

6TH-12TH GRADE MATH TEACHERS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH THE
MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE- AND CAREER- READINESS STANDARDS

by
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the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to

my parents for loving me from a world away and giving me the world,

my former teachers, particularly two of my high school teachers for showing me what it
looks like to be an extraordinary teacher and an even better person,

my professors for guiding me through my college career and fostering my passions,

and, finally, to my future students.

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the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College faculty and staff, especially Mrs. Penny Leeton, for their kindness and support over the past four years,
the educators throughout my academic career who have played a significant role in my life and have inspired me to be a teacher,
my readers, Dr. Allan Bellman and Dr. Jennifer Parsons, for their helpful edits and insights,
and, finally, my thesis advisor Dr. Melissa Bass for her support and patience during this process.

ABSTRACT

DOROTHY ROSE REID: 6TH-12TH Grade Math Teachers and Their Experiences with the Mississippi College- and Career- Readiness Standards
(Under the direction of Dr. Melissa Bass)

This thesis identifies and describes 6th-12th grade math teachers and their experiences with the Mississippi College- and Career- Readiness Standards. There are two parts to this thesis: 1) a survey distributed to public school math teachers across the state and 2) the written thesis. In my thesis, I craft teacher narratives from the quantitative and qualitative results of the survey. Listening to the teachers' narratives provides beneficial insights to the implementation of the MCCRS at the classroom level. Teachers have many different experiences. My thesis offers policy recommendations, based on the teacher narratives, to three levels of education: teachers, schools and school districts, and policy makers. It is evident that teachers' experiences are essential in improving our education. I hope this thesis may serve as a bridge between all levels and actors of public education in Mississippi.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Having lived in Mississippi for more than 20 years, I have personally seen many of the struggles and issues, such as race, poverty, and quality of education, that have shaped this state for decades. I love the state of Mississippi despite its flaws. I believe that the way to move Mississippi forward is by providing all of our students a high-quality education. The best approach to alleviate some of the problems in the state is to strengthen the abilities of residents and make them more willing to build a life in Mississippi and improve their own communities. More equitable education could go a long way in helping to provide these opportunities. Native Mississippians know our state the best, and investing in their unique talents will help us improve the state.

The people who know our state's education system best are its public school teachers. It is vital to include them in policy decisions and education reform. They are on the front lines of our poor education system trying to teach our students with limited resources and support from the state. It is important for policy makers and the public to better understand what it is like to be a public school teacher in Mississippi by knowing their experiences with students, parents, lawmakers, their school and school district, other teachers, pedagogy, teacher education and training, state standards, and everything else that affects their teaching.

This topic is important to me because I was a Mississippi public school student from grades K-12 and I plan on teaching math in Mississippi upon graduation from college. My parents are both educators at the University of Mississippi. I was fortunate

to be raised by educators. They instilled in me the value of education, as have many of my own teachers. My teachers in high school are some of the kindest and most caring people I have ever met. My professors challenge me and encourage me to explore other peoples' experiences through empathy. Their compassion for their students has inspired me to do the same for my future students.

The results of this study interest me because they will better prepare me for the future as a public school mathematics teacher in Mississippi. I need to know how education policies are made and how these policies affect all aspects of teaching. There is a considerable disconnect between our educators and policy makers. I want to ensure that this disconnect is remedied and that teachers' experiences inform policy makers and decisions.

The purpose of this thesis is to explain and evaluate the effects of the Mississippi College- and Career- Readiness Standards (MCCRS) on the pedagogy of public school mathematics teachers in Mississippi and offer policy recommendations. I used the narrative policy framework to conduct a study of math teachers and the MCCRS in Mississippi. Based on my quantitative and qualitative survey results, I found two areas that need the most improvement in the implementation of the MCCRS: 1) better assessment systems and 2) clarity of standards. I recommend for teachers to increase communication with math teachers of other grades, parents, and students about the MCCRS; for administrators to hire more math curriculum coaches and to have a deeper understanding of the material of the MCCRS and state tests; and for policy makers to consider modeling state tests after the ACT and to form a body of education experts to review the MCCRS.

CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND

Two contexts of education policy are vital to the discussion of the MCCRS: (a) the historical context which led to the creation and implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and (b) the current policy context which affects teachers in the classroom every day. This background chapter delves into these two topics.

In August 1981, U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell formed the National Commission on Excellence in Education to examine and write a report on the quality of education in the United States. The subsequent report, “A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform,” was published in April 1983 based on research findings and public hearings. Its opening paragraphs famously stated:

Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world... If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves... We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.

This report on the nation’s public education system has been the foundation of education reform for the past 35 years.

The next big change in education reform was President George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The act reauthorized the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a 1965 effort of Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. NCLB was designed in particular to improve education for disadvantaged students in poor areas by allocating more federal funding to poor schools with low achieving students (Jorgensen & Hoffmann, 2003).

The change to ESEA most associated with NCLB was increased accountability. It required states to implement statewide accountability measures for all public schools with challenging state standards in reading and mathematics, yearly testing for all students in grades 3-8, and yearly statewide progress objectives for all student groups to ensure every student was proficient within 12 years (NCLB, 2002). These subgroups were economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. There were repercussions for school districts and schools that did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) to 100% proficiency, even though that goal was unrealistic. However, schools that met or exceeded AYP objectives or closed achievement gaps were eligible for awards that included additional funding (Linn & Betebenner, 2002). Prior to NCLB, only nine states had standards-based tests in both English and mathematics for Grades 3-8 (Olson, 2002).

Under NCLB, states set their own standards, chose their own tests, and set their own proficiency scores. This gave states a lot of latitude and there was virtually no oversight. The original performance standards states set were vastly different from state to state (Linn & Betebenner, 2002). The differences were noticeable when comparing students' scores. On the Grade 8 mathematics assessments in 2002, the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level was 39% in Mississippi, 7% in Louisiana,

and 92% in Texas (Linn & Betebenner, 2002). While these states' students may have actually known more or less math, it is evident that the states' definitions of *proficient* and *passing* and even the tests themselves were very different.

NCLB led to an increase in standards-based reform (SBR) which relied on standardized tests to measure student and teacher success. Requirements of NCLB and previous education policies on the federal and state level resulted in the SBR systems which are still seen today (Hamilton, 2008).

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative, or Common Core, began in 2009. Various state leaders from 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia set out to create comprehensive standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) for grades K-12 for all of the states. These leaders included state commissioners of education through the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and governors through the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center). It was difficult to accurately compare student performance and standards between states and the U.S. standards, in general, were lagging behind those of other countries. The purpose of the CCSS was to provide shared standards for states to abide by, in part to remedy the standards and test-based disparities highlighted above. These standards were intended to motivate states to reach proficiency goals and provide measures that could be used to assess teacher quality. At its peak, 45 states and the District of Columbia had adopted the standards in both math and ELA/literacy (Achieve, 2013). As of 2018, 24 states have reviewed or revised the Common Core standards after initially adopting them (Tampio, 2018).

Alaska, Indiana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have not adopted the standards (Quinlan, 2015). Minnesota adopted only the English Language Arts standards. Several states renamed their state standards but did not make significant changes to the actual standards. It has been hard to keep track of which states have adopted CCSS, which ones adopted both sets, which ones added to or renamed them, and other changes states made to their standards.

In August 2010, the Mississippi Board of Education unanimously adopted the Common Core State Standards for mathematics and English Language Arts to be used in Mississippi public schools (PEER, 2014). Poor performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the American College Test (ACT) led to the adoption of CCSS.

The competencies were developed to prepare students to attend two- and four-year colleges and universities. The standards lay out what students should be able to know and do by the end of each grade, kindergarten through 12. However, they do not specify the curriculum and pedagogy the teachers will use to help students achieve these standards. These choices are left to the states, districts, schools, and teachers.

In 2015, Mississippi legislators passed a bill to change the name “Common Core State Standards” to the “Mississippi College- and Career- Readiness Standards” (MCCRS). The bill did not change anything about the standards. Republican legislators said the name change would free the state from federal control of education. According to the U.S. Department of Education, states did not require permission to make changes to their state standards, only proof of using adequate standards (Skinner, 2015).

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) oversees implementation of the MCCRS in school districts. It supports educators through professional development and provides frameworks and assessments used by school districts. Local districts are responsible for administering the online assessments to measure students' mastery of material required by MSSRS. The Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) is the current statewide assessment distributed to Grades 3-8 in mathematics and English Language Arts. High school students take the Algebra I subject-area test and the ACT. However, results of the MCCRS remain far from adequate and Mississippi continues to be at the bottom of the country for quality of education.

While there have been many improvements in our education system since "A Nation at Risk," the U.S. remains in the middle of the pack in education internationally. The U.S. is one of 35 member nations in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The 2015 results of the OECD-sponsored Program for International Assessment (PISA), which measures reading ability, and math and science skills of 15-year-olds, places the U.S. at 30th in math and 19th in science among the 34 OECD members (Desilver, 2017). Since 2012, U.S. scores have fallen, pushing the U.S. to the bottom half of the 72 nations and regions that participate in PISA (Barshay, 2016).

Andreas Schleicher, director for education and skills at the OECD, states that "the Common Core concept is quite well aligned with what we see in many high performing education systems." The OECD notes that implementation of CCSS could lead to improvement of PISA scores in math.

CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

There is little research about Mississippi math teachers' perceptions of the MCCRS. However, there are studies conducted in other places in the U.S. that I can use to lay the foundation for my research on Mississippi teachers. This chapter is a review of previous studies related to teachers' perceptions of the effects of CCSS on their teaching. All of these studies conclude that it is vital to understand teacher perspectives to better create and implement policies to improve the quality of education. These studies guided my research of teacher perceptions of the effects of the MCCRS.

Cheng's 2012 dissertation is most similar to my research. While it was written seven years ago and includes elementary teachers and English teachers, it is still useful and relevant. Cheng conducted a qualitative phase followed by a quantitative phase in two school districts in California. His results show that teachers generally believed the implementation of CCSS was a positive step in education reform despite the increased work of moving toward the new standards. However, the results also showed that teachers did not believe it was an overall welcome change.

An interesting part of Cheng's study are the teachers' concerns about standardized testing. Under No Child Left Behind, states were required to create tests for English and math that would measure student progress toward the law's achievement standards (Hamilton et al, 2007). Teachers generally approved of using standardized tests as benchmarks during the school year. The test results provide schools with information about student performance and what changes need to be made based on those results.

Teachers also noted that test results could facilitate more collaboration because they are able to compare scores and help each other improve. Also, some teachers in Cheng's study believed that a national standardized test would allow comparisons between states across content areas and grades.

However, these teachers felt that there could be too much emphasis placed on assessments in the future. Some noted that the assessments were not accurate measures of achievement for some of their students. Others added that they did not want the tests to limit what they were able to teach: They were concerned about having to teach to the test.

The study, "Better to be a pessimist': A narrative inquiry into mathematics teachers' experience of the transition to the common core" by Martinie, Kim, and Abernathy (2016) inspired the thesis topic I chose. The authors conducted research similar to what I wanted to research, so I based my research methods on their study. They gathered data through one-on-one individual interviews and follow-up email interviews. They chose seven mathematics teachers from the same high school in a rural area of the Midwest. There were four female and three male teachers. Three teacher had taught for less than five years, two teachers for less than two years, and two teachers for more than 20 years. Four teachers taught Grade 9 and three teachers taught Grades 10-12. The same questions were asked to each teacher. Responses were digitally recorded, the interviews were transcribed by the authors, and then sent back to the participants to be reviewed.

Martinie, Kim, and Abernathy used narrative inquiry to collect data through interviews with high school math teachers in a rural area of the Midwest. They compiled

their interviews to construct four teacher profiles that were general enough so the teachers would not be identifiable. The resulting four “voices” were the Hardcore Adopter, the Anxious Adopter, the Cautious Adopter, and the Critical Adopter. The findings show teachers’ diverse experiences with implementing CCSS.

The first voice, the Hardcore Adopter, truly believed in the CCSS. They felt it would lead to better teaching and greater student achievement. Teachers who were math department leaders were more likely to be hardcore adopters and were often sought out by administrators for their professional opinions and to assist with professional development. They were willing to work as a team and help their colleagues with the transition.

The Anxious Adopter tended to represent newer teachers who had learned to teach to the prior standards in their teacher education programs. These teachers looked to the Hardcore Adopters for guidance because they had to change many of their lesson plans. They also had a lot of questions about how to implement the changes like concerns with textbooks, student scores on the new assessments, what to teach, and how to teach it. However, they were still open to the transition.

The Cautious Adopters were generally teachers who had been teaching for more than five years. They felt that the new standards were a huge change. Trying to read and understand the content of the standards was difficult and they were unsure how they would affect their students. After several meetings discussing the standards, they had a better understanding of how the standards would affect their teaching and what changes they needed to make to help their students. They realized that these standards were not

going away anytime soon and understood their importance. These teachers wanted to know if the new standards would provide a more equitable education for their students.

The Critical Adopter believed that CCSS was just a fad that would come and go. They were generally older teachers with many years of teaching. They were less willing and open to making changes to their teaching because of previous ineffective policies. They felt like their voice was not being heard and not valued by their administrators.

Overall, Martinie, Kim, and Abernathy found that it is vital that all teacher voices are heard because they all have different experiences with implementing CCSS. Teachers are in the classroom every day and see the effects of CCSS in real time. They are able to provide more context to administrators and policy makers on how the standards have changed the classroom and affected students. Listening to teachers is a priority because they are the foundation of successful implementation of CCSS.

Burks, et al. conducted a study of 35 grade 6-12 teachers' comfort levels with CCSS in Alabama, South Carolina, Maryland, and Texas. Almost 75% of these teachers had 7 or more years of experience. Interestingly, they note that 60% of teachers with 7 or more years of teaching were "comfortable" or "extremely comfortable" with implementing CCSS while 80% of teachers with 0 to 6 years of experience indicated that same comfort level (Burks et al., 2015).

When it came to teacher training, almost 55% of teachers said they did not receive training and preparation for teaching to the standards. 47% of teachers responding to the same question participated in 3 or more CCSS professional development sessions, most of which were conducted at their school.

Using these studies, I formed the survey and policy narratives to collect data about teachers in Mississippi and their experiences with the MCCRS. I hope to fill in some of the missing literature with this research.

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

I decided to use an online survey to gauge teachers' perceptions of the MCCRS to collect quantitative data (Appendix A). The survey also includes an open-ended question to collect additional qualitative data. I created the survey by using questions from other surveys of teachers' perceptions of CCSS. The two surveys I drew from were "Teacher Survey: Common Core Standards" by McKenzie and Ritter and the "CCSS Feedback Tool – For Educators" from Achieve. I compiled the survey questions which were relevant to my research questions. See Appendix A for the full survey. I did not ask for teachers' names or any other identifying information. The survey took approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete.

At the beginning of October 2018, I started the process to obtain approval for my study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Mississippi. The application included my final survey questions and an information sheet for the teachers to read before participating in the survey. Once I received IRB approval, I formatted the survey online in Qualtrics. I decided to use an online survey since most teachers have access to a computer and the internet. My survey consisted of 37 total questions. Most of those were Likert scale questions. The final question was the opportunity to leave comments about the MCCRS.

As a pilot test, I contacted two of my former math teachers to take the survey. I wanted them to test out the survey to make sure it was not too long and the wording was

easy to understand. If the survey was too long, it would decrease likelihood of participation, and unclear questions could lead to invalid results. Their reviews were important because as math teachers in Mississippi, they could tell me what made sense and what was unclear. It was also important to know whether or not they were comfortable answering all of the questions. They gave me feedback and corrections, which I made.

I got teachers' emails in several ways. First, I went to the Center for Mathematics and Science Education at the University of Mississippi, where the Assistant Director of Professional Learning invited me to the Mississippi Council of Teachers of Mathematics conference in November 2018. I attended the conference and she told the attendees about me and my thesis research, and gave me the participants' emails. I got most of the emails of participants from the director of the conference. I sent the first email with the survey link to the participants after attending the conference. I followed up a few weeks later and sorted through which emails were working.

Next, I found a list of all the school districts in Mississippi from the MDE website. For each of the 161 school districts, I Googled the district's information and contacted their curriculum and instruction coaches or person in a similar position. Not all districts had math-specific curriculum and instruction personnel. Some of the district websites did not display employee emails, so I called those districts to find an email. Curriculum coaches have direct relationships with teachers in their fields across schools, so they made the most efficient liaisons. They forwarded my email to all of the grades 6-12 math teachers in their districts.

Some of the school districts requested documentation of IRB approval. A few districts had a department for external research to which I had to submit forms and IRB items. It was important to jump through these hoops because I wanted a high participation rate from as many school districts as possible.

There were a few districts that were made of only one school, including alternative and specialty schools. I decided to exclude them due to the small number of teachers. Two other schools required approval by a department of research and chose not to proceed because the additional paperwork required was not an efficient use of my time.

I contacted 63 teachers and 175 curriculum coaches in 146 districts. I sent 129 follow up emails and made 85 phone calls. I opened the survey on November 15, 2018 and closed the survey on February 22, 2019.

To create the narratives, I used the narrative policy framework as discussed by Jones, McBeth, & Shanahan (2016). The authors stated that policy narratives use narrative elements and strategies to describe and explain the policy process of a policy issue. Policy narratives are formed with a purpose, such as to persuade or dissuade, argue, recruit, etc. to achieve the narrators' goals. I employed survey methods to create the policy narratives of the "teachers." These "teachers" were not real teachers. They were first person stories created by compiling the survey results and comments into four individual narratives.

CHAPTER V: RESULTS

As of February 22, 2019, I had received responses from 295 teachers. 233 of them fully completed the survey for a completion rate of 79 percent. Teachers from 49 Mississippi school districts were represented in the survey. I grouped the responses into four categories: preparation for teaching the standards, teacher experiences, student performance, and assessments.

Demographics

81 percent of the teachers were female, 18 percent were male, 1 percent preferred not to say. 83 percent were white, 12 percent were black, 5 percent chose other or preferred not to say. 146 teachers taught more than one subject. 12 years of experience was the median. See *Figure 1*. The 2018 Mississippi District Accountability Grades of represented districts were mostly B. See *Figure 2*. The 36 counties in which teachers worked were spread across Mississippi. See *Figure 3*.

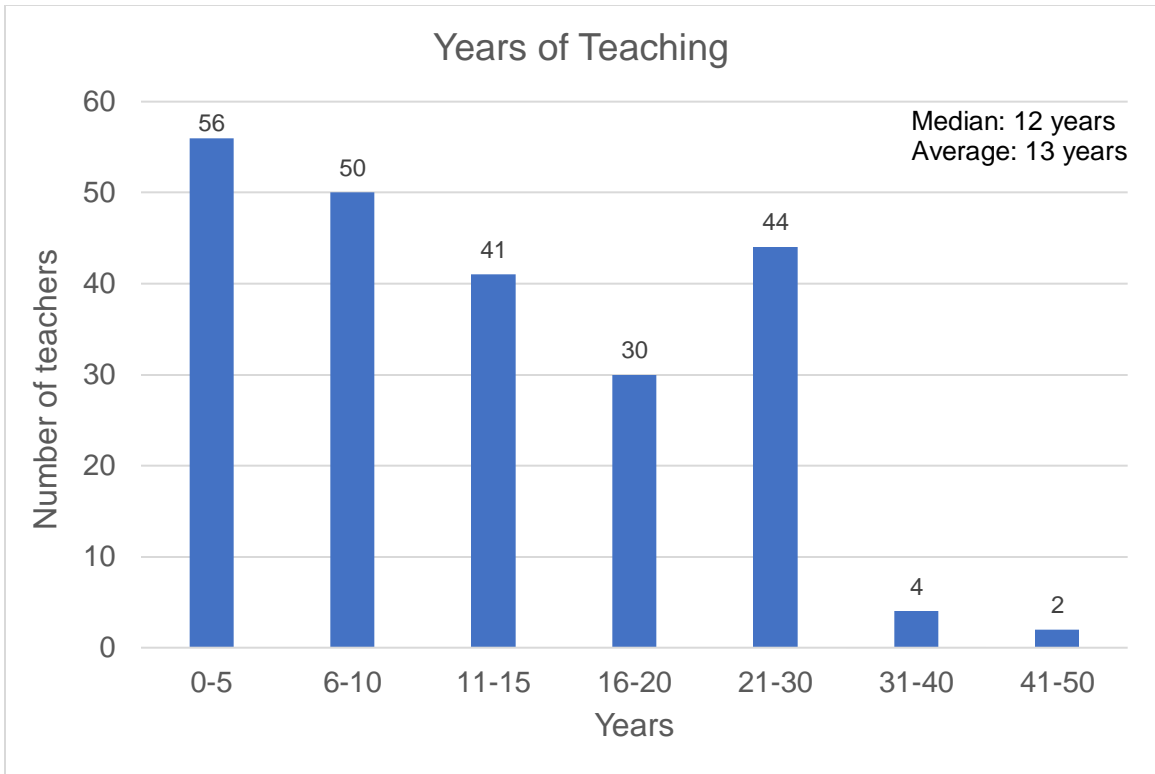


Figure 1. Teachers and the number of years of teaching

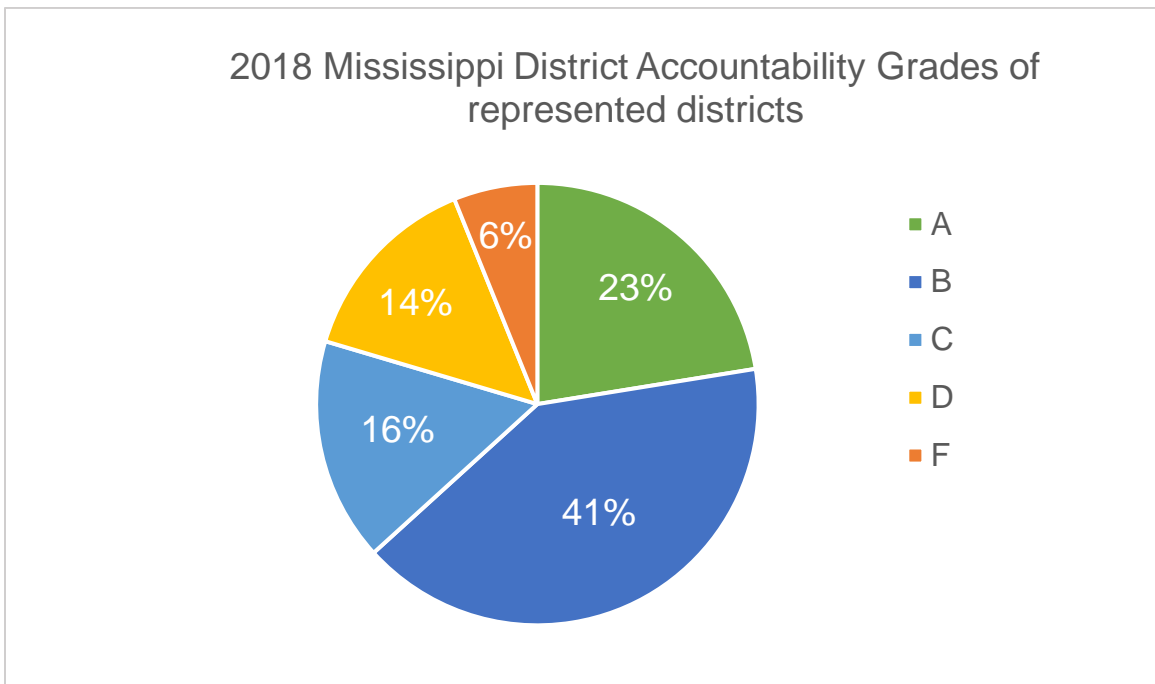


Figure 2. Percentage of represented schools in each Mississippi District Accountability Grade.

Preparation for teaching

40 percent of participants had obtained a Bachelor’s degree (e.g. BA, BS) and 60 percent had obtained a Master’s degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd) or higher. Notably, after five years of teaching, the number of teachers earning their master’s degree almost doubles for all other age groups. See Figure 4. 71 percent of teachers with more than 15 years of experience had obtained a Master’s or Doctorate degree. Only 53 percent of teachers with less than 15 years of experience had a obtained a Master’s or Doctorate degree.

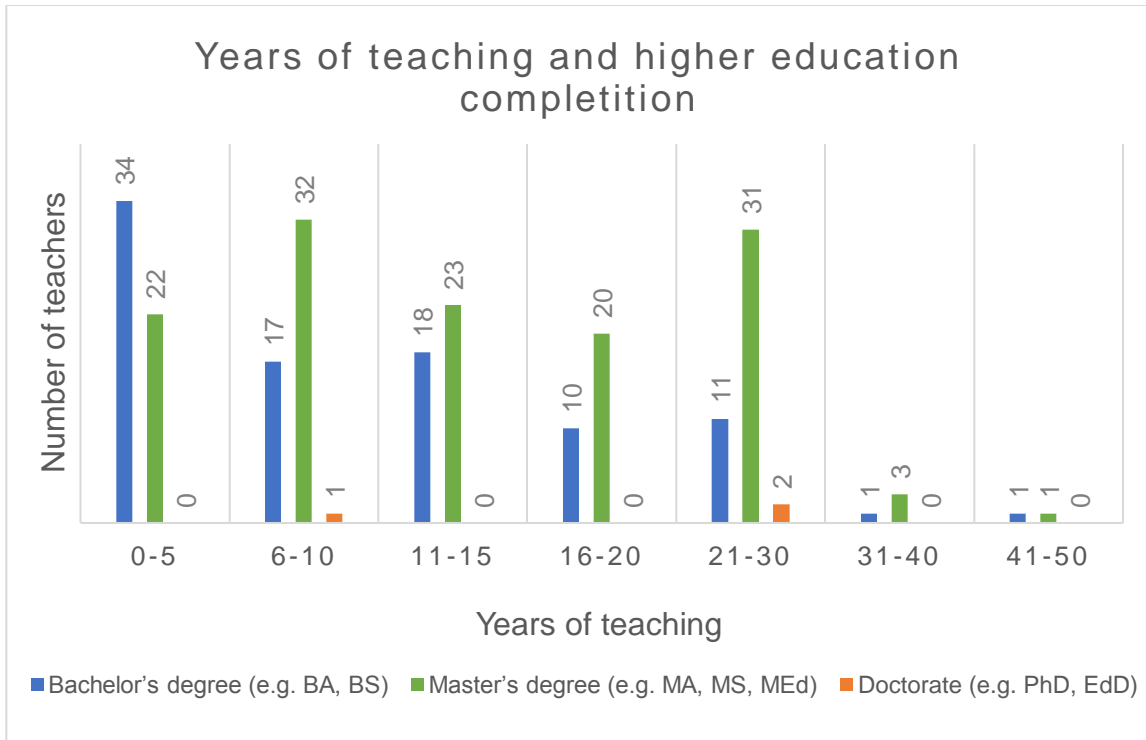


Figure 4. Crosstabulation of teachers and their levels of higher education completion and years of teaching.

52 percent of teachers with more than 15 years of experience disagreed that their teacher education program prepared them to teach to the MCCRS. 55 percent of teachers with less than 15 years of experience agreed that their teacher education program prepared them to teach to the MCCRS. When comparing education completion levels

and teacher education programs, 49 percent of those with a Bachelor’s degree agreed that their teacher education program prepared them to teach to the MCCRS, but 35 percent disagreed. 46 percent of those with a Master’s degree or higher agreed that their teacher education program prepared them to teach to the MCCRS, but 44 percent disagreed.

92 percent of teachers reported, overall, feeling supported by their school. 81 percent of teachers felt that their administration values their thoughts or opinions. 84 percent said they had “adequate classroom resources to help with the implementation to the MCCRS.” 82 percent felt that they had “effective professional development opportunities to help with the implementation to the MCCRS.” See Figure 5. 60 percent of the teachers responded that “access to curricular resources aligned to the MCCRS” would make them more confident to teach to the standards.

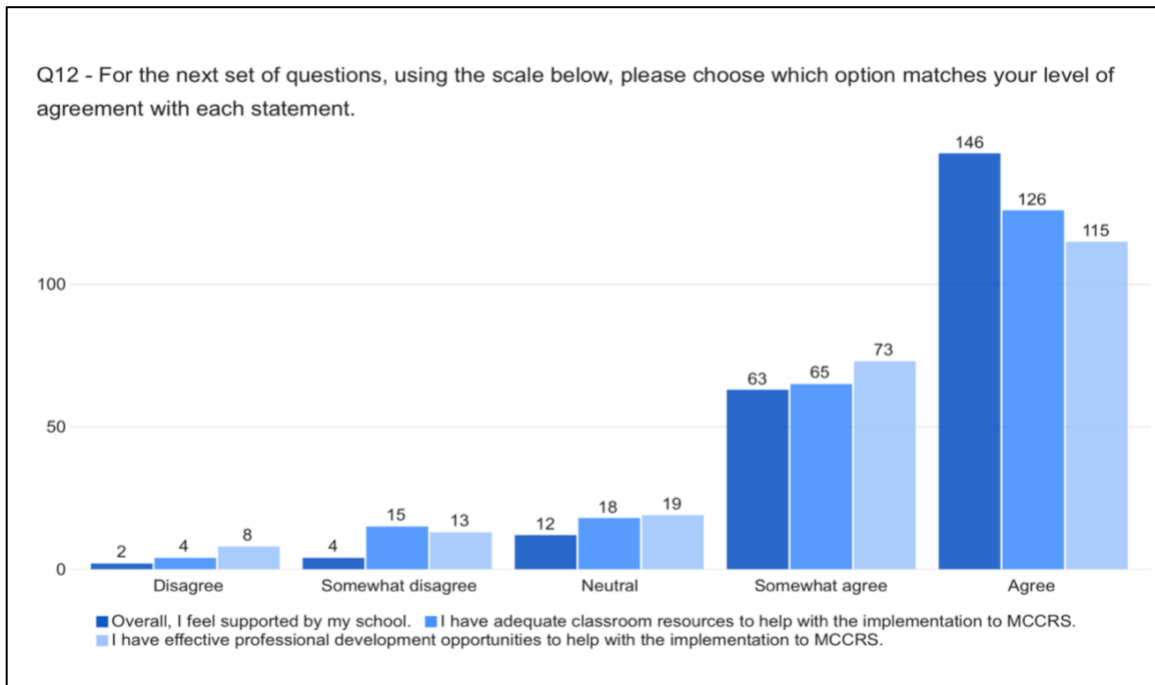


Figure 5. Teachers opinions of their school and resources provided by their school.

Webinars were the least accessed resources. 32 percent of the 74 respondents thought that webinars were helpful. 61 percent of teachers participated in out-of-school

professional development. 34 percent of them felt that out-of-school professional development was helpful. About 80 percent of teachers accessed websites and participated in in-school professional development. 31 percent of teachers who used websites thought they were helpful. 26 percent of teachers thought that in-school professional development was helpful. See Figures 6 and 7.

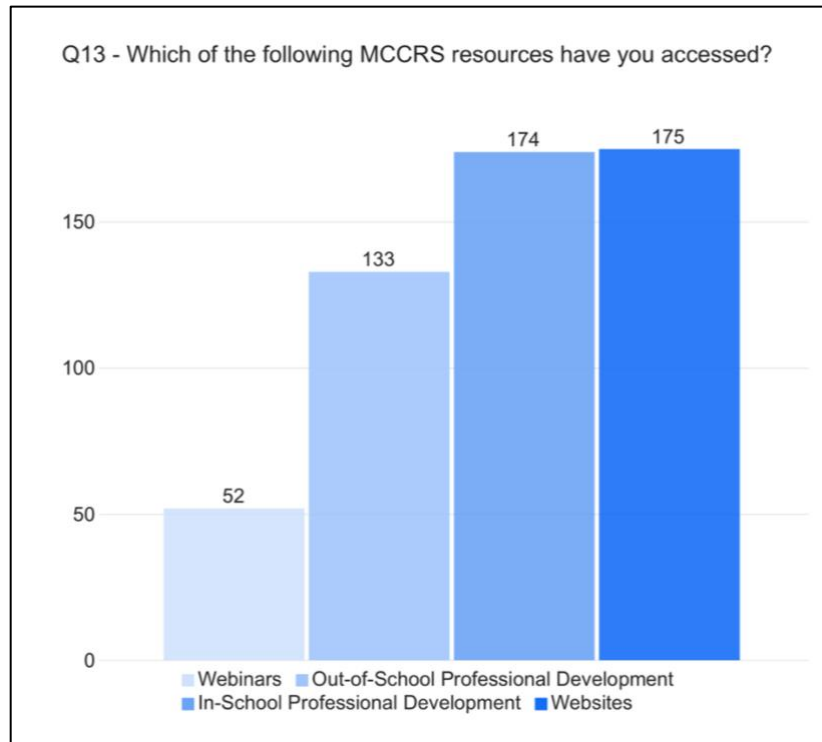


Figure 6. MCCRS resources accessed by teachers

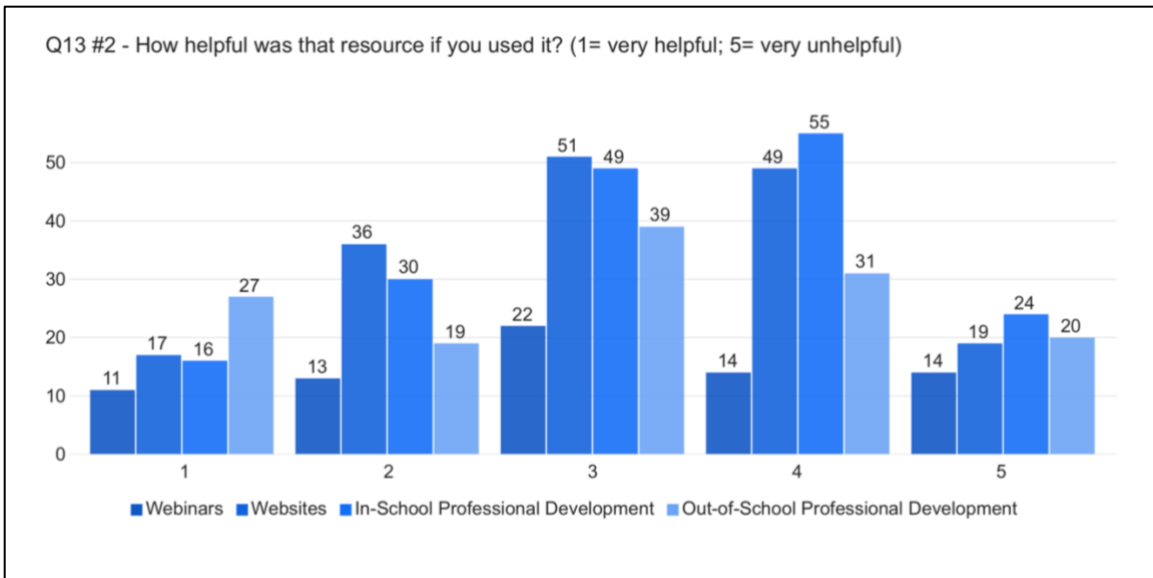


Figure 7. Teachers opinions of the helpfulness of the MCCRS resources.

Teacher experiences of the standards

65 percent of teachers said the MCCRS are more stressful than previous standards. In particular, 32 of 39 teachers with 11 to 15 years of experience said the MCCRS are more stressful than previous standards. However, 82 percent of teachers believe that the MCCRS are more rigorous than the previous state standards. More than 80 percent of teachers agree that their school has made progress in implementation of the standards and that they are implemented well in their school. 55 percent of the teachers, if given the choice, would choose to keep the standards.

Student performance on the standards

55 percent of the teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience and 52 percent of the teachers with 15 or fewer years of teaching experience felt that the MCCRS embraces a “one size fits all” approach that does not help many students they teach. 64 percent of the teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience and 62 percent of the teachers with 15 or fewer years of teaching experience felt that the standards do not provide educators the flexibility needed to help students who are not on grade level. 53 percent of teachers with more than 15 years of experience and only 40

percent of teachers with 15 or fewer years of experience felt that the MCCRS limited their ability to teach what their students need. 59 percent of teachers, regardless of number of years teaching, agreed that “the MCCRS leads to improved student learning.” 56 percent of the teachers agreed that the work associated with the MCCRS has made them a better teacher.

Assessments of standards

69 percent of teachers responding do not like the testing involved with implementing the MCCRS. 68 percent of the teachers responded that access to more practice material for students and being able to preview test material would make them feel more confident to teach to the standards. 36 percent of teachers would prefer to continue with the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) rather than develop (15 percent), purchase (9 percent), or return to (11 percent) another state test. 48 percent of the teachers believe that, overall, standardized testing has not positively affected their teaching.

Ultimately, teachers said that having to meet the MCCRS:

1. Encourages students to think more critically.
2. Helps students be better prepared for college.
3. Helps my school system ensure that our standards are vertically-aligned from kindergarten through grade 12.
4. Leads to improved student learning.

Qualitative Results

The last question in my survey was a text entry question letting participants make final comments about the MCCRS. I use these responses as qualitative data. Of the

completed surveys, 52 respondents left comments. Four of these comments were excluded due to irrelevance to this study. Therefore, qualitative data is derived from 48 comments. I categorized responses by common topics mentioned in each of the comments. I created the following categories: (1) standards, (2) time, (3) testing, (4) students with disabilities, (5) negative consequences for students, (6) positive consequences for students, (7) administration, and (8) miscellaneous.

Standards

There were 14 comments that mentioned standards. Teachers liked the accountability and expectations. Several teachers said that the standards were too broad. Standards were more rigorous and better than previous standards, but were also confusing. One teacher noted that the standards were not easily accessible for teachers or students. Students did not know what the standards were unless the teacher told them.

Time

A main concern of teachers regarding time was that the standards move too quickly. 8 of 12 comments mentioned that there was not enough time to teach all of the standards. They felt that the standards did not allow for multiple days on a lesson, did not leave adequate time for more in-depth coverage of material, and offered little time to help struggling students. Some noted having to spend more class time helping students catch up to competencies on grade level because they did not master the standards in prior grades.

Testing

Teachers gave the most feedback about testing. Almost half of the comments included feelings of teachers having to teach to the test. They felt that there was little flexibility with the time constraints and the standards that had to be covered. One teacher

wrote about Questar, which is a test created by a Minnesota based company. Mississippi spends a large amount of money for the contract with this company.

One of the most common alternatives offered for state testing was replacing the state tests with the ACT. These teachers suggested that money spent on creating or purchasing state tests would be better spent on the ACT because students need it for college. Teachers also felt that standards should better reflect material on college admissions tests.

One teacher said that testing is one of the worst parts of the MCCRS. There are many more additional duties and meetings they are required to participate in because of the state tests. This time is time taken from being able to best serve their students and tailor instruction to their needs.

Students with disabilities

Teachers who mentioned students with disabilities were concerned about the standards because these students must take and pass the state tests to earn a high school diploma. They argue that the difficulty level of these tests is not fair for these students. Mississippi is transitioning from the Mississippi Occupational Diploma to a standard high school diploma making it harder for some students. With limited resources for these students, there are fewer options for success. Some students end up dropping out of school.

Negative consequences for students

Students are coming into middle school less prepared for the material that we teach. Students are learning harder concepts at earlier ages which some teachers feel means leaving some students behind. These students are also being promoted because teachers feel pressured to pass them on even if they are not ready.

Students who did not begin with these standards are having a hard time catching up. They do not have a solid foundation and are further at a disadvantage because they don't have the same problem-solving skills that they will need in the future.

Not all students are going to college and the standards and curriculum should reflect that. They can hurt many students who are not strong in math. Students do not need the same content knowledge to be successful in college as they do in the workforce. Some students will not need the mathematics courses that are required for graduation. There are students who need more real-world mathematics that will be relevant to their future plans. These standards have ignored the above average students. Some are exceeding the standards while others are still behind.

Good for students

The standards have encouraged teamwork among the members of my school's math department. We have grown professionally. It has helped create a more cohesive vertical alignment. Our classroom community is stronger because of testing. Students are able to understand the "why" of how things work instead of just the "what." Students are more responsible for their learning. Having standards ensures that all students across the state are receiving similar educations. It also ensures that teachers are reaching certain objectives and content. It is important that teachers are held accountable to teach the necessary material. However, it does not dictate how they teach students.

Administration

While administrators may have management skills they do not all know a lot about the standards. One teacher recommended that math coaches with experience should be available to support teachers. One math coach cannot support a whole district.

Math coaches should be the ones to perform evaluations of teachers because they are most familiar with the standards. They have the knowledge to give the teachers the most support.

Miscellaneous

One teacher wrote that their child, who had been taught under the MCCRS, is currently excelling in school. Their four year-old is being taught through the MCCRS and is learning a significant amount.

An Algebra I teacher wrote that their Algebra I team moved towards “standards based grading.” However, because of the depth and complexity of each standard, they have turned to “section based grading.” Students receive points based on level of mastery of each section from each unit. The better understanding of the standards, the better they can implement a standards based grading system.

One teacher described a problem with the calculator policy for the eight-grade math test and the Algebra test. There are two calculators, a scientific calculator and a graphing calculator, for each of the two tests. The teacher has to teach students how to use both calculators and students must learn how to use them for the tests.

Teacher Narratives

For the teacher narratives, I created categories corresponding to feelings about the actual standards, time, testing, their teacher education programs, and other categories. I created four individual stories based on the through lines of teachers’ experiences with implementing the MCCRS. I named these narratives The Committed Implementer, The Optimistic Implementer, The Discouraged Implementer, and The Dissatisfied Implementer.

Although survey responses were completely anonymous, the narrative inquiry process further ensured the protection of the participants' identities. There was no identifiable information from the surveys and comments about individual participants, therefore gender, age, and other metrics were guaranteed confidentiality. The following "voices" were the foundation of the discussion.

The Committed Implementer

I am in my seventh year of teaching now. The MCCRS was implemented right before I first started teaching so I haven't really used any curriculum from before then. It was a little hard to start off with being a new teacher during a big change. In my teacher education program, we definitely looked at the standards in a general way but we mostly learned about how to teach and develop our teaching skills.

A common problem I have seen is that the MCCRS is lacking in standards that reflect the material on college entrance exams. Sometimes, students want to know why they have to learn something. It isn't sufficient to have to tell them that it's because it is on the state test. I feel like telling them it's on the ACT or something that is seen on the ACT is more valuable to them than the state test. I think students do care what they are learning about but the standards aren't totally clear to them. Materials to help them understand what they are learning could better help them connect it to a purpose.

Instead of continuing to purchase different tests we should use the ACT to assess mastery of the standards. Or, we should at least change the state tests to include more items that would found be on the ACT or SAT. The standards are working for some students. There are some who are excelling now. I really do believe that the MCCRS has the potential to raise the quality of education in Mississippi. I want to find solutions

to these problems with implementing the standards because these standards are what we have and we should lean into that.

The Optimistic Implementer

This school year is my 21st year as a teacher. A little less than half of my career has been guided by the MCCRS. I can see a big difference before and after implementation. I think it has been generally positive or it has potential. I have two kids in elementary school who have been taught with the MCCRS and it amazes me what they have learned. I understand changes may not be obvious with the older students but I think the standards are working as they should, even if slowly.

The MCCRS are definitely more rigorous than the previous state standards I think that is a good thing, in general. I believe it is a good way for students to understand “why” of how things work rather than only the “how.” Their learning has more of a purpose. However, I have students who are having a harder time than others, especially when it comes to the state tests. I feel like I have to teach to the test usually. Students aren’t all on the same level so I feel like I spend more time on covering all of the content that will be on the test instead of being able to ensure that, at least, most students understand the material. Students are also stressed with these state tests because they are pass-fail the grade level or all of high school. There has to be a better way for us to assess their knowledge and decrease the stressfulness of testing.

While there are definitely some problems with the implementation of the MCCRS, I truly believe that they will allow our students to be competitive nationally. I am also pleased that the standards has increased teamwork among the whole school’s math department since we have to ensure effective vertical alignment of the curriculum. It is good for professional growth and helping moral. Overall, implementing the MCCRS

has been successful in some ways but needs improvement. I think they can really help Mississippi students.

The Discouraged Implementer

After 13 years of teaching, the implementation of the MCCRS has been the most major change of my career. The MCCRS implementation has made up more than half of my career. I like the standards, but it is really difficult to teach students who are so far behind. This isn't good because the students aren't prepared for the state tests. It feels like I have to move very quickly to cover all of the standards that need to be covered. This leaves less time for students to truly understand material.

Another negative consequence of the MCCRS is that I feel like it is a one-size-fits-all approach regarding students who choose alternative careers or paths instead of going to college after they graduate. Not every student will need the math courses that we are limited to offer for graduation requirements. Some students want to go straight into the workforce. MCCRS stands for "Mississippi College- AND Career-Readiness Standards." We should be preparing these students by providing more relevant courses.

The Dissatisfied Implementer

I feel like even after eight years, there are a lot of things we still haven't fixed yet. There isn't a lot of time for remediation. Some of my students are coming in less prepared for the material we are teaching. I feel like some of these standards are too high for some grades. I taught for 20 years before the implementation of the MCCRS and it seems like we didn't have this many issues before. The promise that the standards we teach would help students to think critically and understand concepts is a delusion.

There are too many standards for some of these courses and I haven't found any school that actually is able to cover all of the required standards. These should be

streamlined. The standards seem too broad and the wording is difficult to understand. The scope was supposed to be focused and deeper but they seem broader and shallower. They are too vague and we don't know exactly what to include. Also, because of the state tests I feel like I don't even have the flexibility to help students who aren't on grade level.

Limitations

My research has some limitations that should be noted. First, my survey should have included more than five Likert scale choices (i.e., strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, neutral, somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree). There were a significant number of teachers who marked neutral for the Likert scale questions. Future researchers should be advised that including more options would increase respondents' likelihood of giving an opinion or answering the question because there would be less "extreme" options for participants to choose from. The wording made some of the questions unclear. I should have rephrased the question "what would help you feel confident to teach to the standards?" and phrased it as "what would help you feel *more* confident to teach to the standards?" I also did not include a question to specify how long teachers had been teaching in the state of Mississippi instead of how long they have been math teachers.

Another limitation of this study is the small sample size. The sample size does not fully represent the all teachers in Mississippi. Some districts did not have any teachers respond to the survey. One of the largest school districts required paperwork to obtain approval to conduct research in the district. I should have considered narrowing the school districts I contacted in order to get more responses in a shorter amount of time.

From the survey data and subsequent teacher narratives, it is clear that teachers have varying opinions about the MCCRS but had several common beliefs. First, the idea and purpose of the MCCRS are good, but the standards themselves need more clarity. Second, the current assessment systems must be improved. Finally, the implementation of the MCCRS has a lot of potential but must be improved.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The literature review shows that there is no research on the experiences of math teachers in Mississippi. However, from several different studies on experiences of math teachers in other parts of the country, I developed the survey to determine experiences of Mississippi teachers. In the study by Martinie, Kim, and Abernathy (2016), the authors created narratives of teachers in a rural Midwest high school. They called their four voices “adopters” because the study was conducted in 2013, only two years after the state adopted CCSS. For the purpose of my research, I renamed the voices “implementers.” The MCCRS have been in place since 2011 so the state has moved far past the adoption phase.

Therefore, the narrative inquiry approach has not been done before on Mississippi teachers. The literature review and results from the survey provide valuable insight to the experiences of math teachers with the MCCRS. With this information, I will focus on the two common concerns of teachers and offer policy recommendations for each: 1) better assessment systems and 2) clarity of standards.

First, I would like to address some unexpected results. For one, I did not consider the calculator policy in assessments. There are two different calculators used in two different tests. The teacher must teach students how to use both of them. The same calculator should be used for all tests. Consistency in this area is important for students so they can focus on the test. Another interesting result is that two teachers report

concerns about the MCCRS and students with disabilities.

Using the quantitative results of the survey and filters for data analysis on Qualtrics, teachers fall under one of the four “implementers.” 34 teachers fall under the Committed Implementers. 18 teachers fell under the Optimistic Implementers. 38 teachers fell under the Discouraged Implementers. 10 teachers fell under the Dissatisfied Implementers.

Recommendations

The four voices do not speak for all math teachers, but they provide helpful insights to the implementation of the MCCRS. There are multiple levels that can improve the MCCRS implementation. In the conclusion section, I will focus on three: the teachers, the schools and school districts, and policy makers.

I offer policy recommendations for these actors involved with education in Mississippi in the two key areas identified in the discussion: better assessment systems and clarity of the standards.

Teachers

The first level is the teacher. As suggested in the research, teachers are vital actors in changing education. They are also willing to keep the standards and do what it takes to improve implementation. There are a few possibilities for teachers to improve the assessment systems. Math departments in schools can decide which standards students need to master in preparation for state tests. As a team, they can choose how they all want to teach and provide uniformity across different classes. Teachers should also be able to meet with teachers from different grades regularly so they can review the effectiveness of the vertical alignment of the courses. Communication will allow

teachers to be prepared for what the current students are going to need in the upcoming classes.

I believe, in order to move forward, teachers must play a more active role in explaining the standards to the students. Students should be informed about what they are learning. This can be done in several ways. At the beginning of the year, teachers could give students a simplified version of the standards and go over it with them. Students can take those home and give them to their parents or guardians. If there are “meet your teacher nights,” teachers can use this time to summarize the standards for parents or guardians.

Schools and school districts

The second level is the school and school district. Principals, administrators, and school board members should take part in professional development specified for the standards on the state test. Not all of these people have a deep understanding of all subjects’ standards. They should be more aware of what their teachers are teaching. They need to know about the tests that students are taking.

The school and school district should hire more math coaches to support the teachers. In most districts I contacted, there was only one math coach. A few districts had one for elementary and one for secondary. One math coach is not enough to support all of the teachers in an entire district effectively. There should be a math coach for each school that is knowledgeable to help teachers in each grade and class. Math coaches could also be responsible for teacher evaluations since they are most familiar with the MCCRS. They are also most familiar with the content on the assessments and can provide more support to teachers creating curriculum to teach to the standards while still preparing students for the test.

Teachers access a variety of resources to implement the MCCRS, but they do not find all of them very helpful. The resources teachers used the most were websites and in-school professional development. Teachers feel supported by their schools administrators. They also say they have adequate classroom resources. The positive relationships are present, but it seems there are also some missed opportunities for schools and districts to develop more effective resources for teachers. This is promising for future collaboration and communication between schools, school districts, and teachers.

State policy makers

The third level is policy makers. They are responsible for mandating which standards to follow and which assessment systems to use. They should consider using the ACT or adding ACT-like items to the state test to provide students with the opportunity to take the ACT. The ACT is an important college entrance assessment that virtually all college and universities require. Students cannot be “college-ready” if they do not have access to the ACT. It is important that teachers have ready access or know that they have access to the standardized tests and assessments. Teachers need to know what is on the test if policy makers expect teachers to improve scores each year. It would be like doctors not being allowed to see patient files before seeing the patient.

There should be a committee of math teachers, math coaches, university professors, and other education experts to reassess the MCCRS related curriculum, resources, and assessments. There are over 30 two- and four-year higher education institutions with hundreds of experts in the field of education in Mississippi. They are untapped resources in developing better curriculum and more appropriate assessments for schools, school districts, and teachers to use.

Teachers want to earn higher degrees and we should use this to our advantage to increase the number of highly qualified teachers. The state should reduce barriers for teachers to go back to school. The state could offer extra funds to schools based on the number of teachers they have with higher degrees. There could be financial aid specifically reserved to help teachers earn higher degrees at any state higher education institution and provide incentives for teachers who do so.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

Over the past nine months, I have researched, spoken with, and gotten to know teachers and their experiences. I have learned so much just from the survey responses alone about what it means to be a math teacher in Mississippi. Looking to the future, this research has been informative as I move on to be a math teacher with my own classroom. Teachers have a lot to say. They have a lot to offer. We must promote spaces and outlets for teachers to express themselves and their experiences if we want to create and make informed education policy decisions.

We are consistently last in the country on multiple metrics such as education, economy, health care, opportunity, and others. We are failing our citizens with our current policies. We cannot continue to allow for ineffective and mediocre policies to dictate the outcomes of our state. Some of our most vulnerable citizens, our students, are caught in the crossfire of ineffective policies. They are the literal future of this state and we cannot afford to maintain this stagnation.

Ultimately, my thesis fills in part of the gap of research on teachers in Mississippi. It is my hope that teachers, schools and school districts, and policy makers use my findings to design policies that are cognizant of teachers experiences with the MCCRS. One level of education will not improve the whole system. We say that we value education but we do not successfully follow through with our actions. There must be change on all levels of education. It is imperative that we make these changes for Mississippi to make forward progress in our education system.

There are actors on multiple levels that can improve the MCCRS implementation. We must be innovative and creative in generating better policies on all levels to increase teachers' abilities to teach to the MCCRS. It is evident that there are multiple potential solutions that should be further explored. I have a few suggestions for future researchers who would like to continue this project based on the recommendations found in the previous chapter.

First, given the opportunity for further research, the researcher should consider exploring any of, but not limited to, the following questions.

1. How do the standards affect students with disabilities?
2. What are teachers' opinions of our state's policy makers?
3. Which school districts are successfully implementing the standards? How are they doing this?
4. What knowledge about the actual standards do our policy makers have?

Second, I was not able to collect data from all school districts in all parts of the state.

While the survey response completion rate was high, researchers should find more efficient ways to contact more teachers. Therefore the scope of future research can be expanded and more inclusive of teachers from around the state. A better representation of teachers' experiences could bring more potential solutions to light.

Third, another suggestion for the researcher is to conduct in-person interviews with teachers, school and school district administrators, and policy makers about the MCCRS. I would have liked to meet some of the teachers I surveyed but time did not allow for me to do so. I strongly believe that teachers are not just numbers and that interviews would provide much deeper insight to the experiences of teachers. Teachers would be able to express themselves without the limitations of a survey and they would

be a valuable source to draw from. Conducting interviews with school and school district administrators would allow for understanding of how the standards are being implemented at the local level. We could better see what is working and how to adapt those methods in different schools and school districts. I also think it would be interesting to add perspectives of policy makers by delving into the policy side of education and the motives and choices our politicians make in policy. Interviews with these other actors would add to a more comprehensive understanding of the standards and their implementation.

While there are more barriers to equal education such as extreme poverty, inadequate funding, and racial inequality there are solutions in plain sight. We have a comprehensive set of standards that were made to help fix some of these problems. Improving the implementation of the MCCRS will improve our system of education in Mississippi will help us move our state forward in more aspects than just education. All of this would not be possible without our teachers. Teachers are on the front lines every day of classrooms teaching our students and they should have their voices heard. They deserve for their voices to be heard.

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APPENDIX A

MS Math Teachers Survey

Start of Block: Beginning Message

Q1 Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

The survey is anonymous. Answering all questions would be helpful but is not required. If you prefer not to answer a question, then you may skip it and continue with the survey.

End of Block: Beginning Message

Start of Block: General Information

Q2 Are you 18+ years old?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q3 What is your gender?

Female (1)

Male (2)

Prefer to self-describe (3) _____

Prefer not to say (4)

Q4 What is your race?

American Indian or Alaska Native (1)

Asian (2)

Black or African American (3)

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (4)

White (5)

Prefer not to say (6)

Q5 What is your ethnicity?

Hispanic (1)

Non-Hispanic (2)

Prefer not to say (3)

Q6 In which school district do you teach in?

▼ ABERDEEN SCHOOL DIST (1) ... Prefer not to say (163)

Q7 If "other" is selected on the dropdown list, type the name of the school district in the text box below. If not, you may continue the survey. _____

Q8 What type(s) of math do you teach? Select all that apply.

Grade 6 (1)

Grade 7 (2)

Grade 8 (3)

Compacted Mathematics Grade 7 (4)

Compacted Mathematics Grade 8 (with Algebra I) (5)

Compacted Mathematics Grade 8 (with Integrated Math I) (6)

Algebra I (7)

Geometry (8)

Algebra II (9)

Integrated Mathematics I (10)

Integrated Mathematics II (11)

Integrated Mathematics III (12)

- Advanced Mathematics Plus (13)
- Algebra III (14)
- Calculus (15)
- SREB Math Ready (16)
- Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus (17)
- Advanced Placement (AP) Statistics (18)
- Compensatory Mathematics Course (19)
- Foundations of Algebra Course (20)
- Other (21) _____

Q9 What is your higher education completion level?

▼ Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS) (1) ... Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD) (3)

Q10 How many years have you been teaching math?

▼ 0 (1) ... 52 (52)

Q11 How many years have you been teaching since the Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards (MCCRS) were released in 2010?

▼ 0 (1) ... 8 (9)

End of Block: General Information

Start of Block: Resources

Q12 For the next set of questions, using the scale below, please choose which option matches your level of agreement with each statement.

	Disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Agree (5)
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Overall, I feel supported by my school. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am seen as a professional whose opinions matter to my school. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have adequate classroom resources to help with the implementation to MCCRS. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have effective professional development opportunities to help with the implementation to MCCRS. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q13 Have you accessed any of the following MCCRS resources? How helpful was that resource if you used it? If you have not accessed a resource, you do not need to rate its helpfulness.

	Accessed?		How helpful? (1= very helpful; 5= very unhelpful)				
	Yes (1)	No (2)	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
Webinars (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Websites (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In-School Professional Development (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Out-of-School Professional Development (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Resources

Start of Block: Implementation, Teaching

Q14 I have read the math MCCRS.

Not at all (1)

A little (2)

Somewhat (3)

A lot (4)

Q15 I have _____ knowledge about the implementation of the MCCRS.

A great deal of (1)

A lot of (2)

A moderate amount of (3)

A little (4)

No (5)

Q16 Please choose which option matches your level of agreement with the following statement:

I feel confident to teach to the standards.

Agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neutral (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Disagree (5)

I don't know (6)

Q17 What would help you feel confident to teach to the standards? (select all that apply)

Access to curricular resources aligned to the MCCRS (1)

Access to assessments aligned to the MCCRS (2)

More information about how the standards change what is expected of my instructional practice (3)

More information about how the standards change what is expected of students (4)

Other (5) _____

End of Block: Implementation, Teaching

Start of Block: Department

Q18 My department meets to discuss how to meet the standards

At least once every week (1)

Every two weeks (2)

Once a month (3)

Once or twice a semester (4)

Other (5) _____

Q19 Overall, my department meetings are productive.

Agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neutral (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Disagree (5)

Q20 Overall, my department works as a team.

Agree (1)

- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)

End of Block: Department

Start of Block: MCCRS

Q21 For the next set of questions, using the scale below, please choose which option matches your level of agreement with each statement.

	Agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Disagree (5)	NA (6)	I don't know (7)
MCCRS are more rigorous than the previous state standards. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Implementing MCCRS is more stressful than previous standards. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The previous state standards were better than MCCRS. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school is making progress in implementation of the standards. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MCCRS are implemented well at my school. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Given the choice,
I would choose to
keep the MCCRS.
(6)

Q22 Having to meet the MCCRS _____ (select all that apply)

- Encourages students to think more critically. (1)
- Leads to improved student learning. (2)
- Helps students be better prepared for college. (3)
- Helps students be better prepared for the workforce. (4)
- Helps educators focus on what's most important. (5)
- Ensures that a high school diploma has meaning. (6)
- Provides educators a manageable amount of curriculum to teach in a school year. (7)
- Gives students the opportunity to master key competencies, rather than just being superficially exposed to them. (8)
- Helps my school system ensure that our standards are vertically-aligned from kindergarten through grade 12. (9)
- Provides students a clearer understanding of what they must know in order to succeed. (10)

End of Block: MCCRS

Start of Block: MCCRS, Students

Q23 For the next set of questions, using the scale below, please choose which option matches your level of agreement with each statement.

Disagree (1)	Somewhat Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	NA (6)	I don't know (7)
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MCCRS leads to improved student learning. (1)

The work associated with MCCRS has made me a better teacher. (2)

MCCRS are too rigorous for many students I teach. (3)

MCCRS excludes important concepts that students should learn. (4)

MCCRS embraces a “one size fits all” approach that does not help many students I teach. (5)

MCCRS limits my ability to teach what my students need. (6)

The standards do not provide educators the flexibility needed to help students who are not on grade level. (7)

Q24 Overall, my students are _____ because of the implementation of MCCRS.

a. Better off (1)

b. Worse off (2)

- c. The same (3)

End of Block: MCCRS, Students

Start of Block: Assessments

Q25 Overall, standardized testing has positively affected my teaching.

▼ Agree (1) ... Disagree (5)

Q26 I don't like the testing involved with implementing MCCRS.

▼ Agree (1) ... Disagree (5)

Q27 To assess whether students have met MCCRS, I would prefer

- The state to continue Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) (1)
- To return to previous MS state tests (2)
- The state to purchase another assessment (3)
- The state to develop a new state assessment (4)
- To develop my own assessment (5)
- To give no assessment (6)

Q28 Overall, I am satisfied with the assessments.

▼ Disagree (1) ... Agree (5)

End of Block: Assessments

Start of Block: Observations

Q29 How frequently are you observed by another teacher? If other is selected, please specify.

- At least once every week (1)
- Every two weeks (2)
- Once a month (3)
- Once or twice a semester (4)

- NA (5)
- Other (6) _____

Q30 How frequently are you observed by an administrator? If other is selected, please specify.

- At least once every week (1)
- Every two weeks (2)
- Once a month (3)
- Once or twice a semester (4)
- NA (5)
- Other (6) _____

Q31 For the next set of questions, using the scale below, please choose which option matches your level of agreement with each statement.

	Agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Disagree (5)	NA (6)
My teacher education program prepared me to teach to the MCCRS. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher observations help me become a better teacher. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Administrator observations help me become a better teacher. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My administration knows what is going on in my classroom. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Observations

Start of Block: Administration

Q32 Are you a department head?

- No (1)
- Yes (2)

Q33

If you are not, you may continue the survey.

If you are, choose which option matches your level of agreement with the following statements.

Q34

My administration values my thoughts or opinions.

- Agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)

Q35 I am asked to facilitate or assist with professional development.

- Agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Disagree (5)

End of Block: Administration

Start of Block: Parents

Q36 Parents voice concerns about MCCRS.

- Often (1)

Sometimes (2)

Rarely (3)

Never (4)

End of Block: Parents

Start of Block: Comments

Q37 Please feel free to make final comments about MCCRS.

End of Block: Comments