

NEGOTIATING NETWORKS:
EXPLORING THE INTERACTION AND INTERSECTION OF A TEACHER'S BELIEFS,
LITERACY POLICY, AND INSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT

Aubrey N. Comperatore: *Negotiating Networks: Exploring the Interaction and Intersection of a Teacher's Beliefs, Literacy Policy, and Instruction*
(Under the direction of Julie E. Justice)

The increasing standardization of literacy curriculum and instruction compounded with high-stakes accountability measures present unique challenges for teachers and policymakers (Barrett-Tatum, 2015). Teachers' beliefs and interpretations of content, curriculum, instruction, and students shape the implementation of new mandates (Remillard & Bryans, 2004). However, when policy messages conflict with teachers' perceptions of literacy instruction, implementation may compromise their instructional self-efficacy (Apple & Teitelbaum, 1986), instill a learned dependency on outside resources (Papola-Ellis, 2014), and erode their instructional beliefs (MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen, & Palma, 2004; Stillman & Anderson, 2011; Valli & Chambliss, 2007). The black box (Black & William, 1998) of teachers' policy enactment as manifested through their instruction has remained largely hidden to researchers and practitioners, as existing literature positions the teacher and the policy as separate entities.

Informed by a sociomaterial perspective, this study uses a revelatory single-case study design and interpretive research methods with analysis grounded in cultural-historical activity theory and actor network theory to analyze the interplay between policy narratives and the internal and external factors influencing one teacher's classroom literacy instruction. First, tracing the moments of the social translation (Callon, 1999) of North Carolina's Read to Achieve policy, legislative, practitioner, and media texts were analyzed for evidence of ways discourse constructed a social narrative framing literacy, instruction, and learning. Findings revealed that

the policy's narrative plot privileged positivistic research and an autonomous model of literacy (Street, 2003). Second, using observational and interview data collected over a five-month period, the study details the instructional beliefs and policy landscape of one North Carolina third-grade teacher under Read to Achieve and other local literacy policies. Comparisons between the teacher's ideal and actual literacy instruction lead to analysis of how she negotiated the influential factors within her instructional system—through compliance with, adherence to, resistance of, and defiance against political and curricular directives. This study concludes with implications for teacher educators, practitioners, and policymakers. Further implications include calls for policymakers to consider the social construction of policy design and researchers to delve into the impacts of teachers' views on race with regards to their literacy instruction.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANT.....	Actor-Network Theory
BOY.....	Beginning of the Year
CHAT.....	Cultural-Historical Activity Theory
EOG.....	End-of-Grade
MOY.....	Middle of the Year
NAEP.....	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NC.....	North Carolina
NCDPI.....	North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
NRP.....	National Reading Panel
PLC.....	Professional Learning Community

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Now more than ever educators exist under increased pressure to deliver standardized instruction and exceed accountability requirements brought about by federal, state, and local education policies. Since the 1950s when the country encountered *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Why Johnny Can't Read* (Flesch, 1955), teachers have experienced a surge of government-backed initiatives aimed at regulating instruction and boosting student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 1992; McGuinn, 2006; Pearson, 2002). Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, literacy education has been at the forefront of political debate and critique. *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), commissioned by the Reagan administration, depicted a failing U.S. education system and a nation encountering a literacy crisis (Pearson, 2004). A string of political initiatives aimed at teachers' literacy instruction and students' reading achievement resulted. Two of the most significant mandates are No Child Left Behind's Reading First policy (Coburn, Pearson, & Woulfin, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2001) and Race to the Top's Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association, 2010). States followed with their initiatives, such as North Carolina's 2012 Read to Achieve bill (N.C. Legis., 2012).

North Carolina Read to Achieve

In July 2012, the North Carolina (NC) State Legislature signed into law the Excellent Public Schools Act for enactment in the 2013-14 school year (NC Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2015). One portion of the Act entitled Read to Achieve was passed "to ensure that every student read at or above grade level by the end of third grade" (N.C. Legis.

2012). Additionally, students must demonstrate an ability to "read, comprehend, integrate and apply complex texts" through to high school (N.C. Legis., 2012). The law asserts the critical responsibility K-3 teachers must identify reading difficulties early on, provide targeted support where needed, and eliminate social promotion. As such, teachers are required to administer ongoing diagnostic reading exams to students to monitor their reading proficiency levels from Kindergarten through third grade (N.C. Legis., 2012). Read to Achieve, therefore, requires schools and teachers to adopt specific instructional software and assessments to track their students' reading progress (NCDPI, 2015a).

According to Read to Achieve, third grade is a pivotal year for students and teachers. A student's reading proficiency level at the end of third grade, as measured by the state's End-Of-Grade Test (EOG), determines her/his eligibility for promotion to the fourth grade (N.C. Legis., 2012). A student who is reading below proficient levels is retained and enrolled in a summer reading camp. If, after completing the camp, the student continues to read below proficient levels as measured by an alternative assessment, s/he is assigned to a third/fourth-grade transition class with a possibility of a midyear promotion (N.C. Legis., 2012). The law is currently in its fourth year of full implementation and accounts for a significant portion of K-3 teachers' measures of accountability.

Problem Statement

The ever-increasing standardization of literacy curriculum and instruction compounded with high-stakes accountability measures present unique and troubling challenges for both teachers and policymakers (Barrett-Tatum, 2015). Teachers are ultimately responsible for enacting new policies at the classroom level (Walski, 2014). Their beliefs and interpretations of content, curriculum, instruction, and students serve to shape the implementation of new

mandates (Remillard & Bryans, 2004). If policies conflict with teachers' perceptions of literacy instruction, implementation may compromise their instructional self-efficacy (Apple & Teitelbaum, 1986), instill a learned dependency on outside resources (Papola-Ellis, 2014), and erode their instructional beliefs (MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen, & Palma, 2004; Stillman & Anderson, 2011; Valli & Chambliss, 2007). Policymakers, on the other hand, argue that teachers' individual and varied interpretations of literacy policies are to blame for implementation failures and policy abandonment, often at high financial losses (Coburn, 2001; Honig, 2006; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). How then should teachers and policymakers construct, disseminate, and implement literacy education policies to affect change over time?

Addressing the above question requires literacy and policy researchers as well as practitioners to understand deeply policy development and implementation processes, including the actors responsible for policy creation, teachers' policy navigation, and how these entities can shape the other (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011; Hamilton & Pitt, 2011; Miettinen, 1999; Neuman & Roskos, 2013; Sørensen, 2009). The current literature provides examinations of only portions of the problem. One group of studies shows a connection between teachers' beliefs and their literacy instruction, specifically what content and methods they use and how they view learners (e.g., Berry, 2006; Deal & White, 2005; Harste & Burke, 1977; Mesmer, 2006; Ness, 2011; Parsons, Malloy, Vaughn, & La Croix, 2014). A second body of work describes how teachers navigate educational policies at either the microlevel (e.g., Taylor, Raphael, & Au, 2010; Valencia & Wixon, 2001) or the institutional macrolevel (e.g., Coburn, 2005), with few studies combining both perspectives (e.g., Pacheo, 2010; Phillipi, 1998; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). Finally, studies exist exploring literacy policies as a form of a discursive social order (e.g., Hamilton, 2001).

Despite this literature's contribution to the field, there is a paucity of studies seeking to describe the interaction and intersection of teachers and policies, specifically around literacy education. Studies aiming to explain the relationship between literacy educators and policies maintain a narrow focus on policy as a static, formal system (Coburn, 2005) rather than a fluid, evolving network of actants. Learning not only how teachers negotiate internal factors, such as their beliefs and perceptions of literacy, instruction, students, and policies but also how policies contribute to the shaping of these perceptions is relevant to both policy enactment and literacy instruction.

Definition of Key Terms

Beliefs, policy, and actor/actant are key terms I use throughout the manuscript and are essential to understanding the purpose and procedures of the study.

Beliefs

As discussed in the next chapter, the concept of beliefs is nebulous and the definition elusive. As Pajares (1992) has pointed out, *beliefs* are rarely explicitly defined in educational research. However, for my study, I adhere to Rokeach's (1968) explanation of beliefs in which he asserted that all beliefs have three components—*affective, cognitive, and behavioral*—influenced by one's experiences and knowledge and vice versa. Further, beliefs can be descriptive, evaluative, or prescriptive; conscious or unconscious; and surmised from what one says and does (Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968).

Policy

Similar to the notion of beliefs, the conceptual definition of *policy* is often only implied in much of the research (Ball, 1993; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997). For my work, I do not view policy as a stagnant construct, nor do I only refer to public policies, or policies

determined solely by the government. I include localized policies, such as those enacted in the classroom or school level. I also look to Ball's (1993) two-pronged definition to ground the concept of policy for this study. Ball (1993) described policy as both text and discourse. Specifically, policy is text constructed to address a problem and is meant to intervene in practice via its interpretation and implementation. Invoking Foucault's (1971, 1974) writings on discourse and power to describe policies, Ball (1993) described policy as the powerful creation of "truth" and "knowledge" (quotes in the original) seeking to promote action and values in a given community. Finally, policies are dynamic, living entities that are "encoded in complex ways and decoded in complex ways" (Ball, 1993, p. 11) by those who engage in them.

Actors/Actants

The current study is grounded in both cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) and actor-network theory (ANT). Both theories assert that human and nonhuman objects build and contribute to activity networks using the terms *actor* and *actant* to identify such objects (Engeström, 2000; Latour, 1996). The study uses both terms interchangeably though the term *actant* is mostly attributed to ANT rather than CHAT to emphasize the nonhuman element of a network.

The Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between one third-grade teacher's instructional beliefs, literacy instructional practices, and the literacy education policies surrounding the classroom. Specifically, the current study addresses three foci. First, this study extends the literature examining educational policy to practice through the exploration of one teacher's mediation of instructional beliefs, perceptions of educational policy, and literacy instruction. Second, informed by actor-network theory (Edwards, 2002; Latour, 2005; Law,

2009), I analyzed the discourse of social order as it existed throughout the creation and dissemination of the Read to Achieve policy as a contextual component of the teacher activity system. Finally, I examined both narratives together to describe if and how a state reading initiative's network intersects with one teacher's literacy instructional beliefs and practices.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do literacy policies, instruction, and a teacher's beliefs interact to inform literacy instruction?
 - a) How do state and local literacy policies define literacy and frame literacy education?
 - b) Does an elementary teacher negotiate her literacy instructional beliefs in conjunction with state and local literacy policies in practice, and if so, how?

Organization of Study

I have organized this study into six chapters. The first chapter provides a brief introduction to the intersection of teachers' beliefs, instruction, and policy enactment, as well as an overview of Read to Achieve. It also establishes the need for a comprehensive study of the interaction between these entities and the discursive process of policy creation, dissemination, and implementation.

Chapter 2 is a literature review that situates the study among prior research, highlighting gaps that my research aims to address. It begins with a systematic review of studies examining the role of teachers' beliefs on instruction, specifically literacy instruction. The conversation then focuses on the various lenses through which researchers have examined teachers' policy enactment. Finally, I describe two different but complementary theories framing this study: cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) and actor-network theory (ANT).

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology of the study. It begins by illustrating how I have conceptualized the Read to Achieve policy network as a part of a teacher's overall literacy instructional activity system, informing the rules under which she exists. I then describe the two parts comprising this revelatory single-case study design. First, guided by ANT, I outline the data collection and analysis procedures used to trace Read to Achieve's social translation and construct its narrative plot that defines literacy, instruction, and learning within a social order. I then outline the steps for collecting data and analyzing the case of Ms. Suzie Lemon, a third-grade teacher implementing Read to Achieve within her literacy instruction.

In Chapter 4, I share the findings from the construction of Read to Achieve's narrative plot through the first three moments of its social translation into practice. From those moments—problematization, intressement, and enrolment (Callon, 1989)—I identify five underlying messages defining how Read to Achieve positions literacy, instruction, and learning. I then present Chapter 5, focusing on Ms. Lemon's policy landscape, beliefs profile, and instruction, as a representation of the final phase of translation—mobilization—wherein the policy is in full implementation mode.

Finally, in Chapter 6, the findings from the previous two chapters combine to inform an activity systems analysis (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) of the four ways in which Ms. Lemon negotiated policy messages and other internal and external factors through her literacy instruction. Implications include calls for teacher education, practitioners, and policymakers to critically consider the role of policy discourse in transmitting instructional narratives and to what extent teachers' beliefs and contextual surroundings play a role in enacting those narratives.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To lay the foundation for the current study, what follows is a systematic review of the literature from two bodies of scholarship: (a) teachers' instructional belief systems and (b) teachers' sense making and enactment of educational policies. I begin this section with the methods I used to identify relevant literature. I then describe the seminal works grounding both fields of research, eventually narrowing the literature to studies relevant to literacy instruction and policy. Next, I use a sociomaterial perspective, specifically cultural-historical activity theory and actor-network theory, to frame the study. I conclude by describing how my study addresses the gaps evident in the research.

Literature Review: Teachers' Beliefs and Policy Negotiation

Literature Review Methods

To begin, I identified relevant literature by searching both the Education Resources Info Center (ERIC) and Education Full Text/EBSCO for peer-reviewed, scholarly articles. I also searched for relevant papers presented at peer-reviewed conferences (e.g., American Educational Research Association, Literacy Research Association, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education). The search was limited to the years 1985 through 2015, during which occurred an increased interest in research on teachers' beliefs and education policy implementation. However, I also included seminal and well-cited works published before 1985 where appropriate. To ensure I only included literature relevant to the study, I limited the searches to texts written in English and research conducted in the United States focused on inservice elementary school teachers.

For literature on teachers' literacy instructional beliefs, I used a combination of the following keywords as guided by the seminal research: literacy or reading education; teachers' perceptions or beliefs or orientations or attitudes or conceptions; and instruction or instructional. On the basis of the results, I excluded research solely focused on teachers' beliefs about science, technology, and mathematics. The searches yielded 65 articles. I then eliminated articles if their foci were not on teachers' beliefs, literacy instruction, or elementary teachers. Ultimately, I accepted and analyzed 29 studies about teachers' beliefs.

When reviewing the literature on teachers' policy enactment, I used a combination of the following keywords: literacy or reading education; teachers' perceptions or beliefs or orientations or attitudes or conceptions; instruction or instructional; policy or politics or political; and state or federal or local. This search yielded an initial result of 64 articles. I ultimately accepted 21 articles for further review and analysis based on the above criteria.

Teachers' Instructional Beliefs as a Construct

Only since the mid-twentieth century have scholars considered the role of teachers' intentions, goals, and judgments on their instruction (Borko, Shavelson, & Stern, 1981). From the 1950s-1970s, researchers focused solely on the attitudes and dispositions correlated with student achievement (Doyle, 1977; Gage, 1963). However, results were inconsistent, statistically nonsignificant, and overall lackluster (Brophy, 1973; Rosenshine, 1976). A subsequent wave of studies examined the correlation between teachers' instructional behavior and student achievement, which yielded statistically stronger results; yet researchers continued to isolate teachers' instruction from their beliefs and knowledge (Doyle, 1977).

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, scholars increasingly adopted perspectives more aligned with constructivism. Citing the work of Dewey (1933) and Rokeach (1968), researchers

heeded the call to investigate teachers' motivations and belief structures as they influence instructional decisions (Clark, 1988; Cole, 1989; Fenstermacher, 1978; Nespor, 1987). Education scholar Gary Fenstermacher (1978) emphasized the importance of examining teachers' beliefs in conjunction with effectiveness research, calling beliefs "the single most important construct in educational research" (Pajares, 1992, p. 329). Though sparse, research on teachers and their instruction now positioned educators as active, professional decision-makers influenced by their beliefs and values about teaching and students (Borko et al., 1981). However, growing interest in teachers' beliefs as they impact instruction was still lacking through the early nineties.

In his comprehensive review of belief research, Pajares (1992) noted Rokeach's (1968) view that the vague nature of belief structures made it too difficult for researchers to study their development and influence on instruction empirically. Consequently, contradictions and questions still abound over how to define the term *belief* (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987). Scholars have defined the notion in a myriad of ways (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). The literature describes the construct of beliefs as dispositions leading to behavior (Brown & Cooney, 1982), a manipulation of knowledge for a specific purpose (Abelson, 1979), experiential memories (Sigel, 1985), an individual's truth and reality (Harvey, 1986), or one's assertion of value (Dewey, 1933). Richardson (1996) defined the construct of beliefs as the mental labels and descriptions compelling one's actions.

A common and standard definition of belief structures has eluded scholars, affecting how they have conceptualized teachers' beliefs since the 1960s (Pajares, 1992). Researchers have described teachers' beliefs as preconceptions and theoretical orientations about students, epistemology, content, the institution of schooling, pedagogy, and the role of education and teaching (Clark, 1988; Harste & Burke, 1977; Porter & Freeman, 1986). Tabachnick and

Zeichner (1984) preferred the term *teacher perspectives*, claiming beliefs are simply opinions whereas teacher perspectives are a greater influence on the ways teachers think about teaching. Rokeach (1968) classified beliefs as educators' attitudes toward teaching, learning, and students. Pajares (1992) defined beliefs as "an individual's judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition, a judgment that can be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say, intend, and do" (p. 316). Contemporary literature largely adheres to the concept of beliefs as a complex composition of interconnected networks comprised of cognitive and affective structures that affect an individual's perceptions and resulting behavior (e.g., Charalambous & Philippou, 2010; Meidl, 2013; Milner, Sondergeld, Demir, Johnson, & Czerniak, 2012).

Beliefs rather than knowledge appear to have more influence on a teacher's behavior as belief structures are unlikely to change. Nisbett and Ross (1980) described the perseverance phenomena during which an individual's deepest beliefs manipulate new incoming information, forcing it to align with their previously held perceptions, despite conflicts between old and new. For example, when confronted with disjointed situations preventing access to the schema (Nespor, 1987), teachers may revert to their core beliefs about teaching when making split-second instructional decisions despite knowing new and better information about what works better. Teachers also tend to abide by their pedagogical ideologies when challenged with uncertainty, isolation, and the innate need to maintain control (Kagan, 1992). Changing one's beliefs is an arduous task. To change a belief, individuals must (a) experience cognitive dissonance, (b) encounter pedagogical disenchantment, and (c) be presented with explicit evidence of a new action's effectiveness (Guskey, 1986; Southerland, Sowell, Blanchard, & Granger, 2011).

With such an array of definitions and conceptualizations of teachers' beliefs, Pajares (1992) has suggested researchers narrow their inquiry into subtopics. Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy has inspired studies examining how teachers' levels of instructional self-efficacy influence their instructional quality (Allinder, 1994), job satisfaction (Coladarci, 1992), motivation (Pajares, 1996), and student achievement (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006). Personal epistemology research looks at teachers' beliefs about the nature of learning and knowing (Brownlee, 2004; Hofer, 2001). Another strand of beliefs research explores teachers' subject- or content-specific beliefs. Content-specific studies focus on how teachers perceive teaching and learning in various disciplines, such as mathematics (Ernest, 1989; Stipek, Givvin, Salmon, & MacGyvers, 2011), science (Haney & McArthur, 2002; Levitt, 2002), technology (Ertmer, 2005; Windschitl & Sahl, 2002), and literacy (Behrmann & Souvignier, 2013; Maggioni, Fox, & Alexander, 2015).

Another strand of studies in the late 1990s and early 2000s focused heavily on the beliefs of preservice teachers and the role teacher education programs play in modifying their beliefs. Researchers (Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996), inspired by Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984), called for more investigation of the ways in which student teachers viewed teaching and learning before and after graduating from their preparation programs. Implications for teacher education programs included learning about students' beliefs before teaching using surveys, offering course experiences that challenge their beliefs, and longitudinally examining students' practices as beginning teachers (Barnyak & Paquette, 2010; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 2003). Although there are more teacher beliefs studies focused on preservice teachers, research on established teachers' belief structures, including their literacy instruction beliefs, do appear in the literature.

Teachers' Literacy Beliefs and Their Influence on Instruction

In response to earlier research, literacy scholars questioned whether teachers possess belief systems as aligned with theoretical orientations specifically to reading education (Barr & Duffy, 1978; Harste & Burke, 1977). Studies found that not only do educators hold literacy-specific beliefs but their beliefs influence the goals, activities, and decisions they make during their instruction (Barr & Duffy, 1978). In the following sections, I summarize the important work connecting teachers' literacy beliefs to their instruction that laid the foundation for current research. I then review the contemporary literature I have labeled (a) teachers as literate beings, (b) teachers' beliefs about literacy pedagogy, and (c) teachers' beliefs about literacy learners. Each category elucidates how teachers' beliefs about literacy directly influence their instructional choices. The categories coincide with a similar review published by Maggioni and colleagues (2015).

The seminal studies of Harste and Burke (1977, 1980) and Barr and Duffy (1978) set the stage for further exploration of teachers' beliefs about reading as they aligned with two theoretically-driven spectrums (Maggioni et al., 2015)—language units and instructional models. Two popular instruments, the TORP and the PRI, arose from this research and embodied each theory, respectively. DeFord's (1985) Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) focused on the phonetically derived language unit teachers perceived as the most critical to their instruction. The Proposition about Reading Instruction Inventory (PRI; Duffy & Metheny, 1979) examined the aspects of literacy instruction teachers prioritize (e.g., basals, student-centered, skills). The PRI was developed to assess whether teachers privileged prescriptive, skills-based reading instruction over student-centered reading development or vice versa. Used less often than the TORP, the PRI was implemented in research published during the 1980s and early

1990s to examine various instructional characteristics, such as teachers' use of feedback (e.g., Hoffman & Kugle, 1982) and instruction of students at-risk or with special needs (e.g., Maxson, 1996). Despite their implications, scholars widened their research interests past what the TORP and PRI could provide and investigated other areas of teacher beliefs as they inform literacy instruction.

Teachers as Literate Beings

From the review of the research emerged a category of studies examining the relationship between teachers' views of themselves as literate beings and how they engage in their literacy instruction. The studies argued two distinct but connected notions. First, they concluded that how teachers view themselves as readers and writers can influence their instructional practices (Hamel, Shaw, Taylor, & Fink, 2013; Janzen, 2015). Second, teachers' beliefs about themselves as literacy pedagogues impacts how they navigate their educational settings and practices (Deal & White, 2005; McElhone, Hebard, Scott, & Juel, 2009; Parsons et al., 2014). Though the studies are grounded in the works of Harste and Burke (1977, 1980) and Barr and Duffy (1978), they also challenge the restricted and dualistic view of literacy teaching and learning by expanding on the ways literacy educators view themselves and their profession (Maggioni et al., 2015).

Researchers found that when teachers reflect on their personal beliefs about literacy practices, they become more aware of their biases about students, reading, writing, and their instructional self-efficacy (Hamel et al., 2013; Janzen, 2015). Teachers' beliefs and experiences around literacy were shown to influence their literacy instruction, as well. One study captured how teachers explored both the differences and applications of at-home literacies and in-school literacies (Hamel et al., 2013). Upon completion of the study, teachers indicated an increased

level of awareness of their prejudices as well as strategies for including students' home literacies in their instruction. Janzen's (2015) theory-laden text examined how teachers navigate the power structures found in the teaching profession and how they help or hinder professional identity development as literacy instructors.

Two studies employed teacher visioning as a means of engaging teachers in exploring themselves as literacy educators (McElhone et al., 2009; Parsons et al., 2014). Researchers defined *visioning* as a strategy for teachers to contemplate their literacy goals for their students, reflect on the pedagogical approaches they believe to be the most effective, and create an image of the literacy instructor identity they strive to have (Parsons et al., 2014). Visioning is based on the social constructivist assumption that guiding new teachers to identify their professional ideal may influence their practices and resilience in the profession (Duffy, 2002). This work directly links beliefs and teachers' professional identities to changes in their practice.

When examining how teachers' reflective visions informed instruction, results revealed that context mattered to both the types of visions they constructed and their resiliency when challenged by pressures of the classroom. For instance, Parsons and colleagues (2014) found the visions laid the foundation for teachers' critical analysis and examination of whether their pedagogical practices aligned with their vision. They also noted teachers' preparation pathways (traditional or Teach for America-TFA), scripted curricula, and high-stakes testing environments all impacted the participants' journeys to achieving their professional visions. Findings also showed that teachers who maintained high levels of quality in their literacy practice held specific and comprehensive visions despite potentially pernicious influences from outside contexts (McElhone et al., 2009).

The cited studies illustrate the influence teachers' self-perceptions as literate beings and literacy educators have on their instructional beliefs. Further, their professional identities and motivations for engaging in literacy teaching can impact how they prioritize and enact literacy instruction in their classrooms. For instance, a comparison of the instructional motivations of Teach for America teachers and traditionally-prepared teachers found that teachers align their instruction with what they believe to be their mission as literacy teachers (Parsons et al., 2014). Specifically, traditionally-prepared teachers believed their mission was to instill joy and promote intrinsic motivation for reading as grounded in skills. As such, their instruction focused on the skills that increase student self-efficacy, ultimately growing reading enjoyment (Parsons et al., 2014). This category of research emphasizes the important contribution teachers' beliefs about themselves as professionals and humans engaging in literacy practices have on how (a) they view their students as literate beings, (b) successful literacy instructors implement their instruction, and (c) to connect their personal literacy behaviors to those of their students.

Teachers' Beliefs About Literacy Instruction

In conjunction with perceptions of themselves as literate beings, teachers' beliefs about what skills, objectives, and strategies are critical to their students' success may also impact their classroom decisions. Several studies examined teachers' beliefs about which pedagogical practices (Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, & Duffy-Hester, 1998; Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013), content (Baker & Dever, 2005; Mesmer, 2006; Ness, 2011), materials (Mesmer, 2006), and external factors teachers most valued in their instruction. These studies found that what teachers believed to be essential to their literacy instruction influenced the frequency and amount of time they engaged in specific methods.

How teachers approach literacy instruction as grounded in specific paradigms is also related to their beliefs. Two studies examined teachers' preferences and practices around phonics/skills-based, whole language, or balanced approaches to literacy. Baumann and colleagues (1998) studied teachers' pedagogical orientations and found that teachers never fully engaged in only one way of teaching (phonics or whole language). Instead, teachers utilized a balanced approach to their instruction in response to their students' needs. Nearly 15 years later, Bingham and Hall-Kenyon (2013) implemented a similar survey to determine teachers' instructional beliefs and found that 95% of the 581 respondents endorsed a skills-based, balance-oriented approach to literacy.

In addition to their pedagogical methods, what content teachers believe to be crucial to their literacy instruction may shape what and how they teach literacy in the classroom. Although contextual factors such as policies and curriculum were shown to have some influence on teaching (Mesmer, 2006; Ness, 2011), teachers tended to align their content and pedagogy to what they believed to be the most essential skills and content for successful literacy learning. Therefore, it is plausible that when faced with curricular objectives that challenge their instructional belief systems, teachers may adhere to the content and pedagogical strategies they believe to be most important. Thus, it is critical to reflect on how teachers prioritize specific content and objectives to understand their instructional decision-making in the classroom.

Studies have also highlighted the important role external environmental factors such as classroom resources, materials, and educational policies play on teachers' enactment of literacy instruction in the classroom (Mesmer, 2006). Upon learning teachers' instructional preferences, researchers argued that limited resources, teachers' preparation and experiences, systematic policy constraints, and school leadership impact the ways teachers plan and implement their

instruction (Baker & Dever, 2005; Mesmer, 2006; Ness, 2011). For instance, Mesmer (2006) examined how often teachers used beginning reading materials in conjunction with their literacy objectives, policies, programs, and levels of autonomy. Results showed that teachers who believed direct instruction of phonics was the most important selected a greater number of leveled beginner texts and used student workbooks more often than teachers who did not share the same belief. Mesmer (2006) also noted that teachers in Texas and California who were experiencing statewide policy shifts from literature-based to skills-based instruction expressed feeling conflicted between their beliefs and the new mandates. Implications included the importance of outside factors on teachers' literacy instruction despite their strongly held beliefs.

Teachers' Beliefs About Literacy Learners

The final category of research in the literature explored teachers' implicit epistemological principles and beliefs underlying their literacy instruction. Specifically, researchers investigated how teachers' perceptions of learners coupled with their knowledge and beliefs about literacy learning colored how they implemented literacy instruction (Berry, 2006; Deal & White, 2005; Durando, 2008; Hollenbeck, 2013). There were three clear foci within this category: (a) special education students, (b) students with reading difficulties, and (c) student motivation.

Teachers who work with students with special needs hold distinct beliefs about how their students can and should experience literacy instruction (Berry, 2006; Durando, 2008; Hollenbeck, 2013). Berry (2006) compared the beliefs of two teams of inclusion teachers, each comprised of one general education teacher and one special education teacher. Participants described their perceptions of effective writing instruction for students with learning disabilities, as well as their orientations to teaching the writing process. One team believed students with special needs should learn literacy in controlled and prescriptive ways. The other team privileged

the social nature of literacy learning and valued relationships and collaboration. Researchers found that although both teams adhered to the same instructional objectives (e.g., teaching the writing process), the first team implemented explicit and highly structured writing instruction typical of teacher-centered pedagogy. In contrast, the other team utilized instruction group work and discussion, demonstrating their belief that students with special needs can thrive in more socially active environments. Similar studies showed that teachers who viewed students' learning difficulties as hindrances likely adhered to teacher-centered, direct literacy instruction, despite exposure to research-based practices (Hollenbeck, 2013) or professional development training touting student-centered instruction (Durando, 2008).

Teachers' epistemological beliefs about students with reading difficulties play a role in determining instructional practices (Hamel, 2003; Mallette, Kile, Smith, McKinney, & Readence, 2000; Maxson, 1996). Although not necessarily identified as special education students, the learners described in the studies were labeled as at-risk based on home and academic characteristics (e.g., socioeconomic status, race, and language). Maxson's (1996) study of teachers of at-risk first-grade students found that although teachers felt it essential to facilitate a nurturing classroom climate, they also maintained a structured literacy learning environment to supposedly neutralize students' backgrounds and home issues. The studies identified factors such as students' home language barriers, classroom management issues, and administrative mandates as barriers to teachers' literacy instruction for struggling readers (Hamel, 2003; Powers, Zippay, & Butler, 2006).

Quirk and colleagues' (2010) study found a relationship between teachers' perceptions and beliefs about their students' reading motivation and teachers' instructional self-efficacy. Results of a three-part questionnaire showed teachers prioritized and fostered students' reading

motivation by creating an environment where students felt successful, using materials that challenged their reading skills, and establishing the importance of becoming a good reader. Participants believed it was least important to foster student motivation by creating competitive environments, leveraging students' grades, and manipulating students' feelings. The study noted the use of intrinsic motivation strategies increased teachers' self-efficacy ratings when compared to teachers who valued extrinsic motivators, further illustrating the influence teachers' beliefs had on their instructional practices and vice versa.

Overall, researchers concluded that teachers of students with learning disabilities varied in their views of both how best their students learned literacy and when and how to implement their literacy instruction. Common among the three studies was teachers' underlying deficit perspectives of their students' ability to engage in literacy instruction.

The reviewed literature captures not only the multiple layers comprising teachers' literacy instructional belief systems but also how these systems influence instruction in the classroom. Teachers' perceptions of their students, literacy pedagogies, and themselves inform how, when, and to whom teachers implement their literacy instruction. The studies also reveal some inconsistencies. For instance, although many of the studies showed the persistent power of teachers' belief systems, several studies highlighted how the literacy beliefs of teachers, particularly novices, evolved over the course of the research (Deal & White, 2005; Hamel et al., 2013). These results conflict with the notion that teachers' belief systems are resistant to change (Lortie, 1975; Nespor, 1987; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Veteran teachers' perceptions, however, were not altered, despite the needs of their students or being given additional evidence-based strategies that conflicted with their beliefs (Berry, 2006; Maxson, 1996). These findings may indicate time in the profession as influential to the steadfastness of teachers' literacy instructional

beliefs, which is problematic for policymakers and school system leaders wishing to incite changes to curriculum and assessment practice.

Further, the literature identified several outside factors as both positive influences and barriers to teachers' enactment of their literacy instructional beliefs. Potentially positive contextual influences included supportive colleagues and administration, teachers' preparation programs, a strong sense of identity and instructional self-efficacy, and additional resources. The most common barriers included a lack of teacher autonomy, the use of scripted curricula, and limited time and resources. Researchers also emphasized politically mandated and high-stakes testing environments as barriers to the actualization of teachers' literacy beliefs. As a result of the potential conflicts between teachers' beliefs and their political and professional expectations, study participants struggled with maintaining what they believed to be high-quality literacy practices for their students alongside policy constraints. As such, policy plays a critical role in the development and enactment of teachers' literacy beliefs and instruction.

Teachers' Negotiation of Policy Around Literacy Education

Educational policy development and implementation related to literacy instruction has not always been up for national debate. Until recently, much of the political decision-making involving curriculum and instruction remained at the local levels (Shanahan, 2014). The federal government's role in developing educational mandates remained limited until the late 1950s and into the 1960s amidst the government's war on poverty (Mraz & Vacca, 2012). Increased accountability measures coincided with the implementation of Head Start, Title I, and other federal initiatives aimed at disadvantaged populations. Consequently, the national government became increasingly involved in schools and their teachers (Shanahan, 2014). The 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*, which depicted a failing U.S. education system, fueled the

federalization of educational policies and prompted media and public outcries of a nation in literacy crisis (Pearson, 2004).

In response, the federal government commissioned several meta-analyses of literacy research, most notably *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) and *The Report of the National Reading Panel* (NRP, 2000). The reports urged reserachers to develop empirically-based best practices for teachers (Botzakis, Burns, & Hall, 2014; Coburn et al., 2011; Mraz & Vacca, 2012; National Research Council, 2010; Shanahan, 2014). Accordingly, states and the federal government mandated standards-based literacy instruction based on the results of the research syntheses. The high-stakes *Reading First* initiative of No Child Left Behind required U.S. schools to teach the skills and strategies highlighted in the reports (Coburn et al., 2011). The curricular mandates have since paved the way for Race to the Top's Common Core State Standards, a standards-based curricular scope and sequence that guides instruction across the states (National Governors Association, 2010). In addition to federal policies overseeing curriculum and instruction, state legislative bodies also continue to pass instructional mandates.

In the wake of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, teachers are faced with a barrage of local, state, and federal educational mandates. However, scholars have found that despite intricate top-down dissemination plans, policies aimed at altering teachers' instruction are skewed by teachers' perceptions, understanding, and application of policy-driven messages (Coburn, 2001; Cohen, 1988). Therefore, when educational policies fail to meet their proposed goals, policymakers blame teachers for improper implementation. Meanwhile, teachers blame policymakers for developing unrealistic and overly ambitious expectations (Coburn, 2001; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). When a policy is meant to impact and influence teachers' classroom

practices, it is essential for researchers, policymakers, and school leadership to address how teachers engage in its enactment (Walski, 2014).

Scholars from the fields of both education and policy research have answered the call to look at how teachers implement policies in schools. However, there are significant differences in the lenses through which each body conducts their research. Literacy education researchers have investigated teachers' enactment of policy at a microlevel (Taylor et al., 2010; Valencia & Wixson, 2001; Walski, 2014). Microlevel processes include policy enactment at the school, classroom, or individual teacher level. Contrarily, educational policy scholars study the top-down implementation of political initiatives through a macrolevel and organizational lens (Cohen & Spillane, 1992). Macrolevel factors include institutional and organization roles, norms, and rules, standards, and accountability measures (McGill-Franzen, Ward, Goatley, & Machado, 2002). There is, however, potential for both sets of research to inform the other. As such, researchers have recently begun to view policy enactment through an integrated micro- and macroperspective (Coburn, 2001, 2006).

In her comprehensive review of literacy policy implementation research, Walski (2014) described a nested, ecological model layering a suite of theoretical lenses. The model includes both micro- and macrolevel theories from literacy policy enactment research: (a) the cognitive theory of sensemaking (Weick, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005), (b) the sociocultural theories of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and Vygotsky Space (Gallucci, 2003; Gavelek & Raphael, 1996), (c) and the organizational theory of neo-institutionalism (Scott, 2013).

Sensemaking is a cognitive theory illustrating how individuals negotiate, adapt, and integrate policy messages into their preestablished schema and behaviors (Weick, 1995; Spillane,

Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs often intertwine to contribute to their sensemaking. Similar to results found in the literature on instructional beliefs (Kagan, 1992), sensemaking occurs most often in uncertain, ambiguous, and stressful climates that disrupt typical and routine behaviors (Weick, 1995). For instance, Goertz, Floden, and O'Day (1995) found that though policies contributed to teachers' actions their beliefs and knowledge were most influential to their instructional decision-making.

Sociocultural factors have also been shown to influence teachers' policy enactment. Such factors include interactions between various public policy system and nonsystem actors, such as colleagues, coaches, professional membership organizations, and administrators, as well as the formation and facilitation of communities of practice (Coburn, 2005; Cohen & Hill, 2000). A sociocultural perspective on educational policy asserts the existence of a socially and culturally mediated and shared understanding of policy and reform messages among a group (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Research in this vein goes beyond examining individual teachers' reactions to policy and expands the process to include the social and professional interactions occurring in and around school communities. Scholars have also used situated learning and activity theory as theoretical frameworks. For instance, Coburn (2005) found teacher communities rejected, assimilated, or accommodated curricular policy messages in response to their interactions with nonsystem actors such as professional development providers, university coursework, and curricula more often than when confronted by system actors, such as district leadership. Gallucci (2008) examined teachers' shared understandings of political messages via their communities of practice, which included their teammates.

In addition to communities of practice, Walski (2014) described the sociocultural theory Vygotsky Space as particularly useful in grounding policy enactment research. The Vygotsky

Space is a metaphorical space in which individuals encounter and contribute to political messages occurring in the public discourse within and around their professional communities (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Harré, 1984). Teachers then privately subsume the common messages to make sense of the policies impacting their experiences, a process aligned with the sense-making theory. Kragler, Martin, and Kroeger (2008) described how teachers who faced difficult school contexts, changes in curriculum, and mandated professional development sessions banded together to create a collective sense of efficacy and protection against new mandates. Subsequently, their teaching practices were unaffected by the macrolevel policy decisions.

The final layer of Walski's (2014) model includes institutional factors, such as organizational expectations about instruction, curricular resources, assessments, and instructional standards. Institutional factors are those with the capability of assessing and influencing teachers' instructional practices from outside the classroom, such as state standardized tests. The neo-institutional theory describes the relationship between microlevel and macrolevel rules and players, respectively (Spillane & Burch, 2006). Coburn's (2005) study offers a glimpse into the interplay between the policy environment with its rules and expectations among system actors and teachers' mediation of those messages.

Much of the recent research in the field of policy enactment in literacy instruction, although sparse, is grounded in one or more of the above theories. Researchers from both education and public policy have recognized the complex nature of policy implementation, including the critical role of individual teachers' mediation of policy messages (Coburn, 2001). Attempts to bridge the gap between micro- and macrolevel investigations have partially clarified

the complex ways in which educators accept, reject, assimilate, modify, or implement policy messages and mandates.

Studies combining the micro with the macro report an alignment between policy, curriculum, teachers' belief systems, and instructional practices. The seminal work of Spillane and Jennings (1997) examined the ways in which teachers in nine classrooms in Michigan reacted to new district literacy policies. Initial results showed teachers were enacting instruction as aligned with policy and curriculum mandates; however, a more nuanced look revealed teachers engaged in superficial implementation. Authors suggested the need for reformers to be more explicit about the pedagogical practices and materials required for the new policies. Implications also included the critical need for opportunities for teachers to integrate their knowledge and interpretations around policy texts and workshops.

Similarly, Phillippi's (1998) ethnographic study of the implementation of a mandated constructivist literacy reform found that although the staff's sense of professionalism increased and classroom climates improved, researchers were confronted with teachers who were heavily resistant to implementing the policy. The microlevel belief systems of the resistant teachers ultimately impacted macrolevel dissemination processes. Hall, Houston-Coleman, and Napier (1994) found similar results when measuring teachers' perceptions of whole language teaching mandates versus basal and phonics instruction. They found that teachers who were given the choice to teach using pedagogies aligned with their beliefs held higher self-confidence and greater job satisfaction.

Conversely, teachers who were required to teach to standards contrary to their personal pedagogical beliefs or that they perceived were inappropriate for their students felt less efficient at implementing quality instruction. Valli, Croninger, and Buese's (2012) longitudinal High-

Quality Teaching study illustrated the ways in which teaching and learning, as well as teachers' perceptions of the narrowing concept of teaching quality, were slowly impacted by literacy policies. Two studies examining teachers' responses to literacy policies aimed at English Language Learners found that teachers felt devalued and limited in their pedagogical choices (Harper, de Jong, & Platt, 2008; Pacheo, 2010). Teachers in one study altered their practices to both align with and work around their political barriers in conjunction with their beliefs (Pacheo, 2010). The results echo those found in teacher belief literature and emphasize the critical role teachers' instructional beliefs play in their interpretation, assimilation, revision, and eventual acceptance or rejection of policies intended to influence teacher practices.

The reviewed research demonstrates the need for literacy policy researchers to consider educators' beliefs about teaching, learning, and children as they influence policy enactment through instruction. It is not enough to only determine teachers' beliefs about literacy as they influence instruction around political contexts. Neither is it practical to restrict observations to how educators implement political mandates without considering the educator's role in interpreting the policy messages (Cohen, 1988; Smit, 2005). Rather, as the literature shows, to fully capture the dynamic relationship between educators, policy, and instruction, scholars should employ research methods and designs that account for how teachers actively engage with their beliefs, translate policy messages, and make real-time classroom instructional decisions.

Where contemporary research has attempted to investigate teachers' cognitive and affective responses to policy development and implementation and vice versa, either one network or the other has been depicted as a passive system. Studies aiming to describe teachers' beliefs about policy depict teachers as active beings in a political system that is otherwise frozen in time. When literacy researchers chronicle the history and objectives of a particular policy

pertinent to their study context, rarely do they expound on the parallel development and implementation activities of the policy. Nonhuman actors and entities (Fenwick et al., 2011) are often ignored by educational research for intentional human actors (Sørensen, 2009). However, recent theoretical assertions point to the need for educational researchers to examine the microconnections between all entities of teaching (Fenwick Pacheo, 2010, 2011; Hamilton & Pitt, 2011; Miettinen, 1999; Sørensen, 2009). My study seeks to fill this gap in the research by considering both the teacher and the literacy policies enveloped in the teaching context as separate, active, and fluid cases. Through a sociomaterial approach, namely cultural-historical activity theory and actor-network theory, I aim to describe the influence inter- and intranetwork relationships have on teachers' literacy instruction.

Theoretical Framework

The review of the literature demonstrated how teachers' local enactment of mandated curricula and educational policies is constructed and influenced by their beliefs, interpretations, and interactions with contextual factors (Barrett-Tatum, 2015; Remillard & Bryans, 2004). The process through which educational policies and their messages are passed down to teachers is complex, context-specific, and varies by each individual (Loeb, Knapp, & Elfers, 2008). However, the local mediation process is nested within larger systems, namely institutional, community, and curriculum systems. Embedded in and across these systems is the creation and transmission of educational policies (Fenwick et al., 2011). As such, to make sense of what occurs at each system level—local to global—and how each shapes the other, I apply what Fenwick and colleagues (2011) have labeled *sociomaterial analysis*. Specifically, I frame the study using cultural-historical activity theory and actor-network theory.

Sociomateriality focuses on the many negotiations and microconnections embedded in the study of social innovations, such as education and learning. Whereas much of the educational research privileges human processes, including phenomenology and social constructivism, as central to the school system, sociomaterial approaches call attention to the material entities embedded in teaching, learning, and politics (Fenwick et al., 2011). *Material*, in this case, includes tools, technologies, actions, texts, discourses, and objects that are “entangled in meaning, not assumed to be separate from it” (p. vi). Among the various sociomaterial theories applied to the social sciences, cultural-historical activity theory and actor-network theory are two that have an established stake in educational research.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

Activity theory, specifically cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), offers a lens through which the interaction between teachers’ beliefs, classroom contexts, and instructional practices can be examined, especially in the local level (i.e., the classroom). Stemming from the constructivist learning theory, CHAT offers a framework that accounts for the situated and context-dependent nature of teaching, learning, and policy implementation (Barrett-Tatum, 2015).

Grounded in Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of learning that emphasizes the interplay between social, cultural, historical, and individual factors, CHAT theorists refute the individualistic creation of discrete knowledge. Rather CHAT describes human development and learning as inseparable from the context in which it takes place (Daniels, 2004; Schunk, 2012). Context, in this case, mediates cultural activities and continually shapes and is shaped by its participants in a transactive relationship (Cole, 1996; Roth & Lee, 2007). As such, CHAT

focuses on the goal-oriented activities and cocreation of contexts in which humans participate, resulting in social and cognitive growth for its participants (Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 1991).

Activity theory has undergone three iterations since Vygotsky’s (1978) initial notion of activity mediation. The original theory, centered on a subject, its primary goal or objective, and the cultural tools or artifacts used to mediate the activity (Engeström, 1987), linked the individual with their cultural context and vice versa. However, despite Vygotsky’s innovative inclusion of mediated cultural artifacts, the individual remained at the core of the model. In response, A. N. Leont’ev (1978), Vygotsky’s student, critiqued the model for its lack of attention to the social systems surrounding an individual and expanded the theory to include examining collective networked activity systems. Now part of Leont’ev’s second generation theory, activity systems accounted for the subject’s community, divisions of labor within the community, and the rules of interaction between roles (Barrett-Tatum, 2015; Engeström, 2000; Fisher, 2012). Table 1 defines their components.

Table 1

Components of First- and Second-Generation Activity Theory

<u>Component</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Subject	Individual or groups of individuals engaging in the activity
Object	The objective motivating subjects’ participation in the activity
Artifacts/Tools	Signs, symbols, language, and conceptual understandings used to mediate the activity and obtain the object
Community	Social and cultural group in which subjects are participating in the activity
Division of Labor	Defines how tasks and roles are shared between system participants
Rules	The rules, norms, and roles guiding participants within the community

Note: Taken from Cole & Engeström, 1993.

Critics have disparaged the second-generation model claiming it disregards the diverse cultural and historical traditions believed to be deeply ingrained within and around activity

systems, thus inspiring a third iteration (Griffin & Cole, 1984). The third-generation model adds a cultural-historical perspective to the preexisting framework, creating cultural-historical activity theory, or CHAT (Engeström, 1987). CHAT asserts that there is an interconnectivity of activity systems at both the micro- and macrolevels. The CHAT model and its depiction of the interaction between systems can be used to examine how related systems mediate over time (Engeström, 1987, 2011; Roth & Lee, 2007). As such, CHAT illustrates how subjects' social interactions *within* each activity system shape their interaction with the cultural contexts. This interaction thus shapes and reshapes the systems. Figure 1 displays the theoretical model for third-generation CHAT.

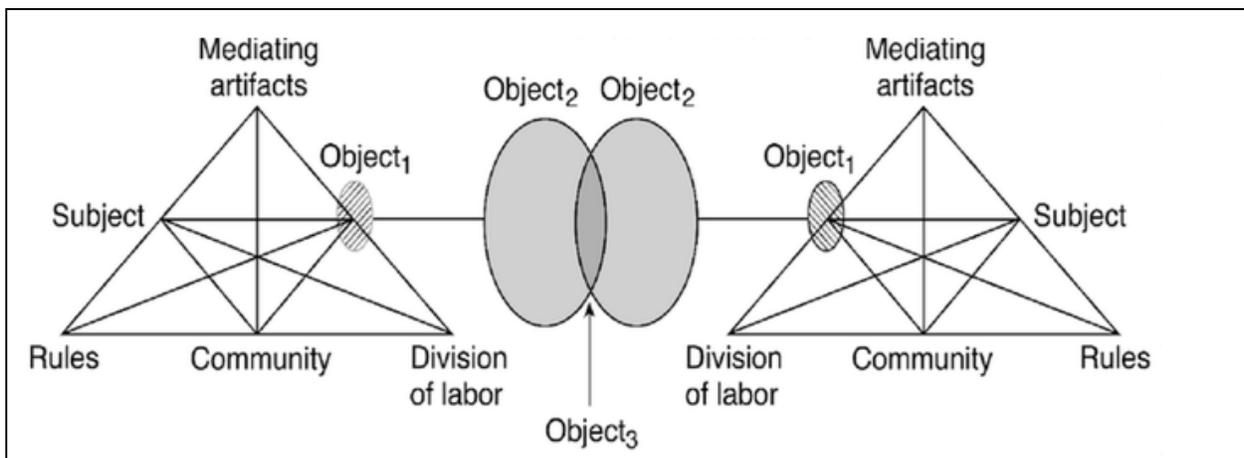


Figure 1. Third-Generation CHAT Model. Taken from Barrett-Tatum, 2015.

The joining of two or more activity systems in which both strive toward a shared goal (e.g., teachers and educational policies) also creates contradictions. The contradictions, neither positive nor negative in nature, create a new meaning for the participants of both activity systems. The resulting tension may appear as conflicts, struggles, contradictions, or power dynamics within and across the activity systems (Daniels, 2004; Engeström, 1987). According to Roth and colleagues (2004), the conflicts are viewed as dialectical and progressive, allowing for improvements to the system(s) while synchronously influencing participant responses and

identities. It is at these junctures that growth and development, both for the participant and the surrounding systems, can be achieved.

The application of CHAT in educational research has increased over the past 30 years, as it is particularly useful in addressing issues of praxis and implementation (Roth & Lee, 2007). Roth and Lee (2007) described CHAT's potential to explain conflicting viewpoints in educational research, such as the individual versus the collective, and theory versus praxis. Scholars have applied CHAT's transactive and dialectical perspectives to explore teachers' adoption and inclusion of technology in the classroom (Anthony, 2012; Kollias, et al., 2005), implementation and use of new curriculum (Garcia, 2011), and gaps in theory to practice in teacher preparation (Cole, 1988). Surveying the current research in teacher education outcomes, Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2012) identified a substantial body of research grounded in CHAT. Much of that research examined the interaction between teachers' preparation, their subsequent performance, and the social, cultural, and institutional contexts surrounding them. For instance, Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, and Fry (2004) used CHAT to explore how a preservice teacher mediated conflicting beliefs and expectations of teaching between her preparation program and her student teaching setting. In addition, the authors used CHAT to frame the preservice teacher's negotiation between these experiences and the development of her teaching identity.

Particularly relevant to the current study, CHAT, as well as other sociocultural theories, have been applied to research on teachers' implementation of educational policies and curricular mandates (Lee, 2011; Marsh, Bertrand, & Huguet, 2015). Scholars have used CHAT to explore the tensions present when teachers enact new policies and curricula and any resulting changes to their instructional practice. Marsh and colleagues (2015) used CHAT to frame their exploratory

study of teachers' responses to working with coaches and professional learning communities (PLCs) in using student data to make instructional decisions—a political mandate. They identified and described the dynamic interrelations between coaching sessions, PLCs, and teachers' instructional use of data and their influence on the cocreation of knowledge across the differing contexts. Lee (2011) described the results of the implementation of a standardized science curriculum in Singapore, focusing on teachers' changes in practice, the role of stakeholder power, and teachers' mediation of conflicts surrounding previous practices and mandated assessments.

Several scholars have applied CHAT to teachers' literacy instruction and their enactment of literacy educational policies. Fisher's (2012) application of CHAT grounded his retrospective examination of six early-grades teachers' implementation of a required dialogic writing program. The study described how teachers mediated competing motivations when participating in the activity of writing instruction, as well as their beliefs about writing and the children they were teaching. On the basis of his findings and influenced by Hedegaard's (2009) work with CHAT and children's development, Fisher (2012) described a three-part relational model through which activities take place that includes societal conditions (policy), institutional practice (teacher as school member), and individual perspective (teacher as individual). Implications for the study include the need for policymakers and those imposing educational initiatives to focus on the goals and perspectives of those enacting the policies (teachers) during every stage of implementation. Likewise, Fisher (2012) suggested policymakers consider not only student improvement as an indicator of an initiative's success but also its impact on classroom and school contexts.

Most salient to the study, Barrett-Tatum's (2015) study utilized CHAT to both frame and analyze her examination of two elementary teachers' literacy instruction as influenced by the Common Core State Standards, their teaching experiences, and their personal beliefs about the standards and literacy. Barrett-Tatum (2015) used the components of CHAT as the coding scheme in a constant comparative analysis of the complex political and social processes surrounding policy enactment and literacy instruction. With this method, she aligned the patterns and themes from the analysis to several third-generation CHAT models illustrating various activity systems, such as children in a small reading group alongside a teacher's participation in literacy instruction within the group. Results found that the two teachers felt a loss of their professional autonomy for scripted and mandated curriculum. However, although both teachers covered the same literacy objectives as dictated by the Common Core State Standards, how they implemented their instruction and learning outcomes varied. Specifically, the rules and division of labor relating to student interaction and teacher roles, as well as the classroom and school communities, varied greatly across the teachers' activity systems, thus inferring the importance of teachers' beliefs and perspectives as they enact policy. On the basis of these results, the author asserted the utility of CHAT as a way to validate the social, historical, and cultural constructs influencing the reality of policy enactment and standardization (Barrett-Tatum, 2015).

Scholars such as Roth and Lee (2007) and Barrett-Tatum (2015) have called for the continued exploration of the dynamics between teaching and policy enactment through a sociocultural-historical perspective. As such, I employed CHAT as a framework to guide my study of the individual teacher at the local classroom level, informing both the methodology and the subsequent analysis.

Actor-Network Theory

Grounded in French philosophy and semiotics, specifically Foucault's view on social orders (Kendall & Wickham, 1999), actor-network theory (ANT) frames technological and social innovations via a series of translations (Hamilton, 2011, 2014; Latour, 2005; Law, 2009). Researchers initially applied ANT to scientific and technology studies. However the theory has more recently been used to describe how complex networks, such as educational policies, develop and exist as social structures (Fenwick, 2010). In this context, ANT supports the notion that multiple stakeholders are involved in the creation, refinement, and implementation of complex educational policies before their use on the ground (Hamilton, 2011). Further, Edwards (2002) has described ANT as “[providing] a framework for analyzing the exercises of power by which cultural, social, and economic capital is produced or reproduced” (p. 355). That is, ANT does not view social projects, such as policy initiatives, as static, stable entities but rather as fluid, discursive, symmetrical networks of actants (human and nonhuman) comprised of multiple realities (Ball, 1993; Fenwick, 2010; Hamilton, 2014).

ANT emphasizes how various, seemingly unconnected elements, such as texts, people, and media messages, come together to form coherent policies and social innovations (Callon, 1984; Latour, 1987). These processes, known as *translations*, emphasize the negotiations between elements, interlocking them into an activity network. Translations are documented using what French sociologist Michel Callon (1984, 1999a) called *moments* of the sociology of translations, or episodes of time and force. Researchers can analyze the four moments—problematization, intressement, enrolment (*sic*), and mobilization—to chronicle the history, discourse, and inner workings of established policies and its links to classroom practice

(Hamilton, 2011). Table 2 defines each of the four moments and provides examples relevant to my study.

Table 2

The Four Moments of Translation

Moment	Definition	Example
Problematization	A problem is recognized, and the primary actors essential to the overall network are identified, excluding those that are not critical.	A national or state literacy crisis a la <i>A Nation at Risk</i> involving teachers, students, families, media, etc.
Intressement	The devices used to stabilize actors in a new alliance and infrastructure. Serves to confirm the validity of the problematization.	Development of policy documents, such as the Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan, in which policymakers, teachers, students, and institutions (research organizations, Amplify, etc.) collide to form new mandated processes.
Enrolment	The assembly of resources, including material goods and services, to align the actors' interests with the network.	Material investments include Amplify's mClass: Reading 3D software and assessment. Grades and teaching evaluations.
Mobilization	All actors and those affected by policies are experiencing the same reality. The policy is in full implementation mode and has succeeded for the time being.	All K-3 classrooms statewide are fully implementing <i>NC Read to Achieve</i> , including instruction, assessment, and resulting decisions regarding student promotion.

Callon (1984, 1999a) considered the first two moments—problematization and intressement—to be hypothetical and unsolidified in the political realm. Rather, these moments remain ideas or simple documents. A network is realized once the actants interact with their resources and take on their new roles during the enrolment moment. Finally, although mobilization signals the translation and acceptance of a policy, it hardly signifies an ending or a conclusion to the political process. On the contrary, Hamilton (2011) described a policy's

“constant overflow, disentangling from external entities that continue to crowd in and also steal away the actors” (p. 60). Likewise, Callon’s (1984, 1999a) moments should not be considered a rigid set of principles to be followed in exact order. However, these moments serve as critical points of analysis when attempting to describe the fluid political realm.

Researchers using the ANT approach to examine educational policies do not necessarily adhere only to analyzing Callon’s (1984, 1999a) moments. In fact, according to Fenwick (2010), originators of the theory have critiqued research seeking to produce a set of concrete methods for analysis. To that end, ANT methodologists also examine the discourse, power relations, artifacts, roles, routines, regulations, technologies, concepts, identities, and forms of institutional knowledge found interwoven between and within networks (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010; Hamilton, 2001, 2014). They view these entities, mainly nonhuman actants, as symmetrical to human actants; that is, all forms are critical to the translation process. Therefore, current ANT research spans a wide range of topics and analytical forms.

Researchers have applied ANT across educational foci including issues related to higher education (Mitterle, Würmann, & Bloch, 2015; Mulcahy & Perillo, 2011), English Language Learners (Koyama & Menken, 2013), and teacher education (Ceulemans, Simons, & Struyf, 2012; McClam & Sevier, 2010). One common focus is the existence of educational standards and implementation in practice through an ANT perspective. In her review of the literature, Fenwick (2010) noted how researchers have positioned educational standards in a multitude of ways. Nesper (2002) argued the ways standardized tests act as an immutable mobile (Latour, 1987; Law, 2003), or a self-contained artifact that is both fixed and able to travel through various networks to mobilize a series of actors in its alignment. Other works have described the concept of curriculum and teaching standards as varied forms of ontology (Edwards, 2009; Mulcahy,

1999, 2011) and how the local practice of standards is both prescriptive and negotiating networks (Hamilton, 2009; Murdoch, 1998).

Researchers have also applied ANT to studies of literacy education policies. Educational researcher Mary Hamilton has published the majority of extant work in literacy policy and ANT. Her work focuses on the rise and mobilization of England's adult literacy policies and standards, curriculum, and practice. In documenting the "back room" moments of the policies, Hamilton (2001, 2011, 2012, 2014) has analyzed the translation process, including the dominant discourses found in policy documents, media messages, and curriculum that serve to mobilize a certain image of adult (il)literacy. Hamilton (2001) applied both ANT and New Literacy Studies to her analysis of the International Adult Literacy Survey in which she described how political and institutional discourses serve to influence dominant definitions and values of literacy across education. She followed up her results from that study in a 2014 article in which she traced the translation of representations of literacy and literate adults down to the local level.

A study of particular interest to me is Hamilton's 2011 work tracking the *Skills for Life* policy, an Adult Literacy education reform initiative, using ANT as an analytic lens. In her study, Hamilton identified three *obligatory passage points* (OPPs; Callon, 1986, 1999b) to illustrate the four moments—problematization, intressement, enrolment, and mobilization—that comprise the translation process (Law, 1994). According to Callon (1986), OPPs are episodes that force all actants to come together for a common purpose or topic, necessitating the creation or development of a network. The three featured OPPs were the International Adult Literacy Survey, the Get On campaign, and the Individual Learning Plan used by educators. To analyze each OPP, Hamilton consulted data from various texts including test booklets, test items, curriculum documents, technical and evaluation reports, academic articles, policy documents,

government-sponsored surveys, and the media (Hamilton, 2001, 2011). Grounded in poststructuralism and historical critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1996), analysis of the texts focused on their discourses, circulation across actants, purposes, utility, and role in the translation process (Hamilton, 2011; Hamilton & Pitt, 2011).

Hamilton (2011) presented her findings using both narrative stories and accompanying commentaries for each of the three OPPs, as is characteristic of ANT analysis (Moser & Law, 1999). Hamilton positioned the International Adult Literacy Survey, the first OPP, as contributing to the problematization moment of *Skills for Life*. The survey establishes an Adult Literacy crisis by citing low literacy levels among adults in the UK as compared to other countries (Hamilton, 2011). The survey, as Hamilton notes, also commodifies adult literacy skills, connecting low literacy levels to a strain on the overall economy. The Get On campaign, a mass media promotion advertising the *Skills for Life* program, embodies both intressement and, to some extent, enrolment. Through the use of metaphors, catch phrases, fictional characters, and merchandise, the Get On campaign created a new actant that embodies the discourse of the policy and creates an alliance with adults with literacy needs and the tutors who serve them (Hamilton, 2011). The campaign also encourages adults with basic skills needs to contact a call center and sign up for tutoring, thus promoting enrolment (though most of the potential adult learners escaped the policy). Finally, the program's Individual Learning Plans illustrate mobilization or "the consolidation of the network through active involvement of the target actors" (Hamilton, 2011, p. 67). Actants are firmly in place and fulfilling their intended roles through the use of core curriculum and objectives. The plans act as a stable mobile (Latour, 1987), fixing the intentions of the policy on the actors, implying full implementation.

Hamilton's 2011 study is an example of how researchers can apply actor-network theory, specifically Callon's (1986) four moments, to educational policies. Through analysis of various policy-related texts, Hamilton (2011) identified specific OPPs and described how each point illustrates one or more moments in the policy's translation to social order.

Besides Hamilton's research, there are other studies applying ANT approaches to literacy practices conducted in the United States (e.g., Leander & Lovvorn, 2006), though no studies focus on American literacy policies. Implications of Hamilton's work include the application of ANT to not only the literacy policy-making process, but also the role of academic research, media, and texts in creating a social discourse in order to "uncover the experience of practitioners and the dilemmas and decisions about advocacy in a field where the focus on 'literacy' can be framed in a variety of ways" (Hamilton, 2001, p. 193). In heeding her call, this study applies the tenets of actor-network theory to chronicle and describe the translation and discourse of North Carolina's most recent literacy education policy, Read to Achieve. As such, this research describes a state policy's translation process as well as informs the context for the teacher case study, a framework that is absent from the literature.

CHAT and ANT: Complementary Theories

Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) and actor-network theory (ANT), though differing perspectives, complement one another in viewpoint and application. Both are considered socio-material approaches to researching social innovations as each attempts to mediate what Miettinen (1999) defined as "the dualism between subject and object, nature and society" (p. 170). In this case, the dualism I propose to examine is literacy education policy and classroom teaching.

When comparing the two theories, Fenwick and colleagues (2011) identified several similarities between CHAT and ANT. First, both theories view networks as whole systems rather than stagnant pieces and explore both human and nonhuman action and influence in, within, and across systems. Second, both CHAT and ANT focus on the microinteractions between the human and nonhuman elements within a system. Moreover, both theories assert that human knowledge and learning are embedded within these material interactions of the networks. These notions are evidenced by the theories' heavy reliance on artifacts, such as language, texts, and technologies (Miettinen, 1999).

Despite the similar characteristics of CHAT and ANT, their differing philosophical backgrounds, namely that CHAT is dialectical in nature whereas ANT focuses on symmetry, provide slightly different, if not parallel, perspectives. CHAT privileges historical relations between material artifacts, divisions of labor, norms, rules, and perspectives that make up an activity system (Fenwick et al., 2011). Its value is on the back-and-forth interactions between all these elements and often includes the role of the individual actor's knowledge and beliefs. Counter to that, ANT focuses on the negotiations between all the human and nonhuman elements, particularly those promoting power struggles, coercion, opposition, and conciliation, rather than on how each element influences the next. ANT describes the undulating processes that force alignment or exclusion of social forces (Miettinen, 1999).

The aims of my study were to examine and describe (a) if and how an elementary teacher mediates her beliefs, knowledge, and environment with the overarching educational policies to deliver literacy instruction; (b) how human and nonhuman actants contribute to the development, implementation, and public narrative of a state literacy policy; and (c) how each network influences the other. In addressing the above questions, my study is grounded in several

assumptions. First, I assert that teachers hold content-specific beliefs based on their experiences, knowledge, and environments and that these belief structures influence their instruction (Barr & Duffy, 1978; Behrman & Souvignier, 2103; Harste & Burke, 1977; Maggioni et al., 2015). Second, as a function of their beliefs, I assume that teachers interpret and enact educational policies in unique ways depending on whether the policies conflict or challenge their values (Ball, 1993; Coburn, 2005; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). Third, I claim that policies are neither developed nor implemented in a vacuum. Rather, policies are active, living entities involving multiple stakeholders and actants that contribute to the public narrative around a particular issue (Ball, 1993; Hamilton, 2001, 2011; Taylor et al., 1997).

On the basis of these assumptions, I propose to ground my study in both CHAT and ANT to answer the following questions:

1. How do literacy policies, instruction, and a teacher's beliefs interact to inform literacy teaching and instruction?
 - a) How do state and local literacy policies define literacy and frame literacy instruction?
 - b) Does an elementary teacher negotiate his/her literacy instructional beliefs in conjunction with state and local literacy policies in practice, and if so, how?

Both CHAT and ANT suppose the existence of a sociocultural interaction between networks and actors that influences both internal and external events. To better understand the policy-to-practice phenomena, I conducted a revelatory single-case study of one third-grade teacher as the case. In designing this study, I have conceptualized the role of Read to Achieve and its social narrative as a contextual piece of the teacher's literacy instruction as an activity system. As such, I first developed a narrative plot of Read to Achieve, highlighting the four moments of its social translation (Callon, 1986) and the role of policy discourse in shaping messages about

literacy instruction. I then examined the teacher's literacy instruction as an activity system, focusing on reading education policy as a component of that system. Specifically, I use CHAT as a framework for examining the dialectical intersection between a teacher's literacy beliefs, classroom instruction, and response to policy. Finally, to illustrate how the two networks intertwine, I compare both narratives using activity systems analysis (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010), identifying four specific ways Ms. Lemon negotiated both internal and external system components.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the interplay between the social narrative constructed through the translation of literacy policies and a teacher's personal and instructional beliefs made manifest through classroom literacy instruction. As such, the following research questions guide my exploration:

1. How do literacy policies, instruction, and a teacher's beliefs interact to inform literacy teaching and instruction?
 - a) How do state and local literacy policies define literacy and frame literacy instruction?
 - b) Does an elementary teacher negotiate his/her literacy instructional beliefs in conjunction with state and local literacy policies in practice, and if so, how?

The above research questions contribute to the illumination of the "black box" (Black & Wiliam, 1998) of educational policy implementation and classroom practice.

Research Design

A qualitative research design best suited the in-depth nature of the research questions. Specifically, I conducted an in-depth case study of one elementary teacher's literacy instruction, focusing on to what extent her belief structures, classroom contexts, and surrounding policy messages influenced what and how she engaged in said instruction. Framing Read to Achieve as a contextual component of the teacher's literacy instruction, I examined policy messages as a mitigating factor in Ms. Lemon's instructional decision-making. Grounded in CHAT, Figure 2 illustrates how I have conceptualized Read to Achieve as part of the teacher's milieu (Neumann, 2016) encompassing the teacher's literacy instruction.

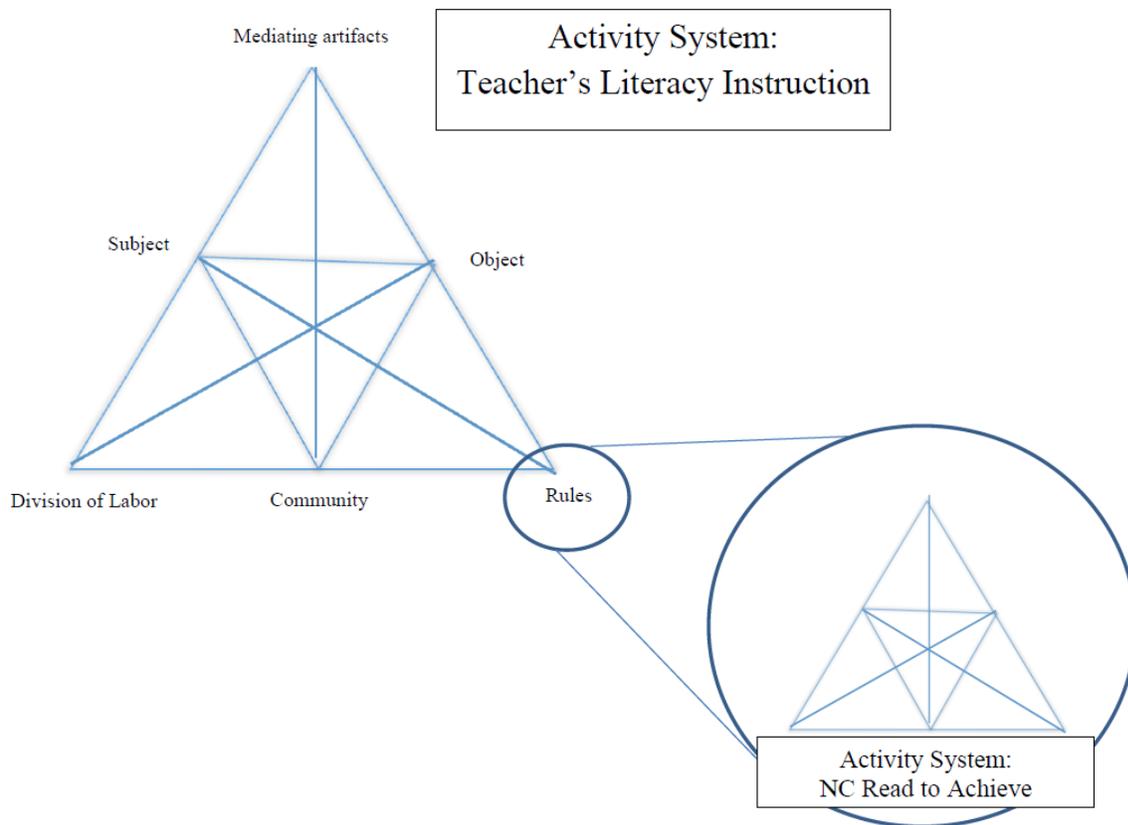


Figure 2. Depiction of teacher's literacy instruction as an activity system and Read to Achieve as a contextual component of the system.

Revelatory Case Study Design

This study uses a single-case study design to particularize the interaction between one teacher and the literacy policies surrounding the classroom as enacted through literacy instruction. The objective of a case study is not to form generalizations. Rather, its purpose is to elucidate the interplay between actors, actions, and contexts (Stake, 1996).

A descriptive case study approach is appropriate for contemplating the aims and challenges presented by the complex nature of the research questions. Specifically, I turned to what Yin (2012) characterized as a revelatory case study. The purpose of a revelatory case study, particularly one focusing on a single case, is to probe a real-world situation that social scientists

have had difficulty accessing in previous research (Yin, 2009). Acknowledging the dearth of research examining both policy-driven messages and the role of such messages in teachers' instructional negotiation, I focused on one third-grade teacher's literacy instruction around Read to Achieve, her instructional beliefs, and her classroom context.

There are several advantages to using a case study approach. First, the data and the context in which they were collected are intertwined, requiring collection of real-time observations of the phenomena. In this case, I intrinsically (Stake, 1995) explored one teacher's classroom instruction through repeated classroom observations, the collection of artifacts, and multiple interviews to capture the decision-making process as it occurred. In contrast, an experimental design examines phenomena in isolation across a preestablished set of variables. Further, an in-depth case study allows the researcher to delve deeper into the complexities of natural environments and processes (Zainal, 2007) where surveys or experimental research fail to do so. Examining data at the microlevel provides greater access to the factors underlying instruction, such as beliefs and decision-making.

Although I use a case study design to investigate the complex phenomena as one entity, I divided the study into two parts, closely examining both policy and practice. First, guided by actor-network theory, I chronicled the historical and political events, documents, and narratives contributing to the social translation of Read to Achieve through construction of its narrative plot (Berger, 1997; Søreide, 2007). The purpose of the first analysis was to identify how Read to Achieve framed and defined literacy, instruction, and learning and, as a result, whether mobilization of these messages influenced classroom instruction. Next, using cultural-historical activity theory as a framework, I used an intrinsic, descriptive case study design (Yin, 2009) to describe one third-grade teacher's beliefs about literacy, teaching, her students, and education

policies and how they inform her professional decision-making during literacy instruction. Finally, I examined each analysis for evidence of interactions between policy messages and teacher instruction and the surrounding factors driving instructional choices.

Study Context

Participants. Often characteristic of case study research is the selective and purposeful sampling of participants and settings to investigate phenomena as they occur (Yin, 2009). A case can take the form of an individual, program, organization, project, or community. Each case requires a variety of data collection strategies over a sustained period (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009). Although some studies prioritize site criteria, participant selection drives my study's design.

Read to Achieve focuses much of its reform efforts on third-grade teachers and students. Therefore, I selected a third-grade elementary school teacher as the focal case. Further, to investigate the teacher's perspective on the impact of Read to Achieve, my selection criteria required the focal teacher to have taught third grade prior to the enactment of the policy. Hence, the teacher had to have taught third grade for at least 4 years, preferably in the same school or district.

Suzie Lemon. The focal teacher for this case study was Suzie Lemon¹, a third-grade teacher at Midtown Elementary School. I first met Ms. Lemon while working as a teaching assistant for her undergraduate Literacy Methods course. We later met at an ongoing event sponsored by her alma mater geared toward supporting area new teachers with their problems of practice. After learning of her teaching experience and her level of awareness about Read to Achieve, I described my study to her. She was eager to participate and taught in a school system

¹ All identifying names of people and places are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of study participants.

where I was approved for conducting research. I selected Ms. Lemon based on our collegial relationship, her desire to participate in the study, and the diverse student population in her school.

Ms. Lemon is a young teacher in her mid-20s who identifies as a White upper-middle-class female from the Southeast region of the country. She attended a private K-12 school with a graduating class of 90 predominantly White students. Upon graduating she attended the Research I University located near Midtown, majoring in elementary education. Her first job brought her to a neighboring district, in a school located in a predominantly Black, working-class community where the majority of students and staff were also Black. After her first and only year there, she moved to Midtown Elementary School in the University Public School system where she was on staff when it first opened. She has been teaching there for the last 4 years. She leads the third-grade team, as the other two classroom teachers are new to third grade. Ms. Lemon has always taught third grade, even during her student teaching experiences. As Ms. Lemon's beliefs profile and my findings will reflect in Chapter 5, Ms. Lemon's experiences with reading, race, and teaching have shaped her beliefs about literacy, education, policy, and her students.

District and school setting. My selection of Ms. Lemon as the focal teacher for my study determined the school context in which it was conducted. Midtown Elementary School is the newest school in the University Public School System, a prominent but small district in the southeastern United States. University Public Schools is located in the same town as a Research I university and is within 10-15 miles of several other institutions of higher learning. The school system is home to 21 schools. As of the 2016-17 school year, 11 elementary schools served more than 5400 students. The district is known for its high levels of academic achievement (over 75% of its third graders scored Proficient or higher on the 2015-16 Reading EOGs compared to the

state average of 57.7%) and graduation rates (90.1%). However, NCDPI data also showed a disparity in achievement for students of color, students coming from low-income families, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities.

School setting. It is essential to describe the demographics and other contextual factors, such as school achievement, in order to better situate the findings of this study. A better understanding of policy-related factors such as these informs how policies are enacted, as well as teachers' professional motivations in instructional decision-making.

Midtown Elementary served 481 students at the time of this study. Of the total student population, White students made up almost half, with White females representing the largest percentage (22.45%) of the study body, followed by White males (21.83%). Black students comprised almost one quarter of the student body (22.87%), followed by Asian (14.55%) and Hispanic (13.72%) students. Notably, the number of males and females were almost equal across racial and ethnic groups. However, the number of Asian males was 1.5 times higher than Asian females (42 males and 28 females). Although the 2016-17 school year data were not available at the time of this dissertation, according to the 2015-16 data, the U.S. Department of Education designated Midtown Elementary a school-wide Title I school, as more than 40% of its students were considered low income. Table 3 displays the student body demographics based on the second 2016-17 Principal's Report (NCDPI, 2016).

Compared to other University elementary schools, Midtown serves the highest percentage of Black students, 22.87%, compared to the district's 10.98%. The school also has one of the highest percentages of students receiving free or reduced priced lunch, a proxy for socioeconomic status. Midtown's free and reduced lunch rate barely comes in second to one

other University school, a dual-language immersion school serving a student body comprised of over 50% Hispanic students and 38% White students.

Table 3

2016-17 Midtown Elementary Student Demographics by Race and Gender

Race	Female		Male		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
American Indian	1	0.21	1	0.21	2	0.42
Asian	28	5.82	42	8.73	70	14.55
Black	55	11.43	55	11.43	110	22.87
Hispanic	31	6.44	35	7.28	66	13.72
White	108	22.45	105	21.83	213	44.28
Two or More Races	11	2.29	8	1.66	19	3.95
Pacific Islander	0	0.00	1	0.21	1	0.21
Total	234	48.65	247	51.35	481	100.00

Note. Taken from NCDPI, 2016.

School grades, test scores, and Read to Achieve. Examining Midtown’s school and student achievement data is important to the context of the study, as data may have an impact on how the district and school leadership emphasize policies and high-stakes testing. As previously discussed, University Public Schools is heralded for its high academic achievement, particularly on standardized tests. However, results vary across elementary schools.

Part of the Excellent Public Schools Act (N.C. Legis., 2012) included the implementation of school performance grades and scores. The state calculates the school performance scores using an 80/20 model, where 80% of the scores is based on the average achievement score as indicated by standardized tests and 20% is based on student growth. The state then assigns a grade of A-F based on the achievement score. According to state lawmakers, school scores will help families compare schools’ performances to inform educational decisions. However, critics have argued school grades are often misrepresented and unfairly punish schools with high concentrations of students living in poverty (Wagner, 2015).

Midtown’s 2015-16 grade is a C in all three tested areas, with an EOG Reading score of 64 out of 100. Midtown’s was the lowest EOG Reading score out of all the University elementary schools. The school also did not meet their projected student growth. When broken down by subgroups, the majority of Midtown’s Asian and White third-grade students scored Proficient or above on the EOG Reading exam. However, only 43% of Black students and 23% of Hispanic students performed at or above grade level, while about a third of low-income students and English Language Learners scored Proficient. Additionally, 7.7% of third-grade students with disabilities attending Midtown passed the Reading EOG, about a third of the district and state percentages. Table 4 displays the 2015-16 EOG Reading exam results by school, district, and state.

Table 4

Results of the 2015-16 EOG Reading Exam Results by Proficiency and Demographic

<u>Exam</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>State</u>
Third Grade EOG: Levels 3-5	65.9%	76.1%	57.7%
Third Grade EOG: Level 1	25.6%	13%	22.1%
Third Grade EOG: Level 2	8.5%	10.9%	20.2%
Third Grade EOG: Levels 3-5, Asian	80.0%	79.9%	75.3%
Third Grade EOG: Levels 3-5, Black	42.9%	47.3%	41.3%
Third Grade EOG: Levels 3-5, Hispanic	23.1%	38.7%	42.9%
Third Grade EOG: Levels 3-5, Mixed	No Data	86%	60.7%
Third Grade EOG: Levels 3-5, White	94.1%	92.2%	71.3%
Third Grade EOG: Levels 3-5, Low SES	37.8%	39.8%	44.1%
Third Grade EOG: Levels 3-5, LEP	30.8%	35.1%	29.5%
Third Grade EOG: Levels 3-5, SWD	7.7%	28.7%	23%

Despite the low scores on the Reading EOG, according to the NC Report Card and the 2015-16 Read to Achieve results, Midtown was one of three schools with the highest third-grade promotion rate of greater than or equal to 95%² of third-grade students. The high passing rate

² According to NC DPI, issues with small sample sizes and anonymity means that any percentage greater than or equal to 95% appears as “95%”, and anything less than or equal to 5% shows as missing data. Therefore the percentage of students promoted from Midtown may be higher than 95%.

may be due to the high percentage of students qualifying for good-cause exemptions (15.5% passing local alternative assessments and 13.1% deemed students with disabilities). The other two schools with a 95% or above passing rate had fewer than 5% (if any) of the third-grade students meeting a good-cause exemption.

Race and school history. Race plays an integral role in both district and school policies and curricular foci. In 2015, a group of area families, students, and community activists, as well as anonymous school faculty and staff members, formed a group to examine racial disparities within the school system. The group presented an 87-page report to the school district illustrating the wide achievement gap among students of color, despite the district's overall stellar performance. University Public Schools has since put on staff a Director of Equity who developed a task force and developed a district-wide Equity Plan to address the academic discrepancies between White students and students of color.

Topics of race, social justice, and equity also permeate Midtown Elementary. The school opened in 2013; it is the neighborhood school within the town's historically middle- and working-class Black community. The land on which Midtown resides was first home to a historically-Black training school in the 1920s, then a segregated Black high school in 1948, and finally the town's only elementary school to serve Black children in 1951. In 1967, all the town's schools integrated, redistricting students and closing the elementary school.

Though the new Midtown building is modernized, with three floors of eco-friendly and sustainable building materials, the school faculty, staff, and student body remain aware of its roots. On the first floor are glass display cases of photographs, newspaper articles, and trophies from the schools that preceded it. Fifth-grade students of Midtown's opening school year authored a book connecting the lineage of the school to its present day. The current community

surrounding Midtown, historically comprised of African-American residents, has shifted to an increasing population of mostly White university students.

In addition to its history, Midtown explicitly integrates topics around race and identity into parts of the curriculum. For instance, the first social studies unit in Midtown's third-grade classrooms is Race. The unit guides students as they define *race* and *racism*, learn to identify institutional and systemic power differentials, and practice strategies to promote equity and advocate for social justice. As part of the school's commitment to reducing disciplinary actions that disproportionately affect students of color (Campaign for Racial Equity in Our Schools, 2015), teachers across grade levels engage in restorative circles as a form of conflict resolution. The practice stems from the concept of restorative justice and promotes reparation of harm, the involvement of stakeholders, and transforming community relationships through social responsibility (González, 2015; Macready, 2009).

Classroom setting. Midtown's third-grade team is comprised of three third-grade classes and one multiclass lead teacher who floats between classrooms to work with teachers and their students. The third-grade team is located on the top floor of the three-story school building.

Classroom description. Upon entering Ms. Lemon's classroom, there is a SmartBoard at the front of the room with a carpet for students to sit on. The class calls this area the Stadium, where students gather for minilessons and Team Time. Each student has an assigned place on the carpet and practices going to their spot throughout the first few weeks of school. Instead of desks, Ms. Lemon's classroom has seven tables where students sit and work together. All the students' materials, such as folders and notebooks, stay in their individual cubbies. In the back of the room is a sink and cabinets where Ms. Lemon keeps the classroom communal snacks for students who do not bring snack from home. All along the walls are anchor charts, some

describing routines and expectations. Others display content objectives and corresponding skills and strategies.

Along the window-lined wall is the classroom library. The books are organized in baskets, each basket containing a different genre of books. Categories include realistic fiction, fantasy, mystery, biographies, historical fiction, poetry, folk literature, and informational. On the top of the shelf are baskets of four other genres labeled “Graphic Novels”, “Growth Mindset”, “Power Reads”, and “Picture Books.” Displayed between the baskets are three picture books often featuring characters of color on their covers. On my first day in the classroom, the books displayed were *Soccer Star* by Mina Javaherbin (2014), *Fantastic Elastic Brain* by JoAnn Deak (2010), and *Say Something* by Peggy Moss (2004), all books featuring characters of color.

Outside of the classroom are bulletin boards displaying students’ work. At the beginning of the study, the board displayed students’ self-portraits, along with students’ descriptions of their skin colors, an activity drawn from the race unit. Students completed the project after reading *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz (2002), in which a young girl and her artist mother walk through their urban neighborhood and create paint names for various skin colors, such as peanut butter and honey. After reading the book, students used paint swatches from a hardware store to select their skin color and wrote a sentence about it. Their work was displayed throughout the majority of the study.

Class demographics. Ms. Lemon described her class as one of the most diverse she has ever taught. The class was comprised of 23 students, 13 boys and 10 girls. When I asked Ms. Lemon to share her students’ racial demographics, she categorized students as White, Black, or Brown. In the Brown student category, she included students from Asian and Hispanic descent. Four students qualified for Exceptional Children’s services, and no student was considered

Academically and Intellectually Gifted. Ms. Lemon remarked to me how different her students' abilities were compared to the other two third-grade classes. Table 5 displays the types of services students received, their racial make-up, and reading levels, according to Ms. Lemon and the beginning of the year mClass.

Table 5

Student Demographics, Including Services, Race, and Reading Level, by Frequency and Percentage

<u>Type of Service</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
Exceptional Children	4	17.4%
English as a Second Language	4	17.4%
Tier 3	1	4.4%
Academically & Intellectually Gifted	0	0.0%
<u>Race</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
Black	5	21.7%
Brown ^a	5	21.7%
White	13	56.6%
<u>Reading Level^b</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
E	2	8.7%
F	1	4.4%
G	1	4.4%
H	1	4.4%
I	1	4.4%
K	2	8.7%
L	4	17.4%
M ^c	1	4.4%
N	4	17.4%
O	1	4.4%
Q	1	4.4%

Note. Race is based on Ms. Lemon's categorization. ^a As per Ms. Lemon's definition, "Brown" includes both Asian and Latinx students. ^b Not every student had a beginning-of-the-year reading level at the start of the school year, and not every reading level was represented. ^c Level M is considered the beginning of the year benchmark for third grade.

Why Midtown? I acknowledge that when exploring issues of policy and instruction, conducting research in schools and districts of the highest need could yield powerful and intriguing results, particularly due to the curricular and accountability demands placed on them.

However, school districts that are deemed high performing are also under intense pressure to continue to achieve impressive academic results. Midtown is a low-performing school in a high-performing district. Both the school's historical population and its ties to today's student demographics make it an exciting setting for my study, as teachers and students confront the demands of social, cultural, political, and academic pressures.

Examining the Social Practice: Developing a Narrative Plot of Read to Achieve

The purpose of the policy analysis is to explore Read to Achieve as a new social object, ultimately defining the messages framing literacy, instruction, and learning. Continuing Hamilton's work (2001, 2011, 2012) in examining the development, discourse, and influence of policies on literacy learning, I analyzed policy data sources to create a map of Read to Achieve's social translation as a fluid and complex narrative. My analysis of the data sources also identified the human and nonhuman actants and their roles in building the activity network of the policy (Law, 1994).

Data Collection

The primary data sources for the policy analysis included specific texts integral to the creation and dissemination of Read to Achieve. Arguing their central role as active agents in understanding a culture's values and the social construction of knowledge, sociologist Dorothy Smith (1999) said of texts:

The text is a material object that brings into actual contexts of reading a standardized form of words or images that can be and may be read/seen/heard in many other settings by many others at the same or other times. (p. 7)

For this study, I define *text* as documents, policies, devices, and articles developed around the Read to Achieve policy. As such, I identified the following texts as those critical to tracing the development, passage, and enactment of Read to Achieve:

- Policy Documents
 - *Excellent Public Schools Act: North Carolina Read to Achieve* (N.C. Legis., 2012)
 - *Read to Achieve Local Alternative Assessments* (NC State Board of Education, 2015)
- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
 - *North Carolina Read to Achieve: Comprehensive Reading Plan K-12* (NCDPI, 2013a)
 - *North Carolina Read to Achieve: A Guide to Implementing House Bill 950/S. L. 2012-142* (NCDPI, 2015b)
 - *North Carolina Read to Achieve: What Every Parent of a Third Grader Needs to Know* (NCDPI, 2013b)
- Assessments and Curriculum
 - Amplify mClass Reading 3D marketing materials
 - DIBELS implementation guide
 - Sample mClass writing prompts
- Media
 - Newspaper articles, editorials, and letters to the editor printed in the *News & Observer* from 2011-2016 ($n = 29$)

Actor-network theory implies that “the power of a network lies in its size and the number and status of actors enrolled in it” (Hamilton, 2001, p. 184). Institutions such as think tanks, research organizations, and local and state agencies contribute to the validation, mobilization, and dissemination processes of social acts such as policies. The greater the status an acting

institution has, the wider the scope and scale of the initiative. The major institutions contributing to the above texts include the NC State Legislature, the State Board of Education, the NCDPI, and local school systems.

The above collection of texts not only represents the various institutions involved in Read to Achieve, but are intended for multiple stakeholders, or actors, who are impacted by the policy. Actors include teachers, parents, policymakers, students, and community members. The two policy documents are the enacted bills, one embedded in the Excellent Schools Act and the other a separate document pertaining only to Read to Achieve and assessments. Documents from NCDPI illustrate how the department acts as a technician, translating policy into practice. NCDPI texts act as a window into how the policy is interpreted by different institutions for different audiences as a result of the process of social translation.

I chose examples of assessments such as Amplify's mClass Reading 3D and curriculum as they are considered cultural artifacts that travel through organizations and connect to actors, or what Latour calls "stable mobiles" (1987, p. 227). Finally, actor-network theory views the media as a powerful network actant responsible for contributing to the public narrative of a social project (Hamilton, 2001, 2011; Søreide, 2007). As such, I have selected a sample of articles from *The News & Observer*, the most circulated newspaper in the area where the study takes place (AgilityPRSolutions, 2016). The sample of 29 articles consists of news, op-ed pieces, and letters to the editor that include the key phrase "North Carolina Read to Achieve" that were printed between 2011 (the creation of the bill) and March 2016.

Data Analysis

To determine how Read to Achieve defines literacy and literacy education I analyzed the policy as a social process in two ways: (a) analyzing the policy discourse shaping literacy and (b)

tracing the timeline of translation. The analysis culminated in a narrative plot detailing how actants and OPPs (Callon, 1999b) used policy discourse throughout the phases of translation to create the messages transmitted through instruction.

Policy discourse analysis. I argue that the discourse embedded in the Read to Achieve documents included in my data move in such a way as to construct policy narratives about reading, teaching, and students (Gerstl-Pepin & Woodside-Jiron, 2005; Roe, 1994; Søreide, 2007). Søreide (2007), citing Somers and Gibson (1994) and Holstein and Gubrium (2000), defined a narrative plot as the ways in which the media, politicians, documents, and policies shape and explain how individuals see the world, their immediate context, and themselves. This type of analysis views the social construction of ideals, identities, and ideologies using a poststructuralist lens to create a narrative plot, or a collection of varied resources documenting contextually-situated and interconnected events and actions (Berger, 1997; Søreide, 2007). Narrative resources include subject positions, or how a text presents a narrow view of the world (Davies & Harré, 2001), and constructions of identities and processes (Søreide, 2007). In her study of how policy documents serve to construct teachers' identities, Søreide (2007) suggested engaging in multiple readings of each text, each reading taking on a different analytical objective. For this analysis, I conducted three separate readings of each of the textual data to identify how the policy discourse shaped the public narrative around (a) reading, (b) literacy instruction, and (c) students and learning.

Prior to analysis, I uploaded each of the documents for coding using Atlas.ti Version 8 as my qualitative analysis software. The first reading, beginning with the North Carolina (NC) Legislative documents, focused on how policy discourse framed reading, especially language, texts, and purpose. Using line-by-line coding (Glaser, 1978), I applied an inductive approach to

coding, or application of codes that emerged through analysis of the data (Creswell, 2009). Emergent codes included definitions of accountability, evidence, and reading practices. Throughout this first phase, I also coded for evidence of major actants and actors, both human and nonhuman. Actants included people, institutions, documents, or assessments driving the social translation of Read to Achieve, such as NCDPI, Amplify's mClass Reading 3D, the End-of-Grade tests, and the Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan. Throughout this and subsequent coding phases, I developed analytic memos to capture my reflections and understanding as new patterns and salient themes emerged.

After completing the first round of coding, I reanalyzed each document for evidence of discourse framing literacy instruction. Such discourse included who should be teaching literacy, what methods teachers should use, and what content should be covered. After the second round, I employed the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to begin combining and collapsing categories of codes for interpretation and thick description of behavior and social processes (Charmaz, 2008). Finally, the third round of coding focused on how the data shaped perceptions of students and measurements of learning through specific discourse. Again, I used the constant comparative method to modify the categories and craft Read to Achieve's narrative around literacy and instruction. I then used the codes to inform the second goal of analysis, identifying the OPPs critical in driving Read to Achieve through the four phases of social translation (Callon, 1999b).

Obligatory passage points and the timelines of social translation. Once I analyzed and identified how the discourse around Read to Achieve shaped the literacy narrative, I reexamined the actant codes to identify which actors and actants acted as major drivers of social translation. Then, using the code co-occurrence analysis tool, I established patterns and relationships

between the actors, examining them for evidence of OPPs. Recall that Callon (1986, 1999) defined OPPs as moments or events during translation in which all network components converge, forcing a network and embodying at least one of the four moments—problematization, intressement, enrolment, and mobilization. In identifying the OPPs I considered which of the actants appeared across the data, affected policy development or enactment, or were preemptive of future actions or policies. For instance, I selected the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as an assessment actant and contributor to the problematization moment because its results were quoted and referred to by politicians prior to and coinciding with the enactment of the Read to Achieve. Due to its saliency across media accounts and the policy’s direct focus on third grade, NAEP is an obligatory passage point contributing to the problematization phase. Once I identified the prominent OPPs and the actors involved, I mapped the timeline of Read to Achieve, its corresponding OPPs, and its social narrative.

Examining the Instructional Practices: Teacher Case Study

The purpose of the teacher case study was to examine how one teacher negotiated her literacy instructional beliefs, classroom instruction, and perceptions of local and state literacy policies when making professional decisions about her teaching.

Data Collection

The data for the teacher case study includes (a) the Language Arts Activity Grid (Cunningham, Zibulsky, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2009), (b) interviews and focus group, and (c) classroom observations. I describe each measure in depth in the following section. Table 6 explains the data collection procedure, instruments, and a timeline.

Table 6

Data Collection Procedures and Instruments

	Procedure	Instruments/Purpose
Beginning: August-early October 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Arts Activity Grid (Cunningham, Zibulsky, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2009; see Appendices A and B) • Initial formal interviews (see Appendices C, D, E) • Semiweekly observations of participating teacher's classroom literacy instruction spanning August-December (see Appendix F) • Collection of documents and teaching artifacts • Weekly Check-Ins ($n \approx 8$) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed before first interview • Formal semistructured interviews with teacher, principal, and school literacy coach • The Language Arts Activity Grid as a reference during teacher's interview • Observation protocol to observe the teacher's real-time literacy instruction and interaction 2-3 times a week • Two grade-level meetings or professional learning community meetings • Contact summary forms (see Appendix G).
Mid-Study: October- Early December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Focus Group (Appendix H) • Semiweekly classroom observations and collection of materials • Weekly Check-Ins ($n \approx 2$) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above. The additional time will provide sufficient data for saturation.
Final December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final interview comparing initial and midstudy interviews, observations, and Grid

Language Arts Activity Grid. Before the initial interview, Ms. Lemon completed the Language Arts Activity Grid (LAAG; see Appendix A for the protocol). Developed by Cunningham and colleagues (2009), the grid asks teachers to describe the activities they would incorporate into a 2-hour literacy block free of any limitations to determine their instructional beliefs, such as scripted curriculum or mandated assessments. Funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation, researchers created the grid to measure teachers' intrinsic beliefs about literacy education that extend beyond what traditional Likert-scale instruments (e.g.,

DeFord's Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile, 1978) assess (Cunningham et al., 2009).

The open-ended nature of the instrument is intended to limit skewed responses from teachers as a result of social desirability often present in multiple-choice items.

Cunningham and colleagues (2009), noting that self-reported measures can produce sensitive and descriptive results (Bahrlick, Bahrlick, & Wittlinger, 1975; Singh, Rothschild, & Churchill, 1988), administered the grid to 121 first-grade teachers from 37 elementary schools in a large, urban school district in the western United States. Two raters selected roughly half of the completed grids for initial coding using data-driven strategies rather than a priori codes. From more than 500 responses in the sample, the raters developed categories of instructional activities driven by the literature (interrater agreement = .89). They then presented the codes to a panel of five reading research experts for validation, settling on 13 categories plus an "Other" group:

- Teacher-managed Reading
- Independent Reading
- Oral Language
- Reading Comprehension
- Literature
- Letters/Sounds/Concepts of Print
- Assessment
- Writing
- Phonics
- Grammar and Spelling
- Phonemic Awareness
- Sight Words
- Vocabulary
- Other

Although the raters iteratively coded the teacher responses, many of the categories naturally fell within two theoretical orientations—skills-based activities or literature-based methods—similar to those measured by the TORP (Cunningham et al., 2009; DeFord, 1978). The results of the grid were used to compare teachers' self-reported fundamental literacy to their content knowledge, years of experience, and instructional practices.

Other studies have also used the LAAG to assess teachers' inherent literacy instructional beliefs. A study similar to Cunningham and colleagues' (2009) compared 102 K-5 general and special education teachers' self-reported grids to their literacy knowledge (Spear-Swerling & Zibulsky, 2014). They found teacher instructional knowledge influenced how they allocated their time on the grids. Spear-Swerling, Lopes, Oliveira, and Zibulsky (2015) applied the instrument to their study comparing how Portuguese and American teachers plan their literacy instruction. The study found that, although both groups of teachers addressed reading comprehension and fluency in their ideal literacy blocks, Portuguese teachers ($n = 186$) were less likely to implement teacher-directed activities and phonics-related instruction and more liable to allocate time for writing processes compared to American teachers ($n = 102$). Researchers also noted a large amount of variability across all teachers' and educators' omission of evidence-based literacy activities.

I selected the LAAG for my study for several reasons. First, the open-ended format of the task allowed Ms. Lemon to choose freely any activities she deemed valuable to her classroom context without political or curricular constraints. Second, the nature of the instrument did not force Ms. Lemon to choose activities from preselected categories, as do other instruments, such as the TORP (DeFord, 1978). Third, the coding is based on theoretically-driven assumptions, namely that teachers align themselves with theoretical perspectives and orientations about literacy instruction (Barr & Duffy, 1978) and that their beliefs influence and are influenced by their content knowledge and classroom contexts. Finally, Ms. Lemon was able to complete the instrument on her own prior to the interview, giving me an opportunity to review it with her during the interview.

Despite these qualities, there are limitations to the LAAG. Though the researchers established high interrater reliability and received expert approval of the codes (Cunningham et al., 2009), the instrument itself has not been validated for predictability of teachers' instruction (Kiely, 2011). Researchers of all three studies noted small sample sizes and a lack of observations comparing the grid to teachers' instruction. For my study, however, my aim was not to validate the tool but rather to gain a rich understanding of my teacher participant's belief structure and instructional decisions in conjunction with the surrounding educational policies and contexts.

Interviews. As is often employed in case study research, I conducted two semistructured interviews to ascertain how Ms. Lemon's beliefs have shaped her experiences and knowledge. The purpose of the interviews was to determine (a) what Ms. Lemon's instructional beliefs were around literacy, (b) to what extent she felt she could enact her instructional beliefs under current curricular and political mandates, (c) how she perceived literacy education policies, and (d) what factors influenced her instructional practices. The initial interview took place prior to the start of my classroom observations. The final interview occurred 3 weeks before the study ended. Though I had planned for three interviews with one at the midpoint, scheduling challenges limited my ability to do so. However, I was able to informally debrief with Ms. Lemon about her beliefs and perceptions toward the beginning of analysis.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the school's political and curricular climate, I also interviewed Ms. Lemon's principal, Mrs. Carmichael, and her school literacy coach, Maggie Slater. These interviews provided greater clarification and understanding of the political and curricular expectations surrounding Midtown teachers' literacy instruction. In addition to the interviews, I conducted one focus group comprised of Ms. Lemon and her three third-grade

colleagues. The purpose of the focus group was to gather more information about the context in which the teachers engage in literacy instruction. All interviews and the focus group were audio recorded and transcribed for accuracy.

Classroom observations. I conducted two to three classroom observations a week to examine the real-time instructional decisions Ms. Lemon made during her literacy teaching. In total, I conducted more than 41 hours of observations, including observations of classroom instruction, PLC meetings, and professional development sessions. I observed a total of 35 hours of classroom literacy instruction, using the formal observation protocol for over 31 hours. On average, observations of literacy instruction lasted about 98 minutes, with a minimum of 40 minutes and a maximum of 128 minutes.

To provide consistency across data points and measures, I included the expanded LAAG (Cunningham et al., 2009) within the observation protocol, thus triangulating Ms. Lemon's interviews with her actual instruction. Further, the protocol served as a comparison between Ms. Lemon's ideal literacy instruction and what happened during actual instruction. Observation foci included (a) lesson objectives, (b) literacy instructional methods, (c) teacher and student interactions, (d) resources, (e) evidence of policy discourse, and (f) lesson content as they align with (or differ from) their initial Literacy Arts Activity Grid, as well as any supplementary notes. Appendix F contains the observation protocol. After each observation, I completed a contact summary form reflecting on notable occurrences and emergent themes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; see Appendix G).

Other observations included 2 third-grade team planning meetings and a professional development session for literacy integration in the content areas. In addition to these data, I also

collected lesson materials, such as worksheets, newsletters, and emails deemed by Ms. Lemon to be relevant to the study.

Data Analysis

The overall aim of the analysis was to illustrate how Ms. Lemon's beliefs, environment, and surrounding policies influenced her literacy instruction.

Beliefs profile. The first phase of analysis was to create a beliefs profile for Ms. Lemon. The profile served as the foundation for determining to what extent Ms. Lemon's literacy instruction was aligned to those beliefs or whether there were other influential factors. To develop the profile, I analyzed Ms. Lemon's initial interview and her LAAG. I first applied line-by-line coding (Glaser, 1978) of the interview using a set of a priori codes developed from the LAAG, the literature, and my research questions (Creswell, 2009). Then, guided by the teacher beliefs literature described in Chapter 2, I developed codes categorizing Ms. Lemon's beliefs about herself, her teaching, literacy instruction, students, and policy. Finally, I employed an iterative strategy of qualitative analysis, including the inclusion of in vivo codes, to determine the themes and patterns related to Ms. Lemon's belief structure (Charmaz, 2008).

The remaining analysis focused on three categories: (a) Ms. Lemon's beliefs, (b) the presence of policy, and (c) Ms. Lemon's literacy instruction. Similar to Fisher's (2012) results, each area represents different portions of the teacher system. Teacher's beliefs represent the system as it pertains to the individual's perspective, policy the societal conditions of the system, and instruction the school context. Figure 3 displays the conceptual framework for the analysis

similar to CHAT's depiction of an activity system (see Barrett-Tatum, 2015, for an example).

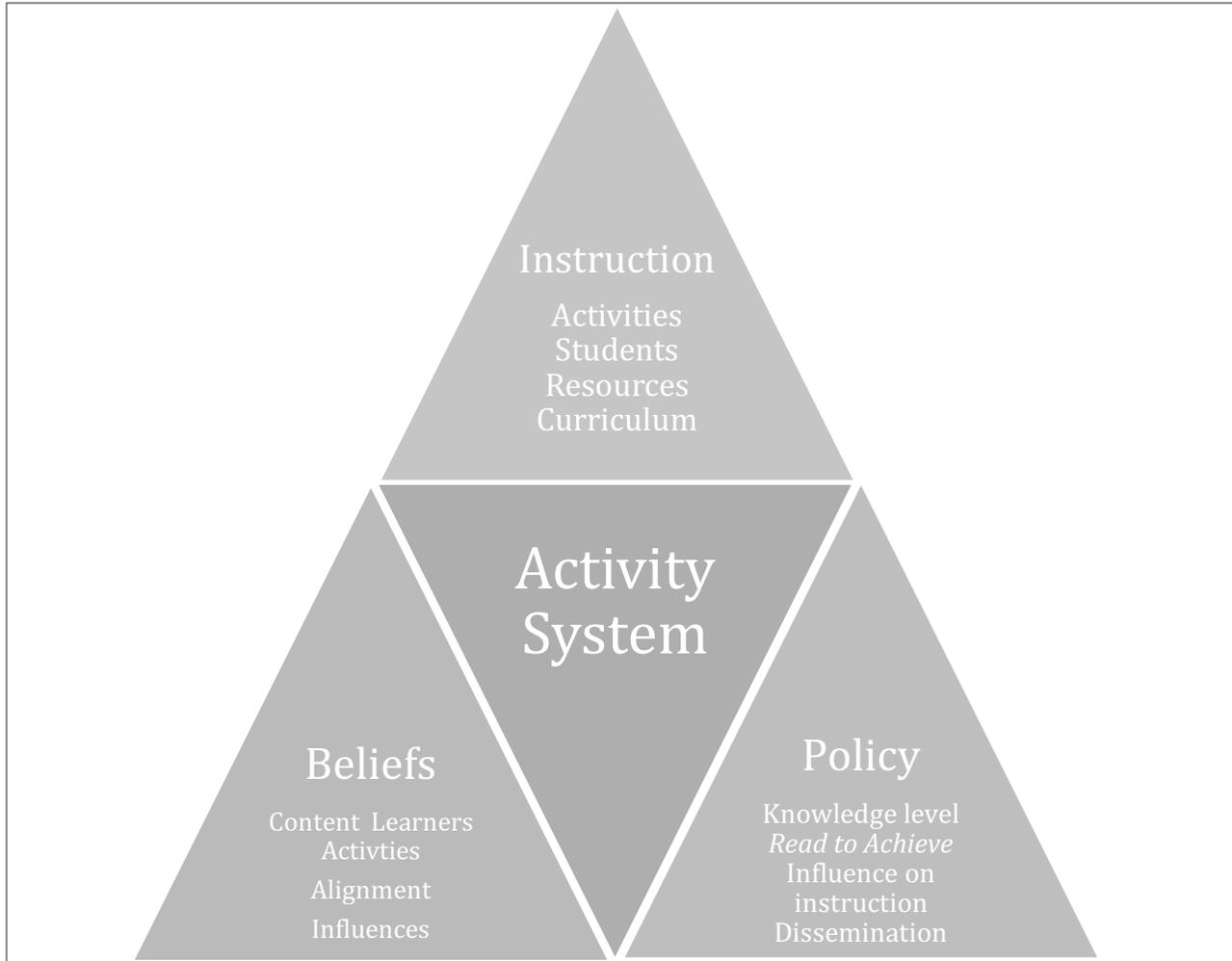


Figure 3. Teacher analysis framework.

Interview and focus-group coding process. Using a constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I again used a combined deductive and inductive coding approach. First, using the LAAG codes and codes from the literature, I analyzed the remaining interviews and focus groups. I then used an open-coding, inductive coding strategy to identify any other salient themes that may have been present across the interviews that were not captured by the a priori codes. As part of the initial rounds of coding, I used multiple codes for each quotation,

where applicable, to ensure a robust analysis. The first round of coding resulted in exactly 50 codes across the six transcripts.

I then applied inductive coding in three stages: (a) compared instances into categories, (b) merged and eliminated categories based on their properties, and (c) delimited a theory with the aim of saturation. Following the initial coding process, I revised and refined the codes into focus codes that led to the creation of conceptual categories (Charmaz, 1991, 2008). Once coded, I used the co-occurrence tool to begin looking at relationships between the codes. The table provided a visual organizer to help determine which codes I most often used together, providing insight into developing themes and patterns across different codes. Finally, I plotted the themes, corresponding codes, and illustrative quotes using an analysis matrix to organize the data for deeper analysis (Miles et al., 2014).

Observation analysis. To analyze my observations, I first uploaded the completed protocols and any handwritten notes into Atlas.ti. I then coded all the activities in the protocol using the LAAG established codes. Once coded, I enlisted Dr. Charna D'Ardenne, an education researcher, early literacy expert, and former elementary teacher, to ensure reliability in the coding. Dr. D'Ardenne coded half of the observations. Overall, both Dr. D'Ardenne and I were in agreement, however, any dissonance between codes was discussed and resolved in the data. We also recognized that the LAAG Teacher-Managed category did not allow for more nuanced analysis of activities, such as read-alouds and minilessons. Therefore, we broke that category down further to ameliorate these findings, as I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Once all the observations were coded, I calculated the percentage of time Ms. Lemon and her class spent on each activity and compared the findings to her ideal literacy instruction, as indicated on her initial LAAG. Further, I coded the observations for evidence of policy discourse

and influence from outside factors, such as teacher resources, PLCs, and student reactions. Once codes were refined via the constant comparative method, the results were added to the matrix for comparison between the belief profile and the interview analyses to detect moments in Ms. Lemon's teaching in which she negotiated the various factors surrounding her instruction. The analysis led to the identification of four distinct types of mediation and examples of each in preparation for an activity systems analysis.

Activity systems analysis. Finally, guided by the matrix, I used activity systems analysis (Engeström 1987; Kaptelinin 2005; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) to illustrate the complex mediations through which Ms. Lemon made professional decisions about literacy instruction. This analysis method "is designed to enhance understanding of human activity in a collective context" (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 1). Activity systems analysis allows researchers to display multifaceted data sets into a graphic model for organization, interpretation, and presentation. This approach requires the researcher to identify isolated activities and plot the contextual factors influencing an activity system, such as rules, roles, and mediating artifacts, as described in Chapter 2.

Based on the analyses matrix, I plotted the existing influential factors associated with each mediation type. Identification of the factors came from the interviews, observations, and classroom artifacts and documents, as well as the debriefs with Ms. Lemon and my contact summary forms. Once I formed all the systems, I identified which factors were most influential, suppressing other factors within the system.

Researcher Positionality

It is important to acknowledge the biases and lenses through which all social science research is conducted and interpreted. As Stake (1996) stated, "[Qualitative research] champions

the interaction of researcher and phenomena" (p. 95). Although the primary objective is to describe a phenomenon, the description is influenced by a researcher's values, experiences, perceptions, and motives. As such, although my role as a researcher is that of a nonparticipant observer, it is important to disclose my positionality and situate my perspectives around the context of the study.

I am a doctoral student of education at a Research I university and a former elementary school teacher. One major reason for leaving the classroom was my displeasure with the curriculum and testing movement as mandated by both state and local policies. My frustration was mainly felt around literacy instruction. The strict pacing guides and endless benchmark assessments made it so I could not implement what I believed to be quality literacy instruction. To me, quality literacy instruction was (and still is) student-centered, literature-rich, collaborative, balanced, responsive, and a shared, social experience for both teachers and learners. Though I attempted to navigate around the scripted curricula and skip the benchmarks, I felt defeated and chose instead to instill change at the higher education level.

As a doctoral student, I have largely maintained the same beliefs about literacy instruction with the addition of critical and multimodal literacies in everyday instruction. In addition to my academic experiences, I have been engaged in educational policy program evaluation for the last 4 years. My work has given me a window into the black box (Dyer, 1999) of educational policy, something that Hamilton (2001, 2011, 2014) has striven to illuminate in her work. As a teacher, I was not privy to what happens during the political process, nor was I interested in finding out. I realize now the importance of engaging teachers in the policy-making process as they are ultimately the ones to enact them, impacting students and learning.

Finally, though I am not necessarily invoking a critical lens for my study, cultural-historical activity theory and actor-network theory do touch on issues of power in and across networks. Similarly, examining the discourse embedded in a policy's narrative also describes positioning and power. Therefore, it is necessary for me to disclose other features of my identity. As a White woman who originally hails from a state in the northeast with a strong educators' union, my views about literacy, students, and policy influence my interpretation of the data. Prior to moving to North Carolina, I had the privilege of people representing my best interests in education and politics as my demographic features are representative of the majority of the US teaching force. However, this is not the case for many teachers, students, and families, particularly in North Carolina. Therefore, my interpretation of the data is influenced by my experiences as a White woman, teacher, student, researcher, activist, and mother. The above experiences are the impetus for this study.

Conclusion

The public education system is under intense scrutiny as the age of accountability continues to prevail. Policies aiming to standardize instruction and learning, particularly in literacy education, remain at the forefront of education reform. Teachers are bombarded with numerous, sometimes conflicting mandates trickling down the various policy cascades above them (Papola-Ellis, 2014). Despite their involvement in implementing the policies, teachers often do not have access to the inner-workings of policy creation (Song & Young, 2008). According to Song and Young (2008), the staggeringly complex policymaking and lobbying processes require a deep knowledge of the actors and information used to develop such reform efforts. Once a new initiative reaches the classroom, however, teachers must negotiate not only the policy requirements but also their beliefs about what works best in literacy instruction for themselves

and their students. It is at this juncture that policies either thrive or fail (Coburn, 2001; Cohen, 1988; Spillane & Jennings, 1997).

My study unpacks not only the black box (Dyer, 1999) of educational policy development, including its role in influencing public narratives about literacy education and teacher practice, but also illuminates the black box of teaching and learning amidst policy mandates (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In Chapter 4, I discuss how policy narratives shape our perceptions of literacy, instruction, teachers, and students. Then, in Chapter 5, I describe Ms. Lemon's policy landscape, beliefs profile, and instructional practices. Finally, in Chapter 6, I argue that Ms. Lemon does indeed negotiate a myriad of factors when making instructional decisions around policy narratives that are affecting teachers' instruction.

CHAPTER 4: THE SOCIAL TRANSLATION OF READ TO ACHIEVE

The purpose of policy is to bring about social change. Actants of a policy network work together to create an objective or agenda meant to uphold their ideologies and values (Prunty, 1985). As I discussed in Chapter 2, actor-network theory argues that to impose a new social order or innovation, implementation of a policy is marked by four phases, or moments, of social translation (Callon, 1999b). Each moment is defined by “a fulcrum of forces around which events turn” (Hamilton, 2011, p. 11). First, *problematization* frames an issue or challenge to be addressed by a collection of previously dissociated actants, now considered indispensable to the hypothetical network. Second, *intressement* creates an infrastructure of action and resources, strengthening roles and alliances between actants and weakening relationships with competing networks. Third, the innovation enters *enrolment* during which the network develops and assigns devices through which actants will fulfil their intended roles. Finally, marking full implementation, the policy enters *mobilization* and has established a new and unchallenged social order.

One aim of this study is to determine how policy frames and defines literacy and its instruction. In this chapter, I explore the translation of North Carolina’s Read to Achieve initiative as a social innovation, tracing its progression through the four moments of social translation. In so doing, I analyze the political discourse found throughout the network and, specifically, in what I have identified as OPPs (Callon, 1986, 1999b). I argue along with Fairclough (1995) who asserted, “The power of political discourse depends upon its capacity to constitute and mobilize those social forces that are capable of carrying into reality its promises of

a new reality, in its very formulation of this new reality” (p. 182). Throughout this chapter, using data from legislative and educational documents and media accounts and guided by actor-network theory, I argue that the identification and alignment of actants and the resulting textual and verbal discourse around the translation of Read to Achieve establishes a new reality around literacy, instruction, and students.

A Summary of North Carolina’s Read to Achieve

The North Carolina Read to Achieve legislation is part of a suite of reforms collectively known as the 2012 Excellent Public Schools Act (N.C. Legis., 2012), a comprehensive initiative within House Bill 950. The legislation implemented school performance grades, extended the school year, increased accountability measures for community colleges, and established a state teacher corps. Though the bill included several ambitious reforms, Read to Achieve was the most comprehensive, requiring major shifts in funding, personnel, and resources. (See Appendix I for the full bill.)

The primary goal of Read to Achieve, as stated in the bill, is:

to ensure that every student read at or above grade level by the end of third grade and continue to progress in reading proficiency so that he or she can read, comprehend, integrate, and apply complex texts needed for secondary education and career success. (N.C. Legis, 2012, § 115C-83.1, p. 38)

To accomplish its objective, the policy carves out four components—(a) assess children’s school readiness upon kindergarten enrollment; (b) maintain continuous communication with families about their students’ progress; (c) monitor students’ reading progress through formative assessment systems; and (d) end social promotion of third graders. To summarize, teachers routinely assess children’s reading, beginning in Kindergarten through the third grade, whereupon their success is determined by satisfactory scores on the End-of-Grade (EOG) standardized test. Most relevant to this study are the last two components.

If per the tests, third-grade students are not deemed proficient readers, they are retained and invited to attend a reading-intensive summer session. Each school district is fiscally responsible for hosting the summer camps, providing staff, materials, and transportation. If students score proficiently upon completion of the summer camp through an alternative assessment, they can move on to fourth grade. If they fail once more, they are assigned to a transitional third/fourth-grade class, where they receive intensive literacy instruction and are retested for full promotion midyear. Students may qualify for exemptions to retention, including language barriers, EC-limitations, or having been retained in an earlier grade. School and district leaders report retention and promotion statistics to the NCDPI, who then reports to the State Board of Education and the NC General Administration. Finally, the state releases each school's Read to Achieve results to the public on the state report card website, along with the schools' EOG scores and performance grades. The flow map in Figure 4 illustrates students' pathways to promotion or retention.

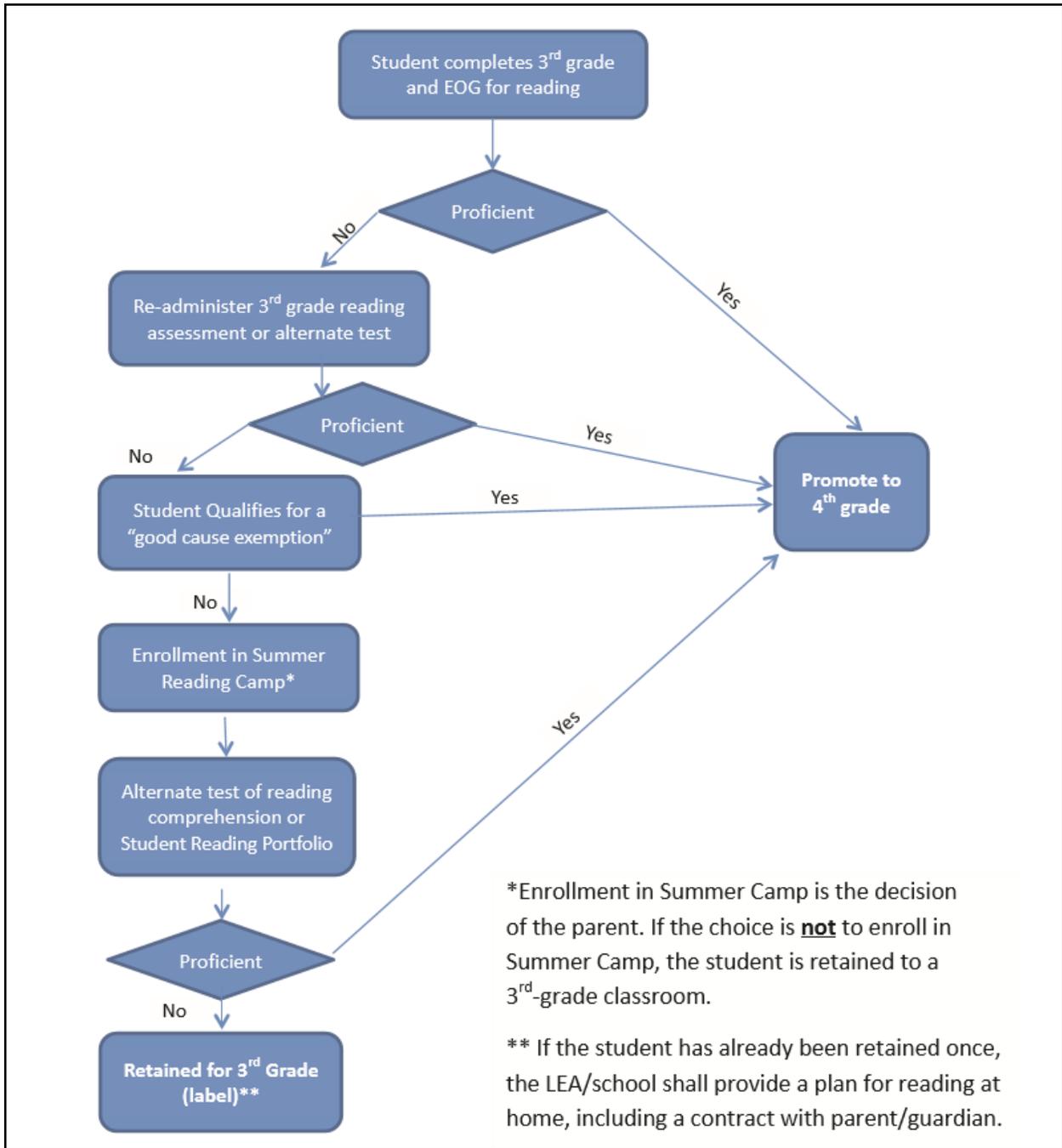


Figure 4. Flow map of North Carolina General Assembly's Read to Achieve program³.

³ Image taken from NCDPI. (2013). *North Carolina Read to Achieve: A guide to implementing House Bill 950/S.L. 2012-142 Section 7A*. Retrieved from <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/k-3literacy/resources/guidebook.pdf>

The passage of Read to Achieve required statewide implementation the following school year. The NC General Assembly assigned the State Board of Education and NCDPI as the technicians responsible for enacting the policy into practice. As such, the law required NCDPI to develop a K-12 Comprehensive Literacy Plan delegating the roles and responsibilities for itself and state school personnel, including district leaders, principals, and teachers. The policy also ordered all district representatives, school literacy coaches, and K-3 teachers to receive training on how to administer the state-selected progress monitoring tool, Amplify's mClass Reading 3D, and assemble student portfolios.

The passage and enactment of Read to Achieve marked a significant shift in the state's involvement in defining literacy and monitoring teachers' literacy instruction. Prior to Read to Achieve, the state government's only directives around the teaching of reading required educators follow the Common Core State Standards and administer state standardized tests. Through Read to Achieve, the authors of the bill crafted a powerful tool shaping how literacy, instruction, and learning are positioned and measured. This framing did not occur in isolation. Rather, primary actants created a problem, identified and aligned other network actants, and assigned their roles through development of devices and materials. What follows is an analysis of the social translation of Read to Achieve, from its conception to its enactment, revealing the major network actants and how they collide to define literacy, instruction, and students. Inspired by Hamilton (2011), I describe several OPPs (Callon, 1999b; OPPs) that exemplify the first three phases of Read to Achieve's translation (problematization, intressement, and enrolment) into a social construct. Figure 5 shows a timeline of these actants involved throughout the social translation process. Within each section, I describe how the history, events, content, and

discourse associated with them moved to conceptualize the types of literacy practices that matter and whom they benefit and whom they disenfranchise.

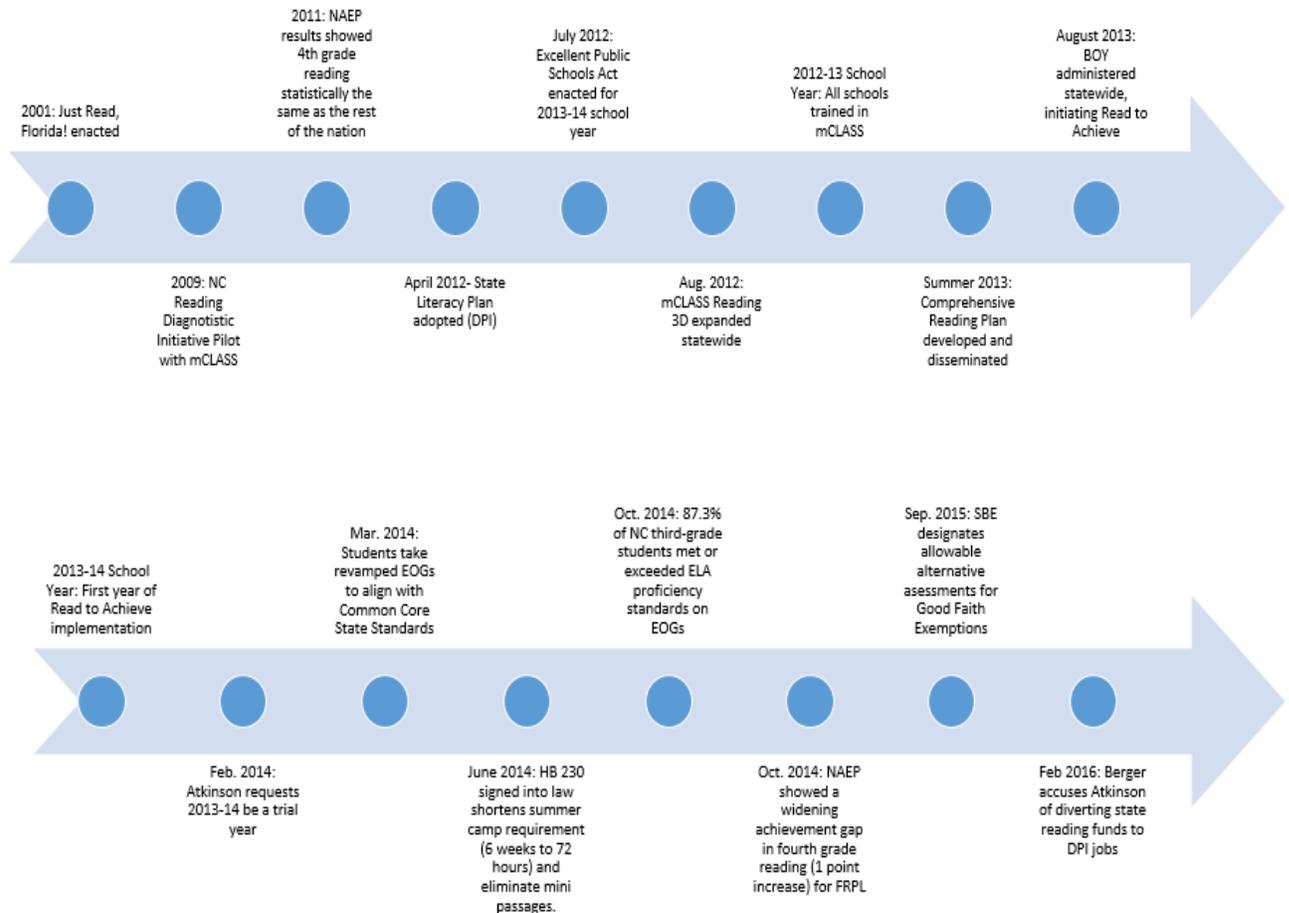


Figure 5. Timeline of the social translation of Read to Achieve.

Problematization

“The biggest issue is, all these numbers show the sad reality that our school systems have not been teaching children how to read.”

- Vice Chairman of the NC State Board of Education, A. L. “Buddy” Collins

The first moment of social translation is problematization, or the construction of a problem and the identification of the actants essential to the development of a network poised to solve the problem (Callon, 1984, 1999b). The problematization stage is considered by Callon to

be more hypothetical and theoretical than concrete but crucial to a policy's realization nonetheless. It requires the actants to acknowledge a new reality generated by a socially-constructed challenge or dilemma. In this section, I trace the events, devices, and research preceding Read to Achieve that both informed and influenced the unchallenged assumptions framing the problem the policy is meant to address.

Problematizing the Problem: How History Created a Literacy Crisis

One assumption contributing to the problematization of Read to Achieve is the invention of a state literacy crisis incited by the failures of North Carolina's public schools. This version of reality as constructed by the *A Nation at Risk*, the NAEP, and reading research for the early grades paints a dire picture of an American youth struggling to read. The perception of a literacy crisis is partially devised from the federal government's reliance on empirical research and big statistical data as a lever to standardize literacy and strengthen accountability.

A Nation at Risk, the Five Pillars, and Florida's Miracle: Crafting a reform for a literacy crisis. To understand how network actants relied on the unchallenged assumption of the existence of a state literacy crisis, it is essential to briefly review the historical context in which teachers' literacy instruction has been politically scrutinized. It is also pertinent to examine how states have answered the call for greater literacy education reform to combat the assumptive crisis.

A Nation at Risk. The idea that public schools are failing its students, particularly in reading achievement, is not new. In 1955, Rudolph Flesch published *Why Johnny Can't Read and What You Can Do About It*, sparking a national conversation around the impending literacy crisis facing its children and the proper way to teach reading. A decade later, researcher Jean Chall and Feldmann (1966) published their First Grade Studies, bringing phonics instruction to

the forefront of educational research through the 1970s (Pearson, 2004). In 1983, President Ronald Reagan commissioned a report on the state of the nation's education system by the Committee on Educational Excellence. The report, entitled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (Gardner, Larsen, Baker, Campbell, & Crosby, 1983), painted a grim picture of broken public school systems and was a critical document in establishing a link between a strong education system and a healthy economy (Bracey, 2002; Gerstl-Pepin & Woodside-Jiron, 2005). *A Nation at Risk* helped to usher in the era of high-stakes accountability as a driver of education reform. Perhaps most importantly, it framed the education system, teachers, and students through a deficit lens, paving the way for future centralized reform efforts, such as Read to Achieve.

The National Reading Panel and the Five Pillars. *A Nation at Risk* first shaped the country's perception of the dumbing down of its children and public schools' inability to teach them how to read. During this time, the literacy research community was more divided than ever over the best way to teach reading. Doubting researchers would ever reach consensus, the federal government commissioned several meta-analyses of literacy research, most notably *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998) and a report of the NRP (2000), to determine what explicit evidence pointed to "best practices" in literacy instruction (Botzakis et al., 2014; Coburn et al., 2011; Mraz & Vacca, 2012; National Research Council, 2010; Shanahan, 2014). Reviewing only experimental, quasi-experimental, and correlational studies (Shanahan, 2015), results highlighted five foci, or pillars, around which effective literacy instruction should be constructed—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NRP, 2000; National Research Council, 2010). The five pillars, or the Big 5,

have influenced generations of policymakers, educators, and students through their enactment of No Child Left Behind and, later, the Common Core State Standards.

This standardization of literacy fostered Street's (2003) notion of the autonomous model of literacy, or a universal trajectory of skills and strategies. The concept of the autonomous model of literacy holds fast to the idea that literacy is a set of universal and cognitive skills, void of cultural or contextual influence, that are to be acquired to attain a "literate" state. Gee (2012) asserted that essay-text or school literacy are "a part of a set of concepts, conventions, and practices that privilege one social formation as if it were natural, universal or, at the least, the end point of a normal developmental progression" to be achieved by only privileged cultures (i.e., "Western" cultures) (p. 75). The autonomous and standards-driven framing of literacy and instruction continues to influence education reform across the country.

We see evidence of Read to Achieve's grounding in the Big 5 in the following quote extracted from House Bill 950:

Focused *instructional supports and services, reading ~~intervention~~ interventions*, and accelerated activities should include ~~research-based~~ *best-evidence-based* practices..." (N.C. Legis, 2012, p. 43)

Fairclough (1992) asserted that "it is always worth attending to what is placed initially in clauses and sentences, because that can give insight into assumptions and strategies which may at no point be made explicit" (p. 84). Here the elimination of the initial term "research-based" in favor of "evidence-based" delegitimizes other forms of research, namely nonexperimental studies focused on the social and cultural factors of literacy. The edit reinforces the policy's reliance on a narrow set of quantitative, experimental or quasiexperimental, and replicable studies, calling back to the studies privileged in the NRP report.

Florida Miracle: Florida's Formula and Just Read, Florida! Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* and subsequently the enactment of No Child Left Behind, the federal government and specific state governments have implemented other initiatives addressing a hypothetical literacy crisis. Perhaps the impetus for Read to Achieve came from 2001's Just Read, Florida!, a component of the heavily-touted Florida Formula initiative. Then-governor Jeb Bush initiated the comprehensive reforms meant to overhaul public education, including school report cards, increased funding for charter schools to bolster school choice, and achievement-based funding for schools and teachers (Berliner & Glass, 2014). Core components of the legislation related to high-stakes testing, reading summer camps, good-cause exemptions, and third-grade retention and social promotion. The bill funneled \$11 million in 2001-2002 to provide literacy coaches who were trained through partnerships with Florida Reading Research Center and faculty from teacher preparation programs from institutions of higher education across Florida to underperforming schools. The program also provided professional development for teachers and administrators.

The Florida Formula, particularly Just Read, Florida!, received high acclaim as a cure-all for what was ailing the state's public school system (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Di Carlo, 2013). Touting increases in Florida students' scores on the NAEP and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) as evidence of its effectiveness, other states have since declared the prescriptive formula a miracle, implementing state-specific versions. However, the ability to isolate the effects of any specific component of the Florida Formula is compromised as schools were implementing other reforms as well. Berliner and Glass (2014) asserted that if ending social promotion did indeed increase test scores, then it was at the expense of poor and minoritized students—those who are most often left back and who could have benefited from alternative

programs. Research has also shown that retaining children, especially later in elementary school, results in higher absenteeism and difficulties maintaining positive self-esteem, peer relationships, and classroom behavior (Brophy, 2006; Shepard & Smith, 1989).

Summary of the historical context. This brief review examining the role played by *A Nation at Risk*, the work of the NRP, and the Just Read, Florida! informs the context through which the remaining data is situated. Understanding the prior influences of past research and reforms informs how Read to Achieve’s network actants applied the resulting assumptions in constructing the problem. These assumptions also drive the values and attitudes underlying the policy and its messages. Throughout the remainder of this section, I explain how network actants have relied on statistical information from a narrow set of research to shape Read to Achieve’s social narrative.

“One-out-of-Three”: How NAEP and Its Results Problematize Literacy Instruction

One way Read to Achieve actants positioned data and statistics in problematizing third-grade literacy instruction was through reliance on the results from the NAEP. NAEP has undergone extensive revisions since its inception in the late 1960s, and these changes inform how the interpretation of its results for education policy reform is problematic.

History of NAEP. First administered in 1969 (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) as a means of communicating student learning based on content and learning processes, NAEP has transformed into a composite measure used widely by policymakers to inform educational policy decisions. Its original purpose was to advise teachers of item-level results so that they could revise their teaching on the basis of students’ performance in specific content areas.

However, influenced by *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner et al., 1983), the 1984 NAEP assessment went from being reported at an item-by-item level to reports of scale scores (0-500).

The department's aggregation of the results into a comprehensive scoring system piqued the interest of policymakers and the public, dubbing NAEP "The Nation's Report Card." The National Assessment Governing Board revised the assessment, including in its structure longer text selections, open-ended questions, and NAEP Reader, where students selected from a variety of stories and answered open-ended questions about the selection. Contemporary research relating to the cognitive and sociolinguistic theories of reading comprehension (e.g., prior knowledge, process-driven) influenced the development of the test items (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Although subsequent test revisions may have changed the nomenclature of the items, the NAEP continues to define reading as "the process of constructing meaning from the text" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 33).

To take advantage of more robust statistical methods, the 1990s saw NAEP's reports employed as a state-by-state comparison, a strategy for which the assessment was not initially designed, and included achievement levels based on a standardized definition of proficiency. A 2009 evaluation report conducted by the Buros Group examined the extent to which NAEP aligns with state curriculum standards conducted. Their results found that revisions to NAEP affected its purpose and interpretation of its results:

These changes in reporting had the effect of diminishing the attention given to what students know and can do and its inherent relation to curriculum, and increasing the attention on performances by various subgroups of students, defined by demographic conditions related to geographical, racial, ethnic, sociological, and poverty markers. (p xii)

Since 1988, NAEP has transitioned from examining national trends to comparing state-level results, prompting more involvement of state leaders and educators in the development of the assessment (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The enactment of 2002's No Child Left Behind extended NAEP's reach across states and into urban subgroups, making its interpretation

more intricate. As a result, these misinterpretations are often incorrectly applied to policy and program planning (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The low-stakes, descriptive nature NAEP was intended to be has become a high-stakes and evaluative “policy lever” (Buros Group, 2009, p. xiii).

Actants’ use of NAEP results to shape the problem. Analysis of the 29 identified articles printed in *The News & Observer* from 2011 through 2016 highlighted how lawmakers and proponents of Read to Achieve used the state’s NAEP results as a policy lever. Amid public speculation and concern over the possible impacts of Read to Achieve on teachers’ time and resources, leading network actants consistently cited what I have labeled the “one-in-three” statistic. The “one-out-of-three” statistic refers to the 2009, 2011, and 2014 NAEP reading results for North Carolina’s fourth graders. These results revealed that one in three fourth graders failed to meet proficiency standards on the NAEP. Actants have since used this statistic to bolster the public’s perception of a third-grade literacy crisis.

As printed in a February 3, 2014, article in *The News & Observer*, NC State Senator Phil Berger, one of the authors of Read to Achieve and its most vocal supporter, said in a statement to then State Superintendent June Atkinson:

One out of every three North Carolina fourth graders is reading below the basic level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and research shows children who leave third grade unable to read are on a path to academic failure and life-long economic hardship. Superintendent Atkinson’s continued insistence that we keep advancing kids who can’t read into fourth grade is disturbing and could amount to an *economic death sentence* for those students. We—the legislature, the Department of Public Instruction, educators, and parents—can no longer accept allowing even a single child who has the ability to learn to leave third grade unable to read. (Bonner, 2014, para. 4-5, my emphasis)

Here Berger’s use of the one-out-of-three statistic informs the message that students who do not pass NAEP by fourth grade encounter a life of poverty and affect the economic prosperity of the

state. By leading his statement with the NAEP statistic, he legitimizes his attack on Atkinson and emphasizes an urgent literacy crisis. Further, the line “We—the legislature, the Department of Public Instruction, educators, and parents—can no longer accept allowing even a single child who has the ability to learn to leave third grade unable to read” strengthens an alliance between the legislature, NCDPI, teachers, and families in combating illiteracy. However, Berger’s statement also serves as an “othering” mechanism, disregarding students who do not “have the ability to learn,” labeling students who qualify for promotion under the good-cause exemptions as unable to learn. As I argue later in this chapter, the policy’s student labels transmit a significant message about students and who the policy supports and who the policy oppresses.

Policy actants’ leveraging of NAEP results to push education reform initiatives is problematic for several reasons. First, the federal NAEP evaluation identified substantial sampling issues, particularly around the misrepresentation of racial and ethnic subgroups and students with disabilities, with regards to state-level comparisons. Second, using NAEP as a comparison to state standardized tests, such as North Carolina’s EOGs, is misleading. A 2013 study mapping state proficiency standards to the NAEP scales found a statistically significant difference between the two (Bandeira de Mello, Bohrnstedt, Blankenship, & Sherman, 2015). Results found the difference between the highest and lowest proficiency state standards on Grade 4 reading was twice the standard deviation on the 2013 NAEP reading assessment and more than twice the difference between Basic and Proficient performance levels for NAEP Grade 4 reading. Citing low proficiency levels based on NAEP and then requiring the same proficiency levels on the EOGs is also problematic, as the two instruments do not necessarily measure the same constructs.

Other newspaper articles from 2012-2016 also revealed actants' tendencies to cite the NAEP results in rationalizing Read to Achieve. Actors such as lawmakers, researchers, and practitioners often referred to the 2011 and 2014 NAEP scores, highlighting the same one-out-of-three statistic (Bonner, 2014; Zimmerman, 2016). However, different from Berger's statement is the articles' emphasis on the widening achievement gap reported by NAEP. Reports in *The News & Observer* described the upward trend of reading proficiency for White students from middle to upper SES families; however, for students of color and students in poverty, the gap continued to spread. Tracy Zimmerman, the executive director of the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation, wrote in a 2016 op-ed piece for *The News & Observer*:

Last year, only 38 percent of North Carolina fourth-graders and 25 percent of students from economically disadvantaged families scored at or above reading proficiency on the *National Assessment of Educational Progress*. Although we have made progress narrowing reading proficiency disparities among students of color, *the gap in the average scores between Black and Hispanic students and their non-Hispanic White peers is more than 20 points.* (Zimmerman, 2016, para. 3, my emphasis)

Despite concerns about the disparities between White students and students from historically marginalized groups, initial actants of the Read to Achieve policy instead placed value on more positive aspects of the results. An October 28, 2015, article published in *The News & Observer* quoted State Senator Berger's response to the 2014 NAEP results: "I am delighted to see the Read to Achieve program is making real progress at preparing North Carolina students for future success" (Bonner, 2015). Berger's quote provides further evidence of the limited emphasis actants placed on the performances of traditionally marginalized student populations.

"Learning to Read and Reading to Learn": An Increased Emphasis on Third-Grade Literacy

Throughout the analyzed *The News & Observer* articles, actants identified third grade as the crucial year for children to exhibit proficient reading skills. The actants used evidence from

research studies and reported statistical findings describing the consequences of a third grader who continues through school without the ability to proficiently read academic texts. Consequences include increased likelihood of school failure or dropping out, subsequently leading to a life of poverty and economic hardship. Contributing to this argument was Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin's (1990) characterization of the transition from early literacy learning in grades kindergarten through third grade to the upper elementary grades. As indicated by their findings, children in third grade are shifting from "learning to read to reading to learn" (p. 14). The researchers asserted that prior to fourth grade (Stages 1 and 2), children learn the alphabetic principle, become familiar with concepts of print, and acquire fluency through familiar texts. However, once children reach Stage 3, they transfer the previously learned skills to unfamiliar texts, learning more complex vocabulary and using reading as a vehicle for learning (Chall et al., 1990). The transition from Stage 2 to 3, the authors asserted, is crucial to the future academic success of children.

The maxim "learning to read" and "reading to learn" appears across several newspaper article sources. Again, in the October 28, 2015, *The News & Observer* article, State Senator Berger, while addressing the need for and success of Read to Achieve on third-grade reading proficiency, said, "Fourth grade is typically when students *stop learning to read and start reading to learn. Those who can't master this basic life skill face a lifetime of hardship*" (Bonner, 2015, para. 20, my emphasis).

In this quote, Berger again rationalized the need for Read to Achieve by placing emphasis on third grade as a critical transition period. However, he also covertly marginalized those students who cannot and are not reading proficiently as per the standards by positioning them as "other" (i.e., "Those") and referring to reading, a complex cognitive, social, cultural, and

linguistic process (Heath, 1980), as a basic skill. Berger also implicitly placed the onus of economic poverty and hardship on an individual's inability to read rather than acknowledging other institutional and systemic factors.

Hidden in Berger's 2015 quote is further evidence of how actants privileged narrow forms of literacies, namely the autonomous model (Street, 2003). However, scholars have criticized the common "learning to read, reading to learn" adage as being overly simplistic and neglectful of young children's need to learn more about the world around them early on (Pearson, Cervetti, Invernizzi, & Hayes, 2012). Critics argue that at no point should children not be reading to learn, but rather they should be learning how to attack words and use comprehension skills and strategies through embedded, authentic, purpose-driven lessons with high-interest texts.

Compounding actants' focus on third grade as a critical point in children's literacy development is a 2010 report published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private organization committed to creating "a brighter future for the nation's children" (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010). The report, entitled *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, and its 2013 update, synthesizes education, public policy, and economics research to highlight the disparities in drop-out rates between children who read proficiently by third-grade and children who don't (2010). The rates double for children living in poverty and Black and Hispanic children. Children who live in low-income neighborhoods are also at greater risk of dropping out. The report frames third grade reading with urgency (*Early Warning!*) and warns of dire economic consequences, not just for the children but for their community and the nation. In bold font and highlighted with yellow, the report reads

The bottom line is that if we don't get dramatically more children on track as proficient readers, the United States will lose a growing and essential proportion of its human

capital to poverty, and the price will be paid not only by individual children and families, but by the entire country. (p. 7)

Words like “dramatically” and “the price will be paid” frame the severity of the literacy crisis on the economic well-being of the United States.

The *Early Warning!* report also relied heavily on NAEP results, both state-by-state and country-to-country comparisons, and adhered to Chall’s stages of learning.

Reading proficiently by the end of third grade (as measured by NAEP at the beginning of fourth grade) can be a make-or-break benchmark in a child’s educational development. *Up until the end of third grade, most children are learning to read. Beginning in fourth grade, however, they are reading to learn, using their skills to gain more information in subjects such as math and science, to solve problems, to think critically about that they are learning, and to act upon and share that knowledge in the world around them.* (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, p. 9, italics in the original)

Here again is evidence of a social narrative construing research and statistics into an autonomous model of literacy, with a cut-off wherein children must have learned everything they need to know about how to read before they can read to learn.

Data from *The News & Observer* articles showed that the narrative surrounding the Read to Achieve network relied on the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s report to problematize third-grade reading and inform the public’s perception of a state literacy crisis. However, the two newspaper articles that cited the report did so to lobby for more substantial and farther reaching support in addition to Read to Achieve. One Letter to the Editor published on July 2, 2015, written by a pediatrician used the disparities to argue for more resources to support birth through prekindergarten literacy programs (Tayloe, 2015), and an April 6, 2015, op-ed piece, written by a college professor used the information to request more literacy coaches in schools (Spires, 2015).

Messages of Problematization. Based on the analysis of the history of Read to Achieve, as well as media reports surrounding it, problematization frames Read to Achieve as an evidence-based solution to a literacy and economic crisis brought on by a failing public school

system. This message imposed a new social reality on the general public, who prior to Read to Achieve were overall satisfied with North Carolina public schools. In April 2012, prior to the enactment of HB 950, Public Policy Polling (2012) released the results of a statewide survey on citizens' perceptions of public education. Out of a representative sample of 563 North Carolinians, 52% indicated they believed public schools were doing a good job; 42% felt that public schools were failing and needed to be overhauled. They also indicated high levels of distrust around the media, elected school board officials, and the state legislature for information on how well the public school systems were doing. More than two thirds of respondents, however, did trust teachers' opinions.

Actants such as the NC General Assembly, the State Board of Education, and the NCDPI build and accept the messages of problematization, moving translation forward into intressement. Here, texts such as the Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan assign roles and responsibilities to carry out the vision.

Intressement

North Carolina's goal is to ensure that every student read at or above grade level and continue to progress in reading proficiency so that he or she can read, comprehend, integrate, and apply complex texts needed for secondary education and career success.

(What Every Parent of a Third Grader Needs to Know, NCDPI, 2013)

Throughout the rest of the chapter, I expound on the emerging social narratives initiated by the problematization phase by identifying the OPPs and how each conveys the messages of problematization through intressement and enrolment. In so doing, I set the stage for how the translation of social narratives around literacy instruction, teaching, and students is mobilized through classroom instruction.

NCDPI's Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan as an Obligatory Passage Point

Actor-network theory asserts that the goal of intressement is to enforce and secure the identities of the actors defined through the problematization phase (Hamilton, 2011). The shift from problematization to intressement moves the theoretical towards the practical. Here, alliances are constructed through the strengthening of a new infrastructure and the weakening of connections with opposing forces (Callon, 1999b; Hamilton, 2011). The newly formed network is considered an obligatory passage point in which actors, actions, and materials are forced together to accomplish the objectives of the initiative as defined during problematization. It is most often during the intressement phase that policy initiatives fail because of weak alliances and networks.

Identifying documents representing the OPPs for intressement for Read to Achieve was obvious. The legislation required the State Board of Education to develop a comprehensive reading plan for achievement, grounded in “empirical research in reading development” (N.C. Legis, 2012, §115C-83.1D). The plan’s development was to include input from other stakeholders such as teachers, teacher educators, and families and assign roles and responsibilities to members of the network. The State Board of Education transferred the responsibility to the NCDPI and its K-3 literacy team. This shift in roles assigned the part of technician, the actant responsible for putting the social innovation into practice, from the State Board of Education to NCDPI. As my analysis shows, the State Board’s handover of the Plan was purposeful in that it drove together two actants—NCDPI and educators—into a new alliance. The Plan solidifies the critical role of student data, introducing Amplify’s mClass tool as a major device for collecting and applying student data to instruction. Further, it privileges the

autonomous model of literacy by requiring teachers to use standards-driven curricula that perpetuates the Big 5.

NCDPI's Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan Creates Alliances

The Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan attempts to create an alliance between NCDPI and the practitioners responsible for implementing Read to Achieve, namely district leaders, school principals, and teachers. Cohesion of actants within a network is crucial for the successful implementation of a new social order. One state-sponsored evaluation report detailing Read to Achieve's first year of implementation found that two thirds of teachers who were surveyed for the report did not initially support the legislation (Hui, 2014). Thus, it was necessary for primary actants to strengthen the network to ensure its successful translation to practice. In crafting the alliance, through the Plan, NCDPI executes discourse moves that develop an "us"—the educators—versus "them"—the politicians—dichotomy. This form of discourse leverages educators' distrust of legislators and policymakers to make sound legislation for the classroom (Woodside-Jiron, 2004) by shifting the tone of the directives from policy jargon to a collective effort to improve students' reading.

NCDPI used dichotomy discourse to form an alliance between itself and educators beginning with the Plan's introduction. The first of four introductory paragraphs in the Plan states, "According to the law, *the plan shall be based on reading instructional practices with strong evidence of effectiveness in current empirical research in reading development*" (NCDPI, p. 3, my emphasis). In this sentence, NCDPI employs the third person and includes a direct quote from the legislation explaining its role in Read to Achieve's creation. This move maintains the General Assembly's ownership of the policy and separates the department from the law.

Over the course of the four-paragraph introduction, the discourse transitions from the third person to a collective first person—the “we”. The middle of the introduction describes how NCDPI consulted other groups of stakeholders in creating the Plan, including families, teachers, administrators, literacy specialists, and faculty from institutes of higher education.

In June of 2013, the newly developed K-3 Literacy Division conducted focus group sessions in all eight state board districts of North Carolina. Session participants included *parents, teachers, administrators, reading and literacy specialists, central office personnel, curriculum coordinators, and representatives from Institutes of Higher Education. The framework for the Comprehensive Reading Plan is developed from the perspective and input of all of these stakeholders.* It focuses on six areas: standards-based curriculum, leadership, instruction, professional development, assessment, and partnerships and communication. (p. 3, my emphasis)

The Plan’s strategy of referring to its collaborative development attempts to gain educators’ trust by giving ownership to those who would be most affected by the law. The inclusion of experts, namely specialists and academics, further legitimizes the Plan and creates teacher buy-in.

The introduction’s final paragraph establishes the alliance by applying discourse in the first person and using softer language to outline policy directives. NCDPI uses terms indicative of collaboration, camaraderie, support.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has provided a detailed list of actions employed to assist districts and schools with the implementation of the Comprehensive Reading Plan in these six focus areas. *In order to increase reading achievement across our state, districts, school administrators, and teachers have been provided suggested actions. Districts and schools are encouraged to use the Comprehensive Reading Plan as a guide for aligning, developing, and implementing local plans to advance reading proficiency.* (p. 3, my emphasis)

Here, NCDPI shifts to a collective discourse when referring to “increas[ing] reading achievement across *our* state, districts, school administrators, and teachers.” Further, this paragraph uses more collegial verbs, such as *encouraged* and *assist*, to shape a communal relationship between NCDPI and the practitioners charged with implementing the new policy.

The discourse above assigns the role of NCDPI as a partner in education rather than a part of a top-down policy machine (Darling-Hammond, 1990), creating an alliance between the two actants. Evidence of similar discourse appears throughout the document as NCDPI used terms like *foster, promote, provide, encourage, offer, allocate, make available, and collaborate* to promote its role in implementing Read to Achieve. Once the Plan constructed the alliance, it set and defined practitioners' roles in implementing Read to Achieve.

How NCDPI's Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan Defines Literacy and Instruction

The Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan, the Implementation Guide, and the Parents' Guide also move to block potentially conflicting alliances between those actors and the intended social narratives. Evidence of this action is apparent in four of the six instructional foci featured in the Plan (Leadership, Instruction, Professional Development, and Assessment). At the start of each focus section, NCDPI repeats the goal of the State Board, "The mission of the North Carolina State Board of Education is that every *public school student will graduate from high school globally competitive for work and post-secondary education and prepared for life in the 21st Century*" (pp. 7, 9, 11, 13, my emphasis). Here, NCDPI grounds the definition of literacy achievement that informs the network's social narrative through repetition of the goal across the Plan. The Westernized goal of becoming "globally competitive" draws forth a business-like model of schooling, wherein students are the products in an international marketplace (Hewitt, 2005). The objective also assumes that literacy instruction espoused in the Plan and Implementation Guide will impact students' social mobility and societal success (Gee, 2012).

Throughout the NCDPI documents, the department also extends the role of the NRP and the Big 5 into the Plan's messages about literacy instruction, while also blocking competing views. In one section of the Plan, NCDPI states:

Teachers use *standards-based curriculum to plan instruction*. ... These standards allow for vertical and horizontal alignment of reading skills. The standards-based curriculum promotes the use of *21st Century Skills* in reading instruction. ... *Just as students must read, write, speak, listen and use language effectively, so, too, must the standards specify what students need to know and understand to be career and college ready in multiple disciplines.* (p. 5, my emphasis)

The above quote defines literacy instruction, learning, and achievement as autonomous and standards-driven (Street, 1984). By listing specific literacy practices—reading, writing, speaking, listening, and using language—NCDPI is locking in the network’s narrative of the types of literacy valued under Read to Achieve. Further, NCDPI pins each actant to the standards, emphasizing instructional fidelity. Figure 6, taken from the Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan, shows how the Plan explicitly links teachers to the standards.

Focus	Suggested Teacher Actions	Evidences
Standards-Based Curriculum	Teachers will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the NCSCoS with fidelity • Plan reading instruction that is aligned to the NCSCoS and includes the strands of literacy learning: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language to advance the use of critical thinking and communication skills • Integrate explicit reading instruction in all grade levels and content areas • Collaborate with stakeholders to communicate policy expectations for all students • Use instructional strategies that integrate 21st Century Skills in all content areas • Utilize research-based materials, interventions, and strategies that align with the NCSCoS • Participate in horizontal and vertical planning within the school to provide consistency and continuity for all students • Review, evaluate and revise the curriculum to allow for student-centered learning opportunities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Planning documents 2) Agendas, summaries, and handouts for PLC meetings, parent communications, faculty meetings, and professional development sessions 3) Curriculum documentation 4) Class schedule

Figure 6. A table of suggested teacher actions in implementing standards-based curriculum included in the NCDPI Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan⁴.

In Figure 6, there is also evidence of a discrepancy in how the Plan frames teacher autonomy around the implementation of the standards. Prior to the first bullet, NCDPI changes

⁴ Taken from NCDPI. (2013). *Comprehensive Reading Plan K-12*. (p. 34). Retrieved from <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/k-3literacy/achieve/plan.pdf>

the tone of their message, from “Suggested Teacher Actions” to “Teachers will”, implying a directive rather than a suggestion. The first action orders teachers to deliver the standards “with fidelity.” The term *with fidelity* is a loaded one. It demands teaching of a prescriptive sequence of instruction “thus establishing a technical and moralistic tone that constrains reflective critique and marginalizes dissent in the profession” (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006, p. 31). Here, NCDPI exerts control over the types of content and objectives teachers are expected to teach during literacy instruction. Further, it restates the valued components of literacy (e.g., reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language) and leverages the term *research-based* (as opposed to *evidence-based* as in the legislature) to narrow what and how literacy should be taught in classrooms. However, the final bullet invites teachers to “review, evaluate, and revise the curriculum,” seemingly pulling against the control the initial actions implied.

How NCDPI draws the standards into the network is crucial to the understanding of Read to Achieve’s narrative plot and its role in shaping literacy instruction. Standards, including the Common Core State Standards used in North Carolina, uphold the NRP’s five pillars, foregoing a body of research that argues for the inclusion of critical and new literacies into classroom instruction and academic literacies (Botzakis et al., 2014; Fiano, 2014; Handsfield, Crumpler, & Dean, 2010; Kontovourki, 2012; May, 2011; Schmidt & Whitmore, 2010). As such, securing the standards as a mediating device in the network narrows how literacy is represented through teachers’ instruction (Neumann, 2016).

Data extracted from the NCDPI (2013) documents also defines what literacy instructional components the network values through the Plan’s incorporation of an appendix devoted to “Literacy-Rich Instruction”(p. 40). Figure 7 is a copy of the suggested teaching foci for Kindergarten through fifth grade, as printed in the Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan.

Emphasis	Kindergarten Classroom Suggested Actions	1 st – 3 rd Grade Classroom Suggested Actions	4 th – 5 th Grade Classroom Suggested Actions
Instructional Focus (Big Picture)	Literacy instruction includes attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploring and expanding language, building concepts through experience, discussion and play • building background knowledge and vocabulary • phonemic awareness including rhyming and segmenting sounds • systematic, explicit, developmentally appropriate phonics to include sound-symbol correspondence, onset-rime work • strategies for comprehension: predicting, central ideas, questioning, identifying schema, retelling, inferring, text features, structures, and author’s purpose • fostering the motivation to read • building basic sight vocabulary • modeling writing in response to text • building beginning writing skills in response to text for a specific purpose (narrative, informational, and argumentative/explanatory, and opinion writing with intentional organization and specific details across genres) • helping emergent spellers use “inventive” spelling • communication skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language • handwriting, letter formation, spacing between words 	Literacy instruction includes attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grade level foundational skills as identified through the NCSCS • building accuracy and fluency to support comprehension • building understanding of text features, text structure, literary devices, figurative language, and author’s purpose • strategies for comprehension including predicting, central ideas, questioning, identifying schema, retelling/recounting, inferring, text features, text structures, and author’s purpose • fostering the motivation to read • building academic and domain-specific vocabulary • modeling writing grounded in text • building beginning writing skills grounded in text for a specific purpose (narrative, explanation/informational, and opinion writing with intentional organization and specific details across genres) • spelling • writing in response to text • communication skills including reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language 	Literacy instruction that includes attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategies for comprehension including predicting, central ideas, questioning, identifying schema, summarizing, inferring, text features, structures, and author’s purpose • utilizing fiction and informational text • building understanding of text features, text structure, literary devices, figurative language, and author’s purpose • building accuracy and fluency to support grade level comprehension • word study and academic and domain-specific vocabulary development • fostering motivation to read • building writing skills grounded in text for a specific purpose (narrative, explanation/informational, and opinion writing with intentional organization and specific details across genres) • writing across all content areas • communication skills including reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language

Figure 7. Suggested foci for literacy instruction across grade levels.⁵

Figure 7 shows how NCDPI grounds teachers’ literacy instruction in the NRP’s five pillars. First, the suggested actions privilege the role of the standards. Following that are literacy instructional foci directly influenced by the Big 5 and following an autonomous trajectory, as activities are centered around phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. NCDPI also includes in the Plan examples of 90-minute literacy blocks featuring whole-group lessons, differentiated small-group lessons, and immediate intensive intervention, all teacher-led (NCDPI, 2013, p. 58).

⁵ Taken from NCDPI. (2013). *Comprehensive Reading Plan K-12*. (p. 43). Retrieved from <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/k-3literacy/achieve/plan.pdf>

The Parental Guide for Read to Achieve published by NCDPI (2013) exemplifies a narrative the values the autonomous model of literacy. On the brochure, NCDPI described the differences between early and elementary literacy:

In the early grades, students build foundational skills to help them learn to read. Teachers use a variety of methods and strategies to teach children these basic skills, including *hearing letter sounds, connecting sounds with letters and words, putting sounds together to make words, reading smoothly and fluently, building vocabulary, and deepening comprehension.* (NCDPI, 2013, p. 1, my emphasis)

Using less-specific educational jargon associated with literacy instruction, the parent brochure establishes a consistent narrative with another set of actants, students' families. The narrative here continues to define literacy instruction along a standardized series of Big 5 foci. Absent from the message is any contextual factors relating to culture or practice. Through their Read to Achieve documents, NCDPI passed down an autonomous definition of literacy instruction designated by the standards and the Big 5.

Introduction of mClass as a Network Device

The Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan and the Implementation Guide not only assign roles to human actants (e.g., district personnel, administrators, teachers, families) but also introduce a critical nonhuman actant to the network. In their documents, NCDPI positioned teachers as reflective practitioners who use data to inform their instruction to meet the needs of all their students. As such, the Plan frames teachers as *“knowledgeable in their practice and include assessments that are authentic, aligned to instruction, and demonstrate student understanding”* (NCDPI, 2013, p. 13, my emphasis). The discourse move in the above example presupposes that teachers are considered knowledgeable when they use data.

Data-driven decision making in education has become a prominent topic in response to increased high-stakes accountability in schools (Ikemoto & Marsh, 2007). Teachers are expected

to analyze a myriad of student outcome data, formative and summative, formal and informal. A heightened focus on student monitoring through Response to Intervention models has shifted school’s data use from overall school improvement to teachers’ one-on-one instructional decisions (Kerr, Marsh, Ikemoto, Darilek, & Barney, 2006). As such, the data-driven school culture places greater value on student data, contributing to the deprofessionalization of teaching (Harris, 2011). Through this lens, the professionalism of teachers hinges on their ability to analyze and apply formal student data to their decision-making, undermining the role of teacher expertise and experience.

NCDPI urges teachers to use a balanced assessment framework when collecting student data. Balanced assessment is a combination of formative, benchmark, and summative assessments, including progress monitoring “to maximize student potential” (NCDPI, 2013, p. 13). Figure 8 displays the broad array of assessments expected of teachers.

Emphasis	Kindergarten Classroom Suggested Actions	1st – 3rd Grade Classroom Suggested Actions	4th – 5th Grade Classroom Suggested Actions
Assessment Practices	Informing instruction in Kindergarten includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a system for collecting and maintaining formative, diagnostic, and summative assessment information • ongoing and consistent assessment practices • evidence of using assessment practices to inform and differentiate instruction • benchmarking and ongoing progress monitoring using mClass Reading 3D • teacher observations, conferences, and anecdotal notes, in addition to formal assessments • mClass Reading 3D data analysis for determining effectiveness of instructional practices • using multiple data points and the problem-solving model to address student learning needs 	Informing instruction includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a system for collecting and maintaining formative, diagnostic, and summative assessment information • ongoing and consistent assessment practices • rubrics, checklists or scales that are linked to standards so that students understand what is valued • evidence of using assessment practices to inform and differentiate instruction • benchmarking and ongoing progress monitoring using mClass Reading 3D • teacher observations, conferences, and anecdotal notes, in addition to formal assessments • mClass Reading 3D data analysis for determining effectiveness of instruction • using multiple data points and the problem-solving model to address student learning needs 	Informing instruction includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a system for collecting and maintaining formative, diagnostic, and summative assessment information • ongoing and consistent assessment practices • rubrics, checklists, scoring guides, or scales that are linked to standards so that students understand what is valued and can self-assess • evidence of using assessment practices to inform and differentiate instruction • using multiple data points and the problem-solving model to address student learning needs

Figure 8. NCDPI-suggested balanced assessment practices across grade levels.⁶

⁶ Taken from NCDPI. (2013). *Comprehensive Reading Plan K-12*. (p. 46). Retrieved from <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/k-3literacy/achieve/plan.pdf>

Here NCDPI (2013) described in the Plan the list of assessment practices for informing literacy instruction. Assessments should be “ongoing and consistent” and “linked to standards so that students understand what is valued.” This phrase positions both the standards and what is tested on the accompanying assessments as knowledge that is “valued.” Further, teachers must show “evidence of using assessment practices to inform and differentiate instruction,” forcing data-driven decision-making practices as proof that teachers are relying on data.

The above section also sets the stage for securing the role of mClass as an actant in the Read to Achieve network. The Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan marks the first time teachers are introduced to mClass Reading 3D. The Plan requires districts and school leaders to provide teachers with professional development around the use of mClass. NCDPI mentions mClass in two different ways across the K-3 grade levels.

1. Informing instruction includes *benchmarking and ongoing progress monitoring* using mClass Reading 3D.
2. Informing instruction includes mClass Reading 3D analysis for determining *effectiveness of instruction*.

Through these two points, NCDPI’s Plan established mClass as a tool for both measuring student performance and evaluating teachers’ instruction. As such, the Plan acts as an obligatory passage point by assigning the critical role of mClass as the final actant in the network. This move also classifies mClass as another obligatory passage point through which the third phase of translation, enrolment, can proceed.

Enrolment

Amplify is reimagining the way teachers teach and students learn. We believe technology can empower classroom teachers to offer personalized instruction, and accelerate the potential of individual students to become more active, engaged learners.

Amplify, About Us, 2016

The third phase of social translation is enrolment. Enrolment is characterized by the gathering of resources, materials, and devices that enable the network's actors to fulfill their roles (Callon, 1999b; Hamilton, 2011). Examples include investment in building a research center, new curricula, professional development courses, and development of accountability measures. Analyses found that Amplify's mClass Reading 3D, along with DIBELS and DIBELS Next, can be considered such a device. The devices force all actors in the network into committing to how the initiative represents literacy, instruction, and students.

mClass Reading 3D is a digitized progress-monitoring tool developed by Amplify, part of Wireless Generation. Before administration of mClass, assessors conduct DIBELS Next assessments to determine decoding and fluency rates. mClass requires assessors to administer the Text and Reading Comprehension (TRC) measure. Students read leveled text passages aloud while the assessor records any miscues on a tablet. Once the student completes the reading, the program tallies up the number and types of miscues and self-corrections, spitting out an error rate. The assessor then asks the student four comprehension questions measuring basic understanding as well as inferring. Next, the student responds to another question in writing. The assessor uses a rubric to evaluate the oral and written responses. Finally, the mClass program assigns the student a color—green, yellow, or red—to indicate at what level the child read. If the test could not confirm the instructional level at which the student read, the assessor will need to

conduct another assessment, adjusting the text level. The process continues until mClass determines the instructional reading level.

Kindergarten through third-grade teachers are required to administer DIBELS Next and mClass three times a year, at the beginning of the school year (BOY), middle of the year (MOY), and at the end of the year (EOY). Aside from the thrice yearly intervals, teachers are expected to administer the assessments throughout the year for students reading below grade level, labeled yellow or red. The program aggregates and disaggregates student data, as needed, for informational decision-making.

mClass's Relationship with North Carolina

The history of North Carolina's relationship with mClass is important in understanding the devices' role in the enrolment phase. Before the enactment of Read to Achieve, North Carolina had already been associated with Amplify and mClass. In 2009, NCDPI conducted a pilot study in 27 of the state's lowest-performing public schools using the reading diagnostic tool. The study examined classroom implementation as well as whether the measure was predictive of student success as per the English Language Arts State Standards, which preceded implementation of Common Core State Standards (State Board of Education, Executive Summary, August 2012). The pilot ramped up to include 480 schools in 2010 and through 2011. A presentation to the State Board of Education in August 2012 cited NCDPI touting mClass's ability to provide immediate feedback to teachers and records for administrators. On the basis of the Read to Achieve legislation passed in 2012, mClass was deemed the official state instrument for collecting diagnostic literacy data for K-3 students. District and teacher training began in Fall of 2012, with full implementation in Fall 2013. The scores are used to determine the Standard six scores for K-2 teachers, creating an accountability system.

How mClass Data Perpetuates an Autonomous Model of Literacy

mClass acts as the obligatory passage point for the enrolment phase of Read to Achieve’s translation into social order. The network invests time, training, and money into implementing mClass as the preferred assessment and monitoring tool. The successful implementation of Read to Achieve depends on teachers’ administration of mClass with fidelity and their use of the data in informing instruction. For this to occur, all the actors, from district leaders to school administrators to teachers to students, must buy-in to the instrument—the process, the constructs it measures, the results, and the type of literacy achievement it represents. As discussed previously, NCDPI’s Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan and the Implementation Guide position the tool as an essential part of a balanced assessment framework, as well as a required component of Read to Achieve. Using it as intended requires teachers to mediate any conflicting beliefs they have about their students and literacy instruction.

Proponents of mClass, including its creator, tout the digitized ease of assessment and collaboration with PLCs and school administrators as major selling points. Once teachers have administered the oral reading and written comprehension portions of the assessment, mClass displays the color-coded results. Figure 9 is an example of the display taken from Amplify’s website.

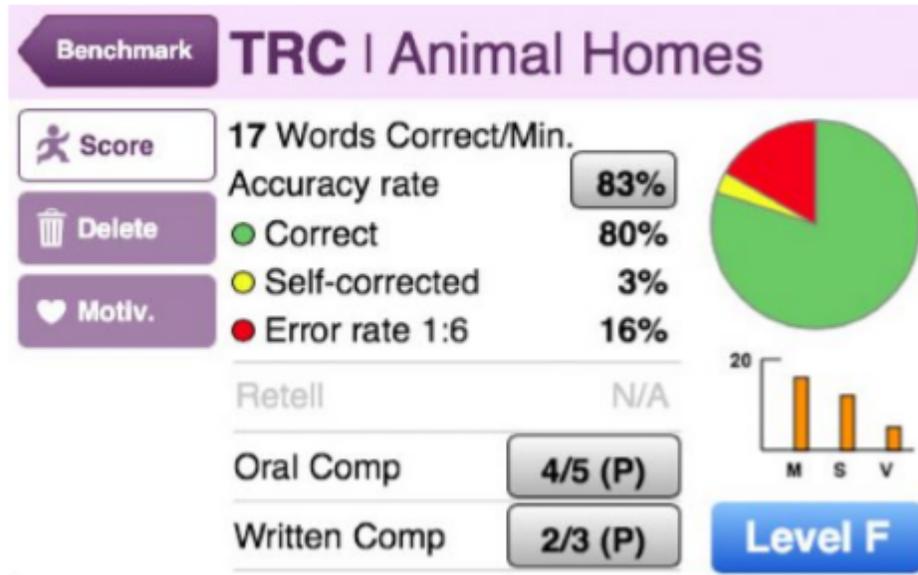


Figure 9. mClass display of student Text and Reading Comprehension results.⁷

Amplify’s digitized display uses a red, yellow, and green coding system to indicate at-risk and proficient reading skills as compared to the benchmark. Here, the benchmark is a reading level derived from an accuracy rate of decoding and oral and written comprehension scores. The comprehension scores indicate whether students correctly and explicitly responded to question prompts. mClass’s focus on narrow conceptions of literacy as determined by the Big 5 (phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, decoding), as well as its ability to label and categorize students in an industrialized fashion perpetuates an autonomous literacy model within the Read to Achieve narrative.

Since its implementation, teachers and families have spoken out about the time commitment required in assessing each student at least three times. In a February 18, 2014, article, *The News and Observer* republished a letter written by an English as a Second Language

⁷ Taken from Amplify. (2016). mClass Reading 3D. Retrieved from <https://www.amplify.com/assessment/mclass-reading-3d>

teacher in a rural, high-poverty North Carolina school to her students entitled “Dear NC third-graders: I’m sorry for all the meaningless tests.” In the letter, the teacher wrote,

I’m sorry for the *other new reading assessment system* we have implemented this year, too. *Those of you who have the most difficulties with reading and comprehension must be retested every ten days. About two-thirds of you are in that position*, which means I test two to three of you each day to fit it all in! These one-on-one tests are time-consuming. (para 9-10, my emphasis)

Here the teacher underscores how the constant monitoring using mClass takes up instructional time that could benefit the very children it identifies as needing extra instruction and support.

One other article from *The News & Observer* published that same year described how North Carolina families with elementary-aged children worried that their students would be overtested and missing out on opportunities for more meaningful instruction (Bonner, 2014).

Some opponents of Read to Achieve and mClass, such as teachers and parents, have argued that the Text and Reading Comprehension portion is not developmentally appropriate for young students, particularly the writing portion. The format and the types of questions, they contend, do not accurately assess students’ reading comprehension and often cause students’ reading levels to stall. For a student’s answer to be considered proficient (Level 3 or 4), it must include a prescribed set of key terms and sentences. Taken from one North Carolina school system’s assessment, a written comprehension question for the book *The Miller, His Son, and Their Donkey* (Level N) asks:

What lesson does the miller learn? Use details from the text to support your answer.

If the student simply answers the question (“The miller learns to not listen to everyone.”), that student receives a 1 (Not proficient). If the student responds with the following:

The lesson the miller learns is to not try and please everyone. He wanted to sell the donkey at the fair, but because he listened to everyone it ran away.

and includes these terms or phrases:

- Miller
- Everyone
- Please/make everyone happy/do what everyone says
- Lost donkey/donkey ran away/ended up with nothing

then mClass considers the student to be proficient. The level of prescription required of students narrows what and how they can learn and express their understanding of their reading.

An article written by a second-grade teacher and her literacy coach for the EducationNC (EdNC) organization in 2016, “mClass- Helping or Hurting Your Youngest Readers?” (Sears & Mellor, 2016) expounds on the challenges associated with the written comprehension portion of mClass. The authors asserted that the mClass tool is cumbersome and the measurement ignores contextual factors surrounding students’ literacy learning, privileges quantitative data over teacher expertise, and does not accurately judge a child’s reading development but rather their writing ability. In this article, we see evidence of teachers’ resistance to the narrative driven down by mClass and Read to Achieve.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have made explicit the narrative plot (Berger, 1997; Søreide, 2007) created through the first three phases of social translation of the Read to Achieve initiative. After summarizing the Read to Achieve legislation, through the lens of actor-network theory I first argued how historical documents, events, and narratives, namely *A Nation at Risk*, the NRP, and Just Read, Florida!, helped establish a supposed literacy crisis among the nation’s third-grade students. Next, I detailed how an obsession with data, including results from the NAEP and literacy research, contributed to the problematization phase of translation, making room for Read

to Achieve to develop. What followed was an examination of the NCDPI Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan and Amplify's mClass Reading 3D as OPPs underlying the intressement and enrolment phases, respectively. Both passage points identified actants, assigned their roles in enacting Read to Achieve, and disseminated a social narrative defining literacy, instruction, and learning.

Based on my analysis, the unchallenged assumptions that formed Read to Achieve's narrative plot are

- North Carolina's third-grade students are experiencing a literacy crisis that will impact the state's economic future.
- Data is objective and provides specific and targeted information about students and their teaching to further drive instruction.
- Literacy instruction and learning follows a universal trajectory of skills and strategies for student mastery.
- Literacy instruction is informed by evidence-based practices within five major foci—phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency—or the Big 5.
- Schools' primary responsibility is to produce students who are college and career-ready and knowledgeable citizens who will eventually contribute to the economy.

In the next chapter, I describe the mobilization of Read to Achieve as it appears within Ms. Lemon's instructional context.

CHAPTER 5: MOBILIZATION: THE NEGOTIATION OF BELIEFS AND POLICY MESSAGES THROUGH INSTRUCTION

The final phase of translation of a social innovation is mobilization. Hamilton (2011) described mobilization as the moment when “the few come to speak as the many” (p. 61). The primary actants, representing unquestioned assumptions, now impose a new social order. Both human and nonhuman actants act as official spokespeople for those who cannot speak for themselves. For this study, human actants such as the NC legislature, NCDPI, and a narrow group of researchers as well as nonhuman actants like mClass speak on behalf of teachers, students, and their families. However, as Callon (1999b) pointed out, “To speak for others is to first silence those in whose name we speak” (p. 78).

The moment of mobilization marks full implementation that occurs in what education policy researchers call the black box, or the opaque processes educators undergo when enacting policy in the classroom (Valencia & Wixson, 2001). Mobilization creates the space for all actors to work in their intended identities and roles through the devices and resources identified in the previous phases, like the cultural artifacts as a component of an activity system (Engeström, 1999).

As I describe in this chapter, I analyzed one third-grade teacher’s classroom literacy instruction as well as her grade-level planning sessions and professional development for evidence of Read to Achieve’s mobilization. Analysis of actions, intentions, and discourse illustrate the policy’s mobilization at the classroom level. I also investigated how one teacher negotiated that reality around internal and external factors in a series of activities. This section aims to answer the research question 1b—**Does an elementary teacher negotiate her literacy**

instructional beliefs in conjunction with state and local literacy policies in practice, and if so, how?

In answering the research question, I first summarize the local and school literacy policy landscape, highlighting if and how it aligns with Read to Achieve's representation of literacy, instruction, and students. Next, I outline Ms. Lemon's beliefs about her professional identity, literacy, instruction, her students, and social justice through her beliefs profile. I then describe what activities comprised Ms. Lemon's literacy instruction and compare them to her actual instruction. Though her ideal literacy instruction was comprised of authentic and rigorous text discussions and small strategy groups, her actual instruction mainly took the form of teacher-managed minilessons, scripted phonics instruction, and ability group work.

Ms. Lemon's Policy Landscape: The Major Actants and Policies Surrounding the Classroom

To determine whether Ms. Lemon negotiated her instructional beliefs around state and local policies, I must first establish what those state and local policies are. In doing so, I emphasize the major actors primarily responsible for mediating, interpreting, and disseminating instructional policies down to the classroom level, specifically the district literacy coach, the school literacy coach, the school principal, and the grade-level PLCs.

The Major Actors in Ms. Lemon's Local and School Policy Landscape

Interviews with key school policy actors, namely Principal Carmichael, the school literacy coach Maggie Slater, and the third-grade team, informed my comprehension of Ms. Lemon's policy landscape. Other data sources, such as staff emails and district updates, further refined my conception of the policy dissemination process. Based on these data, it became clear that transmission of literacy policy narratives travels through a top-down pathway. Primary

actants, such as the NC State Legislature and NCDPI, initiate the process through documents and mandates. The messages then filter through the district literacy coordinator, the school literacy coaches, and the grade-level PLCs. It should be noted that NCDPI does communicate with teachers directly through websites, webinars, emailed newsletters, and professional development opportunities. However, the district literacy coordinator is responsible for interpreting the mandates and infusing them into district-level curriculum expectations. Often state and district interpretations conflict, as I discuss later in this chapter. For this section, I focus on the complexities of Ms. Lemon's local policy landscape.

It is important at this juncture to call back to the tenets of actor-network theory when considering the role of these actors in translating Read to Achieve in relation to Ms. Lemon's policy landscape. Although I have organized the results of this study in such a way as to situate these actors as a function of the policy's mobilization phase, recall that actor-network theorists argue that fluid, multiple realities comprise a network and its translation (Callon, 1984, 1999b; Hamilton, 2011). The four moments are not a rigid and prescribed process but rather a framework to explain the complex nature of policy as a new social order. As such, these actors—district literacy coordinator, school literacy coach, school principal, and the PLC—can move within and between the other three phases of translation. Each actor can contribute to the problematization of literacy, creation of alliances, and introduction of devices. However, here I have conceptualized the actors' role as part of the overall mobilization and implementation of the policies as they are presented at the school-level and inform Ms. Lemon's teaching.

The district literacy coordinator initially interprets policy. According to interviews with Ms. Slater and Ms. Lemon, the University's literacy coordinator, a position that recently saw personnel turnover, acts as the liaison between NCDPI and the teachers, mediating messages

between the two actants. Ms. Lemon shared that teachers do not understand NCDPI's role in implementing policies like Read to Achieve, which leads to feelings of mistrust toward the institution. For instance, when I asked about her perception of NCDPI's relationship with schools in the initial interview in September 2016, Ms. Lemon responded, "I don't know. I really don't ... I felt like a lot of them were really removed from what it was like to be in a classroom." Her perception conflicts with how NCDPI aimed to frame the institution's relationship with teachers as an educational ally.

On the basis of my analysis of district-produced documents such as several emails from the beginning of the year from the district coordinator and actor interviews, I found the coordinator is responsible for applying the policy to district-specific practices. Dissemination comes in the form of meetings, emails, and shared manuals on Google Docs with school literacy coaches and teachers, where applicable. The coordinator stays abreast of changes at the state level and must adjust accordingly; however, practitioners at the school level, including Ms. Lemon, complained that district messages often conflict with those from NCDPI. For instance, the district created a rubric for teachers to use when administering and scoring the writing portion of mClass. The rubric was not aligned with the scoring manual provided by mClass and NCDPI as it eliminated an entire score threshold. The discord in information caused confusion among teachers, and the rubric was scrapped.

School literacy coach facilitates policy implementation and acts as teacher advocate.

Whereas the district literacy coordinator is largely responsible for translating statewide policies into district-specific expectations, the school literacy coach plays an integral role in facilitating their implementation at the school level. According to Ms. Slater's October 2016 interview, once the district literacy coordinator receives information about state literacy policies or implements

new local policies, she meets with all the school literacy coaches. Ms. Slater is Midtown's schoolwide literacy coach for all grade levels. All the other University elementary schools have two coaches—K-2 and 3-5. Ms. Slater defined her primary role as literacy coach as providing support for teachers' literacy instruction. Her duties included locating resources, planning lessons, coteaching, and disseminating information about district literacy initiatives to the teachers. In an interview on October 28, 2016, Principal Carmichael reported to me that, although NCDPI and the district literacy coordinator make her aware of the literacy policies affecting her school, she delegates most of the interpretation, presentation, and facilitating of new mandates around literacy to Ms. Slater. In addition, Ms. Slater primarily participates in each grade level's PLC to update the teachers, though she also conducts schoolwide staff training when necessary. The third-grade team agreed that Ms. Slater was their primary source of literacy news and support, often going to her with questions about instructional strategies and policy logistics.

Although Ms. Slater does disseminate the district's messages about literacy policy and instruction as required, she also sees herself as an advocate for teachers. When she feels that new initiatives unfairly tax teachers' time and resources, she acts as their representative. Despite her self-positioning as a teacher advocate, her discourse in her interview (October 18, 2016) reflected her alignment as a policy disseminator rather than an implementer:

The policies and expectations that are placed on teachers and often times those that are making policies and those who are making program decisions are not thinking about how much that disrupts a teacher's day so I wanted to be a voice for classroom teachers to help us—those who are bringing in programs that those that are making policies—think about how is this going to impact instruction and the class if we are continuously adding to classroom teachers and not thinking about what's already in place and how we can build on what's in place to make it stronger instead of adding on more and more.

Ms. Slater advocates for teachers by first sharing her concerns with Principal Carmichael, particularly if the grievances are related to school-specific policies. She also discusses teachers' issues during district coach meetings, weighing with her colleagues the cost versus the benefit of adding new responsibilities to teachers' workload. "I express my thoughts and hope that action happens," she told me.

The school principal drives school-level literacy initiatives. Whereas, according to Principal Carmichael (October 28, 2016 interview), Ms. Slater is largely responsible for facilitating district-relayed policy messages and expectations to each grade level, Principal Carmichael also initiates school-specific literacy initiatives and monitors accountability measures. In our interview (October 28, 2016), Principal Carmichael shared her passion for literacy and its potential to ensure equity for all students.

I need [students] to be able to access curriculum hints, I need [them] to read about, write about, think critically about, make applications so that when [they] are arguing a point [they] can—it helps [them] focus on building not just [their] own opinion but the opinions of others and even critiquing the opinions of others in ways that [they] don't just accept something because it's written in the book or it's written in the text or the newspaper or seeing it in media.

Her views of literacy as an equalizer for marginalized students inspired her to focus on writing across the content areas in the school's improvement plan. To support the initiative, Principal Carmichael described how she introduced the concept to her staff at the beginning of the school year and required they attend professional development sessions and staff meetings to extend their knowledge of writing across the curriculum. The initiative expanded during the 2016-17 school year to include language arts integration within science and social studies, a policy I explain later in this chapter.

Once the initiative was introduced and teacher support for professional learning was put into place, during the same interview Principal Carmichael explained how she used Learning

Walks to gain a better understanding of how teachers were implementing the new policies. The Learning Walks, informal classroom check-ins, provided Principal Carmichael with greater insight into implementation while holding teachers accountable for adhering to the plan. Additionally, Principal Carmichael depended on Ms. Slater to deliver resources and updates and support teachers' implementation through their grade-level PLC meetings, a space for teachers to make sense of the mandates and expectations surrounding them.

The PLC provides a space for teacher sense making. Grade-level PLCs act as the hub where policy meets implementation. PLCs are a school capacity-building tool developed to increase teacher collaboration with the goal of increasing reflective practice and data-driven decision-making (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Marsh et al., 2015; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). Often led by a lead teacher or coach, groups of teachers pour over student data in inquiry-based tasks to improve instruction and extend teachers' data-use skills (Datnow, Park, & Kennedy-Lewis, 2012; Louis & Marks, 1998; Marsh et al., 2015).

The third-grade PLC met at least once a week, often more, and consisted of the three third-grade teachers, the multiclassroom lead teacher (Laurie Miller), and Ms. Slater, the literacy coach. During one observation of the third-grade PLC (October 3, 2016), interventionists such as the exceptional children, English Language Learners, or Academically and Intellectually Gifted teachers joined in. Throughout the school year, the PLC worked together to plan common units, lessons, and assessments based on the Common Core and district standards; scored district performance assessments; requested guidance for working with individual students; and grouped their students for literacy instruction based on the beginning of the year and middle of the year mClass results. According to interviews with Ms. Lemon (September 19 and November 30, 2016) and Ms. Slater (October 18, 2016) as well as my observations, the PLC served as the time

for Ms. Slater to update the teachers on any changes to district policies, such as the reading performance assessments, or help guide them as they began to implement new ones. In response, the teachers could ask questions, get clarification and suggestions, or register complaints. Collectively, PLCs created the space for teacher sense making (Coburn, 2005; Marsh et al., 2015).

Summary of local and school policy actors. This section provided an overview of the district and school policy actors responsible for receiving, interpreting, disseminating, facilitating, and implementing state-, district-, and school-level initiatives contributing to Ms. Lemon's policy landscape in which she teaches. How each actor engages with literacy instructional policies influences Ms. Lemon's instructional milieu (Neumann, 2016; Schwab, 1973), or the structural and institutional factors that influence how Ms. Lemon engages in policies and its effect on her literacy instruction. As such, understanding who the major players in the local network are and how they manipulate policy messages is essential when situating Ms. Lemon's instructional practices within the policy landscape. Based on these findings, the next section outlines the district, school, and PLC-level policies and instructional expectations under which Ms. Lemon must operate.

District, School, and PLC-level Policies Comprising Ms. Lemon's Landscape

Teachers at Midtown Elementary, particularly the third-grade team, encountered four different layers of policies and curricular expectations—state, district, school, and grade-level. State policies required third-grade teachers to (a) adhere to the CCSS, (b) administer the Beginning-Of-Grade (BOG) test, (c) administer the benchmark mClass assessments, (d) continuously monitor the progress of below-grade-level readers, (e) determine which students would be retained and who would be promoted, (f) inform families of their children's progress,

(g) develop personalized education plans where applicable, and (h) record which students qualified for good-cause exemptions. As discussed in earlier chapters, the messages surrounding the state legislature on literacy instruction promoted an autonomous model of literacy (Street, 2003), the big data, and an industrialized and deficit view of students.

District-level literacy policies within Ms. Lemon's policy landscape. Interviews and observations of instruction and grade-level meetings revealed that the district is largely responsible for disseminating state initiatives down to the school level. Although teachers do receive updates from NCDPI, they look to the district for explicit directives on how to implement state mandates within the district's unique context. As such, miscommunications often occurred due to conflicting messages between NCDPI and the district literacy coordinator, particularly during the Read to Achieve's first years of implementation. One example of this dissonance in message happened after the first year of Read to Achieve (2013-14) after state educators complained to lawmakers about the high number of passages required for student portfolios (Bonner, 2014). As a result, the legislature eliminated the portfolio requirement, but that message had not reached the district. Ms. Miller, the third-grade lead teacher, said during our focus group on December 8, 2016, that after her team had rushed to complete all the passages and student portfolios based on the district's instruction, by the end of the 2013-14 school year no one came to retrieve the portfolios. The teachers, she said, ended up recycling the portfolios' contents while the district scrambled to make the changes and inform teachers through school literacy coaches. The miscommunication caused frustration and confusion among the K-3 staff. In her initial interview in September 2016, Ms. Lemon described the chaos she felt during the first couple of years of Read to Achieve.

When Read to Achieve was in full-effect, it changed every week. What was considered a district thing, what was a state thing. Parents would ask us what does this mean. We don't know. [The parents] know as much as we do. The state would change all the rules.

Policies specifically aimed at the district are more specific, drilling down to actual classroom instruction, according to my interviews. For instance, in our first interview, Ms. Lemon described the 2014-15 district literacy initiative requiring teachers to align their instruction with *Learning-Focused Lesson Plan Components* as part of their move toward adapting Understanding by Design. Learning-Focused is an educational company that developed the Learning-Focused Framework, a process by which teachers plan instruction beginning with the outcome goals and moving through strategies and practices to engage students in higher-order thinking (Learning-Focused Lessons, 2015). The template guides teachers' minilesson structure, as well as their work with small groups during literacy instruction. Touting a foundation in research-based and evidence-based practices, the tagline for the company, as per its curricular materials, is "Lessons you believe in." However, when I asked Ms. Lemon if *she* believed in the Learning-Focused Framework (Interview, September 19, 2016), her response was

No ... I believe that good teaching requires good lesson planning and putting thought into lessons, but do I think it's the Learning-Focused template? No, because there's nothing on the Learning-Focused template for any sort of cultural references on anything and that's something that needs to be added to the lesson.

District-level initiatives often require rapid implementation, sometimes without providing proper training. As a result, the district revises the programs at near-constant intervals when implementation goes awry. Ms. Lemon explained how various district-mandated projects and programs would be either revised or abandoned too quickly for teachers to implement fully. The quick turnaround is irritating, she shared. For instance, in her initial interview (September 19, 2016) Ms. Lemon explained that 2 or 3 years before, University Public Schools required teachers to include text talks and rigorous text discussions in their literacy instruction, although the

district did not offer teacher training. After a couple of years, the district abandoned its focus on the initiative, concentrating instead on Learning-Focused lessons, Understanding by Design, and district-created performance assessments.

District-level policies also dictated the structure of the literacy blocks for each grade level. As explained in a district's document "3-5 Reading and Writing Workshop Expectations" (acquired December 2016), the district expected each third- through fifth-grade literacy block to last for 2.5 hours and include balanced literacy, reading and writing workshops, and Focused-Lesson components. The district policy broke each pedagogy down into specific activities and time allotments. For instance, reading should last 80 to 90 minutes and include a teacher-directed minilesson (10-20 minutes), teacher and student collaboration with shared reading and read-alouds (10-15 minutes), and a "student-directed/teacher-guided" period during which students worked independently or in small groups (60 minutes). The guide continued to specify the types of instructional activities within each section, including the amount of time for each.

School-level policies within Ms. Lemon's policy landscape. Policy changes happen quickly at the school level, as well. Shifts in the school's philosophy from a project-based curriculum to a standard curriculum characterize the history of Midtown's literacy instructional policies. As introduced in the previous section, the most recent school initiative impacting Midtown teachers' literacy instruction is the redesign of the traditional literacy block to integrate science and social studies. In her October 28, 2016, interview, Principal Carmichael outlined the school's initiative of using the Understanding by Design framework to map English Language Arts standards to science and social studies content, focusing on how students can transfer their knowledge of both through authentic assessments. The reform requires teachers to rearrange their literacy blocks to include science and social studies activities, such as labs and experiments.

Besides the school's focus on writing across the curriculum, the impetus for the initiative was the need for teachers to meet content requirements for science and social studies, areas that teachers often cut from their classroom schedules due to time limitations. "How are we building background for students to even be successful when the reality is, chances are we are not going to extend the day?" Principal Carmichael explained (Interview, October 28, 2016). "So, how are we going to get the time we have and knowing that we don't separate [content and literacy] in real life ... and so we need the integration." As such, she scheduled three training and planning sessions for each PLC to teach them how to design integrated units of study.

The training caused confusion, according to the third-grade PLC (Focus group, December 8, 2016). While the team believes that integrating literacy objectives with science and social studies is a worthwhile endeavor, implementation at the school level has been less than intuitive. Teachers use YAAGs, or Year at a Glances, a district-created document with the schedule of standards and assessments for literacy, to plan the unit. However, the timing of the YAAGs does not align with the calendar of the science and social studies standards, creating a mismatch of objectives. Ms. Miller, the lead teacher, explained in our focus group, "The unit we are working on making up, the literacy goal is a very small goal and doesn't even fit with the content we're teaching at all." Ms. Lemon agreed, pointing out that the the literacy standards should drive the content, not the other way around.

Another literacy instructional initiative unique to Midtown was the extension of the Learning-Focused Framework to include teaching the Tested Seven (Thompson, 2011). Developed by Learning-Focused, the Tested Seven is described by Dr. Max Thompson as the seven reading comprehension foci most often included on state standardized tests. The seven areas are main idea, sequencing, compare/contrast, fact and opinion, cause/effect, inferences, and

literary elements. Teachers should introduce the seven areas in a particular order during the first 20 days of the school year. They create anchor charts that include the topic, the description, signal words, and a graphic organizer. Teachers then refer to the anchor charts throughout the year. Ms. Lemon lamented during her initial interview (September 19, 2016), “We’re supposed to have them above our board, but I don’t know what I’ll do because I love my numbers.” In support of the Tested Seven program, for each teacher the school purchased a flipchart with all the strategies, complete with examples of comprehension question stems developed from standardized tests. My observations revealed that Ms. Lemon’s remained buried under piles of student work, indicating she rarely referred to the resource.

PLC-level policies within Ms. Lemon’s policy landscape. The data revealed the crucial role Ms. Lemon’s PLC played in her understanding and enactment of state, district, and school policies. In putting policy into practice in conjunction with the various levels’ directives, the PLC established common routines, procedures, and expectations for the group to follow. Specifically, the PLC developed lesson plans using the Learning-Focused templates and ELA standards, with the unquestioned assumption that each teacher would use them during instruction. The group adhered to the same timeline, despite having very different groups of students. Likewise, the PLC was responsible for combing through student mClass data to form reading groups across the grade level. During my observation of a PLC literacy planning meeting on October 3, 2016, each teacher and interventionist was assigned a groups of students for phonics, guided reading, and writing instruction (book clubs for students above grade level) based on their abilities and needs.

Interviews with Ms. Lemon and the PLC focus group indicated that the cohesion of the PLC held a powerful grip on the ways Midtown third-grade teachers engaged in literacy

instruction. The solidity of the group made it so that straying from the routines and procedures would be harder for Ms. Lemon than it was to implement the PLC-created lesson plans and units. For instance, during our second interview (November 30, 2016), when I questioned Ms. Lemon about the differences between her LAAG and her actual instruction, Ms. Lemon explained that the rigorous text discussions and text talks she equated to high-quality literacy instruction were missing from her current instruction due to her dependency on the PLC.

We never plan them as a PLC, I guess. What I would like to ideally do is teach the standards through the discussions like that, but no, I guess at this point, we do so much as a PLC, we do everything together, and I think that that would be a really big feat to have to recreate our lessons and things based on rigorous text discussions.

The above quote describes how, most often, Ms. Lemon abandons her ideal literacy instructional practices to follow her PLC and use the collectively premade lesson plans based on Learning-Focused templates. The PLC plays a major role in how Ms. Lemon navigates her beliefs and expectations and implements instruction.

State, Local, and School Policies Create Conflicting Messages

To this point, the discussion has centered around the key actors and policies shaping the policy landscape and milieu in which Ms. Lemon must make instructional decisions about literacy. Here I describe how Ms. Lemon's policy landscape contributes to the narrative that defines literacy, instruction, and learners. Understanding how Ms. Lemon's network forms these messages provides greater context into how she negotiates the messages around other internal and external factors, contributing to her literacy instructional decisions.

Whereas University Public Schools and Midtown share a mission of supporting equity, diversity, and valuing children's experiences, the literacy instructional expectations center around standardization, data-privileging, and student labeling. Though the state policies are unavoidable, local policies continue to support representations of literacy as autonomous.

This conflict between supporting and celebrating culturally conscious teaching and learning and valuing assessment and universal skills and strategies was evident from the analysis of the interviews and district and school artifacts. During my interview with Principal Carmichael on October 28, 2016, she described the school's mission to provide an environment where students are free to express individuality and acceptance of all cultures and perspectives. Further, the school culture aimed to bridge the academic achievement gap through relationship building and authentic literacy practices that honor students' interests and abilities. However, in the same interview, Principal Carmichael described the heightened role of data in teacher decision-making over teacher expertise.

I don't know how you can continue instruction without data. Honestly, I do not. ... Now do I think mClass is the only way? No. My question would be what's your alternative? If you're saying this doesn't work, and we are testing students to death yet you can't tell me with certainty where a student is, then I need to know what's your alternative. ... "In God I trust. Everyone else—I need data."

As I will show in upcoming chapters, privileging teaching to the test and narrowing curriculum to the standards and the Big 5 is also apparent in the adoption of the Learning-Focused framework, the Tested Seven, and an intensive, schoolwide focus writing in response to reading, an mClass-driven unit. The perpetuation of student labeling using mClass as a narrow indicator of success occurs when the PLC works together to assign students to their reading groups. Ms. Lemon encountered all these messages throughout her literacy instruction, influencing her mediation and negotiation between them and her beliefs about literacy, policy, teaching, and her students.

One research question grounding this study is whether and how an elementary school teacher negotiates her literacy instructional beliefs in conjunction with state and local literacy policies in practice. Thus far, I have followed Read to Achieve's social translation and identified

how it has defined literacy, instruction, and learning through its narrative plot. In this chapter, I have described the tapestry of policy mandates underlying Read to Achieve, as well as local and school literacy initiatives and the major actors responsible for enacting them. Now that I have established the policies under which Ms. Lemon exists in the classroom, I will discuss how Ms. Lemon's literacy instruction unfolded in relation to her policy landscape. In examining Ms. Lemon's mediational moves, we must first review how she perceives high-quality literacy instruction to be via her completed LAAG.

Who Is Suzie Lemon? A Beliefs Profile

The current study assumes a deep connection between teachers' belief systems and their interpretation and enactment of literacy instruction. To determine if and how Ms. Lemon negotiated both internal and external factors as manifested through her literacy instruction, I developed a profile outlining her personal and instructional beliefs. Grounded in the reviewed literature, interviews and the completed LAAG informed Ms. Lemon's beliefs profile around the following areas: (a) Ms. Lemon as a student and literate being, (b) quality teaching and literacy instruction, (c) Ms. Lemon's students, and (d) policy. The final category of Ms. Lemon's beliefs profile depicts her deeply-entrenched and influential views on race and social justice.

Ms. Lemon as a Literate Being

Ms. Lemon identifies as an upper-middle-class, White female brought up by a somewhat conservative Southern family. Growing up, Ms. Lemon went to a K-12 private school and recalls writing in letter books during kindergarten as her earliest memory of literacy. She remembered voluntarily staying in at recess to work on her letter books, not because she loved it but because she was trying to please her teacher. "I was obsessed with pleasing everyone," she said in her initial interview (September 19, 2016). She was never an avid reader or a writer, something she

equated with being smart, creative, and artistic, like her two sisters. In upper elementary school, her mother would try to coax Ms. Lemon into reading novels, but if the books did not interest her, her mother would have to read them to her. “I was very Math,” she told me. “Still am. I love Math. It’s who I am.”

Though Math was her favorite subject and she struggled early on with reading, she still enjoyed reading certain kinds of books. Growing up her favorite books were from the Amelia Bedelia series, books her father hated. She loved them because they had silly rhymes and predictable text, features she felt were important because they helped her read like her sisters did. Later, in 7th grade, Ms. Lemon’s English teacher challenged her to read more critically and examine literature, opening her up to more advanced texts. However, it was Ms. Lemon’s 11th-grade teacher whom she claims changed her life:

Mrs. X opened me up to the outside world because she came from Princeton and she was a lesbian, and she changed my entire literacy. . . . I think she was the first real pathway to see that there were other things out there in life. I took Women Studies 101 at [University] because of her. It was my favorite class at [University]. (Interview, September 19, 2016)

Her favorite books as a young adult included *My Antonia* and anything written in French, particularly *The Little Prince*. For someone who rarely enjoyed reading, her tastes expanded to include more challenging literary texts. Her favorites are short stories, particularly the works of notable female writers like Flannery O’Connor and Emily Dickinson.

Identifying as a nonreader early on has influenced how Ms. Lemon connects to her students who may view themselves similarly. Those third-grade students hate reading, she said, because they are often behind and want to read chapter books but can’t. Though this was not necessarily her experience, Ms. Lemon strives to normalize her students’ feelings by sharing with them her newfound habit of reading as an adult. She tries to read daily, and although she

likes fantasy novels, she finds herself drawn mostly to academic and professional books about race, specifically by authors like Lisa Delpit. Ms. Lemon participated in a book club for families of color at her university alma mater, reading a book about microaggressions. “It was awesome,” she shared.

Ms. Lemon’s Beliefs About Quality Teaching and Literacy Instruction

According to her September interview, Ms. Lemon wanted to be a teacher from an early age. Her parents transformed a room in the family basement into a play classroom, complete with whiteboards and desks. For Ms. Lemon, the role of a teacher is to facilitate a student’s love of learning. To her, teachers are not top-down givers of knowledge. Rather, the most important aspect of teaching, according to Ms. Lemon, is fostering partnerships not only with students but also their families and the community surrounding the school. Reminiscent of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model (1992), she posits, “The development of a child is not just the teacher’s job and not just the parents’ job, but also the job of the community. It’s not just family, school, teacher—it’s also every single person in the community” (Interview, September 19, 2016).

Good teachers, said Ms. Lemon, don’t just build relationships with their students. Good teachers are dynamic and adapt, adjust, and grow for and alongside their students. To Ms. Lemon, good teachers put maximum effort into their jobs, including thoughtfully planning lessons, knowing that the stakes are high:

I can’t half-ass my job. ... I morally can’t do that. ... The way that I act and the way that I push my students and believe in my students is what is going to make or break their year in here. So much of their future relies on what they learn in school and the way I act and the way they see me as a role model or not. I try and come in here every day and make them want to come to school and want to learn and want to come back. They do come back every morning, so I guess I’m a good teacher. (Interview, September 19, 2016)

Ms. Lemon graduated from a traditional, 4-year teacher preparation program taught by the university near Midtown. Having only taken one literacy course, Literacy Methods, she has used what she learned about shared reading and writing, as well as running records. However, Ms. Lemon did not feel prepared to teach the basics of reading to her students, particularly around phonics. Even as a 5th-year teacher she did not feel knowledgeable or confident in her abilities to teach foundational reading skills.

In the same interview, Ms. Lemon described good literacy teachers as knowing the basics of reading and what standards to meet but also those who are willing to dig deeper and encourage students' critical thinking through authentic and engaging texts. Teachers, she said, more often associate problem solving with teaching math and science, but literacy instruction can foster some of those same skills. "I think people don't realize it," she mentioned. "They think we have to teach main idea because we have to teach it. Go further than that." Teaching literacy without facilitating critical thinking only results in read-and-respond understanding, something she is frustrated about when talking about her current students. "I could tell a lot of them [students] had been trained to look back in the book for answers ... there's really little critical thinking that I've seen from this group."

Ms. Lemon's Language Arts Activity Grid. Ms. Lemon's completion of the LAAG provided a clearer picture of what comprises quality literacy instruction. Table 7 displays her answer. Based on her LAAG responses, Ms. Lemon values the social nature of literacy, preferring rich discussions using authentic texts over teacher-led, standardized lessons.

Table 7

Ms. Lemon's Initial Language Arts Activity Grid

<u>Literacy Activity</u>	<u>Time Allotted</u>	<u>%</u>
Rigorous text discussion, using a picture book (focused on teaching points within Common Core Standards)	40 minutes	33.3%
Small groups		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heterogeneous Strategy Groups • Guided Writing • Guided Reading (if necessary) • Phonics Group 	60 minutes	50%
While students are not with a teacher, they are moving between:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on Writing • Read to Self • Listen to Reading 		
Chapter book read-aloud with emphasis on vocabulary words (Text Talks)	20 minutes	16.6%

Rigorous text discussions and Text Talks would comprise half of her ideal literacy block.

Rigorous text discussions, a strategy Ms. Lemon credited to the Institute for Learning, are 45-minute blocks of time during which the teacher reads a picture book without the pictures first and ask questions, then reads it again showing the pictures and facilitating discussions. Although the Institute for Learning does not specifically mention rigorous text discussions or Text Talks, it does include Accountable Talk as one of its nine principles. Accountable Talk promotes discussions that are responsible for the learning community, accurate knowledge, and rigorous thinking (Michaels, O'Connor, Hall, & Resnick, 2013).

Text Talks, like rigorous text discussions, include the teacher reading aloud a chapter book, discussing the story while focusing on building vocabulary. Both read-aloud strategies align with her definition of quality literacy instruction as authentic discussions fostered by authentic texts for authentic purposes. According to her September interview, she believes that Text Talks also provides a much-needed opportunity for students to learn more advanced vocabulary, something she believes her students desperately need.

My favorite thing for literacy to do is read alouds, whether it be picture books or chapter books. I love a good read aloud, and I think that's what so many kids, especially my

students of color, it shows in research that their vocabulary is so far behind their White peers and my favorite way to teach vocabulary is through a really good read aloud. (Interview, September 19, 2016)

Children's literature, particularly books highlighting issues around race, equity, and social justice, also play a prominent role in Ms. Lemon's beliefs about literacy and her students. She firmly believes in the critical need for books that include characters of all races, religions, and ethnicities in both typical and inspiring storylines. During one informal check-in on September 26, 2016, she told me how she applied for and received a grant to stock her classroom with what she calls Power Reads, or books to inspire, uplift, motivate, and spark critical conversations between her and her students. Ms. Lemon's collection of Power Reads include *Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh; *Big Hair, Don't Care* by Crystal Swain-Bates; *Sí, Se Puede* by Diana Cohn; and *Nasreen's Secret School: A True Story from Afghanistan* by Jeanette Winter, to name a few (see Appendix J). One chapter book, *How to Steal a Dog* by Barbara O'Connor, a story about a young girl living in poverty desperate enough to steal someone's dog for the reward money, was always situated on the white board, ready for reading.

In her initial interview (September 19, 2016), Ms. Lemon described how she loved to read aloud from her collection of Power Reads when doing rigorous text discussions and Text Talks. Power Reads foster deep and critical conversations while still covering the standards, she said. They also keep the marginalized students, those who participate less often such as her students of color and ELL students, engaged and discussing the book with the class. During her midyear interview on November 30, 2016, she recalled the time she read *Malala, a Brave Girl from Pakistan/Iqbal, a Brave Boy from Pakistan* by Jeanette Winter (which I observed on September 28, 2016), and one of her Burmese students who often disengaged from literacy

minilessons was enthralled with the stories of overcoming violence. So much so, she said, that he asked to read the book on his own with assistance from the ELL teacher.

Ms. Lemon's Beliefs About Her Students

Ms. Lemon loves teaching third grade, every year telling her colleagues how each new class is her favorite. She found her current group to be the kindest and most supportive, a cohesive bunch. Despite that, she felt that the class also had the lowest ability compared to previous classes. Although incredibly diverse across race, ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status, Ms. Lemon's current class had a significant proportion of students she said were reading below grade-level. One student, she lamented, was on a Level G, typically considered an early second-grade level. She always gets the more difficult classes, Ms. Lemon told me during our first check-in.

The third-grade curriculum is Ms. Lemon's favorite to teach, although she has not taught any other grade. She was worried for her current class, however. Her students struggled with activities and lessons that previous years' classes had no problems completing. She was concerned at their inability to critically think about reading, citing them during her initial interview as "the least sophisticated thinkers I've ever had." Her students are dependent upon finding precise answers from their texts rather than drawing their own conclusions and inferring meaning. Increasing her class's ability to discuss texts at a higher level was a major goal for the year.

On the basis of her understanding of her students, Ms. Lemon believes that many of them were at a disadvantage when it came to completing certain tasks, particularly standardized assessments. In her opinion, cultural and language factors precluded some of her students from achieving at the highest levels they could. Citing research and professional texts about race and

education, though not by name, Ms. Lemon told me during her initial interview that she believes biased testing, inauthentic pedagogies, and unengaging texts further perpetuated systemic and academic inequalities. She feels that standardized tests like the EOG do little to include culturally relevant topics and questions. As such, she shared with me how she saw it as her responsibility to ensure her students, especially those in certain subgroups, were well prepared to handle the testing, even though she does not believe in its validity.

Ms. Lemon's Beliefs About Policy

During the September interview and again during the third-grade focus group, Ms. Lemon rated highly her level of awareness about state and local policies; however, her understanding of the intricacies of policy is not as strong as she would like it to be. The pace at which the state legislature, NCDPI, and the district initiate and modify new programs and mandates prevents Ms. Lemon from staying actively engaged in education policy. She is frustrated by the lack of consistency among the three parties and the messages teachers get as the outcome of the discord. She also believes those who put policies into place for teachers are out of touch with what is happening in the classroom.

Ms. Lemon has a functioning knowledge of Read to Achieve based on her experiences with it since its inception. However, when I asked her what she thought the policy's overall goal was during our first interview, she believes the purpose is to ensure all children are "reading ready" in third grade. She does not believe that the program is achieving its goal:

I think it needed to start way earlier than third grade. I think it's an awful idea because it's like, third grade teachers—alert, alert—if your kids can't read, they need to be able to read by the end of the year or else they can't go to fourth grade. They need to be able to read before they get to third grade. If you're trying to get kids to read by the end of third grade, so you're just going to use the third grade year to...? It doesn't make sense at all to me.

The focus on third grade, specifically the use of EOGs to measure teachers' performance, frustrates Ms. Lemon. She believes the policy is unfair because the primary teachers use mClass results to measure effectiveness, a subjective measure, she says. "It blows my mind," she told me during our November interview.

Ms. Lemon's Beliefs About Race and Social Justice

Ms. Lemon's views on race and social justice heavily influence many other aspects of her beliefs profile. Ms. Lemon believes her private education kept her "sheltered" from other people's experiences, including issues around poverty and race. Claiming to be an advocate for public schools, Ms. Lemon declared that she would never teach in a private school, nor would her future children attend one unless, she qualified, "the public school system where I ended up living was in shambles" (Interview, September 19, 2017).

Though her parents were influential in shaping her as a person, she credited her college experience with exposing her to the new ideas and perspectives that have contributed to who she is as a teacher. In her initial interview, she said:

When I got to [college], I completely changed who I was. I felt like I was just introduced to this new world. What it means to have your own opinions and be liberal thinking. ... I feel like I became my own person in college and changed. I developed my own ideas and opinions about things. I always felt like I was smart, but just I don't think that I had much chance to explore other avenues of life and culture and things like that.

Ms. Lemon's college professors taught her about White privilege, the intersectionality of oppression, and its effects on education and students. According to Ms. Lemon, these conversations sparked a fascination with and passion for advocacy, inspiring her to leverage her power and access as a White woman to provide equitable experiences for her future students. She read academic and professional books on race, culture, and language and the systemic injustices "Black and Brown kids [and] people face every day."

Ms. Lemon applied her new understanding to her first teaching job as a third-grade teacher in a large urban district next to University Public Schools. She was the only White person in her classroom, and one of few White people in the school. It was then that she realized “how White I was and how to use my power in a way that would help close the racism that I noticed every day.” Ms. Lemon’s privilege is her power, though she was quick to explain to me that she is not someone who views herself as the White savior trope (Popkewitz, 1998), dismissing the notion in our first interview as misguided, though a good start toward systemic change. However, Ms. Lemon left her first job for the third-grade position at Midtown where she was no longer the minority.

Ms. Lemon views state and local policies relying on standardized assessments, including Read to Achieve, as perpetuating institutionalized inequities in education. Measuring her students’ abilities through formal testing like the EOGs is problematic, she said, because it disregards any cultural factors. Reading passages and related questions are not sensitive to students’ cultural experiences and are not accessible to large subgroups of her class, namely students of color, students with first languages other than English, students of immigrant families, and students with low socioeconomic status.

She believes Read to Achieve harms the same groups of students. During our initial interview, she shared her experience in teaching the Read to Achieve summer camp that informed her belief about the policy’s perpetuation of inequity. The summer camp serves as intensive literacy instruction for students who were not promoted to fourth grade at the end of the school year. The camp was held in Ms. Lemon’s classroom that summer, and a large proportion of the campers were Ms. Lemon’s former students. After visiting the first week, the literacy coach asked if Ms. Lemon would be willing to stay and coteach the remaining sessions. “I loved

it because we did literacy all day, which is so crazy coming out of my mouth because I love math so much,” she said.

However, she noticed that all the students in the camp were students of color, largely Black males. She described how working at the summer camp opened her eyes to the systemic racism inherent in the policy:

What blew my mind the first day and what made me want to stay and do it was ... everything was locked in my closet so three students who were in my class who were EC students, all of them are boys below grade level. They were the ones I fought to be there instead of doing anything else. If they’re going to be at summer school, they need to be in the reading one. I watched them all year, struggle and look around the room because they knew they were behind everyone. We got resources from Read to Achieve money to get all these books that were lower level. I watched them book shop when I was here. They pulled out books that they would consider baby books. They were excited to see that they both had them in their box. Everyone looked at them. Everyone was at the same level as them. They didn’t feel threatened. They didn’t feel like anyone was better than them. We talked about it every day at how eye opening it was and what it would take to get it to the point where it wasn’t like that during the school year. ... I felt like they felt empowered to want to be there and want to read.

She explained how conflicted she felt while telling me her story. On one hand, her stint at summer camp, where she taught literacy all day to students who never experienced literacy instruction on their terms, was exhilarating. On the other, it made her realize the potential harm Read to Achieve was causing:

It makes me so sad because it is segregation. We didn’t know what to do. We kept trying to think of how to counteract everything so that it didn’t get to that point. ... [Summer camp] wasn’t something that I could have tried to recreate because the difference in school culture and what it’s like when there are White kids in the room or Asian kids in the room, or what it’s like when there’s an EC teacher coming in and pulling out kids or an AIG gifted specialist coming in. I don’t know the answer.

Ideal vs Reality: Examining the Language Arts Activity Grid and Actual Instruction

In investigating whether Ms. Lemon negotiated her beliefs, classroom context, and policy landscape through her literacy instruction, I first determined whether Ms. Lemon engaged in literacy instruction that was aligned to or conflicting with her beliefs about what she defined as

her ideal literacy instruction. As such, I turn to her completed LAAG, as well as the commentary I gathered from Ms. Lemon's interviews, as a proxy for her beliefs about her ideal literacy instruction. I then describe what Ms. Lemon's actual literacy instruction looked like based on my observations and analysis using the same LAAG activity codes. Finally, I compare Ms. Lemon's ideal instruction to her instructional reality, setting the stage for my analysis revealing her instructional negotiations.

Ms. Lemon's Language Arts Activity Grid Privileges Social, Authentic Practices

Recall from Ms. Lemon's beliefs profile that her LAAG largely favors social aspects of literacy instruction using engaging texts for authentic purposes. As shown in Table 7, engaging students in authentic conversations through the reading aloud of rich texts is the foundation of her ideal literacy instruction, as she expressed on her LAAG and various interviews and follow-ups. Read alouds bookend the beginning and end of her ideal literacy instruction, through rigorous text discussions with picture books and text talks with chapter books, respectively. Comprising the middle of her ideal literacy block are small-group instructional sessions with heterogeneous strategy groups. Students who would not be meeting with her during that time would work independently on reading, writing, or listening.

In coding the LAAG, I realized that the teacher-managed code as defined by Cunningham and colleagues (2009) was a particularly broad category covering any teacher-led instruction. Examples include minilessons, read alouds, guided reading, and whole-class shared reading. Ms. Lemon's LAAG required a more nuanced coding scheme so that I could more accurately discern various types of teacher-led activities. Therefore, I disaggregated the code to include read-aloud lessons and guided reading and strategy group lessons. Also, the way Ms. Lemon constructed her literacy block necessitated a double-coding strategy, in which I assigned more than one activity

code for each percentage of the lesson. For instance, I coded the teacher-facilitated small-group instruction as teacher-managed (T-M) and the independent work as Independent Reading (Ind.). Based on the revised coding scheme, Ms. Lemon’s ideal literacy block comprised 120 minutes of some form of teacher-managed instruction (50% read-aloud and 50% small-group) and 60 minutes of independent work. Within the teacher-managed lessons, Ms. Lemon described how she would use rigorous text discussions and text talks with chapter books to satisfy the Common Core standards, as well as focus on building students’ vocabulary⁸.

Once I coded Ms. Lemon’s LAAG, I used the results to compare what she believed to be her ideal literacy instruction to the actual literacy instructional activities I observed during the study.

Ms. Lemon’s Actual Literacy Instruction Differed From Her LAAG

To compare Ms. Lemon’s ideal literacy instructional block as she indicated on the LAAG to her reality, I totaled the number of observed minutes for each activity code and the percentage of total instructional time spent on each activity. Table 8 displays Ms. Lemon’s typical literacy instructional schedule, and Table 9 shows the proportion of time during which Ms. Lemon and her students participated in each literacy instructional activity.

Table 8

Ms. Lemon’s Literacy Instructional Schedule

Time	Instruction
10:15	Fundations
10:45	Minilesson
11:05	Rotations/Guided Reading
11:50	Writing Workshop
12:10	Work on Writing
12:30	Lunch

⁸ I did not code the chapter-book read alouds as Vocabulary because it was not a stand-alone vocabulary lesson as described by Cunningham and colleagues (2009). See Appendix B for the code book.

Table 9

Frequency and Percentage of Each Observed Literacy Instructional Activity, by Minute

Activity Code	Number of Minutes	Percentage
Independent Reading	522	27.9%
Teacher-managed	509	27.2%
Writing	439	23.5%
Assessment	339	18.1%
Other	209	11.2%
Concepts of Print	76	4.1%
Phonics	53	2.8%
Oral Language	34	1.8%
Mechanics	31	1.7%
Phonemic Awareness	14	0.7%
Literature	11	0.6%
Sight Words	0	0.0%
Vocabulary	0	0.0%

Note. The total does not include observations of transitions, which accounted for 137 minutes, 7.3%. Total percentage exceeds 100% due to double-coding of activities.

Of the coded activities, I observed students participating in independent reading, or Read to Self, most often (27.9%). Students independently read or listened to books for an average of 27.5 minutes per literacy block, which is a little less than half of what Ms. Lemon would like during her ideal literacy block (1 hour or 50% of the block, combined with small-group instruction). Per district literacy policy documents, students should be able to sustain their independent reading for 40 minutes by the middle of the year. Typically, students read to themselves during their rotations when they were not in small-group instruction. However, Ms. Lemon also assigned independent reading when she needed something quiet for students to do while she attended to other tasks, such as mClass assessments, sorting book orders, or answering emails. I witnessed two instances where Ms. Lemon used independent reading as a punishment for students who were talking during silent work or fooling around. During Read to Self, students could read where they felt comfortable, though Ms. Lemon did not allow buddy reading.

Teacher-Managed Instruction Was Prominent and Varied

Ms. Lemon taught teacher-managed instruction almost as often as students read independently, 27.2% of observed lessons. I initially coded all the observations using the original definition of teacher-managed lessons, and again using the revised codes for read alouds and guided reading groups, leaving another code for traditional teacher-led minilessons. The results revealed that on average Ms. Lemon spent about 27 minutes conducting teacher-managed lessons during a typical literacy block. I only observed three lessons that did not have any teacher-managed activity.

After the second round of coding, it became clear that there were three distinct ways Ms. Lemon used read alouds in her instruction. Throughout the observation data, Ms. Lemon used read aloud a picture book as part of a planned lesson, read aloud a picture book as an impromptu activity, or read aloud a reading passage during a minilesson. As such, I accounted for cases where Ms. Lemon used a read aloud as part of her plan, as a stand-alone impromptu activity, or using a passage as part of a minilesson. Table 10 shows the results of the more nuanced round of coding.

Table 10

Frequency and Percentage of Types of Observed Teacher-Managed (T-M) Activities, by Minute

Activity Code	Number of Minutes	Percentage of T-M	Overall Percentage
Traditional Minilesson	227	45.6%	12.2%
Guided Reading	123	24.7%	6.6%
Read Aloud- Planned	62	12.5%	3.3%
Read aloud- Other	47	9.4%	2.5%
Passage Read Aloud	39	7.8%	2.1%

Once disaggregated, the analysis showed that of the five types of teacher-managed activities I observed, Ms. Lemon most often taught using a traditional, teacher-facilitated minilesson structure grounded in the Learning-Focused Framework. Typically, each minilesson

began with a review of the essential question, the activation of prior knowledge (known as Links to Experience), and students choral reading the expected objectives. The format reflected the district's instructional expectations. Example objectives included defining and explaining idioms, use context clues to define unknown words, and asking questions to monitor comprehension. Ms. Lemon also taught the Tested Seven through minilessons. Each minilesson lasted an average of 15 minutes and culminated in a minilesson writing assignment during which students answered a prompt about the day's minilesson.

Guided reading activities seldom occurred in actual instruction. During my observations, Ms. Lemon only met with her guided reading group 6.6% of the overall instructional time, about six lessons. Ms. Lemon's guided reading group was comprised of the most at-risk students, those who were labeled "red" and reading below grade level. Per the district literacy expectations, teachers are supposed to conduct guided reading group lessons for at-risk students daily. However, that was not the case in Ms. Lemon's classroom. One reason I did not observe more guided reading lessons is that the third-grade team did not assign guided reading groups until the 6th week of school after they administered the BOY mClass assessments. Another possible reason was a lack of time in the instructional schedule. For instance, during an observation of her literacy block that took place on November 14, Ms. Lemon was helping two students finish a science project instead of meeting with her guided reading group. She said to me, "You probably think I'm the worst teacher ever because I haven't done guided reading, but I have to get these iMovies done. They are taking forever."

Ms. Lemon engaged in three types of read-aloud activities. Some form of read-aloud activity comprised a little over 10% of the observed instruction. Ms. Lemon read aloud in three different ways: (a) a short reading passage during a minilesson (2.1%), (b) a planned picture

book during a minilesson or to extend a minilesson (3.3%), or (c) improvised and unplanned picture book (2.5%). The types of read alouds Ms. Lemon performed varied depending on the objective and context. Ms. Lemon intentionally planned a little over half of the picture-book read alouds, purposefully choosing texts to support the lesson's English language arts standards and objectives. For instance, while teaching text selection and "just-right books" during a lesson on October 5, Ms. Lemon read aloud *Those Shoes* by Maribeth Boelts (2007), a story about a boy whose family cannot afford the cool new sneakers, so he tries to wear a pair that is too small. She asked the class how the story related to just-right books, fostering discussions about the importance of finding the right fit in book selection, just like shoes. When teaching the Tested Seven's lesson on compare and contrast in September, she read *Malala, a Brave Girl from Pakistan/Iqbal, a Brave Boy from Pakistan: Two Stories* by Jeanette Winter (2014), prompting students to discuss the similarities and differences between the two children's experiences.

The other type of picture-book read aloud was more impromptu, often the last resort when Ms. Lemon was tired, frustrated, or not feeling well, or if her class was especially rowdy. Often the read alouds replaced a planned lesson. She read books for fun, like *Billy's Booger* by William Joyce and *Moonbot* (2015) and *Peanut Butter and Cupcake* by Terry Border (2014), as a break from traditional instruction. "I just need to chill out," Ms. Lemon said to me during an October 18 observation. At other times, she read from her collection of Power Books, like *Sonia Sotomayor, a Judge Grows in the Bronx* by Jonah Winter (2009), inspired by events outside of the classroom, like the presidential election that was happening 4 days later. However, these types of read alouds happened least often.

Writing in Response to Reading Dominated the Writing Activities

According to Cunningham and colleagues (2009), the writing activity code encompasses traditional writing instruction (prewriting, drafting, revising, publishing) and writing in response to reading. Most of the writing-coded instruction was the latter in the form of Minilesson (ML) Writing. The third-grade teachers assigned students ML Writing assignments at the end of each minilesson as a review of the lesson content. Each ML Writing prompt began with the students copying the date and the lesson topic, along with the assignment, in their reading notebooks. Students then answered the prompts, first restating the question as a statement. Ms. Lemon used the ML Writing assignment as her guided reading lesson for three of the lessons I observed. She guided her group, providing step-by-step think-alouds to help the students answer the question or complete the prompt. For example, after Ms. Lemon taught the lesson using the Malala and Iqbal picture book, she asked students to compare and contrast the two figures. Students completed the following prompt: “The way they are alike is that both are/have _____, but what’s different is that _____ are/have _____.”

Ms. Lemon introduced ML Writing in September during the third-grade unit on Responding to Reading, a unit that is directly applicable to the mClass Text Reading Comprehension. The third-grade team is responsible for teaching students how to respond to their reading in writing, including restating the question, writing the answer, and finding evidence from the book. Students follow those steps when completing any writing prompt. Writing in response to reading is also a focus of the school’s improvement plan. During our second interview, Ms. Lemon told me that she found the ML Writing helpful in teaching her students how to summarize their learning in written format, though she admits “it’s essentially about teaching them how to do mClass.” Citing research supporting writing across the

disciplines, Principal Carmichael explained in her interview, “the minute you increase your writing, you see the increase in reading and being able to model and share some of those things that you are learning from different books and authors.” However, Ms. Lemon noted in that second interview that her students were not using ML Writing to express their critical thinking but rather to answer basic literacy questions. The way she taught ML Writing with her current class was much more structured and explicit because of their lack of critical-thinking skills. “In the past, it would be more of like ‘Relate it to your book’ which I wish they could do, but I don’t think they are there yet,” Ms. Lemon said.

Formal Assessment Activities Comprised 18% of Classroom Instruction

Ms. Lemon spent an average of 33.5 minutes a day administering assessments, both formative and summative, formal and informal. Though Ms. Lemon did not assess students for 11 of the 20 formal observations, children completed assessments for over 30 minutes about 20% of the time. Assessments were clustered at the beginning and end of the observation period, roughly the beginning and middle of the school year. The longest Ms. Lemon spent assessing students in one observation was 85 minutes during which she administered the BOY mClass at the beginning of September. Other assessments included the district performance assessment, several Foundations assessments on phonics and spelling, and a practice BOG, as well as progress monitoring using the mClass and the whole-class DIBELS DAZE assessment.

Ms. Lemon’s Ideal Literacy Instruction Differs From Her Actual Instruction

Comparing Ms. Lemon’s typical literacy instruction shows a discrepancy between how Ms. Lemon wants to teach, grounded in her beliefs and ideologies about literacy instruction and her surrounding contexts, and how she enacts her instruction. However, the reality revealed Ms. Lemon read aloud a picture book for a total of 109 minutes (5.8% of the total observation time),

and she never read aloud from a chapter book during a typical literacy block. Since the beginning of the school year, Ms. Lemon was reading *How to Steal a Dog*, a chapter book, to her class and it was always somewhere on the schedule, so it is possible that she read the book at other times. However, she never included chapter-book read alouds as part of the daily literacy instruction.

In our November interview, Ms. Lemon explained that she was unable to teach using rigorous text discussions of picture books because she was following her PLC's planned lessons. Time was also a factor, particularly when it came to fitting in a chapter-book reading. Students asked about reading *How to Steal a Dog* several times during my observations. However, Ms. Lemon felt she never had enough time to include it because of the needs of her students and the new pressure of the district's performance assessments.

The thing is is that it's a catch-22 because I think that they need the chapter book read-aloud, in my opinion maybe even more—but I'm mandated to—I feel obligated to make sure they understand how to do this opinion writing because they are going to have to do one of the district performance assessment. I guess the reason why I'm not doing the read-aloud as much as I want is because of the district-mandated assessments. (Interview, November 30, 2016)

The amount of time Ms. Lemon spent teaching her guided reading group, though far less than the district prescribed, aligned with her ideal literacy block. She indicated on her LAAG that during a 1-hour chunk in the middle of her literacy block, she would alternate between heterogeneous strategy groups, guided writing groups, phonics groups, and guided reading groups only when necessary. She believed that static guided reading groups based on ability could be damaging to students and lead to the resegregation of students from traditionally oppressed populations. Research confirms her reservations (Cummins, 2007; Ford & Opitz, 2011). Rather, she preferred to teach fluid strategy groups, dynamically developed regardless of reading level. Ms. Lemon explained the influence of critical educational researcher Lisa Delpit on her beliefs about guided reading:

I feel like my beliefs about race--that's why I believe more in strategy groups because if you look at typical guided reading, your groups are segregated. If you do guided reading, you have segregated groups. My second year teaching, my student looked at me one day and he said, "Why are all the people in my group always Black and why do we meet with you every day and how come the other groups don't?" I changed everything since then. ... I was doing [guided reading] because I was supposed to do it because the district is telling me that I have to and I have never heard anything else. (Interview, September 19, 2016)

During my observations, Ms. Lemon never met with any of the other types of groups besides her assigned guided reading group comprised of one Black boy, one White girl, one White boy, and two Latina girls.

Noticeably absent from Ms. Lemon's ideal literacy instruction are formal assessments and the use of specific curriculum resources other than picture books and chapter books. However, the reality of her instruction includes both. Though she indicated that she would include note-taking and running records in her ideal teaching to determine the needs of her students, mClass, DIBELS, EOGs, and district performance assessments have no place in Ms. Lemon's ideal literacy block. Formal and standardized assessments, though a part of life she says, do not adequately depict what her children can do, particularly children from oppressed populations.

The [EOG] is completely inappropriate for any eight-year-old ever. More specifically students of color based on history and social experiences. It's really inappropriate for lots of reasons, and it's boring and it's long, and it's multiple choice. ... I just think it's one small little picture into who a student really is.

District and school policy also mandate Ms. Lemon teach using Learning-Focused lessons, including the Tested Seven, and her PLC works to implement Foundations, a scripted program designed to teach phonics explicitly.

Ms. Lemon's ideal literacy instruction reflects her beliefs about using authentic texts to foster authentic discussions about reading, race, equity, and social justice while meeting the

specific needs of all students on the basis of where they are challenged rather than their reading levels. Actors in her network (e.g., district and school leadership, literacy coach, PLC, students), time constraints, policy mandates, and her perceptions of her students' abilities as well as her own are heavy influences on Ms. Lemon's actual instruction. Though the literacy instruction she enacts does not mirror her ideal, analysis of the observations revealed moments when she made choices reflecting her beliefs and her contexts. During other times, Ms. Lemon engaged in instructional practices that went further away from her convictions.

Setting the Stage for Negotiation: Summarizing the Who and the What of Ms. Lemon's Network

The aim of this study is to explore the interaction and intersection between one teachers' instructional beliefs, classroom contexts, and surrounding policy messages as they are manifested through her literacy instruction. In this chapter, I designed the cognitive, affective, organizational, and political realm in which Ms. Lemon must engage in literacy instruction. The information and results garnered from these chapters work to inform the activity systems analysis examining Ms. Lemon's literacy instruction as it is mediated through cognitive, affective, contextual, organizational, and political factors. As I argue in Chapter 6, my analysis made evident the influential role of Read to Achieve's narrative on Ms. Lemon's classroom. Further, on the basis of the presence of those messages and other factors within her activity system, I argue that Ms. Lemon did indeed perform four distinct types of negotiations as informed by her beliefs, political expectations, and classroom contexts.

CHAPTER 6: ILLUMINATING THE BLACK BOX

“I think that I would probably say that most of the day is not what I believe. But, it’s gotten so this is just how it is, it’s been like this the past four years.” -Ms. Lemon

The main objective of this study was to determine to what extent interactions between literacy policies, classroom contexts, and a teacher’s instructional beliefs about literacy inform classroom instruction. The data and analyses resulting from this study illuminate the “black box” (Black & Wiliam, 1998), or the dynamics occurring during classroom instruction, of teachers’ policy enactment in the classroom and what happens between policy dissemination and actual implementation. In the previous chapters, I identified how macrolevel and microlevel literacy policies frame literacy and education.

In this chapter, I further elucidate ways in which the mobilization of Read to Achieve has permeated Ms. Lemon’s classroom instructional practices with messages about literacy education and practice, thus creating a new normal for Ms. Lemon, her colleagues, and her students. Then, through activity systems analysis, I illustrate four specific ways Ms. Lemon responded to both internal and external factors within her instructional system. On the basis of the analyses, I then describe how factors within her activity systems held shifting influences on Ms. Lemon’s negotiations around policy messages. I conclude with implications for teacher education, school leaders, and policymakers, as well as future research directions.

Mobilized Messages

Mobilization of Messages

Chapter 4 explored how the first three phases of the social translation of Read to Achieve (Callon, 1999b)—problematization, intressement, and enrolment—effectively crafted and propagated messages related to what, who, and how literacy instruction is represented and valued. The network created by the OPPs (Callon, 1999b; Hamilton, 2011) aligned multiple actants in carrying out the following messages:

- North Carolina’s third-grade students are experiencing a literacy crisis that will impact the state’s economic future.
- Data is objective and provides specific and targeted information about students and their teaching to further drive instruction.
- Literacy instruction and learning follows a universal trajectory of skills and strategies for student mastery.
- Literacy instruction is informed by evidence-based practices within five major foci—phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency—or the Big 5.
- Schools’ primary responsibility is to produce students who are college and career-ready and knowledgeable citizens who will eventually contribute to the economy.

Analysis of the classroom observations and interviews found evidence of the presence and influence of the five axioms transmitted through the phases of social translation. Educators’ discourse and actions serve as proof of the ubiquitous nature of the unchallenged assumptions about literacy, instruction, and students.

Third-grade literacy and economic crisis. The notion of accomplishing or achieving a state of being literate as a measure of stability and success has deep and historical roots. When

there exists a perceived deficiency in children's literacy performance, a collectively-created educational crisis emerges, and the education system and schooling are to blame. As Cook-Gumperz (2006) argued in her highly-cited work *The Social Construction of Literacy*:

Over the past hundred years of universal schooling, literacy rates have served as a barometer of society such that illiteracy takes on symbolic significance, reflecting any disappointment not only with the workings of the educational system but with the society itself. An assumption often expressed is that if educational institutions cannot manage the simple task of teaching basic decoding and encoding skills, they cannot prepare future generations to deal with more complex questions of technological change. (p. 1)

Though previous studies have challenged the connection between literacy rates and improved economic status (see Heath, 1980, for examples), the unimpeded assertion that poor literacy causes poor citizens remains. In reaction, policymakers and education leaders most often strengthen accountability measures while narrowing what and how to teach literacy education. Actors in policy networks position schools and teachers as ill-equipped to teach children to read and covertly point their fingers at specific subgroups of children using deficit language.

Policies and research implicitly frame educators' and the public's perceptions of students and their families, namely those from historically marginalized populations, as cognitively, behaviorally, or culturally deficient in literacy and learning (Comber & Kamler, 2004; Gay, 2010). A study by Bertrand, Perez, and Rogers (2015) examined the discourse and discursive strategies policymakers employed when discussing academic and educational gaps and inequities. Their results found that the discourse of more than half of their sample of highly influential lawmakers strengthened deficit discourse by asserting that populations affected by inequity are those who in fact caused the problem. Other research has argued that discourse embedded in education policy maintains and bolsters neoliberal stereotypes, such as those associated with a "culture of poverty" (Gorski, 2012).

Risk rhetoric. One way the OPPs of the social translation of Read to Achieve shaped the notion of students in crisis is through the use of the term *at-risk* to describe students who score below proficient levels on any assessments. For instance, NCDPI's Comprehensive K-12 Plan (2013) reads, "Teachers utilize the problem-solving method to guide interventions and provide support for at-risk and accelerated students (p. 13)." Further, according to the legislature of the Excellent Public Schools Act (N.C. Legis., 2012), students at risk of failure require a personal education plan. Policy- and education-centered uses of what Swadener (2010) deemed "risk rhetoric" (p. 8), as highlighted by *A Nation at Risk*, serve to bolster the ideology of a failing culture rather than positioning children on paths to success (Swadener, 1990).

Though Ms. Lemon situates herself as an advocate for social justice and indeed attempts to work towards equity in her classroom through restorative circles, race lessons, and Power Reads, she, as an actant and mechanism of Read to Achieve, also slips into using risk rhetoric. Throughout our interviews, Ms. Lemon described how she felt this particular class had the most needs and challenges compared to her previous classes. Though she did not use the word *risk*, she perceived her students of color as being linguistically deficient (Gorski, 2012), citing research that her Black students would benefit from more explicit vocabulary instruction. In our first interview, she said:

I love a good chapter book read-aloud, and I think that's what so many kids, especially my students of color—It shows in research that their vocabulary is so far behind their White peers and my favorite way to teach vocabulary is through a really good chapter read-aloud novel.

As this interview took place at the beginning of the school year, Ms. Lemon had not had many opportunities to assess her students' capabilities. Further, she explained how her group, one of the most diverse she has taught, lacks in critical-thinking skills and writing aptitude. Ms.

Lemon's perceptions of her students of color inform her instructional beliefs and practices, including her negotiations around policy.

The Power of Data. The social translation of Read to Achieve strengthens the grip big data has on educators' professional decision-making. Using data as evidence of what works in education is not novel, nor is the idea negative. However, the sentiment has been more pervasive over the last two decades, pushing data into the center of the education policy realm and diminishing the value of teachers' expertise (Biesta, 2007). Instructional practices supported with quantifiable, preferably experimental data have become the gold standard and favorable over teachers' professional and experience-based opinions. Biesta (2007) wrote

I am particularly concerned about the tension between scientific and democratic control over education practice and educational research. On the research side, evidence-based education seems to favor a technocratic model in which it is assumed that the only relevant research questions are questions about the effectiveness of educational means and techniques, forgetting, among other things, that what counts as "effective" crucially depends on judgments about what is educationally desirable. On the practice side, evidence-based education seems to limit severely the opportunities for educational practitioners to make such judgments in a way that is sensitive to and relevant for their own contextualized settings. The focus on "what works" makes it difficult if not impossible to ask the questions of what it should work *for* and who should have a say in determining the latter. (p. 5)

In the quest for legitimizing the field, education researchers, policymakers, and educators themselves have replaced the role of teacher knowledge with the unchallenged perception of data as pure and true (Smagorinsky, 1995).

The messages emanating from Read to Achieve support the continued privileging of quantifiable, valid, and reliable student and teacher data. Throughout the network, from actant to actant and problematization through mobilization, data is held in the highest regard. Throughout analyzed media accounts, data from NAEP and the EOGs act as catalysts for lawmakers to address the crisis in North Carolina public schools. Even opponents of Read to Achieve leverage

standardized testing data to support their arguments. For instance, North Carolina State University Education Professor Hiller A. Spires (2015) leveraged both NAEP data and data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010) in a Letter to the Editor to lobby for more reading specialists in public schools. The initial draft of HB 950, The Excellent Public Schools Act (N.C. Legis., 2012) blatantly displayed its stance on evidence over research, striking the term *research-based* and replacing it with *evidence-based* in a move to narrow what type of data is acceptable and worthy. NCDPI includes the words *data* and *evidence* in its Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan (2013) a total of 106 times (68 and 38 times, respectively) across the 65-page document. In contrast, the Plan includes 45 uses of *research* and *research-based*. Its reliance on data frames competent educators as those who rely on data to drive instruction:

Successful implementation of reading initiatives will be realized in the creation and maintenance of a culture in which all levels of leadership have a shared vision; open and honest communication; and a focus on the use of data, teamwork, and research-based practices. For example, teachers demonstrate leadership by taking responsibility for the progress of all students in their classrooms. They use formative and summative assessment information to assist in making informed decisions and to make adjustments to the teaching and learning process. They work collaboratively with school leaders and other team members to analyze data to develop goals and strategies to ensure that children are reading at or above grade level. (p. 7)

The Plan also heralds mClass as the prime data-collecting tool for teachers to use to inform their ability of their students and the effectiveness of their instruction.

Read to Achieve's data-centered messages are embedded in Ms. Lemon's district and school climate, from the literacy coordinator to Ms. Lemon herself. For instance, the district's constant revisions to district-level performance assessments and writing prompts and rubrics drives down the message that data is a privileged source of truth and knowledge. However, the further down the message goes through the implementation process, the more convoluted it becomes. Educators begin to qualify their data more frequently at each level, providing greater

context around each data point. Ms. Lemon's principal, for example, shared in her interview that she encourages teachers to pitch to her alternative pedagogies, schedules, and assessments based on their particular contexts, though they must show data to support their arguments. Drilling further down to Ms. Lemon's PLC, the team of teachers scrutinized their students' mClass results during their October planning meeting. However, they also offered context-laden information to justify why each student earned a particular score or should be moved to a different reading group. The pervasiveness of the data-driven culture is most weak in Ms. Lemon's classroom, as she rolls her eyes at me when she administers mClass or purposefully disturbs its fidelity through acts of defiance. This is in line with Campbell's Law, which states that "the more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it was intended to monitor" (Nichols & Berliner, 2007, p. 27).

In Ms. Lemon's classroom, data is not black and white, but colored with context and countered by other forms of research. During our second formal interview, Ms. Lemon did explain that although she found some of the mClass data useful in planning her reading groups, she found little value in administering the assessments as often as required. The amount of time it takes her to collect both benchmark and progress-monitoring data is not worth the information mClass provides. When I asked during our second interview to what extent she believed mClass assessment results impacted her teaching, she replied, "I mean, until today, it hasn't impacted it at all. Ok, because I hadn't progress monitored until today because I forgot about it until yesterday, I think that the amount of time to do the benchmark is absurd." Further, according to both Ms. Slater and Ms. Lemon, mClass does not have any value added over the amount and

type of data they had collected using running records. They did, however, appreciate how quickly and easily mClass calculated students' scores.

Although data does play a prominent role in Ms. Lemon's classroom, particularly the amount of time she spends administering and analyzing assessments, she considers data from standardized assessments as void of the contextual information she would like to make teaching decisions. Instead, Ms. Lemon uses other types of research as a lever of support for her instructional decision-making. Citing educationalists like Lisa Delpit as well as simply referring to general research she has encountered, Ms. Lemon leveraged research typically discounted by policymakers, such as ethnographies and case studies, to make instructional decisions as well as justify her choices to me during my observations. Research about culturally relevant teaching and the existence of systemic and institutionalized inequities in schools informed her ideal literacy instruction (e.g., Text Talks and rigorous text discussions) as well as motivated her to resist policies that challenge her beliefs.

Autonomous literacy model. The standardization of literacy and high-stakes accountability go hand-in-hand. Standards, such as the Common Core, frame literacy learning as the process of mastering a finite set of skills and strategies to attain a Westernized definition of being literate, or an autonomous literacy model (Botzakis et al., 2014; Street, 2003). Standardizing literacy instruction contributes to what Thomas (2001) referred to as the “finish-line mentality,” or the pedagogical narrowing and limitation of teachers' practices to meet the intervals assigned to a preestablished continuum (Neumann, 2016). The result is a curriculum that values a constricted conception of literacy and separates the acts of reading and writing into separate, context-free chunks.

The social translation of Read to Achieve upheld the autonomous model of literacy in both overt and covert ways. The Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan (NCDPI, 2013) highlights the role of the standards, specifically Common Core, immediately after the introduction, framing teachers as those who use a standards-based curriculum to determine what literacy competencies matter and what is the valued objective of becoming literate. NCDPI (2013) wrote, “Just as students must read, write, speak, listen and use language effectively, so, too, must the standards specify what students need to know and understand to be career and college ready in multiple disciplines” (p. 5). The mClass assessment is based on predictive and universal benchmarking (Amplify, 2016). Actants’ constant references to third grade as the break between skills-based reading and content-based reading also disregard an ideological model of literacy, or literacy for practical and social purposes (Street, 2003). As Heath (1980) argued in her seminal work, formal literacy instruction that is limited to graded tasks, skill hierarchies, and linear trajectories measures students’ achievement “by a sequenced move through the hierarchy of skills, and it is believed that acquiring these skills, i.e., *learning to read*, is necessary before a student is *reading to learn*” (p. 130).

Despite Ms. Lemon’s concerns with the lack of equal opportunities for her students to learn and demonstrate literacy, particularly students from historically marginalized groups, she relied on the Common Core State Standards to guide her planning and decision-making. During our midstudy interview, Ms. Lemon said

When people ask me if I like Common Core, I’m like, “Yeah, for sure!” They argue that’s all I’ve ever known, and yeah, it kind of is. ... I’m still familiar with Standard Course of Study. I like [Common Core] so much. I think it’s much more rigorous and it guides us in a good way than it used to. I like it.

Her perception of Common Core, along with her PLC’s strict alignment with standards-based lesson planning and grading, keep her instruction entrenched in the autonomous model.

Throughout the study, I observed as Ms. Lemon engaged in teaching isolated skills and strategies, for example using context clues and asking questions based on a text's subheadings, in inauthentic ways. These lessons ignored other social, cultural, and functional purposes of literacy, including those Heath (1980) identified with Black readers. Ms. Lemon's reliance and privileging of Common Core served to continue disenfranchising the very groups of students she aimed to support.

In some moments in Ms. Lemon's instruction, however, she engaged students in more authentic reading activities, often through acts of defiance. For instance, during my first observation in her classroom in early September, I observed Ms. Lemon's students who were spread out all over her classroom—on the floor, across tables, under desks. There was a buzz throughout the class, students chattering excitedly. Each student had a crayon or a marker in one hand and a Scholastic Book Order form in the other. The students were book shopping, reading the descriptions of each title aloud to one another, circling which ones they wanted to order. Students who typically spent their Read to Self time lying with their heads buried in their arms because they were still “learning to read” were now “reading to learn” about what books Scholastic had to offer. Ms. Lemon looked at me and defiantly said, “I can get into trouble for this, but they love it,” allowing the students to use the minilesson time to scan their order forms. In this example, Ms. Lemon purposefully strayed from the standards, providing her students with the space in which they needed literacy to choose which books they wanted to buy (Heath, 1980). These acts were the exception rather than the rule.

The Big 5. The privileging of big data and standards-based instruction in messages transmitted by Read to Achieve also leads to teachers' pedagogical narrowing (Neumann, 2016) to a focus on the NRP's five pillars—phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency,

and vocabulary (NRP, 2000). As I described in the problematization phase, the NRP conducted meta-analyses of experimental and quasi-experimental research studies to identify what matters in literacy teaching and learning. Critics of the report have lambasted the panel's constriction of the vast amounts of literacy research to positivistic, replicable studies, excluding other relevant research methods, samples (e.g., English Language Learners), and longitudinal designs (Allington, 2005; Garan, 2001; Krashen, 2001). Cunningham (2001) pointed out that the report should be viewed as a "manifesto for a particular philosophy of science as much as a summary of particular research findings" (p. 326). He was referring to the panel's indoctrinated adherence to "rigorous," "objective," and "scientific" research (NRP, 2000) often used in intervention efficacy studies. Though a lever to bolster the professionalization of reading research (Shanahan, 2004), the sanctioning (and misinterpretation) of such research by the federal government limits teachers' pedagogical instructional choices to the five pillars of low and noninteracting interventions (Botzakis et al., 2014; Cunningham, 2001).

The dominance of the Big 5 was evident throughout my data. The Excellent Public Schools Act (N.C. Legis., 2012) defined "difficulty with reading development" as

not demonstrating appropriate developmental abilities in any of the major reading areas, including, but not limited to, oral language, phonological or phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, or comprehension, according to observation-based, diagnostic, or formative assessments. (p. 39)

The Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan (NCDPI, 2013) focused elementary literacy instruction around the five pillars, encouraging explicit instruction of strategies and skills. The Big 5 is the foundation of Common Core's English Language Arts standards (Comperatore, 2015), ignoring other contextually-laden and localized instructional components, such as motivation, critical literacies, student choice, home literacies, and classroom environment (Allington, 2005; Botzakis et al., 2014). The mClass Reading 3D system is based entirely on the five pillars, focusing on

phonics, comprehension, and fluency. At the district and school levels, the inclusion of the Tested Seven lessons and explicit phonics instruction using Foundations are also evidence of its influence.

The permeation of the five pillars in Ms. Lemon's literacy instruction is evidenced by the shared discourse between Ms. Lemon, her colleagues, and her students. As I observed in the daily discourse of the lessons and the PLC meetings, "good readers" are those who use Big 5 skills and strategies, ask questions, make predictions, or read with expression. The October PLC planning meeting was wrought with Big 5-inspired language, referring to students' decoding, fluency, and written comprehension skills. Also, students used pedagogical and testing jargon inspired by the five pillars throughout my observations of instruction. For instance, at the beginning of the school year, the reading essential question posted on the wall read, "What reading strategies will help me comprehend third-grade texts?" Lessons included identifying the main idea and supporting details, using context clues to define unknown words, crafting character traits, and making inferences—all isolated comprehension strategies. Students are encouraged to use the same educational terminology in their answers and conversations.

Students also gave each other compliments on how fluently they read aloud from the board. For example, I observed one student telling another, "I really liked how you read that with fluency because it was smooth and loud." During another observation toward the middle of the year, Ms. Lemon shared with her students their growth in words per minute, an mClass and DIBELS measurement of fluency, after progress monitoring those who were labeled red. Students talk about digraphs and blends using professional jargon. During an October 25 observation, the lead teacher shared a set of "college-level vocabulary words" with Ms. Lemon's students, who asked, "Why are they on there?" The lead teacher replied, "Because we think you

need to start looking at this in third grade. These are big words and these may not make sense yet.” The influence of the Big 5 also reached students’ families through a digital collection of Ms. Lemon’s literacy anchor charts, most inspired by the Tested Seven. The introduction to the website reads:

In our third-grade classroom, we LOVE anchor charts! The class knows that anchor charts “hold them down” when they’re learning and practicing a new concept. Because we create so many anchor charts together, we can’t keep them up all year long! This website will act as our “digital notebook” of anchor charts so that students can use their iPads to access past and present anchor charts to help them learn and grow. This is also a great tool for families to use at home—it’s our goal to bridge the vocabulary use between home and school and allow families to see the strategies we use here in Room [redacted].

The crossing over of the Big 5 into families’ literacy discourse and practices imposes the narrowed conception of literacy knowledge, bringing forth parents’ feelings of inadequacy and defeat (Heath, 1980).

Despite the five pillars’ pervasiveness in Ms. Lemon’s classroom, she also encompassed other forms of literacy in her instruction. Ms. Lemon’s ideal instruction includes rigorous text discussions because she believes they are effective in addressing students’ critical literacy practices and social and emotional needs. She uses Power Reads as read-aloud materials because she believes in the efficacy of engaging texts and increasing students’ motivation and purpose to read. It is important to Ms. Lemon to provide authentic and holistic conversations about shared books because she believes in the value of social and cultural literacies, though she perceives phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary as vital to students’ academic success.

Producing college and career-ready citizens. The final message disseminated by Read to Achieve’s social translation process is the framing of schools as factories and students as products created on an assembly line. The assembly-line metaphor used to compare industry to education is not new. In fact, the contemporary model of schooling is based on the objective to

efficiently produce as many graduates with the basic skills needed for the workplace, while focusing greater attention on a select few who would rise above (Darling-Hammond, 1995). The system's use of labeling, categorizing, and tracking students was an attempt to spread wide the few resources and curricula available and routinize instruction in a top-down transmission fashion. The result is that some students sail through to top-earning and respected careers while others are left behind. Based on the messages of Read to Achieve, not much has changed.

The purpose of Read to Achieve is to assess students and tag them as proficient or not based on a narrow conception of literacy skills and strategies. Students labeled as not proficient are subjected to instruction that is broken down into small, isolated skills, taught in isolated and static groups, using inauthentic and often disengaging texts. Teachers collect and analyze data that is impersonal, fostering an individualistic and industrialized form of education. These students are also continuously monitored and assessed, pulled away from other activities, such as independent reading or writing, that have been proven to benefit all students (Cummins, 2007). Those who continue to fail are retained, whereas those who have always been labeled as proficient continue on to become college-ready.

The software system Amplify created for mClass has capitalized on America's factory-modeled education system. Upon completion of a student's running record, the software assigns the student a color—red, yellow, green, or two levels below, just below, or on- or above-grade level. On the basis of the results, students are placed in groups. Red and yellow students are assigned to groups who meet almost daily and work on explicit skills in isolation, like digraphs or underlining the main idea. They are followed and notes are sent home to parents, warning them of their child's failure. According to the Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan, good teachers are those who monitor progress and follow interventions so that students test proficiently. If not,

they are herded into summer camps and transitional classes with students who, like them, did not fit the factory mold.

Ms. Lemon was not immune to the influence of a top-down, industrialized model of schooling. During their October planning meeting, she and her PLC used the mClass results to target students and place them in homogeneous groups by reading level and test performance. Red and yellow reading groups were scheduled to meet daily while green and blue groups met in book clubs, a more relaxed and authentic learning environment. Though Ms. Lemon preferred heterogenous strategy groups, the pressure to meet all the standards and instruct students according to their mClass color was overwhelming. Despite this, Ms. Lemon did not meet with her red guided reading group daily, as required by her district. Rather, she worked with students individually, as needed, to help them complete assignments and books. Working with students one-on-one and recognizing the need for opportunities for unique instruction is aligned with the call made by Darling-Hammond (1995) two decades earlier “to ensure that all students learn in more powerful and effective ways, we must create schools that are sufficiently personalized to know their students well” (p. 153).

The New Status Quo

Ms. Lemon’s classroom literacy instruction is indicative of Read to Achieve’s full implementation and the pervasiveness of its messages via social translation. A social innovation has reached the mobilization phase when all actants have adjusted to a new normal and are fulfilling their intended roles as part of the status quo (Callon, 1999b; Hamilton, 2011). On the basis of my analyses, the Midtown third-grade team has accepted Read to Achieve’s existence and each member plays their part accordingly. Ms. Slater, Ms. Lemon’s literacy coach, described in her interview how Read to Achieve has successfully infiltrated the school’s everyday climate:

The pressure that teachers feel, I feel, has decreased. And maybe that's me being naïve and me not focusing as much on Read to Achieve and rather on the instruction of reading versus the panic that we felt four years ago, when Read to Achieve was first introduced and BOG scores came in and we had to send parent letters and have parent nights and rework that whole literacy block. And teachers had to do portfolios for their kids.

The institutionalization of policy is characterized by a decrease in feelings of discord due to what Johnson (2013) called *educational turbulence*, or the slapdash execution of macrolevel (i.e., state) mandates through microlevel (i.e., district and school) applications. In Ms. Lemon's case, Read to Achieve has fallen into place, bringing changes happening at school level into the immediate foreground. Although logistical challenges still plague the third-grade teachers, namely how to efficiently assess students as quickly as possible, their concerns have shifted to rearranging their units and literacy schedules to integrate literacy and the content areas. The full mobilization of Read to Achieve also marks the complete passage of its implicit messages about literacy, instruction, and students down to the ground level, where Ms. Lemon negotiates around them as influenced by her beliefs and classroom contexts.

Negotiating Networks: Influential Factors in Mediating Activity Systems

A second aim of this study was to observe if and how a third-grade teacher negotiated her beliefs about literacy, teaching, and students in conjunction with her state and local literacy policies as evidenced through her instruction. Using activity systems analysis (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) as informed by classroom observations and interviews with Ms. Lemon, I identify four distinct ways Ms. Lemon negotiated various mitigating factors within her activity system, including her beliefs, classroom contexts, and policy landscape.

The Four Types of Negotiation

The following section describes four distinct ways Ms. Lemon negotiated her beliefs, classroom contexts, and surrounding political messages as manifested through her literacy

instruction. I have labeled each mediation as (a) compliance, (b) adherence, (c) resistance, and (d) defiance. Factors influencing the four types of negotiation include Ms. Lemon's beliefs about herself, her students, policy, and literacy, as well as her instructional self-efficacy; the pressures of time, resources, and collegial compliance; and the messages she receives from all directions. Using activity theory analysis, I aim to illustrate how Ms. Lemon exhibited compliance, adherence, resistance, or defiance, and which system factors influenced her mediation the most while identifying which factors she minimized. To do so, I plot illustrative observations as activity systems, or graphic conceptual representations of interconnecting elements within an activity (Engeström, 1987).

Negotiating through compliance. Ms. Lemon most often negotiated her instruction through compliance with state and local policy directives. I define *compliance* as Ms. Lemon's acquiescent fulfillment of her intended role as policy actant manifested by instruction that supports and perpetuates policy messages. Compliance reflects Ms. Lemon's instructional assimilation (Coburn, 2005). Ms. Lemon's average literacy instruction demonstrates acceptance of her part in carrying out the collection and use of mClass data, alignment of instruction of the Big 5 through the ELA standards, and perpetuation of a transmission model of instruction (Cummins, 1986). Her typical literacy instruction as plotted as an activity system blends the six factors—subject, object, artifacts, rules, community, and division of labor—in a somewhat balanced fashion, though with a heavier reliance on rules, community, and artifacts. Figure 10 illustrates an activity system of Ms. Lemon's average literacy instruction.

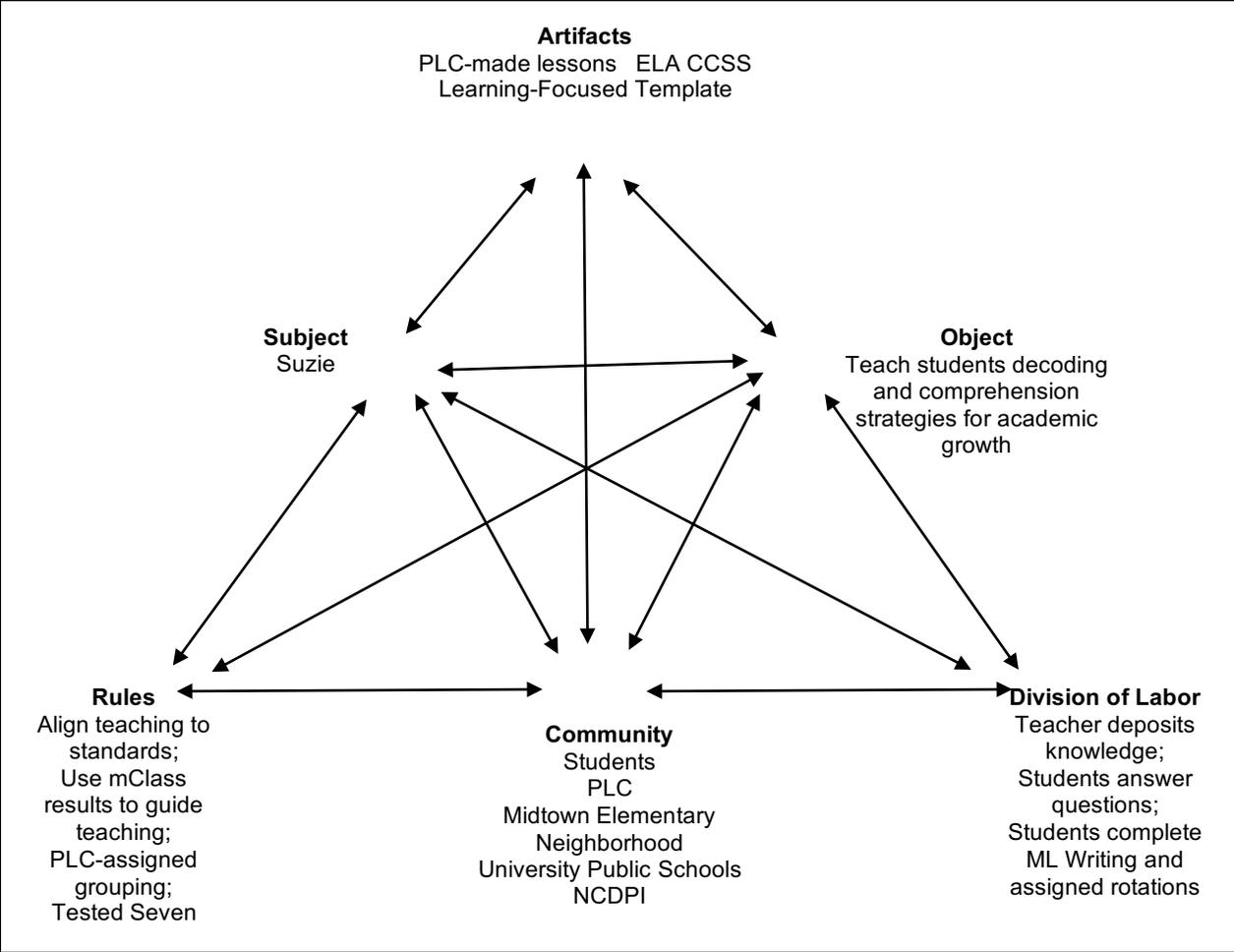


Figure 10. Activity system illustrating Ms. Lemon’s average literacy instruction.

In addition to her typical literacy instruction, Ms. Lemon exhibited compliance with the political messages surrounding her and her classroom during the October PLC literacy planning meeting. The objective of the meeting, which included all the third-grade teachers, the literacy coach, the EC teachers, the AIG teacher, and the ELL teacher, was to assign students’ reading groups and plan the grade-level literacy block. Before that time, Ms. Lemon taught the Tested Seven lessons during the minilesson time, administered the BOG and the BOY mClass, and worked on building students’ independent reading stamina. She also allotted more time for physical and mental breaks for her students, through mindfulness exercises and dancing to music videos, time that greatly decreased after the PLC-planning meeting.

The teachers poured over the mClass BOY data as they discussed which kids were red, yellow, green, or blue, or far below grade-level, just below grade-level, at grade-level, and above grade-level, respectively. The EC teachers complimented the third-grade team for having their data early: “You guys have your data first and ready to talk about kids first.” The group discussed children collectively as color groups (e.g., “I’ll meet with my yellows three times a week”) but also consulted individual reports. For instance, the literacy coach described one student, “Phoneme segmentation was low at the end of kindergarten. Nonsense word fluency was a 5. There’s definitely some decoding issues. Ended first grade at an F and then has been an E ever since.”

Throughout the discussion, I observed as teachers qualified students’ results on the basis of their anecdotal understandings and beliefs about the assessment. The group identified the written comprehension portion of the TRC as a major barrier to students’ reading-level growth. Teachers appeared frustrated with the writing hurdle and advocated for their students, saying, “He should be moved up because he just didn’t pass the writing part,” and, “They can read better, but it’s the writing part.” Ms. Lemon, talking about one of her lowest level students, a Black male, exclaimed, “Y’all are going to think I’m crazy, but I want to put the student in the yellow group. He’s a level M, but it’s the writing!” The educators lamented the written responses, chiding the K-2 teachers for not properly preparing students to answer writing prompts. One interventionist said that she hoped that the students would “get back into the groove of this is how you write a prompt” and improve throughout the year.

Once the PLC identified the reading groups and the students’ needs, they began to develop the literacy block schedule. Blue students (above grade-level) would meet with the AIG

specialist for cooperative book clubs, discussions using engaging chapter books. The PLC then scheduled the remainder of the groups as follows:

- Yellow/Red group: Four times per week
- Yellow/Green group: Four times per week
- Green/Yellow group: Three times per week
- Green group: Three times per week

Following the district's suggested literacy block, the teachers developed a schedule that would include phonics instruction, a minilesson with the students' homeroom, and then two small-group rotations across classes based on their groupings. They ended the block with Writing Workshop. Ms. Lemon was assigned only one Guided Reading group to meet during the first rotation, leaving her time to work with strategy groups and individual conferences. "Well, that's what I believe in so that's perfect!" she said. I did not observe Ms. Lemon meeting with strategy groups.

Analysis. The PLC planning meeting demonstrated Ms. Lemon's compliance as an actor in the enactment of Read to Achieve, as well as the district and local literacy policies. The group's use of students' mClass results revealed the teachers' acceptance of the role of quantitative data in determining their instruction. The teachers did not analyze the data; that role went to Amplify and mClass. The teachers did not question what analytical methods the software used to categorize students or justify their scores. Rather, Ms. Lemon and her PLC acted as consumers of data. Though the teachers interjected their expertise for some children, such as which children they felt could perform better than the mClass results indicated, Ms. Lemon and the third-grade team solidified the positivistic role of data and the message that data is truth and knowledge.

Labeling and grouping students based on the mClass data also perpetuated the view of students as products. Teachers categorized students on the basis of their results, herding them into ability groups who move together across the grade level for ability-based instruction. Though NCDPI and University Public Schools encourage fluid grouping, the groups remained static throughout my observations. Although a possible timing limitation of my observations, students remained with the same groups for the entirety of the study. Teachers referred to groups of students by the mClass-assigned colors throughout the meeting. The teachers' dependence on and fostering of student ability-grouping does not align with Ms. Lemon's views of encouraging text choice and extending opportunities to groups of students who are not labeled proficient readers:

It's a strategy that people use in middle and high school for content teachers called collaborative strategic readings, CSR, and it's basically like you put kids that are very much below grade level or whatever and you just stick them in one of the higher groups, and there are different roles and jobs, and essentially it's meant to expose the below grade-level child to grade-level text and content in a way that makes them feel like they are smart, part of the group, they have a role.

The PLC also used terms inspired by the five pillars. Ms. Lemon and the team discussed literacy instruction and learning around the discourse of fluency, comprehension skills, and phonics. Cultural factors, such as language or race, were not recognized nor identified throughout the planning. Though Ms. Lemon expressed her desire to ensure she could fit her lessons on race into the schedule, using critical literacy to teach the lessons during literacy instruction was not discussed. "I feel really passionate about these lessons, so I'm doing them and moving literacy to sometime in the afternoon," she said. The same discourse also moved to sustain the limited and autonomous model of literacy instruction disseminated by the policies and expectations of the network actors. It worked to craft deficit views of students, particularly those who performed poorly as measured by DIBELS and mClass. The discourse grouped

students who “couldn’t” or “struggled” or “went blank,” pinning them to lower achieving groups.

Further, teachers’ compliance with Read to Achieve and the NCDPI’s Comprehensive K-12 Literacy Plan also conflicts with their perceptions of the overall policies. Neither Ms. Lemon nor her grade-level lead teacher or literacy coach trusted that Read to Achieve is accomplishing its goals. “I don’t think it makes a huge difference in the students,” lead teacher Laurie said. “The students that come in struggling leave struggling. [There’s] a similar demographic of students who come in struggling and students who aren’t.” Social promotion is still happening, and students who are not deemed proficient readers continue through to fourth grade because of the good-cause exemptions. Further, Ms. Lemon added, the pressure continues to be placed on third grade as she has not noticed any bolstering of early literacy practices before her students coming to her classroom, a goal of Read to Achieve. “Testing is so much just [the third-grade] floor that it’s almost unfair, but no one realizes that it’s unfair,” she stated.

Regardless of Ms. Lemon’s beliefs about mClass, Read to Achieve, and her students, she demonstrated her compliance with her PLC to develop a literacy block based on the ELA standards and student ability-grouping. To participate in the PLC planning session, Ms. Lemon actively minimized the role of her beliefs about equity in assessment, fluid strategy groups, and effectiveness of mClass. Rather, the role of her community, namely the PLC and her district, as well as artifacts such as mClass and ELA Standards, were more influential in her actions. Figure 11 illustrates the PLC planning session as an activity system.

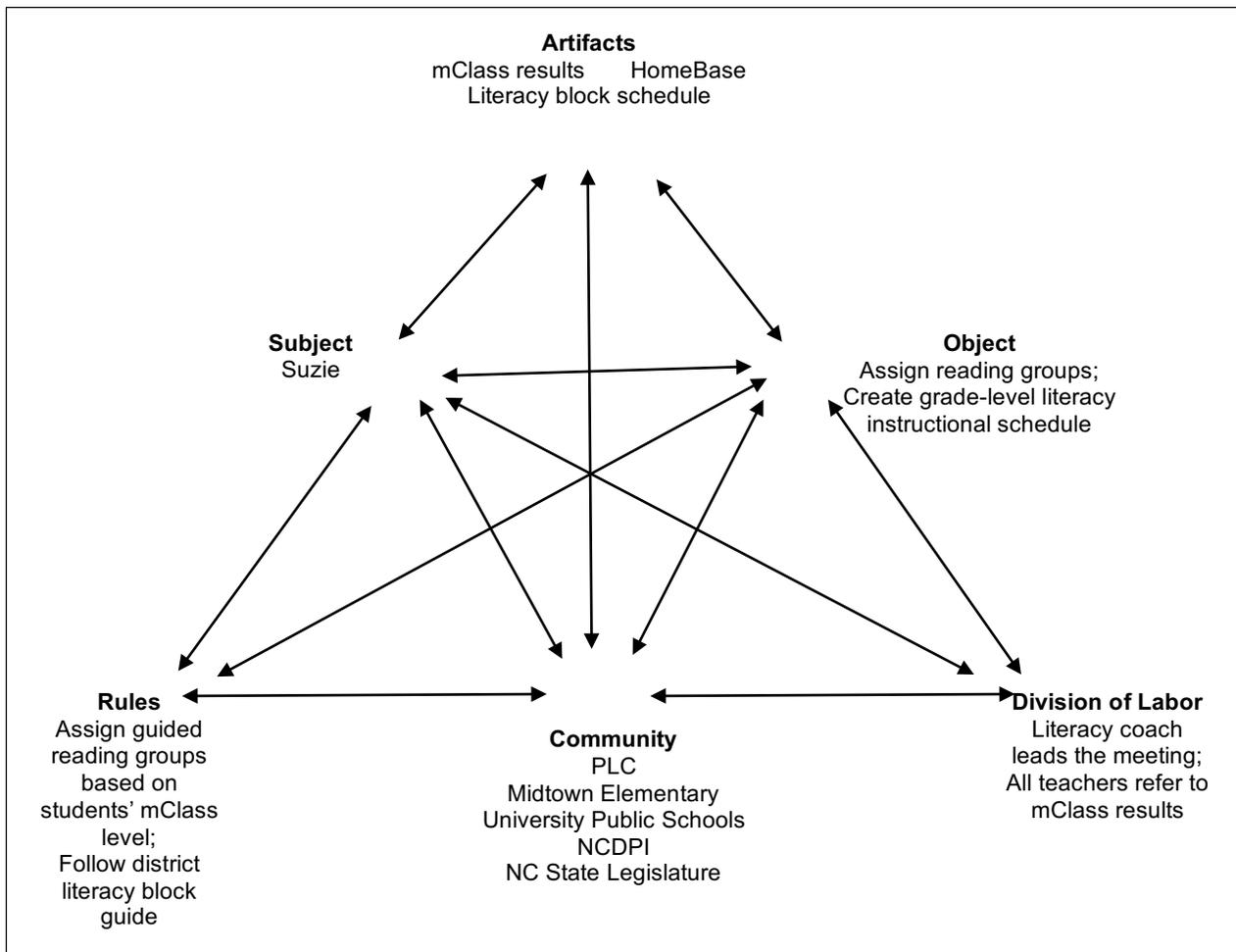


Figure 11. Activity system of PLC planning meeting.

Negotiation through adherence. The second type of negotiation Ms. Lemon engaged in through her literacy instruction was adherence. I define adherence as Ms. Lemon's unyielding conformity to policy messages, resources, and curriculum despite directly conflicting with her beliefs and other contextual factors. Adherence is characterized by Ms. Lemon's reliance on the strict delivery of literacy instruction that does not align with her ideal. Adherence differs from compliance in that Ms. Lemon does not question the validity or purpose of the instruction, as she does while mediating with compliance. Rather she remains uncritical while propagating the messages about literacy, teaching, and students that she identifies as unjust, inequitable, or

ineffective. Overall, the messages disseminate deficit views of students and promote the autonomous literacy model (Street, 2003).

One example of Ms. Lemon's adherence to these messages despite their discord with her beliefs is her implementation of Foundations. Foundations is a scripted curriculum aimed at explicitly teaching K-3 students foundational skills focused on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and spelling (Foundations, n.d.). The curriculum is teacher-led while students manipulate letter sounds and words to learn word patterns, such as digraphs and blends. Materials come in kits that include daily lesson plans, activity cue cards, flashcards, posters, magnetic letters, worksheets, and quizzes. Teachers are expected to teach lesson plans according to a predetermined sequence of skills, either as general instruction or as an intervention strategy.

Districtwide implementation of Foundations was in the works for several years for University Public Schools. Before the current district literacy coordinator's arrival, several elementary schools were piloting the program. However, they did not receive any training around putting it into practice. That changed once the current coordinator was hired, as she had experience with Foundations and provided training for the elementary literacy coaches. According to Maggie, half of University's elementary schools are implementing Foundations for kindergarten and first grade, including Midtown. However, Midtown received a grant allowing for the expansion of Foundations to second and third grade. As a PLC, the third-grade team decided to break the students into groups and teach Foundations using kits from different grade levels. Ms. Lemon was assigned to teach the lowest group.

The execution of Foundations as a scripted program did not coincide with Ms. Lemon's ideal literacy pedagogical practices. Although she indicated that she would work with small phonics groups when applicable, her preferred instructional materials did not include scripted

curricula. Rather, she preferred instruction driven by engaging texts and authentic conversations as aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Strictly adhering to a teacher's manual and requiring quizzes and worksheets did not appear in Ms. Lemon's conception of quality literacy instruction.

Despite the disharmony between Foundations and her ideal instruction, Ms. Lemon told me during one weekly check-in that she was excited to get started with the program. Supported by her students' mClass results, Ms. Lemon believed her students were a needy group—the lowest in the grade—and lacked the foundational phonics skills to read proficiently by the end of the year. She also viewed herself as having her own professional deficit in teaching the basics of reading to her students. As she shared in her initial interview, Ms. Lemon felt that she did not receive enough training in teaching children the mechanics of decoding words during her teacher preparation program. The only grade Ms. Lemon taught was third grade, where her students had already passed Chall's (1983, 1996) initial stage of reading. She expressed, “[Students] are not learning to read anymore, they're reading to learn, which is definitely going to be a challenge this year because they're still learning how to read.” She felt that her students did not receive enough phonics instruction in the earlier grades, leaving it up to her to teach an unfamiliar topic. “I think that there are a lot of kids that need explicit phonics teaching, starting their first day of kindergarten and I think that if they do that, then ... in third grade, we won't even have to think about it.”

At the start of the school year, Ms. Lemon borrowed Ms. Slater's copy of the Foundations teacher manual to get acquainted with the lessons. She told Ms. Slater during the October PLC planning meeting, “I want to get into this right now. I want to teach kids how to read. I never learned, and I want to do it!” She still struggled with some of the terms and lessons, such as

closed syllables, but began to feel more confident in teaching phonics to her group. Though she questioned the purpose of teaching students specific terms (“What’s the point of knowing about closed syllables?”), during my observations Ms. Lemon clutched the Foundations teacher manual and followed the lesson plan. She interjected with encouraging statements (“I like that growth mindset!”), but never deviated from the script. Some students in the group could follow along while others lagged. Ms. Lemon did not adjust her instruction to do the same.

Analysis. Despite her beliefs about quality literacy instruction as authentic and text-driven, Ms. Lemon strictly adhered to Foundations, a scripted, context-free curriculum, to teach her phonics group. Figure 12 displays an activity system depicting a Foundations lesson. In the system, Ms. Lemon’s absorption and assimilation of messages around literacy and students dominate her decision-making, and she minimized the role of her community (i.e., her students) and her internal belief structures. Specifically, her perception of third grade as a pivotal literacy year as measured on a universal trajectory colored her deficit view of her students. While discussing Foundations with her PLC, Ms. Lemon felt exasperated with the level of her students: “By third grade, they are supposed to know this stuff already!” She felt that the responsibility of teaching phonics skills and decoding strategies should be with the primary grades, whereas it was third grade’s job to integrate content and foster more critical thinking. As such, she never experienced teaching foundational skills.

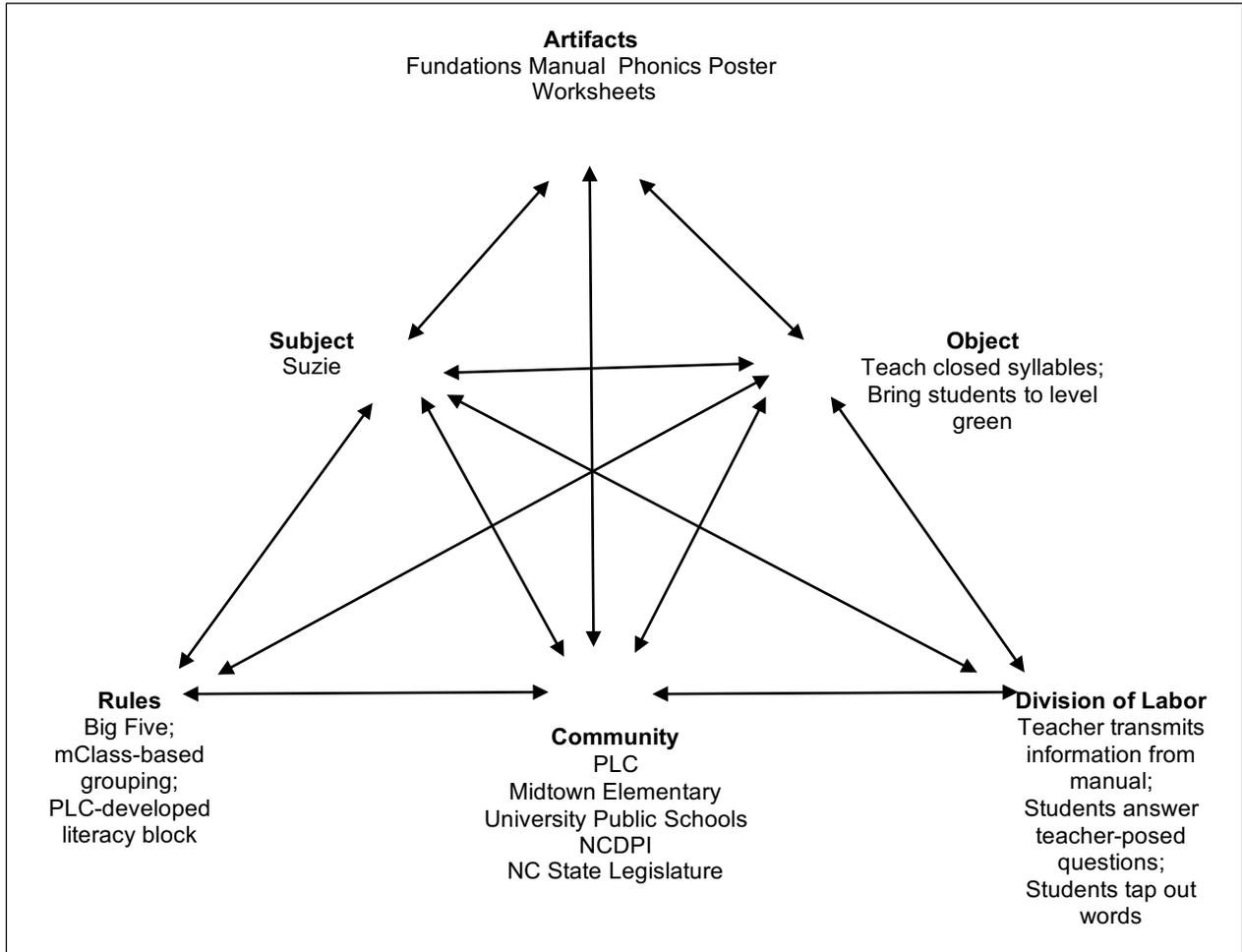


Figure 12. Activity system of Foundations lesson.

Simultaneously, her low level of instructional self-efficacy and perceived lack of knowledge about phonics instruction influenced her adherence to the scripted and explicit curriculum, overcoming her principles about quality teaching. She was nervous to teach phonics and relied on curricular resources to guide her, despite its dissonance with her LAAG. She shared the following in our initial interview:

[Undergraduate program's] I got very little phonics instruction, and I felt like I needed more. I still feel like I don't know anything about it. At this point, I'm having to teach kids how to read, and I don't know how to do that. I've been a third-grade teacher forever, and it's never been an issue.

She also trusted Ms. Slater, her literacy coach, who was supportive of Foundations as a comprehensive phonics instructional program. Ms. Lemon accommodated for her lack of confidence by supplementing her instruction with pedagogical practices that do not align with her conception of quality literacy instruction.

Negotiation through resistance. A third way Ms. Lemon negotiated her beliefs and contexts around policy expectations was through her passive resistance of policy pressure. Ms. Lemon engaged in resistance by modifying her role as an actor in the network by purposefully negotiating what and how to teach while still maintaining the status quo. That is, Ms. Lemon knowingly strayed from compliant instruction (e.g., PLC-planned lessons, guided reading groups, district-mandated Learning-focused lessons) to participate in her ideal pedagogical practices. For example, Ms. Lemon resisted by mediating her beliefs about race, social justice, and inequity as well as her definition of quality literacy instruction as authentic engagement through impromptu read alouds.

Despite her beliefs about read alouds and their benefits to her students, she admitted to me that she hardly ever had an opportunity to do them. Her PLC members agreed that although they all believed in the power of reading aloud to their students, they could never find enough time. During the third-grade team focus group, one teacher lamented what a “bummer” it was to miss out on read alouds, citing it as a strategy for struggling kids to read books on the same level as proficient readers. “Some of them struggle with reading,” she said. “So, they can hear the same story as the kid sitting next to them and experience it in the same way.” It levels the playing field for students who are typically stuck reading basic and uninteresting texts or “the cat-sat-on-the-mat type of books,” said Ms. Miller, the lead third-grade teacher, during the focus

group. The school's literacy coach and principal are supportive of reading aloud, and University Public Schools once required them.

During the final days of the 2016 Presidential Election season, Ms. Lemon shared with me at the start of that day's observations that she knew that her students had questions and fears, as she did herself. She mentioned to me how several of her students came from immigrant families, with one student's father having been deported back to Mexico. Students were uneasy, fearful, anxious, and curious. During this November observation, Ms. Lemon had just completed an explicit Foundations lesson on digraphs. She had a PLC-created lesson plan about character traits ready for the upcoming minilesson. Instead, Ms. Lemon said to me, "So, I think I'm going to just do a read aloud for minilesson today, if that's ok. It's that kind of day." When she told the students about her plans to scrap the minilesson, they all cheered with delight and quickly got to their spots on the carpet.

"You know, it's election season," Ms. Lemon began. "And part of politics is learning about the government, and we are going to learn more about a really inspiring judge in our country." The kids launched into questions about the election, but Ms. Lemon stopped them and began asking questions about the book, *Sonia Sotomayor: A Judge Grows in the Bronx* by Jonah Winter. "Why was the book written in both English and Spanish?" "Is Mexico the only country where people speak Spanish?" The students settled in and listened to the book. Throughout the reading, Ms. Lemon stopped to ask more standards-based comprehension questions about character traits and comparing characters. She asked students to use context clues to define words like *inferior*, as she read aloud the sentence, "Suddenly she was aware of being poor, being Latina, and being inferior."

Students whom I observed as on the fringe of typical minilessons, those with limited English proficiency and Latinx students, asked questions and offered their own perspectives on the book. One Burmese student, whom I often observed as disengaged in whole-class lessons, was rapt with attention and made a connection between the bilingual structure of the book. “Maybe she can speak two languages,” he said. “Do you?” asked Ms. Lemon. “Yes, English and Karen!” He remained engaged throughout the remainder of the book. Another student, a Black male who was often lying down on the carpet and not answering Ms. Lemon’s questions during traditional minilessons, lifted his head at the mention of Sotomayor’s parents dying. “Wait, who died again?” He was listening.

Once the story ended, students went back to their seats to start their rotations. Ms. Lemon met with her guided reading group and had them respond in writing to the following prompt:

What is a character trait to describe Sonia? She went through the steps of responding to reading (for example, Step 1: Restate the question), and it was back to complying with business as usual.

Analysis. The Sonia Sotomayor read aloud was indicative of how Ms. Lemon negotiated between political expectations and her beliefs about students, race, and pedagogy. Acknowledging her professional principles (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006) to build relationships with her students and address their social and emotional needs through authentic text-based conversations, Ms. Lemon made a conscious choice to navigate around her PLC’s traditional minilesson to honor the needs of her students and her ideal instructional practices. Negotiation was evident in her comments to me before reading the book. At that moment, she responded to her students and the surrounding climate by forgoing the planned minilesson and reading one of her Power Reads. However, her comments indicated some guilt over choosing a read aloud rather than the minilesson, as she qualified her decision to me (“It’s that kind of day”).

The activity system for this resistance activity favored Ms. Lemon's beliefs, community, and cultural artifacts over the roles and rules (see Figure 13). Her objective for the read aloud was not only to engage students in a discussion of social justice in a climate of uncertainty and unrest. The questions she posed throughout the book tied the conversation back to comprehension strategies and vocabulary, while still discussing issues of equity. Though the balance of teacher and student talk still favored the teacher as she posed questions for students to answer, the inclusion and engagement of traditionally marginalized students offered Ms. Lemon an opportunity to infuse her beliefs about rigorous text discussions and social justice with all her students. Through the read aloud, she still met the standards and the objective of the PLC minilesson already planned, perhaps assuaging the guilt of straying from the plan, but could circumvent the rigidity and routine of the minilesson to engage in a conversation about a Power Read.

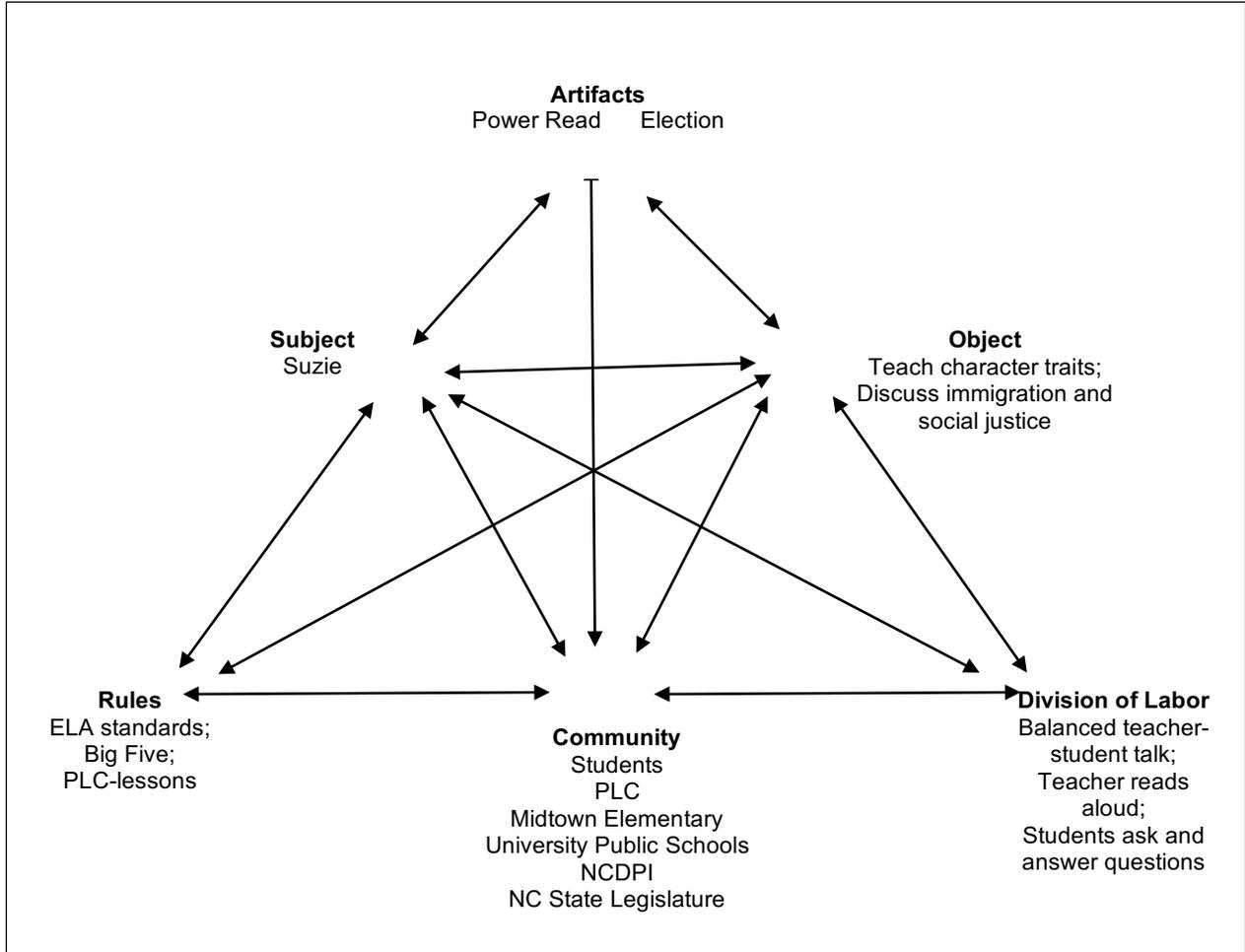


Figure 13. Activity system of Sonia Sotomayor read-aloud.

Negotiation through defiance. Active defiance was the final form of negotiation and mediation of beliefs and policy as manifested through Ms. Lemon’s literacy instruction. I define defiance as Ms. Lemon’s deliberate and overt decision-making and activities against policy expectations. During defiant mediation, Ms. Lemon knowingly breaks the rules of compliant teaching for her professional principles, most often related to her students’ age, race, ethnicity, and language. Ms. Lemon most often engaged in defiant mediation during moments when she was administering assessments, particularly mClass.

During one observation on September 16, Ms. Lemon confessed to me that she was suffering from a moral dilemma between how she is supposed to score the TRC and mClass and what she believes about her students. She perceived mClass and the texts she must use when administering the TRC as inappropriate for children of certain subgroups, such as African-American children and children who primarily speak Asian languages. Citing their tendencies to codeswitch the texts to make sense of what they are reading, Ms. Lemon felt that the assessments did not accurately capture those students' abilities. She told me during a break in between assessing students:

Teachers like me probably do it wrong. For instance, I have knowledge that the Karen and Burmese population often times leave the "s" off the end of words because that's a cultural thing even though it's plural. So when I'm giving a benchmark test to one of those kids, and they leave an "s" off, I know that I'm supposed to mark it wrong, but I don't because I know that they understand what the sentence or what it's saying. Of course afterward, I'll say, even though I understood you, I want you to know what's at the end of this word. Same with African American children, if they say "ax" instead of "ask," and we are supposed to mark it wrong, but they know what it is. It's almost like putting kids in the red and at-risk just because of where they come from.

Ms. Lemon's comments indicated that she felt pressured to disregard students' cultural influences for administering the mClass with fidelity. However, Ms. Lemon leveraged what she knew about her students as well as research she had read on codeswitching and language to make professional decisions that went against the political rules.

Ms. Lemon's perceptions of her students and the inequity of the assessments she had to administer influenced her deviating moments. I observed several defiant negotiations nestled in Ms. Lemon's instructional practices. The moments were small and seemingly insignificant to the overall literacy block. For instance, during an observation on October 18, Ms. Lemon prompted one of her African-American male students to extend his TRC writing response after he had finished and shown it to her. "Ok, can you tell me one more thing that happened? What was the

big thing that happened? Go back and add that and then you're done." The conversation was brief but made the assessment invalid and unreliable. Later, Ms. Lemon said to me, "I feel bad that I asked [student] to redo the written part, but I know that he is not a [reading level] M." I wondered why she felt bad and whether she was a rule follower. "No," she said. "I'm a rule-breaker." Ms. Lemon defiantly negotiated the mClass scoring in the same manner for several other students throughout its administration.

Analysis. Ms. Lemon's community, mainly her students, and her beliefs about policy and testing based on her understanding of critical race research were most influential in her defiant negotiation. Her small acts of nonconformity from what was expected of her also minimized the role of the rules and mandates surrounding her, the objective of the assessment, and the division of labor. Interestingly, Ms. Lemon's use of mClass as a cultural artifact was not as an evaluation tool but as a tool of disobedience.

Ms. Lemon's defiant mediation is reminiscent of what Achinstein and Ogawa (2006) defined as *principled resistance*. Ms. Lemon's professional principles, or conceptions about herself, her students, and the role and objective of teaching and assessment, influenced her decision to sidestep the fidelity of the mClass instrument. Different from basic reluctance to policy implementation, principled resistance takes into account teachers' professional views and ideologies about what is best for students and education. Figure 14 illustrates how a defiant activity system privileges Ms. Lemon's professional principles above rules and the outer bands of her community, namely her school, the district, and the state.

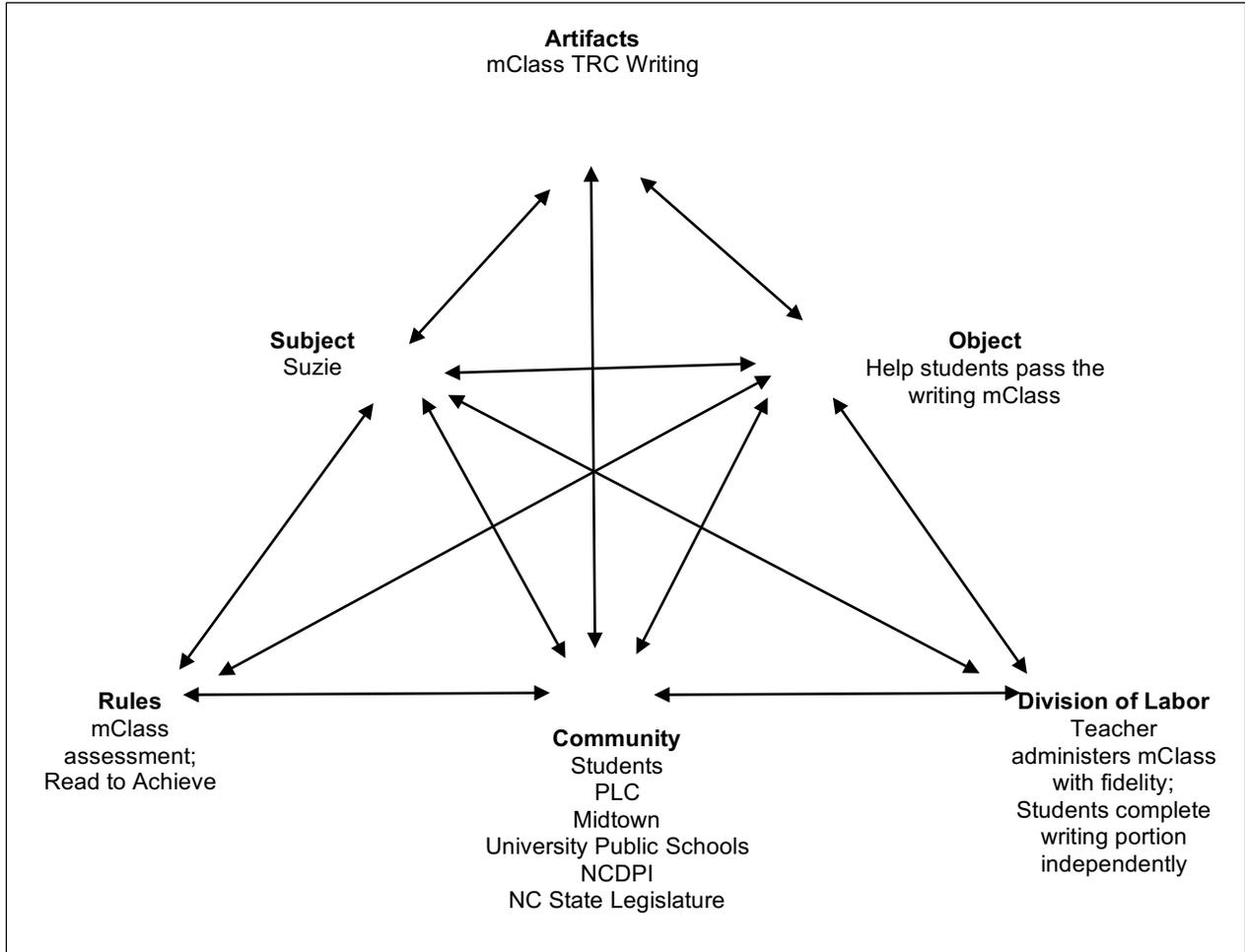


Figure 14. Activity system of mClass defiance.

Summary of Negotiations

My findings in this chapter loosely echo those found by Coburn (2005) in her similar study examining teachers' responses to California reading policy mandates. In her study, Coburn identified five teacher responses—rejection, symbolic response, parallel structures, assimilation, and accommodation. Drawing on cognitive learning theories, Coburn's five types of responses, although like my findings, do not provide an exact fit for Ms. Lemon's experiences. One type of Coburn's responses, rejection, is most similar to Ms. Lemon's defiant negotiation in that both types elicited teachers to ignore or simply act against policy or curricular expectations. Coburn's

identification of parallel structures in which teachers balanced contradictory priorities by engaging in multiple approaches to satisfy each priority, is somewhat similar to Ms. Lemon's resistance response. Like the teachers who created parallel structures, Ms. Lemon attended to both the required lesson standards (i.e., character traits) while also participating in her preferred teaching method (rigorous text discussions). Despite the differences, both sets of findings—Coburn's and mine—highlight the critical role teachers' beliefs and knowledge play in whether and how they enact literacy policy.

The findings in this chapter also relay the important influences both internal and external factors play in teachers' policy and curriculum implementation. Perhaps the most important argument here is not that there are a wide range of contextual elements significant to a teacher's instructional decision-making. Rather, as I displayed through the activity systems analysis, the magnitude of each factor's influence on a teacher's actions fluctuates, promoting certain aspects of the system while suppressing others. Acknowledging the complex interplay of the elements surrounding a teacher's literacy instruction is critical to designing and disseminating policies in the long term to affect change.

The Factors Influencing Negotiations Around Policy Messages

In this next section, I continue to build on these findings, illustrating the ways in which both internal and external factors within Ms. Lemon's instructional activity systems were most influential to her negotiations. Specifically, I focus on the role of Ms. Lemon's PLC, her professional identity as a teacher of literacy, and her beliefs about race and social justice as driving forces in shaping how she mediates conflicting messages. On the basis of my observations and clarified through interviews and debriefs with Ms. Lemon, I concluded that for each activity system, Ms. Lemon privileged different factors within each component (e.g.,

mediating artifacts, rules, subject) at different times. Table 11 shows the differences in influence of similar factors across the four types of negotiations.

Table 11

Most and Least Influential Negotiation Factors, by Activity

Activity	Negotiation	Most Influential Factors	Least Influential Factors
Tested Seven Lesson	Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA Standards • Learning-Focused • PLC • District/School • Predetermined lessons • Teacher-centered role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs- Students • Beliefs- Race • Beliefs- Literacy pedagogies
Foundations lesson	Adherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs- Confidence • Beliefs- Students • Beliefs- Literacy content • mClass results • Read to Achieve • Foundations manual • Literacy coach/PLC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs- Literacy pedagogies • Beliefs- Race • Beliefs- Purpose of literacy
Sotomayor Read-aloud	Resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs- Students • Beliefs- Race • Beliefs- Confidence • Beliefs- Literacy pedagogies • Standards • Classroom climate • Power Read • Student-centered role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC • District/School • Read to Achieve • Planned lesson
mClass Writing	Defiance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs- Students • Beliefs- Race • Beliefs- Assessment • Beliefs- Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District/school • Read to Achieve • PLC

Whereas I explained how each type of negotiation activity moves to elevate or diminish the influence of the factors and system components in the previous section, here I expound on the role three specific factors had in mediating the messages mobilized by the social translation of Read to Achieve—Ms. Lemon’s PLC; her identity and self-confidence; and her beliefs about race, equity, and social justice in education.

Ms. Lemon's PLC: Collaborative Sensemaking

Ms. Lemon's PLC, facilitated by her literacy coach, played both a prominent and mitigating role in her negotiation of policy messages. The PLC created a social learning system (Wenger, 2000) for the third-grade team to question and discuss instructional policies, students, and scheduling. Existing research has paralleled the social learning theory of communities of practice (Rogoff, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) with the communal learning and policy implementation taken up by educators in their PLCs (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Gallucci, 2003). Coburn and Stein (2006) postulated that PLCs provide a space where teachers learn from one another, making them critical instruments for policy sense-making and enactment. My analysis echoed similar conclusions. The third-grade team, led by Ms. Slater, made collective sense of the state, local, and school literacy policies, including Read to Achieve, the literacy block scheduling, and the performance assessments. Together they implemented and routinized the policy mechanisms, such as mClass and guided reading group rotations, and messages, such as data as truth and privileging the autonomous literacy model.

The PLC also developed a socially constructed common discourse to describe Read to Achieve actions and components. For instance, the teachers modified certain commonly used terms associated with Read to Achieve, such as benchmarks and mClass, into verbs. Teachers regularly refer to the administration of mClass as "mClassing." Teachers were not allowed to "mClass" their own students, Ms. Lemon told me during a weekly check-in. Further she said, "Even if we're talking about [fluency] while we're mClassing, we do mention it a lot." Benchmarking was also a collaboratively developed term used by the third-grade team. During the October PLC planning meeting, Ms. Lemon said to her colleagues, "One of my students who I just benchmarked level C raised her hand and she goes to me, 'What would you do?'" The

teachers' use of policy terms as policy-related actions was a language understood by all members of the PLC, indicating a universal acceptance of Read to Achieve's influence, including the infiltration of its messages into their everyday teaching and the group's role in perpetuating them.

The PLC's influence on Ms. Lemon's understanding and mediation of the policy messages were most prominent when Ms. Lemon was either displaying compliance or adherence to those messages. For example, Ms. Lemon's participation in teaching the Tested Seven, which was in conflict with her beliefs about literacy instruction and how her students learn best, was swayed by the premade lessons created by her PLC and her disinclination with having to remake the lessons to suit her ideal. Further, her PLC's collaborative decision to form guided reading and phonics skills groups across the grade level forced Ms. Lemon to adjust her ideal literacy block to coordinate with her colleagues' and adhere to teaching homogeneous, ability-based groups rather than the heterogeneous and fluid strategy groups she preferred. However, when Ms. Lemon participated in acts of resistance or defiance, other factors, such as her beliefs about herself as a teacher and her knowledge of literacy instruction, overshadowed the role of the PLC.

Ms. Lemon's Professional Identity

Ms. Lemon's perception of herself as a literacy teacher, including her perceived knowledge and self-confidence in literacy instruction, also played a heavy role in influencing her mediation participation. During her initial interview, Ms. Lemon shared that she felt least knowledgeable and efficacious at teaching phonics-based decoding skills and strategies to her students who she believed desperately needed explicit phonics instruction. Her perceptions of her students' needs, based on their reading level and mClass performance, indicated to her that she would not be effective at teaching foundational reading skills. As such, she was excited to

implement the scripted curriculum from Foundations because the manual was easy to follow and required little to no modifications by Ms. Lemon. Despite the structure's (i.e., teacher-centered, transmission model, worksheets) conflict with how Ms. Lemon envisioned her ideal literacy instruction (i.e., teacher-student coconstructed, discussion-based, critical), her perception of her identity as a math person and unknowledgeable about phonics influenced her adherence to Foundations.

Ms. Lemon's eagerness to implement Foundations resulting from her low instructional self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993) in early literacy instruction contradicts other research about teachers' self-efficacy and curriculum implementation but confirms findings of other studies. Guskey's (1987) study found that teachers with high levels of confidence in their teaching ability were more likely to adopt new practices and curricula than those who reported low self-efficacy. However, Ms. Lemon's belief that her ability to effectively teach phonics to her students with Foundations increased coupled with her perception of her students' critical need for explicit phonics instruction may have had an influence on her Foundations adoption (Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997). This reaction is reflected in the research reviewed in Chapter 2. That is, studies have shown that the influence of teachers' professional identities may have an impact on what they prioritize when enacting literacy instruction (Parsons et al., 2014).

Ms. Lemon's perceived knowledge and instructional identity still played a role in her resistance activity systems, albeit in a reversed way. Ms. Lemon's conception of quality literacy instruction relied heavily on Text Talks and rigorous text discussions using picture books and chapter books. Earlier in her career, the district trained Ms. Lemon in using both practices as part of a literacy initiative, though they were no longer a focus. When explaining the strategies to me, Ms. Lemon cited research on the benefits of authentic and rich texts and discussion, confidently

supporting her instructional choices on her LAAG. She believed that literacy instruction should build on student-teacher relationships and be grounded in social and cultural definitions of literacy. The training, familiarity with the practices and research, and her perception of good teaching as relationship-building worked together to heighten Ms. Lemon's instructional self-confidence around Text Talks.

The Sotomayor read aloud as a mechanism of resistance to the policy messages reflected Ms. Lemon's comfort with teaching through picture-book discussions. Ms. Lemon reverted to using a read aloud as the center of her literacy instruction when she felt tired or frustrated ("It's that kind of day"), indicating that the read aloud incurred less of a cognitive load on her than the scheduled minilesson. She did not plan the read aloud nor what points or words on which she would focus during the reading. Rather, the lesson unfolded organically and fostered a more balanced teacher-students talk ratio and an underlying theme of equity and social justice, Ms. Lemon's passion. Ms. Lemon negotiated the policy pressures and messages through resistant negotiation when she felt confident in her instructional practice.

Ms. Lemon's Beliefs about Race, Equity, and Social Justice

Perhaps the factor having the greatest influence on Ms. Lemon's negotiation of her instructional network was her beliefs about race, social justice, and institutionalized and systemic inequities in education. Her views about race grounded her perceptions of literacy policy and standardized assessments, as well as her students' abilities and what constitutes quality literacy instruction for all students, including those from historically marginalized groups. They also motivated her acts of resistance and defiance, intensifying the role of her beliefs and her community of students and families while minimizing her PLC and the rules and roles imposed on her by district and state policies.

Ms. Lemon's beliefs that Read to Achieve contributed to the resegregation of her students of color and the role mClass plays in marginalizing those students made them targets for defiant activities. Contributing to her motivation to defy the mClass assessment, rendering it invalid, was the perception that the assessment did not account for dialectical and cultural differences, nor did they provide reading materials that her students of color could easily connect to. Viewed as a subjective tool by Ms. Lemon, mClass provided the space for her to counter the injustice and beat the system by providing scaffolded assistance on the writing portion and ignoring dialect-influenced miscues, both of which she believed unfairly punished her most vulnerable students.

Throughout the study, Ms. Lemon exhibited characteristics of culturally and politically relevant and critical teaching (Beauboef-Lafontant, 1999; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). As a self-identified White, middle-class teacher, Ms. Lemon recognized that she holds a particular set of privileges that many of her students and their families do not share. She acknowledged that traditional forms of schooling and the political system surrounding education work to suppress these same students in a myriad of ways, particularly through the overvaluation of standardized assessments or students' contextual learning. She refrained from placing the onus on the children and their families for any academic challenges (Ryan, 1976). She valued critical children's literature for its windows and mirrors (Bishop, 1990; Glazier & Seo, 2005). She thoughtfully engaged with the school's historically Black, working-class community and her students' families through home visits, connecting them with community resources and attending student functions outside of the work week. She also coauthors race lessons that she then shares with her school and district.

Despite her commitment to culturally relevant education, the majority of Ms. Lemon's overt work in addressing race in her classroom was done outside of the literacy block, in separate

Team Times, Restorative Circles, or social studies lessons. Her beliefs about equity and the needs of her students were suppressed through her typical literacy minilessons, guided reading groups, and Foundations lessons that continued to marginalize the very group of students she sought to help. Likewise, at times throughout the study, Ms. Lemon referred to her students in deficit ways. While openly encouraging her students to rise up to meet high expectations and adhere to a “growth mindset” (Dweck, 2016), in interviews and her PLC she lamented about her struggles with her low group of students. She believed that her students, particularly Black males and Karen-speaking males, could not speak or write effectively and had to have assistance in completing comprehension tasks, such as the mClass.

Even classroom activities focused on restorative practices, social justice issues, and providing space for typically suppressed students to share perpetuated systemic inequities. For instance, I observed as Ms. Lemon held a restorative circle for her class on the day after Donald Trump surprisingly won the 2016 Presidential election. Understanding that many of her students were anxious and frightened by the results, particularly her students of color and students who had immigrated to the U.S. from Spanish-speaking countries, she was compelled to address their concerns and support their social and emotional growth. Opening the floor to any of her students to share, the students who had the least to fear—White, middle- to upper-class, English as a primary language—dominated the conversation, while the remainder of the class sat in stunned silence.

Overall, internal, external, and organizational factors determined how Ms. Lemon negotiated her beliefs and surrounding policy messages and expectations. Each activity relied on certain factors while minimizing the role of others. For instance, Ms. Lemon’s awareness of her role as a potential disrupter of the political and social status injustices inherent in schools colored

her resistant and defiant activity systems. However, those acts of opposition were few and far between. More often, Ms. Lemon dutifully carried out her role as an actant of Read to Achieve through compliance and adherence to messages about what and who were valued in literacy instruction.

The Black Box: What Happens in the Classroom, Stays in the Classroom

Education researcher Larry Cuban uses the term *black box* to describe the complex inner workings of the classroom. Comparing the term as it is used in systems engineering and economic production functions, Cuban (2013) wrote that classrooms are

where inputs (e.g., money spent per pupil, facilities, teacher qualifications) go into a box called “schools” or “classrooms” and outputs emerge (e.g., test scores, skilled and knowledgeable high school graduates) with no clue as to how that transformation occurred. (para. 44)

The process through which teachers absorb, understand, and enact new policies and initiatives while also navigating through other internal (e.g., beliefs, identity, experiences, knowledge) and external (e.g., school community, colleagues, student demographics, time) factors has remained largely hidden from the public. Although scholars and organizations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, have attempted to document teachers’ roles in negotiating the inputs to produce the outputs, the black box is still dark.

However, the current study shines some light onto the interaction and intersection of policy and instruction as mediated by a classroom teacher. Previous literature written by both education scholars and policy researchers has only covered this topic in segments, focusing on only one aspect of the black box, such as teacher sensemaking and policy development. My study offers a more holistic illustration of how policies shape social narratives around education, to what extent teachers negotiate those narratives, and what factors influence their professional decisions to bolster the narratives or reshape them through their instruction. Thusly, this research

offers suggestions for applying these results to teacher education and practice, as well as new directions for research.

Implications and Conclusion

Limitations of the Study

This study addressed gaps in the literature in the relationship between teachers' beliefs about literacy, influential policy messages, and instructional decision-making. It is important to note, however, that a single-case design does not afford generalization of findings across other settings and participants (Kennedy, 1976). The objective of this study was to investigate the dialogic relationship between policy and teachers' instruction, and I maintain that case studies, like experimental designs, serve to further inform and generalize *theory* rather than extrapolate to other populations (see Yin, 2009).

Case studies are also bound by time and setting limitations. However, through data collected from triangulated and varied sources I developed the "thick description" (Geertz, 1973; Stake, 1995) of both the policy and the teacher case study required to describe the perceptions of the actors involved.

Finally, as is often the case with any study, my positionality as a researcher had an influence on all aspects of my work, from the research questions to dissemination. As Law (2009) mused about the subjectivity of texts within a network, my work "comes from somewhere, rather than everywhere or nowhere" (p. 142). Choices related to the focus of the study, instrument selection, analysis of results, and framing of the discussion were ultimately informed by my experiences as an educator.

Implications for Teacher Education

Teachers' preservice preparation is influential in shaping their beliefs and perspectives about teaching literacy (Barnyak & Paquette, 2010; Deal & White, 2006; Flint, Maloch, & Leland, 2010). As such, teacher educators must teach how policy is informed, shaped, implemented, and evaluated, both inside and outside of the classroom. Teacher educators should themselves become more familiar with what Hecló (1978) defined as *issue networks*, communication networks linking inside actors, like policymakers, with outside actors, such as academics and journalists, in developing policy agendas (Miskel & Song, 2004). They should also be familiar with the processes through which literacy research is presented and integrated into the policymaking process. Exposing this process to preservice teachers and encouraging their participation and activism in policy reform prepares them to advocate for themselves and their students. Song and Young (2008) argued

For educational professionals to become powerful policy advocates with a strong voice on education decision-making, expertise and knowledge about teaching and learning are not enough. It is essential that they also both possess knowledge about the policy system and are equipped with effective strategies for political actions. (p. 177)

By teaching preservice teachers how policies shape social narratives and the role of research and practice in this process, practitioners will become more aware of the purposes and effects of policy on their literacy instruction.

Beyond understanding the policymaking process, teacher educators must prepare preservice teachers to consider the social, political, economic, and cultural implications embedded in the materials and curricula they receive, as well as where their own professional ideals and identities stand in relation to them. Then they can make informed literacy instructional decisions aligned with their professional values in the face of autonomous, technocratic, and standardized mandates.

One possible strategy teacher educators can use in informing their students of the complexities of policy and practice would include (a) supporting students as they reflect on their own perceptions of themselves as literacy professionals, (b) providing examinations of policy actors and discourse, and (c) including explicit and purposeful analysis of curriculum. To begin, teacher educators would guide preservice teachers in developing their teaching philosophies, beliefs, and professional identities based on their lived experiences, as well as their coursework and academic knowledge, similar to the reflections described by Parsons and colleagues (2014). Next, instructors would facilitate students' critical examination of relevant education policies, drawing attention to the historical and cultural contexts in which they exist as well as the major actors responsible for development and implementation. The overarching purpose of the activity would be to identify messages about teaching and learning implicit throughout the policies' discourse. Finally, students would have the opportunity to scrutinize examples of curriculum resources, such as instructional guides and lessons, to determine whether the resources align or conflict with policy messages as well as their own beliefs. In doing so, teacher educators can then lead their students in developing modifications to lessons that not only meet the requirements of the policy but honor the instructional and professional beliefs of the students. Activities like the ones I described bring to the forefront sociopolitical, cognitive, and affective elements present in classroom instruction, arming new teachers with ways to acknowledge and negotiate these elements successfully.

Implications for Practitioners

Few can deny that the move toward data-driven instructional decision-making has been one of the most influential in education. Lawmakers and researchers push districts, administrators, and teachers to constantly collect and analyze student and teacher data to inform

professional and personnel-related actions. At the school level, teachers' PLCs are the hub for educators' data use (Marsh et al., 2015). Teachers and administrators use much of the data for instructional decisions, such as which intervention groups students are assigned and which students will be retained, but student data can also serve as a tool for more critical conversations about students and teaching.

School leaders should encourage PLCs to examine data for trends and patterns indicative not only of academic achievement but the underlying factors influencing students' learning and school experiences. Such trends may particularize school- and grade-level issues pertaining to certain subgroups of students, instructional methods, curriculum, or other contextual aspects of teachers' and students' work in the classroom. Similar to the work of Ladson-Billings and Gomez (2001), school administrators can foster both data literacy and culturally relevant and responsive teaching through deeper conversations about student data and providing resources and research to address their findings. This practice not only allows for constructive collaboration and sensemaking (Coburn, 2005) but also gives teachers the support they need to make context-driven choices about their literacy instruction.

My study echoes previous literature postulating the critical role of teachers' PLCs in policy sensemaking and implementation (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Gallucci, 2003), but the results also highlighted the extended role teacher socialization (Edgar & Warren, 1969; Staton & Hunt, 1992; Zeichner & Gore, 1989) can have on the everyday actions and decisions teachers make in the classroom. For instance, despite Ms. Lemon's strong views about the ways mClass and guided reading groups segregate students from historically marginalized groups, I never observed Ms. Lemon assert these beliefs during her PLC planning meetings or conversations with her grade-level peers. Further, though many of the PLC-created lessons did not align with

Ms. Lemon's ideal of literacy instruction, she continued to follow what the rest of her team was doing. How might Ms. Lemon's teaching be different were she not accountable to another group of teachers? Although the extensive literature around teacher socialization theory is outside the scope of this study, further examination of the power and influence teachers' peer groups can have on negotiations of beliefs and policy are relevant to how practitioners can harness PLCs in supporting teachers' work.

Finally, school administrators and beginning-teacher mentor programs can use the results of this study to support new teachers as they begin to grapple with policy, practice, and their newly forming professional identities. Statistics show that 17% of teachers in their first 5 years of teaching leave the profession (Gray & Taie, 2015). Novice teachers often struggle with a learning curve around interpreting and implementing district and school policies, standards, and curricula (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). As Ms. Lemon demonstrated, when teachers have low instructional self-efficacy, they may tend to adhere to practices that are not aligned with their own beliefs about quality instruction. In helping to care for the needs of new teachers around policy expectations, administrators and mentors can encourage new teachers to assess their beliefs about teaching and learning as well as introduce them to strategies for injecting their ideal instruction around the topics and procedures they must cover. In doing so, new teachers may feel more efficacious in their teaching.

Implications for Policymakers and Researchers

Critical education scholar Sonia Nieto wrote:

schooling is a social enterprise in which people interact with one another, yet decisions made about education are often treated as politically neutral ... such decisions are never politically neutral, but rather bound up with the social, political, and economic structures that frame and define our society. (p. 9)

The incongruity between the purposes and processes of schooling and policy often results in failed implementations and other unintended consequences (Coburn, 2001; Honig, 2006; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). Previous research has blamed poor implementation partially on teachers' lack of implementation fidelity, viewed by policymakers as a form of cognitive impairment rather than a purposeful and autonomous professional decision. A scorched-earth reaction typically follows, with the introduction of an entirely new policy or curriculum always at the ready. The minimal implementation and constant scrapping of plans is costly, both financially and to teachers' morale.

Though my application of actor-network theory in this study enlightened the existence of a reality imposed by a social network, the nature of this framework is too theoretically dense for practical use. The results from this work contend the need for those crafting policies to critically examine how initiatives shape a social narrative. However, as Law (2009) asserted, in using an actor-network approach, one must first acknowledge "the openness, uncertainty, revisability, and diversity" of the "messy practices of relationality and materiality of the world" (p. 142). My experience with actor-network theory, although initially exhilarating due to its freeformed nature, at times became overwhelming and unwieldy. If policymakers are to incite meaningful change through their programs, actor-network theory will not provide them with the practical tools they need to critically examine how the many human and nonhuman actors contribute to the creation of a social narrative.

That said, the results of this study highlight how tracing the types of messages created through the social translation of education policies can stave off some of the confusion, frustration, and lackluster implementation of new initiatives. Schneider and Sidney (2009) have called for policy researchers and lawmakers to consider policy development and dissemination

through social construction theory. They argued that to affect actual change through policy implementation, policymakers must (a) examine how policies construct social narratives about value and knowledge, (b) empirically and theoretically research the target populations, (c) understand the broad social and political impacts of the design, (d) align the policy design with democratic theory, and (e) collaborate with other policy theories. Conducting needs assessments and gathering information from stakeholders also ensures that the messages driven down by policies agree with those who will be implementing the policies. Likewise, including a wider array of stakeholders, including teachers, students, families, and community members, in conversations around crafting education policies helps to shift the process to a more democratic paradigm.

At this juncture, I would like to note that the results of this study are not intended for policymakers to generalize across settings and stakeholders. Although the study identifies and highlights factors influential in one teacher's implementation of policy despite her instructional and personal beliefs, the results should not be exploited as a means of forcing teachers to comply with policies. Rather, my study provides greater context in how policy is negotiated and implemented at the classroom level amidst teachers' internal and external factors not often accounted for in top-down policy making. As such, the results serve to facilitate policymakers' acknowledgement and understanding of the integral role of these factors when crafting education policy.

Implications for Future Research Directions

The current study is the first of its kind to combine both macro- and microlevel policy negotiations manifested through a teacher's classroom instruction. The argument that policies drive down messages and teachers interact with those messages in a myriad of ways opens the

door for many variations of this research. One extension of the current study could be the examination of how the Read to Achieve messages are received and negotiated by teachers from different backgrounds and across varied school settings. For instance, a Black teacher in a high-poverty, low-performing district teaching in an even lower performing school may receive drastically different policy messages and negotiate those in ways distinctive of the contexts as compared to Ms. Lemon's experiences.

Further, there is a critical need for more research examining how teachers' views of race and culture impact their literacy instruction. The initial literature review did not result in any studies directly related to teachers' perceptions of social justice, equity, or race and their literacy instruction. Maxson's (1996) study observed teachers' views of their at-risk students whereas Powers and colleagues (2006) chose the term *struggling readers*. A second search in which I included the keyword "race" found the majority of articles covering preservice teachers or perceptions of race in relation to math and science. Two exceptions were Cooper (2003), who described teachers' operational and conditional views of race and literacy, and Hollingworth's (2009) study of a White teacher who incorporated multicultural literature as a form of culturally relevant pedagogy. The paucity of studies in this realm calls for more research seeking to elucidate the relationship between teachers' beliefs about race, language, culture, and equity around their literacy instructional decisions and surrounding policies.

Conclusion

While writing this dissertation, my father, knowing the study's focus, emailed me an article from the *Triangle Business Journal* entitled "Goodnight, Whitehurst: How Third-Grade Literacy Will Slash the Skills Gap" (Ohnesorge, 2017). The article reports on a group of North

Carolina business leaders, including the CEOs of SAS Institute⁹, Red Hat, and Medical Mutual Insurance Company, who met with area students, teachers, and families to discuss the importance of reading. The CEOs shared their findings from their “Why Reading Matters and What to Do About It,” (Business Roundtable, 2016), citing the a skills gap in STEM industries as a result of an American student population lagging in reading achievement. The group bolsters its arguments with the same statistics and research lawmakers employed to problematize and inform Read to Achieve, including results from NAEP, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998). The report repeats the argument that students who are labeled below-proficient readers as measured by standardized tests are likely to fall into poverty, negatively influencing the future economic health of their communities. To address the crisis, they suggest expanding Pre-K and full-day Kindergarten opportunities, longitudinally tracking student assessment data, and tightening required interventions and government control of instruction.

Why did I find the article so intriguing? The business leaders chose the elementary school where I taught fourth grade for 3 years as the first stop for their Reading Matters tour. They elected to discuss the adverse consequences of third-grade illiteracy at one of the lowest-performing, highest-poverty elementary schools located in a historically marginalized community situated in a large, high-performing school district. The school’s student population consists mostly of Black and Latinx children, though there is a sizeable percentage of rural White students, with 75-85% of students qualifying for free or reduced-priced lunches (Student Accounting, n.d.). Teacher turnover has been climbing since 2012 and now sits at 18%, seven percentage points higher than the district’s average (North Carolina Report Cards, 2016). Only

⁹ The SAS Institute currently holds a multiyear contract with the state of North Carolina to develop and host its School Report Card database.

44% of the school's third-grade class passed the Reading EOG, yet more than 95% of the students were promoted to fourth grade. The exemption most cited? Previously retained, as 26.3% of the students had already been held back in previous grades.

On the surface, my former workplace was the perfect school setting for press opportunities and photos depicting CEOs giving back to a community where a high percentage of the school's population is living in poverty or are students of color. After the presentation, the CEOs met with groups of students (adults in chairs, kids sitting on the gym floor) and read aloud picture books to them. However, the deficit view of students and families implicit in their report and to whom the group presented its findings is reminiscent of the White savior trope (Hughey, 2010) and delegitimizes social, cultural, and linguistic literacy practices. The group shared messages, like those I have described in this study, were counterintuitive to the very group of students to whom they were meant to help.

The article parallels the findings of this study and reiterates the need for reevaluation of the social narratives of education policies to which students and families are exposed. Although ensuring children can adequately read and write in academic settings is an important and just cause, how policies and curricula place value on particular types of literacy practices while minimizing others is destructive. The mismatch between how lawmakers shape education and schooling and what a vastly diverse student body needs to succeed is wide and staggering. To ensure reform that works, that is initiatives that are fully implemented and serve the target population for which they were developed in ways to promote equity, policymakers, researchers, and educators must work together to determine how a modified narrative of policies can be used to support instead of suppress.

APPENDIX A: LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITY GRID

(as taken from Cunningham, Zibulsky, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2009)

Instructions: Please indicate what kinds of activities you would engage in when teaching literacy (which would include your reading and writing instruction). What proportion of a *two-hour literacy instruction block* would be spent on each activity? On the left of the grid, list the literacy activities, and on the right, list the percentage of your literacy instructional time you would allocate to these activities. Please be as detailed and specific as possible in the teaching activities that you generate. For example, do not say “reading”, but explain exactly the type/format of activities used during this time. Please make sure that your percentages add up to 100.

Literacy Activity	Time Allotted/Percentage
	Total time:

APPENDIX B: LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITY GRID CODING SCHEME

(as taken from Cunningham, Zibulsky, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2009, p. 429)

Activity Code	Examples
Teacher-managed reading	Basal reading, center activities, read aloud, decodables, whole class oral reading
Writing	Independent writing, reading response journal, peer editing, sentence development
Independent Reading	Free choice reading, sustained silent reading, partner reading, practice reading
Phonics	Building words, decoding, structural analysis, word attack
Oral language	Listening centers, morning message, pair talking
Grammar and Spelling	Verb tenses, punctuation, irregular words, word study
Reading Comprehension	Before reading discussion, asking questions, story recall, graphic organizers
Phonemic Awareness	Clap sounds, segmenting, rhyming, blending
Literature	Book share, literature circles, readers' workshop, story mapping
Sight Words	Word bank, word list, word wall, match words
Letters/Sounds/Concepts of Print (COP)	Consonant letter naming, daily letter, pre-reading skills, ABCs
Vocabulary	Dictionary work, hands-on vocabulary development activity, vocabulary resources, vocabulary review work
Assessment	Pre-reading assessment, running records, testing, individual reading assignment

APPENDIX C: INITIAL TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Background

- 1) Tell me about yourself. What are your most defining features and characteristics?
 - a) With what race and gender do you identify?
 - b) How long have you been in education? This school? This role?
 - c) How do these characteristics influence the way you teach?
- 2) Tell me about your upbringing?
 - a) Where are you from? [If not from here, what brought you to this area?]
 - b) How would you describe your childhood? Adolescence?
- 3) How would you describe your experiences as a student (elementary, high, college)?
 - a) What would your teachers say about you? Your parents?
- 4) Describe your relationship with reading? With writing?
 - a) What types of literacy activities do you typically engage in?
 - b) Would you describe yourself as a “good” reader? Writer? Why or why not?
 - c) What were you childhood literacy experiences?

Teaching and Current Context

- 5) Why did you become a teacher?
 - a) Was teaching your first career choice? If not, what other careers were you considering?
- 6) Describe your teacher preparation program.
 - a) What type of program did you complete? Traditional 4 year? Alternate Route?
 - b) How effective do you believe the program was in preparing you for the classroom?
 - c) How did the program prepare you to teach literacy?
- 7) In your opinion, what is the role of a teacher?
 - a) What are teachers’ main responsibilities?
 - b) How should teachers interact with students? Families? Colleagues? Administrators?
- 8) Describe what traits a “good” teacher would possess.
 - a) What should a good teacher know?
 - b) What dispositions should a good teacher possess?
 - c) What skills should a good teacher have?
- 9) Based on your descriptions, do you think you are a “good” teacher? Why or why not?
- 10) Tell me about your students this year.
 - a) Demographics? (Race, gender, SES, academics)

- b) How many of your students do you believe are reading at or above proficiency? Below? How do you know?
- c) How do you plan to approach your instruction with this group this year? Different than in previous years?

11) How would you describe your school?

- a) What do you like? Wish you could change?
- b) What are your perceptions of your administrators? Grade level colleagues? The overall community?
- c) To what extent do you believe your school supports your teaching philosophies?

Literacy Instruction

12) Describe the role and traits of a “good” literacy teacher.

- a) What should a good literacy teacher know?
- b) What dispositions should a good literacy teacher possess?
- c) What skills should a good literacy teacher have?

13) Define “quality literacy instruction”.

- a) What content should be covered in literacy instruction (e.g., comprehension strategies, fluency, critical literacy, etc.?)
- b) What teaching methods should be used to deliver quality literacy instruction (e.g., guided reading, shared reading, teacher-centered, etc.)?
- c) What role do students play during quality literacy instruction?
- d) What materials and resources should be used to deliver quality literacy instruction?

14) In your opinion, how do students learn literacy best?

- a) What literacy experiences do students need?
- b) What resources should students have access?

15) How have these beliefs about teaching and literacy instruction been influenced? By whom?

Have they changed?

16) What resources do you consult when making literacy instructional choices?

- a) What types of publications (teaching journals, research journals, professional books, blogs)?
- b) What types of personnel (colleagues, coaches, PD developers)?
- c) What organizations (DPI, IRA, etc.)?

17) Describe your ideal classroom climate that is most conducive to literacy teaching and learning?

- a) To what extent does your current classroom and students align with this ideal vision?

Note: Teachers should have completed the Language Arts Activity Grid and brought it to the interview. The next section focuses on the grid.

Language Arts Activity Grid

- 18) Please explain the process you used to complete the grid.
- Why did you include these particular activities?
 - Why did you allot those specific chunks of time to each activity?
 - Why did you decide on this order of activities?
- 19) To what extent is the completed sample literacy block similar to the ways you currently teach literacy? How is it different?
- 20) To what extent do you believe the sample literacy block could be implemented successfully in your current classroom? School? District?
- What barriers would you encounter?
 - What would you need to make this block a reality?

Policy Perspectives

- 21) Please tell me about the literacy curriculum your district/school expects you to implement.
- Is there a pacing guide?
 - Are there scripted lessons or mandatory resources/materials?
 - Who determines these expectations and how are they relayed to you?
- 22) To what extent do you believe the required literacy curriculum aligns with your definition of quality literacy instruction?
- What challenges are you facing with implementing the curriculum? What successes?
 - What would you change?
- 23) What is your understanding of the current education policies in North Carolina? At your district?
- 24) What is your understanding of the current literacy policies in North Carolina? At your district?
- 25) Tell me about Read to Achieve?
- How is it implemented in your school? In your classroom?
 - What are its intended goals? Is the policy working to meet these goals?
 - What are the challenges or barriers to implementing Read to Achieve?
- 26) Based on the literacy policies you have described, including Read to Achieve, to what extent are they aligned with or hinder how you want to teach literacy in your classroom.
- 27) If you could, how would you change the current state and district literacy policies? Literacy curriculum? Why?

28) Is there anything else you would like to add or would like for me to know prior to our work together?

APPENDIX D: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

General Background

1. How long have you been in education?

PROBES:

- a. What positions have you had in education?
- b. How long have you been an administrator? In this school? This district?

2. Please describe your school.

PROBES:

- a. What are the demographics of your teachers? Students?
- b. What is the mission and/or vision? To what extent do these align with OCS?
- c. Describe the climate and culture.

Policy Perspectives

3. What is your understanding of the current state and local education policies?

4. How are state and local policies enacted in your district? Your school?

- a. What is your role in implementing policies?
- b. How do teachers receive information regarding new policies?

5. Overall, to what extent does your staff accept and implement new state and local policies and curricular mandates?

Literacy Instruction

6. What is your knowledge of elementary literacy instruction?

7. Define “quality literacy instruction”.

PROBES:

- a. What content should be covered in quality literacy instruction?
- b. What teaching methods are used to deliver quality literacy instruction?
- c. What are students doing during quality literacy instruction?
- d. What materials and resources are used to deliver quality literacy instruction?

8. How do you believe students learn to read and write?

PROBES:

- a. What experiences should students have?
- b. To what resources should students be exposed?
- c. Describe the ideal classroom climate to maximize literacy learning.

9. What is your expectation of teachers’ literacy instruction?

PROBES:

- a. What curriculum should teachers be using?
- b. What do you expect to see when walking into a literacy lesson?

10. To what extent do teachers' literacy instructional practices align with your expectations of "quality" literacy instruction? To OCS policies and curriculum?

11. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX E: LITERACY COACH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

General Background

1. How long have you been in education?

PROBES:

- a. What other positions have you held in education?
- b. How long have you been a literacy coach? In this school? This district?

2. Describe the responsibilities of your current position.

3. Please describe your school.

PROBES:

- a. What are the demographics of your teachers? Students?

Literacy Instruction

4. What does literacy instruction currently look like in your school?

PROBES:

- a. What materials are teachers using?
- b. What content is covered?
- c. What is the role of teachers? Of students?

5. Define “quality literacy instruction”.

PROBES:

- a. What content should be covered in quality literacy instruction?
- b. What teaching methods are used to deliver quality literacy instruction?
- c. What are students doing during quality literacy instruction?
- d. What materials and resources are used to deliver quality literacy instruction?

6. How do you believe students learn literacy best?

PROBES:

- a. What experiences should students have?
- b. To what resources should students be exposed?
- c. Describe the ideal classroom climate to maximize literacy learning.

7. Based on these descriptions, to what extent do you believe the teachers in your school are engaging in quality literacy instruction? The students?

8. What challenges are teachers facing when implementing their literacy instruction?

9. What resources do you consult when supporting teachers’ literacy instruction?

PROBES:

- a. What texts? (Research articles, teaching magazines, professional books, blogs, etc.)

- b. What organizations? (DPI, International Literacy Association, etc.)
- c. What personnel? (District leadership, colleagues, etc.)

Policy Perspectives

10. What is your understanding of the current state and local education policies related to literacy?
11. How are state and local literacy policies enacted in your district? Your school?
 - a. What is your role in relaying these policies?
 - b. How do teachers receive information regarding new policies?
12. What is your understanding of Read to Achieve?
 - a. How is it implemented in your school?
 - b. What are its intended outcomes?
13. What is your overall opinion of Read to Achieve?
 - a. How is it impacting teaching? Student learning?
 - b. Does Read to Achieve align with or contradict quality literacy practices?
 - c. Is it achieving the goals it aims to reach?
14. In your opinion, how do you believe teachers perceive Read to Achieve?
 - a. To what extent are teachers accepting or resisting the policy?
 - b. What barriers and challenges are there to implementing Read to Achieve, if any?
15. If you could develop any literacy policy to influence both teachers and students, what would it be and why?
16. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX F: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Lesson Objective _____ Number of Students _____ Total Time _____

Time	Content/ Activity Code	Teacher Activity	Student Activity	T/S Interaction?	Resources	Was <i>Read to Achieve</i> , or other policies, mentioned, referred to, or engaged in? How?	Evidence of policy discourse?

Notes:

Content/Activity Codes:

T-M: Teacher-managed reading; *W*: Writing; *Ind. R.*- Independent reading; *Ph*- Phonics; *Oral*- Oral language; *Mech*- Mechanics, e.g. grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.; *Aware*- Phonemic awareness; *Lit*- Literature; *SW*- Sight words; *COP*- Concepts of Print; *Vocab*- Vocabulary; *Assess*- formative or summative assessment; *Other*- any instructional activity other than those listed

Adapted from Cunningham, Zibulsky, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2009

APPENDIX G: CONTACT SUMMARY SHEET

(Adapted from Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014)

Contact Summary Form

Contact type: (circle one)

Date:

Classroom Observation Interview Other Observation

1. What issues, moments, and/or themes seemed most significant during this visit?

2. Summarize the information you got for the following:

a) Lesson objectives	
b) Lesson Content	
c) Instructional Methods/Strategies	
d) Student reaction	
e) Prevalence of political influence	
f) Comparisons to Language Arts Activity Grid	

3. Anything else that stuck you as salient, interesting, illuminating, or important during this contact?

4. What information from this contact can/will be included in the next check-up? Interview?

APPENDIX H: TEACHER FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

General Background

Please introduce yourself including your name and your current professional role (title and grade level).

1. How many years have you worked in this role? At your school? In the county?
2. How long have you been in education?

Classroom and School Context

3. How would you describe your school climate and culture?
 - PROBE: To what extent do faculty collaborate? Administration?
 - PROBE: What are the mission, vision, and values of your school?
 - PROBE: How would you describe your school to new families?
4. How would you describe your student population?
 - PROBE: Demographics? Academics?
 - PROBE: Successes? Challenges?

Literacy Instruction

5. Describe what your district and school expects from your literacy instruction.
 - PROBE: What content/methods are required?
 - PROBE: What resources do you have to/want to use?
 - PROBE: What has been the communicated objective?
6. How, if at all, does the district and/or school support your literacy instruction?
 - PROBE: What resources does the district/school provide?
 - PROBE: What types of professional development, if any?
7. To what extent do you feel this type of literacy instruction is aligned with what you believe to be the best instruction for your students? Why?
 - PROBE: How does the expected instruction support/not support you? Your students?
 - PROBE: What elements are missing? Are overly emphasized?
8. What is the role of your literacy coach in supporting your literacy instruction?
 - PROBE: Useful? How?
9. What resources do you consult when making decisions about your literacy instruction?
 - PROBE: Research? Magazines? Professional books? District?

Policy

10. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest, 10 the highest), how would you rate your knowledge and understanding of current state educational policies? Why?
 - PROBE: From what sources do you receive policy information?
11. What district and school policies affect your teaching the most? How?
12. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being not at all, 10 being extremely), how knowledgeable are you of Read to Achieve?
 - PROBE: What is its intended purpose?
 - PROBE: What are the major components?
 - PROBE: What types of support do you receive?
13. To what extent has Read to Achieve influenced, affected, or otherwise impacted your literacy instruction?
 - PROBE: Successes? Challenges? Issues?
 - PROBE: Impacted your students' academically? Behaviorally?
14. What is your overall perception of NC Read to Achieve?
 - PROBE: Is it achieving its goal of preparing students for college or career?
 - PROBE: What changes would you suggest?
15. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX I: NC EXCELLENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACT

PART VII-A. EXCELLENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACT IMPROVE K-3 LITERACY

SECTION 7A.1.(a) G.S. 115C-81.2 is repealed.

SECTION 7A.1.(b) Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Part to read:

"Part 1A. North Carolina Read to Achieve Program.

"§ 115C-83.1A. State goal.

The goal of the State is to ensure that every student read at or above grade level by the end of third grade and continue to progress in reading proficiency so that he or she can read, comprehend, integrate, and apply complex texts needed for secondary education and career success.

"§ 115C-83.1B. Purposes.

(a) The purposes of this Part are to ensure that (i) difficulty with reading development is identified as early as possible; (ii) students receive appropriate instructional and support services to address difficulty with reading development and to remediate reading deficiencies; and (iii) each student and his or her parent or guardian be continuously informed of the student's academic needs and progress.

(b) In addition to the purposes listed in subsection (a) of this section, the purpose of this Part is to determine that progression from one grade to another be based, in part, upon proficiency in reading.

"§ 115C-83.1C. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Part:

- (1) "Accelerated reading class" means a class where focused instructional supports and services are provided to increase a student's reading level at least two grades in one school year.
- (2) "Alternative assessment" means a valid and reliable standardized assessment of reading comprehension, approved by the State Board of Education, that is not the same test as the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students.
- (3) "Instructional supports and services" mean intentional strategies used with a majority of students to facilitate reading development and remediate emerging difficulty with reading development. Instructional supports and services include, but are not limited to, small group instruction, reduced teacher-student ratios, frequent progress monitoring, and extended learning time.
- (4) "Difficulty with reading development" means not demonstrating appropriate developmental abilities in any of the major reading areas, including, but not limited to, oral language, phonological or phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, or comprehension, according to observation-based, diagnostic, or formative assessments.
- (5) "Reading interventions" mean evidence-based strategies frequently used to remediate reading deficiencies and include, but are not limited to, individual instruction, tutoring, or mentoring that target specific reading skills and abilities.
- (6) "Reading proficiency" means reading at or above the third grade level by the end of a student's third grade year, demonstrated by the results of the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students.

- (7) "Reading deficiency" means not reading at the third grade level by the end of the student's third grade year, demonstrated by the results of the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students.
- (8) "Student reading portfolio" means a compilation of independently produced student work selected by the student's teacher, and signed by the teacher and principal, as an accurate picture of the student's reading ability. The student reading portfolio shall include an organized collection of evidence of the student's mastery of the State's reading standards that are assessed by the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students. For each benchmark, there shall be three examples of student work demonstrating mastery by a grade of seventy percent (70%) or above.
- (9) "Summer reading camp" means an additional educational program outside of the instructional calendar provided by the local school administrative unit to any student who does not demonstrate reading proficiency. Parents or guardians of the student not demonstrating reading proficiency shall make the final decision regarding the student's summer camp attendance. Summer camps shall (i) be six to eight weeks long, four or five days per week; (ii) include at least three hours of instructional time per day; (iii) be taught by compensated, licensed teachers selected based on demonstrated student outcomes in reading proficiency; and (iv) allow volunteer mentors to read with students.
- (10) "Transitional third and fourth class combination" means a classroom specifically designed to produce learning gains sufficient to meet fourth grade performance standards while continuing to remediate areas of reading deficiency.

"§ 115C-83.1D. Comprehensive plan for reading achievement.

(a) The State Board of Education shall develop, implement, and continuously evaluate a comprehensive plan to improve reading achievement in the public schools. The plan shall be based on reading instructional practices with strong evidence of effectiveness in current empirical research in reading development. The plan shall be developed with the active involvement of teachers, college and university educators, parents and guardians of students, and other interested parties. The plan shall, when appropriate to reflect research, include revision of the standard course of study or other curricular standards, revision of teacher licensure and renewal standards, and revision of teacher education program standards.

(b) The State Board of Education shall report biennially to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by October 1 of each even-numbered year on the implementation, evaluation, and revisions to the comprehensive plan for reading achievement and shall include recommendations for legislative changes to enable implementation of current empirical research in reading development.

"§ 115C-83.1E. Developmental screening and kindergarten entry assessment.

(a) The State Board of Education shall ensure that every student entering kindergarten shall be administered a developmental screening of early language, literacy, and math skills within 30 days of enrollment.

(b) The State Board of Education shall ensure that every student entering kindergarten shall complete a kindergarten entry assessment within 60 days of enrollment.

(c) The developmental screening instrument may be composed of subsections of the kindergarten entry assessment.

(d) The kindergarten entry assessment shall address the five essential domains of school readiness: language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development.

(e) The kindergarten entry assessment shall be (i) administered at the classroom level in all local school administrative units; (ii) aligned to North Carolina's early learning and development standards and to the standard course of study; and (iii) reliable, valid, and appropriate for use with all children, including those with disabilities and those who are English language learners.

(f) The results of the developmental screening and the kindergarten entry assessment shall be used to inform the following:

- (1) The status of children's learning at kindergarten entry.
- (2) Instruction of each child.
- (3) Efforts to reduce the achievement gap at kindergarten entry.
- (4) Continuous improvement of the early childhood system.

"§ 115C-83.1F. Facilitating early grade reading proficiency.

(a) Kindergarten, first, second, and third grade students shall be assessed with valid, reliable, formative, and diagnostic reading assessments made available to local school administrative units by the State Board of Education pursuant to G.S. 115C-174.11(a). Difficulty with reading development identified through administration of formative and diagnostic assessments shall be addressed with instructional supports and services. To the greatest extent possible, kindergarten through third grade reading assessments shall yield data that can be used with the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS), or a compatible and comparable system approved by the State Board of Education, to analyze student data to identify root causes for difficulty with reading development and to determine actions to address them.

(b) Formative and diagnostic assessments and resultant instructional supports and services shall address oral language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension using developmentally appropriate practices.

(c) Local school administrative units are encouraged to partner with community organizations, businesses, and other groups to provide volunteers, mentors, or tutors to assist with the provision of instructional supports and services that enhance reading development and proficiency.

"§ 115C-83.1G. Elimination of social promotion.

(a) The State Board of Education shall require that a student be retained in the third grade if the student fails to demonstrate reading proficiency appropriate for a third grade student, as demonstrated on a State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students. The test may be readministered once prior to the end of the school year.

(b) Students may be exempt from mandatory retention in third grade for good cause but shall continue to receive instructional supports and services and reading interventions appropriate for their age and reading level. Good cause exemptions shall be limited to the following:

- (1) Limited English Proficient students with less than two years of instruction in an English as a Second Language program.
- (2) Students with disabilities, as defined in G.S. 115C-106.3(1), whose individualized education program indicates the use of alternative assessments and reading interventions.
- (3) Students who demonstrate reading proficiency appropriate for third grade students on an alternative assessment approved by the State Board of Education. Teachers may administer the alternative assessment following the administration of the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension typically given to third grade students at the end of the school year, or after a student's participation in the local school administrative unit's summer reading camp.
- (4) Students who demonstrate, through a student reading portfolio, reading proficiency appropriate for third grade students. Teachers may submit the student reading portfolio at the end of the school year or after a student's participation in the local school administrative unit's summer reading camp.

The student reading portfolio and review process shall be established by the State Board of Education.

- (5) Students who have (i) received reading intervention and (ii) previously been retained more than once in kindergarten, first, second, or third grades.

(c) The superintendent shall determine whether a student may be exempt from mandatory retention on the basis of a good cause exemption. The following steps shall be taken in making the determination:

- (1) The teacher of a student eligible for a good cause exemption shall submit documentation of the relevant exemption and evidence that promotion of the student is appropriate based on the student's academic record to the principal. Such evidence shall be limited to the student's personal education plan, individual education program, if applicable, alternative assessment, or student reading portfolio.
- (2) The principal shall review the documentation and make an initial determination whether the student should be promoted. If the principal determines the student should be promoted, the principal shall make a written recommendation of promotion to the superintendent for final determination. The superintendent's acceptance or rejection of the recommendation shall be in writing.

"§ 115C-83.1H. Successful reading development for retained students.

(a) Students not demonstrating reading proficiency shall be enrolled in a summer reading camp provided by the local school administrative unit prior to being retained. Students who demonstrate reading proficiency on an alternative assessment of reading comprehension or student reading portfolio after completing a summer reading camp shall be promoted to the fourth grade. Students who do not demonstrate reading proficiency on these measures after completing a summer reading camp shall be retained under G.S. 115C-83.1G(a) and provided with the instruction listed in subsection (b) of this section during the retained year.

(b) Students retained under G.S. 115C-83.1G(a) shall be provided with a teacher selected based on demonstrated student outcomes in reading proficiency and placed in an accelerated reading class or a transitional third and fourth grade class combination, as appropriate. Classroom instruction shall include at least 90 minutes of daily, uninterrupted, evidence-based reading instruction, not to include independent reading time, and other appropriate instructional supports and services and reading interventions.

(c) The State Board of Education shall establish a midyear promotion policy for any student retained under G.S. 115C-83.1G(a) who, by November 1, demonstrates reading proficiency through administration of the alternative assessment of reading comprehension or student reading portfolio review.

(d) Parents or guardians of students who have been retained once under the provisions of G.S. 115C-83.1G(a) shall be provided with a plan for reading at home, including participation in shared and guided reading workshops for the parent or guardian, and outlined in a parental or guardian contract.

(e) Parents or guardians of students who have been retained twice under the provisions of G.S. 115C-83.1G(a) shall be offered supplemental tutoring for the retained student in evidence-based reading services outside the instructional day.

"§ 115C-83.1I. Notification requirements to parents and guardians.

(a) Parents or guardians shall be notified in writing, and in a timely manner, that the student shall be retained, unless he or she is exempt from mandatory retention for good cause, if the student is not demonstrating reading proficiency by the end of third grade. Parents or guardians shall receive this notice when a kindergarten, first, second, or third grade student (i) is demonstrating difficulty with reading development; (ii) is not reading at grade level; or (iii) has a personal education plan under G.S. 115C-105.41.

(b) Parents or guardians of any student who is to be retained under the provisions of G.S. 115C-83.1G(a) shall be notified in writing of the reason the student is not eligible for a good cause exemption as provided in G.S. 115C-83.1G(b). Written notification shall also include a description of proposed reading interventions that will be provided to the student to remediate identified areas of reading deficiency.

(c) Parents or guardians of students retained under G.S. 115C-83.1G(a) shall receive at least monthly written reports on student progress toward reading proficiency. The evaluation of the student's progress shall be based upon the student's classroom work, observations, tests, assessments, and other relevant information.

(d) Teachers and principals shall provide opportunities to discuss with parents and guardians the notifications listed in this section.

"§ 115C-83.1J. Accountability measures.

(a) Each local board of education shall publish annually on a Web site maintained by that local school administrative unit and report in writing to the State Board of Education by September 1 of each year the following information on the prior school year:

- (1) The number and percentage of third grade students demonstrating and not demonstrating reading proficiency on the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students.
- (2) The number and percentage of third grade students who take and pass the alternative assessment of reading comprehension.
- (3) The number and percentage of third grade students retained for not demonstrating reading proficiency.
- (4) The number and percentage of third grade students exempt from mandatory third grade retention by category of exemption as listed in G.S. 115C-83.1G(b).

(b) Each local board of education shall report annually in writing to the State Board of Education by September 1 of each year a description of all reading interventions provided to students who have been retained under G.S. 115C-83.1G(a).

(c) The State Board of Education shall establish a uniform format for local boards of education to report the required information listed in subsections (a) and (b) of this section and shall provide the format to local boards of education no later than 90 days prior to the annual due date. The State Board of Education shall compile annually this information and submit a State-level summary to the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by October 1 of each year, beginning with the 2014-2015 school year.

(d) The State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction shall provide technical assistance as needed to aid local school administrative units to implement all provisions of this Part."

SECTION 7A.1.(c) G.S. 115C-105.27(b)(1a) is repealed.

SECTION 7A.1.(d) G.S. 115C-105.41 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115C-105.41. Students who have been placed at risk of academic failure; personal education plans.

In order to implement Part 1A of Article 8 of this Chapter, ~~Local~~ local school administrative units shall identify students who are at risk for academic failure and who are not successfully progressing toward grade promotion and graduation, beginning ~~no later than the fourth grade~~ in kindergarten. Identification shall occur as early as can reasonably be done and can be based on grades, observations, diagnostic and formative assessments, State assessments, and other factors, including reading on grade level, that impact student performance that teachers and administrators consider appropriate, without having to await the results of end-of-grade or end-of-course tests. No later than the end of the first quarter, or after a teacher has had up to nine

weeks of instructional time with a student, a personal education plan for academic improvement with focused intervention and performance benchmarks shall be developed or updated for any student at risk of academic failure who is not performing at least at grade level, as identified by the State end-of-grade test and other factors noted above. Focused instructional supports and services, reading ~~intervention~~ interventions, and accelerated activities should include ~~research-based best~~ evidence-based practices that meet the needs of students and may include coaching, mentoring, tutoring, summer school, Saturday school, and extended days. Local school administrative units shall provide these activities free of charge to students. Local school administrative units shall also provide transportation free of charge to all students for whom transportation is necessary for participation in these activities.

Local school administrative units shall give notice of the personal education plan and a copy of the personal education plan to the student's parent or guardian. Parents should be included in the implementation and ongoing review of personal education plans.

Local school administrative units shall certify that they have complied with this section annually to the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education shall periodically review data on the progress of identified students and report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.

No cause of action for monetary damages shall arise from the failure to provide or implement a personal education plan under this section."

SECTION 7A.1.(e) G.S. 115C-174.11(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Assessment Instruments for ~~First and Second Grades~~. Kindergarten, First, Second, and Third Grades. – The State Board of Education shall ~~adopt~~ develop, adopt, and provide to the local school administrative units developmentally appropriate individualized assessment instruments consistent with the Basic Education Program and Part 1A of Article 8 of this Chapter for the ~~first and second grades, rather than standardized tests~~. kindergarten, first, second, and third grades. Local school administrative units ~~may~~ shall use these assessment instruments provided to them by the State Board for ~~first and second grade students~~, kindergarten, first, second, and third grade students to assess progress, diagnose difficulties, and inform instruction and remediation needs. ~~and~~ Local school administrative units shall not use standardized tests for summative assessment of kindergarten, first, and second grade students except as required as a condition of receiving federal grants."

SECTION 7A.1.(f) G.S. 115C-238.29F is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(d1) Reading Proficiency and Student Promotion. –

- (1) Students in the third grade shall be retained if the student fails to demonstrate reading proficiency by reading at or above the third grade level as demonstrated by the results of the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students. The charter school shall provide reading interventions to retained students to remediate reading deficiency, which may include 90 minutes of daily, uninterrupted, evidence-based reading instruction, accelerated reading classes, transition classes containing third and fourth grade students, and summer reading camps.
- (2) Students may be exempt from mandatory retention in third grade for good cause but shall continue to receive instructional supports and services and reading

interventions appropriate for their age and reading level. Good cause exemptions shall be limited to the following:

- a. Limited English Proficient students with less than two years of instruction in an English as a Second Language program.
 - b. Students with disabilities, as defined in G.S. 115C-106.3(1), whose individualized education program indicates the use of alternative assessments and reading interventions.
 - c. Students who demonstrate reading proficiency appropriate for third grade students on an alternative assessment of reading comprehension. The charter school shall notify the State Board of Education of the alternative assessment used to demonstrate reading proficiency.
 - d. Students who demonstrate, through a student reading portfolio, reading proficiency appropriate for third grade students.
 - e. Students who have (i) received reading intervention and (ii) previously been retained more than once in kindergarten, first, second, or third grades.
- (3) The charter school shall provide notice to parents and guardians when a student is not reading at grade level. The notice shall state that if the student's reading deficiency is not remediated by the end of third grade, the student shall be retained unless he or she is exempt from mandatory retention for good cause. Notice shall also be provided to parents and guardians of any student who is to be retained under this subsection of the reason the student is not eligible for a good cause exemption, as well as a description of proposed reading interventions that will be provided to the student to remediate identified areas of reading deficiency.
- (4) The charter school shall annually publish on the charter school's Web site and report in writing to the State Board of Education by September 1 of each year the following information on the prior school year:
- a. The number and percentage of third grade students demonstrating and not demonstrating reading proficiency on the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students.
 - b. The number and percentage of third grade students not demonstrating reading proficiency and who do not return to the charter school for the following school year.
 - c. The number and percentage of third grade students who take and pass the alternative assessment of reading comprehension.
 - d. The number and percentage of third grade students retained for not demonstrating reading proficiency.
 - e. The number and percentage of third grade students exempt from mandatory third grade retention by category of exemption as listed in subdivision (2) of this subsection."

SECTION 7A.1.(g) G.S. 115C-288(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) To Grade and Classify Pupils. – The principal shall have authority to grade and classify pupils, except as provided in G.S. 115C-83.1G(a). In determining the appropriate grade for a pupil who is already attending a public school, the principal shall consider the pupil's classroom work and grades, the pupil's scores on standardized tests, and the best educational interests of the pupil. The principal shall not make the decision solely on the basis of standardized test scores. If a principal's decision to retain a child in the same grade is partially based on the pupil's scores on standardized tests, those test scores shall be verified as accurate.

A principal shall not require additional testing of a student entering a public school from a school governed under Article 39 of this Chapter if test scores from a nationally standardized test or nationally standardized equivalent measure that are adequate to determine the appropriate placement of the child are available."

SECTION 7A.1.(h) G.S. 130A-440(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) A health assessment shall include a medical history and physical examination with screening for vision and hearing and, if appropriate, testing for anemia and tuberculosis. Vision screening shall be conducted in accordance with G.S. 130A-440.1. The health assessment may also include dental screening and developmental screening for cognition, language, and motor function. The developmental screening of cognition and language abilities may be conducted in accordance with G.S. 115C-83.1E(a)."

SECTION 7A.1.(i) This section is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning with the 2013-2014 school year. The developmental screening and kindergarten entry assessment required by this section shall be administered beginning with the 2014-2015 school year.

APPENDIX J: MS. LEMON'S COLLECTION OF POWER READS

Alia's Mission	Big Hair, Don't Care	Fireboat	Dancing in the Wings	Penny and the Magic Puffballs
I Love My Hair	Nasreen's Secret School	The Streets Are Free	March- Book One	I Like Myself
Naturally Me	Keep Your Ear on the Ball	The Bat Boy and His Violin	We Shall Overcome	S'eLavi
One	Child of the Civil Rights Movement	Si, Se Puede!	Supermommy	Amazing Faces
Looking Like Me	Ron's Big Mission	Freedom School, Yes!	The Composition	New Shoes
Goin' Somewhere Special	Hairs/Pelitos	A Sweet Smell of Roses	My Very Own Room	Africa is Not a Country
Meet Danitra Brown	Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match	As Fast As Words Could Fly	The Other Side	Moses

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