COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: A PATHWAY TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?

By

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine if student achievement was effected by differentiated instruction, the difference being the Common Core State Standards. The researcher asked: Was there a difference in student achievement, as measured by Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores, between teachers who integrated the Common Core State Standards into their instruction and teachers who did not integrate the Common Core State Standards into their instruction? 4th and 5th grade MAP scores, an indicator of student achievement, were collected from a Midwest, suburban, metropolitan school district. A pilot study, conducted by this district, identified teachers who did not teach to the Common Core in 2010-2011 and teachers who taught to the Common Core in the 2011-2012 school year. The findings were analyzed through Microsoft Excel and A Statistical Program (ASP) software. The findings indicated there was no difference in student achievement, as measured by MAP scores, between teachers who taught to the Common Core Standards and teachers who did not teach to the Common Core Standards. The reasoning behind these findings was not addressed in this study. However, review of literature has led the researcher to conclude that additional studies of alignment between the Common Core State Standards and assessments of student achievement are warranted.
INTRODUCTION

Background, Issues and Concerns:

In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* warned the public of the United States’ education deficiency. This report sparked a push toward academic standards. *The America 2000 Act*, under the Bush administration, and *the Goals 2000: Educate America Act* under the Clinton administration furthered the development of content standards. In 2002, President Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind Act*. This legislation led to annual state testing in math and reading in grades 3-8 and once during high school. States were mandated to align their tests with their academic standards. In April 2009, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and the National Governors Association unveiled the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The initial motivation for the development of the Common Core began with the desire for U.S. standards to be equivalent to the standards of academically successful countries. It was the desire of United States legislators to prepare students for college and careers upon graduation. In September 2009, the draft of the college-and-career-readiness standards was made available to the public. In November 2009, the Race to the Top campaign was unveiled. States began adopting the Common Core State Standards after this unveiling. In April 2010, the Department of Education invited states, whom had adopted the standards by the end of 2011, to become part of a state consortium and thus receive funds for designing assessments for the Common Core State Standards. The Department of Education awarded funds to two state consortia for the development of these assessments and supplemental resources. Furthermore, in September 2011, the Department of Education announced guidelines for states desiring waivers for key requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. To qualify for this waiver, states had to adopt the college-and-career-
readiness standards. As of November 2011, all but four states have adopted the Common Core State Standards.

*Practice under Investigation*

As a result of teachers differentiating instruction or not differentiating instruction to align with the Common Core State Standards, student achievement was under investigation. Student achievement, as measured by Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores, was analyzed to determine if student achievement was affected by this differentiated instruction.

*School Policy to be Informed by Study*

The policy of differentiated instruction, as a result of piloting the Common Core State Standards, was informed by this study.

*Conceptual Underpinning*

Common Core State Standards benefit student achievement. By differentiating instruction to focus on Common Core State Standards, teachers help to prepare students for life after secondary education. Furthermore, the differentiating of instruction to focus on Common Core State Standards increases student achievement.

*Statement of the Problem:*

Our nation is on the cusp of adopting and fully integrating the Common Core State Standards. As teachers differentiate their instruction, will these newly adopted standards benefit student achievement? As the United States looked forward to its competitiveness in the global market, a change in educating its youth was warranted.
**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine if student achievement is effected by differentiated instruction. Specifically, this study will address if student achievement, as measured by MAP scores, will decrease or increase as a result of teachers teaching or not teaching to the Common Core Standards.

**Research Question(s):**

Is there a difference in student achievement, as measured by MAP scores, between teachers who are teaching to the Common Core Standards and teachers who are not teaching to the Common Core Standards?

**Null Hypothesis(es):**

There is no difference in student achievement, as measured by MAP scores, between teachers who are teaching to the Common Core Standards and teachers who are not teaching to the Common Core Standards.

**Anticipated Benefits of the Study:**

The information gained from this study will aid educators and administrators in determining the effectiveness of using the Common Core State Standards as a roadmap to increase student achievement. In addition, this information may provide confidence in teachers’ efforts to teach to the Common Core if an increase in MAP scores is noted. If, however, MAP scores decrease as a result of teachers teaching to the Common Core, then this information may serve as a catalyst for acknowledging a need to align the Common Core Standards with a more valid summative assessment measure. In addition, this action research
may aid in our understanding that the change of our assessments in 2014-2015 may be warranted.

*Definition of Terms*

**Common Core State Standards (CCSS):**

The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy ("Common core state," 2012).

**Missouri Assessment Program (MAP):**

MAP stands for "Missouri Assessment Program." It is a series of assessments for Communication Arts, Mathematics and Science at grades 3-8; and Communication Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies in high school. These assessments are designed to see if students in Missouri are meeting the Show-Me Standards (Schwab, 2011).

**Missouri DESE:** Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**A Nation At Risk:** A 1983 report of President Ronald Reagan’s National Commission on Excellence in Education. This report was a landmark in educational history. The report awoke Americans to the sense of educational failure in the United States.
No Child Left Behind: Signed by President George W. Bush, P.L. 107-110 mandates that states annually test students in math and reading. Furthermore, these state assessments must be aligned to state academic standards.

Pilot study: a small-scale design experiment used to gather data before a full-scale implementation is conducted.

Race to the Top: Part of the American Recovery and Investment Act of 2009, President Obama announced of federal funding available to states who submit to educational policies and national standards, for example.

Survey of Enacted Curriculum: a set of data collection devices used to collect and report on data surrounding instructional practices and content.

Summary:

As the United States looked toward to its competitiveness in the global market, a change in educating its youth was warranted. As a result of historical education legislation, in April 2009, the Common Core State Standards Initiative was unveiled. As of November 2011, all but four states have adopted the Common Core State Standards. A specific Midwest metropolitan school district was on the cusp of fully integrating the Common Core State Standards into the 4th and 5th grade curriculum. As a result of randomly selected teachers piloting the integration of CCSS into their instruction, student achievement was under investigation. Student achievement, as measured by Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores, was analyzed to determine if student achievement was affected by this differentiated instruction. Common Core State Standards were adopted to benefit student achievement. By integrating the Common Core State Standards into their curriculum, these randomly selected
4th and 5th grade teachers intended to help prepare students for life after secondary education. As teachers piloted the integration of the CCSS into their 4th and 5th grade curriculum, were these newly adopted standards of benefit to student achievement?

The purpose of this study was to determine if student achievement was effected by differentiated instruction. The researcher asked: Was there a difference in student achievement, as measured by MAP scores, between teachers who integrated the Common Core State Standards into their instruction and teachers who did not integrate the Common Core State Standards into their instruction? The information gained from this study will aid educators and administrators in determining the effectiveness of using the Common Core State Standards as a roadmap to increase student achievement.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Common Core State Standards provide an understanding of what America’s students are expected to learn as they prepare for college and career through each grade level. Core concepts and procedures are identified as benchmarks at every grade level to insure that teachers, parents, and community leaders are “equipped to know exactly what they need to help students learn” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Offices, 2010, p.1). Launched in April of 2009, states pledged support to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (Gerwertz, 2012). As of December 2012, all but five states have adopted the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Offices, 2010).

The development of the Common Core State Standards can be traced to milestones in United States educational reform history. In 1983, A Nation at Risk warned the United States that its competitiveness in the global market was mediocre in comparison to many nations. This report sparked a focus on academic standards (Gewertz, 2012). President George H.W. Bush and the nation’s governors agreed to set national education goals in 1989. As a result, in 1991, President Bush introduced the America 2000 Act. Although this act failed to gain congressional support, this administration funded “the development of voluntary national standards” (Gewertz, 2012, p.S10). In 1994, under the leadership of President Clinton, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act was signed. This piece of educational reform provided grants to assist states in creating content standards. In addition, “the voluntary national standards in arts, civics, geography, social studies, English/language arts, history, science, and foreign
languages” were unveiled (Gewertz, 2012, p.S10). The U.S. Department of Education withdrew financial support of the English standards when Lynne Cheney emphasized the negative attacks that the draft presented toward the United States and Western civilization. The development of voluntary national standards met its demise in 1995 when the Senate passed a “nonbinding resolution denouncing the history standards” (Gewertz, 2012, p.S10). The standards certification panel was abolished in 1996 by congress. In 2002, President George W. Bush set another milestone toward the Common Core initiative with the No Child Left Behind Act. State testing requirements more than doubled (Toch & Tyre, 2010). Furthermore, state academic standards were required to align with state tests. These assessments were to be “broken down by subgroup in every school to draw attention to the plight of the poor and other groups of students that schools traditionally had not served well” (Toch & Tyre, 2010, p.6). Toch and Tyre (2010) also report that failing school scores required reorganization and even closure according to No Child Left Behind legislation. As a competitive edge in the global market was warranted, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Governors Association, and Achieve, in collaboration with state leaders, released a report in 2008 advising the United States to develop equally competitive standards with academically successful countries. In April of 2009, “the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association launched the Common Core State Standards Initiative” (Gewertz, 2012, p.S10).

Critics of the CCSS identify this initiative with a top-down implementation approach (Lee, 2011). The question arose whether Washington-based organizations pushed the CCSS objective harder than state-led supporters (Gewertz, 2012). In July 2009, President Obama announced, “the race starts today” with the implementation of Race to the Top, part of the
American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Boser, 2012, p.1). During a time of fiscal recession, states were offered a piece of this four-billion dollar grant if they adopted the CCSS by August 2, 2010 (Gewertz, 2012). The Race to the Top campaign promised to aid states in closing achievement gaps and prepare students for college and career readiness “by supporting key reform strategies including: adopting more rigorous standards and assessments, recruiting, evaluating, and retaining highly effective teachers and principals, turning around low-performing schools, and building data systems that measure student success” (Boser, 2012, p.1). The top-down initiative fueled further suspicion as “the U.S. Department of Education awarded $360 million in grants to two groups of states to develop tests for the new standards. To participate in those consortia, states had to have adopted the standards by the end of 2011” (Gewertz, 2012, p.S7). Authors of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, emphasize that their initiative is not a top-down implementation approach. Rather the CCSS initiative is “a state-led effort that is not part of NCLB and adoption of the standards is in no way mandatory” ("Common core state," 2012, p.4). “States across the country collaborated with teachers, researchers, and leading experts to design and develop the Common Core State Standards. The federal government was NOT involved in the development of the standards” ("Common core state," 2012, p.1).

The implementation process of the CCSS presents a challenge to U.S. stakeholders. “The CCSS will involve challenging curriculum transformations given teacher’s familiarity with the current state standards, challenges exacerbated by lack of resources to implement these changes” (Beach, 2011, p.181). The Common Core authors outline myths versus facts of the CCSS. The fact is that “standards will establish what students need to learn, but they will not
dictate how teachers should teach” ("Common core state," 2012, p.3). Lee (2010) reports that, “the great majority of schools across the country are missing the professional learning culture that’s necessary if the proposed common standards and assessments are to make a real difference” (p.43). Calkins emphasizes a celebration that must occur because the CCSS recognize “that teachers need to draw upon the knowledge of our field in order to bring students to these ambitious levels” (Calkins, 2012, p.13). It is the responsibility of the schools and teachers to implement the standards and adjudicate best practices to assist students in achieving academic success (“Common core state,” 2012). “The Common Core State Standards have been written, but the plan for implementing them has not. The goal is clear. The pathway is not” (Calkins, 2012, p.13). The goal is to “establish what students need to learn” (“Common core state,” 2012, p.1).

Calkins states the pathway is not clear (2012); however, the Common Core State Standards provide a roadmap for educators between state lines. “When a family moves from Kalamazoo to Kansas, they will not have to worry that their children will be out of sync with instruction in the new state and waste a year to align their knowledge” (Jaeger, 2012, p.10). Lovelace, in the Brown Center Report on American Education, states, “concern for interstate student mobility is overblown, the counter-manifesto claims, because very few students move between states. Most mobility is within state, which is already addressed by the No Child Left Behind Act’s requirement that every state establish standards” (2012, p.9). Furthermore, Lovelace claims, “the variation within states is four to five times larger than the variation between states” (2012, p.12). Framers of CCSS intend that students learning under the CCSS umbrella will be encouraged to think critically rather than dig for an answer. The CCSS
emphasis on rigor and relevance aims to produce independent thinkers who read and write “at high levels of proficiency and at a rapid enough rate to be effective” (Calkins, 2012, p.12). Specifically, “the Common Core aims to put all of us alongside the same measuring stick, creating a basis for credible judgments as well as encouraging states to learn from one another in ways that move the nation toward higher levels of accountability for student achievement” (Calkins, 2012, p.15).

Fuhrman, Resnick & Shepard (2009) emphasize, “Curricula, tests, textbooks, lesson plans, and teachers’ on-the-job training will all have to be revised to reinforce the standards” (p.28). Ball and Forzani (2011) argue that “policymakers are concerned with recruiting better teachers and developing new approaches to teacher evaluation and accountability than with building the infrastructure needed for high-quality instruction” (p.18). Furthermore, Ball and Forzani propose a common core curriculum for teacher preparation. “With a practice-focused curriculum for learning to teach, prospective teachers would learn to use high-leverage practices to teach high-leverage content, much of it derived from the Common Core State Standards” (2011, p.21). Daniel Willingham, professor of psychology at the University of Virginia recognizes that as the bar of challenge is raised for students, “then you also raise the possibility that the content is more challenging for the teacher,” (Sawchuk, 2012, p.S14). Hung-Hsi Wu, a professor emeritus of mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley predicts “the common-core standards will fail, unless we can do massive professional development for teachers,” (Sawchuk, 2012, p.S14).

Porter, McMaken, Hwang, and Yang (2011) conducted a study in which “the CCSS were compared with current state standards and assessments and with standards in top-performing
countries, as well as with reports from a sample of teachers ... describing their own practices” (p. 103). Based on a content analysis procedure, the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum, Porter et. al compared assessment items with objectives or standards. “The general finding for both standards and assessments is great state-to-state variability” (Porter et al., 2011, p. 105). With regard to CCSS and current state standards, Porter et al. discovered an “average alignment between state and Common Core English Language Arts standards” (2011, p. 105). Porter et al. reported that the alignment indices of state standards to CCSS ranged from .10 to .48 with an average of .30 (2011). Furthermore, Porter et. al reported the “average alignment of Common Core standards and state assessments is slightly lower than the alignment of state standards to the Common Core” (2011, p. 109). In regards to English Language Arts, “the average alignment of assessments to the Common Core standards is .17, compared with .30 for state standards” (2011, p. 109). Variability was reported to be less for the alignment indices between assessments and the Common Core. The alignment index fell between .07 and .32 for English Language Arts (Porter, 2011, p. 109). Porter et al. conclude, “the Common Core standards represent considerable change from what states currently call for in their standards and in what they assess” (2011, p. 114).

Authors of the CCSS recognize a need to align assessments with the Common Core State Standards. “States that adopted the Common Core State Standards are currently collaborating to develop common assessments that will be aligned to the standards and replace existing end of year state assessments. These assessments will be available in the 2014-2015 school year” (“Common core state,” 2012, p.2). Specifically, “two consortia of states are developing common assessments – the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) and
the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)” (“Common core state,” 2012, p.4). Toch reported that states joining Race to the Top committed to using new standards and “joining a testing consortium that measures students’ grasp of the new standards” (2010, p.9). These coalitions of states are working closely to “establish new assessments of school performance for accountability, increase online testing, link testing more closely to instruction, and compare scores across states” (Toch, 2010, p.10).

As development of aligned assessments continue, Loveless comments “standards that simply sit on a shelf are certain to have no effect” (2012, p.32). Furthermore, Lovelace states, “there could be issues of alignment between these assessments and teachers’ unique instruction and evaluation methods” (2012, p181). Porter et al. studied the relationship between what teachers currently teach and the Common Core State Standards. Using the Wisconsin Survey of Enacted Curriculum (SEC), this data set provided data on “what teachers say they teach using the SEC metric” (2011, p. 114). A matrix of content proportions for each teacher was built. For English Language Arts, the average (mean) alignment across teachers to the Common Core State Standards “was .27, with a standard deviation of .071, a minimum alignment of .001, and a maximum alignment of .398.” Therefore, Porter et al. reported generally low alignment levels between what teachers say they teach and the CCSS (2011, p. 114).

Beach reports “the CCSS framers provide little research supporting the presumption that adopting standards necessarily leads to a more rigorous curriculum to better prepare students for college” (2011, p. 179). Although the framers of the CCSS intend for these high standards to
“provide teachers, parents, and students with a set of clear expectations that are aligned to the expectations in college and careers,” (“Common core state,” 2012, p.1) the Center on Educational Policy released a report of key findings as a result of states’ survey responses. Specifically, “officials from most adopting states were unsure whether their state plans to align undergraduate admission requirements or first-year college curriculum with the CCSS” (Kober & Rentner, 2011, p.1). Although Ball & Forzani recognize “to improve the quality of teaching, educators must establish a common core of professional knowledge and skill that can be taught to aspiring teachers, across all types of programs and pathways,” they also state a “lack of a common curriculum in the United States has often discouraged teacher educators from focusing beginners’ training on any particular academic content” (2011, p.38). Ball & Forzani argue that the introduction of the Common Core State Standards provides a framework for “instructional practices...that could serve as the foci of a redesigned professional curriculum for learning to teach responsibly” (2011, p.38).

Within the 2012 Brown Center Report on American Education, Lovelace asked “why don’t aspirational standards make much of a difference?” (2012, p.13). Additionally, Lovelace stated, “Despite all the money and effort devoted to developing the Common Core State Standards, the study foresees little to no impact on student learning” (Lovelace, 2012, p.3). Although the CCSS authors report its development based on international benchmarks and research (“Common core state,” 2012, p.2-3), Lovelace reports “interpretation of international test scores are characterized by ...common mistakes” (2012, p.5). In addition, Tienken agrees, “understanding international test results is not as cut-and-dried as the NGA and CCSSO would have us believe” (2010, p.15). The difference lies somewhere between the
intended, implemented, and attained curriculum (Lovelace, 2012, p.13). Lovelace also raises these questions, “how much does raising the quality of standards matter in boosting student achievement? Will raising the bar for attaining proficiency, in other words, increasing the rigor of performance standards, also raise achievement?” (2012, p.9). Lovelace calls for dependable curriculum, quality teaching, valid assessments, and accountability “for the promise of standards to be realized” (2012, p.32). “The empirical evidence suggests that the Common Core will have little effect on American students’ achievement” (Lovelace, 2012, p.14).
RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

The research was designed around a measure of student achievement (MAP scores) and teachers who piloted or did not pilot the integration of the Common Core State Standards into their 4th or 5th grade instruction during the 2011-2012 academic school year. The independent variable was based upon whether the Common Core State Standards were used or not used to differentiate instruction during the 2011-2012 school year. The dependent variable was student achievement as measured by MAP scores.

Study Group Description:

The 4th and 5th grade students were from a Midwest, suburban, metropolitan school district. The district demographics, as of 2011, were defined by 10,683 students of which 19.8% were on free and reduced lunch. The ethnic makeup of the district was 85.3% white and 6.3% Hispanic in 2011. The teachers, employed by this district, who piloted the process of integrating the Common Core State Standards, were randomly selected.

Data Collection and Instrumentation:

Student achievement information was obtained via the results of 2011 and 2012 Missouri Assessment Program raw data collection, a summative assessment measure. This data was provided by the Midwest, suburban, metropolitan school district’s director of assessment, evaluation, and testing.

Statistical Analysis Methods:

A t-test was used to compare the independent variables (4th and 5th grade teachers who did not pilot the CCSS in 2011 to the same 4th and 5th grade teachers who did pilot the CCSS in
2012) with the selected dependent variable (MAP score raw data) to determine significant differences in student achievement. Specifically, the source was broken into two categories: five teachers who did not integrate CCSS into their instruction in 2011 (status =1) and five teachers who taught to the CCSS in 2012 (status = 2). The mean, mean D, t-test, df, and p-value were concluded from this test. The Alpha level was set at 0.25 to test the null hypothesis: There is no difference in student achievement, as measured by MAP scores, between teachers who are teaching to the Common Core Standards and teachers who are not teaching to the Common Core Standards.
FINDINGS

A t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in performance on the 2011 and 2012 Missouri Assessment Program scaled scores (communication arts subtest) based upon teachers who integrated CCSS into their teaching practice (2012) and those who did not teach to the CCSS (2011). The following tables, graphs, and charts will depict the organized findings based on the raw MAP scores obtained by a Midwestern, suburban school district.

Figure 1

**t-Test Analysis Results:**

**2011 and 2012 Communication Arts MAP scores for 4th and 5th grade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean D</th>
<th>t-Test</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (2011, No CCSS) (5)</td>
<td>681.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (2012, CCSS) (5)</td>
<td>681.84</td>
<td>-0.76</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significant when p<=0.25

Five teachers from a Midwestern, suburban school district were randomly selected to participate in pilot study to determine if there was a difference in student achievement as the result of Common Core State Standards integrated into their teaching practices. Student achievement was measured by Missouri Assessment Program student raw scores in the area of Communication Arts. These scores were provided by the Midwestern, suburban school district.
to the researcher for action research purposes. The mean of the 2011 sampling of students’ MAP Communication Arts score was 681.08. The 2011 students were not provided with focused CCSS instruction. The mean of the 2012 sampling of students’ MAP Communication Arts score was 681.84. The 2012 students received instruction focused on CCSS. The Mean D, or difference between the two groups, was -0.76. The t-test result was -0.17 and the df was 222. The null hypothesis states that there is no difference in student achievement, as measured by MAP scores, between teachers who are teaching to the Common Core Standards and teachers who are not teaching to the Common Core Standards. This null hypothesis was not rejected because the p-value, 0.87, is higher than the alpha level, 0.25. This shows that instruction focused on CCSS does not significantly impact the state standardized test scores in the Communication Arts content area.

As provided by the Missouri DESE website, Communication Arts MAP scores are broken down into four achievement level descriptors: below basic, basic, proficient and advanced. The achievement levels provide a roadmap toward student achievement of grade level expectations ("Missouri assessment program," 2012). The following table provides the achievement level cut-off points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAP Achievement Level Descriptors</th>
<th>Grade 4 cut-off points</th>
<th>Grade 5 cut-off points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below Basic</td>
<td>470-611</td>
<td>485-624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>612-661</td>
<td>625-674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>662-690</td>
<td>675-701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>691-820</td>
<td>702-840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based upon these cut-off points, the mean of the 2011 4th and 5th grade students’ MAP Communication Arts score was 681.08. Again, the 2011 students were not provided with focused CCSS instruction. The mean of the 2012 4th and 5th grade students’ MAP Communication Arts score was 681.84. The 2012 students received instruction focused on CCSS. The mean of 681 indicates that both 2011 and 2012 students fell within the proficient range on the Communication Arts MAP test. Although the CCSS were implemented in 2012, a significant difference/increase in student achievement from 2011 to 2012 was not noted (mean D= -0.76).
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings reported from this study show that there is no difference in student achievement, as measured by MAP scores, between teachers who are teaching to the Common Core Standards and teachers who are not teaching to the Common Core Standards. The t-test results from the 2011 and 2012 4th and 5th grade Communication Arts MAP scores indicated the mean of the 2011 sampling of students’ MAP Communication Arts score was 681.08. The 2011 students were not provided with focused CCSS instruction. The mean of the 2012 sampling of students’ MAP Communication Arts score was 681.84. The 2012 students received instruction focused on CCSS. The null hypothesis was not rejected because the p-value, 0.87, is higher than the alpha level, 0.25. This shows that instruction focused on CCSS does not significantly impact the state standardized test scores (student achievement) in the Communication Arts content area.

The conceptual underpinning of this study is not supported by these research findings. The concept of Common Core State Standards benefitting student achievement was not supported by analyses of MAP scores provided by a Midwest, suburban, metropolitan school district’s pilot study. By differentiating instruction to focus on Common Core State Standards, are teachers helping to prepare students for life after secondary education? Furthermore, the idea in which differentiating of instruction to focus on Common Core State Standards increases student achievement could not be supported by this study.

Based upon conclusions of this study, areas of further research and training in CCSS are warranted. It is the responsibility of the schools and teachers to implement the standards and adjudicate best practices to assist students in achieving academic success (“Common core state,” 2012).
Lee (2010) reports that, “the great majority of schools across the country are missing the professional learning culture that’s necessary if the proposed common standards and assessments are to make a real difference” (p.43). Therefore, professional development opportunities focused on professional learning cultures as well as best practices for implementing the CCSS should be offered by districts intending to promote successful teacher buy-in of the CCSS. As students are challenged to think more critically rather than find an answer on a page, teachers must also prepare themselves for lessons involving inquiry-based learning. In addition, Porter et al. reported generally low alignment levels between what teachers say they teach and the CCSS (2011, p. 114). Therefore, additional alignment research is needed regarding how teachers are implementing the CCSS into their teaching practice.

Lastly, as two consortia develop national assessments claimed at measuring student achievement, alignment research is needed surrounding the extent that these national assessments align with the Common Core State Standards of which districts are reporting to adopt and adhere to. Ball and Forzani recognize “our schools vary significantly from one neighborhood to the next, there are more curricula than schools, and tests do not assess what students have been taught” (2011, p.17). As the two consortia release their assessments in the future, alignment of assessments to the Common Core State Standards should be analyzed.
REFERENCES


