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# All for One, but Not One for All: The Knowledge/ Power Struggle and Its Effect on Teacher Autonomy

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ALL FOR ONE, BUT NOT FOR ALL: THE KNOWLEDGE/POWER STRUGGLE  
AND ITS EFFECT ON TEACHER AUTONOMY

by

AMY PHELPS FOUSE

(Under the Direction of Grigory Dmitriyev)

ABSTRACT

Addressing current issues in English Language-Arts education, this study analyzes teacher perception of the paradoxical relationship between the Georgia Performance Standards and high-stakes testing accountability measures. This study examines teacher response to the implementation of Georgia Performance Standards and the oppression of federal accountability measures. This study also investigates whether Georgia Performance Standards can, in fact, promote equity through a multicultural and democratic pedagogy. This study further investigates whether or not standardized assessment serves to squelch equity and enforce power structures of bureaucracy through superseding the state curriculum in English-Language Arts.

A mixed methods study was created to measure differences in teachers' attitudes regarding their perceived freedom of pedagogical practice within implementation of Georgia Performance Standards and high stakes testing accountability measures. Ninety-two participants were invited to participate in this mixed methods research study. A total of 70 surveys were returned for a response rate of 76 percent during a time period of two weeks. Participants' responses indicated that there was a strong relationship between the impact of high-stakes testing accountability and perceived independence within pedagogical practice. Participants also indicated through their responses that they felt

that the Georgia Performance Standards in English-Language Arts provided them with pedagogical opportunity and freedom.

Ultimately, this study suggests that if one is to hope for a transformative pedagogy, teachers must be provided the freedom to teach democratic ideals to their classes. If teachers are not provided the freedom to teach democratically, how might we ever be able to encourage awareness of democratic ideals within our students? For there to truly be hope for our educational system, a grassroots movement must ensue which encourages freedom of pedagogical practice and the opportunity for transformation.

**INDEX WORDS:** Georgia Performance Standards, Democratic education, Teacher Attitudes, Language Arts

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## DEDICATION

To my loving parents, my devoted husband, my beautiful daughter, and my patient friends.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*He who would learn to fly one day must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance; one cannot fly into flying. ~Friedrich Nietzsche*

*I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me. ~Isaac Newton (Brewster, 1855, Ch. 27).*

Just as the boy in Newton's reference, I have felt that this accomplishment is but a tiny glimpse at the truth that lies before me. I have traversed the liminal edge of an undiscovered world of curriculum studies, a world within which I am constantly reawakened to new thoughts and discoveries. Without the tireless support of my loving parents, my devoted husband, my beautiful daughter, and my patient friends, I would not have had the opportunity to chase my dreams of attaining this degree. Without their dedication, sacrifice and commitment, I would not have been able to play on the sea-shore of this ocean which will continue to mesmerize me for the rest of my life.

The task of achieving a higher degree has impacted my life through both the course work and the impact it has had on my growth as an educator. Completion of this doctoral study has been a major accomplishment in my life. I would like to thank my husband, Jonathan, whose encouragement kept me motivated through the good times and the times when I struggled from the weight of guilt and sacrifice from endless hours of reading and writing. I would also like to thank my beautiful daughter, Brenley, for giving me the kisses and hugs that sustained me. Additionally, I would like to thank my parents,

David and Alice Phelps, for their unwavering confidence, support, and love that have helped me grow into the person I am today.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE PROBLEM

#### Introduction of the Problem

Addressing current issues in English Language-Arts education, this study analyzes teacher perception of the paradoxical relationship between the Georgia Performance Standards and high-stakes testing accountability measures. This study examines teacher response to the implementation of Georgia Performance Standards and the oppression of federal accountability measures. This study also investigates whether Georgia Performance Standards can, in fact, promote equity through a multicultural and democratic pedagogy. This study further investigates whether or not standardized assessment serves to squelch equity and enforce power structures of bureaucracy through superseding the state curriculum in English-Language Arts.

Curriculum studies merges with the role of the educator through the critical, theoretical approaches of discovering identity, both of the classroom leader and the students within that classroom. As Pinar (1993) discusses, one's "otherness" is always connected to one's "self." Within this "otherness," there is a relationship or connection to the interplay of human relationship and interaction in a classroom community between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, etc. All educators bring their personal biases with them to the classroom; in the same sense, administrators bring their biases to the faculty and staff of a school. These biases are embodied in the way teachers and administrators interact with one another and with students, the way they construct knowledge about the world, and the way they operate within shifting power networks. Furthermore, biases are often constructed and enforced from administration. Thus, these

constructs are then passed along to students. Taking a critical view of the impact of these relationships in today's classroom can best be examined from the perspective of critical theory. The nature of critical theory implies the necessity of taking an aware and analytic view of power structures that guide and inhibit a transformative curriculum. According to Fay (1987), "Humans are not only active beings, but they are also embodied, traditional, historical, and embedded creatures" (p. 9). In this sense, critical theory becomes the driving force of emancipation as administrators, teachers, and students alike learn how their personal conditions shade their interaction with one another and the world. This is not an easy task, nor is clinically defining how critical theory unfolds within a classroom or a school. Because the political and social arena is constantly evolving with the ever-changing political arena and conversation, so does the teacher and administrator's role in teaching and learning. The saying goes, "In teaching, no two days are alike." This commonly heard adage is not only a basic testament to the unpredictability of student behavior, but it is also a testament to the impact that political and social power fluctuations have on administrator, teacher, and student interactions. The impact of where critical theory merges with educational practice lies within not only the awareness of these powers structures, but also the ability to understand one's connection within the political and social historical moment and the culture of the school community.

My situatedness within this study is simple. I am a teacher. My role in previous years has been one of teaching high school English-Language Arts; however, I have now assumed the role of the English-Language Arts curriculum coordinator for my district. Although my contract lists me as an administrator, my heart declares that my role must still be one of a teacher. Critical theory has shaped the way that I not only view the role I

play in our educational structure, but also the role that I believe teachers and other administrators should strive for in teaching students. In this sense, theory merges with practice in the way that critical theory guides and shapes my views, my beliefs, and my responsibilities. In my tenure as a teacher, I have personally watched teacher attitudes toward formal curriculum take what I consider to be a downward spiral. Instead of seeing the formal curriculum as a starting place, it often is seen by many educators as a form of imprisonment, dictating what must be taught, how it is to be taught, and when it is to be taught. With the adoption of Georgia Performance Standards, our state-wide focus has shifted to a focus on standards-based education. Districts then use the Georgia Performance Standards as a beginning point from which they build a narrower, more specific curriculum. This district-level curriculum is often guided by the dominant discourse and hegemony of accountability and surveillance. Concurrently, the pressures of high stakes testing have increased, making it seem nearly impossible for teachers to focus primarily on anything except the content expected to appear on the high-stakes, standardized assessment. The pressures of testing are apparent in not only the attitudes of the faculty and administration at many schools, but also in the performance and attitude of students. In many cases, teachers feel as if they are losing autonomy and being forced to teach content that will be covered on the high-stakes test. This frustration is then turned not only toward the high-stakes testing accountability reality, but also toward the formal district-wide curriculum.

Gramsci (1957) stated, “All men are intellectuals...but all men do not have the function of intellectuals in society” (p. 121). In Giroux’s (1997) view, teachers should be “transformative intellectuals who work toward a realization regarding their views of

community, social justice, empowerment, and transformation” (p. 96). Like Gramsci and Giroux, I feel that the role of a teacher should be that of an intellectual, a role which is strongly linked to autonomy and professionalism. It is my hypothesis that the loss of teacher autonomy within the standards-based curriculum is inextricably linked to the power structures of school leadership and administration, both at the district, state, and national levels, which determine a teacher’s effectiveness by how well his or her students perform on high stakes assessments. This mentality serves to weaken the function of teachers as not only intellectuals, but ultimately as professionals. A classroom should be a place where a professional educator is allowed the unencumbered freedom to teach to the needs of his or her students. However, this is not the case when teacher autonomy is becoming virtually extinct as government legislation and bureaucracy infiltrate the educational system and determine not only the curriculum, but the very day to day instructional methods of teachers. The common, mainstream curriculum of the dominant majority is taught to a diverse population of students, ultimately serving the needs of only some students and leaving the rest behind. Who serves to benefit from this curriculum? The dominant majority benefits, and the minority is marginalized. Students who embrace and excel within this curriculum then graduate and have the possibility of succeeding in post-secondary aspirations. However, those who do not master the art of the hidden curriculum are marginalized and held away from the possibility of bettering their situations.

In my view, teaching provides an intrinsic benefit unlike many other professions, in the sense that teachers truly shape the ideology and the mindset of future generations. However, this benefit is often squelched by reform movements which prevent teachers

from reaching out and helping students become critical thinkers. Kanpol and McLaren (1995) attribute the silencing of marginalized students to the trend of teachers believing that “by implementing consistent prescribed standards, they are serving the best interests of students, for they do not possess a sanctioned [critical] pedagogy to help them unleash student resources” (p. 218). With the hidden curriculum, students are not taught how to think for themselves. Instead of learning to formulate and support their own ideas, they are taught to mirror the “correct” answer they have been given. With teacher education programs creating proficiency based teachers, the new generations of teachers are ill-equipped to think for themselves, much less teach their students how to critically view the world around them. Thus, both the teachers and the students perpetuate the mindset of the dominant majority.

Standards-based education has disguised itself under many different titles, education initiatives, and political agendas in the past few decades. Championed by politicians and bandwagon ignoramuses who serve to benefit from accountability measures of these initiatives, the current trend and reality of accountability based on singular standardized assessments of standards has been suggested to the public as a “common sense” measure. Tucker and Coddling (1998) are promoters of the standards-based education and accountability reform movement and state, “a rising chorus is calling for a return to the demands of the core disciplines and the idea that all students should meet a common high academic standard before going their separate ways” (p. 74). After all, who wouldn’t want their student held to a high standard? On the surface, this plea for standardization and accountability sounds like a plausible idea. However, many consequences are not considered or publicized. I argue that the danger lies not within the

standard itself but instead within the manipulation of teacher freedom and accountability determined consequences of data gleaned from mandatory, standardized high-stakes testing.

Within a democratic, multicultural pedagogy, personal awareness is vitally important to both the teacher and the student. Critical pedagogy is the scaffold which can serve to structure and support a teacher's autonomy. However, before one can effectively engage in critical pedagogy, one must first learn to critically view one's own perceptions of race, class, and gender, as well as one's cultural place in society and the power formations of the culture (Nieto, 1999). For learning to take place, students need to be provided with authentic opportunities to interact with concepts and one another. Instructional strategies need to cater to all students and encourage cooperative, relationship building learning activities (Shade, 1999). These authentic learning opportunities should center on the specific needs of the students and should encourage dialogue. Teachers who present multicultural literature from the perspective of merely stating its existence are in actuality creating even more oppression of underrepresented cultures in the mandated curriculum. Giroux (2000) states the following:

Texts in this instance become objects of pedagogical inquiry as well as pedagogical events through which educators and others might analyze the mechanisms that inform how a politics of representation operates within dominant regimes of meaning so as to produce and legitimate knowledge about gender, youth, race, sexuality, work, public intellectuals, pedagogy, and other issues. (p. 138)

Democratic ideals are learned by exploring and working through differences (Dewey, 1916). By raising awareness of other viewpoints, yet not making students critically conscious of the worth and value of these perspectives, teachers are merely modeling and perpetuating the oppression that is being trained and institutionalized in our schools.

Through critical theory, one is able to tease out the relationship between one's "other" and one's "self" as a beginning of the process of liberating and transforming curriculum. Pinar (2004) sees the field of curriculum studies as a way to begin to explore "what curriculum is, how it functions, and how it might function in emancipatory ways" (p. 154). According to hooks (1994), teachers should guide students to see themselves as "'whole' human beings, striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world" (pp. 14-15). In this sense, hooks (1994) encourages teachers to be mindful about their own place in the world in order to avoid perpetuating the oppression of the dominant majority. Extrapolating this view to the role of school leadership would infer that administrators should also encourage the same of teachers. Doing so would encourage teachers to critically view their role within guiding the curriculum and the power structures that guide this curriculum.

Merging curriculum studies with traditional leadership courses can seem problematic at best. However, taking a closer look requires one to find the point where theory merges with practice. To hooks (1994), theory became a "location for healing" (p. 59). It is in this same regard that I see curriculum studies and leadership courses. When I began this program, I saw graduate school as a place to create practical ideas and learn practical strategies. That, after all, was the purpose of other graduate programs I had completed. As I began to immerse myself in literature and ideas of curriculum studies, I

realized that this program will never be one that I “complete.” Instead, it is something that I will continually grapple with as I view things around me differently. In Pinar’s (2004) definition of *currere* (p. 4) is the image of perpetual movement. To me, this perpetual movement has centered on the ideas of power and benefit. Who serves to benefit from the decisions that are made within the educational system? Within the school? Within the very classroom? Freire (1982) refers to my self-reflexive practice as “conscientization,” my attempts to liberate myself from the ways I have been trained to think about my career as an educator.

Within critical theory is the call to understand the relationships which cause injustice, oppression, and discrimination. According to Sergiovanni and Corbally (1984), the educational system is a vital source of “the maintenance, transmission, and recreation of culture” (p. 262). Viewing school structure from a critical perspective shifts the focus of school administration from one of management to one of liberation. For example, an administrator would view self-reflection as a key to gaining knowledge. The focus of the school leader would be on the school vision – a vision oriented around democratic ideals and shared power. School reform measures shift from universally mandated tasks to the goal of understanding and analyzing the ideology of the dominant majority which effects daily practice in schools. According to Armitage and Giroux (2000), “since culture is a prime educational resource, a theory of educational administration which doesn’t take culture into account must be inadequately based” (p. 186).

Administrators should strive toward creating spaces for individual teacher voices. Teachers need to feel safe and secure in critically viewing their oppression and finding means of liberation. This self-reflexive practice will not only lead to liberation, but will

also help teachers understand their place within the recreation of culture through their pedagogy. Students who take a self-reflexive, critical look at their place in society will be better prepared to understand themselves and their “otherness,” their place in relation to the dominant majority, and their place within the world as a whole. According to Kumashiro (2000), an “anti-oppressive pedagogy should aim for effect by having students engage with relevant aspects of critical theory and extend its terms of analysis to their own lives” (p. 39). This conscientization will help students develop an awareness of self, a necessity for critically viewing the world.

For the most part, I strongly believe that the past generations of teachers have chosen the profession of education because of a love for students. As with any profession, there are exceptions to the rule. It appears to me that teachers who have recently entered the profession, as well as those who are in the process of completing the teacher education programs, have been sacrificed to the factory mindset of the value of proficiency insisted upon by accreditation requirements. Teacher education courses, including some graduate level programs, reinforce the structures of curricular standardization and the strategies proffered by current legislation for student success. This “de-skilling” of the incoming teaching force inevitably will fail students. When students fail, accountability measures tighten and the teachers are blamed – not the curriculum. Hence, teachers further standardize their instructional strategies so as to ensure the continuance of their employment. The divergent teachers, the ones who rebut the standardization and proficient mindset, are the ones who are more likely to leave the profession. Should that be the case, the majority of educators will become those who are

willing to be further de-skilled and fit the mold of standardization, the educators who do not question the undercurrents of contemporary school policy and legislation.

In my experience, teachers who have recently entered the profession, as well as those who are in the process of completing the teacher education programs, seem to have bought into the factory mindset of the value of proficiency. Ladson-Billings (2001) describes this travesty within teacher education programs as “the failure of students to demonstrate a clear understanding and commitment to principles of human diversity, equity, social justice, and the intellectual lives of teachers” (p. 30). Teacher education courses, including some graduate level programs, reinforce the structures of curricular standardization and the strategies proffered by current legislation for student success. It does not appear to me that these teachers are entering the profession because of a love for students, and that love is even further from grasp when they realize that by teaching the standardized curriculum, their students fail. When students fail, accountability measures tighten and the teachers are blamed – not the curriculum. Hence, teachers further standardize their instructional strategies so as to ensure the continuance of their employment. The divergent teachers, the ones who rebut the standardization and proficient mindset, are the ones who leave the profession. Who is left? Only the educators who are willing to be further de-skilled and fit the mold of standardization, educators who do not question the undercurrents of contemporary school policy and legislation.

Giroux (1983) believes that education serves as an agent of reproduction for power structures such as cultural privilege. Giroux (2000) states, “Making the political more pedagogical means raising questions about how domination and resistance actually

operate, are lived out and mobilized, and how they both deploy power and are themselves the expression of power” (p. 138). Critical discourse in the classroom and among administrators and teachers can serve as a way to emancipate the contemporary educational system from the constrictive ideology of the “rag-and-bone shop of predatory culture” (McLaren, 1995, p. 3). From a critical perspective, administrators and teachers are able to view the “systemic features [which] structure, disguise, suppress, and silence conflict for marginal groups” (Heck, 2004, p. 24). This type of “transformative leader” (Burns, 1978) sees leadership as the driving force of conscientization for the entire school community. Transformative leadership changes everyone involved, making every one a stakeholder and raising consciousness. Foster (1991) explains the relationship between education and leadership by stating:

Each is engaged with the raising on consciousness, with the power of vision, and with liberation from the present. Each aims itself toward critique, wherein received knowledge is always incomplete, and received structures are always in need of improvement. Each is also emancipatory, both showing new possibilities and new versions of how humans might interact with each other. (p. 14)

Considering the past expectation of school administrators as members of upper-management, this is a significant shift in the role of school leaders. Educational Leadership programs have been criticized for perpetuating the “technician’s mentality” of school management (Pinar, 2004, p. 154). Critical curriculum theorists such as Pinar (2004) and Kincheloe (2004) feel that it is this very mindset that perpetuates the reproduction of the power structures of the dominant majority. Sergiovanni (1984) states, “The principal is the one who seeks to define, strengthen, and articulate those enduring

values, beliefs, and cultural strands that give the school its identity” (p. 9). If school leaders are to be moral leaders, it becomes crucial that critical theory play a role in the way that they guide pedagogy and discourse in their schools. School leaders should therefore also navigate the repressive power structures which forcibly oppress the members of each school community. Hence, it is important for administrators, at both the school and district level, to assume the responsibility of liberating their faculty members from oppressive instructional expectations and reject the normalizing tendencies of the predatory culture.

How does this liberatory culture become established? Sergiovanni (2001) states, “The secret both to successfully practicing idea-based leadership and to helping schools become moral communities is to replace communication with conversation” (p. 34). If administrators are to be a driving force in exploring the emancipatory ability of curriculum (Pinar, 2004), they should have a consistent focus on inquiry, constantly reflecting on the way that critical theory can provide a means for guiding democratically centered practice. To a reflective administrator, the convergence between theory and practice becomes an agent of change for promoting ideals of liberation, both for the teachers and the students within the school. Aronowitz & Giroux (1986) discuss the merging of theory with practice by creating a culture where “transformative intellectuals from these different spheres can forge alliances around common social and political projects in which they share their theoretical concerns and practical talents” (p. 41-42). For this to become a possibility, it is important for schools to not only have transformative intellectuals as teachers, but also have transformative intellectuals as administrators.

According to Sergiovanni (2001) one critical component to transformative school leadership is to change the relationship between democracy and technocracy in schools.

He states:

As a technocratic institution, reliance is placed on technical experts who engage in “policy-science” that decides for everyone what our standards are, what the outcomes of schools should be, how schools should pursue these outcomes, how these outcomes should be assessed, who the winners and losers are, and what the consequences of this winning and losing will be. (p. 45)

Through discourse and unity, administrators and teachers are able to come together to create a balance between democracy and technocracy. Sergiovanni (2001) states, “The answer to this perplexing problem is not to pit one of these impulses against the other but to bring the two together in a way that technocratic virtues serve democratic ends” (p. 46). Curriculum as “complicated conversation” (Pinar, 2004, p. 11) is at the very heart of any study of educational practice. Educators, whether administrators or teachers, need to learn to see curriculum in the broad sense, not with the “technician’s mind” (Pinar, 2004, p. 154). Both teachers and administrators should see curriculum studies as *currere* (Pinar, 2004) if we are to escape the tyranny of technocracy that currently guides and dictates the anti-democratic, restrictive pedagogy of contemporary education.

What contribution will my area of interest present to curriculum studies? Critical discourse among administrators and educators will begin to open up perspectives and understandings about the relationships that guide our thoughts, words, and actions. Pinar (2004) states, “Teachers ought not be only school-subject specialists; I suggest that they become private-and-public intellectuals who understand that self-reflexivity,

intellectuality, interdisciplinary, and erudition are as inseparable as are the subjective and the social spheres themselves” (p. 10). Our current educational system in America is on a swift downward spiral. Policy makers and those in power of decision making are making things even worse by stifling relationships and taking away pedagogical autonomy. My hope is for this study to contribute to the “project of intellectualization” (Pinar, 2004, p. 10) within the field of curriculum studies as educators struggle to not only regain, but also respect intellectual freedom for all. I foresee this research as a way to help build the capacity for change in the perception of teachers’ autonomy in guiding independent pedagogical practice. This, in turn, will help teachers unify their voices toward liberation from the bureaucratic social, political, and cultural forces which oppress educational policies, goals and actions.

#### Rationale

A search of ERIC, Dissertation Abstracts, and a current index to journals in education revealed that no study specific to the topic of my research has been conducted between the years of 1950-2007. The following descriptors were used in this search:

1. Autonomy: Teacher autonomy, independence, teacher participation, teacher involvement, teacher independence, teacher attitudes; autonomous teaching; teacher professionalism
2. Standards-based Education: Georgia Performance Standards, teacher attitudes, Outcome Based Education; English Language Arts Standards
3. Assessment: Testing, high-stakes assessment; accountability; Adequate Yearly Progress, formative assessment, evaluation

In 2002, the *No Child Left Behind Act* caused a “seismic jolt” to academic standards in states across America (Stotsky & Finn, 2005, p. 15). As the demand for increased rigor and expectations has grown state and nation wide, so has the pressure of high performance on standardized assessments. As a reaction to this pressure, the Georgia Department of Education created and implemented the Georgia Performance Standards in 2004. These standards replaced the Quality Core Curriculum of 1985, and were written as a way to ensure depth of content and increased rigor and expectations. According to the Georgia Department of Education,

The revised and strengthened curriculum will drive both instruction and assessment in Georgia’s schools, providing guidelines for teachers, students, and test makers... Our statewide assessment will be aligned with the Georgia Performance Standards, taking the guesswork out of teaching and providing guidelines for our schools, students, and testmakers... (Politis, 2005, para. 2)

. Although the Georgia Performance Standards do not specify specific texts, content or instructional methods, these variables are often mandated as a way to ensure that material likely to appear on the test is not only taught, but, in some instances, taught in a particular way. Adequate Yearly Progress, both at the school and system level, is determined by the outcome of student performance on these newly aligned assessments. According to Adams and Kirst (1999), the rigidity and standardization of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation would be a strong accountability system. The strength and power of this accountability system is derived from not only the politically charged, misguided research that lends credence to high-stakes test scores, but also from the public acceptance of this farce through the attention and constant references provided by the

media and political leaders. Feelings of powerlessness and lack of professional freedom are fueled by the pressure of not only a new curriculum, but also by the threat of penalties for low student achievement on standardized tests.

Teacher professionalism and autonomy is lessening due to the loss of instructional freedom. This loss is directly correlated to the fear of failure of accountability measures which are based on high-stakes assessments. Research has shown that a teacher's attitude can have a direct effect on the attitude that students adopt as well as the independent pedagogical practices of the teacher (Clark, 1988; Stern & Keislar, 1977; Fenstermacher, 1986; Husu, J., Jyrhämä, R., Kansanen, P., Krokfors, L., Meri, M., & Tirri, K., 2000; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Wood & Floden, 1990). Teachers have been led to believe that they must set aside their attempts to teach a multicultural, democratic pedagogy and instead must follow standardized lesson plans and benchmarked assessments. Stripping away the control teachers have over the instruction of their diverse students not only squelches authentic learning opportunities within diverse classrooms, it also devastates the morale of teachers.

Curriculum studies from the perspective of critical theory serves as a lens through which to examine the interactive relationships among teachers, pedagogy, and the ideological, disciplinary, and social contexts of teaching. Within this examination will be the consideration of the purpose this knowledge serves, and who this knowledge serves to benefit most.

#### Purpose and Research Questions

Although there has been a vast amount of research on standards-based education reform nation-wide, there has been a lack of research on the paradox between Georgia

Performance Standards and federal accountability measures. Educators have pled for a reconceptualization of standards-based education to reflect the values of a multicultural, democratic education. The Georgia Performance Standards provide teachers with the freedom and flexibility to teach the content of standards to all students in a democratic, critically aware method. However, due to the outcome from constraints and the terrorism of high-stakes testing accountability, teachers are losing the autonomy to teach a multicultural, democratic pedagogy and are instead being forced to teach a standardized curriculum with standardized instructional methods. I used critical theory to explore the perceptions of high-school English teachers in relation to the ideals of Georgia Performance Standards which are in opposition to the hidden outcomes of standardized testing accountability.

The state-wide mandate and implementation of Georgia Performance Standards in English-Language Arts is an essential factor in interpreting teachers' attitudes of their autonomy within the context of school reform. The purpose of this study is to examine teacher perceptions of autonomy as they relate to attitudes toward this curricular reform and high stakes testing.

The instructional quality of teachers and the curriculum taught needs to be held to high standards. These standards should be centered on a critical, liberating pedagogy which helps students become change agents by learning to critically view their position in the world around them and make decisions accordingly. There should also be a system of accountability in place for student learning and achievement. However, standardized high-stakes assessment results should not be a measure of accountability for students, teachers, or schools. Teachers need to be provided with the professional freedom to teach

to the needs of every student. Sizer (2004), Kozol (1991) and Meier (1995) have conducted extensive research which supports the necessity and possibility of a democratic education for all students without the standardization and uniformity of instruction. Opposing views of Adler (2003), Thernstrom (2003), and Nash (2000) see uniformity as a way to promote equality; however, these views are problematic in that equality is not always equitable. Teaching is a subversive act (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Postman & Weingartner, 1969). In this sense, it is important that teachers realize their freedom to promote equality and democracy within their classrooms. Equality, in this sense, promotes the power of the dominant majority and furthers the marginalization of the minority.

#### Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore whether teachers feel that they have freedom in their pedagogical practice, and whether they view the mandated Georgia Performance Standards as allowing freedom or restricting freedom. The lens through which I approach this research is grounded in my belief of the importance of place and otherness within networks of power. As a classroom teacher, I felt strongly tied to the mandated curriculum, not to the betterment of my students. Because this research project was born from my personal “truth” of feeling that my voice was stifled, I am cognizant of the ideological underpinnings of my research. As an administrator, I now want to empower my teachers by helping them to understand their own realities as educators and create possibilities for reflection and understanding of human experience.

This study uses a framework of research questions to guide exploration of teacher attitudes regarding perceived freedom of instructional content and practice. According to

Cresswell (2003), quantitative researchers should “use research questions and hypotheses to shape and specifically focus the purpose of the study” (p. 108). Additionally, these should be “interrogative statements or questions” (Ibid.) that are focused on the intended outcomes of the study. This study will focus on the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between the use of high-stakes testing accountability measures and perceived independence within pedagogical practice?
2. Is there a relationship between the implementation of Standards-based Education and perceived independence within pedagogical practice?
3. Is there a difference among teachers’ perceptions of Standards-based Education on the instructional freedom of promoting the ideals of a democratic pedagogy in educating diverse student populations?

The following null hypotheses were developed from the research questions:

Ho1: There is no relationship between the use of high-stakes testing accountability measures and perceived independence within pedagogical practice.

Ho2: There is no relationship between the implementation of Standards-based Education and perceived independence within pedagogical practice.

Ho3: There is no difference among teachers’ perceptions of Standards-based Education on the instructional freedom of promoting the ideals of a democratic pedagogy in educating diverse student populations.

### Definitions of Terms

Terms used in this study are defined in order to provide consistent definitions and eliminate confusion.

*Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* – Accountability measure mandated by the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. AYP requires a school or school system to meet decreed levels of student participation and achievement on statewide assessments as well as a second indicator chosen by individual school systems.

*High-stakes assessments* – Mandatory tests which measure an individual student's mastery of predetermined state standards. These tests are aligned with state curriculum standards in each content area.

*Standards-based Education* – An education movement which defines what students should know and be able to do in specific content areas and grade levels.

*Democratic multicultural education* -- an education for all students (Banks, 1994; Sleeter & Grant, 1988) and teaches students the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to effectively interact with individuals in a diverse community (Freire, 1985).

#### Potential Significance

Authentic, effective educational reform begins in the classroom (Cuban, 1984). This study is intended to reveal teachers' perceptions of the role of Georgia Performance Standards in promoting the ideals of a democratic public education. This study will ideally help teachers navigate the standards-based education process from a critical perspective, thus transforming and strengthening both their ability and their responsibility to lead students toward becoming critically conscious transformative agents of the world around them (Giroux & McLaren, 1994).

Teachers often work in a professionally isolated environment, working as independent agents and not a team. Sedlak, Wheeler, Pullin, & Cusick (1986) note that teachers historically have acknowledged and accepted administrative authority, yet have

exercised their autonomy within the privacy of their individual classrooms. Using an attitudinal survey as an instrument to explore shared views of teachers will provide a platform from which teachers can realize shared values and beliefs. By addressing compatibilities and paradoxes between Georgia Performance Standards and high-stakes test accountability, this study will provide insight into ways that teachers can unite to create “lines of flight” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21) in navigating the relationship between the regimented accountability requirements of the state and the expectation and moral responsibility to teach to the social and intellectual learning needs of each student.

#### Limitations

In 2002, when the *No Child Left Behind Act* was signed into law, math and language arts were the two components of accountability. At that time, Georgia had been using the Quality Core Curriculum since the Quality Basic Education Act of 1985. The English Language-Arts Georgia Performance Standards were phased in during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years; therefore, this has allowed only two school years in which teachers can make judgments regarding the impact of this new curriculum on their students. Although the time frame is an observable phenomena within this study, it is a limitation in that teachers have only just begun to delve into the newly implemented curriculum, limiting both their experience level and their knowledge base.

Another limitation of the study is the voluntary self-reporting of perceptions. This is a limitation due to the possibility of participants reporting a more or less favorable attitude than is actually present. The survey will be distributed to teachers with a minimum of two years of teaching experience in the school district in order to ensure that all participants received the same Georgia Performance Standards training.

Considering the existing relationship between the supervisory role of the researcher in relation to the participants, social desirability bias could occur in order for participants to be viewed more favorably. Additionally, participants may feel the need to report a positive attitude regarding Georgia Performance Standards in order to appear supportive of current school reform and curricular initiatives mandated by both state and local boards of education. To offset this limitation, participants will be provided anonymity in their responses. Additionally, teachers in this district have historically been encouraged to be frank and honest in their opinions.

A further limitation of the study is the use of a singular school district. Although this is a delimiting factor, choosing this one large school district will provide a consistent variable of teacher training during the training and implementation of the Georgia Performance Standards. Because a state-wide train-the trainer approach was used, inequity in redelivery has occurred state-wide, causing misconceptions among the faculty which could skew their perceptions of the purpose and outcomes of Standards-based Education. Additionally, there was been little, if any, observed or reported consistency among county redelivery sessions. Once the county representative received training from the state, the state did not verify the redelivery measures. Ultimately, the possibility could, and does, exist that some counties redelivered the exact information, while some counties did not redeliver any of the information at all. Further research could be conducted after completing of this study to investigate the impact of inconsistent training state-wide.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Power is the coveted link to individuality or uniqueness. According to Pizzorno (1992), one must understand the need for power and the power-structure of his or her culture to understand oneself. The aims of multicultural education have been professed as offering a way to appreciate diversity, as well as a way for people to promote and identify with their own culture. According to Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (2004), “Multicultural education represents an effort to acknowledge cultural diversity in the curriculum” (p. 323). Although the theory behind multiculturalism in education is noble, it is often problematic in that these efforts tend to prove a means of assimilation, not the celebration of diversity. The power structures that dominate hidden curricula and the norms of the school environment often make education a disguised means of oppression.

Critical theory builds a strong theoretical framework for the analysis of power structures and the struggle for liberation and praxis. Centering around transformation and fluid growth of both teachers and students, critical theory and critical pedagogy enable the learner, whether teacher or student, to not only be aware of the power structures within which they operate, but to understand how these structures in turn create their personal realities, empowering them to then respond accordingly. Nieto (1992) states:

Critical pedagogy is an exploder of myths. It helps to expose and demystify some of the truths that we have been taught to take for granted and to analyze things critically and carefully... Critical pedagogy allows us to have faith in these ideals without uncritically accepting their reality. (p. 221).

My hope is that empowering and enabling both students and teachers to construct new meanings will lead to transformative change in the perception of what it truly means to teach and to learn.

### Power/Knowledge

Foucault (1990) defines power by stating that it is “not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society” (p. 93). Foucaultian analysis reveals the intricacies of the ways in which power operates in schools. Both sovereign and disciplinary power control and regulate the teacher-student relationship and the teacher-administrator relationship. Power, enforced by surveillance, thus becomes a locus of control which serves to alter or restrict the actions of both teachers and students. Sovereign power operates in schools through the obvious consequences of resistance, coercing subjects to do something against their will. For example, teachers often exert sovereign power over their students as a way to control classroom behavior. Willis (1977) finds this as the point of resistance against which working class students rebel and thus perpetuate the replication of the class hierarchy.

Although sovereign power might seem the most prevalent in teacher-student dynamics, I argue that it is the more covert disciplinary power which controls the teacher-administrator relationship. According to Foucault (1980), disciplinary power “reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their action and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (p. 39). Disciplinary power is exercised through the invisible ways of “knowing what is inside of peoples’ minds” (Ibid, p. 104). The invisible tactics of surveillance I experienced as a

teacher were made possible by constant monitoring communication, student academic performance, professional practice, and personal interaction with one another. Foucault (1979) describes this type of pervasive of surveillance as a technology through which to maintain norms. These norms thus serve as the guide by which people must behave.

Dominant discourses are created through the control of knowledge, which, in turn, produces more power for the dominant majority. Foucault describes the relationship between power and knowledge as the “politics of knowledge relations of power which pass via knowledge” (Ibid, p. 69). Thus, dominant discourses become powerful determinants of which knowledge is of most value. The disciplinary role of power in pedagogical practice is evident when power/knowledge relations restrict instructional practices and strip away teachers’ abilities to act as transformative intellectuals.

As the authority figure in the classroom, teachers exert power in the sense that they are in control of the knowledge that is disseminated to students through the texts and lessons that are taught. According to the National Council of Teachers of English (2000):

The English/Language Arts classroom can and should be a unique place to develop voice as well as to respect and to hear all voices. It is the place where many students learn they have a right to their own language, where multiple forms of literacy are explored, where censorship is abhorred, and where difference is valued in pursuit of an education befitting a democracy. (National Council of Teachers of English, 2000)

Although many teachers strive to make multicultural perspectives available, it seems that often times, this information is seems to be presented as a way of fulfilling the requirement of building students’ capacity for awareness, not understanding or

contemplation of personal interconnection. Information is presented that provides different viewpoints, but the value and significance of these viewpoints are often explored from a white, middle-class perspective. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2007, June) reported that 42% of public school students were members of minority groups (p. 26), but only 17% of K-12 teachers were members of minority groups (p. 70). Although the percentage of minority teachers has grown approximately 4% between 1993-1994 and 2003-2004, there has been very little change in gender diversity. This lack of gender diversity is also alarming in that approximately 75% of all teachers are female (NCES; 2007, June; p. 70). For a transformation of the American educational system, substantive changes in fundamental assumptions, educational practices, and critical awareness of the interconnectedness of human relationships must occur (Conley, 1997; Delpit, 1995; Elmore, 1996). Awareness of the domination of power structures and the oppression of hegemony (McLaren, 1989) must be sought, or there will be no hope for a culturally responsive, transformative pedagogy within our educational system.

In discussing the emergence of cultural studies in education, Giroux (1999) states that “teachers always work and speak within historically and socially determined relations of power” (p. 230). These relations of power are those which serve to heighten and extend authority and control already in existence. Giroux (1999) credits cultural studies with “questioning how power operates in the construction of knowledge while simultaneously redefining the parameters of the form and content of what is being taught” (p. 233). Thus, the schools become a small scale version of the large picture – the national and world-wide struggle for cultural authority. For example, although many mainstream Language Arts textbooks proffer to be “multicultural,” instead, the majority

of the literature is still from the dominant culture, with only excerpts and small selections offered from the minority cultures. The discussion stems generally around the differences, not in an effort to appreciate each piece of literature on equal terms, but instead to further the dominant ideology that the minority culture's literature is less valuable or meaningful. In our American Literature textbook, more Native American literature is present than has been in previous years. However, it is presented in the beginning of the book then forgotten as the book continues. So who holds the power? The dominant culture still holds the power. It is almost as if that power is made even more apparent by "allowing" certain pieces of literature to appear, yet not allowing for equal value to be designated to those pieces. This same mindset can be extrapolated to the greater school community if one were to consider the celebration of Black History Month. Yes, it is a wonderful thing for the heritage of African Americans to be recognized. However, power is still wielded over the discourse regarding this culture and is evident in the sense that it is promoted or discussed only one month out of the entire year. And, February happens to be the shortest month of all twelve.

Foucault (1980) describes power as "a productive network which runs through the whole social body" (p. 119). In order to successfully operate within this network, one must be able to adequately strategize and critically analyze the assumed truths upon which the empowered derive their supremacy and domination. Before being able to strategize and analyze, one must first be able to recognize these truths that are often an unwritten, underlying force of the culture in which one operates. Horton and Freire (1990) consider the role of education to be one which changes society through teaching individuals to become cognizant of the "levels of knowledge people have" (p. 226). For

liberation or any degree of change to occur, individuals will need to be aware of their own oppression. Educators must transform their own realities in order to be able to effectively humanize and contribute to the transformation of children (Hilliard, 1991). This recognition serves “to create a new knowledge and to help the people to know better what they already know. It’s not an idealism; it is consistency. It’s a revolutionary process” (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 226). Discussing the concept of social change, Freire (2005) sees knowledge as having a key role in revolution and power shifts. Freire looks at the relationship between power and knowledge through the lens of the powerless, those who are oppressed by power. A person is helpless against an unknown enemy. Liberation can only occur once one realizes one is oppressed and becomes aware of the ways in which he or she is oppressed. Freire’s liberation theory echoes a similar strategy of utilizing knowledge in order to escape oppression.

Although Foucault and Freire seem to agree on the basic relationship between power and knowledge, they differ in their focus. Whereas Foucault tends to see the critical analysis of knowledge as a means of shifting power from one institution or individual to another, Freire tends to have a much more existential view of the individual’s conceptualization of knowledge and thus, the individual’s conceptualization of power. Instead of focusing on creating a new discourse based on perceived knowledge with the intent to thus gain power, Freire’s focus is on the liberation of the individual from the oppression of power, liberation which, to Foucault, is an impossibility. Freire (2005) believes that ones who are oppressed should create a pedagogy that “makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. And in the

struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade” (p. 48). According to Freire (2005), society is changed as:

...the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. (p. 54)

Freire’s counter-power theory seems to focus on the weakening of power as a tool for societal change and liberation. This becomes problematic in that Foucault sees power as being inherent in society, something which society must have to operate, regardless of how much liberation takes place.

Foucault (1980) explains the existence of power relationships by describing their “multiplicity of points of resistance” (p. 95). In this sense, individuality is only created through the opposition to power. Pizzorno (1992) compares individuality to a “battlefield” and states that “Without something or somebody opposing us, we would not be able to trace the boundaries of ourselves.” (p. 207). Thus, individuality is formed by others, specifically, others with power. Foucault (1991) believed that, “The more one individual possesses power or privilege, the more one is marked as an individual, by rituals, written accounts or visual representation” (p. 192). From this perspective, the acquisition of power thus becomes the ultimate goal one must strive for in order to be recognized as an individual. Freire (2005) stated, “Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong enough to free both” (p. 44).

Although the existence of power structures is an inevitable part of society, so is the hope of overcoming oppression and promise for ultimate individuality in the pursuance of individual truth. Gilligan (1982) describes the paradox of human experience as, “we know ourselves as separate only insofar as we live in connection with others, and that we experience relationships only insofar as we differentiate other from self” (p. 63). Dewey (1916) builds on this premise by expressing the importance of the teacher/student relationship. I posit that the same consideration and value should be placed in the context of the teacher/administrator relationship, one which, in my experience, holds the key to perception of liberation and/or oppression within pedagogical practice.

### Hegemony

Power and hegemony play a significant role in the educational reform movements which govern the American educational system. McLaren (1989) defines hegemony as “the maintenance of the domination not by sheer exercise of force but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites” (p. 173). In this study I use the term hegemony to refer to pedagogical practices and assumptions within the curriculum which are determined by dominant discourse. Educators pride themselves in preparing students for life by teaching them a curriculum of literature, math, and technical skills. However, the school environment often serves to perpetuate the hegemony of power usurpation and domination through the vehicle of curricula.

Hegemonic ideologies of schooling are born from the dominant discourse of which knowledge is of most value, knowledge which is touted as being in the best

interest of all stakeholders. These discourses create ideologies which are then institutionalized. This institutionalization is what makes ideologies become hegemonic (Giroux, 1982). The strength of hegemony lies in its normalization of common practices, forms, and structures. Curricular hegemony often becomes oppressive when it operates as a power structure to control pedagogy and professional practice.

Mintzberg (1983) contends that one of the historic ways to control the work of an organization is to measure, and thus reward, the outcomes. He defines organizational politics as "individual or group behavior that is informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, and above all, in a technical sense, illegitimate--sanctioned neither by formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise" (1983, p. 172). This definition certainly applies to the political organization of the educational system, as well as the supposedly measurable outcomes of standards-based education. In this sense, the paths of education and bureaucracy converge.

If the manifestation of power is then created by knowledge, and the manifestation of knowledge is created by power, then which institution or individual ultimately holds complete control over knowledge or epistemology? In a discussion of the roles of individuality, truth, and power, Foucault (1988) stated:

My role... is to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed. (p. 10)

It is in this sense that the concept of "truth" becomes muddled and corrupted, for if discourse is based on knowledge, which is created by someone or something that has a

personal stake and interest in its manifestation, then the purity and wholeness of the concept of truth is lost. So then, if knowledge creates power which, in turn, creates individuality, then how authentic is the power someone holds if that power stems from something that is no longer true? Foucault (1988) describes the role of an intellectual as one meant “to change something in the minds of people” (p. 10). Foucault is ultimately describing the reciprocal nature of power and knowledge in the sense that although knowledge is the source of power, knowledge can also be a tool for creating a power shift through dispelling or contradicting the knowledge upon which an institution’s or an individual’s power is based.

In agreement with Foucault, I do believe that power is omnipresent and inescapable. However, once one is cognizant of the way power operates, one is better able to use that understanding to create a counter-hegemonic discourse. The current hegemony of accountability, working alongside the disciplinary power operations of surveillance, threatens the emancipatory potential of standards implementation. This is problematic in that it restricts not only teacher autonomy and freedom of pedagogical practice, but also student learning of the ideals of emancipatory thinking.

For a liberatory pedagogy, teachers must create a counter-hegemony to be able to have autonomy within their pedagogical practice. Before this can happen, teachers will need to be conscious of the power structures that control their perceptions, actions, and obligations. This critical consciousness is what will ultimately lead to teaching strategies of liberation and hope.

## A History of Efficiency

Industry and political leaders have an unmistakable chokehold on the American educational system. The degree of federal control of education has increased since the end of the Revolutionary War, beginning with the federal declaration of land for use in public education in the Northwest Ordinances in 1785. The U.S. Office of Education was established in 1867, the purpose of which was to monitor the progress of public education. However, local and state education agencies still had the most authority to determine the structure and progress of their schools.

Standardized student achievement assessments in the American school system began with Horace Mann. As the secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education, Mann declared a need for consistency and quality in Boston schools and created an assessment tool that would measure achievement in core areas such as math, history, science, and English. According to Horn (2004), Mann believed that standardization within the school system would “ensure social stability by promoting common values and beliefs” (p. 13). Mann’s belief that the teacher could shape students “made schools the central institution for the control and maintenance of the social order” (Spring, 2005, p. 79). Years later in 1895, Joseph Rice created an assessment program to determine achievement in spelling and mathematics (Mathison & Ross, 2004). In contrast to Mann, Rice’s purpose was to determine the need for a standardized curriculum.

Concurrently with Rice and Mann, E. L. Thorndike, a professor at Columbia University, researched educational measurement and in 1904 published *An Introduction to the Theory of Mental and Social Measurement*. Thorndike’s research proffered that there was a need for standardization in test administration and scoring in order to develop

a standardized view of achievement. Based on Thorndike's achievement tests came intelligence testing.

In 1905, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching was founded, providing extensive funding from the steel industry for teacher incentives as well as research in educational progress. In 1909, the Carnegie Foundation solicited Frederick Taylor, esteemed scientific management expert, to conduct a research study to investigate application of the efficiency of factory management to college administration. According to Taylor (1917), "It is only through *enforced standardization* of methods, *enforced* adoption of the best implements and working conditions, and *enforced* cooperation that this faster work can be assured. And the duty of enforcing the adoption of standards and of enforcing this cooperation rests with the *management* alone" (p. 83). Taylor enlisted Morris Cooke for the research, who published a report in 1910 which began the "cult of efficiency" (Callahan, 1962) that still plagues the university and American public education system today. Focusing on using instruments to measure achievement and progress, Cooke's report not only sparked behavioristic school reform, it also cemented the relationship and control of industry and politics on education (Schachter, 1991).

Who served to benefit from this report and the spiraling changes it sparked in both universities and public schools? Industry benefited as schools produced a ready-trained workforce, pleasing the "philanthropic" corporate sponsors of education. In turn, these sponsors vocally and monetarily supported politicians who created and passed legislation that would ensure the continuance of efficient, industry based educational goals. Sinclair's (1923) social analysis of the corrupt influence of industry on universities, specifically Columbia University and the University of Pittsburgh, exposed the hidden

agenda and utter control of the Carnegie Foundation on higher education. His linguistic renderings of life in the university during this time, supported by personal experiences and horrors of punishment for not accepting the ideology of the Carnegie Foundation is a compelling expose that applies to corporate control of the current educational system.

Lewis Terman assisted the military during World War I in using standardized intelligence tests to determine which recruits were best suited for officer training and which recruits were best suited for sacrifice on the front lines of the war. Terman, creator of the Stanford Achievement Test, used his test to determine what is now known as IQ, or the intelligence quotient. After receiving a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1919, Terman developed a national intelligence test which was then made available to all public elementary schools in the United States (Mathison & Ross, 2004).

Test publishers immediately latched on to the financial opportunities existing in the test market and Houghton Mifflin, one of today's leaders in textbook publishing, published the Stanford-Binet Intelligence test in 1916, creating a commercial market share for the testing industry, as well as providing a stronghold on the educational system for corporate America (Mathison & Ross, 2004). Along with the creation of the test came efficient ways to administer the test, score the test, and manipulate the data. By providing ways for schools to statistically analyze data, the high stakes market for testing was born, ultimately booming out of control and creating the slaughterhouse of industry controlled assessment that we are held victim to today. The efficiency of scoring these tests and making the data easily and readily available to schools made it even more tempting as an indicator, while fattening the pockets of the test creating companies. These companies are not making things more efficient for the good and well-being of the educational system.

Instead, they are following one of the most basic tenets of economics – supply and demand. Once the school systems are held accountable for the test scores, then the test is a permanent factor in the educational system. If the test is required, then the test companies are guaranteed income and an inevitable profit from the creation and scoring of these tests. The windfall from the testing industry appears in the textbooks and curriculum programs that are created to “boost scores.” School systems, especially the ones that have lower test scores, are encouraged to buy the programs that have been created to improve scores on the tests. If the test company owns the textbook company, who better to rely on for curriculum and educational tools? For the textbook companies, this is a win-win situation. They can then turn a profit on both the test itself and also the textbooks, creating a false sense of dependence that allows for price inflation and future profit. Interestingly enough, it is generally the schools with the lower test scores that receive the least funding. These schools generally do not have enough money in their operating budget to provide basic needs of students. However, these schools are typically the target schools that are cajoled into prioritizing their spending toward curriculum programs and concepts that promise “overnight success” on the high stakes assessments.

Historically, American public education has leaned toward the scientifically efficient model of education. Instead of providing education, schools have provided specific training and sorting of students, which has been largely dependent on race, class, and gender. Callahan (1962) interpreted the ideology of Taylor’s scientifically efficient model of schooling as a “cult of efficiency” which has spun into a myriad of school reform efforts through the history of American public education. The Soviet launch of Sputnik I in 1957 created a tsunami of panic in America, fueled greatly in part by the

media blitz which centered around the nation-wide inadequacy of American education and defense. Drawing a direct connection between the satellite launch and American education, Ravitch (2000) stated, “Sputnik became an instant metaphor for the poor quality of U.S. schools” (p. 361). Only three days after the historic launch, *New York Times* journalist Schmeck (1957) quoted Dr. Elmer Hutchisson, director of the American Institute of Physics, as stating that unless significant changes occur in the “namby-pamby kind of learning” in the area of science, “our [American] way of life is, I am certain, doomed to extinction” (para. 5). One year later, the National Defense Education Act, funded largely by the Carnegie Foundation and the Ford Corporation, provided financial assistance and incentives for educational opportunities in mathematics, science, and foreign language study. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson established and supported a Task Force on Education, comprised mainly of Carnegie Foundation members, whose research report formed the foundation of the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965 (Eakman, 2001). This monumental piece of legislation provided Title I monies as a way to help fund public education for the poor. With this funding came expectations of accountability, monitoring, and evaluation of program effectiveness, as well as an inseparable bond between the education system, national public issues, and federal financial aid (Spring, 1993). State-level bureaucratic involvement in education also developed further, taking considerable control away from local education agencies.

In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* furthered the aims of the ESEA by recommending heightened and measurable academic standards, both in primary/secondary education and in college admissions (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Spawned from the fear of national economic ruin, *A Nation at Risk* declared the failing

state of the American educational system and chastised previous attempts to raise student achievement in order to increase both world-wide economic production, as well as the reputation of the United States. According to the report, “We have, in effect been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 5). This report flung education into the forefront of politics, leading to a storm of school policy legislation and a considerable weakening of public support of the educational system. Interests from the corporate, private sector of industry have led the policy legislation and school reform efforts. For example, prominent corporate CEO’s, state governors, and education leaders have joined together to both sponsor and control the National Education Summits in 1989, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2005, and 2007. These National Education Summits have not only represented the inextricable bond between corporate America and education, but have also fueled the fire of accountability measures. Glaser and Linn (1993) discuss the importance of this movement in the history of American education by stating:

In the recounting of our nations' drive toward educational reform, the last decade of this century will undoubtedly be identified as the time when a concentrated press for national education standards emerged. The press for standards was evidenced by the efforts of federal and state legislators, presidential and gubernatorial candidates, teacher and subject-matter specialists, councils, governmental agencies, and private foundations. (p. xiii)

Over a decade later, we are still seeing the same phenomenon as education remains at the forefront of political debate and legislation.

The private business sector and politicians began to focus blame on the public schools as the economy in the United States began to deteriorate during the 1970s (Cremin, 1989). In response to this, educational reforms began to focus on standards and accountability testing as an indicator of student learning and school success. According to Sacks (1999), these educational reforms promoted the idea that “taxpayer funding of schools should be preceded by proof of educational efficiency” (p. 78). Taxpayers naturally want to know that their hard-earned money is being well spent. Tax money spent on education is no different.

This push toward educational efficiency became the focus of political agendas that served not as an aid in determining areas of need, but instead as a punishing force to debilitate the public educational system. Taylor (1998) states, “In a country in which school children are pitted against school children, a small group of governmental scientists, hiding in their fortress of impenetrable numbers, claim they have discovered that a terrible illness is afflicting millions of the nation’s children, and that only ‘reliable, replicable research’ will provide a cure” (p. xxi). Politicians know how to sway the American public. How better to rally support for standardization than to convince the public that it is a cure for an illness that is harming their children?

Educational policies and reform movements are given the responsibility of “monitoring the general conditions and context of education, identifying progress toward specific goals, illuminating or foreshadowing problems, diagnosing the potential sources of identified problems” (Darling-Hammond, 1992, p. 236). This surveillance, encompassing national, state, district, school, and classroom levels, serves as a mechanism of disciplinary power, fueling the normalizing and standardization of

pedagogical practice. Elmore (1987) sees these reform efforts as problematic in that instead of resulting in higher levels of student achievement, the “result is teacher resistance and student disengagement” (p. 60). In my personal experience, I have found that these reform movements not only disengage students, they also disempower teachers by eroding autonomy. Instead of creating solutions for the problems that are discovered through monitoring and accountability measures, punishments are doled out. By basing public opinion on test scores that do not adequately or authentically assess students and schools, the public is given a skewed, incorrect idea of the effectiveness of schools. Schools are compared by failure rates and then judged from best to worst according to the data provided. Instead of praising gains in student achievement and school improvement, generally, the school with the highest scores is placed at the top of the list, regardless of the student demographics, financial resources, or other uncontrollable variables that separate schools and inevitably play a part in their success and failure on high-stakes achievement tests. When these schools are pitted against one another, stereotypes and public opinion play a large part in the transfer of teachers, students, and parental support to the higher scoring schools. This not only affects the school itself, but also the surrounding area. Most parents would prefer that their students attend “better schools.” This largely is considered when parents move into an area, change jobs, etc. Thus, the accountability curse of high-stakes testing affects the community as well, not just the actual classroom.

Although an initial consideration of this perspective may seem extreme and simplistic, the Georgia Department of Labor, under the direction of Commissioner

Thurgood, published a document listing numerous employer expectations that an employee should meet in order to be successful. For example,

- A positive attitude is one of the most important factors in achieving job success.
- Know and follow all office rules, policies, and procedures. Read the employee manuals and ask questions.
- Listen and learn. Be open to new ways of doing things, even if you were taught differently in school or in a different job.
- Learn all you can about the job you were hired to do before thinking about moving up.
- Support management decisions once they are made.
- Do not express your opinions, biases or prejudices about others while you are at work.
- Accept criticism as constructive...Thank the person for their input. Consider changing the way you do things...
- Notice who your boss relies on and model yourself after them.
- Realize playing politics or power games could be dangerous and backfire on you.
- Keep your emotions under control. The workplace is not the place to express or show strong personal opinions or feelings.
- Strive to be positively recognized... (Georgia Department of Labor, 2004)

If one were to consider these characteristics of the ideal employee against the measure of our educational system's success in producing students ready for the workforce, then the

factory model of schooling should be considered successful according to labor agency standards. After all, consider how much time and energy educators and school administrators spend monitoring and correcting student behavior. Looking at the bigger picture from a critical perspective reveals the political, economic, and social connection between industry and education in Georgia. The Georgia Department of Economic Development attempts to lure new industry to Georgia by stating,

When your business strikes out into new territory, it's a key competitive advantage if you can staff up with a properly educated and trained workforce. Keeping education and industry on pace with each other is just part of what Georgia does to help your company gain an edge and meet your hiring needs. (Georgia Department of Economic Development, n.d., para. 1)

The intertwining of the goals and purpose of the Georgia Department of Economic Development and the Georgia Department of Education is apparent in that producing students ready for the workforce is not only listed as a "selling point" for new industry, but it also reflected in the English Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards.

However, state industry in Georgia is not the only entity benefiting from the focus on student achievement. Ironically, it is the standardization and accountability testing that is the revenue booster, not revenue from student achievers. Neill and Medina (1992) assert that "Standardized tests undermine school improvement instead of advancing its cause" (p. 46). Instead of focusing on building students' understanding and will for social justice and critical reflection, schools have become places which often focus on ensuring that the student will know which bubble to darken on the high-stakes assessment. Sensationalism regarding student and school achievement is rampant throughout industry,

politics, and media. This data is published on the front page of newspapers, televised on news reports, published on the Internet, and is considered one of the strongest indicators of community success. It is the driving force behind the standards-based reform movement. Apple (2001) describes education as “one of the major arenas in which resources, power, and ideology specific to policy, finance, curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation in education are worked through” (p. 36). Who serves to best benefit from standards-based education? Politicians can skew statistics to improve their popularity and support; the testing industry holds a strong market share and reaps an obscene profit. There are school systems that are financially floundering and that do not have the materials that they need to teach their students, yet the publishing companies that create and score the mandated tests are prospering.

Not only are the publishing companies thriving from their testing materials, but they are also churning out curriculum guides and teacher resources which delineate exactly what is to be taught, how it is taught, and to which test it correlates. Ladson-Billings (2001) comments that “Students do not come with instruction manuals” (p. 98), opposite to what textbook companies would like to make us believe. Reynolds (1989) describes his experience with teacher materials provided to English teachers as a “frightening and dangerous trend” (p. 164). Three years ago, Georgia adopted new English Language-Arts textbooks for grades 9-12. Teacher resource materials were provided “free of charge” with each class set of student textbooks purchased. As a classroom teacher, I received an annotated teacher’s edition of the literature textbook which included scripted notes in the margins of the important information that the editors thought should be taught, as well as questions and activities for each text included in the

anthology. Beyond the teacher's edition of the textbook, I received a box of teacher resources with sixteen booklets which contained every imaginable worksheet, lesson, or pre-fabricated instructional strategy for teaching literature, vocabulary, grammar, and test preparation skills. These pre-fabricated strategies were itemized in the box by the "type of student" to which the publishers thought they might be most appropriate. For example, one item was listed as appropriate for students categorized as "English Language Learners." Beyond the teacher's edition and resource box, I also received fifteen additional resources, such as a cd-rom with test questions (just point, click, and print!), a cd-rom with worksheets aligned to each text (as if the items in the teacher/student book weren't enough), an audio version of the textbook, video tapes (with lesson plans), and even a book which gave day-by-day lesson plans aligned to our state curriculum. In other words, I had a total of thirty-two items provided to me as "resources" for teaching with the literature book we adopted. At the same time, we adopted a grammar textbook as well. Just as the case with the literature book, the publisher provided similar teaching resources aligned to the grammar book and our state curriculum. So, for each grade level I taught, I received a total of approximately sixty-four "resources" to help me teach. Considering I taught ninth, tenth, and twelfth grade English that year, I had a total of 192 items in my teacher inventory.

Not only were my teacher resource items provided in excess, so were the materials provided to my students. For my ninth grade classes alone, I was asked to issue the following six items to each student: literature book, Interactive Reader Workbook (with reading prompt questions and activities), grammar book, grammar workbook (with practice exercises), a vocabulary workbook (which included a set of vocabulary words

for each week of the school year and practice exercises), and a test preparation workbook with practice questions aligned to the English-Language Arts Georgia High School Graduation Test. The excess of materials in English was similar to other academic content areas. Imagine how many books a student could be responsible for if he or she received as many materials in each academic course attempted in ninth grade!

As the Language Arts Coordinator, one of my responsibilities is to ensure that all of our various and sundry materials are inventoried and accounted for. Although teachers received these resources “free of charge” during the textbook adoption year, any replacements or additional materials needed must be purchased through the textbook publisher. To put this in perspective from an economical standpoint, to replace one teacher’s resources for ninth grade literature alone would cost approximately \$1979.40. Considering that the grammar resources are also required, that would be almost \$4000 in teacher resources per grade level. Considering I taught three grade levels at one time, I had \$12,000 worth of materials stored neatly in my teacher closet. Add that to the cost of the student literature and grammar textbooks for my approximately 120 students, and the total district-owned instructional materials in my possession would total almost \$28,800. We currently have approximately 130 English Language-Arts teachers in our district. From this example alone, it is impossible to deny the profit probability in the textbook publishing industry.

### Standardized Testing

The vast majority of the American public is not familiar with the intricate workings and theoretical underpinnings of the educational process, system, or the needs of students. Due to this lack of critical awareness, people are often easily swayed and

coerced by politicians, industry, and media who proffer not only an explanation of the shortcomings of our educational system, but also “suitable” accountability measures intended to force improvement in academic achievement. To the unknowing, wouldn’t it make sense to see a “bottom line” of achievement? Standardized testing certainly presents a “bottom line.” However, the results of these tests are not indicative of the true achievement of our students. Sizer (2004) states:

While worthy standardized tests do provide teachers with much good data, they hardly provide either enough information nor the balance of information necessary to assess accurately either a student’s mastery or a district’s or school’s effort. NCLB narrows, and thus profoundly distorts, the problem. (p. xxi)

This provides the political arena with unprecedented power in determining which schools are successful and which are failures in an effort to heighten national standards. After all, the United States has not recently been considered the “cutting edge” in achievement in the academic arena. Teachers across the nation are speaking out, some aggressively and some passively, against this travesty. Yet, the momentum for standardization and high stakes testing accountability increases and dissonant voices are seemingly mere whispers. Apple (2001) states that “Education is both cause and effect, determining and determined” (p. 36). What better way to increase national standards than to belittle and chastise the educational institutions that are responsible for creating our society? If we are not the “best,” then someone is to blame. What better target than our educational system?

There are many different factions in the United States that voice opinions regarding the status of our educational system. According to Apple (2001), neoliberals

believe that “not only are public schools failing our children as future workers, but like nearly all public institutions they are sucking the financial life out of this society” (p. 38). The exorbitant amount of money spent annually on education is a serious concern for most taxpayers. Also, the private sector’s complaint of not having enough skilled workers is also something that is appearing on the forefront as more and more of our businesses head overseas, damaging our economy. Likewise, neoconservatives also feel that public schools are failing our children. In the neoconservative view, there should be a return to Western tradition, fueled by what Apple (2001) refers to as “a fear of the Other” (p. 47). America has long been heralded as a “melting pot” and as a country that not only appreciates, but encourages diversity. However, this image is certainly a farce when the educational system is considered. Diversity is something that is frightening to many people, creating fear that spreads rapidly through all sectors of society, especially in the arena of education. In order to protect society, diversity, viewed as “Other,” is squelched through standardization and the creation of a nationalized curriculum (Apple, 2001, p. 47). By standardizing education, the threat of diversity is diminished, creating a foundation for the popular majority to be in control. Standardized instruction leaves very little room for diversity, nor does it differentiate for or consider differences of background, gender, or socioeconomic status. In the eyes of standardization, all students should be exactly the same in the area of achievement, regardless of their prior experiences, knowledge, or culture. Assimilation is hidden behind the guise of appreciation, and diversity is exterminated.

The educational system has historically been expected to shape and mold students in order to produce a better, or more ideal, society. Schools are “sites of both oppression

and empowerment” (Darder, 1991, p. 81). The broad spectrum of expected responsibilities that are placed on the education system opens it up for an endless amount of criticism from all directions. This becomes even more muddled as schools battle the inherent contradictions in their expectations. For example, two very distinct contradictions in responsibilities lie within the realm of diversity. Schools are expected to embrace diversity and differences by teaching the individual child according to his or her strengths, creating and celebrating the individual within their school communities, yet they are to teach every child the same thing, the same way, and to the same standard. Then, those children are tested using the same instrument and the same goal based outcome expectations. In this example of doublespeak, educators claim to promote and celebrate diversity, yet manically test to ensure that there is no diversity present.

#### The Standardization of Teaching

Teachers practice in an almost impossible situation. On one hand, they are governed and restrained by the directives of governmental bureaucracy. On the other hand, they are intrinsically driven by the needs of the students that they teach. Teaching contracts are granted on an annual basis and legally ensure that teachers will follow the directives of the school administration, the school district, and other political forces. Dreeben (1970) states, “Teachers are salaried employees; they agree, through a written (or unwritten but formal) contract with a school board, on what tasks they shall perform in exchange for pay” (p. 46). Although employment contracts vaguely refer to duties and responsibilities of an educator, the hidden, politically charged curriculum of the dominant majority is often an expectation within those duties and responsibilities. When this is the case, these directives, as well as others which will also be discussed, play a role in stifling

both the personal and pedagogical freedom of educators. Ayers (2004) defines the concept of freedom by stating:

...freedom, if it means anything at all, points to the possibility of looking through your own eyes, of thinking, of locating yourself, and importantly of naming the barriers to your humanity, and then joining with others to move against those obstacles. Freedom is not simply a gift – something inert, offered, received, accepted – but stands always as a challenge to “unfreedom,” the active negation of a negative. .. Freedom, then is an act, a verb, a force in motion; freedom must be chosen in order to be brought to live as authentic, trembling, and real. (p. xiii).

Action becomes the focus of the educator who strives to transform the lives of students. In Giroux’s (1997) view, teachers should be “transformative intellectuals who work toward a realization regarding their views of community, social justice, empowerment, and transformation” (p. 96). A classroom should be a place where a professional educator is allowed the unencumbered freedom to teach to the needs of his or her students. However, this is not the case when teacher autonomy is becoming virtually extinct as government legislation and bureaucracy infiltrate the educational system and determine not only the curriculum, but the very day to day instructional methods of teachers. The common, mainstream curriculum of the dominant majority is taught to a diverse population of students. Who serves to benefit from this curriculum? The dominant majority. Students who embrace and excel within this curriculum then graduate and have the possibility of succeeding in post-secondary aspirations. However, those who do not master the art of the hidden curriculum are marginalized and held away from the possibility of bettering their situations.

For the most part, I strongly believe that the past generations of teachers have chosen the profession of education because of a love for students. As with any profession, there are exceptions to the rule. It appears to me that teachers who have recently entered the profession, as well as those who are in the process of completing the teacher education programs, have been sacrificed to the factory mindset of the value of proficiency insisted upon by accreditation requirements. Teacher education courses, including some graduate level programs, reinforce the structures of curricular standardization and the strategies proffered by current legislation for student success. This “de-skilling” of the incoming teaching force inevitably will fail students. When students fail, accountability measures tighten and the teachers are blamed – not the curriculum. Hence, teachers further standardize their instructional strategies so as to ensure the continuance of their employment. The divergent teachers, the ones who rebut the standardization and proficient mindset, are the ones who are more likely to leave the profession. Should that be the case, the majority of educators will become those who are willing to be further de-skilled and fit the mold of standardization, the educators who do not question the undercurrents of contemporary school policy and legislation.

Teaching provides an intrinsic benefit unlike many other professions, in the sense that teachers truly shape the ideology and the mindset of future generations. However, this benefit is often squelched by reform movements which prevent teachers from reaching out and helping students become critical thinkers. Kanpol and McLaren (1995) attribute the silencing of marginalized students to the trend of teachers believing that “by implementing consistent prescribed standards, they are serving the best interests of students, for they do not possess a sanctioned [critical] pedagogy to help them unleash

student resources” (p. 218). With the hidden curriculum, students are not taught how to think for themselves. With teacher education programs creating proficiency based teachers, the new generations of teachers are ill-equipped to think for themselves, much less teach their students how to critically view the world around them. Thus, both the teachers and the students perpetuate the mindset of the dominant majority.

Standards-based education has disguised itself under many different titles, education initiatives, and political agendas in the past few decades. Championed by politicians and bandwagon ignoramuses, the current trend and reality of accountability based on standardized assessment of standards has been suggested to the public as a “common sense” measure. Tucker and Coddling (1998) are promoters of the standards-based education and accountability reform movement and state, “a rising chorus is calling for a return to the demands of the core disciplines and the idea that all students should meet a common high academic standard before going their separate ways” (p. 74). After all, who wouldn’t want their student held to a high standard? On the surface, this plea for standardization and accountability sounds like a plausible idea. However, many consequences are not considered or publicized. I argue that the danger lies not within the standard itself but instead within the manipulation of teacher freedom and accountability determined consequences of data gleaned from mandatory, standardized high-stakes testing.

The importance of standards derived from standards-based education is that essential content in each academic area is determined, as well as the curricular structure and pacing of instruction. Individual states then determine the minimum content of the standards that must be taught in each grade level and content area, and then these

standards are the base for high-stakes tests which determine accountability. These state-based standards reflect the mission and values of the state department of education and thus determine the content and curriculum in each state school district. A study by the American Federation of Teachers in 1995 found the national attention to standards-based education reform to be a “strong indicator of the national commitment to raising academic standards” (Gandal, 1995, p. 13). At the time of this study, 48 states were involved in standards-based reform. However, overall findings of the study were that the standards in most states were insufficient. Gandal (1995) states, “Only 13 states have standards that are strong enough to carry the weight of the reforms being built upon them” (p. 13). This, in conjunction with fear of high-stakes accountability measures, is causing administrators to force teachers into a more standardized method of instruction, creating a loss of autonomy.

The Georgia Department of Education has rewritten the state mandated standards and is currently in the process of transitioning to a more governable standards-based accountability system. In this system, content standards were created by state educational leaders and teachers which outline the knowledge and skills that students are expected to master in each grade level and content area. Although Georgia has provided content and grade level standards, these standards are, for the most part, generally broad and vague. No specific texts are required, and no specific instructional strategies are suggested. Teachers are encouraged to use their professional judgment to choose the best texts and methods for their individual students, differentiating instruction as necessary (M. Stout, personal interview, July 18, 2007). It is left to the school district leaders and content specialists to then determine the details and specificity of what is taught in each area.

A main goal of the newly mandated Georgia Performance Standards is to give students multiple ways to learn and multiple ways to be assessed in order to show mastery of the concepts that are required for each course and grade level. In these standards, the state requires that there be multiple forms of assessment, differentiated instructional methods, and determines that learning goals work together and are not isolated from one another. As an English teacher, I see the value in this type of curriculum because it allows room for creativity, giving teachers more freedom to choose what they want to teach and how they want to teach it. It also seems to give students a chance to show that they understand and have mastered the concepts without having to determine everything using a multiple choice assessment. So where is the contradiction? The contradiction exists in the fact that these students are taught and assessed all year, or semester, long and given the ability to creatively express their mastery. Then, they are slapped with a state wide, standardized test that determines whether or not they truly understand and have mastered these goals. How can a teacher have freedom of instruction and freedom of assessment if the ultimate result on a standardized test will determine whether or the student will pass or fail?

Although the Georgia Performance Standards delineate what specific concepts are to be taught in each content area and grade level, these standards do not dictate the manner in which these concepts are taught. As a whole, the same is true nationally of state standards and assessments (Goertz, Floden, & O'Day, 1996; Slavin & Fashola, 1998). Ironically, Georgia Performance Standards are to guide pedagogical practice, but the Language Arts Georgia High School Graduation Test, a main determinant of Adequate Yearly Progress, is broken into content domains and specific skills. Thus,

pedagogical freedom and autonomy erodes as administrators dictate that the specific domains are explicitly taught. In McNeil's (1985) discussion of the top-down model of school improvement, where "speed, standardization, and centralization merge," (p. 184), directives are issued from legislation and state agencies, not from the classroom teachers who are responsible for following through with the directives. McNeil (1985) states, "state-mandated reforms measured by standardized scores on tests of standardized curricula deprofessionalize our best teachers" (p. 185). In the case of Georgia, the state standards are not ratcheting down specifics of instruction; instead, the high-stakes assessment, created by a for-profit test publisher, determines what will be taught. Classroom teachers, being the ones with the least authority, are not valued for professional judgment regarding the instruction of students. Instead, the decisions regarding what should be taught are driven by the for-profit test industry which proffers the ability to determine levels of student achievement based on a particular assessment.

Standards-based education and the high stakes testing that measures a specific level of accountability serves to marginalize teachers and students. Students fare the worst in this nationally mandated marginalization because there is no consideration regarding who the students are, where they come from, or the background that they have attained from their specific experiences due to their race, class, and/or gender. Kanpol and McLaren (1995) attribute this silencing to the trend of teachers believing that "by implementing consistent prescribed standards, they are serving the best interests of students, for they do not possess a sanctioned pedagogy to help them unleash alternative student resources" (p. 218). This results in students being generalized to the norms and expectations of the dominant majority, with no room for cultural diversity. Hinchey

(1998) states, “Students can’t win a rigged game; they also can’t win if they don’t play. Educational inequity is a lose/lose situation for disadvantaged students” (p. 103). Considering the vast spectrum of students in the United States, it would be virtually impossible for a reform movement to derive norms that are reflective of this diversity. According to Taylor (1998), “Ignoring the social, cultural, and intellectual lives of children invalidates the measures” (p. 19). Adequate Yearly Progress, a benchmark of No Child Left Behind, refers to the minority groups as “subpopulations.” Schools are determined whether or not to be making progress according to several indicators, primarily how well or poorly students in these subpopulations score on the standardized test. Neill (2003) states that “virtually no schools serving large numbers of low-income students will clear these arbitrary hurdles” (p. 225). What happens, in turn, is that teachers and schools become factory oriented and begin drilling students with the concepts that will be covered on the test, in the hopes that the subpopulations will be able to score satisfactorily, raising the school’s probability of making Adequate Yearly Progress. Lisa Delpit (1998) discusses these marginalized subpopulations by stating:

“I suggest that students must be taught the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life, not by being forced to attend to hollow, inane, decontextualized subskills, but rather within the context of meaningful communicative endeavors; that they must be allowed the resource of the teacher’s expert knowledge, while being helped to acknowledge their own ‘expertness’ as well; and that even while students are assisted in learning the culture of power, they must also be helped to learn about the arbitrariness of those codes and about the power relationships they represent.” (p. 289)

It is of utmost importance that these students, as well as all students, are not injured by the crime of “teaching the test” that many teachers fall victim to. Authentic assessment should evaluate and assess authentic teaching and education, not how well a teacher has taught the test. With the changing definitions of school success that are driven by the high-stakes testing for accountability, the role of the classroom teacher will ultimately be changed as well.

Accountability based on test results determines the level of punishment that a student, school, or system will receive if proficiency is not apparent. For example, if a student does not “meet the standard” on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), then that student does not promote to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Likewise, if a student does not pass each content area Georgia High School Graduation Test, they do not receive a high school diploma. At the school level, if a certain percentage of students do not meet the standard score on these tests, then the school is deemed as making Adequate Yearly Progress. If a school does not meet this goal for two consecutive years moves the school into “Needs Improvement” status. If improvement does not occur, a progressive plan of punishment continues until finally the school is completely restructured, the local system loses all control, and the state takes over.

In standards-based education, educational outcomes are defined and measured, then the data derived from these assessments is used to influence instruction. Fulani (1999) discusses the outcome of basing instruction on high-stakes assessments:

I would hypothesize that the greater the emphasis on academic achievement through high stakes accountability, the greater the gap becomes between advantaged and disadvantaged students. The main reason for this is that poor

performing students do not need more pressure, they need greater attachment to the school and motivation to want to learn. Pressure by itself in this situation actually demotivates poor performing students. (Fullan, 1999, p.19)

This outcome has not only a negative affect on student achievement, but on the autonomy and instructional effectiveness of teachers as well. Teaching to achieve measurable outcomes then becomes a disparate reform strategy in which both the curriculum and instructional strategies teachers employ are standardized. The well-known phrase “teaching to the test” then incorrectly becomes the goal, for the test is the ultimate measure of the validity of instruction and student achievement, as well as the overall adequacy of the educational system. Darder (2004) feels that the “sterile and enfeebling pedagogical approach” of teaching to the test is a manifestation of the “reflection of the dominant class is inscribed in the educational policies and practices that shape public schooling” (p. 58). To Darder (2004), this serves to “reinforce their intellectual submissiveness and conformity to the state's prescribed ideological definition of legitimate knowledge and academic measures of achievement” (p. 58). Sacks (2000) states, “Where significant public and official pressure is placed on the tests, teaching specifically to those tests in some fashion inevitably follows” (p. 126).

Extensive research on teaching to the test suggests that the end result of this travesty is not only a decline in the quality of instruction, but also the loss of teacher autonomy and skill (see Corbett & Wilson, 1991; Darder, 2004; Firestone, Monfils, & Schorr, 2004; McNeil, 2000; Sacks, 2000; Smith, 1991). The quality of instruction is weakened because students are not learning meaningful knowledge and skills to make them critically conscious members of society. Instead, they are pummeled with disjointed

bits of information which causes them to feel as if they are “abstract, isolated, independent and unattached to the world... that the world exists as a reality apart” (Freire, 2005, p. 81). Students cannot be expected to be members of a diverse democracy if they feel as if they are not a part of the world around them. This method, which Freire (2005) refers to as the “banking method,” inhibits the development of a critical consciousness by preventing students from interacting with the world. Freire (2005) states, “The more completely they [students] accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them [students]” (p. 73). The same is true for teachers in the sense that they need to feel as if they are true stakeholders in the educational system, not merely deskilled assembly line factory workers.

Taking this one step further, what are the implications for teachers? The No Child Left Behind Act defines the quality and success of a teacher solely by test scores. According to Elmore (2002), this is the “worst trend of the current accountability movement” (p. 35). Because of the ultimate accountability and drastic measures that many school systems take in order to “meet the standard” in school achievement, many teachers are forced, whether by their administration or by fear of failure and its consequences, to focus their teaching strategies on test taking skill improvement, not on knowledge. According to Horn (2004), this makes “administrator and teacher job security and advancement contingent upon student achievement of the standards as determined by student test scores” (p. 1). The focus becomes the test, not the well-being of the student. By teaching the test, we leave students “a-critical and naïve in the face of the world” (Freire, 1989, p. 152). Who serves to benefit from this type of education? We aren’t

creating citizens to help foster an ideal society. Instead, we are creating skilled test takers that would seemingly be lost and ill prepared for success in the world beyond public education. Who serves to benefit most from this type of education? In our capitalistic, business driven society, the schools are reproducing the prototype of deskilled workers, ones which will be able to enter the working force at entry level and complete automatic, predetermined tasks in a repetitive nature.

Just as the ideal concept of the student is changing, so is the ideal teacher prototype. Teachers are also marginalized in the sense that teacher education programs nationwide have varying concepts of the ideal educator. According to Darling-Hammond (1995):

Strategies for sorting and tracking students were developed to ration the scarce resources of expert teachers and rich curricula, and to standardize teaching tasks and procedures within groups. This, in turn, enabled greater routinization of teaching work, and less reliance on professional skill and judgment, a corollary of the nineteenth-century decision to structure teaching as semi-skilled labor. (p. 153)

Teachers are thus disempowered, as is the teaching profession. Factory-based proficiency models dictate the curriculum and professional standards of teacher education. Darder (2002) combats this trend and states that teachers and administrators should find “new ways to make a difference, not only in the lives of students, but also communities” (pp. 93-94). It is imperative that teacher education programs are redesigned in order to best prepare new teachers for the culturally diverse landscape of American classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2001). For progress in the preparation of future teachers, teacher

education programs should intentionally strive to cultivate educators who are mindful of the power that they hold to shape society.

When teachers are micromanaged and held accountable for their passage rates, the result is an even further loss of autonomy and sense of professionalism. Hilty (2000) states, “often, top-down decision making aimed at increasing learning in our schools focuses on "whipping into line" teachers who are obviously perceived as recalcitrant and unprofessional. Thus, the strategies employed involve accountability translated as increased test scores” (p. 84). One of the outcomes of this loss of autonomy is a feeling of powerlessness. Darder (2004) believes that the feeling of powerlessness is caused by the “oppressive apparatus of school districts that mythologize the authoritarianism of standardized testing and its accompanying curricula so as to effectively conceal its domesticating role – not only on students, but also on teachers” (p. 58). A teacher’s attitudes very easily could become imprisoned by the fear of low student achievement on these tests, which could ultimately affect the renewal of individual teacher employment contracts, course offerings, responsibilities, the amounts of professional development required, or even the schools in which the teacher is eligible to teach. Once again, fear of loss of autonomy is directly tied to a revenue pumping test manufacturer’s determination of which 90 questions a student should be asked.

#### Teacher Autonomy

Teacher autonomy can be defined as the level of control that teachers perceive they have over their instruction and their environment. Hanson (1985) suggests that empowerment stems from content knowledge, classroom guardianship, and administrative and collegial support. Much research has been conducted in the area of

teacher autonomy to draw a correlation between teacher autonomy and instructional quality (See Ball, 1987; Chubb & Moe, 2000; Firestone & Bader, 1991; Hanson, 1985; Lieberman, 1988; Lightfoot, 1983; McGrath, 2000; McNeil, 1986; Powell, 1990; Sedlak, et.al., 1986; Darling-Hammond, 1985; Franklin, 1988). Teacher professionalism and autonomy is a social construction. According to Firestone and Bader (1991), “Increasing teacher autonomy is consonant with professionalizing. If the critical knowledge about teaching resides within teachers and is constructed and reconstructed through the teaching act, teachers need substantial autonomy to make use of it” (p. 71). Teachers play a definite role in the way that this is perceived. According to Darling-Hammond (1985), teacher professionalism is multi-faceted and involves not only the societal perception of the role of an educator, but also their degree of perceived autonomy.

Teachers are constantly bombarded by threats and punishment due to accountability measures. In this respect, the image of the ideal teacher becomes “a passive teacher molded by bureaucracy and buffeted by external forces” (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p. 523). This image, in conjunction with the inherent isolation of the occupation, leads to a weakening of teacher autonomy and empowerment. Darden (2004) states, “The antidiological arrangements of their labor prevents teachers from establishing deeper trust and knowledge about one another’s practice, in terms of both strengths and limitations” (p. 59). The sheer nature of the closed door classroom has provided both a sense of independence and isolation for educators. According to a report published by the Center for Innovative Thought (2006, July), “Schools have been described as ‘egg cartons’ into which teachers are assigned to individual classrooms, largely isolated from one another” (p. 21). Although the door is closed, autonomy is constrained by the forced

curriculum and expectations of administrators and the school district. Isolation breeds a sense of alienation, coupled with the fear of failure. Freire (2005) attributed the often times fatalistic attitude of the oppressed to the lack of dialogue with one another. In the words of a peasant interviewed by Freire (2005), "The peasant begins to get courage to overcome his dependence when he realizes he is dependent. Until then, he goes along with the boss and says, 'What can I do? I'm only a peasant'" (p. 61). In the same sense as the peasant, teachers often feel that they are alone and incapable of combating the constraints placed on their pedagogy by administration. Before revolution and liberation can occur, true dialogue should commence among the oppressed teachers. Freire (2005) states, "Because liberating action is dialogical in nature, dialogue cannot be *a posteriori* to that action, but must be concomitant with it" (p. 139). By first realizing and understanding oppression, teachers are better equipped to begin the process of laying the foundation for authentic dialogue. Beyer (1996) suggests that transformation toward critical awareness and pedagogy is enabled when the organization of the school provides a culture which supports thoughtful, reflective discussions on pedagogical practice. Authentic dialogue, in turn, will bring about the reflection and action of praxis, opening the door to liberation and hope for the future of the educational system.

Motivated by fear of failure and punishment, school leaders have begun to prescribe standardized instruction. Popkewitz and Lind (1988) directly link school reform based measures of instructional standardization to loss of teacher autonomy. The message that these leaders are sending to teachers is a "message of conformity ... and proudly packages itself as an escape from the necessity of critical thought" (Giroux, 1983, 15). Ironically, in most cases, the ones prescribing instruction are not content authorities, but

instead refer to popular business models of success to determine needs areas. In discussing the pressure to conform, Smyth (1995) states, "teachers must be prepared to enter a partnership with the state in return for varying degrees of 'limited or licensed' professionalism" (p. 81). In many cases, not only is professionalism at risk, their very employment is at risk as well. Freire (1998) states:

Teachers become fearful, they begin to internalize the dominator's shadow and authoritarian ideology of the administration. These teachers are no longer with their students because the force of the punishment and threatening dominant ideology comes between them.... In other words, they are forbidden to be. (p. 9)

This fear and forbiddance destroys not only the morale of the faculty within a school, but also inevitably weakens and ruins any attempts of teachers to instill concepts of democracy within their students. In a similar fashion as the banking method of educating students, oppression finds its way to teachers as "the dominant elites utilize the banking concept to encourage passivity in the oppressed...and take advantage of that passivity to "fill" that consciousness with slogans which create even more fear of freedom" (Freire, 2005, p. 95). Slogans used to further terrorize teachers include, but are not limited to, Adequate Yearly Progress, "duties and responsibilities" as listed in teacher contracts, "insubordination," etc. The rhetoric of the oppressors resonates from the school administration, to district administration, to state administration. Even when not directly stated, these slogans are a constant presence within the minds of teachers.

Instead of instructional excellence, we seek high test scores. Instead of knowledgeable, compassionate educators, we seek rule-followers. Berman (1986) and Cohen & Barnes (1993) suggest that too much attention is paid to enforcement of new

policies instead of determining what should be learned. Instead of creating critically engaged members of society, we are creating de-skilled test takers. When the curriculum dictates teaching the content that will appear on the state assessment, instructional quality suffers. In a prioritized curriculum, there is a prescribed content and pacing of instruction, where teachers are forced to stay within very narrow and rigid parameters of what is to be taught and how it is to be taught. As the state hands down mandates of curriculum, then school districts pass down personalized mandates that further restrict the content and methodology of instruction in an effort to further standardize school reform. McNeil (1985) discusses the outcome of standardized reform on the professionalism of teachers by stating:

Rather than raise quality, these broadside policies, which standardize overt behaviors of schooling, induce semantic games for symbolic compliance, cause teachers to eliminate complex lessons in favor of simple coverage of testable proficiencies, or increase teacher alienation among even those dedicated and competent teachers. (p. 196)

Teachers are taught to be proficiency based rather than empowered, and often lose sight of transformative efforts and hopes of liberation.

#### Waking Up to the Challenge of Action

Ladson-Billings (2001) challenges teachers to “function as change agents in a society that is deeply divided along racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and class lines” (p. 104). Critical analysis and understanding of social justice is vitally important to teaching a democratic, multicultural pedagogy. Morley and Rassool (1999) reiterate the importance of theory within practice by stating, “Teachers need to understand the range

of theories that underpin learning and, therefore, the pedagogical rationale for adopting different teaching approaches in different situations and with particular pupils” (p. 90). Critical theory provides a strong foundation which can serve to undergird these needs. Before one can effectively utilize critical pedagogy, one must first learn to critically view one’s own perceptions of race, class, and gender, as well as one’s cultural place in society and the power formations of the culture (Nieto, 1999). Ladson-Billings (2001) states:

Teachers who are prepared to help students become culturally competent are themselves culturally competent... They know that students who have the academic and cultural wherewithal to succeed in school without losing their identities are better prepared to be of service to others; in a democracy their commitment to the public good is paramount. (p. 97)

Building capacity and awareness of socio-political awareness within one’s self is dependent upon critical analysis of one’s multifaceted place in the world.

Slattery (2000) states, “the emphasis in the teaching and learning process should be placed on *possibility* and *becoming*, for human consciousness can never be static” (p. 207). For learning to take place, students need to be provided with authentic opportunities to interact with concepts and one another, allowing room to explore new possibilities and intersections of humanity. Instructional strategies are most effective when they cater to all students and encourage cooperative, relationship building learning activities (Shade, 1999). These authentic learning opportunities should center around the specific needs of the students and should encourage dialogue. Teachers who present multicultural literature from the perspective of merely stating its existence are in actuality creating even more oppression of underrepresented cultures in the mandated curriculum. Democratic ideals

are learned by exploring and working through differences (Dewey, 1916). By raising awareness of other viewpoints, yet not making students critically conscious of the worth and value of these perspectives, teachers are merely modeling the oppression that is being trained and institutionalized in our schools. Ellsworth (1989) states, “In a racist society and its institutions, such debate has not and cannot be ‘public’ or ‘democratic’ in the sense of including the views of all affected parties and affording them equal weight and legitimacy” (p. 302). The lack of dialogue concerning the consideration of all viewpoints is threatening and creates more oppression, not liberation, for those who are in the cultural minority.

Entering into a conversation regarding difference creates a risk or vulnerability of identity and beliefs. It is important that teachers consistently encourage a collaborative classroom community in order to teach students to make connections and build relationships with one another (Banks, 2000). As students of subcultures begin to define and defend their differences compared with the majority, this risk increases. To Ellsworth (1989), “dialogue in its conventional sense is impossible in the culture at large because at this historical moment, power relations between raced, classed, and gendered students and teachers are unjust” (p. 316). Her tendency to reject dialogue serves to create a shift in the source of power, but fails to affect the power structures that dominate the society. In discussing the impossibility of dialogue unfettered by cultural constraints, Bakhtin (1986) stated, “the simple utterance, with all its individuality and creativity, can in no way be regarded as a completely free combination of forms of language” (p. 81). A person’s words are part of a social or cultural language, one which determines not only the words one uses, but also the framework of their beliefs and values. If, then, a person’s

participation in dialogue is determined by the limitation of language, then the ideas presented in that dialogue are taken from “other people’s concrete contexts, serving other people’s intentions” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 293-294). For critical discussion of multicultural literature to be meaningful and liberating, it must not sustain or empower oppressors; it must empower the oppressed.

Foucault (1991) believed that power “produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (p. 194). Power gains momentum through knowledge via perception. Knowledge creates discourse, creating a platform for assimilation and unification. As the majority begins to accept and promote the discourse, or belief system, the knowledge base becomes the unifying element and the source of power. According to Dewey (1954), “Ideas which are not communicated, shared, and reborn in expression are but soliloquy, and soliloquy is but broken and imperfect thought” (p. 218). Creating a dialogue in this sense, requires the discussion, consideration, and internalization of ideas that are different from one’s own background in order to create a sense of rebirth – a new outlook or perception of difference or otherness. Without this crucial element, dialogue becomes one-sided and meaningless if the purpose is enlightenment about differences among cultures, serving to proliferate power through perception.

Finding a way to break the commands of fear which serve to control and disempower educational roles will lead to empowerment. Freire (2005) states, “One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people” (p. 95). Without considering the views and needs of teachers and students, no educational reform movement will ever be successful. Ingersoll and Alsalam (1997) describe the authority of

a teacher as “the degree of individual autonomy exercised by teachers over planning and teaching within the classroom” (p. vii). Franklin (1988) states, “Although autonomy is not power, it is a necessary condition for it. Hence, the teacher is empowered by autonomy” (p. 24). Without hope of sustainable empowerment, teachers

Teacher empowerment can be created through camaraderie with other teachers, where critical dialogue occurs. Spring (2005) states:

Like historians who weave together the drama of the past, consumers of history have their own political and social opinions. By engaging in an intellectual dialogue with the historical text, readers should be able to clarify their opinions about educational institutions and about the relationship of education to other institutions and to social events” (p. 2).

Entering into a conversation regarding difference creates a risk or vulnerability of identity and beliefs. Ayers (2004) states, “I will teach then, not credulousness but critical awareness, not easy belief but skepticism, not blind faith but curiosity. I want no reverence for what I say; I want no disciples” (p. 93). For critical discussions to be meaningful and liberating, they must not sustain or empower oppressors; they must empower the oppressed.

Oftentimes, teachers are less likely to voice their concerns or opinions out of fear of retaliation from those in the dominant majority. Speaking out against standardized teaching, for example, when those in power are in support of the initiative can be very difficult. Burbules and Rice (1991) believe that dialogue can provide a place for beginning to understand and appreciate differences. They feel that dialogue can “serve the purpose of creating partial understandings, if not agreement, across difference” (p.

409). According to Burbules and Rice (1991), for dialogue to be productive and empowering, participants need to internalize virtues of:

...tolerance, patience, respect for differences, a willingness to listen, the inclination to admit that one may be mistaken, the ability to reinterpret or translate one's own concerns in a way that makes them comprehensible to others, the self-imposition of restraint in order that others may 'have a turn' to speak, and the disposition to express one's self honestly and sincerely. (p. 411)

Creating a sense of community among teachers can restore a sense of empowerment. Darder (2004) states, "Such collective empowerment reinforces the need for teachers to struggle together in identifying the tactical paths that competent and politically clear teachers must follow" (p. 61). A sense of community is important because participants need to feel safe and secure in voicing their thoughts and opinions. However, this optimistic view of a constructive positive dialogue is problematic in that it does not allow for the everlasting presence of power and domination that are in control of the entire circumstance. It is this power and domination that teachers often find inescapable, causing even more oppression as opposed to the liberation that Burbules and Rice suggest.

Another way of creating heightened teacher autonomy and empowerment is through allowing teachers to become stakeholders in the decision making process of the school. Both Darling-Hammond (1985) and McNeil (1986) view the decision making process as a foundation for teacher empowerment. However, this is problematic if there is an overwhelming fear of not making the popular decision. Lieberman (1988) answers this issue by calling for a restructuring of the authoritarian, top-down model on which our

schools are based. In this model, teachers are the least powerful and have the least room in the decision making process. Freire (1998) calls for teachers to liberate themselves from their submissive role and “affirm themselves as teachers by demythologizing the authoritarianism of teaching packages and their administration in the intimacy of their world” (p. 9). We must revamp the structures of schools in order for this demythologizing to occur. Teachers must unite in order to battle the fear of failure or inadequacy that pummels them on a daily basis.

Allen (1999) describes Foucault’s premise that people in power utilize specialized knowledge by stating, “the production of knowledge and the administrative power intertwine, and each begins to enhance the other” (p. 70). The reciprocal relationship between power and knowledge is what drives the production of power. According to Foucault, knowledge cannot exist without power and vice versa. Foucault (1982) states, “A society without power relations can only be an abstraction” (p. 222-223). Equality in government is, according to Foucault, an impossibility due to the sense that power relations are inevitable. When dialogue is promoted within a classroom, even with the communicative values that Burbules and Rice suggest, the knowledge gained through the discussion is often used to provide more of a stronghold for those in power. The knowledge of difference between cultures is often used to uncover weakness, to highlight the differences instead of building common ground and unity.

Freire (1985) adamantly interjects that there is no neutrality in education. He feels that, “It would be naive to expect the dominant classes to develop a type of education which would enable subordinate classes to perceive social injustices critically” (p. 102). So how, as educators, do we bridge this gap? Freire (1998) believes:

There is no more ethical or truly democratic road than one in which we reveal to learners how we think, why we think the way we do, our dreams, the dreams for which we will fight, while giving them concrete proof that we respect their opinions, even when they are opposed to our own. (p. 40)

In an attempt to promote critical consciousness, students should be taught ways in which a situation can be perceived in multiple ways. Students and teachers must learn to critically perceive the world, attending most “to wide-awakeness, to imaginative action, and to renewed consciousness of possibility” (Greene, 2005, p. 73). We shape the world and the world shapes us, and it is important for one to recognize one’s place within this relationship. Then, one must learn to formulate a judgment regarding that situation.

Finally, one is prepared to act accordingly. Following Freire’s model of teaching how and why we think the way we do, students will then be better able to formulate their own thoughts and determine the way in which they choose to act. This provides a liberation in the sense that the student is not being taught the appropriate way to act, but is instead being given the freedom to decide for himself or herself.

For students to be successful, they need to have a sense of empowerment.

McLaren (1989) discusses the social purpose of empowerment as, “the process through which students learn to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way we live (p. 186).

In order to promote this sense of liberation and create students who are able to strengthen and exercise freedom necessary to liberate themselves from the structures of

power which oppress them, students must be taught how to critically view the ways in which they perceive other cultures. Giroux (1999) believes that cultural studies can contribute to this enlightenment through “its emphasis on studying the production, reception, and use of varied texts, and how they are used to define social relations, value, particular notions of community, the future, and diverse definitions of the self” (p. 254). By focusing the instruction of these texts on their inherent value, not just their basic existence, students can then use the knowledge gained to help form their own identity. Curriculum has an amazing power in identity formation, and this power is most meaningful when it builds upon the diverse backgrounds of students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Used appropriately, the knowledge gleaned from the study of multicultural texts can serve to broaden perspectives in order to create a freedom of thinking and an awareness of the underlying power which plays a role in that culture and its interactions with the majority culture. However, this power should not be used in the sense of oppression. Texts should not be seen as a way to define and stereotype the culture which they represent, but instead should be used as an basis for questioning how they may or may not perpetuate the meta-narrative of the hidden curriculum.

Educators must embrace the challenge of creating progress toward a better society. According to Wink (2000), “The connections we create in classrooms are central to students’ growth as they negotiate their own identities” (p. 112). Learning and acquiring knowledge is a fluid process. It is not one that is ever “finished.” Just as an educator empowers a student to form his or her own identity, that educator’s identity is simultaneously changing. This constant re-inventing of one’s identity causes a continuously shifting reality and truth. Students must learn to be comfortable in this

evolution, not afraid of it. Students must become critical pedagogists and continually question their belief systems, their perceptions, the power structures that shape and frame their identities. Students must learn to experience their own education, not simply memorize facts and figures.

The process of Freire's concept of conscientizaion can be painful in that sometimes, awareness brings about a sense of failure. Looking critically at my teaching practices, especially the first years of my career, I find that I have been very little more than a pawn in the power struggle of education. Instead of teaching my students how to view texts and problem-pose in order to change their viewpoint, I have taught the students to embrace and adopt the viewpoint that society wishes for them to emulate. As I struggle to question and critically analyze my world, I can see my outlook and viewpoints shifting, as well as my teaching strategies. Teacher education programs practically teach the art of brainwashing. According to Griffin (2002),

It is still assumed by many that teaching is a kind of follow-the-rules activity; that if one knows a set of teaching behaviors, students will respond and learning will take place. Although additional information to challenge this assumption is not needed by the expert teacher educator, there are still educational professionals and policymakers who persist in holding such a view. (p. 7)

This is the basic format of three degrees from teacher education programs that I have earned. This simply must not continue. In order for liberation to take place, there must be a shift in the concept of what it means to educate the youth of today. If students are to learn how to appreciate one another and forge their own identities, it is imperative that they become conscious of their presence in the world. From an existentialist viewpoint,

one must first reach a level of authenticity before being able to situate themselves with the needs of others.

The center of the Existentialist search lies in the individual and his or her perception of personal identity and the role of their identity within humanity. Thayer-Bacon (1998) defines Existentialism as “a philosophy rooted in the individual rather than in relations” (p. 112). For a life to be deemed authentic, the individual’s choices must be liberated from the collective and external forces, such as power structures of society. According to Noddings (1995), Existentialists “emphasize the freedom of human beings” (p. 59). It is this freedom that, to Reynolds (2003), “involves the imagining of possibilities, of a better state of things” (p. 68). Freire’s liberation theory centers on the concept of freedom. By teaching students to appreciate and value diversity, we give them the critical consciousness necessary to break free from institutionalized systems of power and create a better world.

Because of the constant shifts of experience, that identity never arrives at an absolute state, causing uncertainty and the need for constant reflection and reconsideration of both the entity of self and, therefore, humanity as well. Curzon-Hobson (2002) believes that the learning process “allows teachers and students to live ‘without fear’ in a world of flux, challenge, and radical unknowability” (p. 182). This presupposition allows for a distinctive educational framework that focuses on the experiences and perceptions of the individual student.

According to Jacobsen (2003), Kierkegaard believed that “quality of life depended on truth, which was obtained through personal freedom and subjective interactions, not through human reason” (p. 257). In the same sense, I believe that it is

the responsibility of the individual to search out truth through the freedom and choice of his or her own experience. It is only through the exercise of this freedom that a person can, in good faith, truly understand and come to terms with the existing power structures that dominate society. Knowledge based on the convictions of others' beliefs is against the major tenets of the Existentialist philosophy. To the Existentialist, all truth is personal truth, because truth only exists in the individual sense. Mareeva (2005) states, "truths are oriented toward the common good and therefore concern no one in particular" (p. 36). Truth cannot be generalized. According to Maxine Greene (1995), to find truth, we must, "actively insert our own perception into the lived world" (p. 74). To an Existentialist, the purpose of finding truth is to create an individual meaning, not universal truth about the world.

For something to be found to be true for an individual, the sum of the individual's experiences must be considered. Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (2004) state that, "Knowledge takes form in the individual over time and each form is unique" (p. 751). This formation of knowledge changes with the addition and reconsideration of individual experience, making the idea of concrete universal truth impossible. Existentialists believe autobiographical and narrative dialogue can be a powerful in making educated, well-thought decisions regarding the essence of being. By introspection and reflection on experience, an individual is able to see their autonomy in the world, as well as the paradoxical relationality to power structures that dominate society.

Guttek (2004) explains that truth can be found through the "perception and awareness of phenomenon" and also through knowledge "about ourselves as persons living in a world of choice" (p. 91). The pursuit of this knowledge is "the struggle to

realize emancipatory possibilities through collective interactions with different frameworks of thought, action, and reflection” (Curzon-Hobson, 2002, p. 182). The freedom to make choices based on these interactions is the center of the belief of Existentialism. According to Morris (1966):

If I freely choose to conform, if I enter into and appropriate for my own life the conventions of my society, and if I take personal responsibility for them as values in the world which I create by actually living them, then I can claim an authentic life. (p. 66)

Instead of being forced to adopt the assumed truths from these interactions, the individual can determine how those interactions might apply or correlate with his or her individual being, adding to the store of experience that is used to define or formulate his or her identity.

In contrast with the idealist and rationalist view of “discovering” morals or values through knowledge, the Existentialist learner defines and creates his or her individual view of morals according to his or her perceptions regarding individual experience. Individual choice allows a decision to be made based on assumptions or perceptions derived from personal experience, making the individual ultimately responsible and accountable for that decision and its repercussions. Längle (2005) explains, “Whatever I decide to do – I cannot leave myself aside to experience meaning. We therefore always live with the question of whether we agree with our decisions” (p. 13). To the Existentialist, the outcome or repercussions of the decision will ultimately be the burden of the individual, not the external forces.

A student’s individual belief system evolves with their accumulation of

experience. What differentiates good from bad is determined by whether or not the individual has chosen to break away from the oppressions and concrete expectations of humanity. Greene (1995) states, “We must intensify attentiveness to the concrete world around in all its ambiguity, with its dead ends and its open possibilities” (p. 68). If the individual has made the decision to discover meaning in existence based on his or her individual experience, that individual is considered to be living in good faith, which is the ultimate source of happiness and contentment. However, the Existentialist would consider it bad faith, or evil, if the individual accepted or failed to challenge the societal norm without reflection and introspection of the meaning enlightened by his or her personal experience. Living in accordance with societal norms or expectations would make a person inauthentic, or not true to their being. Instead, the individual would be denying the freedom of choosing for him or herself, allowing the oppressive forces to determine his or her mindset about not only his sense of being, but also about how that identity fits into the larger whole of humanity.

Art, literature, music, and other elements of humanities serve the purpose of allowing an individual to see a perspective and personalize that experience. Grumet (1993) explains that, “The academic disciplines, like paintings and symphonies, express the concerns, experiences, and understanding of their creators” (p. 204). By personalizing one’s experience, one is able to expand experiences to encapsulate the ideology and aesthetics of something that would otherwise be unattainable or unreachable due to one’s particular situation or atmosphere. It is a way to project their personal experiences into another time, place, or character and have the freedom to make choices accordingly. By utilizing the power of narratives and autobiographies, a student is able to access what

Greene refers to as “the gaps, the broken glass, the unpainted walls, the pallid faces, the empty shelves” (quoted in Wear, 1999, p. 181).

Sartre’s assertion that we are different from other objects in the universe because of our consciousness provides us with the ability to recognize and provide meaning to our experiences. Consciousness also gives an individual the opportunity and insight to make judgments and interpretations based on experiences, therefore making the individual accountable for his or her choices. The presence of this consciousness causes the individual to realize the absurd and chaotic nature of the universe that connects all of humanity via a sense of nothingness, created from the lack of an absolute. This commonality is based on the concept that we are all separate, individual beings interacting in a universe with no absolute or definite truths. Wilson (2003) quotes Arendt as having said, “The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves” (p. 207). Reality is determined by the individual’s perception, as opposed to being predetermined perceptions of society. What is perceived as reality is based solely on the individual’s experiences and perceptions. The acceptance of this infinite sense of impossibility, coupled with the cognizance and relativity of one’s own experience within the universe, creates a sense of authenticity within an individual that ultimately provides him or her with the sense of identity and place within humanity.

Echoing critical theory and Freire’s conscientization, Noddings (1995) believes that, “By planning, reflecting, choosing, and acting, people make themselves” (p. 59). Thus, reality is not mere existence. It requires, “conscious awareness of our human condition” and the responsibility that arrives through that awareness (Noddings, 1995, p.

59). This notion of awareness is key to creating the opportunity for reflective and responsive decision making. By utilizing the element of dialogue presented by Buber (1993), a perceiver is better able to examine the idiosyncrasies of their individual situation, as opposed to the assumed state created by oppositional forces. It is imperative that the individual be cognizant of these biases in order not to fall prey to their oppression.

The purpose of critical pedagogy within schools is to help students define their individual goodness and reality, not to make them carbon copies of the predominant contemporary belief system of the dominant majority. The role of a critical educator is to challenge the student's presumed role in society. Thus, it is imperative that a critical educator guide a student toward the analysis of his or her freedom, being, and responsibility to others. From a postmodern perspective, Usher and Edwards (1994) suggest:

It is impossible to be a teacher without also being a learner, that in order to be a teacher it is first necessary to abandon the position of the "one who knows," recognizing both one's own lack of knowledge and of self-transparency and mastery and that one's own learning is never, and never will be, complete. (p. 80)

Pinar (1994) praises the freedom of individual choice by stating, "we must create our own intellectual and practical discipline, independent of its sources, sensitive and responsible to our present" (p. 68). As students study multicultural literature, for example, the experiences of the individuals and the repercussions of the choices that they make, whether positive or negative, are internalized to the student as a model for that individual student's own behavior, moral fortitude, or belief system. Especially in

adolescent years, it takes courage to strike out against the popular norm and forge new territory on your own volition. Without this courage, Crocco, Munro, and Weiler (1999) believe that students have “limited access to the tools society offers the privileged for gaining a sense of self-determination and acting upon it” (p. 49). Grumet (1986) explains:

Even language experience or arts curricula that seem to invite the fantasies and memories of students challenge the teacher to come to terms with her versions of truth and the designations she reserves for those accounts that differ from the current wisdom. (p. 96)

Grumet’s assertion shows that it is also imperative that a teacher have the courage to also have strength of identity and sense of being, so that students might be encouraged by this example.

My hope is for my students to gain a sense of their individual identities and their relationship with the rest of the world. It is not my desire to produce students that are carbon copies of society, or the society that politicians or bureaucrats might strive to create. I expect my students to take the knowledge that I present and use it to formulate or shape their perceptions of the power structures that hold them captive. If they merely repeat or reword what I have presented, I do not feel like I have successfully educated them. Instead, I have just taught them to mimic and conform to societal norms.

The danger of schools is that often, the standardized curriculum becomes an agent of oppression, causing students to feel that there is only one right answer or belief. The role of a teacher, therefore, should be to constantly reinforce the concepts of freedom of choice and individuality through the information presented to students. Curzon-Hobson

(2002) refers to this individual discovery as “something unique to the individual because it is a culmination and a celebration of radically different personal experiences” (p. 183). Teachers must be willing to embrace and accept disparate stances of students’ views, beliefs, and discoveries regarding both their individual identities and humanity as a whole. By recognizing and embracing these disparities, a teacher is able to reinforce and encourage the process of teaching students to overcome the oppression from outside sources to adopt a certain belief system or world-view regarding their identity and their place in the world.

### Summary

Teachers are most effective as critical educators when they are able to be confident and stand by their practice in order to remain against the contemporary norm of educational standards. Kozol (1981) believes teachers can use “their ingenuity and skill in order to arrive at a way out” (p. 51). According to Gannaway and Macedo (1994), the role of a critical teacher is to expose students to “economic and social, national and global problems as well as the values that accompany them, the trends they are taking, and various viewpoints in analyzing them” in an effort to build their critical thinking skill (p. 38). Through critical pedagogy, an educator can better provide students with the opportunity to truly understand themselves and the world around them, making them liberated people that possess an ownership of their belief system, not merely a reproduction of the dominant society.

Standards-based education provides the freedom and opportunity for a multicultural, democratic pedagogy which can reach and meet the needs of all students in our diverse nation. However, for this to happen, educators and administrators must

embrace the concept of equity within standards-based reform. In addition, teachers and administrators must be acutely aware of the pressure of high-stakes testing accountability and guard against allowing these assessments being used to drive legislation, educational policies, instructional strategies, and the achievement of our students. Teachers must be allowed the professional freedom to teach students to be critically minded, democratic members of society. Without this professional freedom, autonomy is lost along with the hopes of a democratic future for our nation.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH PROCEDURES

#### Restatement of the Problem

Building upon the foundation of market driven school reform of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 caused a “seismic jolt” to academic standards in states across America (Stotsky & Finn, 2005, p. 15). As the demand for increased rigor and expectations has grown state and nation wide, so has the pressure of high performance on standardized assessments. As a reaction to this pressure, the Georgia Department of Education created and implemented the Georgia Performance Standards which do not specify specific texts, content or instructional methods; however, these variables are often mandated as a way to ensure that material likely to appear on the test is not only taught, but, in some instances, taught in a particular way. The strength and power of this accountability system is derived from not only the politically charged, misguided research that lends credence to high-stakes test scores, but also from the public acceptance of this farce through the attention and constant references provided by the media and political leaders. Feelings of powerlessness and lack of professional freedom are fueled by the pressure of not only a new curriculum, but also by the threat of penalties for low student achievement on standardized tests.

Teacher professionalism and autonomy is lessening due to the loss of instructional freedom. This loss is directly correlated to the fear of failure of accountability measures which are based on high-stakes assessments. Teachers have been led to believe that they must set aside their attempts to teach a multicultural, democratic pedagogy and instead must follow standardized lesson plans and benchmarked assessments. Stripping away the

control teachers have over the instruction of their diverse students not only squelches authentic learning opportunities within diverse classrooms, it also devastates the morale of teachers.

Critical theory serves as a lens through which to examine the interactive relationships among teachers, pedagogy, and the ideological, disciplinary, and social contexts of teaching. Within this examination will be the consideration of the purpose this knowledge serves, and who this knowledge serves to benefit most from the hegemony of accountability and surveillance that, in my opinion, are silencing voices of transformation and marginalizing teachers who value the tenets of critical theory and liberatory praxis. The power structures that dominate hidden curricula and the norms of the school environment often make education a disguised means of oppression. Centering around transformation and fluid growth of both teachers and students, critical theory and critical pedagogy enable the learner, whether teacher or student, to not only be aware of the power structures within which they operate, but to understand how these structures in turn create their personal realities, empowering them to then respond accordingly. My hope is that empowering and enabling both students and teachers to construct new meanings will lead to transformative change in the perception of what it truly means to teach and to learn.

#### Null Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no relationship between the impact of high-stakes testing accountability measures and perceived independence within pedagogical practice.

Ho2: There is no relationship between the implementation of standards-based education and perceived independence within pedagogical practice.

Ho3: There is no difference in the way teachers perceive the impact of standards-based education on the instructional freedom of promoting the ideals of a democratic pedagogy in educating diverse student populations.

### Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore whether teachers feel that they have freedom in their pedagogical practice and whether they view the mandated Georgia Performance Standards as allowing freedom or restriction in comparison with high-stakes testing accountability measures. Exploration of the normative, foundational beliefs of educators can lead to a formation of dialogical reflection. Teachers hold a wealth of practical knowledge; however, this knowledge is often subsumed by the restriction and loss of pedagogical autonomy. The purpose is not to provide one generalizable truth, but to instead explore the ways in which teachers' attitudes are normalized within the power structures which control pedagogical aims and practices.

Research from a critical perspective intends to confront societal injustices and understand the effect of complex relationships between societal structures on social change. Critical research in education is necessary as a means to become aware of meta-narratives which not only are functioning hegemonically in our schools, both in the faculty arenas and in the classrooms. Teaching and learning are most meaningful when guided by critical praxis, not by a hidden curriculum controlled by standardized tests and unrealistic accountability measures.

I chose this methodology because the attitudinal survey provides an avenue through which to explore teacher attitudes and self-reflections regarding teaching practice, levels of professional freedom, and use of critical knowledge within pedagogical

practice as related to the societal structures which guide educational policy and legislation. By surveying the attitudes of teachers in regards to the factors which both increase and limit their freedom of pedagogical practice, I am hoping to not only establish a normative dimension of their attitudes, but also aim to develop a transformative outcome which will develop a way for teachers to fully understand and explore their attitudes and beliefs about their freedom of pedagogical practice. This methodology will allow me to situate current teacher attitudes within the scope of current political, economic, and ideological power structures which currently control levels of teacher autonomy.

This study was conducted using a mixed methods attitudinal study which included both Likert-Scale questionnaire survey to provide quantitative data and open ended questions to provide qualitative data. It was imperative to ensure that open-ended questions were included so that teachers would be provided the means to have a voice and share their outlooks. Greene (1995) states, “the principles and the contexts have to be chosen by living human beings against their own life-worlds and in the light of their lives with others...” (p. 198). This data provides a foundation for exploring a systematic relationship among the attitudes of English-Language Arts teachers regarding their freedom of pedagogical practice. Habermas (1974) stated, “There is a systematic relationship between the logical structure of a science and the pragmatic structure of the possible applications of the information generated within its framework” (p. 8). In this sense, a pragmatic position of research suggests implementing “whatever philosophical and/or methodological approach works for the particular research problem” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 5). Preissle and Grant (2004) state:

The pragmatic principle requires that the truthfulness of claims be judged by the outcomes or consequences of the research. If research results in some desirable goal such as uncovering injustice or empowering community members, then it is judged as good research. (p. 179)

By adopting a critical, pragmatic position in designing the study, I propose that although a scientific method of data collection and analysis was used, the results of this study were analyzed from a critical theoretical perspective. From choosing this methodology, teachers were offered a safe environment from which to share their beliefs and personal truths in regards to their personal situatedness within current school reform hegemony. The critical perspective through analysis of the results hinges upon the postmodern belief in deconstruction of assumptions and the “discovery of limits, contrasts, multiplicity, layers of interpretations, and shades of differences” (Slattery, 1997). The possible outcomes of this research will be to explore the perceptions of the social dimensions that influence the way teachers attempt to understand their place in the ever-changing realm of curriculum. The reflective nature of the attitudes surveyed will provide a foundation upon which to begin to uncover the power structures which guide our contemporary educational system.

The overall purpose of the mixed methods attitude survey is to measure differences in teachers’ attitudes regarding their perceived freedom of pedagogical practice within implementation of Georgia Performance Standards and high stakes testing accountability measures. Mixing methodologies of quantitative and qualitative research will allow the researcher to use both deductive and inductive reasoning in data analysis. Although there is much disagreement regarding mixed method methodology, Patton

(2002) states, “in practice, human reasoning is sufficiently complex and flexible that it is possible to research predetermined questions and test hypotheses about certain aspects...while being quite open and naturalistic in pursuing other aspects of a program” (p. 253). Open ended questions provide participants the opportunity to share their opinion regarding what they feel is most relevant for the discussion and describe what it individually means to them. According to Cresswell (2003), a qualitative researcher, “builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). Qualitative, open ended questions were designed to elicit specific comments from the population surveyed in order to test and identify main dimensions of teachers’ views of the impact of implementation of standards-based instruction and high stakes testing accountability on their instructional practices. Additionally, including open ended questions in this survey will provide more in-depth information about possible underlying factors for the attitudes observed in the quantitative survey analysis.

This survey is designed using opinion statements as a way of exploring teacher attitudes regarding the pedagogical implications of standards-based education and high-stakes assessments. According to Larson and Farber (2003), a survey is defined as, “an investigation of one or more characteristics of a population” (p. 16). Gay and Airasian (2003) find survey research to be a preferred method of attitudinal research due to the convenient delivery method. Cresswell (2003) states that surveys provide, “a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (p. 153). Researchers then generalize or make claims about the population based on the sample results (Cresswell 2003). Larson and Farber (2003)

claim that a disadvantage of using surveys is that “the wording of the questions can lead to biased results” (p. 16). Much research has been conducted in support of making inferences for a large population by surveying a sample of the population (Babbie, 1990; Fowler, 1988). The purpose of survey research is to gather information from a sample in order to be able to make an inference regarding that population’s characteristics, attitudes, or beliefs (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Babbie, 1990, Cresswell, 2003). Survey research is a preferred method of inquiry if a “researcher wishes to obtain a small amount of information from a large number of subjects” (Marshall and Rossman, 1999, p. 130).

Hutchinson (2004) describes the popularity of survey research according to the diverse purposes that it serves such as “needs assessment, program evaluation, attitude measurement, political opinion polling, and policy analysis, as well as for simple descriptions of behaviors, activities, and population characteristics” (p. 286). Surveys are also flexible in their scope, ranging from large-scale national surveys to small-scale surveys individualized to specific groups or organizations (Hutchinson, 2004, p. 286). Surveys can serve many functions, but are primarily used “to assess the status quo” and “to test complex theoretical relationships among various constructs” (Hutchinson, 2004, p. 286).

An important component to survey research is the population sampling procedure chosen (Miller, 1983). In any type of survey or questionnaire, researchers must rely on the “honesty and accuracy of participants’ response” (Marshall and Rossman, 1999, p. 129). This reliance is a limitation of this type of methodology; however, this type of research can often still be useful in surveying the frequency and degree of attitudes among participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Attitudinal survey research provides a

more realistic view of teacher perceptions and beliefs. Additionally, research surveys can provoke teachers to contemplate their philosophy of teaching, instructional styles, and/or professional goals.

Isaac & Michael (1984) cite survey research as the primary method for acquiring self-reported data from a population sample. In choosing the population sample, Marshall and Rossman (1999) state that it is important to make the assumption that “the characteristic or belief can be described or measured accurately through self-report” (p. 129). I felt that the survey method was the most appropriate and ethically sound methodology to explore teacher attitudes regarding the relationship between high-stakes testing and standards-based education in English-Language Arts because it was a method which would allow teachers to anonymously report their attitudes, allowing the freedom of frank, honest responses. Levy and Lemeshow (1999) state that to design a survey, a sampling plan and procedures for gathering and testing the reliability of the data must be developed (p. 6). This study will explore attitudes of teachers from each high school in my district who received comparable training in standards-based education.

Before a sample selection method is determined, the researcher must first determine and narrow the target population to fit the research purpose (Salant & Dillman, 1994, p. 58). The population was comprised of 92 high school English-Language Arts teachers in my school district at the time of this study. I chose to involve the stated participants in order for the study to include teachers who were present for the same training on Georgia Performance Standards and who are held to the same high-stakes testing accountability. Salant and Dillman (1994) state that the sample should be “large enough to yield the desired level of precision” (p. 5). In order to attain a confidence

interval of 4 and a confidence level of 95%, 87 participants must respond from a population of 92 subjects. Salant and Dillman (1994) also suggest the importance of considering the number of surveys distributed that may yield no response or an unintelligible response (p. 54). The number of unintelligible responses can be curbed by the administration of an online survey.

Electronic distribution of surveys is becoming increasingly more popular (Lazar & Preece, 1999; Elliot, Ricker, & Schonlau, 2002; Hutchinson, 2004). Nesbary (2000) suggests that electronic surveys are advantageous due to the low cost of administration and the fast response time. Additionally, many survey software programs are equipped to store and export survey response data into analysis software. This not only minimizes the risk of errors in data transcription, but also saves the researcher the time it would take to compile and enter all of the survey results. Nesbary (2000) states one disadvantage to electronic surveys is caused by the technological expertise required by the research subject to complete the survey. This, however, was not be a limiting factor in my study due to the fact that all teachers are required to have demonstrated computer competency in order to be certified. Self-administered electronic surveys also allow privacy and flexibility for the research subject (Dillman, 2000). Because research participants all have daily access to a computer and the Internet at their schools, lack of necessary resources should not be a limitation during the work day.

Administering an online survey is also an efficient method in that there is relatively no cost involved and the turnaround time for data collection is short. Using an online survey will allow confidentiality similar to that available from paper surveys, which will in turn promote frank and honest responses from survey subjects. Conflicting

research has been reported comparing the effect of anonymity on response rates. This will curb social desirability response bias, defined by Brewer and Crano (2002) as answers which might be skewed from “misrepresenting true feelings and responding in a manner that is consistent with social mores” (p. 54). Social desirability bias will also be minimized by alternating positive and negative statements in the survey. In order to best prevent wording from affecting social desirability bias, I used a consistent format of Likert-style declarative statements as well as a consistent use of vocabulary common to the English-Language Arts state standards.

Likert (1932) developed a scale to assess the attitudes of research subjects. This scale would not only assess individual responses, but also provide a summation of respondents’ attitudes of a population sample. Likert scales efficiently measure the intensity of attitudes about a specific statement (Nieburg, 1984; Young, 1992; Selltiz, Wrightsman, & Cook, 1976). In a Likert scale, questions are worded in statement form and respondents are asked to indicate the level to which they agree or disagree with the statement. These statements can alternate between positive or negative and indicators can be substituted with statements of acceptance vs. rejection, like or dislike, etc. (Likert, 1932; Anderson, Basilevsky, and Hum, 1983, 252-255). According to Young (1992), one distinct strength of Likert scales is the “facility with which respondents pick up on them. After the first one or two questions has [sic] been answered, a series of statements can be run through quickly” (p. 114).

There are many things which should be considered in creating a Likert scale survey. First and foremost, the researcher should consider the purpose of the research and the audience for which the survey is intended. Statements should be clear, concise,

and avoid controversial or biased wording. This can be verified by administering a pilot (or field) test to a small number of respondents. Using both positively worded and negatively worded statements will help the researcher in determining response sets. However, the negatively worded statements should be reverse coded when results are analyzed. Anderson (1998) suggests creating subsections within the questionnaire in order to provide structure and a sense of purpose (176). Additionally, Anderson (1998) suggests the following rules for creating Likert-style statements:

- Use single sentences containing only one complete thought;
- Statements should be short, rarely exceeding 20 words;
- Statements should not be in the past tense;
- Statements should cover the entire range of expected responses. Those which are likely to be endorsed by almost everyone or no one should be avoided;
- Avoid statements that are factual or capable of being interpreted as factual;
- Avoid statements that may be interpreted in more than one way;
- Avoid the use of universals such as all, always, none, and never;
- Words such as only, just, merely should be used with care and moderation;
- Avoid the use of words that may not be understood by the intended respondents; and
- Do not use double negatives. (p. 174).

With these rules considered, statements must be constructed that allow a response which is guided toward the research purpose.

In creating the survey questionnaire, I developed the survey after identifying instructional methods, current issues and trends, and state-wide initiatives from the

review of literature. I also purposely used language common to the field of English-Language Arts. The survey was divided into two parts: Teacher Perception of Georgia Performance Standards and Administrative Influence on Instructional Methodology. Each of the 16 survey questions was assessed on a Likert-style scale with strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Due to the limited possibility of responses in the closed, fixed-response items, participants are afforded no opportunity to use their own words to interject their own experiences, goals, or individual beliefs. According to Patton (2002), “The truly open-ended question allows the person being interviewed to select from among that person’s full repertoire of possible responses those that are most salient” (p. 354). Hence, open-ended questions must not be dichotomous, nor must they elicit a predetermined response. After considering my specific research questions, I chose to craft singular, open-ended questions which would allow teachers to share their experiences and beliefs regarding the effect of the implementation of Georgia Performance Standards and high-stakes testing accountability measures on their individual pedagogical practice. Table 1 presents items that were illustrative of attitudinal statements and open-ended questions as they related to individual research questions of the study.

Table 1  
*Attitudinal Survey Alignment to Individual Research Questions*

<b>Question #1:</b> Is there a relationship between the use of high-stakes testing accountability measures and perceived independence within pedagogical practice?	<b>Question #2:</b> Is there a relationship between the implementation of Standards-based Education and perceived independence within pedagogical practice?	<b>Question #3:</b> Is there a difference among teachers' perceptions of Standards-based Education on the instructional freedom of promoting the ideals of a democratic pedagogy in educating diverse student populations?
Please describe how high-stakes testing accountability has affected your attitude about teaching.	Decreased instructional flexibility will result in improved student achievement.	Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided the freedom to effectively prepare young people to lead fulfilling and contributing lives.
Please explain the process you use for addressing high stakes testing accountability in developing and implementing your instructional strategies.	A teacher should be able to differentiate instruction in order to reach all students.	Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided the freedom to effectively prepare young people to be productively employed.
	My grade-level is required to synchronize our teaching of instructional units.	Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided the freedom to effectively prepare young people to be responsible citizens in a democratic society.
	Teaching with similar instructional strategies as my colleagues makes me feel more confident about my students' success.	Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided the freedom to promote a cohesive American society by bringing together students from diverse backgrounds and encouraging them to dialogue with one another.
	The administrators at my school play an integral role in content and pedagogical decisions that effect my day-to-day instruction. The training I received on Georgia Performance Standards implementation was effective in helping me transition to standards-based teaching.	Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided the freedom to help form a shared American culture and to transmit democratic values.
		Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided a way to deliver the same quality of education to poor children as for non-poor children.
		English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards are not biased and encourage teachers to treat all students justly and without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religious affiliation and/or economic status.
		Teaching English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards adequately ensures that education supported with public dollars remains accountable to taxpayers and the public authorities that represent them.
		English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards reflect the need for educators to be responsive to the needs of local communities and affords citizens a voice in the governance of their schools.
		Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided the freedom to promote a public education that is religiously neutral and respectful of religious freedom.

In order to analyze the survey for construct validity, a panel of professionals in the area of English-Language Arts and Georgia Performance Standards was given a copy of the survey instrument. Panel participants were asked to examine each individual survey item to determine whether or not it actually measures an element of teacher autonomy in pedagogical practice, and whether or not it is stated clearly. If less than 75% of these experts agreed that an item measures teacher autonomy, the item was discarded. Additionally, suggestions were considered for rewording items.

After revisions were made from professional panel findings, the survey was pilot tested with a total of five classroom teachers. The test was then re-administered one week later to the same group to determine the level of test/retest reliability. Participating pilot teachers were then interviewed and discrepancies in test/retest reliability were discussed.

#### Site or Population Selected

The purpose of this study is to explore whether teachers feel that they have freedom in their pedagogical practice, and whether they view the mandated Georgia Performance Standards as allowing freedom or restricting freedom. Therefore, it was important to select participants who had comparative levels of understanding of standards-based education, as well as teaching experience with the newly implemented Georgia Performance Standards. The participants were employed in a district currently implementing standards-based instruction in all English-Language Arts courses. Ninety-two participants were chosen who had two years of English Language-Arts teaching experience within the same school district in order to ensure the same background and training on Georgia Performance Standards during the 2004-2006 phase-in years.

Participant names and grade level assignments were not used in order to protect their anonymity. In addition, the school district was assigned a pseudonym.

### *Sampling*

A random sampling procedure enabled me to better make inferences regarding the population's attitudes concerning high-stakes testing and standards-based education (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Babbie, 1990, Cresswell, 2003; Sudman & Bradburn, 1986; Fink & Kosecoff, 1985). This methodology also proved an efficient way to provide large amounts of data relative to teacher attitude. This was a probabilistic sampling, for every member of the target population will have an opportunity to be chosen for the sample. Probabilistic sampling minimized subjectivity and created an unbiased, representative sample of the target population. This will be a single-stage sampling, as I will have access to the names and positions of all members of the target population and will be able to sample the participants directly (Cresswell, 2003, p. 156).

The survey was sent electronically to every member of the target population with a minimum of two years of teaching experience in the school district in order to ensure that all participants received the same Georgia Performance Standards training.

### *Contextual Setting of the Study*

Research for this study was conducted in an urban school system in central Georgia. The community was experiencing steady growth, with a population of 127,530 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Additionally, there was a high median income level of \$47,134, significantly higher than most comparative areas in Georgia (Ibid.). Racial breakdown data showed white residents as comprising 66% of the county population.

The next most predominant ethnic group was Black persons, comprising 29.2% of the county population (Ibid.).

The school district selected served approximately 25,000 students in 23 elementary schools, 9 middle schools, 4 high schools, and two specialty schools which serve students in grades 6-12. Because of extensive growth, three new schools opened in 2007, and a new high school is underway for 2010, and an additional middle school is planned for 2011.

District-wide test performance on state high-stakes assessments was consistently above average in every area, in every grade, and in every subject area. This would indicate a strong emphasis to success and high-achievement on these assessments.

#### Data-Gathering Methods

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval to conduct the study, I secured approval from the school district superintendent and the principals of the four high schools participating in the study. It is imperative that survey items undergo pilot testing for individual item reliability (Likert, 1932). These questions also should be examined for “bias, sequence, clarity, and face validity” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 130). According to Creswell (2003), pilot testing is important to “establish the content validity of an instrument and to improve questions, format, and the scales” (p. 158). Once the pilot test data was been collected, each pilot test participant was interviewed in order to allow the participant to share concerns or necessary clarification that needed to be made.

Once minor changes were made to reflect concerns addressed by the pilot test survey, I then distributed a cover letter to each participant that explained the purpose of

the survey, the confidentiality oath, and detailed instructions for completing the survey online. Participants accessed a password protected website and respond to a Likert-scale format survey and open-ended questions during a specific time frame.

#### Data-Analysis Procedure

Strauss and Corbin (1998) see data analysis as an opportunity to “offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action” (p. 12). Due to the nature of difference between the process of qualitative data analysis and quantitative data analysis, the data gleaned from the survey was be addressed in two stages. Quantitative data gleaned from closed-ended statements was be analyzed by frequency of distribution of responses. Descriptive statistics, such as the percentage response, mean, and frequency was applied in data interpretation. Variability of responses was examined by looking at the range of expressed attitudes. Descriptive statistics was calculated using participant responses on the Likert scale survey questions from Parts I and II of the survey. Part I of the survey asked teachers to indicate their level of agreement with statements regarding the Georgia Performance Standards. Part II of the survey asked teachers to indicate their level of agreement with statements regarding standardized testing accountability.

The purpose of using survey research methodology in this study is to establish the existence of a postulated effect within the sample. According to Larson and Farber (2003), the “null hypothesis” will state that this effect does not exist and the “alternate hypotheses” will state that the effect does exist (p. 321). Larson and Farber (2003) assert that there is a distinct possibility of making the wrong conclusion due to the fact that the study is based on a sample of the population as opposed to the entire population (p. 323).

#### *Analyzing the Data*

For quantitative analysis of the open ended survey question responses, preliminary analysis of data began with reading the responses in order to determine the initial contribution the data will make to the study and research questions. Because representativeness is one aspect of survey research, non-response bias was analyzed through determining the response rate of participants on the open ended question section of the survey. Miles and Huberman (1994) devised a qualitative data analysis model which divides steps of analysis into data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In order to make the response data from the open-ended questions more manageable, a data reduction technique was employed. Miles and Huberman (1994) define data reduction as a process of “selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data” (p. 21). Content analysis of all open-ended responses was used to objectively and systematically identify themes and patterns in participant responses. Using both deductive and inductive reasoning, I highlighted and identified specific, relevant elements of each response provided. Open coding provided a consistent approach to analyzing the data from participant responses. Interpretation of data analysis focused on identification of pattern and common themes specific to teachers’ attitudes regarding their perceived freedom of pedagogical practice within implementation of Georgia Performance Standards and high stakes testing accountability measures. Any deviations from these patterns or atypical responses were be investigated as possible instances of bias or an area of further research.

Unlike quantitative analysis, which uses an a priori scheme to categorize possible participant responses, qualitative analysis requires the researcher to develop these categories directly from the actual data gathered. The iterative nature of qualitative

research begins as data is revisited, often many times, through the coding process.

Through the preliminary coding of all participant responses, definitions were refined to ensure accuracy of the coding categories and data placement within each category.

Throughout this process, I will ensure that the codes used specifically correlate with the research questions of the study. As an example, Table 2 displays how open-ended question responses were analyzed for the participants' perceptions on both pedagogical freedom and high-stakes assessment accountability measures.

Table 2

*Sample of Coding Analysis*

<b>Key Words</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Comments</b>
“freedom” “flexibility” “have the ability to determine the best methods and resources”	Freedom	These comments indicate that these respondents feel as if the Georgia Performance Standards provide them with the ample and/or adequate opportunity to promote democratic discourse within their pedagogy.
“direct connection with student lives” “consider the student first and foremost” “individualize instruction to help students grow as citizens”	Student-centeredness	These comments indicate that these respondents are centering their pedagogical practice on the needs of the students, not the mandates of the curriculum.
“have to” “forced to” “no choice”	Resignation	These comments indicate that these respondents have effectually surrendered to the dominant discourse of high-stakes testing hegemony, and feel helpless and forced to obey the mandated procedures outlined by their administration.
“fight the system” “refuse to” “will not”	Rebellion	These comments indicate that teachers have found subversive ways to resist the disciplinary power of the norm through appearing as though they are actually adhering to mandated measures.

Those responses which were not relevant to the research questions were eliminated from the coding process, although non-relevant responses could provide areas for further

study. The codes and comments revealed by participants' responses provided evidence of multiple perspectives regarding pedagogical freedom and accountability.

Data display, the second step to qualitative data analysis proffered by Miles and Huberman (1994), provides "an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing" (p. 11). This type of visual display is supported by cognitive research (see Ausubel, 1968; Anderson, 1985; Bruner, 1946; Chang, 1986; Norman & Rumelhart, 1975). From the attitudinal perspective of pedagogical freedom evaluation, choosing to use the data display method of analysis helped identify differences in respondents' attitudes regarding standards-based instruction, as well as high-stakes testing accountability measures, on their pedagogical practices. Individual viewpoints were explored through interpretive analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative responses. As an example, Table 3 displays how open-ended question responses were analyzed for the participants' perceptions on both pedagogical freedom and high-stakes assessment accountability measures.

Table 3

*Perceptions of Georgia Performance Standards and Accountability*

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**Participant AA**

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*Part 1:*

**Freedom provided through GPS**

Agree

*Part 2:*

**Sense of Pedagogical Freedom Within School Setting**

Strongly Disagree

*Open Ended Questions:*

**Georgia Performance Standards**

*Positive Perception:*

"With GPS, I am able to effectively determine the needs of my students and base my instruction accordingly."

**High-Stakes Testing Accountability**

*Negative Perception:*

“Although GPS provides me with the freedom to guide my own instruction, I am forced to follow the same lesson plans and teaching methods as other teachers in my grade-level. This is to ensure that we are all teaching the material that is assumed to appear on the Georgia High School Graduation Test. Ironically, no input from my grade-level was sought by my department chair. Instead, she just decided what we would teach and how we would teach it, and then checks to make sure that we are following the outlined guide appropriately.”

Furthermore, this data also helped identify ways teachers believe could help change current attitudes and/or perceptions.

The final step in analysis of qualitative data is conclusion drawing and verification (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This step is intended as a way to consider the overall meaning of the data collected, as well as to verify the conclusions by revisiting the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) state, “The meanings emerging from the data have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their ‘confirmability’ – that is, their validity” (p. 11). As a test of the validity of the conclusion, I compared the conclusions derived from the quantitative elements of the study to see if there was any correlation among responses. By using mixed-method methodology in this survey research, I was able to use elements of both quantitative research and qualitative research to address teachers’ perceptions of the role of standards-based education and high-stakes accountability measures on their freedom to guide individual pedagogical practice.

#### Ethical and Political Considerations

Ethical standards require that participants in a research study understand the purpose and nature of the study, their responsibilities and obligations of involvement, and any possible consequences of participating in the study. Each participant was informed that his or her participation could be withdrawn at any time.

Considering the existing relationship between the supervisory role of the researcher in relation to the participants, social desirability bias could have occurred in order for participants to be viewed more favorably. Additionally, participants may have felt the need to report a positive attitude regarding Georgia Performance Standards or high stakes testing accountability measures in order to appear supportive of current school reform and curricular initiatives mandated by both state and local boards of education. To further assure participants of anonymity, the survey was administered online so that there would be no visual recognition of participation among other faculty members.

#### Summary

The purpose of this research study is to describe and identify the perceived impact of standards-based education and high stakes testing accountability measures on perceived teacher autonomy and pedagogical freedom. This study was conducted using a mixed methods attitudinal study which included both Likert-Scale style questionnaire items to provide quantitative data and open ended questions to provide qualitative data. Initial plans of sample selection, data collection, and analysis will provide attitudes and degrees of opinion on statements affiliated with the research questions of this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study is to explore whether teachers feel that they have freedom in their pedagogical practice and whether they view the mandated Georgia Performance Standards as allowing freedom or restriction in comparison with high-stakes testing accountability measures. The research questions from this study were as follows:

1. Is there a relationship between the impact of high-stakes testing accountability measure and perceived independence within pedagogical practice?
2. Is there a relationship between the implementation of standards-based education and perceived independence within pedagogical practice?
3. Is there a difference in the way teachers perceive the impact of standards-based education on the instructional freedom of promoting the ideals of a democratic pedagogy in educating diverse student populations?

In addressing these questions, the overall purpose of my research was not to provide one generalizable truth, but to instead explore the ways in which teachers' attitudes are normalized within the power structures which control pedagogical aims and practices. Using a mixed-methods approach allowed me to use both deductive and inductive reasoning to determine the differences in teachers' attitudes through using both quantitative, Likert-style statements and qualitative, open-ended questions. The opinion statements focused on the pedagogical implications of standards-based education and high-stakes assessments. The open-ended statements then provided participants' the arena to verbalize or make claims about the impact that implementation of Georgia

Performance Standards and high-stakes testing accountability has had on their pedagogical practice.

### Survey Response

Ninety-two participants were invited to participate in this research study. A total of 70 surveys were returned for a response rate of 76 percent during a time period of two weeks. Of the 70 respondents, only five participants (7.14%) chose to omit a portion of the survey. The non-response from these participants could indicate a lack of commitment to completing the survey, indecisiveness regarding the answer to provide, as well as uncertainty as to the safety of providing honest answers to the statements. The five participants who chose not to respond all chose to omit Part Two of the Likert survey, the part which specifically asked them to answer questions specific to their individual attitudes regarding the atmosphere and expectations at their individual schools. Nonresponse to these statements could indicate mistrust of the anonymity of the survey, indicating that these respondents might fear repercussions and/or consequences from disciplinary power exerted over them if the responses were traced back to them individually, or if the responses were traced back to their individual school.

### Quantitative Findings

The English Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards Survey instrument was used to gather participant perceptions regarding the degree to which they perceived pedagogical freedom in the newly implemented standards-based curriculum and also the accountability measures from mandated high-stakes assessments. Respondents used a 5-point Likert style scale (1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree) to voice the level of freedom they perceive within their personal pedagogical practice. Individual scores

could have ranged from a minimum of 16 to a maximum score of 80. In this study, a higher score in Part One potentially indicated a stronger perception of freedom enabled by Georgia Performance Standards, whereas a lower score indicated a weaker perception of this freedom. A higher score in Part Two potentially indicated a stronger perception of oppression from accountability measures and disciplinary norms, whereas a lower score indicated a weaker perception of this oppression.

*Table 4*  
*Participant Response Averages*

Part One	Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Neither Agree Nor Disagree 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5	# of Responses	Rating Average 1-2.5 = positive(+) 2.6-3.5 = neutral (~) 3.6-5 = negative(-)	Standard Deviation	Median
1. Freedom to effectively prepare young people to lead fulfilling and contributing lives.	37.1% (26)	<b>51.4%</b> <b>(36)</b>	8.6% (6)	2.9% (2)	0% (0)	70	1.77 +	0.73	2
2. Freedom to effectively prepare young people to be productively employed.	30.0% (21)	<b>45.7%</b> <b>(32)</b>	14.3% (10)	10.0% (7)	0% (0)	70	2.04 +	0.92	2
3. Freedom to effectively prepare young people to be responsible citizens in a democratic society.	28.6% (20)	<b>58.6%</b> <b>(41)</b>	7.1% (5)	5.7% (4)	0% (0)	70	1.90 +	0.76	2
4. Freedom to promote diversity and dialogue	37.1% (26)	<b>50.0%</b> <b>(35)</b>	8.6% (6)	4.3% (3)	0% (0)	70	1.80 +	0.77	2
5. Freedom to help form a shared American culture and to transmit democratic values.	35.7% (25)	<b>50.0%</b> <b>(35)</b>	10.0% (7)	4.3% (3)	0% (0)	70	1.83 +	0.78	2
6. Freedom to deliver the same quality of education to poor children as for non-poor children.	37.1% (26)	<b>57.1%</b> <b>(40)</b>	2.9% (2)	2.9% (2)	0% (0)	70	1.71 +	0.66	2
7. Standards are not biased and encourage teachers to treat all students justly	38.6% (27)	<b>55.7%</b> <b>(39)</b>	5.7% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	70	1.67 +	0.58	2
8. Education is accountable to the public.	<b>45.7%</b> <b>(32)</b>	28.6% (20)	18.6% (13)	5.7% (4)	1.4% (1)	70	1.89 +	1.00	2
9. Standards reflect the need for input and response.	21.4% (15)	<b>57.1%</b> <b>(40)</b>	15.7% (11)	5.7% (4)	0% (0)	70	2.06 +	0.78	2
10. Freedom to promote religious neutrality	28.6% (20)	<b>57.1%</b> <b>(40)</b>	12.9% (9)	1.4% (1)	0% (0)	70	1.87 +	0.68	4
<b>Part Two</b>									
11. Decreased instructional flexibility will result in improved student achievement.	6.2% (4)	4.6% (3)	6.2% (4)	35.4% (23)	<b>47.7%</b> <b>(31)</b>	65	4.14 (-)	1.13	4
12. A teacher should be able to differentiate instruction in order to reach all students.	47.7% (31)	<b>50.8%</b> <b>(33)</b>	0% (0)	0% (0)	1.5% (1)	65	1.57 +	0.66	2
13. My grade-level is required to synchronize our teaching of instructional units.	<b>52.3%</b> <b>(34)</b>	35.4% (23)	4.6% (3)	7.7% (5)	0% (0)	65	1.68 +	0.89	1
14. Teaching with similar instructional strategies as my colleagues makes me feel more confident about my students' success.	18.5% (12)	<b>36.9%</b> <b>(24)</b>	15.4% (10)	18.5% (12)	10.8% (7)	65	2.66 ~	1.28	2
15. Administrators make decisions that effect my day-to-day instruction.	27.7% (18)	<b>44.6%</b> <b>(29)</b>	13.8% (9)	10.8% (7)	3.1% (2)	65	2.17 +	1.05	2
16. GPS training was effective.	40.0% (26)	<b>52.3%</b> <b>(34)</b>	4.6% (3)	0% (0)	3.1% (2)	65	1.74 +	0.82	2

*Part One Survey Response Discussion*

Part One of the survey instrument was comprised of 10 Likert-style statements which centered on attributes of a democratic pedagogy. Participants were asked to determine their level of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding the level of freedom they perceive provided to them by the Georgia Performance Standards. Of the ten statements provided in Part One, the majority of participants responded that they felt they agreed that Georgia Performance Standards provided them freedom to promote democratic ideals in the following areas:

1. Freedom to effectively prepare young people to lead fulfilling and contributing lives.
2. Freedom to effectively prepare young people to be effectively employed.
3. Freedom to effectively prepare young people to be responsible citizens in a democratic society.
4. Freedom to promote diversity and dialogue.
5. Freedom to help form a shared American culture and to transmit democratic values.
6. Freedom to deliver the same quality of education to poor children as for non-poor children.
7. Standards are not biased and encourage teachers to treat all students justly.
8. Standards reflect the need for input and response.
9. Freedom to promote religious neutrality

Because of the overwhelmingly positive responses to these nine statements, it can be inferred that teachers feel that the Georgia Performance Standards do provide them with

the freedom and flexibility to promote democratic ideals. The low standard deviation of each of these items, along with the consistent median response of “agree,” indicates that the majority of responses cluster around the mean. This could be an indication that these participants have determined the possibilities that the freedom of standards-based education provides.

The majority of participants responded that they strongly agreed to the statement that education is accountable to the public. Of the statements in Part One of the survey, this item had the highest standard deviation, indicating that responses varied among respondents. Looking specifically at this item, responses to this statement are interesting, for they highlight a possible contradiction when compared to the qualitative responses from the same group of respondents. Although these respondents indicated that they strongly agreed that education should be accountable to the public, they all strongly disagreed that this education should be made accountable through high-stakes testing measures.

Mid-point responses to Likert items can often be an indicator of respondents’ attitudes as well. In Part One, the statements with over 10% participant response as “neither agree nor disagree” were the following:

- Q. 2. Freedom to effectively prepare young people to be productively employed
- Q. 5. Freedom to form a shared American culture and transmit democratic values
- Q. 8 Education is accountable to the public.
- Q. 9 Standards reflect the need for input and response.
- Q. 10 Freedom to promote religious neutrality

Participants may have answered “neither agree nor disagree” to the statements regarding the standards as a reflection of either personal or administrative inattention to these facets of the standards. Additionally, participants may have rushed through the survey due to impatience or boredom and not wished to take the time to formulate an opinion on these items. The “neither agree nor disagree” response to the accountability of education to the public might have elicited a “neither agree nor disagree” response due to the relativity of the concept of accountability. For example, if a teacher felt strongly about accountability measures based solely on test scores, that teacher might not consider education as a whole as accountable to the public, for test scores do not span the depth or breadth of a child’s education. So, in this example, that teacher might have neither agreed nor disagreed on the basis that education is not fully accountable, nor is it fully unaccountable to the public.

Responses which indicated that participants disagreed were minimal in comparison to those who agreed with most statements in Part One. Of all of the statements, 10%, or 7 respondents, felt that the Georgia Performance Standards did not provide the freedom to effectively prepare young people to be productively employed. While well below the majority of positive responses, these participants could have been reacting to the relevance of the curriculum in the school district in preparation for future employment more so than the actual freedom provided by the standards to prepare students for the work force.

#### *Part Two Survey Response Discussion*

Part Two of the Likert-style portion of the survey focused six statements on participant attitudes regarding their beliefs about pedagogical freedom either provided or

restricted by district or school level administration, as well as their attitudes regarding the value of instruction and training they received on the Georgia Performance Standards. Of the 70 participants, five chose not to respond to this portion of the questionnaire. This non-response could be attributed to fatigue, interruption during the survey administration, impatience, or boredom. However, these five participants did complete the qualitative portion of the questionnaire which immediately followed. This response characteristic could indicate mistrust in the confidentiality of the results, as these six questions focused specifically on their attitudes regarding their personal school and district expectations from their administration.

Questions from Part Two provided the researcher with not only insight into their individual teaching power structure and hegemony. Additionally, a negative response to the effectiveness of training on Georgia Performance Standards was insightful in determining whether or not they comprehend the basic aims and goals of standards-based education and individualized instruction. Forty-seven percent of participants strongly disagreed that decreased instructional flexibility results in improved student achievement. The strong negative response to this item frames an inference that teachers value their freedom and do not wish to see it stripped away from them. Of the 65 responses to this statement, seven participants agreed or strongly agreed that decreased instructional flexibility could be effective. This is attributed to respondents feeling as if they should maintain the normative quality of education provided by their peers.

Of the 65 responses to the statement involving the opportunity for differentiating instruction, only one teacher responded negatively to the idea that teachers should have the freedom to differentiate instruction for individual students. This could be a reaction

to this individual participant's mistrust or disbelief in differentiated instruction, either because of an attitude that it is ineffective, or because of a lack of interest in modifying instruction for diverse student populations.

In my experience working district-wide with all of our high schools, I have noticed an overwhelming surge of the belief that teachers should all teach the same thing, the same way, to the same students. The responses to the statement regarding the existence of a requirement to synchronize teaching at individual schools supported my hypothesis, as well as fueled my concern that teachers are steadily losing more and more of their opportunities to make individual decisions regarding how to teach their students. Of the 65 responses provided, only 3 teachers neither agreed nor disagreed, and 5 respondents indicated that they disagreed, indicating they felt free to use their best judgment and teach with their own methods, strategies, and differentiation. A disconcerting 87.7% of respondents indicated that they were required to synchronize their teaching of instructional units, a debilitating factor to the level of pedagogical freedom that exists within their school. In a similar mindset of pedagogical restriction, 72.2% of respondents indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that the decisions of their administrators affected their day-to-day instruction.

This data clearly indicates that teachers feel as if they are losing autonomy and pedagogical freedom within their individual classrooms. Although they indicated that this freedom was made possible by the state mandated Georgia Performance Standards, this freedom is being stripped away from them at the district and school level. The benefit of looking at this study from a mixed-methods perspective was that the qualitative questions provided a means for participants to voice their specific concerns regarding the

contradiction between the state mandated Georgia Performance Standards and the district and school level high-stakes testing accountability measures imposed upon their pedagogical practice.

### Qualitative Findings

In qualitative research, the goal was focused more on the creation of a hypothesis than upon testing a pre-existing hypothesis. In this sense, it is important that the explanation and understanding of emerging themes are realized. By eliciting data from participants' direct quotations, I was able to explore beliefs and understandings of the relationship between teachers' perceptions of autonomy and standards-based education, as well as the relationship between teachers' perceptions of autonomy and high-stakes testing accountability measures. To enable this understanding, I had to be able to identify my situatedness within this study and use that identification to help discover these themes and individual realities.

The qualitative portion of this study centered around four open-ended questions which were intended to solicit opinions, feelings, knowledge, and attitudes regarding their perception of placement within the power structures of education. My situatedness as an evaluator of these responses centers around my tenure as an educator in the same district. After years of talking with co-educators about their experiences and perceptions, my interest in helping teachers find a "line of flight" grew into this study.

The data from these responses was organized into major themes and categories through content analysis. The validity and reliability of this portion of the study is strongly tied to my knowledge and experience in communicating with these participants, as well as through my knowledge and training in qualitative data. This is crucial in

qualitative analysis, for attention must be paid to the social and political context in which meaning is formed. The power structures operating within the reality of the participants must be understood and considered for the study to be reliable in any fashion.

Furthermore, it is important to note not only consistent responses, but also to address inconsistent responses. Considering both the qualitative responses individually, as well as individual qualitative responses compared with the same individual's response to the quantitative, Likert-style questionnaire items, helped not only the validity of the response, but also, in some cases, helped show glaring discrepancies in responses. For example, teachers who responded that they agreed with the statement that education should be made accountable to the public then answered that high-stakes testing accountability was unfair and irrespective of student achievement in their qualitative question responses. The two responses described illuminate the value of qualitative, open-response opportunities in research. This direct quotation serves to reveal a particular degree of emotion, the participant's thoughts, and even the participant's perceptions that were not readily discernable in his or her answer to the quantitative item.

#### *Georgia Performance Standards*

Qualitative analysis of participants' responses revealed two emerging themes of pedagogical freedom and student centeredness regarding teachers' attitude to Georgia Performance Standards. The vast majority, 68 out of 70, revealed that the participants' largely were in support of the freedom of choice provided from the Georgia Performance Standards. The two respondents who did not reflect this theme both displayed attitudes of distrust in the current movement, indicating that the standards-based movement was just the "new thing" in education, and that it would change in a couple of years. From a

personal perspective, I, too, see educational reform movements as transitory. The ever popular saying that reform movements “swing like a pendulum” often can make one feel that nothing is permanent and stable. This disbelief or mistrust is often fueled, in my perspective, by “quick-fix” efforts to improve instruction. These efforts, generally guided by software programs, textbook resources, or easily implemented strategies, usually are provided as a cure for the symptoms of the problem, not the problem itself. However, it seems to be the case that those implementing the new “program” want instant gratification with results, and generally do not continue their support and allegiance to the program for a long enough time to actually see those results. So, teachers are often left with the attitude of “here today, gone tomorrow,” an attitude which prevents them from making a commitment to the effort.

This same mindset was a predominant concern, both at the state and district level, when the Georgia Department of Education began the process of formulating standards and mandating standards-based teaching practices. In the previous state-wide mandated curriculum, the Quality Core Curriculum, specific skills were enumerated and isolated, making teachers feel as if they had to teach specific things in isolation. The integrated, standards-based approach, was not valued, as administrators often wanted to see a specific skill targeted as opposed to a more broader, vague approach. Because this approach was specified by the state, as well as reinforced in teacher education programs and the general expectation of the public school arena, teachers, myself included, focused their instructional strategies and efforts as such. Hence, it was a difficult challenge to redirect this hegemony to one which focused on integration of knowledge and building a foundation of enduring understandings.

*Freedom*

Of the 68 respondents who reflected the theme of freedom, most indicated that they appreciated the broad, vague characteristics of the standards, as well as the integration of concepts, helping their students understand the inter-relation of the knowledge base, as well as the inter-relation of the discipline with society as a whole.

One respondent stated:

Georgia Performance Standards have given me the possibility to guide students how to see the importance of what we are learning together. Instead of moving students toward rote memorization of literary terms and definitions, I am able to guide them toward questioning the underlying meaning of the text and its interplay with our society.

This “interplay” is of utmost importance in the goals of my research, for, from a critical perspective, students will benefit most from understanding the interconnectedness of the world. Considering literature and communication as a viable component of power networks within which, from the Foucaultian perspective, we all exist and interact, this type of freedom will help educators teach students to question and constantly re-evaluate the world in which they live. This specific respondent’s statement, fortified by the same themes within his or her Likert-style attitudinal statements, was also supported by other participants’ responses. The hope therein lies within the focus of and empowerment in teaching students how to question for themselves, not simply adopting the mindset of the teacher.

*Student-Centeredness*

The theme of student centeredness also emerged, more specifically in the question responses which addressed the ways in which implementation of Georgia Performance Standards affected the respondent's instruction. Of the 68 responses, an overwhelming 62 statements specifically referenced students. This indicates a significant shift from what is being "taught" to what is being "learned." By considering the student first, teachers are more effective in individualizing instruction and considering individual student understandings. Some students come to class from a background which supports and encourages critical thinking, whereas other students do not. One respondent stated:

Instead of concentrating on what specific objectives I must teach, I feel like I am better able to focus on the enduring understandings I want my students to attain. For example, I am not just teaching the definition of a metaphor, but instead am guiding them toward understanding of why metaphors are used and what ultimate affect these metaphors have on the impact of the text.

By building this understanding with his or her students, this teacher is moving past basic identification and moving his or her students toward the impact that the text or element has on a much broader scale. By teaching students to ultimately question the broader perspective and their place within it, they will then hopefully be able to internalize this type of understanding to be able to apply it to other frames of reference. For example, if a student were taught to be cognizant of the affect of a text, media, human interactions, then that student would be more empowered to understand the power networks within which he or she operates. This type of understanding will give students the knowledge

they need to be able to analyze and understand the reasoning behind the texts, news reports, and dominant opinions of the society within which they live.

### *High-stakes testing accountability*

Qualitative analysis of participants' responses revealed two emerging themes regarding teachers' attitudes to high stakes testing accountability. The two themes identified through extensive review and analysis of the data were themes of resignation and rebellion. Resignation, defined as a passive acceptance of something considered inevitable, was indicated through participants' responses which indicated that they felt helpless in resisting the test preparation procedures mandated, even though their responses to the qualitative questions centered on Georgia Performance Standards and their attitudinal beliefs about standards-based education reflected a strong stance against these test preparation measures. Rebellion, defined as a defiant, visible resistance to dominant accountability hegemony, was indicated through participants' responses which indicated that they were outraged and actively disobeyed these mandated measures. The words "have to," "must," "forced," and "required" resounded through the majority of the responses to both the question of how high-stakes testing accountability measures affect their teaching process and pedagogy and how high-stakes testing accountability affected their attitudes about teaching. The themes of rebellion and resignation emerged through the stance in which they took in responding to these measures.

### *Resignation*

The theme of resignation resounded through responses such as, "Although I want to teach my students in ways that promote learning and thinking, I have to spend my time primarily teaching the test-taking strategies and content domains that will help them pass

the test.” Although this individual participant’s response indicated that he or she was a supporter of standards-based education and the principles of critical theory in teaching students how to analyze their position in the world, he or she still feels resigned to having to spend what appears to be the majority of instructional time teaching test-taking strategies and material that is assumed to appear on the Georgia High School Graduation Test. This type of resignation is an indicator of surrender to the dominant discourse and hegemony of accountability in that this teacher appears to know what will serve the students best, but feels helpless and forced to obey the mandates of procedure.

Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power becomes the stronghold in that if this specific teacher breaks the norm and does not follow the test-taking preparation strategies, he or she will then be ousted, both socially and professionally, driven by the regime of power. In my experience, a teacher who questions or resists this regime is the one who is faulted for poor test scores and the consequences and punishments thereof. From both a social and political perspective, teachers who follow the norm are comforted from the “we’re all in this together” mindset. In my experience, the dominant discourse never accepts the possibility that it is, in fact, their norm that is causing not only failure in promoting the inherent humanity of student growth, but also the growth and autonomy of their teachers.

### *Rebellion*

The emerging theme of rebellion was born from numerous responses to not only the question of how high-stakes testing has affected the teacher’s attitude about teaching, but also the way(s) in which high-stakes testing accountability measures have impacted his or her process of focusing instruction. These responses shared both outrage and indignation from the teacher’s perspective of both professional practice and, ultimately,

from the teacher's perspective of the disservice that this education was providing students. One respondent commented as follows:

A nation of thinkers will be world leaders; a nation of test takers will lose its edge. We [teachers] are pawns in the process of watching a sad decline, and I refuse to play a part in this downfall. As long as I can fight the system and teach students to actually think and reason for themselves, I will continue. I refuse to be 'one of those teachers' who has the right answer and forces my students to think the way I, or whomever, is forcing them to think.

This impassioned plea is obviously one of rebellion in that this teacher is determined that he or she will not follow the norm and will teach the way that he or she feels is in the best interest of the students. One might argue that the best interest of the students is for them to graduate, which necessitates passing the test. However, my view, supported by the majority of the respondents of this survey, is that students who are taught to be critical thinkers and viewers will have the capability of passing a test. This viewpoint was reflected in another participant's response who stated the following:

I am a veteran teacher and have yet to view the question on a test I've proctored that had ANYTHING to do with true student learning. Students are not taught to see humanity, but are taught to darken the correct circle on an answer sheet about something that has no direct connection with their lives.

This "direct connection" becomes the key to the desire of the impassioned teachers who responded within the realm of rebellion in this study. How does this impact professional practice and pedagogy for those who are determined to resist the movement? One teacher responded as follows:

They [administrators] tell me what I have to teach and how to teach it, and then I smile, walk away, and close my door and teach my students about the world.

When people ask my why I teach, I don't answer that my career is based on test scores. I adamantly refuse to let my practice say otherwise.

This teacher has found a subversive way to resist the disciplinary power of the norm and the sovereign power of administrative evaluation through appearing as though he or she is actually following the mandated protocol of high-stakes test preparation. What does this mean for the students in his or her class? It could be implied that they are benefiting from his or her determination to help them see and understand the world around them. What does this mean for his or her other colleagues? Depending on how covert this teacher is about his or her actual practice, it could lead them to believe that there is no resistance. However, in my experience, those who are subversive and as determined as this person seems to be, rarely do so unnoticed.

The crossroads of a mixed methods study arrives at the point in which the qualitative and the quantitative data merge. In this study, a resounding majority determined that they felt as if they had the freedom to engage in a democratic pedagogy with their students. However, only approximately half of the participants verbalized the possibility of such in their qualitative responses to the open-ended survey questions.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Participants' responses indicated that there was a strong relationship between the impact of high-stakes testing accountability and perceived independence within pedagogical practice. Although it was not directly stated from any of the respondents, teachers understand both the sovereign and disciplinary power which strives to control

their actions as related to high-stakes testing accountability measures. From the sovereign power standpoint, teachers are required to fulfill their duties and responsibilities in accordance with directives of their administration, a point which is clearly stated in their contractual agreement at the beginning of each school year. Within these “duties and responsibilities” is the surveillance of teacher observation instruments which determine whether or not their contracts will be renewed for another school term. Disciplinary power, although much more subversive, stakes its claim in dominating their actions through infringing upon their teaching practices, determining a “norm” which must be followed. Teachers who do not succumb to these quantified, specific teaching practices are then ousted by their colleagues and determined as the scapegoats for poor test scores, scores which ultimately impact the school’s standing with Adequate Yearly Progress and state funding.

In my study of critical pedagogy, I have understood the paradox of McLaren’s (2000) view of critical pedagogy being “untenable or hopelessly utopian” (p. 148) and at the same time being a viable reality in the actionary sense (Wink, 1997). I relate to McLaren’s (2000) view that to be a critical pedagogue, one must be willing to assume the risk of threatening the “interests of those who are already served well by the dominant culture” (p. 148). These studies, along with my personal wrestling with what critical pedagogy means to me as an educator, have forced me, both consciously and subconsciously, to question what it truly means to educate, to question the power structures I both contribute to as well as am controlled by, and to question the affability of students and teachers actually being in control of their own learning.

In the sense that Foucault believes that power structures are inevitable and inescapable, my research has led me to the hope that if teachers constantly reflect critically on their actions and their role in these inevitable power structures, they will accordingly be empowered to take action and truly make change, as opposed to merely musing about the “hopelessly utopian” arena of education. To be not only visionaries, but also actionaries, educators must be willing to reject the dominant power structures, to stand firm in their beliefs and rebut the “standard notions of self and identity ... based on exclusion and secured by terror” (Martin and Mohanty, 197).

Although this study is not generalizable, I feel that it provides a snapshot picture into the goals and ambitions of the majority of teachers participating. In a world dominated by didacticism, there is hope that resistance to this hegemony will begin to open the possibility of open-minded questioning, not the passive acceptance of a particular mindset, belief system, or hegemony. Although still strangled by the mandates of high-stakes testing accountability, this type of response provides a glimmer of hope that the urge and desire is still there within the hearts of many teachers to strive to serve the best interest of students, not test scores.

First and foremost, this research taught me that I must continually question my assumptions about my role in education, both from the aspect of being an educator and an administrator. In both roles, I wield power as both a director and determiner of learning. As a classroom teacher, this power was wielded upon my students. As an administrator, this power is wielded upon my teachers, who then, in turn, work within the power structures to determine their roles as directors and determiners of the fates of students. After having left the classroom only one year ago, I am still asked about whether or not I

miss teaching. My answer is always that I miss my students and being a facet of their adolescence and growth. The majority of responses I receive to this response generally center around the fact that as an administrator, I help teachers. Thus, I am helping the totality of the student population in our district. Although intended as a comforting response, it rarely seems so. On one hand, it makes my cognizance and determination to build awareness and promote action ever stronger. From a different viewpoint, I must accept the reality that I am but one voice and facet of the power structures influencing, and ultimately controlling, the teachers who directly impact our students' lives and perception of their existence within the world.

From the teacher's perspective, students must be valued as individuals and taught to see themselves as individuals, constantly questioning their place and perspective, as well as their role within the networks of power that encapsulate them. Critical pedagogy becomes an integral part of the education of students in that it provides them with the empowerment and the perspective to see their place within not only society, but also within the power structures in which they play an active and viable role. They must be taught that there is not one valid truth to be assumed, but there are multiple ways of knowing, even if these ways of knowing are in direct conflict with the dominant culture. In the same critical perspective, I have come to realize that, as a Language Arts Coordinator, teachers must also be taught that it is ok to have a different perspective, and that their perspective might not be the same as their peers. Adorno (1974) said, "It is part of morality not to be at home in one's home" (p. 39). In this sense, teachers who are cognizant of the power structures within which they operate should be aware, in kind, of the dissonance that might, and often does, occur when they operate in resistance to the

power structures of the dominant majority. This hegemony of accountability has resulted in a hierarchical, bureaucratic system which only serves to benefit those who are already in power. Gabbard (2000) defines accountability as “a state of being in which persons are obligated to answer to others” (p. 53). This only serves to perpetuate the Foucaultian ideal of the inescapable presence of power and one’s operation within the overall network of this power. One’s personal authority, therefore, is limited according to the ultimate possibility of the power that could be achieved. Directly correlated to the educational system of today, anyone in a position of power must be able to document an achievement of a goal, or annual measurable objective. In the case of high school English-Language Arts teachers, this annual measurable objective is determined by the score on a high-stakes assessment, such as the Georgia High School Graduation Test. I argue that the presence of Foucaultian, self-regulatory disciplinary power, accountability ultimately depends on surveillance. Teachers are forced to teach prescribed lessons, regardless of the characteristics of students placed in their care. Surveillance, in the sense of both curricular and high-stakes assessments, inherits its power because of the peer pressure that results from not following the expected, or the norm, of what the administration deems as the “correct” way of instructing students so that they pass the test and ultimately graduate. Thus, the focus ultimately shifts from what is best for the student to what is best for the assessment result. Teachers then, in turn, begin to surrender to the oppression of the dominant power structures which ultimately, although falsely, reflect on their professional exceptionalities. Administrators, hence, begin to rely on the delegated authority that this disciplinary power exercises. Concomitantly, teachers begin to fear the possibility of resistance, assuming that if they were divergent from the norm

and their test scores did not meet the goal, they would no longer be viewed as competent or professional.

To empower teachers, administrators must embrace the contradictory nature of education. Administrators must realize that every class is its own community, comprised of individuals from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives. Paralleling this view at the district level, so should administrators realize that every school is comprised of individual teachers, each of whom has his or her own strengths, weaknesses, and insecurities.

From a broad perspective, standards-based education attempts to delineate pedagogy, instructional practice, and, ultimately, the assessment of such knowledge. These three facets of this school reform effort are inextricably linked, and ultimately only measured by a high-stakes assessment, one which refutes the very premise of multiplicity and freedom upon which the Georgia Performance Standards are based. The judgmental and governing legislation, such as *No Child Left Behind*, thus become the dominant power which directly controls both schools and the process of schooling. According to Freire and Macedo (1997), "The more you deny the political dimension of education, the more you assume the moral potential to blame the victims" (p. 123). My study of critical pedagogy has brought me to realize that the denial of such a dimension is ultimately a surrender to the ontological sense of knowing. Wink (1997) states, "I must listen, learn, reflect, and act" (p. 6). This study has taught me that reflection is not only something most easily discarded, but, ironically, the most important aspect of knowing. One must constantly reflect to be able to not only become aware, but also to understand how one operates within the power network which determines one's reality.

From an administrator's perspective, praxis occurs when one fuses theory and practice. However, when power structures dominate and dictate what is to be taught, how it is to be taught, and the very subject of which is studied, knowledge and instruction become standardized. In a feeble attempt to ensure federal accountability standards are met, teachers lose their sense of professionalism and autonomy in their pedagogical practice. Coles describes this oppression as "step-by-step, tightly controlled, direct, explicit, and systematic teaching of a 'predetermined logical sequence' "(p. x). The fear, or terror, of not meeting the scientifically-based assessment standard thus is determined by legislators who demand not only the standard, but also influence the means by which teachers could, or should, meet these outcomes.

Under the guise of equality, the hegemony of accountability serves to promulgate the mindset of standardization. The counter-hegemony of these practices depend upon Dewey's (1916) democratic premise of shared authority, or "a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (p. 87). In this sense, democracy refers to the way in which an educators helps create a better life for him or her self and others. A counter-hegemonic accountability is thus born from the action of empowering students and other faculty members.

For departmental, common assessments to truly work, stakeholders, both students and teachers, must feel free to express their opinions and assess the assessment. For a true counter-hegemonic assessment system to come into existence, assessments must be authentic and local, providing a valid assessment of student learning based upon the individual student.

Accountability at the district level is guided by the procedures of a bureaucratic society. Accountability, at the school, district, state, and nation levels, is controlled by persons in private industry. From a critical perspective, the hegemony of accountability is thus determined by the interests of those in the dominant majority as opposed to the individual. However, for this accountability to be truly counter-hegemonic, power must be shared among all involved stakeholders, and the interests of the minority must be considered, even if in direct opposition to the dominant majority.

If accountability is to be based on assessment, then, from a critical pedagogy perspective, this assessment must be based on authentic, dialogic exchanges between the student and the teacher. Neither one nor the other must be considered the authority, but both voices must be valued. Both instruction and assessment must be reinvented, so that both students and teachers are offered the opportunity to question and reposition their values and beliefs according to the experiences and backgrounds that all stakeholders bring to the conversation. In this sense, the curriculum becomes fluid, or constantly morphing. According to Freire (1989), learning is comprised of two contexts, “One is the context of authentic dialogue between learners and educators as equally knowing subjects... The second is the real, concrete contexts of facts, the social reality in which people exist” (p. 49). These contexts not only challenge the current practice of standardized, inauthentic assessment, but also hamper the type of instruction necessary to promote success on these assessments. In a liberatory curriculum where constant change and unpredictability are cherished, there is a lesser risk of high-stakes testing accountability reflecting the “social, political, cultural and ideological conditions that make difficult the construction of our ideals of change and transformation” (Ibid, p. 55).

Ultimately, this study suggests that if one is to hope for a transformative pedagogy, teachers must be provided the freedom to teach democratic ideals to their classes. If teachers are not provided the freedom to teach democratically, how might we ever be able to encourage awareness of democratic ideals within our students? For there to truly be hope for our educational system, a grassroots movement must ensue which encourages freedom of pedagogical practice and the opportunity for transformation. Without this, we will continue to fail not only our students, but the citizenry of our world.

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## APPENDIX A

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GPS SURVEY

*Please choose one response for each statement.*

Part One

5 = Strongly Agree  
4 = Agree  
3 = Neither Agree nor  
Disagree  
2 = Disagree  
1 = Strongly Disagree

1.	Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided the freedom to effectively prepare young people to lead fulfilling and contributing lives.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided the freedom to effectively prepare young people to be productively employed.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided the freedom to effectively prepare young people to be responsible citizens in a democratic society.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided the freedom to promote a cohesive American society by bringing together students from diverse backgrounds and encouraging them to dialogue with one another.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided the freedom to help form a shared American culture and to transmit democratic values.	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided a way to deliver the same quality of education to poor children as for non-poor children.	5	4	3	2	1
7.	English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards are not biased and encourage teachers to treat all students justly and without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religious affiliation and/or economic status.	5	4	3	2	1
8.	Teaching English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards adequately ensures that education supported with public dollars remains accountable to taxpayers and the public authorities that represent them.	5	4	3	2	1
9.	English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards reflect the need for educators to be responsive to the needs of local communities and affords citizens a voice in the governance of their schools.	5	4	3	2	1
10.	Through English-Language Arts Georgia Performance Standards, teachers are provided the freedom to promote a public education that is religiously neutral and respectful of religious freedom.	5	4	3	2	1

Part Two

11.	Decreased instructional flexibility will result in improved student achievement.	5	4	3	2	1
12.	A teacher should be able to differentiate instruction in order to reach all students.	5	4	3	2	1
13.	My grade-level is required to synchronize our teaching of instructional units.	5	4	3	2	1
14.	Teaching with similar instructional strategies as my colleagues makes me feel more confident about my students' success.	5	4	3	2	1
15.	The administrators at my school play an integral role in content and pedagogical decisions that effect my day-to-day instruction.	5	4	3	2	1
16.	The training I received on Georgia Performance Standards implementation was effective in helping me transition to standards-based teaching.	5	4	3	2	1

**Open Ended Questions**

17. Please describe how implementation of the Georgia Performance Standards has affected your attitude about teaching.
18. Please explain the process you use for addressing Georgia Performance Standards in developing and implementing your instructional strategies.
19. Please describe how high-stakes testing accountability has affected your attitude about teaching.
20. Please explain the process you use for addressing high stakes testing accountability in developing and implementing your instructional strategies.

## APPENDIX B

## LETTER TO PRINCIPALS REQUESTING PARTICIPATION

March 8, 2007

Principals,

I am a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University in the department of Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading. I will be administering an online survey to all Houston County English teachers (9-12) to determine their professional training needs regarding Georgia Performance Standards. The primary purpose of the survey is to help provide information to guide and direct the ELA curriculum and benchmark assessments. I would like to also use aforementioned data as part of my dissertation research.

My dissertation will evaluate teachers' perceptions of the Georgia Performance Standards within the English-Language Arts curriculum. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete, and there is no penalty for teachers who choose to not participate. Survey results will be reported anonymously, and your school and faculty members will not be identified in any way.

If you would like to preview the survey questions that will be administered to our county-wide ELA department, please use the following link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=215383384175>. If you have any questions about this research project or would like to request a copy of the results, please call me or e-mail me.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Amy Fouse  
Language Arts Coordinator (6-12)

**I, the undersigned, provide consent for Amy Fouse to use the data gleaned from the ELA Georgia Performance Standards survey in her dissertation research.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**I, the undersigned, DO NOT provide consent for Amy Fouse to use the data gleaned from the ELA Georgia Performance Standards survey in her dissertation research.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX C

## QUALITATIVE SURVEY RESPONSES

**17. Please describe how implementation of the Georgia Performance Standards has affected your attitude about teaching.****Open-Ended Response**

1. It was a big adjustment and at first had a negative effect but now overall I think it has been a positive factor.
2. The stress related to change has negatively affected my attitude, but the organization and competency of the GPS has eased some of the tension.
3. The GPS seems to be a well thought out design that helps teachers focus on concept objectives and student learning rather than teaching material and whatever concepts with that material. This type of design has had a positive effect on my teaching because it has given teachers the framework to help students master concepts instead of cover material well.
4. The implementation of the GPS has had very little overall effect on my attitude about teaching. I think that it is just a new way to do the same thing and I have always been someone who tries to implement best practices. I think the GPS is really good.
5. OMIT
6. OMIT
7. It gives me more freedom to design lessons that meet the needs, levels, and interests of my students.
8. It has not changed my attitude at all. it is just a different way of presenting the material.
9. At first I was apprehensive but once I started using it made sense to me and it has affected it in a positive way.
10. While extensive training for the GPS was time consuming, the overall format of GPS has improved my attitude towards teaching.
11. I feel more confident in providing a quality education for all students. Teachers are now working closely together and the students are benefitting. I feel focused on student learning as opposed to consumed with the material I am teaching.
12. The GPS makes more sense than the previous QCC standards. It has improved my teaching attitude because I have more freedom and flexibility to teach the concepts needed.
13. GPS has allowed me the freedom to truly help my student learn the concepts of the curriculum.
14. The focus of the student's improving verbal and non-verbal communication skills has been a positive impact both in the classroom and for me as a teacher.
15. The emphasis on high stakes testing has changed my positive attitude towards a negative one, both in the classroom and out.
16. The state standards needed to be revamped and the organizational methods used in the GPS are beneficial, however, the emphasis on the assessments has dramatically increased my awareness of individual students.
17. The result of GPS (more common assessments, mini-testing, over-testing, and more state tests) have made my attitude more negative on a daily basis.
18. While the implementation of GPS has been positive, my attitude has turned negative to the high increase of testing.
19. The GPS has put the emphasis back on the student, therefore, my attitude has greatly improved by recognizing the positive impact the GPS will have on the students.
20. The GPS promotes a backward by design theory of teaching. This allows for focus on the concepts rather than the content. It has helped me have a more positive attitude because I can choose the content needed to best help my students learn the concepts-- that is when the administration does not get in the way by requiring pieces of content.
21. There is a higher probability that I will be able to use a variety of texts with my students.
22. I am able to use a variety of resources to meet my students where they are in their development. QCCs allowed very little room for differentiation according to individual student needs, and this has made me feel much better about the instructional methods I use.
23. I think that the resources provided with the GPS are wonderful. They have really helped me understand what students are expected to learn.
24. Who has time to teach the standards with all of the test prep? The test is not a true assessment of the

- standards, but apparently it is an indicator of how well I teach.
25. It feels like the state intentionally released these vague, broad standards to help balance out the high stakes test pressure.
  26. I have much more of a sense of professionalism -- it would seem that even if my administrators don't trust my judgment as a teacher, the state definitely does.
  27. It was a breath of fresh air to hear that possibilities are being opened up -- not restricted.
  28. More opportunity to vary my resources
  29. Having basic mastery focal points (GPS) helps make sure that all teachers are focusing on the same goals, even if they go about it in different ways.
  30. I finally feel like I could have some freedom in what and how I teach -- but it is all taken away by high stakes testing accountability and having to teach what it on the test.
  31. It helps define general things that students should know and be able to do, but doesn't dictate what and how I should teach.
  32. It is a way to give me more flexibility about what and how I teach things kids need to know.
  33. It's a new way to look at how I teach
  34. With GPS, I can teach using whatever resource I want as long as I teach the standards.
  35. I still teach alot of the same things, but just think more about WHY I'm teaching those things
  36. It helps teachers across the state focus on similar things -- but with their own books and strategies
  37. given me more options
  38. It was not my choice, but now I have alot more flexibility in what I choose to teach.
  39. You can choose any text and any strategy -- as long as you are teaching standards...
  40. OMIT
  41. More possibilities to teach a variety of ways and with all kinds of things. Although QCCs did not force me to use my textbook, I felt like I almost had to in order to teach the specific items that they required. GPS is so integrated, I can weave in all sorts of texts, etc. and teach the same standard in multiple ways. It was really hard to switch, but now that I've grown more confident, I really like GPS!
  42. I can actually teach what I want the way that I want. These standards are so broad that I don't have to worry about the minutia of isolated skills. I love it! It is a refreshing change from GPS to be able to use some of the skills I learned in college!
  43. After teaching for years and years with QCCs, I became accustomed to a "patchwork" technique of teaching my students. Instead of integrated ideas that encouraged students to think (like the GPS encourages), my teaching objectives were centered around isolated skills. It was almost like a checklist of things to "cover" and not a foundation to help students UNDERSTAND.
  44. The GPS do not change from grade level to grade level. I find myself teaching the same skills over and over again. Whereas my attitude remains positive, I find myself having to be more creative to keep from stagnating.
  45. These standards helped me to teach and gave me an idea of what to do when teaching units.
  46. I see some teachers taking it seriously and working very hard while other teachers seem not to be pressing their students as hard. This affects whether or not I want to remain in the field.
  47. OMIT
  48. The units and curriculum writing have improved my attitude about teaching because I know that what I am doing really impacts students, and I feel more supported since my colleagues and I are standardized in terms of our instruction and assessments.
  49. It really has not had any bearing on my attitude as the GPS are really things I have always done.
  50. The implementation makes me feel like I a working towards a shared goal.
  51. The presentation of the new Georgia Performance Standards has reinforced the philosophy I have always followed as an educator in that assessments should be produced BEFORE they are taught. I am pleased that I have more flexibility within the curriculum!
  52. Georgia Performance Standards have given me the possibility to guide students how to see the importance of what we are learning together. Instead of moving students toward rote memorization of literary terms and definitions, I am able to guide them toward questioning the underlying meaning of the text and its interplay with our society.
  53. It has made teaching more fun and interesting as students are allowed more flexibility in expressing their knowledge of the material.
  54. I don't see how the GPS is drastically different than any other state standard program. It is attempting

- to move towards standards-based instruction, but it is still rather vague and open to interpretation.
55. I do at times feel a bit more restricted in regards to what items have to be taught. I think that some of the county's articulations about what HAS to be taught is more of my reason for saying that. I am not sure that the GPS itself is quite so restrictive. However, I do think I still have some flexibility on method, so that is good. I would have loved the document when I was a beginning teacher because it is a really great guide to what and how to teach for each course.
  56. I feel positive about the GPS changes.
  57. I have been teaching for 38 years, so I can't say the standards affected my attitude at all. I will say that they make sense, that they are do-able, and that if all teachers adhere to them, the outcome should be better educated students.
  58. As a new teacher, having the standards to follow increased my confidence by giving me set guidelines to follow. However, as I become more experienced, I fear that the GPS units may become restrictive to me as a teacher. There seem to be too many required selections per unit. I seem to never have the time to do enrichment activities as I am always trying to cram in all the stories or selections for each unit.
  59. I like how we have been using similar assessments- it allows me to see how I'm doing in relation to my peers in teaching. I do think that each district's choice of what they use to implement the curriculum needs some tweaking so we have time built in for remediation and reteaching. Optional units would be great to do that.
  60. We no longer teach with a goal on developing better thinkers; we teach with a goal of developing better test-takers.
  61. OMIT
  62. Improved it.
  63. made me more aware of what I do no real change in attitude about teaching
  64. It has made me more flexible
  65. OMIT
  66. Made me much happier knowing that other teachers are being held accountable for the same type of information that I already give.
  67. OMIT
  68. It has given me a better perspective about what my students are required to know and how they are to obtain the objectives described by the GPS by the end of the semester.
  69. I have only taught with the GPS.
  70. I am more aware of this curriculum than of any other I have taught under before. I have become a more thoughtful/reflective teacher, looking at how what I do aligns to the expectations of GPS.

**Q. 18 Please explain the process you use for addressing Georgia Performance Standards in developing and implementing your instructional strategies.**

**Open-Ended Response**

1. I work backwards using it as a guide to develop plans for what my students need to know.
2. Student engagement and involvement; more "hands-on" tactics and approaches to learning
3. All curriculum that I teach is develop from the GPS. As with the GPS, I use a backward by design approach in that I start with the concepts and then build the unit from there. Implementation of the curriculum flows naturally because I am addressing concepts and not just teaching material.
4. It is pretty much the way I have always done things. I started from what I wanted them to know and understand and then planned and focused my lessons accordingly. This is really all the GPS does.
5. OMIT
6. OMIT
7. It changes the order of my thinking. The end is what I start with and then work backwards. It also makes me think of different ways all my varied students can demonstrate mastery of the standard.
8. I review the standards finding out what my students need to know and then I plan my lessons according to what I want them to know and to understand.
9. I review the standards that need to be addressed and then use them as a guide to focus my lesson

- on the essentials.
10. "Teach a little, test a little." Instead of waiting to have one unit assessment, smaller assessments in smaller time intervals.
  11. GPS gives me a strong foundation for developing my daily instructional strategies. I use the standards as a baseline for choosing material and activities for planning and delivering instruction.
  12. GPS is used as a guideline for what the students should know/learn at the end of an instructional unit. It is a smooth process. Having the essential concepts/questions available from the beginning helps me develop a truly focused unit.
  13. Every strategy used in teaching the curriculum must be address the standards. This keeps the instruction focused despite the content used to teach the concepts.
  14. While open dialogue has increased within my classroom, there are more standardized assessments that do not adequately assess the learning that has taken place.
  15. By meeting the individual needs of the students but also by continuously monitoring their progress through observation and assessments.
  16. By putting the emphasis on student learning instead of teaching has helped create a positive implementation of instructional strategies.
  17. Every instructional strategy that is used is designed to help the student towards a test or formal assessment. Basically "teaching to the test"
  18. Differentiated instruction to meet individual needs.
  19. The organizational structure of the GPS, both from the state and local level, has helped organize my units, resources, and overall classroom objectives. By having clear and organized objectives, my daily lessons and overall units are improved.
  20. I always go over the concepts and essential questions before I plan a unit. This way I know what I want my students to know and understand before I choose how to do that. This provides focus for my planning. It allows for flexibility in my implementation to, because I am constantly measuring the understanding of concepts and therefore may have to change strategies.
  21. I don't just "teach a story," I use the story to teach the standards. It's much more student centered.
  22. I first get to know my students, then I determine what I could do to help them grow
  23. Students have general standards to master, so I plan my instruction along with these standards. It really helps me focus.
  24. Who has time to teach the standards with all of the test prep? The test is not a true assessment of the standards, but apparently it is an indicator of how well I teach.
  25. Standards, assessment, instruction
  26. I think about what students should know and be able to do, then plan my lessons to help them meet these goals.
  27. I consult my GPS notebook to see which standards are addressed in the unit, then plan my assessments and instruction according to those standards and the children in my class.
  28. I consider what standard the child needs to master, then plan my assessment and instruction accordingly.
  29. Really, I don't have that much opportunity to think about GPS when planning my instructional strategies, since my particular department has to teach the same thing the same way at the same time in order to ensure that we are teaching what is on the test.
  30. I can use any text to teach a standard -- instead of teaching the text itself, I'm using the text as a method for teaching a standard
  31. I look at the standards and then at how I'm going to get my students to meet them.
  32. I determine which standards I need the kids to meet, then plan my resources accordingly
  33. I now think about the standards I am teaching and not the text.
  34. I think about what the students need to know, then choose my strategies and resources accordingly.
  35. I consider what my students need to understand and then find ways to connect the instruction to their own lives to make it personal
  36. I decide what the students need to understand based on GPS and then plan accordingly.
  37. i think about standards first

38. I think about multiple options for assessment and then plan my lessons based on what my students need to understand.
39. First, I determine what standards my students need to master, then I decide how they can show me, then I plan my lessons.
40. OMIT
41. GPS requires backwards thinking, so I first think about what I need my kids to understand, then decide how they are going to show me, and THEN I plan my lessons. It makes much more sense! Plus, by planning ahead, I have much more flexibility in the lesson planning stage because I'm not tied to creating a disjointed assessment based on the lessons I've haphazardly strung together!
42. I use my county GPS manual and choose the unit, then read the standards that go along with the unit, then plan how to best get my students to understand why it is important for them to know how it all fits together.
43. Truthfully, this has been quite a change for me. Although I can use some of my same resources from when we used QCCs, I now have to completely rethink the way that students learn. Because the GPS is focused on building "enduring understandings," I've had to stop and consider what would make them really understand. Well, teenagers only "understand" things that relate to them. So, instead of teaching them basic skills, I've had to help them relate to what we're learning. Classroom discussions have helped the most, because students love to argue and talk about things that are important to them. The challenge has then been finding a way to tie ELA into what's important to them.
44. Use of portfolios and various hands on projects. However, time factor for these have been greatly reduced due to the testing schedules in and out of the classroom.
45. These standards helped me make sure I was teaching what I needed to teach my students.
46. I follow the curriculum guide and work hard
47. OMIT
48. With GPS, I have a more realistic approach to instruction which confirms the idea that skills, rather than content is what students carry with them. Also, before, during, and after instruction, I emphasize to my students that I am trying to teach them mastery of a skill rather than rote memorization of a topic.
49. I begin with the end in mind. I then teach according to what the standards are, what the kids need to know, and then cover the aspects I want to bring in and for them to know. I then test then for understanding, analyze the results, and remediate when and where necessary.
50. My school provides a thorough GPS manual that aids educators in our pursuit to address the Georgia Performance Standards.
51. I make sure that I cover each standard as often as I can in each unit I teach. I concentrate more now on developing activities and rubrics that reinforce the standards. I use county sample units as a guide since all standards are addressed in each semester's units.
52. Instead of concentrating on what specific objectives I must teach, I feel like I am better able to focus on the enduring understandings I want my students to attain. For example, I am not just teaching the definition of a metaphor, but instead am guiding them toward understanding of why metaphors are used and what ultimate affect these metaphors have on the impact of the text.
53. I think about what I want the students to know and do at the end of a unit first and work backwards.
54. We had to prioritize the standards at the beginning of the year so that we could focus on the standards that were critical. I think this was helpful in making sure that the standards were addressed appropriately in each unit of study.
55. Before starting a unit, I review the document and consider the things I have taught before/the way I have taught them. I then try and verify that I have covered the standards. If not, I make alterations.
56. I use the backward by design method encouraged by the GPS.
57. We are required to keep what we call a Learning Notebook which contains all test scores, a pacing guide, the standards applicable to our classes, and a syllabus for each course. The syllabus reflects the standards for our class.
58. I consult our ELA notebook that contains the sample units outlined by the Houston County

- School system to follow the GPS standards. I include the required selections in each unit, then add selections as time permits (which is not very much at all). I also look at all of the sample activities and performance tasks and strive to include activities that focus on varying learning styles in order to reach all students I teach.
59. I first look at what our district has decided are the required works for the unit and then look at the standards that are to be addressed using those standards and plan the unit activities to address the standards with those required works.
  60. My grade level organized the GPS into priority levels, and we engineer our lesson plans to address the GPS.
  61. OMIT
  62. Adapt it.
  63. Make certain to incorporate standards in all lesson plans reteach standards as needed
  64. Assess then teach and then assess again.
  65. omit
  66. Summer GPS groups met to help develop more cohesive lessons for the county. Utilizing this information has helped tremendously.
  - 67.
  68. I try to use a time-line and gauge my activities around a calendar to make sure that I cover all objectives required by the GPS.
  69. We use the disk for initial planning and instructional guide.
  70. Being performance based, I have more performance based tasks - demonstrations, cooperative learning, reteaching, differentiated instruction, etc. It is not rote drill and practice, as memorization does nothing to prepare students for skills needed. Memorization is closer to QCCs.

**Q. 19 Please describe how high-stakes testing accountability has affected your attitude about teaching.**

**Open-Ended Response**

1. It has had no effect at all.
2. While I agree that teacher's need to be held accountable, the standardized tests are not formulated and assessed to properly address the students or teachers.
3. High stakes testing has stifled what the GPS has given. Teachers are given freedom through GPS and high stakes tests takes away that freedom. Unfortunately many admin and leaders do not feel that teachers can promote student learning without teaching to the test. People have begun to think that the one time test is a true measurement of what a child knows. This negates anything and everything going on in a classroom. If the test could be used to measure progression and used as a tool, it might be okay, but it is being used as knife and it is cutting the throats of educators.
4. The accountability has had somewhat of a negative effect on my attitude because I do not control everything I am held accountable for but I have accepted that and work to do the best with what I have.
5. OMIT
6. OMIT
7. It does make me focus on all the students. I put more effort into teaching to the different levels. That is good. However teaching to the test is not one of the positive outcomes of the high stakes tests. There is too much focus on drill work.
8. It has not really changed it. I have always held myself to a high standard of accountability.
9. It has somewhat negatively impacted it, as there is only so much I can do with the raw materials I am given.
10. The negative impact that the inconsistent, unfair, and ridiculous methods of teacher accountability on high stakes testing can not be measured.
11. I feel discouraged about the focus on testing as opposed to learning. We are forced to skip the rewards of everyday learning experiences as we instead focus on the end result.
12. High stakes testing requires that students be prepared for a certain type of test. These tests do not show progress but rather a snapshot in time. In order to show a "good" picture, the schools have

- highly encouraged teaching to a particular date for a particular test.
13. High stakes testing takes away from truly teaching. Teachers are forced to teach to the test, sometimes to the extent of ignoring the GPS.
  14. While administrators are forced to hold teachers accountable for the "data" produced within each teacher's classroom, outside variables are not being considered. Thus, the teacher is being held accountable to a state or local standard based off data that is not viable.
  15. The stress created from the accountability of high stakes testing has negatively affected my attitude towards the teaching profession and the individual students.
  16. If one teacher has a large majority of Special Education students and another teacher has regular education to "gifted students" it does not seem fair to hold one teacher accountable to the other; therefore, my attitude towards high-stakes testing accountability is that it is done unfairly, inconsistently and unjustifiable.
  17. Regardless of the entry level the students enter my class, they will not be scored or proportionate to the level in which they have learned or leave with. Instead, I will be held to a grade level standard in which the student was doomed before he walked into the room. Due to this, my attitude towards teaching has taken a definite spiral.
  18. While teachers are "required" to teach to individuals, testing is done too frequently and not adapted to meet the individual needs of the students. Not only are the needs of the students being met by the formal assessments, teachers are being held accountable for the negative outcomes.
  19. Unfortunately, high-stakes testing is driving in class instruction. Every unit, lesson and activity is centered around a portion or a probability of what may be on a state test.
  20. Although I understand the purpose of high-stakes testing, it negatively affects my attitude about teaching because of the way that we, at the school level, prepare for high-stakes testing. Instead of allowing our teaching to be truly measured, many administration and leaders at school force teaching to the test. This does not help anyone.
  21. I feel like no matter how hard I work, I'll never be able to make 100% of my struggling students pass that test. Although this seems like a fatalistic attitude, it's quite realistic.
  22. High stakes testing has taken away so much of the time I used to have to teach my students.
  23. I think that the test has become the goal, not just an indicator. Instead of measuring our success by how much our students grow and mature, we are judged by one snip of time when they bubble in circles.
  24. Who has time to teach the standards with all of the test prep? The test is not a true assessment of the standards, but apparently it is an indicator of how well I teach.
  25. I used to like teaching, because I felt like I was helping my students grow as PEOPLE. Now, I feel like I'm just pretty much teaching them how to choose the correct multiple choice answer.
  26. The test is central to everything we do -- It used to be the students.
  27. Worthless. A computer program could do the mindless drill-n-skill that our administration requires us to do.
  28. Not only the accountability, but the way in which it is shoved down our throats, has made me feel like the only thing I can afford to do is teach to the test.
  29. I do agree that it is wise to see what kids know, but the way in which the tests are created (only one way to show mastery) as well as the professional repercussions of not having the best scores, makes me feel like my administration feels that I'm not a good teacher if my kids don't all pass the test.
  30. High stakes testing accountability has made me feel insignificant and worthless as a teacher. In my 20+ years of teaching, I have never felt that my worth was measured by a test score.
  31. High stakes testing accountability has made me want to find another career.
  32. It's just something we have to do in order to be successful
  33. Testing accountability has slowly taken over the goals and purpose of schooling -- especially in ELA
  34. I have to teach test taking skills as much (if not more) than GPS so that we will make AYP
  35. It goes completely against what education should be and does NOT reflect the purpose of schools, nor the ability of students and teachers.
  36. It seems unfair -- the test doesn't seem to really reflect the standards, so it's a no win situation.

37. i've started to graduate school to go into instructional technology so that i don't have to worry about testing anymore
38. These tests do not accurately measure a student's ability and knowledge, and they certainly do not measure my ability and knowledge as a teacher. However -- that's how we are both judged.
39. The tests are unfair and do not reflect mastery of the standards. Since we are to do both, I teach the standards and hope for the best. It really takes away too much of my class time, though, and I don't think the students have enough time to really learn the standards.
40. OMIT
41. Standardized testing is a very poor way to show whether or not a student has learned enough to be allowed to graduate from high school. It's absolutely ludicrous. As a teacher, I know what my students need to understand in order to be successful and "make it" in the world. None of those skills are reflected on our test. So, I feel very torn between what I know (as a person who loves to teach) that students need to know versus what I know they need to know to pass the test. If I am successful in one way, I fail in the other. There's no way to win.
42. I used to worry about my kids, but now I worry about them scoring well enough for me to not be reprimanded.
43. I hate it. Here I am trying to make my instruction meaningful to them personally and to relate to what we're talking about, and the administrators at my school are forcing me to use worksheets to "prove" that I'm test prepping these students.
44. It has had a negative affect. Students are over tested. Implementation of essay type testing has not been successful as the multiple choice test is still the mainstay. Students do not learn from this type of testing.
45. I have to make sure that I am teaching what the kids are going to be tested on.
46. It has negatively affected my thoughts. The harder I work the less the students SEEM to work.
47. OMIT
48. My attitude is soured by high-stakes testing because we are held responsible for another human being's decisions. This practice makes little common sense, yet I understand the need for objective (?) testing to measure progress.
49. It really hasn't. I have always felt accountable even before that was a buzz word. I do my best with each and every child and try everything I can to help them learn, achieve, and be successful and as long as I do that I know I have done a good job and the results will show it. I do think that there needs to be some accountability placed on parents and students, not just teachers as it is not only the teacher that can impact the learning of the child. I feel it is also greatly impacted by the effort and responsibility of all parties and for all of the accountability to be placed solely on the teacher is frustrating.
50. High-stakes testing accountability motivates me to ensure that all of my students grasp the concepts that I teach.
51. I am more aware of the importance of reinforcing the standards frequently, and I realize the importance TO ME of the design of MY formal assessments.
52. Although I want to teach my students in ways that promote learning and thinking, I have to spend my time primarily teaching the test-taking strategies and content domains that will help them pass the test.
53. It has discouraged me. We should be teaching our students how to think, read and write. Instead we are teaching them test taking strategies and facts. Analyzing material, making connections to the material are not occurring.
54. It has made me much more cynical about teaching. Because of high-stakes testing, I may not stay in teaching for long. I believe that there are ways to determine how good a teacher is besides high-stakes testing accountability.
55. I feel really disheartened. We have been told that we must review test questions from certain practice tests DAILY and we have had to put literature in the "backseat." I think that this will kill many students' (and teachers') love of literature. I am really worried about making AYP, and I think that sometimes that kind of worry has sucked the love of teaching right out of me.
56. I feel that it is unfair to hold eleventh grade teachers responsible. Students should be pretested to measure improvement if teachers are going to be held accountable.
57. Testing has become a thorn in the side of Georgia teachers! I believe that the students are tested

far too much. I don't mind an end of course test (that is truly at the end of the course!) to determine if my students are learning what they should. However, GHSGT followed by EOCT is ridiculous. During this semester alone, we have missed more than 2 weeks of class time for testing and test preparation/review.

58. Again, too much to teach, too little time. I am made to feel that spending time on enrichment or creative writing or art activities in the ELA classroom is a waste of time, since those skills will not be on the test. I feel very rushed to fit in everything that is required before the test. It makes class boring for both teacher and student.
59. It has made me use more "backward design" in my planning. I do see the merit, but it feels artificial, still. I have seen, however, that this is really working with our at risk populations.
60. A nation of thinkers will be world leaders; a nation of test takers will lose its edge. We are pawns in the process of watching a sad decline.
61. OMIT
62. Negatively.
63. The testing emphasis has changed my attitude in a negative way. There is far too much stress on scores and not enough on individual achievement of students. If I were just beginning teaching, I am not certain I would continue. The scores seem to matter more than anything else.
64. I try to ensure that I have taught what it is I want them learn and be able to do. I am looking more towards application of knowledge instead of regurgitating knowledge.
65. OMIT
66. It has made me feel sorry for the juniors who have to carry so much stress, causing a loss of my morale in some situations.
67. OMIT
68. It makes me more aware of the needs of my students and how they compare to other youngsters in the system. I want my students to be successful and competitive with their peers.
69. The "High-Stakes" tests do not correlate with the GPS standards in terms of concentration or weight. The issue is irrelevant because we are required to cover the standards regardless of the test.
70. I am more mindful of daily decisions in my teaching, but it does make day to day working more stressful because the "numbers" tell the story.

**Q. 20      Please explain the process you use for addressing high stakes testing accountability in developing and implementing your instructional strategies.**

**Open-Ended Response**

1. I do not worry about the tests. I feel that if I am teaching for student understanding, following the GPS, and differentiating and reteaching then the test will take care of itself.
2. Starting on day one, students are aware of necessity and importance of the tests. Every resource and assignment is given in order to help the student achieve.
3. Our school addresses high stakes testing by forcing students to study the test. Essentially the school requires juniors to practice the test three days a week. The whole school focuses on this one group of students for this one test. The majority of other students who do not take the test or are taking the test for a second time are left to their own. Accountability for teachers who teach juniors is extremely high. Those who do not teach juniors are left alone. Accountability in my room comes from my own implementation of checks and balances to see if students are learning. If they are, the test should take care of itself.
4. I have no special process other than focusing my teaching on the standards and helping students gain the insight and knowledge they need to use and transfer what they learned come test day.
5. OMIT
6. OMIT
7. I do more with reading strategies in class as I feel reading comprehension is huge factor for success on the test.
8. I teach the standards and the curriculum while differentiating for my students. This focus takes care of the testing because the students are focused and learn the material in order to pass the tests.
9. My attention is much more standards focused and governed by the GPS, leaving less time for

- deeper exploration.
10. While smaller assessments more frequently have been helpful, it does not seem to help with the larger "high stakes test" the kids will have. Therefore, I must now not only give multiple small assessments but also large assessments to prepare my students for success. The students are being "tested to death."
  11. I am forced to cut material down to the bare minimum in order to squeeze in all topics that may or may not be covered on the test. I also include frequent assessments (thus more testing) to ensure that students are meeting requirements.
  12. Certain skills have to be addressed regularly. Testing has become a whole genre which often takes up more time than it should. The pressure to have good scores causes teachers to focus on the test and not on true instruction.
  13. The school has developed a "plan" that forces teachers to teach to the test in an "extra period" three days a week. Students are grouped by grade level and teachers' perception of their ability to perform on a test.
  14. Motivating students on a daily basis but also providing constant and continuous feedback on the multiple assessments done weekly.
  15. Classroom discussions, various methods of assessments, and continuous assessments that are geared to the student for success on the "state tests"
  16. Countless assessments throughout the week; therefore, the students feel overwhelmed with formal and informal assessments, thus being "turned off" to learning.
  17. The students are being over tested with TOO many assessments, therefore, every instructional strategy is designed with the assessments in mind.
  18. Common assessments per grade level and by course have been designed and implemented. Teachers are supposed to give the same common assessment on the same day and are penalized when not doing so. By not allowing the teacher flexibility within their classroom, the teacher is unable to meet the individual needs of each student.
  19. Every unit, lesson and activity is centered around the high stakes test. By being held accountable to the high stakes test, there is not a minute to lose of instructional time.
  20. I practice high stakes testing strategies throughout my units. Students need to be aware of test taking strategies; however, this is not taught as a norm. Students must understand the difference between testing and real life situations. They must know how to prepare and take tests, but they must also know more than that.
  21. I make sure I completely cover everything that I assume will appear on the test.
  22. Although my students historically have done well on the test, I am still required to stop teaching (which was probably WHY they were doing well on the test) and follow a daily drill-n-skill review.
  23. I make sure I "cover" what will be on the test, and then use what little is left of my time to teach my students.
  24. Who has time to teach the standards with all of the test prep? The test is not a true assessment of the standards, but apparently it is an indicator of how well I teach.
  25. We have daily powerpoints and weekly quizzes that cover test items.
  26. I make sure that I use plenty of "test-like" questions, and make the content descriptors the primary focus of most of my lessons.
  27. After the mundane required drill-n-skill, I use the rest of my class time (very little) to actually teach.
  28. Before I can consider anything else, I have to teach test items and content. Not only do I have to teach the test, I have to teach the same strategies at the same time as the rest of my grade level. Other schools aren't doing this to the degree we are, but we didn't make AYP.
  29. Well, I really don't have that much of a process since I'm pretty much told what, when, and how to teach -- I guess all of my professionalism and teaching experience means nothing. It's like they don't think I know how to get kids to pass the test, so they are telling me. Funny enough, "they" aren't even English majors...
  30. I close my door and teach what I think the students need to know to be effective readers, writers, and communicators and then hope for the best when the test arrives.
  31. Although I would love to teach GPS, I find myself having to teach test taking skills and only focus on the content of the test instead of helping my students really understand the way that

- literature and knowledge can impact their lives.
32. I am required to teach certain things to make sure they are covered so that kids score well on the test.
  33. No matter what I'm teaching or how I'm teaching it, I have to make sure that I'm incorporating test taking skills into my lessons.
  34. test taking skills is the priority of our school, then standards
  35. I tell my department chair that I'm test prepping -- but really I'm TEACHING. Funny enough -- my strategy must have worked better than hers -- my kids scored higher on the GHS GT!
  36. I just do the best I can to review terms and skills and hope they bubble in the right bubble on test day.
  37. i teach the test
  38. I teach test domains during special instructional periods and also during regular class time.
  39. I am required to test prep during a minimum of 15 minutes per class period, then the rest of the period is up to me.
  40. OMIT
  41. I'm glad this survey is anonymous, because I wouldn't say this otherwise. Truthfully, I give the little quizzes that we all have to give so that I have scores to talk about at meetings. Then, I shut my door and teach my students about literature and how it collides with them. It's really quite rebellious, I'll admit (anonymously, of course). Not being a "team player" and doing all of the test-gearred activities makes people think that you could care less about AYP.
  42. I test prep most of the time because we have to make AYP.
  43. I have little say in the process. Our department uses the same lesson and assessment at the same time, and then we compare results. My instructional strategies are "fit into" my class when we are finished with the required test prep lessons.
  44. Various student assessments and instructional activities. Oral testing has been successful.
  45. I would use the standards to make sure that I was teaching the kids what they needed to know and what they were going to be tested on.
  46. There is no room for "the love of learning" since we are always stressed out over whether our students will pass or fail
  47. They [administrators] tell me what I have to teach and how to teach it, and then I smile, walk away, and close my door and teach my students about the world. When people ask my why I teach, I don't answer that my career is based on test scores. I adamantly refuse to let my practice say otherwise.
  48. I add standardized test questions to each unit test I give, use benchmark quizzes to acclimate students with skilled testing over unfamiliar content, and use several days prior to testing for specific test-prep exercises.
  49. I begin with the end in mind. I then teach according to what the standards are, what the kids need to know, and then cover the aspects I want to bring in and for them to know. I then test then for understanding, analyze the results, and remediate when and where necessary in order for my students to be successful not only in class or on such tests but in life.
  50. I make certain to use my periodic assessments to prepare students for the major tests they will be expected to pass.
  51. I become familiar with state study guides and how content strands are weighted before I design my lesson plans, and I encourage my department to do the same. I often design my assessments like the standardized test questions.
  52. A nation of thinkers will be world leaders; a nation of test takers will lose its edge. We [teachers] are pawns in the process of watching a sad decline, and I refuse to play a part in this downfall. As long as I can fight the system and teach students to actually think and reason for themselves, I will continue. I refuse to be 'one of those teachers' who has the right answer and forces my students to think the way I, or whomever, is forcing them to think.
  53. Reading comprehension and writing to think are the most important things we can teach our students.
  54. I don't. I simply teach the standards to the best of my ability. I challenge my students to rise to the standards. Other than allowing them some practice with the types of questions that may be on the high stakes test, I do not focus on it.

55. I try and expose my students to many more reading passages and poems WITHOUT MY COMMENTS (at least initially) to see if they can locate poetic devices, literary devices, and to see if they can address things like theme and tone WITHOUT MY ASSISTANCE. I have tried to encourage them to learn from the experiences we have with the literature together so that when they are faced with a passage they must comprehend on their own, they will be able to do so successfully.
56. I believe that if I effectively teach by the GPS in my classroom, my students will be prepared for the high stakes test. I also feel testing should be treated as a genre.
57. Because of what I teach, my testing accountability will come with the AP scores that will be coming in July. Since I teach gifted seniors and AP Literature, I do not have to deal with the GHSGT or EOCT. However, the other teachers certainly do. Before GHSGT we held 4 days of review, covering each of the subjects tested. I can assure you that every junior in the school knows what AYP is and what we had to do to meet it. We also had 11th grade homerooms divided into at risk and high achieving students and we spent 20 minutes per day reviewing for the language arts and math tests.
58. I use practice GHSGT questions as bellringers, and I focus my instruction on literary terms that I know will be on the test.
59. I look carefully at the literary terms that should be taught for each unit and make sure that I can point those out and also show my students examples of them in other works we have previously read. Many of those terms are covered heavily on the GHSGT.
60. My grade level organized the GPS into priority levels, and we engineer our lesson plans to address the GPS.
61. OMIT
62. Teach the test.
63. I give a previous year's EOCT and also practice GHSGT early in the year to identify weaknesses and then teach to those areas of weakness.
64. I now make sure that I assess and then formulate instructional strategies based on assessment results.
65. OMIT
66. Use bell ringers with GHSGT type questions.
67. I am a veteran teacher and have yet to view the question on a test I've proctored that had ANYTHING to do with true student learning. Students are not taught to see humanity, but are taught to darken the correct circle on an answer sheet about something that has no direct connection with their lives
68. I aim for the highest level of success for my students. I try to achieve at least 60% (or greater) mastery of a unit by all students before I move on.
69. We use the study guide a week before the test and use the 2004 practice test to teach how the questions are worded. Some questions can be related to the standards and curriculum but only about 50%.
70. Because GPS is performance based, it makes teaching for testing accountability easier, I think, because we are teaching skills, not pieces.

## APPENDIX D

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
<b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>		
Phone: 912-681-5465		Administrative Annex
		P. O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-681-0719	Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460-8005

**To:** Amy Fouse  
1410 Elizabeth Avenue  
Perry, GA-31069

**Cc:** Grigory Dmitriyev, Faculty Advisor  
P. O. Box 8144

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** May 7, 2007

**Subject:** Status of Research Study Modification Request

After a review of your Research Study Modification Request on research project numbered: **"H07181"** and titled **"Standards or Standardization: The Impact of Current Education Initiatives on Teacher Autonomy"**, your request for modification appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your modification request.*

The IRB approval is still in effect for one year from the date of your **original application approval** and will expire on **March 15, 2007**. If at the end of that time, there have been no further changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, another change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary; you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



N. Scott Pierce  
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs