INTERACTIVE POLICY-MAKING: STATE INSTRUCTIONAL POLICY AND THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores how two school districts respond to a state reading policy which was developed to push ambitious approaches to reading instruction. The study examines central office administrators' and school staffs' efforts to guide classroom reading instruction and considers the role that the state reading policy played in these local initiatives.

The study questions the traditional view of local administrators as mere implementors of state policy and argues that local central office and school staff contribute to making instructional policy. The state policy was only one of many streams of instructional ideas on which local administrators drew to develop local instructional policy. Based on this study, I argue that *interactive policy-making* is a helpful perspective with which to explore the relationship between state policy and school districts.

The instructional reform ideas local administrators understand from the state policy vary both within and between these two districts, and these individual differences shape the local district response to the policy. The study suggests that the local response to state instructional policy is shaped by a complex web of local administrators' personal resources (e.g., their knowledge and beliefs about instruction) and local organizational resources. Central office and school administrators' personal resources influence how they attend to and interpret state policy. Personal resources also influence how local administrators

mobilize their organizational resources which, together, shape the local response to state policy. To understand the local response to state policy, then, we must focus on the interaction of personal and organizational resources in influencing local administrators' understanding of state policy and their efforts to incorporate these ideas into local instructional policies.

Finally, the study considers issues of policy design and analysis, suggesting that current systemic reform efforts to push instructional change through curriculum alignment need to pay closer attention to the dynamics of the local context, especially how local administrators' personal resources shape their response to state instructional policy. The study also questions traditional zero-sum notions of state and local relations.

To my parents

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CHAPTER ONE

EDUCATIONAL POLICY-MAKING

Until the 1950s most education policy in the United States was local. Although state governments had constitutional responsibility for the school system, they delegated most administrative tasks to local school districts. Locally elected school boards and central office administrators made most policy decisions. And many educational policy decisions, especially those relating to curriculum and instruction, were left to the discretion of classroom teachers and school principals.[1]

But since the 1950s, state and federal educational policy-making, governance, and funding for public schools have all increased sharply. State support of public schools surpassed local contributions in 1979.[2] While the federal funding share decreased during the Reagan era, state investments continued to rise, reaching a high of 50.7% in 1986.[3] State departments have also grown in size, while the consolidation of schools and districts has increased.[4] The volume of federal and state level educational policies has also increased. State departments of education (SDE), in particular, have moved to implement policies intended to enhance educational equity, raise student achievement standards, and strengthen student graduation and teacher certification requirements. Most noticeable perhaps, has been the increasing interest of state and federal policy makers in issues of instruction and curriculum, issues that traditionally have been left to the discretion of local educators.

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[1]Hannaway and Sproull, 1978-79.
[2]Doyle and Finn, 1984; National Education Assocation, 1987.
[3]National Education Assocation, 1987.
[4]Cantor 1980; Meyer, et al., 1987.

These recent trends raise many questions about the role of local administrators and teachers in this dramatically changed educational policy-making environment. Considering that SDEs have increased their policy-making activities, what role do local central office administrators and school principals play? How have local educators responded to state policy initiatives, especially initiatives which address issues that local administrators and teachers have traditionally taken responsibility for? I take these questions up in the following dissertation through case studies of how two Michigan school districts responded to a state reading policy. I consider the role of local school districts, both central office and school administrators, in light of these developments. In this chapter I consider changes in the state policy-making arena through a look at the state policy-making arena in Michigan, paying particular attention to a state-level initiative to reform reading instruction in the 1980s. I also explore the puzzles that recent state policy initiatives pose, especially with regard to local school districts, through the Michigan story and some of the existing literature on the relationship between state and federal policy, and local practice.

An Expanding State Role in Educational Policy-making

By the early 1980s many SDEs which had previously confined their attention to school finance were expanding their scope of attention to include issues of curriculum. The reform efforts of the 1980s were aimed at improving the quality of learning through strengthening course content, raising student standards, and recruiting quality teachers. Minimum competency testing programs and increased graduation requirements were two of the most

commonly adopted policies by state governments in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[5]

Stronger State Policy: The Michigan Story

Even Michigan, a state where local control of schools is deeply rooted, experienced significant change. State policy-makers in Michigan began to pay greater attention to issues of curriculum in the 1970s and these efforts increased throughout the 1980s. Despite a history of deference to local control, things began to change in Michigan in the 1970s with the introduction of a state-wide testing program, Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) for reading, mathematics and science. During the 1970s and 1980s, the MEAP was expanded as scores were reported by school and district rather than by state-wide averages as they had been initially. In the early 1980s, the state reading consultant began efforts to revise the state reading policy to push more ambitious reading instruction in Michigan classrooms.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw further changes, as state government continued its educational policy-making initiatives. In 1989 new state legislation tied a proportion of state funding to districts to improvement in local MEAP scores. Public Act 25, which became law in 1990, required all school districts to either adopt the state core curriculum or write their own core curriculum for each grade level around student learning outcomes. Districts had to write a core curriculum for each subject area and submit these to the SDE for approval. In addition, in 1991 legislation was adopted which proposed the introduction of a state endorsed diploma and a state proficiency examination which students would be required to pass to obtain a high school diploma. The 10th grade

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[5]In the 1980s some 19 states were using tests to determine students eligibility for high school graduation. Forty-five states were mandating new academic courses, specifying graduation requirements for the first time or increasing existing state graduation requirements. For a more in-depth consideration of these issues see Clune, White, and Patterson, 1989; Firestone, Fuhrman, and Kirst, 1989.

MEAP test would be used to identify which students were eligible for state endorsed diplomas until the proficiency test was developed.

Considering the tradition of local control in Michigan, these developments in state policy-making were dramatic and raised many questions about the role of local school districts in educational policy-making and governance. Although the state began to play a more active role in curriculum and instructional governance, there were no efforts to restructure the educational governance system so that state initiatives might be coordinated with the efforts of local agencies. These state policy initiatives merely added an extra layer of curriculum and instructional governance to what was already in place at the local level. So, as Michigan's SDE adopted more curriculum and instructional policies, did the role of local school districts on matters of curricular and instructional governance and policy-making change? The educational policy literature suggests some answers to this question, though the answers often conflict and numerous puzzles remain unresolved.

Increased State Policy-making and the Role of Local Educators

Some commentators, troubled by the increased federal and state role in education, argue that state and federal policies constrain and regulate the work of local educational personnel.[6] Increasing centralization of the policy-making and educational governance process at the state level, they conclude, results in local educational personnel merely following the dictates of higher level agencies. The discretionary space of district and school personnel is gradually eroded as more and more decisions are made at the state level. Such an analysis suggests that higher level policies have substantial effects on local government and policy-making practices. Cantor sums up the position noting,

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[6]Cantor, 1980; Wise, 1979; Garms, Guthrie, & Pierce, 1978; Kirst and Garms, 1980.

> The likelihood is that eventually a position will be reached whereby in some states the central authority is more or less in complete control of education throughout its territorial area . . . the corollary of such a system is that school districts either disappear entirely or have their powers so attenuated as to become rudimentary.[7]

This perspective suggests that state instructional policies, such as the Michigan reading policy, reduce local central office administrators' and school staff's decision-making authority on issues of curriculum and instruction curricula as they defer to state policy-makers' directives.

But those who make the strongest argument for this interpretation provide little data to support their claim. Other commentators argue, that increased state and federal policy-making does not result in decreased local policy-making and governance endeavors. Centralization of curriculum governance and policy-making at one level of the organization, they argue, does not result in a concomitant decrease in the curriculum governance and policy-making activities of other levels.[8] "Power and organization have often grown in tandem, rather than growing in one place at the expense of another."[9] In fact, most research studies support this perspective, suggesting that state and federal policies have a rather weak and non-uniform impact on local curriculum and instructional initiatives. A few of these research studies are illustrative.

In the 1950s, National Science Foundation (NSF) curricular projects were designed not only to update the content of the math, science and social studies curriculum, but also to promote an inquiry approach to teaching and learning in these subjects.[10] Studies of the impact of the NSF projects indicate that their influence varied dramatically across classrooms and schools. The NSF materials

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[7]Cantor, 1980, p. 30.
[8]D. Cohen 1982; Berman & Pauly, 1975; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; McLaughlin, 1990; Furhman & Elmore, 1990.
[9]D. Cohen 1982, p. 476.
[10]Dow, 1991; Jackson, 1983.

were used to varying degrees in classrooms across the country.[11] And although classroom instruction changed in different ways, the available evidence suggests that these changes were temporary with many teachers eventually reverting back to traditional pedagogy.[12] Local educators continued to exercise significant discretion over curriculum and instruction.

The late 1970s and early 1980s witnessed an unprecedented level of state activity in school curriculum. The reform efforts of the 1980s, in particular, were aimed at improving the quality of learning through strengthening course content, raising student standards, and recruiting quality teachers. Despite a common thrust, these policy initiatives defined the problem with public schooling very differently. Minimum competency testing programs and increased graduation requirements were two of the most commonly adopted policies by state governments in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[13] Studies of minimum competency testing programs suggest contradictory evidence on their impact at the local level. Some commentators suggest these tests have a powerful impact on instruction.[14] But the impact is often to drive instruction in simplistic and mechanical directions.[15] Other studies suggest that testing has little impact on what teachers do in their classrooms.[16] Furthermore, the impact of competency testing is far from uniform, as the attention given to these tests varies widely across classrooms, with some teachers spending more time on test preparation

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[11]Weiss, 1977; Helgeson et al., 1977; Suydam and Osborne, 1977; Stake and Easley, 1978.

[12] Stake & Easley, 1978; Jackson, 1983.

[13]In the 1980s some 19 states were using tests to determine students eligibility for high school graduation. Forty-five states were mandating new academic courses, specifying graduation requirements for the first time or increasing existing state graduation requirements. For a more in-depth consideration of these issues see Clune, White, and Patterson, 1989; Firestone, Fuhrman, and Kirst, 1989.

[14]Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1985; Resnick and Resnick, 1989.

[15]Madaus, 1988.

[16]Floden, et al., 1978; Salmon-Cox, 1981; Sproull and Zubrow, 1981.

than others.[17] In sum, state-level efforts to govern curriculum and instruction through minimum competency testing at best have an uneven impact on the work of local administrators and teachers.

A study of graduation requirements in six states suggests a rather similar uneven impact of state policy at the local level.[18] In almost all schools the state graduation policies required the addition of math and science courses, but the courses added "were predominantly at the basic level,"[19], such as remedial math, consumer math, general science, and general biology. State graduation requirements did not affect all students to the same degree. The reform had greatest impact on the type of courses taken by middle- and low-achieving students and had little impact on college-bound students and schools in affluent areas. Schools and districts seemed to adopt the state level initiatives with little difficulty, in part, because many districts had similar if not more stringent graduation requirements in operation.

Studies of NSF curricular efforts, competency testing, and graduation requirements all suggest that the impact of these state and federal initiatives at the local level vary across districts, schools and classrooms. There is little or no evidence that these state and national policy initiatives had a large or consistent impact on local practice nor that they resulted in limiting the efforts of local administrators and teachers to make decisions about curriculum and instruction. In fact, some studies of the state-level curriculum reform initiatives suggest that local curriculum and instructional policy-making initiatives, especially central office initiatives, increased rather than decreased during the 1980s.[20]

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[17]Romberg, et al., 1989.

[18]See Clune, White and Patterson, 1989; Firestone, Fuhrman and Kirst, 1989; Fuhrman, Clune, and Elmore, 1988.

[19]Clune, White and Patterson, 1989, p. 15.

[20]Fuhrman, Clune and Elmore, 1988; Fuhrman and Elmore, 1990.

But other commentators, as noted earlier, saw these higher-level policy initiatives differently, perceiving them as major intrusions in the work of local administrators and teachers. These commentators saw these state and federal policy initiatives as controlling the work of local administrators and teachers, gradually eroding local discretion on matters of curriculum and instruction.[21] The assumption seems to be that once higher-levels of the hierarchy, such as state and federal agencies, begin to exercise authority and control on educational matters, local authority and control on these matters decreases. Some commentators question this assumption, however, arguing that the hierarchical model of control is seriously flawed in understanding the impact of state and federal policies at the local level.[22] Some researchers argue that although higher level policies influence the work of local administrators and teachers there is little evidence that these policies controlled what local educators did and limited their discretion on matters of curriculum and instruction.[23] The authors of one major study of federal programs, the Rand Change Agent Study, concluded that federal initiatives "exercised limited leverage" over local innovations.[24] "Policy can set the conditions for effective administration and practice, but it can't predetermine how those decisions will be made."[25] One reading of these findings is that treating local administrators as implementors of higher level policy may be flawed to a great extent, as many local agencies seem to continue to exercise considerable discretion on educational policy. External policies exert limited control over street-level bureaucrats (e.g., local administrators and teachers) because the uncertainty of their work, coupled with scarce resources, necessitates

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[21]Cantor, 1980; Wise, 1979; Garms, Guthrie, and Pierce, 1978; Kirst and Garms, 1980.
[22]Elmore, 1979; Cohen, 1982.
[23]Berman and McLaughlin, 1975, p. 24; Elmore and McLaughlin, 1988; McLaughlin, 1976.
[24]Berman and McLaughlin, 1975, p. 24.
[25]Elmore and McLaughlin, 1988, p. 10.

that they have considerable discretion over what they do.[26] Street-level bureaucrats make policy and external policies have only limited impact on what they do.[27] From this perspective it seems premature to write-off the role of local government agencies in the curriculum and instructional decision-making. How do we explain these two distinctly different readings of how state and federal policies impact the role of local administrators and teachers? What role do local districts and schools play in light of increased state curriculum and instructional policy activity? Recent developments in state educational policy-making initiatives further complicate these issues.

New Directions in State Policy-Making: Instructional Policy

Increased state-level policy-making, however, was but part of the story. Concern about traditional didactic instruction was growing across the United States by the mid 1980s, with many state and federal agencies calling for fundamental changes in the manner in which teachers taught and students learned.[28] Unlike earlier state-level policies, which for the most part focused on the "ritual classifications of schooling", e.g., teacher certification requirements, graduation credits, and testing, these "new" policy initiatives focused on the "core technology of schooling,"[29] that is, teaching. State instructional policies began to call for more ambitious visions of student learning which implied radical shifts in teachers' instructional roles and practices. These changes in state educational policy were dramatic when compared with earlier state curricular reform initiatives of the 1980s, which focused almost entirely on students' acquisition of basics skills in mathematics and reading. Policy-makers' began to argue that

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[26]Lipsky, 1980; Weatherly and Lipsky, 1977.
[27]Lipsky, 1980; Weatherly and Lipsky, 1977.
[28]Michigan State Board of Education, 1985; Michigan State Department of Education, 1987; California State Department of Education, 1985; 1987.
[29]Meyer and Rowan, 1978.

students should learn to think independently, reason, and analyze critically. This trend represented a new departure for state government, for it involved both detail about the content of the school curriculum, and its presentation to students.

These developments further complicate efforts to understand the role that local school districts play in curriculum and instructional governance. From one perspective, these instructional policy initiatives represent a further expansion of the state role in educational governance by the involvement of state policy-makers in issues that had traditionally been the responsibility of local educators. From another perspective, however, the nature of the instruction these policies push, coupled with the political and economic contexts within which they were developed, suggest that these policies may do little to limit the curriculum and instructional decision-making of local school districts. State instructional policies that focus on changing the manner in which teachers teach and students learn may in fact increase the capacity for business and governance at the local level because they may increase the uncertainty of local work.[30] A closer look at one such policy, the Michigan reading policy, highlights how these policies may not decrease local activity around issues of curriculum and instruction.

The Michigan Reading Policy

State policy-makers in Michigan were concerned with the traditional emphasis on isolated reading skills and lack of attention given to reading comprehension. Reading instruction focused on isolated decoding and phonics skills and was centered around a basal reader with little attention given to students' comprehension of the material.[31] One local central office administrator in Michigan described it rather aptly when she remarked:

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[30]D. Cohen, 1988; Elmore and McLaughlin, 1988; Lipsky, 1980.

[31]Michigan Reading Assocation, 1984; Durkin, 1978-79.

> Emphasis as I see it was on phonics. Certainly we hoped that students would understand. But I think we dealt more with the tools than we perhaps did with content [comprehension]. We probably looked at reading as something that one did if they put together all the pieces.[32]

Increasingly, research on reading instruction was calling into question the practice of drilling students in isolated reading skills (e.g., phonics) and encouraging practitioners to pay greater attention to students' comprehension of what they read.[33] Some state policy-makers in Michigan, with the help of the Michigan Reading Association (MRA), took up the challenge posed by these research findings.

The state reading definition. In 1985, after considerable preparatory work on the part of State Department of Education's reading consultant, the MRA, and some university academics, the State Board of Education approved a revised definition of reading.

> Reading is the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among: the reader's existing knowledge, the information suggested by the written language, and the context of the reading situation.[34]

Compared to the previous state definition which described reading as "a process of transforming the visual representation of language into meaning," the revised definition implied a radical shift in how state policy makers envisioned reading instruction in Michigan classrooms. In the old definition, reading was portrayed

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[32]Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum (Hamilton School District, Michigan) interview, 14 July 1992.

[33]For a more in-depth look at this research see Pearson, 1985.

[34]Michigan State Department of Education, 1987, p. 1; Michigan Reading Association, 1984.

as a series of isolated skills which students had to master in order to extract meaning from what they read.

The revised definition suggested a dramatic change, placing much greater emphasis on students' comprehension of text. Rather than merely figuring out words, the revised definition suggested that students should be able to construct meaning from whole texts. Moreover the new policy portrayed comprehension as an interactive process shaped by readers' pre-existing knowledge, the material being read, and the context in which the reading took place. Comprehending text involved more than finding the "correct" meaning; it encouraged students to construct meaning based on the interaction of their prior knowledge with the printed matter. Different readers might construct different meaning from the same text, depending on their prior knowledge and their reasons for reading. The state's "essential objectives for reading," which were developed by state policy-makers to shape reading instruction in Michigan classrooms, were also revised to reflect the state definition.[35] These objectives were distinctly different from traditional reading objectives which focused on students' ability to master discrete reading skills, such as, "identifying consonant blends." The revised objectives focused on the need for students to construct meaning, students' knowledge of the reading process, and students' attitudes and perceptions about reading.

An ambitious instructional reform agenda but limited resources. For the first time, Michigan policy-makers had gone beyond using state policy as a means of specifying the content of the reading curriculum, and attempted to affect instruction. The definition implied radical change for reading instruction in Michigan classrooms but these ambitious changes presented state policy-makers with a number of problems if their ideas about reading instruction were to reach

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[35]Michigan State Department of Education, 1987.

Michigan classrooms. The SDE had few financial resources to devote to dissemination efforts and there was only one state department consultant with responsibility for reading. Attempting to reach more than 90,000 teachers and administrators spread across 562 Michigan school districts with these limited resources seemed impossible.

Furthermore, the Michigan SDE, like many others across the country, did not control many of the instruments (e.g., reading textbooks) typically used to guide classroom instruction. Curricular and instructional governance had traditionally been left to local administrators and teachers. In many states, including Michigan, local districts rather than state departments continued to be the major provider of staff development for teachers, resulting in local educators controlling one of the primary dissemination mechanisms for new instructional ideas.[36] In addition, in Michigan many of the other instructional guidance instruments (e.g., textbook adoptions, and most testing policy) were under the control of either local schools or central offices. Consequently, though state policy-makers proposed ambitious instructional reform they did not have direct access to some of the critical instructional guidance instruments in order to communicate their message to local teachers. State policy-makers in Michigan had to address these problems in order to disseminate their ideas to local educators.

A revised state testing program. The primary instructional guidance instrument available to state policy-makers in Michigan was the MEAP reading test which many policy-makers believed would drive instructional change. State policy-makers revised the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) in reading, to reflect the changes in reading that they were advancing. In fact many of the policy-makers saw the MEAP as "the only wedge" the state had to get local

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[36]See Little, 1989, for an excellent treatment of this issue.

educators to pay attention to the reading policy.[37] The revised MEAP, which was administered at grades 4, 7, and 11, differed significantly from its predecessor. The previous MEAP focused entirely on isolated reading skills (e.g., identifying suffixes, prefixes, antonyms) and literal and inferential comprehension which required students to read brief text selections (typically less than 100 words) and answer questions. These reading selections were short, and written for the purpose of the test.

In contrast, the revised test focused mostly on students' ability to comprehend text, requiring students not only to respond to questions to which answers were found in the text, but also questions that drew on students' prior knowledge and experiences. Test items no longer focused on measuring students' ability with isolated reading skills (e.g., word decoding skills), and reading selections were longer (500-2000 words) and drawn from children's reading material rather than selections that were written exclusively for the test. Furthermore, both narrative and informational selections were used, suggesting that reading fiction should be but part of students' exposure to reading. In addition, the test also measured students' attitudes and self-perceptions towards reading, their familiarity with the topics addressed in the selections, and their knowledge of reading (e.g., story genre). So not only was students' ability to comprehend what they read important, but also their knowledge of text structure and their interest in reading.

Engaging local support: State staff development. Despite a shortage of SDE resources to support dissemination efforts, state policy-makers managed to engage the support of some local educators to fund an ambitious staff development program, and to serve as trainers of other educators in their local districts. State Department staff, with the assistance of the Michigan Reading

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[37]Wixson and Peters interview, 25 Oct. 1989.

Association and some local educators, conducted a variety of two workshops across the state beginning in 1985. The audiences were large, with one conference in Flint attracting over 1,000 participants.[38] These workshops involved presentations on the research behind the policy and classroom activities that teachers should use in their classroom to teach reading. Presenters told participants about the research behind the definition, explaining ideas such as metacognition, prior knowledge, and text structure.[39] Presentations on the reading strategies included "Directed-Reading-Thinking-Activity" (DRTA), "Reciprocal teaching," "story mapping," "Know/Want To Learn-Learned" (KWL), and "Question and Answer Relationship" (QAR).[40]

Ironically, although state policy-makers encouraged local educators to adopt innovative pedagogy and encourage students to play a much more active role in the reading process, their own pedagogy was rather traditional. Participants were assigned a passive, listener role, and only occasionally given opportunities to ask questions.[41] Most sessions focused on modeling reading strategies, with presenters "telling" teachers what they should do in their classrooms. Conference organizers developed scripted modules of the presentations with transparencies and handouts which participants were given and encouraged to use to conduct their own staff development efforts in their districts and schools. This was a way for state policy-makers to try and

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[38]Wixson interview, 15 Aug. 1990.

[39]Michigan Department of Education, 1988.

[40]These strategies were developed from research in cognitive psychology and reading instruction. Researchers in cognitive psychology argue that good readers use these strategies to direct and help them think about their comprehension of what they read. Other strategies focus on text structure (i.e., expository and narrative), enhancing readers' ability to identify how parts of stories (e.g., character, plot, problem) relate and thereby developing their ability to understand what is read. Reading strategies are highly structured routines, which researchers argue should be taught to and used by all readers to aid their ability to understand what they read. For a more detailed discussion of reading strategies see Pearson, 1984. See also Michigan Reading Assocation, 1984, and Michigan Department of Education, 1987; 1988.

[41]Observation of Special Needs Conference, Traverse City, Michigan, 30 Sept. 1990 and 1 Oct. 1990; Michigan Department of Education and Curriculum Review Committee, 1988.

maximize their influence on local practice with limited resources. But it also increased state policy-makers' dependency on local administrators and educators, because they relied on local administrators to use local resources (e.g., money, staff, central office instructional guidance instruments) to get the instructional reform message to schools and classrooms.

State Instructional Policy and the Role of School Districts

The new reading policy was an ambitious effort. State policy makers had taken a bold step in attempting to change the manner in which students learned to read. For the first time, they had gone beyond using state policy as a means of specifying the content of the reading curriculum, and attempted to affect learning and instruction. Although state policy-makers began to pay greater attention to issues of instruction, they seemed to depend to a great extent on local central office administrators and school educators to get their message to Michigan classrooms. A number of factors heightened the dependency of state policy-makers on local educators. As noted earlier, the limited financial and staff resources of the SDE coupled with the fact that they controlled few of the instructional guidance instruments increased dependency on local government agencies to get their message for instructional reform to local teachers. But other issues, endemic to efforts to push more ambitious instruction, also heightened their dependency on local school districts.

First, although state policy-makers in Michigan were intent on changing reading instruction, most of the policy documents and dissemination efforts focused on student reading and learning. Although the strategies were techniques that teachers could use to teach reading, they were after all, developed from theories of *learning* rather than theories of *teaching*. The state reading policy provided little direct advice to local educators on teaching as distinct from learning. Like previous efforts to push more ambitious teaching,

the state reading policy portrayed teaching as a simple reflex of learning.[42] State policy-makers' expressed ambivalence on their vision of reformed reading instruction. Although state policy-makers agreed about the reading practice they wished to change, they seemed less clear about the alternative they were proposing. Some saw the policy as promoting a constructivist approach with children constructing different meanings from what they read, while others viewed it from a cognitive psychology perspective with readers constructing right meanings by applying the correct reading strategies.[43]

This ambivalence was reflected in the state policy documents. At least one interpretation of the state reading definition suggested that readers would construct multiple meanings from text depending on their prior knowledge and the reading situation. In contrast, although the revised MEAP encouraged students to construct meaning, the multiple choice format required all students to identify the one best meaning. Regardless of their prior knowledge students were all expected to construct the same *correct* meaning, rather than using their knowledge and experiences to construct a variety of interpretations. From this perspective, the test was at odds with at least one interpretation of the state reading definition which suggested readers construct their own meanings. Which perspective were local educators to adopt and attempt to enact in their schools and classrooms? State policy-makers provided conflicting answers to this question leaving central office staff, school administrators and teachers to decide what the reading policy meant for reading instruction in their schools and districts.

Second, ambitious visions of teaching heighten the uncertainty of the teaching activity, making prescriptions about how to teach difficult.[44] If teachers

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[42]D. Cohen, 1988.

[43]Elaine Weber interview, 27 Aug. 1990; Charles Peters interview, 13 Aug. 1991.

[44]D. Cohen, 1988; Cuban, 1984; Rowan, 1990; Jackson, 1986.

are to teach students to construct multiple meanings from texts based on their prior knowledge and experiences, then teacher discretion seems vital to undertake such teaching. In other words, ambitious teaching is heavily dependent on the classroom context and the experiences and knowledge individual learners bring to the classroom. Ambitious teaching relies heavily on teachers' "intuition, creativity, improvisation, and expressiveness".[45] Consequently, state policy-makers' efforts to push ambitious approaches to learning and instruction obligated local educators to exercise considerable discretion in determining how to teach.[46] At least one of the Michigan policy-makers was aware of this, arguing that "teachers need to be empowered" in order to reform their reading instruction.[47] This new genre of state instructional policies posed new problems for state policy-makers who wanted to push ambitious approaches to instruction, but to do so had to provide local educators with considerable discretion in order to undertake such teaching. This situation suggests the need for state policy-makers to strike a difficult balance between pushing local administrators and teachers to change their existing practice while simultaneously encouraging them to use their own discretion to construct this reformed instruction to fit the local context.

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Instructional policies, such as the Michigan Reading Policy, are open to even more varied interpretations than traditional educational policies which focused on the structure and organization of schooling (e.g., finance policy, certification requirements).[48] The uncertainty surrounding ambitious pedagogy,

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[45]Gage, 1978, p. 15; see also Eisner, 1978.

[46]For an excellent discussion of how different theories of teaching as a technology have major ramifications for proposals to reform education, see Rowan, 1990.

[47]Weber interview, 27 Aug. 1990.

[48]My intention is not to suggest that traditional educational policies are not open to different interpretations. The evidence suggests they are.

the need for teacher discretion in order to undertake such teaching, and state policy-makers' scarce resources to disseminate the reform ideas suggests that (contrary to the expectations of many commentators) increased state policy activity may increase, rather than decrease, local activity on issues of curriculum and instruction. These policies may result in the scope of central office administrators' and school principals' work being expanded to include issues they had not previously addressed. Local administrators and teachers in Michigan, for example, were confronted with decisions about what reformed reading instruction would look like, and whether and how the instructional reform ideas they understood from the policy should be incorporated into local curriculum and instructional decisions (e.g., textbook adoptions). Consequently, the successful dissemination of state instructional policies that focus on changing the manner in which teachers teach and students learn depends to a great extent on the responsiveness of local administrators and teachers.

These recent developments in state instructional policy-making, as illustrated by the Michigan reading policy, raise anew some old questions about the relationship between state policy and local practice. How do central office administrators and school principals respond to these policy initiatives? Did the state reading policy impinge on local curriculum and instructional decision-making, and if so, how? How was the scope of local policy-making efforts influenced by the state reading policy? How did the reading policy influence the balance between state control and local control over curriculum and instruction? And what explains the local response to these state policy initiatives?

State Policy and Local Governance: The Implementation Perspective

Although extensive research has been done on the relationship between state and federal policy and local practice, few studies have focused specifically

on school districts, especially the district central office. Existing research is helpful, however, providing an understanding of the local response to state and federal policy. But the implementation literature also poses many unresolved puzzles and offers conflicting opinions. I consider some of the findings from implementation research tradition below and explore some of the problems posed by the implementation perspective.

Explaining the Policy and Practice Relationship

Again, although analysts tend to agree for the most part that federal and state policies have had rather limited impact on regulating the work of local agencies and personnel, the explanations they offer for this outcome differ considerably. Typically the explanations offered, though interrelated, fall into a number of separate categories. Some researchers point to the nature of educational policy in attempting to explain the rather weak impact policy has on practice. Other explanations focus on the fragmented and loosely-coupled school organization. Still others suggest that the answer lies in attributes of the local context (e.g., district, schools, and classrooms), which hinder change.

Policy explanations. Some see the implementation problem as one of unclear and ambiguous policies which are highly uncertain with regard to their potential consequences on practice.[49] State and federal level policies deal with global issues and lack specificity on the changes that are proposed. At both the federal and state level, power and decision-making authority is divided between judicial, executive and legislative branches of government.[50] Adding to this divided government system a huge array of interest groups attempting to influence policy decisions and relatively weak party discipline illustrates the fragmented nature of the educational governance system at both the state and

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[49]Elmore, 1975; M. Miles, 1978; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1974; Ripley, 1985; Weatherley, 1979.
[50]Cohen & Spillane, 1992; Kaufman, 1969.

federal levels.[51] The need for legislative coalitions and agreement between different levels of government in order that policies can be adopted results in much compromise.[52] As a result, ambiguity is often a necessary condition in order for policies to gain the necessary political support for adoption at the state and federal levels.[53] The importance of elections at both the federal and state levels results in government officials focusing on politics rather than policy.[54] Legislators, to increase their chances of re-election, focus on new policies that have high visibility, immediate effects, and clear benefits, rather than on improving existing policy areas.[55] In addition, policy initiatives are often removed from the everyday practical issues that local personnel have to address and provide limited detail on the changes that are proposed. Numerous studies document how the failure to address specific needs and prescribe the desired changes undermine the implementation of policy.[56]

Agreeing that policies tend to be unclear, others suggest that policies also tend to lack consistency, authority, and power.[57] Aspects of the instructional guidance system (e.g., textbooks, testing, curriculum guides) through which policies are implemented, and the linkage among multiple state and federal policies often send inconsistent messages to local educational personnel. Consistency enhances the impact of policy at the local level. Furthermore, policies often lack authority and power because state and federal agencies have limited staff and resources to oversee the implementation of their initiatives.[58]

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[51]Cohen & Spillane, 1992; Collie, 1985; Epstein, 1980.

[52]Olson, 1980; Lowenberg & Paterson 1979.

[53] For a detailed discussion of this issue see Kingdon, 1984.

[54]Mayhew, 1974; Salmore & Salmore, 1990; Fuhrman, 1993.

[55]Fuhrman, 1993.

[56]See for example, Emrick & Peterson, 1978; Floden et al., 1988; Porter et al., 1988; Williams, 1976;

[57]Floden et al., 1981; Murphy, 1974; Porter et al., 1988;

[58]Cohen & Spillane, 1992; Murphy 1974; McDonnell & McLaughlin, 1982.; McDonnell & Elmore, 1987.

Policy-makers frequently have few sanctions or rewards with which to implement their policies. In other words, state policies often send inconsistent and weak messages to local agencies, thus leaving local personnel with much discretion over curriculum decisions and providing them with considerable room within which to ignore external policy.

Another explanation may lie in the fact that policy "often has little to do with instrumental action."[59] In other words, policy makers develop policy to symbolize a position rather than to achieve specific changes in local practice. Policy is a means for policy-makers to take positions and build coalitions.[60] Educational policy also provides a relatively inexpensive means for state and federal governments to be seen "acting" on more difficult problems such as the economy. The NSF curricular efforts in the 1950s were a case in point, as was the back to basics movement of the early 1980s. Diminishing American competitiveness in international trade markets and an international recession provided the spring board for the back to basics movement and A Nation At Risk (1983) which challenged state governments to reform education. Educational policies, therefore, become symbols for government action on pressing national and state problems such as the economy, with little intent to change local practice.

A somewhat similar argument focuses on how educational policy is designed to protect the weak "core technology" of schooling (i.e., teaching) from external scrutiny which would question public confidence in the school system, especially its legitimacy as a social stratification mechanism.[61] As a result, educational policy focuses on the formal structure of schooling (e.g., teacher and

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[59]Elmore, Sykes, & Spillane, 1990, p. 8.
[60]Elder and Cobb, 1983.
[61]Meyer & Rowan, 1978.

student certification) and thereby buffers the weak core technology protecting public confidence in the school system.

Some researchers, however, argue that although characteristics of external policies are important in understanding how these policies are implemented at the local level, the importance of these policy factors in explaining how policy plays out at the local level is relatively weak when compared with characteristics of the local context.[62] The Rand Change Agent Study, for example, found that the successful implementation of federal programs depended more on local factors than on policy inputs, such as level of funding for the federal program.[63] "The consequences of the various federal policies examined by Rand primarily depended on local factors, not federal guidelines or funding levels."[64]

Organizational explanations. Others perceive the problem as an organizational one. The governance structure of the American school system is fragmented, with levels of governance loosely coupled with one another.[65] Excessive oversight costs cause decisions made at one level of the system to be ignored at other levels. Furthermore, the multi-layered educational governance structure means that policies enacted at higher levels have to survive a multitude of decision points during the implementation process.[66] Federal policies frequently have to pass through state and local educational authorities, and at each point are subject to change or circumvention.

The rewards and incentives of actors at different levels of the educational system differ, so that policies made at higher levels of the system are re-interpreted at other levels to fit with local agendas and priorities. Some

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[62]Elmore, 1979; Elmore and McLaughlin, 1988; Berman and McLaughlin, 1975; McLaughlin, 1990.
[63]Berman and Pauly, 1975; Berman and McLaughlin, 1977; McLaughlin, 1990.
[64]McLaughlin, 1990, p. 12.
[65]Weick, 1976; Meyer & Rowan, 1978.
[66]Pressman & Wildavsky, 1974; D. Cohen 1982.

researchers compare the educational system to a series of overlapping games (federal, state, district, school).[67] Although the games overlap, the rules and the incentives to play the games are different at each level of the system. Consequently, policy made at one level of the system flows into the other games where the attention it receives and the manner in which it is implemented depends on the local game.

Local explanations. Others interpret the failure of educational policy from the local perspective. Some point to characteristics of the local context and the nature of local work, while others focus on the attributes of local educators.

The rewards, incentives, and priorities of the local context have been posited as explanations for the variable and weak response to higher level policies.[68] Factors such as the lack of resources and community attitudes influence the implementation of external policies at the local level. Financial shortages and the lack of curricular materials result in policies not being implemented at the local level.[69] Time shortages also hinder the efforts of local personnel to change their practice in response to policy. Teachers need time to develop the understanding and knowledge needed to adapt a policy to their particular classrooms. State and federal policy-makers, however, working on an altogether different timeline, have adopted new policies before local educators have had enough time to implement previous policies. Furthermore, the time required to implement new policies often leads to the "overloading" of local educators.[70] "Time is the essential ingredient in any reform" Elmore and McLaughlin note, and the "function of time is to provide opportunities to

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[67]Bardach, 1977; Firestone, 1989.
[68] Firestone, 1989, Rosenholtz, 1989.
[69]Gross et al., 1971; Smith and Keith, 1971.
[70]Smith and Keith, 1971; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977.

accommodate, adjust, and adapt administration and practice to policy".[71] The active commitment of central office and school administrators to external policies, their willingness of mobilize local resources to support change are also important in explaining the local response to external policies.[72] External policies that push changes that conflict with community expectations and values are often ignored at the local level.[73]

The unpredictability of social interactions, coupled with the uncertainty that surrounds the means and goals of education, increases the discretion of local educators (and other street level bureaucrats) over their work. The nature of work is such that external supervision is difficult, increasing the discretion of local educators and decreasing the impact of external policies.[74] Furthermore the uncertainties of local work results in local educators adopting a number of standard operating routines to simplify and make their work manageable. These routines often hamper efforts to implement new policies, with policies often being modified to fit with existing routines.[75] In other words, it is not just the local context that retards state and federal policy implementation but the nature of street-level work which policy attempts to change. These uncertainties may make changing practice through policy difficult. As Cohen puts it, "each account assumes few barriers within teaching, to making it more adventurous. All focus on external barriers, in circumstances of teaching."[76]

The beliefs and knowledge of local personnel about teaching and learning, students, and subject matter also help explain the weak and rather erratic response to state and federal policies at the local level. One study illustrated how

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[71]Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988, p. 60; see also Cuban 1984., Weatherly and Lipsky, 1977.
[72]Berman and McLaughlin, 1975.
[73]Berman & Pauly, 1975; Jackson, 1983; Stake & Easley, 1978; Smith & Keith, 1971.
[74]Lipsky, 1980; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977; Cole, 1979.
[75]Gross, et al., 1971; Lipsky, 1980; Lortie, 1977; Sarason, 1977; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977;
[76]Cohen, 1988, p. 9.

fourth-grade teachers' beliefs and convictions about what should be taught was a strong determinant of the content of the math curriculum.[77] Other studies suggest that the manner in which individual local educators attend to and interpret external policies influences how these policies are implemented at the local level.[78] The existing beliefs and knowledge of local educators, therefore, shape their interpretation and implementation of external policy.

Literature from other fields also suggest that the manner in which personnel interpret external reform initiatives influence how they implemented these mandates.[79] One study of downsizing in 30 organizations in the U.S. automotive industry found that whether managers interpreted the external downsizing mandate as a threat or as an opportunity influenced how they implemented the mandate within their organizations.[80] In general, managers who perceived the downsizing mandate as an opportunity undertook more and greater changes than those who perceived the external mandate as a threat. Furthermore, when managers used appropriated interpretation (i.e., attached the downsizing mandate to existing agendas through redefinition and appropriation), they were more successful in implementing the downsizing mandate.

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The implementation literature, reviewed above, posits a plethora of explanations for the rather weak and erratic impact of higher level policy on local practice. These provide important insights into the relationship between policy and practice and informed my research study. The implementation perspective and the explanations suggested, however, raise a number of puzzles.

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[77]Porter, et al, 1986; Schwille et al., 1983.
[78]Keisler & Sproull, 1982; Sproull, 1981; Weiss & Cohen, 1991; McLaughlin, 1987.
[79]Weick, 1988; Dutton and Jackson, 1987.
[80]Freeman, 1992.

First, the manner in which the relationship between state policy and local practice is cast seems problematic. The notion of the impact of higher level policy on local practice implies a rather static and uniform local practice that policy is designed to shape and transform. Policy impact suggests a linear and uni-directional relationship from state policy to local practice which fails to take account of what local educators do with policy in the manner in which I think they should. Some commentators suggest that the practice of local administrators and teachers is far from static and that they adopt an active stance towards higher level policies.[81] In fact, as noted earlier, the uncertainty that surrounds the ambitious instruction that these new state instructional policies push seems to necessitate a rather active role on the part of local educators, as they figure out what the policy means for local practice. In other words, what local educators do with policy as they make sense of the reform ideas is critical in any effort to understand the relationship between state policy and local practice.[82] Recent research, especially work in classrooms, supports this notion, suggesting that practitioners interpret policy and respond to their interpretations of policy rather than a uniform, fixed vision of policy.[83] The notion that local educators respond to their interpretations of policy undermines the notion of some fixed state policy impacting and shaping what local educators do. Focusing only on how policy impacts practice, as much of the implementation literature does, fails to grasp how local administrators and teachers influence state policy-makers' reform ideas as they make sense of them within a local context. The problem is due at least in part to the manner in which policy is defined, rather narrowly, as the intentions and ideas expressed through the policy statements of higher level agencies.

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[81]Lipsky, 1980; Berman and McLaughlin, 1975; Elmore and McLaughlin, 1988.
[82]Lipsky, 1980; Berman and Mclaughlin, 1975.
[83]Cohen and Ball, 1990, Jennings, 1992; Keisler and Sproull, 1982.

Second, most researchers in the implementation tradition assume there are objective attributes of either the policy or local context which explain the relationship between state policy and local practice. The terms factors, properties, characteristics of either the policy or local context, imply objective facets of the context whose absence or presence influences the local response to state policy. For example, one aspect of the local context which has been identified by some researchers as being important in explaining the local response to state and federal policy is the financial resources of the local district or school. Money is often important in order that local administrators can offer staff development opportunities and purchase new curriculum materials that support the changes pushed by state and federal policies. A shortage of financial resources, therefore, could curtail the efforts of local educators to respond to state policy. But this focus fails to capture human agency, that is, how local administrators perceive the context within which they work and how they respond as a result. For example, the importance of money in understanding a school districts' response to a state policy must depend to some extent on how local administrators see this financial resource and whether and how they decide to use it in responding to a state policy. As Weick notes, "though an organization may contain stimuli unlike those encountered in non-organizational settings, these stimuli remain only potential stimuli until they are noticed".[84] Researchers who have attended to the agency of local educators, argue that it is a crucial component in any effort to explain and understand how external policies are implemented in local settings. Berman and McLaughlin, for example, argue that the manner in which local educators understood federal policies, their commitment and active participation in developing project materials to respond to these policies, and their efforts to mobilize local resources in response to these

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[84]Weick, 1979, p. 32.

policies, were important variables in explaining how federal policies were implemented in local districts and schools. "[L]ocal choices about how (or whether) to put a policy into practice have more significance for policy outcomes than do such policy features as technology, program design, funding levels, or governance requirements, ..."[85] Consequently, focusing only on properties of the local organization (e.g., money, community interest in education) fails to attend to how individuals read both policy and the environment in which they work and how this reading shapes their efforts to respond to the policy.

More recently, some researchers are paying greater attention to how local educators' beliefs and knowledge shape the way in which they respond to state policy. These research efforts bring human agency further to the fore in efforts to understand the local response to state and federal policy. How do characteristics and properties of the local context (e.g., financial resources, community values) interact with characteristics of local educators (e.g., their beliefs and knowledge) in shaping the local response to state policy? There have been few efforts to attend to how the resources that individuals bring to their work (e.g., knowledge) interact with the resources available in the local organization (e.g., money). Bringing local administrators and what they do with state policy to the fore - how they attend to, interpret and disseminate policy - helps address this problem, as it highlights human agency in any effort to understand and explain the local response to state policy.

A third problem with the implementation perspective, related to both of the earlier problems, concerns the curious dichotomy that much of the implementation literature draws between "policy characteristics" on the one hand and "characteristics of local practice" on the other. Such a distinction raises numerous questions. How are these two sets of competing explanations related

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[85]McLaughlin, 1990, p. 12.

to one another? How do attributes of the policy context interact with characteristics of the local context? Doesn't the consistency and authority of state policy depend to a great extent on how it is perceived by educators within a local context? The nature of these new instructional policies, coupled with recent research findings which suggest that the beliefs and knowledge of local educators shape how they interpret and respond to these policies, suggest that policy is more than the documents and ideas that state and federal agencies disseminate. If, as some commentators suggest, local educators interpret policy and respond to their interpretations of the policy, then things such as the authority and clarity of state policy must depend to some extent on how local educators construct the policy. Consequently, in order to understand the relationship between policy and local practice we need to consider how characteristics of both state policy and the local context interact with each other. It seems impossible to gauge the importance of policy attributes (e.g., authority, clarity, and consistency) apart from how policy is perceived and understood by administrators within the local context.

Focusing on how local educators respond to state policy blurs the dichotomy that has traditionally been draw between attributes of the policy and attributes of the local context. Using the array of explanations offered by the implementation perspective and acknowledging the puzzles the implementation frame raises, I explore the response to the Michigan reading policy in two local school districts.

The Research Study

I consider the relationship between the Michigan reading policy and local practice in this study, focusing on how two local school districts in Michigan responded to the state reading policy (see Appendix A). I confine my attention

to local school districts (both central office and school administrators) for two reasons. First, the role of school district in curriculum and instruction, and in responding to state policy, has received relatively little attention. The few studies that do exist suggest rather conflicting evidence. One study of school districts in California suggests that while the number of central office staff increased and job titles became more specialized between 1930 and 1970, little attention was given to positions in curriculum and instruction.[86] Other studies suggest that district central office administrators pay little attention to issues of curriculum and instruction in their interactions with school principals and teachers.[87] But a few studies give some reason for optimism, suggesting that central office administrators can play an important role in the successful introduction of change at the school and classroom level.[88] The current state of research on school districts suggests that much more work is needed to understand their role in the relationship between state policy and local practice. Second, as noted above, many of the instructional guidance instruments which are essential to instructional reform initiatives (e.g., textbooks) are under the auspices of local districts rather than SDEs. This is especially true in a state like Michigan which continues to have a relatively decentralized educational governance system. Consequently, understanding the school district's role in the relationship between state instructional policy and local practice is essential.

The Research Questions

The cases of what happened in two Michigan school districts offer an opportunity for exploring the school district's role in responding to this new genre of state instructional policies. Three questions are central.

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[86]Rowan, 1983.

[87]Hannaway & Sproull, 1978-79; Floden et al., 1988.

[88]Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; David, 1990.

1. How did central office staff and school administrators in these two districts respond to the Michigan reading policy?
2. How did the central office response to the state reading policy influence the school-level response?
3. What explains these local responses to state instructional policy?

By response of central office and school administrators I mean the efforts of central administrators to shape the reading curriculum and reading instruction in their districts. Attending to the policy as perceived notion suggests that the manner in which central office and school administrators interpret and disseminate policy within their districts results in the policy ideas being transformed within the local context. Drawing on the accounts of a number of school administrators I consider what influence the central office response to the state reading policy had on reading instruction at the school level.

The Local School Districts

Earlier research involving teachers in these two districts, suggested considerable differences in the messages teachers were receiving from central office personnel on reading instruction. The contrast between these two districts on the messages about reading instruction served as the basis for their selection. Both school districts are large, but are very different demographically.

Parkwood is a suburban school district with close to 20 schools. The district has a large central office administration and has a reputation of supporting rather progressive and innovative instructional practices. Of the nearly 15, 000 students enrolled in the district, less than 1% were American Indian, nearly 3% were Asian, under 2% were black, less than 1% were Hispanic, and 95% were white.[89] Parkwood is among the ten largest districts in the state, serving almost 15,000 students. Over 7,000 students attend the districts' 12

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[89]Data on student demographics for both districts is based on figures supplied by central offices and the Michigan Department of Education, Bureau of Information Management (21 Nov. 1991). This data is for the 1990/91 school year

elementary schools. Students in the district come primarily from middle and upper middle income families and the community is prosperous, with the median income for the various townships which the school district serves ranging between $40, 000 and $50, 000 in 1989.[90] Furthermore, the number of families living below the poverty level was fewer than 5% in 1989 in all communities served by the district. In fact in two of the three urban communities the district serves, only 1% or less of families lived below the poverty level. Education is highly valued, and the community has high expectations for the performance of the school district and their students.

The district budget for 1991-92 was over 73 million dollars, 69.6% was devoted to classroom instruction, and 27.4% was spent on support services. Of the 73 million dollars, close to 95% came from local revenues, less than 2% from state revenues, and over 2.0% from federal funds. Parkwood seems to have had little financial difficulty until the mid 1980s when changes in the state school funding arrangements threatened the district's financial well being.[91] Parkwood's central office grew dramatically between 1977 and 1988. By 1988, central office staff included some 12 administrative staff, four of whom dealt directly with issues of curriculum and instruction. In addition, the district had also hired two full-time central office curriculum specialists. Most central administrators have been with the district for long periods of time. The superintendent, associate superintendent, and the assistant superintendent all have been in their current positions for over 16 years.

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[90]Data on income and poverty for both districts are taken from the US Bureau of Census, 1990. This data provides only a rough indicator of the income and the number of students who live in homes where income is below the poverty level, as census data is not aggregated by LEAs. Furthermore, many families send their children to private schools (almost one quarter of school age children attend private schools in Hamilton, while in Parkwood the numbers vary from 8.5% in one of the townships served by the district to 16.7% in another) further complicating the accuracy of these figures.

[91]Parkwood central office, for example, lost 2 million dollars in state funding during the 1987/88 school year.

Hamilton is a large urban school district with over 40 elementary school sites. Of the more than 25, 000 students enrolled in the district in 1990/91, less than 1% were American Indian, less than 2% were Asian, over 37% were black, close to 9% were Hispanic, and over half the students were white. Close to 50% of students come from low income families, with over 13% of all families in the Hamilton community having incomes below the national poverty level in 1989.

The district budget for 1991-92 was over 162 million dollars, just over half of which was devoted to classroom instruction, and the remainder being spent on business operations and support services.[92] Close to 55% of the school budget came from local revenues, nearly 30% came from state revenues, and over 5% came from federal funds. Hamilton has had considerable financial difficulties over the past decade. Hamilton's central office is large with well over 30 staff members, over half of whom deal with different aspects of curriculum and instruction. Financial shortages in the late 1980s and early 1990s resulted substantial cutbacks in central office staff, with most cuts being made in the number of curriculum consultants rather than senior administrative staff. In addition, the Hamilton district has had four different superintendents since 1980.

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This thesis explores the response to the state reading policy in Hamilton and Parkwood districts. Chapters Two and Three consider how the Parkwood and Hamilton central office responded to the reading policy, focusing on central administrators interpretation of the policy and their efforts to disseminate the policy to schools. Chapter Four considers the influence that the central office response to the state policy had in Hamilton and Parkwood schools through mini-cases of two schools in each district. Chapter 5 attempts to explain the role

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[92]Data on district revenues for both Hamilton and Parkwood are based on figures published by the central offices for the 1991/92 school year.

of the school district in the state policy and local practice relationship based on the cases. Finally, chapter 6 considers the implications of the findings from these cases for state instructional policy-making and policy analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

PARKWOOD CENTRAL OFFICE RESPONDS

The state reading policy proposed ambitious changes in reading instruction, calling on Michigan teachers to strengthen students' ability to construct meaning from text, rather than drilling students in isolated bits of vocabulary, decoding and phonics. State policy makers had taken a bold new step in attempting to change the manner in which teachers taught reading. For the first time, they had gone beyond using state policy as a means of specifying the content of the reading curriculum, and attempted to affect instruction. New policies propose new ideas or new configurations of old ideas and therefore imply learning for those who enact them.[1] The state reading policy seemed to require considerable learning on the part of local educators, considering the dramatic changes state policy-makers proposed about how students should learn to read.

State policies, such as the Michigan Reading Policy, however, enter a complex and dynamic work environment at the local level.[2] Central office administrators have much to attend to besides state instructional policies. And while state policy-makers proposed many novel ideas about reading, local educators had their own ideas on reading instruction. The local "slate," be it at the central office, school or classroom level, "is never clean."[3] Parkwood was no different from other school districts in this respect. Michigan's new reading policy entered a dynamic context in Parkwood in which many ideas and agendas for instruction and educational reform were floating around. And this local context shaped the manner in which Parkwood administrators responded to the

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[1]Cohen and Barnes, 1993.

[2]Cohen and Ball, 1990; Berman and McLaughlin, 1977.

[3]Cohen and Ball, 1990, p. 333.

policy. What central administrators understood and learned from the reading policy was shaped by the context in which they worked. I begin by considering this context.

THE CONTEXT FOR CHANGE: ENDURING TENSIONS

The Parkwood instructional guidance system, in place in the mid 1980s, suggested considerable harmony among local educators on matters of educational reform. A central office instructional guidance system centered around textbooks, testing, staff development, and teacher evaluation pushed a traditional approach to reading instruction (e.g., phonics, decoding). But such harmony and stability was in stark contrast with the flux of ideas and reform agendas that were floating below the surface of central office guidelines. Organizations, such as school districts, are characterized by both stability and change with streams of ideas, problems, solutions, and people flowing around and occasionally coalescing to produce change.[4] These streams are not always homogenous; they flow at different rates and often in opposing directions.[5] Recreating the multiplicity of streams that existed in the Parkwood LEA is impossible, but two seem to have been particularly prominent and played no small role in shaping the central office response to the state reading policy.

Educational reform efforts in Parkwood over the past decade were characterized by both pedagogical and structural tensions. Tensions between traditional skills based instruction and more progressive child-centered approaches to teaching have been part of the Parkwood context for some time. Furthermore, efforts to implement and maintain prescriptive central office

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[4]M. Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972; Kingdon, 1984; Weick, 1979.
[5]Weick, 1979.

curriculum guidance were in tension with the autonomy that a handful of local school educators enjoyed to pursue more innovative approaches to instruction.[6]

Until the late 1970s, each school within the district was its "own little island" with individual principals and teachers taking responsibility for curricular and instructional decisions.[7] Central office played a limited role in curriculum and instructional governance as principals and teachers in each elementary school selected reading textbooks and what to teach in reading classrooms. According to a 1979 report to the Parkwood Board of Education, 10 different basal reading programs were used across the district, with 3 or 4 different programs in use in some schools.[8] Furthermore, in many schools teachers made most curricular and instructional decisions, as the majority of Parkwood principals up until the mid 1980s were "PR people" who "didn't know much about instruction."[9] Until the late 1970s, therefore, most curriculum and instructional policy decisions pertaining to reading were made at the classroom and school-level, rather than by central office administrators.

The reading curriculum was "very basal bound" with reading instruction in many elementary schools focused on teaching students discrete reading skills.[10] The 1979 report to the Board of Education, for example, noted how the two basal reading programs used at Howard Elementary emphasized "decoding skill development using the sounds of letters, the context of words within sentences, and the meanings of words."[11] Although basic reading skills

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[6]All interview data in the following chapters is referenced with the interviewees pseudonym followed by the date on which the interview took place. Where necessary details on the interviewees position is provided in parenthesis. Reference to local documents and observations also use pseudonyms for document titles and place names.

[7]Roberts (school learning specialist) interview, 18 July 1991.

[8]Parkwood School Board, 1979. *Elementary Reading*

[9]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.

[10]Parkwood School Board, 1979. *Elementary Reading;* Cheney (elementary school principal) interview, 19 Feb. 1991.

[11]Parkwood School Board, 1979. *Elementary Reading.*

(especially phonics) and basal readers may have dominated reading instruction in most schools, a wide variety of instructional approaches were used. At Atwood Elementary, for example, although most teachers followed either the Scott Foresman 'Basics in Reading' or the Harper and Row 'Design for Reading' basal programs, some teachers used "a more individualized reading approach" using trade-books to teach reading while still following the "basal sequence of reading skills."[12] Other schools also used a variety of instructional approaches from drilling phonics and word repetition to "linguistic" and "language" approaches.

There were, however, some exceptions to this traditional reading instruction. Some school principals and teachers supported more innovative approaches to reading instruction. In Lorton Elementary, for example, principal Eve Jensen encouraged teachers to use children's literature and multi-basal programs in teaching reading, and teachers developed reading instruction to meet the reading needs of individual students.[13] The approach to reading instruction at Lorton was described, in the 1979 report to the Board of Education, as a "language experience approach" in which students' "daily experiences" were recorded and turned into "personalized reading books" for reading instruction.[14] This approach to reading instruction was in stark contrast with the basic skills and basal dominated reading instruction that characterized most other elementary schools in Parkwood.

Beginning in the late 1970s, central office aspired to assume instructional leadership for the LEA because of "a concern about basic skills."[15] One principal

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[12]Parkwood School Board, 1979, *Elementary Reading.*

[13]Roberts interview, 18 July 1991; Cheney interview, 19 Feb. 1991, Chapman interview, 18 June 1992; Parkwood School Board, 1979, *Elementary Reading.*

[14]Parkwood School Board, 1979, *Elementary Reading.*

[15]Roberts interview, 18 July 1991; Bolton(elementary school principal) interview, 8 May 1992.

remembered "it was a real back to basics push from the general public".[16] In 1977, central office hired three new staff members, the first with responsibility for curriculum and instruction. Larry Green, an advocate of strong centralized instructional leadership, became assistant superintendent for curriculum and was charged with developing more prescriptive central office guidance for instruction.[17] With the support of Mr. Farley (the superintendent), Mr. Green established more prescriptive curriculum and instructional leadership through curriculum guidelines, instructional materials, student assessment, staff development, and teacher evaluation. District-wide curriculum guides were developed for each subject area, providing detailed instructions on what should be taught at each grade level. In the early 1980s, central administrators selected a single basal reader which all schools were required to use.[18] In addition, central office sponsored and mandated training in ITIP for all district employees and effective schools and basic skills "ideas" were also endorsed by central administrators.[19] To ensure teachers paid attention, all elementary principals were trained in using the Hunter model to evaluate teachers. Student evaluation was aligned with the district curriculum guidelines and textbook adoption. Teachers were required to administer end of unit and end of book tests as well as the IOWA test of basic skills, and send them to central office for scoring.[20] This central office instructional system pushed rather traditional notions about reading instruction, emphasizing reading skills (e.g., decoding).

For most district elementary schools, the central office reading curriculum meant little change as it endorsed rather than challenged modal reading practice.

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[16]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.
[17]Green interview, 7 May 1992.
[18]Cheney interview, 8 May 1992.
[19]Roberts interview, 18 July 1991; Tucker (elementary school media specialist) interview, 19 May 1992.
[20]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992; Roberts interview, 18 July 1991.

But for the few schools and educators who practiced more innovative reading instruction, centralization efforts were problematic. Traditional approaches to reading instruction mandated through the newly formed central office instructional guidance system, were in tension with the autonomy that some local schools and teachers enjoyed to practice more innovative and individualized instructional approaches. Some school principals, teachers and learning specialists had "real problems" with central office efforts to push discrete reading skills and many of them refused to comply with the central office instructional guidance system.[21] Principal Kate Bolton, for example, remembered how she managed to delay adopting the basal reader at her school until it was no longer required by central administrators.[22] One fifth grade teacher vividly recalled her efforts to teach the reading skills that central administrators mandated while still using literature to teach reading.[23]

Even within central office, the tension between traditional and progressive notions about instruction were played out. While Mr. Farley (superintendent) and Mr. Green (assistant superintendent) were strong advocates of both basics skills instruction and strong central office instructional leadership, Ms. Jensen who became director of elementary education in 1980, had many problems with the pedagogical ideas they were pushing.[24] Although Ms. Jensen supported efforts to centralize instructional guidance as it introduced much needed teacher

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[21]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992; Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992; Adams interview, 24 March 1992; 29 July 1992; Lyons (school learning specialist and member of districts task force on reading) interview, 5 May 1992). Lyons recalls how while she was a teacher at Lorton Elementary in the late 1970s and early 1980s the school refused to use the central office mandated basal reader.

[22]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992

[23]May Adams teaches fifth grade at Atwood Elementary, where she has used literature rather than basal readers for the past 20 years. She strongly opposed the central office reading curriculum as it conflicted with her progressive approaches to reading instruction. She attempted to modify this centrally mandated curriculum so she could continue to use innovative approaches. Adams interview, 24 Mar. 1992; 29 Jul. 1992.

[24]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992; Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992; Cheney interview, 19 Feb. 1992.

accountability, she was critical of the focus on discrete reading skills.[25] "It's *what* [central office] was monitoring that concerned me," she remembered, "monitoring isolated skills don't [sic] necessarily make kids good readers or teachers good teachers."[26] Although she "fought many battles" with Mr. Green and Mr. Farley on the content of the central office reading curriculum, especially the district adoption of a single basal reading program, her ideas about instructional reform received little attention until the mid 1980s.[27]

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These different streams of ideas and proposals for both instructional and organizational reform were in tension with one another and influenced the manner in which Parkwood central office responded to the state reading policy. This was the context in which central office administrators both learned from the state reading policy, and the context in which they attempted to teach teachers new ideas about instruction in response to the policy. As we will see, these existing tensions influenced the ideas central administrators understood from the policy and their efforts to disseminate the policy to schools and classrooms in Parkwood.

THE CENTRAL OFFICE RESPONSE TO THE STATE READING POLICY

Many central administrators and school-level educators were involved in crafting the Parkwood central office's response to the state policy. Four people, however, seem to have played prominent roles. Eve Jensen, the director of elementary education, played a central role in getting the central office to pay attention to the policy and in reshaping the central office instructional guidance

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[25]Jensen interview, 23 Sept. 1992.
[26]Jensen interview, 23 Sept. 1992.
[27]Jensen interview, 23 Sept. 1992; Roberts interview, 15 Oct. 1992.

system to push new approaches to reading instruction. Sally Roberts, a school learning specialists who chaired the District Reading Task Force that was formed to respond to the state reading policy, played a central role in organizing an extensive staff development effort for Parkwood teachers. Larry Green (assistant superintendent for curriculum) also played an important role. Mr. Green's desire for strong central office leadership in curriculum and instruction coupled with his rather traditional notions of reading instruction were in conflict with the more ambitious instructional reform proposals that Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts advocated in response to the state policy. Joan Berry, who became the central office language arts coordinator in 1986, also played a prominent role in organizing staff development opportunities for teachers in response to the policy.[28] Her dissemination efforts were more closely aligned with Mr. Green's agenda rather than with the more ambitious agendas of Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts (see Figure 2.1).

[28]Interviews with 18 central office and school level administrators, curriculum specialists and teachers suggest that these fourpeople played the central role in the Parkwood central office response to the state policy.

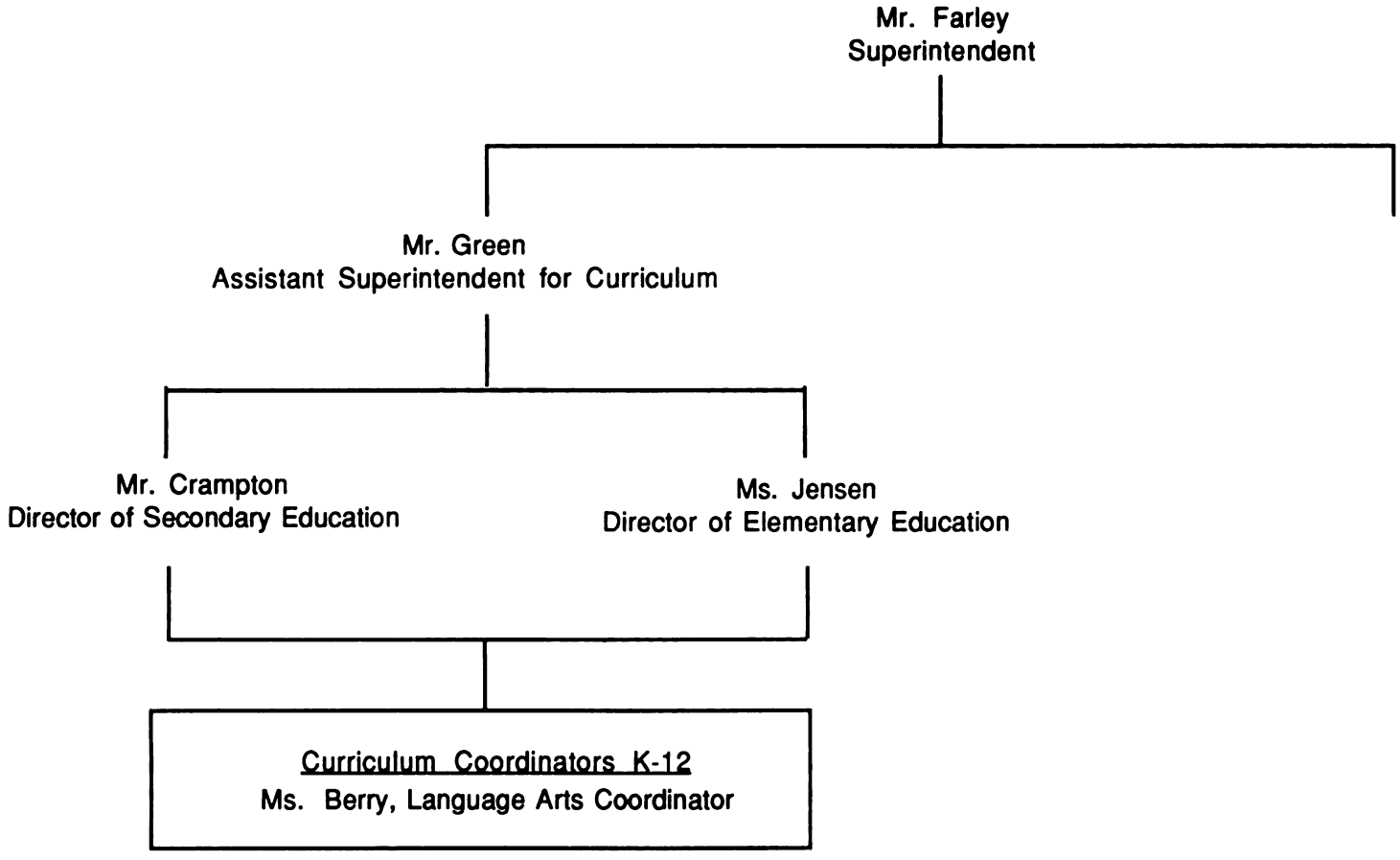

Figure 2.1 Parkwood Central Office Staff with Responsibilities for Curriculum and Instruction

For analytical purposes, I have divided this account of the Parkwood response to the state reading policy into three parts. First, I consider how central administrators attended to and interpreted the policy, focusing on the different ideas for instructional reform they constructed from the state reading policy. Second, I consider central administrators efforts to disseminate the policy to Parkwood school principals and teachers, exploring the different approaches used by central administrators and the instructional ideas they were designed to communicate. Third, I consider how the instructional reform climate changed in Parkwood in the late 1980s, when Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts were no longer in central office leadership roles (See Figure 2.2).

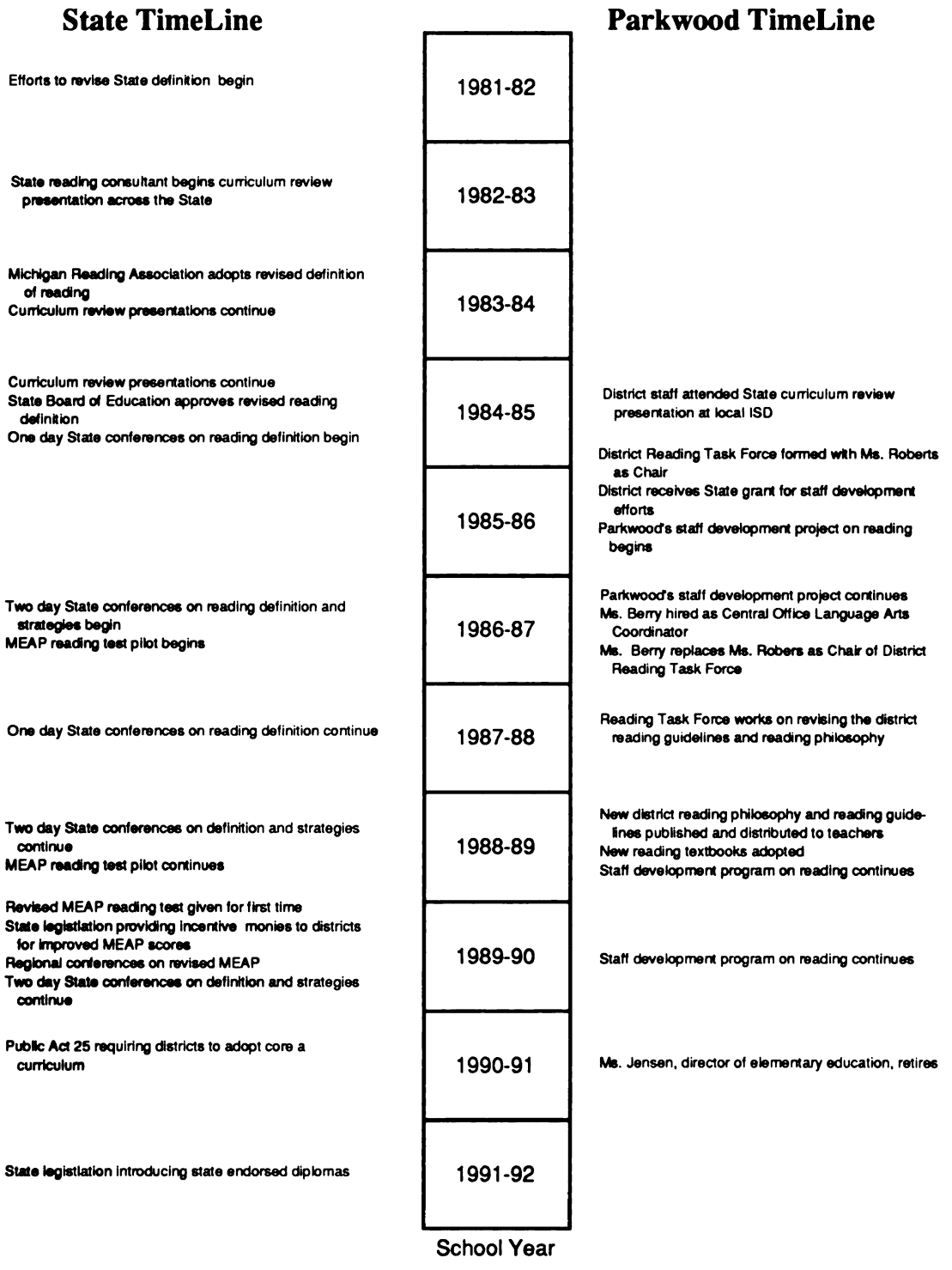

Figure 2.2 Chronology of State and Local District Events Related to Reading Instruction

Attending to and Interpreting the Policy: Multiple Responses

In Parkwood central office administrators paid close attention to the state reading policy. But central administrators attended to the reading policy for very different reasons and interpreted state policy-makers' calls for reform in distinctly different ways. For some innovative Parkwood educators, like Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts, the policy provided a "window of opportunity" through which they could advance their existing instructional reform agendas district-wide; reform proposals that they both had long advocated but had little opportunity to have implemented.[29] But not all central office administrators supported such ambitious instructional reform agendas, and the ideas they understood from the state policy were less ambitious than those Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts interpreted.

The Policy as an Opportunity to Advance Existing Reform Agendas

Both Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts had been strong critics of the basic skills dominated reading curriculum in Parkwood for some time.[30] From her experience as a Head Start and preschool teacher, Ms. Roberts had strong reservations about the basic skills emphasis in the Parkwood reading curriculum. "When you work with young children and see what emergent reading is like," she commented, "it's very difficult to embrace this discrete skill thing when you see children come at [reading] from so many different ways.[31]

Ms. Jensen had championed many innovative approaches to reading instruction as an elementary school principal in the 1970s including; using children's literature to teach reading, individualizing reading instruction to meet

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[29]For a more detailed account of policy windows and the opportunities they provided for advocates of various proposals and problems to advance their agendas, see Kingdon, 1984; and M. Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972.

[30]Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992; Jensen interview, 23 Sept. 1992.

[31]Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992.

the needs of students, and not teaching isolated reading skills.[32] She remembered how, while principal at Lorton, she:

> was really impressed with what they called child-centered or interest based learning. We did a lot with developing units of study. We used to pull together [units] using children's ideas, what they knew about the subject, what they thought they might like to learn and how they might go about doing it.[33]

Becoming director of elementary education, Ms. Jensen had hoped to implement her instructional reform agenda district-wide. "I guess I had the notion that maybe I could make a difference at the district-level, the same difference I made at the building level," she recalled, "so you know I was going to try and see if we couldn't get more schools really looking like we were looking [at Lorton] and doing what we were doing."[34] But neither Ms. Jensen nor Ms. Roberts had any success in addressing the problems they perceived with the existing central office curriculum, or advancing their agendas for instructional reform in Parkwood, as Mr. Green's and Mr. Farley's efforts to establish a district-wide basic skills curriculum dominated the central office reform agenda in the early 1980s.

The state reading policy helped to create a more conducive environment for Ms. Jensen's and Ms. Roberts' instructional reform agendas. Considering that the state was proposing to change the MEAP reading test, both Mr. Farley and Mr. Green were more likely to pay attention to Ms. Jensen's efforts to reform the district reading curriculum in response to the reading policy. Parkwood residents paid close attention to students' test scores on MEAP, a factor which neither Mr. Farley nor Mr. Green could afford to overlook. As Mr. Green

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[32]Roberts interview, 18 July 91; Cheney interview, 8 May 1992; Chapman interview, 13 May 1992; Sutton (elementary teacher and member of the district reading task force) interview, 19 May 1992.
[33]Jensen interview, 23 Sept. 1992. Ms. Jensen noted how the British Infant Schools had a strong influence on her instructional ideas.
[34]Jensen interview, 23 Sept. 1992.

remarked, "obviously . . . when the state moves in a direction you start to become real interested in what's going to go on there."[35] The importance of test scores to the Parkwood community coupled with the proposed revision of the MEAP test provided Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts with an opportunity to convince their central office colleagues that a review of the district reading curriculum was needed. When Ms. Jensen received word that the state department was considering a revision of the state reading objectives and MEAP, she sent three district representatives to a workshop that the state department was offering. Sally Roberts, a school learning specialist, was one of the three Parkwood representatives.

Cognizant of the opportunities for change the state policy provided, both Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts had considerable incentives to attend to the policy. Ms. Roberts explained, "so to think that the state might be moving in a direction which was [towards] a philosophy that I embraced, I saw that as a real chance for our district to start moving away from some of the practices that I though might be holding kids back."[36] The policy provided the opportunity to change modal reading instruction in Parkwood; to tilt the scales in favor of the progressive ideas about reading instruction that both Ms. Roberts and Ms. Jensen and a handful of other Parkwood educators supported and away from the basic skills approach Green and Farley had endorsed.[37] Roberts remembered how she and some of her colleagues saw the state reading policy as an opportunity to "hoodwink central office administration and the school board" so they could no longer endorsed existing curricular policies.[38] They seized the policy as an

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[35] Green interview, 7 May 1992.
[36] Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992.
[37] Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992.
[38] Roberts interview, 18 July 1991.

opportunity to reform the existing basic skills dominated reading curriculum in Parkwood and advance their own agendas for instructional change.

Interpreting the Policy to Support Existing Reform Agendas

Aware of the potential for reform the state policy provided, both Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts interpreted the policy as legitimating their existing reform agendas and beliefs about instruction, and as a critique of the existing Parkwood reading curriculum. Neither thought the state policy ideas on reading were novel. Ms. Jensen remarked how the ideas state policy-makers were advancing were just "new names" that fit with her existing beliefs about instruction.[39] She noted how the policy's call for the use of a variety of texts to teach reading rather than using a basal reader exclusively "was the big big difference" for her.[40] In Jensen's view, the policy also supported both whole and small group instruction, and the teaching of reading strategies. Many of the instructional ideas which Ms. Jensen interpreted from the policy were ones which she had already successfully implemented at Lorton elementary (e.g., focusing on reading comprehension rather than drill on isolated skills, not relying on the basal to teach reading).

Similarly, Ms. Roberts noted how she was delighted that state policy-makers were moving in a direction which she embraced. As president of the local Michigan Reading Council and having recently completed a master's degree in reading, Ms. Roberts had kept up-to-date with developments in the field of reading research. She had heard about proposed changes in the state policy prior to attending the local ISD curriculum review workshop. But unlike Ms. Jensen, Ms. Roberts did not interpret the state reading policy as providing a concrete alternative to modal reading instruction. Her knowledge of reading research suggested that there was no agreement among researchers on what constituted

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[39]Jensen interview, 23 Sept. 1992.

[40]Jensen interview, 23 Sept. 1992.

effective reading instruction. As a result, she interpreted the state policy as an opportunity for teachers to consider their existing reading instruction and to reconstruct their teaching practice based on the available research.[41]

Ms. Jensen's instructional reform agenda, however, was more ambitious than her interpretation of state policy-makers' reform initiatives. For example, Ms. Jensen had long been an advocate of integrating reading and writing instruction. She believed that students needed to understand that "reading was writing written down" and that in order to read they needed to understand the concept of print by reading what they wrote.[42] Although the state policy made no reference to writing, it provided Ms. Jensen with the opportunity she needed to enact this reform proposal district-wide. Similarly, Ms. Jensen used the state reading policy as an opportunity to promote her child-centered approach to instruction; a developmentally appropriate practice curriculum.[43]

Both Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts, seizing the state policy as an opportunity for instructional reform in Parkwood, interpreted the policy as an endorsement of their existing agendas and a critique of the existing Parkwood reading curriculum. Interpreting the policy in such a manner, provided them with significant political leverage to convince their colleagues that modal reading instruction (e.g., drilling students in isolated reading skills) needed to change.

A Less Ambitious Interpretation of the State Policy

Not all central administrators, however, understood the policy as supporting such a radical transformation of the existing central office reading

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[41]Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992; 30 July 1990.

[42]Jenseninterview, 23 Sept. 1992.

[43]Ms. Jensen describes the developmentally appropriate practices curriculum as "child-centered or interest based learning ... developing units of study, the British called them themes or thematic instruction ... it's the good old fashioned unit we used to pull together with using children's ideas, what they knew about the subject, what they thought they might like to learn and how they might go about doing it. She also noted how the National Association for Teaching Young Children and her experience as a teacher in a laboratory school influenced her reform agenda. Jensen interview, 23 Sept. 1992.

curriculum. Mr. Green (assistant superintendent for curriculum) supported rather traditional notions about reading instruction and was one of central office's strongest advocates for teaching basic reading skills. Furthermore, unlike Ms. Roberts and Ms. Jensen, Mr. Green's attention to the policy was not prompted by a strong desire to advance a personal instructional reform agenda: He was content with the basic skills curriculum he had established in the early 1980s. Mr. Green's attention to the policy was prompted primarily by the prospect of a revised MEAP reading test, and as the implementation of the revised test drew closer he became more anxious about Parkwood teachers' ability to prepare students for the test.[44]

Mr. Green's interpretation of the state policy was considerably less ambitious than either Ms. Roberts or Ms. Jensen's. He understood the policy as specifying rather definite approaches to reading instruction which would complement rather than supplant most existing reading practice. For Mr. Green the state policy called on teachers to teach reading strategies so that reading skills were taught in context rather than in isolation. With regard to the implications of the state reading policy for student learning, Mr. Green remarked:

> [Students] still have to do a few fundamental things, they got to have some word attack skills, and they need to have some phonetic ability, and they need to see patterns of words and put concepts together. I think what is different is the strategies that are being used now to re-approach [reading instruction].[45]

Ms. Berry, who became the central office language arts coordinator in 1986, claims to have learned many new ideas about reading instruction from the state reading policy and the workshops she attended on the policy.[46] She

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[44]Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992.
[45]Green interview, 7 May 1992.
[46]Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1993

recalled how the state policy ideas on reading instruction were entirely novel to her when she first heard them. "I remember memorizing the definition and having, and hearing what it meant," she recalled, "but having no ideas conceptually what it would look like."[47] Ms. Berry learned that "constructing meaning" was "the most important part" of reading instruction. In addition, she learned,

> what strategies does a child need to have in order to construct meaning, [and] the strategies that they need to have at different stages of their life are going to be different, and to know that some kids are going to be ready for strategies at different times and to be sensitive to that.[48]

Similar to Mr. Green, the instructional ideas Ms. Berry learned from the state policy had a strong strategies flavor.

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Parkwood central office administrators understood state policy-makers calls for reform of classroom reading instruction in distinctly different ways. Their beliefs and knowledge about reading instruction, coupled with the instructional reform agendas they brought to the state policy, influenced the instructional ideas they understood from the policy. Like classroom learners, central office administrators' learning from state policy was shaped by their prior knowledge and beliefs through which they learned from the policy, and the context in which they learn. The prior knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction that Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts brought to their efforts to understand the policy were distinctly different from those of Mr. Green, and as a result they constructed rather different instructional ideas from the policy. The context was especially important in Parkwood, as the emphasis on basic skills

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[47]Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1992.
[48]Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1992.

within central office provided strong incentives for Ms. Roberts and Ms. Jensen to pay attention to the policy in order to advance their own reform agendas.

Disseminating the Policy: A Variety of Approaches

If the state reading policy was to influence reading instruction in Parkwood classrooms, central office administrators had to do more than interpret state policy-makers calls for reform of reading instruction. They had to disseminate the ideas they understood from the policy to Parkwood's school principals and teachers, and convince them to change their existing reading instruction. The task was no small feat considering that the district had over 700 teachers in close to 20 schools, most of whom taught reading as a process of mastering isolated reading skills.

Central office administrators, however, rose to the occasion and between 1985 and 1989 undertook numerous efforts to reform reading instruction in Parkwood schools in response to the state reading policy. Efforts to disseminate new ideas about reading instruction were underway prior to the state-wide conferences on the reading strategies. And the entire central office instructional guidance system in Parkwood was revised prior to the first administration of the revised MEAP reading test. Parkwood central administrators required little pressure from state policy-makers to reform reading instruction. Central office dissemination efforts, however, varied over time as central administrators with different beliefs about teacher change came to the fore to craft efforts to teach teachers about new instructional ideas. Initial dissemination efforts adopted a less didactic approach, encouraging teachers to change their practice by providing them with opportunities to develop their understanding of research on reading. By 1987, however, central office efforts to reform reading instruction became more

didactic relying heavily on mandates that pushed teachers to adopt new instructional approaches.

Constructing an Alternative to Modal Practice: An Initial Response

When Ms. Roberts and her colleagues returned from the ISD curriculum review workshop, they asked Mr. Green and Ms. Jensen to form a district task force to review the central office reading curriculum, and they agreed. Ms. Jensen selected Roberts to chair the district Reading Task Force. The task force provided the initial opportunity for the district to disseminate ideas about reading instruction and, early in 1986 with the help of a state grant, Ms. Roberts organized an ambitious staff development effort for local teachers.

Ms. Roberts, as chair of the reading task force, had considerable opportunity to shape Parkwood's response to the State reading policy. The manner in which she interpreted the state reading policy, her concerns about modal practice, and her knowledge and beliefs about teacher change influenced the manner in which she set about her task. She designed task force meetings and staff development workshops so they provided considerable opportunities for task force members to learn new ideas about reading instruction and develop their own understanding of the comprehension process, but not necessarily to build consensus. She was pleased with the opportunities both the task force and the staff development workshops provided for teachers "to understand the definition, to internalize it and make it their own."[49] She remarked with regard to her design for the staff development workshops:

> my idea was not to present this uniform picture . . . I said there really isn't any agreement out there [on reading instruction]. With the new definition of reading, it looks like there is, but there really isn't because I've kept up with reading [research].[50]

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[49]Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992.

[50]Roberts interview, 30 July 1990.

Ms. Roberts' goals for staff development on reading instruction were atypical. Efforts to disseminate educational policy, that is, the pedagogy of policy, tend to be didactic.[51] District committees and staff development efforts usually assign teachers a more passive role, with decisions being made by senior administrators.[52]

Staff Development: Investing in teacher knowledge. Ms. Roberts' dissemination efforts were helped by the fact that teachers who served on the district reading task force shared her aversion to the existing district reading curriculum and supported more innovative approaches to reading instruction.[53] Furthermore, having successfully applied for a state department staff development grant of $90,000, Ms. Roberts had ample financial resources to disseminate the ideas for change she had constructed from the reading policy. State funding reduced her reliance on some senior central office administrators who had many concerns about her approach. Furthermore, the rather generous financial resources which Ms. Roberts had at her disposal facilitated an ambitious and extensive staff development program. The staff development program was not a one shot deal, it involved a total of 30 hours of workshops over a ten week period. Furthermore, many nationally recognized reading researchers, including Patrick Shannon, Richard Allington, Eileen Carr, Jerry Duffy, and Karen Wixson presented workshops on their research.

Throughout the weekly presentations attention was paid to the state definition and to much of the research behind the definition (e.g.,

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[51]For an excellent account of the pedagogy of policy in the United States, see Cohen and Barnes, 1993.

[52]Standerford, 1992.

[53]Roberts interview, 5 Oct. 1992; Sutton interview, 19 May 1992.

metacognition).[54] Several sessions focused on reading strategies (e.g., QAR, KWL), paralleling the state staff development efforts. Presenters began by giving teachers an overview of the research behind the particular strategy. Then teachers were given a rationale for using the strategy and when they should use it. Next, the presenter modeled the strategy going through the different stages that teachers should follow in their classrooms.[55]

But in keeping with Ms. Roberts' beliefs that teachers needed to construct their own understanding of reading practice, many of the weekly sessions took a rather different and less didactic format. Other perspectives on reading and language arts instruction were also offered, including topics such as teachers' reliance on basal reading programs, connecting reading and writing instruction, and developing observational assessment techniques. The "extra" topics reflected much of Ms. Jensen's and Ms. Roberts' educational reform agendas.

And some of the presenters paid little attention to giving teachers practical techniques to use in their classrooms, focusing instead on getting teachers to develop their own philosophies of literacy from which they could construct their own approaches to reading instruction. Patrick Shannon, for example, focused on getting teachers to develop an understanding of what they meant by literacy by getting them to define reading and writing. The session began with teachers reading different text selections at different levels of difficulty in order to understand what it meant to read. Based on how they read and the difficulties they had with the texts, teachers developed definitions of the

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[54]Teachers and other district employees attended a three hour workshop each week over a 10-week period. The 10-week series of workshops were repeated on three occasions over a two year period.

[55]My account of the presentations is based on videotape recordings of the sessions and interviews with local administrators and teachers who attend the workshops.

reading process and considered the implications of these definitions for the ways in which they taught reading.[56]

State policy-makers calls for change were transformed in significant ways through these local workshops, as both Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts interpreted the policy as an opportunity to advance their own instructional reform agendas. Parkwood staff development workshops were distinctly different from the state staff development efforts in both method and content. Many of the ideas disseminated through these workshops, such as, integrating reading and writing instruction, received no attention in the state policy documents. The state-sponsored workshops, for the most part focused on giving teachers new highly structured instructional techniques -- especially reading strategies -- to teach reading. In contrast, the Parkwood workshops focused on more than modeling the reading strategies, offering teachers different perspectives on reading and writing instruction and challenging them to construct their own instructional approaches.

Conflicting Perspectives on Reforming Reading Instruction

Some central office administrators, however, had different ideas about reading instruction and had many reservations about Roberts' dissemination efforts. Mr. Green was especially concerned about Roberts' decision to allow task force members and participants at the staff development workshops to work on developing their own understanding of the comprehension process. Having interpreted the policy as suggesting specific new approaches to reading instruction, Mr. Green believed Ms. Roberts' efforts were misguided. Green "thought we were really re-inventing and I thought we had to do that," Ms. Roberts recalled, "he said [state policy-makers] already decided what

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[56]My account is based on a video tape recording of the presentation and the accounts of some participants.

comprehension is".[57] Mr. Green's concerns were also influenced by his belief in the importance of strong central office leadership in matters of curriculum and instruction. He believed that central office should adopt a much more directed and didactic approach to teaching Parkwood teachers about the reading policy. Ms. Roberts' leadership of the task force and her dissemination approach was "too non-directed" and threatened to undermine the centralized instructional guidance that Green had established in Parkwood.[58] Mr. Green thought there was "too much diversity [on reading] - - we've got to have people singing the same tune," Ms. Roberts explained, he "felt that the people who were in charge, should take a stance."[59] In short, Ms. Roberts' ambitious ideas about reading instruction and her non-directed leadership and teaching style were in conflict with Mr. Green's more traditional notions about reading and his efforts to maintain strong central office guidance on matters of curriculum.

Parkwood teachers who attended the workshops also expressed reservations about the dissemination approach. While participants gave the workshops high ratings, most were concerned about the inconsistencies in the messages different presenters were giving them as they wanted concrete answers about how they should teach reading.[60] One principal described how she,

> sensed the crowd right away. I mean they weren't there, they wanted concreteness, the principal and Eve Jensen were telling them to do this and they wanted the "how to", the "handout" they wanted the "this".[61]

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[57]Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992.
[58]Roberts interview, 5 Oct. 1992.
[59]Roberts interview, 18 July 1991; 30 July 1990; 11 Apr. 1992.
[60]Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992; 30 July 1990; Cheney interview, 19 Feb. 1992; Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.
[61]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.

So despite Ms. Roberts' efforts to invest in teacher knowledge and allow teachers to craft the Parkwood response to the policy, the majority of teachers were critical of her approach. Their desire for more concrete alternatives stemmed in part from the fact that other central administrators were pushing them to change their existing reading instruction.

Despite Ms. Roberts initial success, the tensions between her approach and those advocated by Mr. Green continued, and were heightened by the prospect of a revised MEAP test which was due for implementation in 1989. Mr. Green felt that Roberts' efforts to get teachers to construct their own understanding of reading was too time consuming considering the prospect of a revised MEAP.[62] Mr. Green's concern about MEAP scores was such, that he and the Superintendent considered administering a practice MEAP in Parkwood.[63]

But Mr. Green was not the only Parkwood central administrator who supported stronger central office leadership in reforming reading instruction. Ms. Jensen (director of elementary education) took a similar stance. Although Ms. Jensen held many of the same ideas about reading instruction as Ms. Roberts, she believed central office needed to provide authoritative instructional leadership to schools in order to reform instruction. She commented, "if you don't mandate change , it doesn't happen."[64] As one principal remarked, "she just didn't give a choice, she said workbooks are finished, that's it!"[65] Considering Mr. Green's push for a much more direct central office role in reforming reading instruction, Ms. Jensen may have had little choice but to support this position if she wanted to have her reform agenda adopted district-wide. So although Ms. Jensen supported many of the same instructional reform

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[62]Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992.
[63]Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992; Bolton, 8 May 1992.
[64]Jensen interview, 23 Sept. 1992.
[65]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.

ideas as Ms. Roberts, she envisioned a different route to enacting these ideas from Ms. Roberts' staff development approach.

Changes in state policy-makers' dissemination efforts also influenced how Parkwood central administrators approached their dissemination task. By 1986 state policy-makers were offering clearer ideas about the types of change they envisioned in modal reading practice through state-wide conferences that focused on the reading strategies (e.g., KWL, QAR, and reciprocal teaching). These conferences offered a more concrete alternative to modal practice in the form of reading strategies than the earlier curriculum review conferences which merely challenged central administrators to reconsider their reading curriculum in light of a new state definition that would place much greater emphasis on students' comprehension. Some Parkwood administrators and all the district's school based learning specialists attended these conferences. These state sponsored efforts provided central administrators with a clearer picture of the type of reading instruction that state policy-maker's envisioned.

Mandating An Alternative to Modal Practice

Mr. Green got his wish for stronger centralized leadership in 1986 and central office dissemination efforts began to change in Parkwood. When the district hired a full-time language arts coordinator to "homogenize" the work of the task force, Ms. Roberts was not selected.[66] Ms. Joan Berry, was hired as language arts coordinator and replaced Ms. Roberts as chair of the reading task force. "I wasn't in charge anymore", Ms. Roberts remarked, "and that's exactly

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[66]According to Ms. Roberts, Eve Jensen was a strong supporter of her efforts to disseminate new ideas through the staff development workshops she organized. Furthermore, Ms. Jensen told Ms. Roberts that she wanted her to have the position as language arts coordinator but Mr. Green and Mr. Crampton, the director of secondary education, refused as they did not think Ms. Roberts would provided the directed leadership that central office dissemination efforts needed in order to be effective. According to Ms. Roberts, Jensen encouraged her to work on developing a more directed leadership style. Roberts interview, 30 July 1990.

what they did, they homogenized" the definition.[67] Central administrators' efforts to disseminate new ideas on reading instruction in the late 1980s certainly took a much more homogenized and didactic approach compared with earlier staff development workshops.

Ms. Jensen, with the assistance of Ms. Berry and a district committee of teachers, reformed the central office instructional guidance system to reflect new ideas about reading instruction. New district textbooks were purchased, the district reading guidelines were rewritten, student report cards were redesigned, and new central office policies on grouping for reading, workbooks, and the role of learning specialists were implemented. Extensive staff development efforts continued but changed under Ms. Berry's leadership focusing more on a "how to do it" approach to their version of the reading policy and less on providing teachers with opportunities to construct their own understanding of the reading instruction.

Staff development: Telling teachers what to do. District staff development efforts changed under Ms. Berry's leadership, as she adopted a more direct and didactic approach to teaching Parkwood teachers about the state policy. Unlike Ms. Roberts, Ms. Berry did not enjoy the same immunity from Mr. Green's pressure for more directed and prescriptive staff development workshops. Ms. Roberts noted:

> I'm sure [Berry] got the same pressures that I did. I just wouldn't bend. I mean I wasn't in an administrative position. It was entirely voluntary. . . [So] it wasn't like my position depended on [responding to Green's pressures] where [Berry's] did, so she's under different kinds of constraints than I am.[68]

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[67] Roberts interview, 30 July 1990.

[68] Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992.

Staff development workshops "became more how to do QAR's, how do you do reciprocal teaching, how do you do story maps".[69] Ms. Berry's descriptions of her staff development efforts verify Ms. Roberts' account. Her staff development workshops focused almost exclusively on reading strategies, using a modeling approach. Workshops began with presenters giving teachers some background information on a particular reading strategy (e.g., KWL) and then they provided teachers answers to three important questions about strategies: "What it is?, when do you use it?, how do you use it?".[70] Presenters then modeled the strategies using an integrated approach around the theme of Africa.[71]

Berry 's presentations focused on the "how to" of reading instruction, modeling and telling teachers concrete instructional approaches to use in their classrooms. Her staff development workshops had a strong focus on reading strategies, suggesting a less ambitious reform agenda than earlier staff development workshops. In Berry's view, there were other instructional techniques that teachers needed to adopt, such as integrating reading and writing and using whole and flexible student grouping. But these components could be added over time. She remarked with regard to her staff development efforts, "we've spent a couple of years on whole class instruction, let's move now to what comes next and the part that comes next in that small flexible group, before I bring them back to whole class instruction."[72] Unlike Roberts, for Berry reforming reading instruction did not require an investment in building teachers' knowledge of research or providing them with opportunities to construct their own understanding of the reading process. Rather, teachers

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[69]Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992.
[70]Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1992.
[71]Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1992.
[72]Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1992.

needed to acquire and perfect new instructional techniques which would supplant their existing teaching techniques over time.

Curriculum guidelines: Mandating change. In 1988, a new district reading philosophy and new reading guidelines for teachers were published and distributed to all Parkwood educators. With the help of the reading task force, Ms. Jensen and Ms. Berry rewrote the Parkwood reading philosophy and curriculum guide. Ms. Jensen's interpretation of the state policy and the agenda for instructional change dominated the committee's work. Most of the teachers on the committee shared Jensen's beliefs about reading instruction -- one teacher estimated that 80% of committee members supported the new ideas about reading.[73] Another committee member noted how they had to follow the directions of central administrators, especially Ms. Jensen, resulting in more traditional ideas about reading instruction receiving little or no attention. "When things like this happen," she commented "they start at administration and then they filter down to us and so the administration is doing the dictating telling you what they want you to do -- you just have to follow those dictates."[74]

The Parkwood reading philosophy and reading guidelines paid close attention to the ideas about reading instruction presented in the State policy documents. The importance of teaching students reading strategies (e.g., KWL, QAR) in order to strengthen comprehension instead of learning isolated decoding skills was emphasized. The Parkwood reading objectives were practically identical to the State reading objectives, and even went a step further, detailing for teachers what strategies went with particular learning objectives. Comparing these documents with earlier curriculum guides suggests that, in

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[73]Sutton interview, 19 May 1992.

[74]Watt (elementary school teacher who served on the district reading task force) interview, 19 May 1992.

terms of reading instruction, Parkwood had undergone a revolution. According to the district reading philosophy statement:

> Reading, one component of the language process, is dynamic. The meaning of the message which the reader constructs is dependent upon the interaction of the reader's background experiences, the author's purpose for writing the material, the type of material being read, and the readers purpose for reading it.[75]

As a result "reading is taught as a process of thinking, not as a series of isolated skills."[76] Mirroring the dramatic change in the state definition, the new reading philosophy represents a considerable departure from the old Parkwood reading philosophy statement where reading was portrayed as a process of decoding and recognizing words - - a series of isolated skills.[77]

But although there were many similarities between the central office policy documents on reading in Parkwood and the state policy statements, there are also notable differences. Many of the instructional ideas contained in the Parkwood reading guidelines, found no mention in the State policy documents. Central office efforts to disseminate the state reading policy to teachers became entangled with other reform agendas, such as, Jensen's developmentally appropriate practices philosophy. One whole section of the Parkwood Reading guidelines, for example, was devoted to "Developmental Stages of Reading" that teachers should be aware of and use to guide their reading instruction. The guide details six stages of reading development, points out indicators that teachers should look for in gauging what stage of reading students are at, and details helpful learning experiences for students at each stage.[78] The

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[75]Parkwood's *Reading Curriculum Guidelines*, 1988, p. 1.

[76]Parkwood's *Reading Curriculum Guidelines*, 1988, p. 1.

[77]Parkwood School Board, 1979. *Elementary Reading*.

[78]The guidelines detail six stages of reading development: emergent reading; beginning reading, reading for consolidation; reading for independence, mature readers. They highlight indicators

resemblance to Jensen 's developmental appropriate practices philosophy is striking. Considerable attention was also given to integrating reading and writing instruction in the Parkwood Reading guidelines. Again, writing received no mention in the state reading policy documents. Other ideas that appeared novel when compared to the state policy documents, included integrating reading and writing instruction, using whole group and flexible group instruction, and using a variety of texts to teach reading. Evidently, Ms. Jensen's ideas about DAP and integrating reading and writing, among other things, became entangled with the state reading policy and influencing her efforts to revise the district reading guidelines.

Classroom materials. Ms. Jensen also aligned reading textbooks and other materials with the reading guidelines to better the chances of these ideas making their way into classrooms. Three literature-based reading programs were purchased to replace the traditional skills based basal reading program. These texts were closely aligned with many of the ideas that were presented in the Parkwood Reading Guidelines. For example, one of the three district selections paid careful attention to the use of reading strategies.[79] Schools could also opt to use textbook money to purchase children's literature instead of the reading programs. Teachers could use their discretion to select textbooks that were literature-based or literature itself. But teachers didn't have complete freedom, for central office would actively resist the old drill-and-skill reading by cutting off resources that might support it. Ms. Jensen told schools they could no longer purchase any of the workbooks or practice books that accompanied the reading programs and she had the means to enforce a ban on workbooks as central office

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for teachers to assess students' stage of reading development and delineate learning experiences helpful at each stage. Developmental stages of reading received no mention in the state policy documents.

[79]Cheney interview, 19 Feb. 1992.

controlled textbook purchasing. The message central office was sending seemed clear -- drill in isolated skills was no longer acceptable reading instruction and real literature was the material to use to teach reading.

Students' report cards were also redesigned to focus on the new directions in curriculum central office was promoting. The new report cards focused on students' stages of literacy development and required teachers to evaluate students in a number of different categories, including students' interest and participation in reading, their ability to read for meaning, and their writing ability. Furthermore, the IOWA Test of Basic Skills which was used in all elementary grades in the early 1980s, was no longer required by central office. The areas of evaluation identified in student report card were closely aligned with the district reading guidelines and called for more ambitious changes in reading than state policy-makers proposed.

Other mandates New district policies on ability grouping for reading, and the role of learning specialists were also implemented by Ms. Jensen. Teachers were no longer to group students for reading instruction by their reading ability. Ms. Jensen communicated this directive to teachers informing them that when she and Ms. Berry visited classrooms they did not expect to see ability grouping. In addition, learning specialists were no longer to operate pull-out programs for remedial reading instruction. Rather, they were to work within the classroom as the classroom teacher saw fit.

Again these two directives suggested that Ms. Jensen did not want to see any more drill and skill for poor readers. Learning specialists had traditionally operated with case loads of readers who were reading below age level as measured by standardized tests, and they provided these students with drill on discrete skills (e.g., phonics). Considering the focus on comprehension and

teaching skills in context rather than isolation, Jensen 's directives were designed to remove the occasions when this type of modal teaching could occur.

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Central office dissemination efforts enjoyed many of the attributes that implementation research suggests are necessary for the successful adoption of a policy at the local level, such as, consistency, prescriptiveness, and authority.[80] There was considerable consistency across different elements of the instructional guidance system and central office directives in calling for change in modal reading instruction (e.g., reading curriculum guidelines, textbook adoptions, student evaluation). Ms. Jensen's mandates for change were also prescriptive detailing instructional practices that were acceptable (e.g., reading strategies) and those that were not acceptable (e.g., ability grouping and reading workbooks). In addition, the central office mandates enjoyed considerable authority by virtue of the fact that they were supported by senior central office administrators. Whether or not these mandates enjoyed authority in the eyes of school principals and teachers is another matter which we will turn to in Chapter Four.

But the strength and authority of the central office reform efforts had also much to do with Ms. Jensen's leadership style. Most principals and teachers seemed to have taken Jensen very seriously, as one principal put it "to hear everyone talk about her she was like God."[81] And principals who disagreed with her ideas were hesitant to question her reform proposals. "Some principals would have been a little bit uncomfortable with certain aspects of the developmentally appropriate practices and they were apparently afraid to voice it when Jensen was here".[82] Furthermore, Ms. Jensen built coalitions of support

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[80]Porter, et al., 1988.

[81]Nickels interview, 7 May 1992.

[82]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992, also Nickels interview, 19 Feb. 1992.

among teachers and principals for her reforms: "Once [Jensen] had an idea she got other people involved in it and got them to buy into it and then she would present it district-wide, therefore, she always had supporters throughout the school district."[83] Ms. Jensen was a "strong visionary leader" whose visionary qualities were tempered with a keen political skill.[84] For instance, in 1988 when the school board raised some concerns about her developmentally appropriate practices curriculum and requested a third grade reading test to evaluate its effectiveness, Ms. Jensen used this as an opportunity to push her reform agenda even further. She selected a test that focused exclusively on students' ability to construct meaning from real literature through open-ended responses and also integrated reading and writing assessment.

Ms. Jensen's interpretation of the state reading policy, however, did not inhibit her from a rather didactic approach to teaching teachers about the reforms. For at least some local educators, Ms. Jensen's didactic approach to teaching Parkwood teachers about new instructional ideas was in conflict with the instructional approaches she wanted teachers to adopt in their own classrooms.[85] Central office "did not teach [and] treat the teachers in a developmentally appropriate way," a member of the reading task force explained, "they expected that everybody was at the same place at the same time and they [central office] would move to this other place."[86] Although the instructional ideas Ms. Jensen attempted to disseminate to teachers suggested that teachers should teach based on individual students' stage of development and learning style, her efforts to teach these lessons to Parkwood teachers paid

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[83]Berry interview, 19 Aug. 1991.

[84]Cheney interview, 19 Feb. 1991; Bolton, 8 May 1992.

[85]Tucker, 19 May 1992; Olson (school learning specialist), 15 May 1992; Bolton, 8 May 1992.

[86]Tucker interview, 19 May 1992; also Olson interview, 15 May 1992; Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.

little attention to the beliefs and needs of individual teachers.[87] At least in the eyes of some local educators, Ms. Jensen's efforts to teach teachers new ideas about reading instruction (through central office mandates) were inconsistent with her own pedagogy.[88]

A Changing Reform Climate: Balancing the Old and the New

Windows of opportunity for action on different reform proposals stay open for only a short time. These windows of opportunity close for a variety of reasons including the fact that reformers may feel they have addressed the problem or enacted their proposals, or changes in personnel within the organization undertaking the reform .[89] In Parkwood, the ambitious reform efforts that were undertaken as a result of a coupling of the new state reading policy with Ms. Jensen's and Ms. Roberts' personal reform agendas, came to a halt in the late 1980s. With Ms. Jensen's decision to retire in 1990, two of the main advocates of ambitious instructional reform, Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts, were no longer working in central office. Consequently, by 1990 the zest for instructional reform had declined dramatically in Parkwood and more traditional ideas about reading instruction (e.g., phonics instruction) began to receive greater attention from central administrators.

A Central Office Without an Instructional Reform Vision

For both Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts, the state reading policy was not just some new approach to reading they had to implement; it was an opportunity to enact a strongly-held vision for instructional reform. Neither Mr. Green nor Ms. Berry shared this vision for ambitious instructional change. One school

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[87]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992; Nickels interview, 7 May 1992.

[88]A similar tension was evident in the efforts of state policy-makers to disseminate their ideas about reading instruction. For a detailed discussion of this issue see D. Cohen, Grant, Jennings, and Spillane, 1993.

[89]Kingdon, 1984.

learning specialist remarked, with regard to the impact of Jensen's departure, "I don't know if we really have any vision of where we're going and some people have gone backwards."[90]

Neither Ms. Berry nor Mr. Green approached the state reading policy with a mission for instructional reform comparable to Ms. Jensen's. For Ms. Berry, the policy was something which she was required to implement as part of her role as central office language arts coordinator, rather than an opportunity to realize some personal vision of instructional change. She acknowledged that she knew nothing about these ambitious instructional ideas prior to hearing about the state reading policy. The state policy "was just a new thing and I'd always been willing to try new things and I would try this."[91]

Similarly, Mr. Green did not share Ms. Jensen's vision for ambitious instructional reform. As one principal noted, "[Mr. Green] doesn't have the elementary knowledge to truly guide us and lead us and give us a vision, he's less knowledgeable about issues of instruction than Jensen."[92] Mr. Green's vision of educational reform seemed to be confined to creating a strong centralized instructional guidance system, and he had attained this goal by the late 1980s with a revised instructional guidance system firmly in place. Furthermore, as noted earlier, Mr. Green's interpretation of the policy centered on the reading strategies (e.g., KWL, QAR) which in his view supplemented some of the mainstays of existing reading instruction (e.g., phonics). "I think what is different is the strategies that are being used now to re-approach" reading instruction, he explained, "I think strategies mean meaning."[93] Ms. Berry's

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[90] Bev Lyons (school learning specialist) interview, 15 May 1992; also Cheney interview, 19 Feb. 1991.

[91] Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1992.

[92] Cheney interview, 8 May 1992; Chapman interview, 13 May 1992; Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.

[93] Green interview, 7 May 1992.

interpretation was similar. "Constructing meaning, and that's the most important part" of reading instruction, she commented with regard to the state policy, "and what strategies does a child need to have in order to construct meaning."[94]

Modifying Jensen's Reform Agenda

With Jensen's departure the central office instructional reform agenda changed in significant ways. Central office efforts to push ambitious notions of reading curriculum and instruction practically disappeared in the early 1990s. One principal remarked how Jensen was very much of "a driving force in reading" in Parkwood, she was responsible for "getting the ball rolling" and since she left the district is "on hold mode" as there isn't "a real curriculum driver" in central office.[95]

With Jensen's departure many traditional teachers and school principals began to voice their concerns about new approaches to reading and developmentally appropriate practices, especially the manner in which phonics and skills instruction were down-played.[96] The board of education and the Parkwood community also raised concerns about whole language and the DAP curriculum.[97] Ms. Berry explained, "the school board was concerned that the developmentally appropriate practices and our approach to teaching reading was so different than it had been in the past that I think they were afraid that kids weren't learning to read and write."[98] And the larger community's feelings were perceived to be similar. "I think the community is questioning, . . . [there

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[94]Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1992.
[95]Chapman interview, 13 May 1992.
[96]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992; Nickels interview, 19 Feb. 1992.
[97]Nickels interview, 19 Feb. 1992; Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1992; Cheney interview, 19 Feb. 1992; Roberts interview,18 July 1991.
[98]Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1992.

are] lots of parents out there who will say we don't really go for that developmentally [appropriate practices]."[99]

Growing concern among the community and more traditional principals and teachers seems to have resulted in a modified instructional reform agenda in Parkwood by the 1990s. Community and teacher concern coupled with both Mr. Green's and Ms. Berry's lack of commitment to ambitious instruction reform diluted the drive for reform from central office. "I don't think [Mr. Green] is going to put himself out on a limb to support" whole language and developmentally appropriate practices, one principal explained, "I don't think he's going to put himself you know in a position to stand up to the board and community if there's a lot flack out there to say 'well yes this is the best program.'"[100]

Mr. Green and Ms. Berry adopted a more balanced position, at least in the eyes of many local educators, between traditional and progressive approaches to reading instruction. Phonics and skills instruction, which were down-played considerably in the early central office reform initiatives, received much greater attention in recent central office policy documents. One school learning specialist who currently serves on the district reading committee remarked:

> After the initial staff development workshops [teachers and administrators] felt they shouldn't be teaching phonics. Nobody wrote much about teaching phonics so teachers felt [phonics] would just fall into place. But things have changed now and phonics are a part of the new [1991] curriculum guide.[101]

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[99]Nickels interview, 19 Feb. 1992.
[100]Nickels interview, 19 Feb. 1992.
[101]Olson interview, May 15 1992.

Current efforts to write learning outcomes for reading, under Ms. Berry's leadership, focus a lot on discrete phonics and decoding skills that teachers should teach at different grade levels.[102] And the central office push to use literature in reading lessons also changed with Ms. Jensen's departure, with a more moderate approach being adopted by central administrators which supported the use of a combination of basal and real literature programs to teach reading.[103]

The central office agenda for instructional reform seems to have changed considerably in Parkwood compared with the ambitious agenda that Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts advanced in the mid-1980s. The scales seem to have tilted again, away from the innovative ideas about instruction pushed by Jensen and Roberts and back toward more traditional conceptions of reading instruction, maintaining a delicate balance in some middle of the road position. As one reading committee member put it, "I think whole language and literature based and all of those are just going to drift away."[104]

CONCLUSION

Central office administrators in Parkwood embraced the central ideas of the state reading policy in their efforts to revise their existing instructional policy on reading. They revised the entire central office instructional guidance system in response to the state reading policy to disseminate many new ideas about reading instruction, and all of these ideas were in stark contrast with the existing discrete skills based reading curriculum that central administrators mandated in the early 1980s. The Parkwood case suggests that state instructional policy

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[102]Olson interview, May 15 1992; Tucker, May 19 1992.
[103]Lyons interview, May 15 1992.
[104]Tucker interview, May 19 1992.

matters at the local level, prompting significant change in central office administrators' efforts to shape classroom reading instruction through local policy-making initiatives.

But although the state policy mattered, the manner in which it did was not uniform, as central office administrators' read the policy differently. Delineating a single central office response to the state policy is difficult. What appears on paper (e.g., district reading philosophy, district reading guidelines, district textbooks) as a uniform and coherent district response to the state reading policy, looks in practice very different. Central administrators interpreted different ideas about reforming reading from the state policy and set about disseminating these ideas in distinctly different ways. Over time the central office response shifted as different central administrators came to the fore in crafting the Parkwood dissemination efforts. So although, there was consistency across different efforts to guide classroom instruction, in that they all called for change in modal reading instruction, there were notable inconsistencies in the vision of changed practice advocated.

In order to understand the response to the state reading policy within Parkwood central office, we needed to focus on how central administrators interpreted the state policy and set about disseminating the policy. Central administrators interpreted different reform ideas from the state policy depending on their prior beliefs and knowledge about reading instruction. Furthermore, the existing instructional agendas that central administrators brought to the policy, also influenced their attention to the policy and the ideas they interpreted and disseminated from the policy. These different interpretations of the policy coupled with administrators' beliefs about changing instruction influenced their efforts to disseminate the policy to Parkwood teachers. The manner in which state instructional policy influenced the practice of central office administrators,

therefore, depended on the beliefs and knowledge about reading instruction, teacher change, and the role of central office that these administrators brought to their efforts to learn from the policy and to their efforts to teach these ideas to classroom teachers.

The authority which the state reading policy enjoyed in Parkwood central office also had much to do with the local context and how local administrators understood the policy. As described in Chapter One, state policy-makers believed that the revised MEAP reading test would "drive" instructional reform at the local level as it would provide their instructional reform agenda with considerable authority. The Parkwood case provides some evidence that the revised MEAP added considerable authority to the state reading policy. Mr. Green's attention to the policy, for example, was influenced by his belief in the need for local districts to pay attention to SDE reform efforts and the importance placed on test scores by the Parkwood community. But, the authority of the reading policy to drive instructional reform in Parkwood cannot be explained solely by the revised MEAP reading test, nor the fact that it was being pushed by state government. In both Ms. Jensen's and Ms. Roberts' case, the MEAP seems to have played little role in explaining their attention to the policy and their extensive efforts to reform reading instruction. Rather, the manner in which they understood the policy as fitting with their personal reform agendas, coupled with their need for some political leverage to convince their colleagues to revise the existing district curriculum, explains their extensive attention to the state policy. The authority of the policy for Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts had at least as much to do with the personal agendas they brought to the policy, their interpretation of the policy to fit this agenda, and the lack of support from other administrators for instructional change, as it had to do with the revised MEAP.

In other words, the authority of state policy-makers' calls for reform in Parkwood depended to a certain extent on how local administrators construed the policy.

The manner in which the state policy was interpreted to fit with local agendas was especially salient in understanding the Parkwood response to the reading policy. Both Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts interpreted the policy as an opportunity to advance their existing reform agendas. As a result, the state reading policy was appropriated so that it fit with these other instructional reform proposals.[105] The manner in which Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts appropriated the state policy to their existing agendas resulted in extensive efforts on their parts to enact the policy in Parkwood. In contrast, neither Mr. Green nor Ms. Berry saw the policy as an opportunity to push existing instructional reform agendas and their efforts to disseminate the policy were considerably less ambitious than either Ms. Roberts' or Ms. Jensen's. The manner in which state instructional policy is perceived as an opportunity and attached to existing agendas influenced central administrators attention to it, and their efforts to disseminate the policy.

The different local agendas with which the policy became entangled resulted in the state policy-makers' calls for reform being transformed in significant ways in Parkwood central office. Central office administrators did not merely implement or ignore the state reading policy whole-cloth. Instead, ideas about reading instruction, which were absent from state policy documents, received considerable attention in central office efforts to disseminate the policy. Central office administrators drew on other sources for instructional ideas about reading, and these other ideas became entangled with their efforts to respond to the state reading policy. The need to integrate reading and writing instruction,

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[105]Freeman 1992, defines "appropriated interpretation" as the extent to which an external mandate or salient issue is attached to existing (internal) agendas. Appropriated interpretation, influences how external mandates are implemented within organizations.

for example, was an integral component of both Ms. Jensen's and Ms. Roberts' efforts to reform the Parkwood reading curriculum in response to the state policy. Similarly, encouraging teachers to teach in order to facilitate students' stages of literacy development also became an important part of the central office instructional reform agenda in Parkwood. Neither of these reform proposals were mentioned in state policy documents. Likewise central administrators' reading of the state policy shaped the local reform agenda adding momentum to some agendas, such as Ms. Jensen's and Ms. Roberts' efforts to push new approaches to reading instruction.

One way to read this case is that state policy had a significant impact on the practices of central office administrators in Parkwood. But focusing on the impact of state policy on local practice, distorts the role of central office in the policy and practice relationship. This case reveals that central administrators' practice and beliefs transformed the state policy as enacted in Parkwood central office.

CHAPTER THREE

HAMILTON CENTRAL OFFICE RESPONDS

As in Parkwood, the state reading policy entered a complex and dynamic environment in Hamilton. Hamilton central office administrators not only had educational agendas aside from the state reading policy, but also had their own ideas about reading instruction, which, for the most part, were very different from those being advocated by state policy-makers.

THE CONTEXT FOR CHANGE: STRUCTURAL TENSIONS'

Until the mid 1980s, each elementary school in Hamilton took responsibility for selecting its own reading program. One assistant superintendent described how Hamilton schools used "a hodgepodge of different reading programs," as teachers determined their own "teaching styles" and adopted "materials and resources that went along with the way they liked to do things."[1] According to the district language arts supervisor, there were 18 different reading programs in use across the school district prior to 1985.[2] The reading programs included everything from "Readers Digest skill packs" to "basal programs" and "phonics programs", with some elementary schools using two or three different reading programs depending on the individual teacher.[3]

Things began to change in the mid 1980s, however, as central administrators began to establish stronger guidance on matters of curriculum and instruction. Efforts to establish a standardized central office reading

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[1]Jackson (assistant superintendent) interview, 5 June 1992.
[2]Wood interview, 12 Nov. 1990; Jackson interview, 5 June 1992; Little (central office curriculum consultant) interview, 3 June 1992; Oldham interview, 14 July 1992.
[3]Jackson interview, 5 June 1992 .

curriculum in Hamilton, like similar efforts in Parkwood, were in response to the national back to basics movement. A new district superintendent hired in 1983, Mr. Gleason, was a strong advocate of "effective schools" and introduced a major reform packet in 1984 to strengthen academic requirements.

But other motives also seemed to be at play in Hamilton. Some board of education members and central office administrators were concerned about high rates of student mobility among inner-city schools and pushed for the establishment of a district-wide curriculum to ensure curriculum continuity for these transient students.[4] Central office administrators were also concerned about declining student test scores in reading in the early 1980s and the lack of information they had on what was going on in classrooms to ensure teacher accountability.[5] Central administrators' concerns about teacher accountability and student learning were heightened by bitter disputes and legal battles over busing and desegregation in the late 1970s. Schools were integrated under court order in the early 1980s. Consequently many senior central administrators were concerned, and still are, about law suits over the quality of education, especially for students from minority backgrounds.[6] As one curriculum consultant commented, senior central administrators are more "worried about keeping the legal system off their back" than issues of day-to-day classroom instruction.[7] Central administrators' motives for strong centralized instructional leadership seemed more complex in Hamilton than in Parkwood.

Efforts to centralize the district curriculum followed a similar pattern to those in Parkwood, though the timing was later and the instructional guidance system that was established was considerably more elaborate in Hamilton,

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[4]Katz (central office curriculum consultant) interview 23 July 1992; Peters (deputy superintendent) interview, 5 Mar. 1990; Jackson interview, 5 June 1992.
[5]Bates (director of elementary education) interview, 19 Feb. 1991.
[6]Peters interview, 5 Mar. 1990.
[7]Katz interview, 23 July 1992.

prescribing for teachers and principals even the acceptable level of student mastery. In 1986, the district moved to a single district textbook adoption for reading and by 1987 aligned this textbook with a an elaborate instructional monitoring system. In addition, a new central office essential skills test was introduced for each grade level in 1988 and closely aligned with the reading textbook and instructional monitoring system. The central office reading objectives were revised in 1986 and also aligned with the textbook and monitoring system. Although the curriculum decision-making process changed in Hamilton in the mid-1980s, the reading curriculum continued to be very "basal bound and focused almost entirely on reading skills" as it had since the early 1970s.[8] All central administrators maintained that reading instruction in Hamilton elementary schools since the early 1970s focused for the most part on isolated reading skills. A central office curriculum specialist remarked, "basically the basal has been our primary method of delivery of instruction of reading, phonics patterns in teaching reading ... and work-sheets were a major part of it."[9] As the assistant superintendent for curriculum noted, "we probably looked at reading as something that one did if they put together all the pieces."[10] The new central office reading curriculum established in the mid-1980s continued this focus.

The central office instructional guidance system supported the teaching of discrete decoding and comprehension skills in reading. The reading objectives for fifth grade students, for example, outlined more than 80 objectives under headings of study skills, inferential comprehension, literal comprehension, critical reading, and word analysis. These objectives covered everything from identifying the "primary accented syllable" in words to selecting "the statement

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[8]Jackson interview, 5 June 1992.
[9]Little interview, 3 June 1992.
[10]Oldham interview, 14 July 1992.

that best states the author's purpose". Even comprehension-focused objectives had a skills flavor. Under "critical reading", for example, one of the objectives stated, "given a series of reading selections at fifth grade level, the learner will write the author's purpose (persuade, inform, entertain)."[11] Another example, under the sub strand "literature", read, "given a short written poem and story the learner will distinguish between the two."[12] Ms. Helen Bates, who became director of elementary education in 1984, set about crafting a prescriptive instructional monitoring system. These reading objectives were aligned with an elaborate central office instructional monitoring system which required teachers to record students' scores on end-of-unit and end-of-book tests in the basal reading program. The monitoring sheets provided detailed guidance for teachers about what to teach in reading, focusing almost entirely on discrete skills, be they vocabulary skills or comprehension skills. The skills detailed in the monitoring system for one unit at one grade level, for example, included; "word identification; homophones; main idea; supplementary details; prefix; telephone directory.[13] If a student scored below the criterion score on the end of unit test, teachers were expected to plan additional instruction, as directed by the monitoring system.[14] Teachers turned their monitoring sheets into their school principals and these were reviewed twice yearly by the director of elementary education. The monitoring sheets were aligned with a number of reading tests, including an "essential skills test" which was administered at each grade level and the California Achievement Test (CAT).

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[11]District Reading Guidelines, 1987, p. 6.

[12]District Reading Guidelines, 1987, p. 4.

[13]Central Office Instructional Monitoring Sheet, 1986 (revised 1987, 1988).

[14] Each monitoring sheet outlined enrichment activities that teachers could use to re-teach a particular skill to students who did not score above the criterion score. In addition, page references for the basal studybook, teacher's manual, and enrichment study book were listed for teachers to consult in their re-teaching efforts.

The central office instructional guidance system reinforced the focus on discrete reading skills that, according to many informants, had dominated reading instruction in Hamilton classrooms.[15] Most schools, however, were not happy with the new central office instructional guidance system. Central administrators efforts to establish strong and prescriptive instructional leadership were in tension with the autonomy that school principals had exercised in selecting curricular materials and determining curriculum content. The resistance from teachers "was absolutely horrible," Ms. Bates remembered, as "teachers perceived it as an enormous amount of work," and it took three or four years before that resistance "dwindled."[16]

Schools resisted for a number of reasons. Some teachers objected to the amount of paper work the monitoring system entailed.[17] Others were upset by the manner in which it encroached on their autonomy to make curricular decisions. One school principal remarked how his staff believed that the central office instructional guidance system undermined their professionalism as teachers and created too much additional paper-work.[18] The same principal noted that he and his staff would have preferred to use a different reading program than the one selected by central administrators, but had little choice under the new instructional guidance system.

The opposition to the traditional basic skills reading instruction pushed by central office administrators was not as strong as in Parkwood. At least until the late 1980s there was little evidence of resistance to the instructional ideas about reading pushed through the central office instructional guidance system. There was considerable support for traditional ideas about instruction in Hamilton

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[15]Jackson interview, 5 June 1992; Little interview, 3 June 1992; Oldham interview, 14 July 1992.
[16]Bates interview, 12 May 1992.
[17]Bates interview, 12 May 1992.
[18]Nettles (elementary school principal) interview, 5 May 1992.

both at the central office and in school level. And members of the Hamilton Board of Education supported similar notions about reading instruction, as one school principal put it, "they understand reading better in terms of the skills."[19] The state reading policy, however, brought to the fore other ideas about reading instruction which were in tension with these traditional notions.

Despite strong support for traditional instructional approaches, Hamilton's central office was more structurally segmented when it came to curriculum governance than Parkwood's. Over 15 different central administrators dealt with aspects of curriculum and instruction (staff development and the like). Furthermore, four different units within the central office had responsibility for different aspects of curriculum and instruction (see Figure 3.1). A Research and Development unit was responsible for the district testing and evaluation programs. A Staff Development Unit organized all staff development efforts. A three member language arts department, under the leadership of a language arts supervisor, Ms. Wood, provided support and materials for K - 12 teachers in language arts. A director of elementary education, Ms. Bates, with one assistant, was responsible for all elementary schools in the district and the implementation of the instructional monitoring system. While the director of elementary education and the language arts supervisor reported to the same assistant superintendent, the research and development unit and the staff development each reported to a different assistant superintendent.

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[19]Trexler (elementary school principal) interview, 15 June 1992. Ms. Trexler is one of the seven administrators who serves on the Hamilton Instructional Council, which is made up of seven teachers and seven administrators. The instructional council makes recommendations to the Board of Education on matters of curriculum and instruction, such as piloting new textbooks and programs, and textbook adoptions.

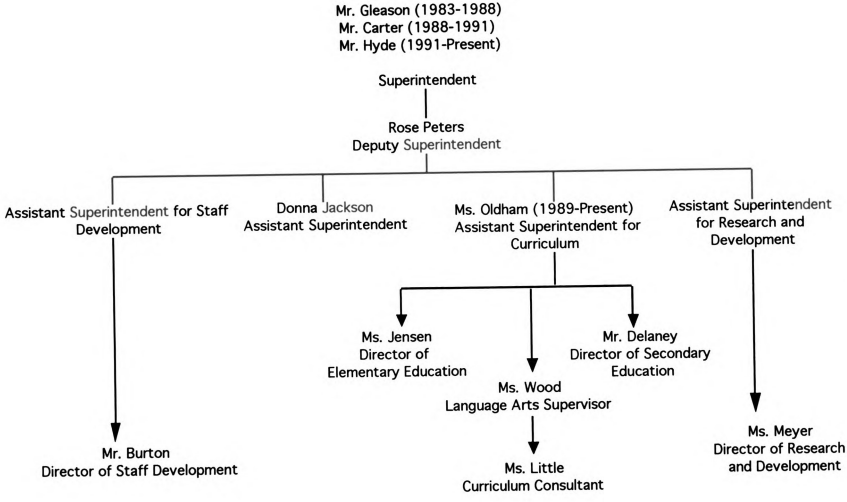

Figure 3.1 Hamilton Central Office Staff with Responsibility for Curriculum and Instruction

The segmentation of central office was heightened in the late 1980s by the failure of senior administrators to agree on an agenda for instruction and curriculum. As superintendents changed frequently in Hamilton, each unit followed their own agenda. Furthermore, staff members of each of these units were careful to confine their attention to their own jurisdiction.[20] Mr. Roy Burton, the director of staff development, explained:

> It's difficult for us to take an initiative and get behind it and move . . . it's an easy decision to just kind of do everything versus say, cut some things out and move in this direction. We seem to be reluctant to do that in Hamilton as witnessed by a lot of what we're doing here, it's the green light to just go ahead and just do everything.[21]

There was little effort to coordinate instructional initiatives across different units of central office, resulting in each of these four units often working on different instructional reform initiatives.

THE CENTRAL OFFICE RESPONSE TO THE STATE READING POLICY

Similar to Parkwood, central administrators' response to the state reading policy in Hamilton was far from uniform, varying considerably between individual central administrators and between different units of central office. Central office administrators and different units of central office responded differently and these responses changed over time. Although initially state policy-makers' instructional ideas received little attention in central office instructional policy-making efforts, things changed considerably by the early

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[20]Burton interview, 5 May 1992.
[21]Wood interview, 5 May 1992.

1990s as some central administrators began to revise existing policies on reading instruction (See Figure 3.2).

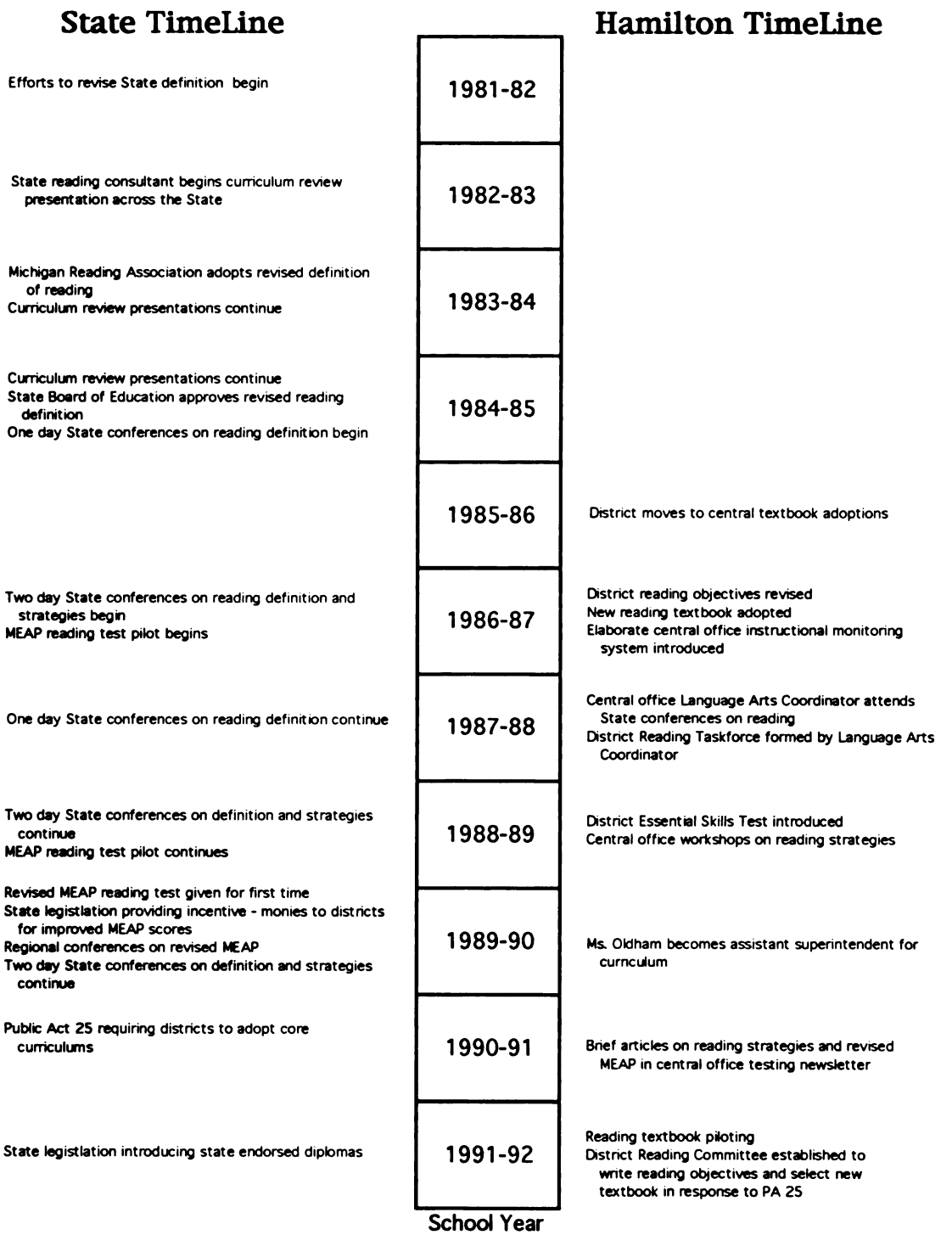

Figure 3.2 Chronology of State and Local District Events Related to Reading Instruction

The initial central office response to the state reading policy in Hamilton was considerably less ambitious and less enthusiastic than the response in Parkwood. Most senior central office administrators who dealt with matters of curriculum and instruction paid little or no attention to the state reading policy.[22] Ms. Helen Bates (director of elementary education) paid little attention to state policy-makers' calls for change in modal reading instruction. Her response was typical of most senior central office administrators. Consequently, the elaborate central office instructional guidance system remained unchanged and continued to endorse the teaching of isolated reading skills; the type of reading instruction state policy-makers were hoping to change.

But there were exceptions. June Wood, the central office language arts supervisor, attempted to disseminate instructional ideas she learned from attending some of the state workshops on the reading strategies in 1987. Her efforts to reform reading instruction in Hamilton grew in the early 1990s as she took responsibility for revising the existing central office reading curriculum. In 1988-89, the Research and Development (R & D) unit, under the directorship of Ms. Beth Meyer, began to pay attention to changes in the MEAP reading test. The R & D unit undertook some efforts to teach Hamilton teachers about the revised MEAP reading test (see Figure 3.2).

The supervisor of compensatory education, Kitty Conway, also attended the state reading conferences in 1987 and undertook a major revision of the Chapter One reading curriculum in Hamilton in response to the ideas she read from the policy. In 1989 Ms. Conway and her staff developed a new reading curriculum and a new instructional monitoring system for Chapter One classrooms that incorporated the reading strategies (e.g., KWL, QAR).

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[22]Wood interview, 12 Oct. 1990.

Furthermore, the chapter one supervisor and her staff organized an extensive staff development program for Chapter One teachers which included follow-up support for teachers in their classrooms.[23] The changes in the Chapter One reading curriculum and monitoring system were in stark contrast with the general education curriculum and monitoring system which remained unchanged. In contrast, the staff development unit, despite considerable staff resources, made no effort to communicate new ideas about reading instruction to Hamilton teachers. So although the central office instructional guidance system (e.g., textbooks, monitoring system, instructional objectives) suggested little effort on the part of Hamilton administrators to attend to the state reading policy, there were significant efforts by some administrators to attend to the policy. Similar to Parkwood, in Hamilton the central office response to the state reading policy was very diverse, and in many respects the diversity of responses within central office was more pronounced than in Parkwood.

For analytical purposes I have divided my account of the Hamilton response into three parts. First, I consider the reaction of central office administrators to the reading policy focusing on the tensions between traditional and innovative ideas about instruction. Second, I consider how tensions between traditional and innovative instructional ideas coupled with the segmented organization of Hamilton central office shaped the response to the state policy. Although the elaborate central office instructional guidance system provided few opportunities for teachers to change their instruction, the efforts of a number of central office administrators suggested new ideas about reading instruction. Third, I consider how the language arts supervisor availed of new opportunities for reform that emerged in the early 1990s, to attend again to the state reading policy.

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[23]Conway interview, 7 Aug. 1992.

Tensions Between Traditional and Innovative Instructional Ideas

Ms. Wood's efforts to respond to the state policy by disseminating the instructional ideas about reading she understood from the policy were in tension with the efforts of most central administrators to preserve the status quo. Most central administrators were content with the existing central office curriculum which focused entirely on isolated reading skills.

Few Incentives to Attend to the Policy: Threat Rather than Opportunity

Inattention is a ubiquitous management tool.[24] And one which is critical in understanding how Hamilton central administrators responded to the state reading policy. By 1988 central office administrators in Hamilton had implemented an elaborate central office instructional guidance system with a strong emphasis on discrete reading skills. Central administrators, especially Ms. Bates, had devoted considerable time and funds to revising the district reading guidelines, implementing a new district essential skills reading test, developing an elaborate instructional monitoring system and purchasing a new basal reading program. One senior central office administrator described how "there was a lot of hesitancy, on the part of the district . . . to forge ahead with the new definition, given we had just made this major expenditure for a basal."[25]

Financial constraints, however, were but one factor in the reluctance of central administrators to pay attention to state policy-makers' calls for instructional reform. State policy-makers' ideas about reading instruction were also problematic for Hamilton administrators in that they were difficult to evaluate. The Hamilton instructional monitoring system was introduced at least in part to keep teachers' accountable for what they taught and alleviate central administrators' worries about legal battles. The director of elementary education

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[24]Kiesler & Sproull, 1982.

[25]Jackson interview, 5 June 1992.

was concerned about the difficulty of monitoring some of the new ideas about reading. She remarked, "I wonder about [the reading policy] in terms of evaluating. I think there are parts that are extremely hard to evaluate."[26] The difficulty of evaluating these new ideas, would complicate efforts to monitor instruction, an issue which Ms. Bates had just spent considerable time and effort addressing through the instructional monitoring system . As noted above, there was considerable resistance from teachers and principals to the monitoring system when it was first introduced. Reforming the elaborate district instructional guidance yet again would have seriously questioned its legitimacy with local educators. By the time teachers were beginning to accept the central office monitoring system, state policy-makers' efforts to reform reading instruction were just being heard in Hamilton. The state reading policy was out of sync with the Hamilton central office's reform cycle for language arts.

Financial constraints, evaluation problems, and reform cycles, however, were but part of the story. After all, the state department had been informing school districts about proposed changes in reading by the time Hamilton central administrators were developing their new instructional guidance system. Yet, state policy-makers' ideas about reading found no mention in Hamilton reform efforts. State policy-makers' calls for change in reading instruction questioned the legitimacy of the Hamilton reading curriculum and the beliefs of most central administrators who dealt with curriculum. The Hamilton reading curriculum supported the discrete skills approach to reading instruction that state policy-makers were trying to change. The incongruence between central administrators beliefs about reading instruction, especially those of Ms. Bates and Ms. Oldham, and those they understood the state reading policy to be supporting resulted in Hamilton central administrators paying little attention to the state reforms.

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[26]Bates interview, 12 May 1992.

Ms. Bates, for example, interpreted the state policy as advancing approaches to reading instruction that she adamantly opposed. Based on her experiences both as a teacher and as a reader, Ms. Bates believed that decoding skills were critical to students' success in reading. She viewed reading instruction as getting students to master a number of processes (e.g., word recognition processes, letter recognition processes, phonics). Bates' response to the state reading policy was shaped by these beliefs and convictions. With regard to the definition she noted:

> I just hope that [the new definition] all comes together and we don't leave out big hunks of the process that I think children need in order to read. It concerns me that on various committees that I'm on . . . around the state when I hear, "Well it's really not important for children to have some of these skills? Who says they need to know their letter names and their letter sounds. Kids can really read without that." I've some real strong feelings on that from past experience. I was a third grade teacher at the time and I picked up four children that couldn't read and it was real apparent to me that they had some site vocabulary but . . . that was it. And there was just no way they could decode.[27]

While Ms. Bates saw some merit in the state policy, she had strong reservations about many aspects of the policy as they conflicted with her deeply held beliefs about reading instruction. Ms. Bates believed strongly that these new ideas should not supplant modal reading instruction.

> Many people are now saying, "Well, what we need to do is just have a literature base in the area of reading. If we do this and we do mapping and webbing and all that stuff, kids will learn how to read. They don't really need to know various things such as letter names, letter sounds, the alphabet, and what have you." I'm not there because there's going to come a time in every youngster's life where he's going to hit a word that he is not going to be able to put

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[27]Bates interview, 12 May 1992.

> in context. He's going to have to do something with that, and it's called decoding.[28]

Bates interpreted the state policy as suggesting that teachers needed to fundamentally change their approach to reading instruction by using real literature, and moving away from drill in reading skills. But such a reading of the policy was in conflict with her own strongly-held beliefs about reading instruction. She did not believe these new ideas should replace existing approaches to reading instruction (e.g., decoding).

Ms. Bates' beliefs were representative of other senior central administrators and the school board; they supported similar traditional notions about reading instruction. As one principal put it:

> With the district [central office administrators and the school board] they are going to be very interested in the skills, I mean it is something they want to make sure that kids have the skills that they require so they can go on to the next grade ... I think they understand reading better in terms of the skills that are being covered.[29]

The conflict between the traditional beliefs about reading instruction that dominated in Hamilton and the more innovative ideas that central administrators like Ms. Bates interpreted the state policy to be pushing, resulted in the policy receiving limited attention in Hamilton central office.

The way in which Ms. Bates and other senior central administrators understood the policy to be in conflict with local instructional agendas undermined the authority of state policy-makers' reform proposals in Hamilton. Regardless of state policy-makers' efforts to enhance the authority of the reading

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[28]Bates interview, 12 May 1992.

[29]Trexler interview, 15 June 1992.

policy by aligning it with a revised MEAP reading test, the authority of the policy depended to a great extent on how local administrators interpreted the policy.

Some Central Office Attention Despite the Odds

Despite most central administrators' disinterest in the state reading policy, there was one notable effort to attend to the policy. In 1987 June Wood, the district language arts supervisor, attended some of the state reading workshops on the new reading policy. Ms. Wood's first supervisor gave her no encouragement to attend to the state initiative as he, like most central administrators, was not interested in the state reform efforts. In 1988, the situation changed briefly when Ms. Donna Jackson, a former reading teacher, became the supervisor for language arts, and encouraged Ms. Wood in her efforts to attend to the state reading initiatives. While she received little encouragement from her central office colleagues, Ms. Wood's personal interest in reading instruction seems to have outweighed the lack of incentives.[30] She expressed a keen interest in research on reading, and noted how she has always read professional reading journals keeping up-to-date on new developments in reading instruction.

Ms. Wood found many of the ideas presented at the state reading conferences not entirely novel, but different from modal reading instruction in the district. She remarked that some of the reading strategies have "been around for a long time" and that she "always thought of reading as comprehension." But she claimed that she learned new ideas about reading instruction from attending the state reading conferences, especially ideas about reading strategies and comprehension of expository texts.[31] Ms. Wood, however, acknowledges that attributing what she has learned about reading instruction to the state reading

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[30]Wood interview, 22 Apr. 1992.

[31]Wood interview, 22 Apr. 1992.

conferences is not realistic, as many other sources have contributed to her learning. "I have changed a lot," she explained, but "I don't know how you could attribute it to just to one or two things."[32] Ms. Wood learned about the importance of teaching reading strategies to students and using real literature in reading instruction from the state policy and state reading conferences. In addition, she felt the state policy supported the use of longer reading selections and expository texts, and stressed the importance of students' prior knowledge in reading. She was impressed with the state policy, noting, "I think that this [revised] definition is by far a real improvement over the old definition from the standpoint that the old definition really spoke mostly to decoding and I think reading is much more than decoding."[33] Although Ms. Wood interpreted the policy as calling for change in modal practice, she believed that phonics and decoding skills should still be taught. Acknowledging her "strong phonics background", she argued "I do think phonics is a part of reading but I also think it's one of the many tools that students use to read."[34] For Ms. Wood, the state policy called on teachers to teach reading strategies and use real literature in reading instruction but did not necessarily mean that existing word decoding tools (e.g., phonics) were no longer legitimate.

What Ms. Wood learned from the state policy was shaped by her existing knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction. Her beliefs in the importance of comprehension and that reading instruction involved more than decoding words, disposed her to state policy-makers' calls for reform of modal reading instruction. But her belief that phonics and decoding skills were essential "tools" in the reading process, suggested to her that the focus on reading comprehension which the state policy called for, required teachers to teach the reading strategies

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[32]Wood interview, 22 Apr. 1992.
[33] Wood interview, 22 Apr. 1992.
[34] Wood interview, 22 Apr. 1992.

in addition to the existing word decoding tools. The strategies were new skills which should supplement rather than replace existing reading skills.

Structural Dissonance: Multiple Central Office Instructional Agendas

Central administrators' reaction to the instructional reform ideas state policy-makers were proposing did not portend well for these ideas making there way into the central office instructional guidance system in Hamilton. The tension between the traditional ideas on reading instruction held by most central administrators and the more innovative ideas proposed by state policy-makers, meant that there were few central office advocates for reforming the Hamilton reading curriculum.

In many respects the tension between progressive and more traditional ideas on reading instruction was heightened by the segmented structure of Hamilton central office. As noted earlier, different units of central office dealt with issues of curriculum, testing, and staff development, each under the leadership of a different senior administrator. Members of these different units confined their attention to their particular specialization (e.g., testing, staff development). During an interview with Ms. Bates, for example, she noted how she was "the director of elementary education, not of curriculum".[35] Similarly, Beth Meyer, the director of the research and development was quick to point out "that's not really my area" when asked about instruction.[36] When one compares the response of the staff development office, research and development unit, language arts department, and the director of elementary education's office to the state reading policy, especially their efforts to shape classroom instruction, this structural dissonance within Hamilton central office becomes even more

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[35]Bates interview, 19 Feb. 1991.

[36]Meyer interview, 12 May 1992.

pronounced and influenced any central office efforts to disseminate the state reading policy.

Ms. Wood attempted to disseminate some of the central ideas she had learned at the state reading conferences to Hamilton teachers, but her efforts at reform were in conflict with Ms. Bates and other senior administrators' inattention to the policy. In addition, despite the considerable resources of the staff development unit, Mr. Burton and his staff paid scant attention to Ms. Wood's reform efforts. Although the research and development unit, under Ms. Meyer's leadership, attempted to support Ms. Wood's reform initiatives, their efforts focused entirely on testing, sending mixed messages to teachers.

Disseminating New Ideas: Staff Development'

Despite the fact that the new ideas about reading instruction were "a hard sell" to her colleagues in central office, Ms. Wood began to organize a district staff development effort on the state reading policy.[37] Limited financial and staff resources, curtailed Ms. Wood's dissemination efforts. As the assistant superintendent for curriculum put it, "our financial constraints made it very difficult for us to provide for our teachers what was provided in other districts."[38] Ms. Wood received no funds from central office for her efforts, and was awarded only $14,000 of the $90,000 state grant for which she applied.[39] Consequently, she could not provide staff development for all Hamilton teachers, which totaled close to 2,000. Instead, two teacher representatives from each building, a total of 70 teachers, were selected to attend staff development workshops one day a month for three hours after school, during the 1988-89 school year.

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[37]Wood interview, 12 Oct. 1990.
[38]Oldham interview, 14 July 1992.
[39]Wood interview, 12 Nov. 1990; 22 Apr. 1992.

Though the lack of financial resources may have shaped Ms. Wood's dissemination efforts, her knowledge and beliefs about teacher change were also important influences on her reading of the state policy. Although she may have been able to provide staff development opportunities for a greater number of teachers with more financial resources, her own account suggested that she would have followed a similar dissemination approach. When asked how she would do things differently with unlimited resources, Ms. Wood suggested more of the same. She believed that the modeling approach to teaching teachers about the strategies was an effective one. She was impressed, for example, with the instructional approach adopted at the state conferences and saw little room for improvement in the state dissemination efforts, noting: "I felt real comfortable with the modules, I felt like I could use those to train trainers."[40] Ms. Woods' beliefs about teacher change coupled with her lack of financial resources shaped her efforts to disseminate the policy to Hamilton teachers.

Ms. Wood followed the presentation format which presenters had used at the state workshops, using the scripted modules which she had obtained at the state workshops. The strategies were the centerpiece of her dissemination efforts. Each of the three hour workshops focused on a different reading strategy. Wood and her co-presenter[41] first spoke about the importance of the strategy, they then modeled the strategy for the participants and then teachers were given an opportunity to ask questions about the strategy.[42]

Presentations on each of the strategies followed a similar format, focusing primarily on the steps of the strategy and what it meant. For example, the presentation on Directed Reading/Thinking Activity (DRTA), began with the

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[40]Wood interview, 25 Nov. 1991.

[41]A textbook company hired a consultant to assist Ms. Wood in her efforts.

[42]My descriptions of Ms. Wood's workshops are based on the state scripted modules which she used, and Ms. Wood's account and the accounts of four teachers who attended the workshops.

presenter putting a transparency on the overhead entitled "DRTA", detailing each of the steps in the strategy:

1. Recall Prior Knowledge, Set purpose for reading;
2. Read to Confirm and Add Prior Knowledge;
3. Confirm, Reject, Add to prior Knowledge.

The presenter then proceeded through each step of the strategy. For step one, for instance, the presenter read the transparency and then noted:

> At the beginning of a chapter, unit or article ask and record on the blackboard, 1. What do you know about . . . 2. What do you think you know about, 3. What would you like to know about . . .[43]

Teachers were expected to return to their schools where they were to offer workshops for their colleagues in a similar fashion. In addition, each trainer was given a copy of the state's scripted modules to use in their presentations and to be kept in the building as a resource for teachers.

The instructional approach was mostly didactic with teachers assigned to a passive listener role, as one teacher who attended the workshops described, "mostly it was just sitting there listening and trying to remember all this so you could bring it back to the building and tell other people what to do."[44] Although the reading strategies were but one of the reform ideas Wood learned from the state conferences, they became the dominant theme in her reading of the policy as reflected in her workshops. Teachers and administrators who attended these staff development initiatives also seemed to have read the workshops as centered on the reading strategies. One participant explained, "they were really focusing on beefing up comprehension strategies . . . teachers had decoding strategies but not comprehension [strategies]."[45]

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[43]Michigan Department of Education, 1988.
[44]Carter interview, 20 May 1992.
[45]Katz interview, 23 July 1992.

Ms. Wood was not entirely satisfied with her staff development initiative, believing that the lack of financial resources curtailed her efforts. She felt her efforts helped teachers become aware of the new definition but she wasn't sure if many had "gone beyond awareness."[46] Teachers who attended the workshops made similar observations, and a central office curriculum consultant who also participated remarked "the overall effect was pretty negligible."[47]

Changing Personnel and Fewer Opportunities for Change

Ms. Wood's staff development efforts on the reading strategies, however, were short lived. Susan Oldham replaced Ms. Jackson as assistant superintendent for curriculum in 1989. New leadership seriously undermined the efforts for change that Ms. Wood had attempted to initiate. Ms. Jackson explained, "It's a funny thing trying to get someone to come on board once the ship is already set to sea, you go through a lot more steps and I'm not sure those steps were facilitated or that message or vision communicated [to Ms. Oldham].[48] Under Ms. Oldham's leadership, Ms. Wood received little encouragement to continue her staff development efforts. "I think [Ms. Wood's efforts] lost some of it's momentum after the initial year," Ms. Jackson explained, the district continued with its initiative but without that high intensity of direction."[49] Although Ms. Wood's dissemination efforts never seemed to have had much momentum, whatever opportunities they provided for change in modal reading instruction ended in 1989. Although the trainer of trainer workshops were supposed to run for two years, they came to an abrupt end after

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[46]Wood interview, 12 Nov. 1990; Jackson interview, 5 June 1992.
[47]Katz interview, 23 July 1992; Murray interview, 29 Apr. 1992; Carter interview, 20 May 1992; Gilby interview, 20 May 1992.
[48]Jackson interview, 5 June 1992.
[49]Jackson interview, 5 June 1992.

the first year.[50] Ms. Wood acknowledged that all she has done since 1989 was to provide some information on the strategies to beginning teachers during their induction meetings. "I've not done anything wholesale in terms of the reading strategies or the new definition of reading."[51] Instead, her efforts have concentrated on working with teachers who have problems with the discrete skills based central office basal program.

Other Efforts to Guide Instruction: A Different Response to the Policy

Although Ms. Wood's dissemination efforts closely paralleled the state workshops, encouraging Hamilton teachers to teach reading strategies, these instructional reform ideas interacted with other central office ideas on reading instruction resulting in state policy-makers' calls for change being transformed in significant ways in Hamilton. Ms. Wood's efforts to change reading instruction were in stark contrast with the message that other central administrators communicated to teachers through other elements of the central office instructional guidance system (e.g., textbooks, instructional monitoring system). While Ms. Wood conducted workshops on the reading strategies, the district instructional guidance system remained unchanged supporting traditional notions of reading instruction (e.g., a focus on word decoding and phonics).

Textbooks, instructional monitoring, and curriculum objectives. The existing instructional guidance system constrained reform efforts, Ms. Wood explained, as "teachers had no tools to reinforce strategies" (e.g., textbooks that used strategies).[52] She acknowledged that the central office mandated basal reader undermined her efforts to get teachers to use the reading strategies. Limited LEA funds coupled with senior administrators strong beliefs in modal practice, meant

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[50]Murray (fifth grade teacher who attended the staff development workshops) interview, 29 Apr. 1992.

[51]Wood interview, 25 Nov. 1991.

[52]Wood interview, 25 Nov. 1991.

that there was no effort to buy a more up-to-date textbook that would encourage teachers to use the strategies. Both the central office reading objectives and instructional monitoring system remained unchanged continuing to encourage teachers to teach isolated decoding and comprehension skills, and making no reference to reading strategies. Ms. Bates (director of elementary education) continued to visit schools to check the instructional monitoring sheets, suggesting to teachers and school administrators that little had changed about reading instruction and providing no incentive for teachers to attend to the instructional ideas that Ms. Wood was disseminating. Ideas for change in reading instruction had to compete with the much more prescriptive, authoritative, and consistent traditional approach to reading instruction supported by the central office instructional guidance system. There seemed little incentive for teachers to pay attention to the ideas Ms. Woods was disseminating. Other units of central office, including the R & D and Staff Development units, also provided few opportunities and even fewer incentives for teachers to learn about the state reading policy.

Testing: Mixed messages on reading. The testing and curriculum units, while attempting to achieve similar goals, never worked well together.[53] Both Ms. Meyer, the director of research and development, and her predecessor Mr. Ruiz claimed to have devoted considerable effort to creating a "partnership" with the curriculum unit in order to push joint reform ventures. With regard to their efforts to create a partnership with the language arts department in responding to the state reading policy, Ms. Meyer noted "we tried to do it in tandem".[54] The R & D's efforts at collaboration with curriculum personnel, however, achieved only a very limited partnership.

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[53]Ruiz and Meyer interview, 8 Feb. 1991.

[54]Meyer interview, 12 May 1992.

The research and development unit began to attend to the state reading policy in 1988/89 as the new MEAP was about to be implemented. Ms. Meyer's and Mr. Juan's dissemination efforts focused almost entirely on the revised MEAP reading test. The focus on testing is not at all surprising considering that the rewards and incentives of Ms. Meyer's and her colleagues' positions were tied to their administration of the district testing program and not to any efforts to promote new approaches to reading instruction. Furthermore, Ms. Meyer's expertise was testing, and traditional standardized testing at that. When asked about the implications of the revised MEAP and state definition for reading instruction, Ms. Meyer responded; "Well I guess you just teach, you teach reading, I think that's the best way."[55] She went on to acknowledge that curriculum and instruction were not her area of expertise and Ms. Wood could best address those questions.[56]

Ms. Meyer's reading of the policy had a strong testing motif which was reflected in the research and development unit's dissemination efforts for principals and teachers. The research and development unit's workshops on the revised MEAP pointed out "this is how it is different, our scores are going to go down, [because] it's a new standard."[57] Ms. Meyer and her colleagues also produced a video focusing on how the revised MEAP was different to the old MEAP, "how to read the test reports, [and] what the score meant."[58] Although Ms. Wood participated in these ventures, distinct lines were maintained between testing and instruction with Ms. Wood confining her attention to the reading strategies while R. & D. personnel focused on the changes in MEAP and new scoring procedures. A similar testing theme was evident in the research and

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[55]Meyer interview, 12 May 1992.
[56]Meyer interview, 12 May 1992.
[57]Meyer interview, 12 May 1992.
[58]Meyer interview, 12 May 1992; analysis of videotape on testing.

development monthly newsletters which were also used to disseminated ideas about the new state reading policy. Brief articles alerted teachers to the revised MEAP. One issue of the newsletter, for example, informed teachers on how to adapt "reading strategies as assessment devices".[59] Certain reading strategies were listed (e.g., K-W-L, DRTA, Story Grammar Maps, Graphic Organizers) which teachers were encouraged to use in order to get "ongoing glimpses of student growth" in reading "fluency, understanding, interest and attitudes."[60] These newsletters seemed to suggest that the reading strategies were assessment drills that teachers needed to practice with kids, rather than a new approach to reading instruction. The R. & D.'s dissemination efforts provided yet another reading of the policy within Parkwood central office.

Considering that the MEAP was but one of three tests that the research and development office administered, Ms. Meyer was trying to address very different and contrary messages about reading. Her dissemination efforts continued to focus on traditional standardized reading tests (e.g., California Achievement Test). Continuing to administrate and advise teachers on traditional standardized reading tests meant that the R & D's dissemination efforts were sending mixed messages to classroom teachers about reading. They were attempting to advise teachers on a revised MEAP test that focused on students' ability to comprehend while at the same time trying to get teachers to prepare students for traditional standardized reading tests that focused on isolated reading skills (e.g., phonics, decoding skills). While the focus on strategies paralleled Ms. Wood's to disseminate ideas from the state reading policy, the focus on isolated reading skills supported the type of reading instruction policy-makers had hoped to change. In fact, Ms. Meyer may have

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[59]Testing Newsletter, Nov. 1990.
[60]Testing Newsletter, Nov. 1990.

had more incentive to attend to the other tests (i.e., California Achievement Test, Essential Skills Test) and the isolated reading skills they measured, as these tests received greater attention in Hamilton than the MEAP. Ms. Meyer explained:

> MEAP ... it's always been seen as an outside test that we have to do and we have other measures that are more valuable to us. [MEAP is] kind of a nice thing to look at as an extra, the CAT is what we used to measure our quality and I would say that's still true.[61]

So for Ms. Meyer's and her colleagues there were mixed incentives to move away from advising teachers on how to prepare students for traditional standardized tests, that focused on discrete reading skills.

These mixed messages and incentives which the R. & D. unit attempted to accommodate were reflected in their dissemination efforts. These same newsletters that attempted to disseminate information about the revised MEAP, contained much advice for teachers on how to prepare students for more traditional reading tests. One issue of the newsletter, for example, advised teachers on how to improve their students' long term memory stating "repetition and reciting must be part of daily routine. Research indicates that over-learning and thoroughly mastering material improves recall." [62] Other briefs detailed discrete reading skills that teachers should practice with their students. A brief in the January 1991 issue, for example, instructed teachers to get their students to practice five types of analogies (e.g., part-whole - leg : body; cow : animal). This focus on drilling students on isolated reading skills was the very type of reading instruction that state policy-makers were attempting to change, and that Ms. Wood was hoping her trainer of trainer workshops would transform to some extent.

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[61]Meyer interview, 12 May 1992; also Nathon (fifth grade teacher and member of the district reading committee) interview, 7 July 1992.
[62]Testing Newsletter, Oct, 1990.

The research and development office's dissemination efforts called for different things. Teachers needed to get students to practice reading strategies in order that they would do well on the MEAP test. Although state policy-makers hoped that the MEAP reading test would drive reform in reading instruction of Michigan reading classrooms, their vision of the "new" instruction seemed very different from that being pushed by the Hamilton research and development unit. State policy-makers anticipated that the revised MEAP test would drive instruction away from drill on discrete reading skills toward instruction centered on constructing meaning from real literature. The R & D's dissemination efforts, however, suggested mixed messages to Hamilton teachers; teachers should practice reading strategies with their students in addition to continuing to drill isolated decoding skills (e.g., vowel sounds, analogies). There was little in the R. & D.'s dissemination efforts that suggested to teachers that drill in isolated reading skills was no longer acceptable reading instruction.

Staff Development: A different instructional agenda. The staff development unit was established in 1986 with five full-time employees, when a new district superintendent was hired who was a strong advocate for "effective instruction" approach to teaching. Mr. Burton, the founder and current director of the unit, described effective instruction as "Madeline Hunter training, or I.T.I.P., Instructional Theory into Practice."[63] He elaborated describing how the Staff Development unit began by providing workshops on:

> effective means to teach students in organized lessons. We covered things like, the right and left hemispheres of the brain, or how they process so we could look at learning types of students. Motivation theory, what are some of the strategies to motivate students,

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[63]Burton interview, 5 May 1992. ITIP refers to an approach to instruction popularized by Madeline Hunter in the 1970s and 1980s. The approach focused on identifying behaviors and strategies that teachers should use in teaching.

reinforcement theory, retention theory, helping students remember, practice theory, how do design effective practice sessions.[64]

The superintendent's departure in the late 1980s coupled with the lack of a central office mission for instructional reform, left Mr. Burton and his staff at the mercy of the local market. As a result, the program offerings of the staff development unit became more diversified to meet the demands of Hamilton teachers and school administrators. As Mr. Burton described, "we're simply sort of a store that you can come in to shop in or not." While effective instruction and peer coaching has remained the "core" activity of the staff development unit, course offerings expanded, to include "peer coaching", "leadership development", "positive discipline", "synergy: unleashing team potential", "master learning" and "cooperative learning".[65]

Mr. Burton and his staff were too taken up with their effective instruction workshops to pay much attention to Ms. Wood's efforts. Neither the state reading policy nor Ms. Wood's efforts to disseminate it to Hamilton teachers was a priority for them. Teachers' demands provided a much stronger stimuli to Mr. Burton than the state reform efforts and there seems to have been little demand from Hamilton teachers for workshops on reading instruction.[66] Market demand coupled with the failure of central administrators to agree on a common instructional initiative has resulted in the courses offered being "content neutral." The staff development unit did little to disseminate ideas on the state reading policy. While Mr. Burton was familiar with the state policy terminology, he acknowledged that he has not considered the implications of the policy for

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[64]Burton interview, 5 May 1992.
[65]Burton interview, 5 May 1992.
[66]Burton interview, 5 May 1992.

reading instruction. "I never really thought about [what was new]. I mean you just kind of, well, reading is opening that book and reading."[67]

Isolated ideas from the reading policy were plugged in, ever so briefly, where they seemed to fit with the existing staff development agenda. During one of the courses on effective instruction, for example, staff developers used the state reading definition to illustrate the importance of prior knowledge. Mr. Burton described how:

> In order to teach somebody something new you probably first go back into their past, . . . something they're familiar with . . . and what I thought was neat about the new definition was that it fit right into that. We would always then hit upon the definition as a prime example of what we were talking about. We would usually put the definition on an overhead when we got to that point and then show the connection between what we were teaching and what was happening [in the definition].[68]

This seemed to be the extent of Mr. Burton and his colleagues dissemination efforts on the state reading policy. The staff development unit provided no opportunities for teachers to learn about the state reading policy nor any incentives for teachers to attend to the policy.

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The various units of central office in Hamilton read the state policy differently and provided different guidance to teachers on reading instruction. Central office textbooks, tests, the instructional monitoring system, and reading objectives continued to encourage teachers to teach isolated reading skills, providing few opportunities for Hamilton teachers to learn about the instructional reform ideas state policy-makers were advocating. But Ms. Wood's

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[67]Burton interview, 5 May 1992.

[68]Burton interview, 5 May 1992.

workshops on the strategies, and the efforts of the R & D department to inform teachers about the revised MEAP test, provided Hamilton teachers with opportunities to learn about new instructional ideas. These readings of the state policy, however, had to contend with the more prescriptive instructional guidance system for teachers' attention. Consequently, in Hamilton state policy-makers' calls for reform were transformed to suggest that the reading strategies were as a supplement to existing discrete skills focused instruction, and an optional supplement at that.

New Opportunities for Instructional Reform

Circumstances change with time in even the most rigid of bureaucracies, with new opportunities opening unexpectedly for those wishing to advance reform proposals.[69] In Hamilton, the opportunities for instructional reform increased considerably in the early 1990s, due to a number of local and state factors. First, as district language arts supervisor, Ms. Wood, was charged with organizing the district's periodical curriculum review process for reading. The process entailed piloting textbooks and establishing a district committee to write new reading guidelines. Second, new state policy initiatives provided further stimuli for central office to consider the existing reading curriculum. State directives that tied state funding to improvement in MEAP scores, and efforts to require MEAP for high school graduation resulted in senior central office administrators' having to pay more attention to the revised MEAP reading test. In addition, Public Act 25 required each school district to submit a core curriculum, that identified student learning outcomes in each subject area, for state approval, providing yet another incentive for Hamilton administrators to review the existing district reading curriculum. While central administrators

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[69]Kingdon, 1984.

were hostile to state intervention in curriculum issues, they felt they had little choice as an informula district[70] but to attend to these state policy initiatives.[71] One assistant superintendent explained, "we have to meet these requirements in order to get state aid and in order to be sure we don't end up with a ton of law suits against us as far as parents are concerned."[72] Again, Ms. Wood was given responsibility for leading the effort to write reading outcomes.

Piloting textbooks: An Opportunity for Instructional Change

Ms. Wood was excited by these new opportunities to push more innovative ideas about reading instruction, and move the district away from an emphasis on isolated reading skills towards greater emphasis on reading comprehension.[73] These opportunities allowed her to renew her earlier efforts to disseminate some of the ideas she had interpreted from the state reading policy.

Ms. Wood took the opportunity provided by the district curriculum review process to attempt to get teachers to move away from traditional basal readers to literature based reading programs. The textbook piloting process, which she began in 1991 in four district schools, provided her with an initial opportunity to achieve this goal. She selected two literature based programs which she described as "Michigan's answer ... [the textbook] stresses everything that you would want from strategies to the new definition."[74] Along with the emphasis on reading strategies and students' comprehension of text, the textbooks also pushed other innovative instructional approaches that Ms. Wood believed to be important, such as, the replacement of reading workbooks with journals, and

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[70]An informula district is one that relies on the state government for a high proportion of its funding.

[71]Peters interview, 5 May 1992; Oldham interview, 5 May 1992; Bates interview, 12 May 1992.

[72]Peters, interview, 5 May 1992.

[73]Wood interview, 22 Apr. 1992.

[74]Wood interview, 22 Apr. 1992.

getting teachers to shift from ability grouping to flexible grouping in their classrooms.

The Reading Committee: Another Opportunity for Change?

Ms. Wood also used the reading committee of district teachers and administrators, which she established in 1992 to write learning outcomes for language arts and select new classroom materials for the district, as an opportunity for instructional reform.[75] She took the opportunity the reading committee offered to disseminate some of the instructional ideas she had learned from the state reading policy, especially the importance of using literature based reading programs. The six textbooks she selected for the committee to review are all literature based, and according to the chair of the committee, Ms. Wood has been pushing committee members to adopt a literature based program.[76]

But tensions between traditional and innovative approaches to reading instruction have also played out in the committee's work and threaten to undermine Ms. Wood's ideas for instructional reform. Some committee members have expressed strong reservations about many of the new instructional ideas that are being advanced, especially how much phonics should be taught. "There's a very very strong element that's very pro-phonics," one committee member explained, "so we had very, very long, drawn out heated discussions, almost arguments about whether or not we had to use phonics as a focus."[77] There has also been resistance to Ms. Wood's efforts to push for a literature based reading program. The chair of the committee argued strongly for a textbook that would present a more balanced approach -- "some solid decoding instruction with authentic literature."[78]

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[75]The district reading committee continues to work on selecting a reading textbook and drafting language arts outcomes.

[76]Katz interview, 23 July 1992; Wood interview, 22 Apr. 1992.

[77]Nathon interview, 7 July 1992.

[78]Katz interview, 23 July 1992.

Concerns about new instructional approaches to reading, however, are not confined to the Hamilton reading committee. The Board of Education and senior central administrators, especially, Ms. Bates and Ms. Oldham, seem less than willing to abandon their traditional notions about reading instruction. Ms. Oldham and Ms. Bates while acknowledging some changes are needed, are still committed to providing instruction to students on discrete reading skills. They are both adamant that they will not change their belief about the importance of teaching phonics and decoding skills regardless of any state policy initiatives.[79] Ms. Oldham explained, "my own position is that the decoding, phonics, the way one sounds out the words, are part of those tools that will eventually assist the student so that they will be able to get the [meaning] and will be able to communicate."[80] She also expressed similar sentiments to the reading committee chair with regard to the type of reading textbook central office should adopt, arguing for a text that "supports both skill development and literature".[81]

Reading Policy and the Local Context

Ms. Wood's efforts to introduce new instructional ideas through the textbook piloting program and reading committee were also shaped by her reading of the local context. Her attention to the concerns of Hamilton teachers about the new reading programs curtailed her reform efforts. Many teachers involved in the textbook pilot program actively resisted many of the ideas Wood was trying to implement. One textbook consultant, assisting Ms. Wood with the piloting efforts, explained that "teachers are trying to teach a new program the old way, and that's causing a lot of the conflict, they are using old methodology, and old attitudes to use new materials."[82] Teachers at the lower elementary

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[79]Bates interview, 30 Apr. 1992; Oldham interview, 5 May 1992; 14 July 1992.
[80]Oldham interview, 5 May 1992.
[81]Oldham interview, 14 July 1992.
[82]Hunt interview, 15 July 1992.

level, for example, requested workbooks instead of the journals that Ms. Wood was pushing.[83] Ms. Wood consented to their demands and supplied the workbooks. Another issue of concern to teachers was the absence of detailed attention to phonics in the early grades. Again, Ms. Wood alleviated teachers' concerns by purchasing a phonics program for grades one through three.[84] Teachers' concerns over whole-group instruction also resulted in Ms. Wood's efforts to enact new instructional ideas being modified in significant ways.[85] Ms. Wood's efforts to get classroom teachers to enact some of the ideas she interpreted from the state reading policy through the textbook pilot process were modified by her need to attend to teachers' concerns and reservations about these instructional ideas.

So while attempting to introduce change in reading instruction through the textbook pilot program, Wood was simultaneously trying to accommodate teachers' concern about reading instruction. And the manner in which she read teachers' concerns influenced the reforms in reading instruction she attempted to introduce in pilot sites. In sum, Ms. Wood's dissemination efforts were shaped by both her reading of the policy and her reading of teachers' concerns and beliefs about instruction.

CONCLUSION

State policy-makers' efforts to reform reading instruction were understood in very different ways and received different amounts of attention from central administrators in Hamilton. Similar to Parkwood, Hamilton central office did not respond in a uniform manner to the state reading policy. There was

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[83]Wood interview, 22 Apr. 1992.
[84]Wood interview, 22 Apr. 1992.
[85]Hunt interview, 15 July 1992; Wood interview, 22 Apr. 1992.

considerable diversity within central office in how state policy-makers' instructional ideas were understood and incorporated into local policy-making initiatives.

Similarly, the authority of the state reading policy as a force for instructional reform in Hamilton depended to a great extent on how local administrators understood the policy. In Hamilton, at least up until the early 1990s, the revised MEAP reading test did not drive instructional reform as state policy-makers expected it would. Most of the Hamilton community paid significantly less attention to MEAP than the Parkwood community. Consequently, there was little community pressure on central administrators in Hamilton to attend to the state reading policy. Furthermore, many senior central administrators resented state policy-makers' efforts to influence their curriculum initiatives. As a result, for most senior central office administrators the policy had little or no authority because the instructional ideas they understood state policy-makers to be advancing were in conflict with their own beliefs about reading instruction. In other words, the inconsistency between the ideas many central administrators interpreted from the policy and their own ideas about reading instruction, undermined the authority of the state reading policy in Hamilton. My intention is not to suggest that how state policy-makers design and disseminated their policies has no impact on the authority that state policy enjoys at the local level. The Hamilton case suggests that it does. State policy-makers decisions to tie a percentage of state aid to improved MEAP scores, for example, increased the authority of their efforts to reform reading for Hamilton central office administrators. Rather, I argue based on the Hamilton case that the authority of state reform efforts is complex, shaped not only by what state policy-makers do in designing policy but also by the manner in which local administrators interpret state policy initiatives.

Senior central office administrators, like Ms. Bates and Ms. Oldham, read the policy as calling for fundamental changes in modal reading instruction which questioned the legitimacy of their existing efforts to shape classroom reading instruction, and their beliefs about reading. These central administrators' response to the policy was not due to any disinterest on their part in issues of curriculum and instruction. In fact, this case reveals that since the early 1980s Hamilton central office played an active role in curriculum and instructional policy-making. Rather the inattention of these senior administrators to the policy was due to a conflict between the ideas that they saw state policy-makers' advancing and their own beliefs about reading instruction. Existing central office instructional policy and beliefs coupled with financial constraints meant that the central office instructional guidance system remained unchanged, continuing to support the type of reading instruction state policy-makers were attempting to change.

But other administrators read the state policy differently and took a more active response in disseminating the policy. The language arts supervisor's response to the policy, for example, differed considerably from both Ms. Bates' and Ms. Oldham's. Ms. Wood's beliefs about reading instruction were a better fit with state policy-makers' call for teachers to use reading strategies to help students comprehend what they read. Her interpretation of the policy and her dissemination efforts suggested that teachers needed to add strategies to the existing reading skills they taught to students. But the language arts supervisor's call for change had to contend with the more prescriptive and authoritative message that was being sent through the central office textbooks, tests, reading objectives, and instructional monitoring system. So while Ms. Wood's dissemination efforts attempted to change modal practice, most other elements of the central office instructional guidance system were working to preserve it. This

was not at all what state policy-makers had hoped for in their efforts to reform classroom instruction.

A segmented central office structure coupled with no coherent agenda for reform among these different segments further complicated the local response to the state policy. Not all central administrators' were hostile to state policy-makers' instructional ideas. For some administrators, such as the director of staff development and the director of R. & D., the state reading policy was just not a high priority on their existing agendas, so it received little attention. The staff development director, for example, was struggling to keep his program alive by meeting the demands of local consumers and continue his efforts to provide workshops on effective instruction and other generic approaches to teaching. There was little incentive to pay attention to the state reading policy. Similarly, standardized reading tests were a much higher priority for the R & D department than the revised MEAP. These multiple agendas resulted in state policy-makers' calls for instructional reform being perceived and incorporated into local policy-making initiatives in very different ways within Hamilton central office.

The response of central office personnel in Hamilton to the state policy had no less of an impact on state policy-makers' efforts to reform classroom reading instruction, than did the more receptive response of Parkwood central office. In Hamilton, the policy as enacted was transformed by virtue of the fact that it was ignored by many senior central office personnel.

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The Hamilton and Parkwood cases call into question the notion of a single central office response to external policy. From that perspective, Hamilton would be classified as a non-adopting central office while Parkwood would be identified as an adopting central office. But such gross categorizations ignore

much of the complexity and lack of uniformity within each central office in responding to the state reading policy. Identifying a single uniform district response to the state reading policy in either of these central office is rather difficult. Focusing on the central office response as a whole leaves many questions about the central office response to state policy unanswered. The lack of uniformity in the local response to state reading policy is further heightened when one considers how school-level educators in Hamilton and Parkwood responded to these instructional reform efforts. I consider this issue in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SCHOOL RESPONSE

> I think there are parts of [the state policy] that you understand but what you got to realize is that running a school and teaching are sometimes a little bit different than what comes from higher levels [state and district]. You don't sit there and you don't spend hours looking at that thing [the state policy] and figuring it out. Your doing too many things so you really get ... not a thorough understanding of it but just bits and pieces of it. (Principal, Sanford Heights Elementary, Hamilton, Michigan, 5/5/92)

Chapters Two and Three detailed how the Parkwood and Hamilton central offices responded to the state reading policy. The central office, however, constitutes but one level of the LEA organizational structure. With school principals and teachers having the potential to play a pivotal role in LEA instructional policy, schools form an integral component of the local organization. Furthermore, regardless of the extent of central office efforts to disseminate state instructional policy, the impact of these efforts on instruction depend ultimately on how principals and teachers respond to them.

While the reading policy may have dominated the world of state policy-makers, in the everyday realities of school life, as reflected in the remarks of one school principal above, state policy occupies only one of many concerns. This chapter considers how central office efforts to disseminate the state reading policy played out in the work of school personnel, through mini-cases of two elementary schools in both school districts. My intention is not to provide a detailed account of the degree and nature of change within classrooms but rather to describe the overall school response and explore similarities and differences between schools within the same district. The mini-cases are based on school

principals', learning specialists', and "reading contact" teachers'[1] accounts of their efforts to respond to the reform initiatives.[2]

THE PARKWOOD SCHOOLS RESPOND

Parkwood's central office provided a plethora of opportunities and incentives for district schools to change modal reading instruction. The entire central office instructional guidance system was reformed to encourage teachers and principals to support new approaches to reading instruction. While central office calls for change in reading instruction did not always support a *consistent* vision of "reformed" instruction, they were consistent in that they all called for change in modal practice. Workbooks were no longer to be used, reading skills were to be taught in the context of reading rather than in isolation, reading strategies were to be taught to develop students' ability to comprehend real literature and reading and writing instruction was to be integrated. Considering existing practice, which in most schools was "basal bound" and focused on discrete reading skills, these changes were extensive and ambitious.[3] Any one of these ideas would have meant dramatic change for most Parkwood teachers.

But despite the fact that all Parkwood schools had access to the same central office instructional reform initiatives, the school-level response was far from uniform. School principals' and learning specialists' interpretation and

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[1]In Hamilton reading contact teachers represented their buildings at central office workshops on the reading strategies. Having attended these workshops, they were expected to return to their schools and provide workshops for their colleagues on the reading strategies.

[2]My account of the school response in Parkwood is based on interviews with either the principal, learning specialist or a teacher from 6 of the districts' 12 elementary schools. More in-depth data collection was undertaken in 3 of these schools, involving interviews with the principal, learning specialist and at least one teacher. My account of the school response in Hamilton is based on interviews with school principals and/or teachers in five elementary schools. In three of these schools the school principal and at least two teachers were also interviewed.

[3] Cheney interview, 8 May 1992; Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1992; Parkwood School Board, 1979, *Elementary Reading.*

enactment of central office reform efforts differed significantly between Parkwood schools. Some schools eagerly enacted the central office initiatives, as principals and learning specialists actively sought to change modal reading instruction. The schools that actively embraced central office instructional reform initiatives, however, were far from the norm in Parkwood. Despite the central office push for teaching discrete reading skills in the early 1980s, these schools continued to be oases of progressive instruction. Other schools, however, were much more resistant to change, reluctantly adopting some of the proposed changes but clinging to many of the mainstays of modal reading instruction, such as phonics and workbooks.[4] "What blew me away" one elementary school principal remarked, "is there were even within our own school district, with all of this information and talk about [reading reforms] at our principal's meetings, and Eve Jensen very firmly at the helm then and really wanting us to move in that direction, there were still people in our district who didn't have a clue [about reading reforms]."[5] Central office administrators were well aware that the success of their reform initiatives depended to a great extent on how they were received and endorsed by school-level administrators and learning specialists. The language arts coordinator maintained that in schools where building administrators encouraged teachers to adopt the new approaches being pushed by central office there was much more change in reading instruction compared with buildings where the administrators paid little attention to central office instructional reform efforts.[6]

Howard elementary is considered by both central office and school personnel to be one of the more innovative schools in the district, and the

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[4]Roberts interview, 11 Apr. 1992; 5 Oct. 1992; Cheney interview, 8 May 1992; 19 Feb. 1992; Bolton interview, 8 May 1992; Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1992.
[5]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.
[6]Berry interview, 14 Apr. 1992.

principal, Kate Bolton, and her staff undertook many efforts to change reading in the mid-1980s. Atwood elementary is a more traditional school where traditional instructional approaches continue to be the norm. Both schools serve similar student populations, primarily from middle-income families. None of the students in either of these schools are eligible for Chapter One services, and only 1.7% of the student population in both schools are eligible for free or reduced lunches. At Howard Elementary less than 9% of students are from minority backgrounds, while less than 5% are from minority backgrounds at Atwood Elementary.[7]

Howard Elementary

A Transformation of Modal Reading Instruction

Reading instruction at Howard elementary changed dramatically during the late 1980s. Ms. Bolton, the principal, was "appalled" by many of the instructional practices she saw when she moved to Howard Elementary in 1986. Teachers were following the central office mandated Houghton-Mifflin basal closely, and using the testing program that accompanied the text to assess students. Basal workbooks were widely used, and most teachers had 3 or 4 ability groups in their classrooms for reading instruction. Fourth and fifth grade students were grouped by their reading ability. But some teachers, especially those who taught the primary grades, were discontent with traditional approaches to reading instruction. Ms. Bolton remarked, "the lower elementary was gung-ho whole language and developmentally appropriate practices" and eager for change by the mid 1980s.[8] Furthermore, many teachers were becoming more and more dissatisfied with the central office reading curriculum.[9]

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[7]Figures are based on central office quarterly reports for the 1991-92 school year.
[8]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.
[9]Roberts interview, 18 July 1991; Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.

By 1989, reading instruction looked rather different at Howard Elementary. According to Ms. Bolton and Ms. Davis, the school learning specialist, teachers no longer used traditional basal textbooks.[10] Instead a combination of children's literature and literature-based reading programs were used in classrooms. In fact, children's literature became the predominant medium for teaching reading. Workbooks and practice books that accompanied reading programs were not allowed in the school. Students were no longer grouped by ability with teachers opting instead to use whole class instruction.[11] The focus on discrete reading skills was replaced by a much greater emphasis on students' comprehension of text, exposing students to different literary genres, and cultivating their interest in reading. In addition, reading and writing instruction were closely integrated in most classrooms, and reading was taught across the school curriculum.

A Receptive Audience for Instructional Change

Comparing the reading instruction at Howard elementary in 1986 with reading instruction in 1989, one could easily conclude that central office efforts to reform reading instruction in response to the state reading policy had a dramatic impact. But such a conclusion would be incomplete. The transformation of reading instruction at Howard elementary had as much to do with the school environment as it had to do with central office reform initiatives. Ms. Bolton and many of her staff were eager to attempt new approaches to reading instruction regardless of central office initiatives. Many teachers worked closely with each other by sharing instructional ideas, thereby facilitating change.

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[10]Ms. Bolton's and Ms. Davis' accounts are supported by data collected through observing and interviewing three teachers at Howard elementary since 1990. This data was collected as part of the larger EPPS study of which this study is part.

[11]According to Ms. Bolton whole-class instruction for reading was intermixed with flexible grouping arrangements based on students' interests and needs. Flexible grouping involves grouping students by their interests in reading material rather than by ability. It is difficult to gauge to what extent flexible grouping practices differ from ability grouping in classrooms.

Ms. Bolton was disposed to more innovative approaches to reading instruction and a strong critic of modal reading instruction, especially the "drilling of skills."[12] As an assistant principal in the early 1980s, she refused to adopt the central office mandated basal reader.[13] Ms. Bolton's concerns about modal reading instruction heightened her interest in instructional reform efforts. She recalled her excitement on hearing about the new state definition in 1983, especially the prospect of moving away from teaching isolated skills. Ms. Bolton interpreted the state reading policy as calling for more ambitious changes in modal practice than just the use of reading strategies, encouraging teachers to:

> use real reading books, real literature. They should not think that children have to have controlled vocabulary. You give [students] a print rich environment. Literature should be dripping from the walls. You read yourself, you model what [reading] is. You recognize the integration of reading, and writing and you write from the beginning.[14]

State policy-makers' ideas on reading "weren't entirely new" to her, but, were "compelling."[15] Eager to facilitate change, Bolton served on the District Reading Task Force and attended the staff development workshops organized by central office.

Principal Bolton's eagerness for instructional change was shared by many of her staff. For example, Ms. Sally Roberts, who spearheaded the district staff development initiative, was the learning specialist at Howard Elementary in the mid 1980s. Many other staff members also were keen to learn about the revised state reading policy as reflected by the fact that the number of Howard teachers who applied to attend the central office workshops on reading far surpassed the

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[12] Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.
[13] Bolton interview, 8 May 1992; Roberts interview, 5 Oct. 1992.
[14] Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.
[15] Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.

number of places the school was allocated. Such enthusiasm was in stark contrast with some other district schools where no teacher volunteered to attend.[16]

Changing From Within

Ms. Bolton and her staff required little prodding to attend to the state policy. As she observed, it just "melded with all of us, I mean what can I say, they wrote it for us, so we weren't resisting it, we were interested in it and so we just started learning about it."[17] "So it was motivation from amongst the staff not an external one originally."[18] Central office staff development initiatives were "influential" in facilitating Ms. Bolton's and her staff's efforts to consider new instructional approaches, getting "those early adopters really energized and talking about [the state policy]."[19] These workshops were not the "how to, it was this is good and this is why we think it's good," Bolton commented, the "in-between the lines message is why don't you try it here."[20]

Consequently, reading instruction began to change at Howard elementary prior to any central office mandates. In 1986 Howard staff used their school improvement money to hire a writing consultant from a local university who worked with teachers in introducing the "writing process approach."[21] Considering that there was no central office mandated curriculum in writing, introducing instructional change through writing proved very effective as it

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[16]Roberts interview, 5 Oct. 1992.
[17]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.
[18]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.
[19]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.
[20]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.
[21] The writing process approach involves getting students to identify their own writing topics and letting them work through a number of stages of writing including brainstorming, drafting, editing, proof reading and publishing. Considerable effort is made to integrate reading and writing instruction in this approach.

allowed teachers to change their practice in a subject area that was less threatening than reading.[22] The school learning specialist elaborated.

> I truly believe [the writing workshop is] what helped move this building along with the new definition of reading. The writing came along where they were letting kids make choices in their writing, . . . what it did for teachers was, it let them let go of control. And it was easier to do it in writing than it was in reading because we're so afraid that students weren't going to get the reading skills. They started out in writing here, of letting go of control and our teachers learned to do that in writing so they weren't as afraid to do it in reading.[23]

Letting students make more decisions about writing as the writing workshop approach required, eased the way for teachers to allow students to make more decisions about reading.

Changes in writing instruction facilitated many changes in reading instruction. By Summer 1987, workbooks that accompanied the basal reader were no longer used and many teachers were attempting whole group reading instruction around trade books. While Ms. Bolton told teachers she would no longer purchase workbooks, "teachers were willing to let go" of their existing practices with little pressure from Ms. Bolton.[24] The money saved from not purchasing workbooks was used to buy a wide range of trade books and children's literature for each classroom . Teachers got to purchase books that students really enjoyed and "it was just a mushrooming effect."[25] Teachers were also given opportunities to learn about the state definition and the reading strategies through school workshops. And every effort was made to stress that the reading strategies were not "the workbooks of tomorrow and they should not

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[22]Davis interview, 4 June 1992.
[23]Davis interview, 4 June 1992
[24]Davis interview, 4 June 1992; Bolton interview, May 8 1992.
[25]Davis interview, 4 June 1992.

be "drilled to death."[26] Rather, teachers at Howard recognized that strategies were "just the means of getting to what you want."[27]

So by the time central office mandated reforms in reading instruction, teachers at Howard elementary had already introduced many of the changes in their instruction. Central office mandates merely legitimated changes that had already been undertaken by Ms. Bolton and her staff. "At Howard we were so ahead of the district that I didn't pay much attention to them," Ms. Bolton remarked, "the district was just behind Howard's development."[28] Although central office state development workshops nurtured Ms. Bolton's and her staff's efforts to reform reading instruction, the impetus for change came from themselves.

Atwood Elementary

Less Ambitious Changes in Modal Reading Instruction

At Atwood Elementary reading instruction also changed in the late 1980s, but the changes were less ambitious than those at Howard, and were not as enduring. As had their colleagues at Howard, until the mid 1980s teachers in Atwood followed the Houghton-Mifflin basal reader that central office mandated and used the accompanying testing program. Instruction in discrete skills, as outlined in the basal reader, dominated most reading classrooms. One of the school's most innovative reading teachers, who had used literature to teach reading for over 10 years, even felt pressured to teach discrete reading skills as mandated by the central office reading curriculum. "They had a Houghton Mifflin text which was skill crazy and then they had these extreme testing programs", she remembered, "so what [I] had to do was to just take the bare

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[26]Davis interview, 4 June 1992.
[27]Davis interview, 4 June 1992.
[28]Bolton interview, 8 May 1992.

essentials of the things that they were going to test the kids on and I'd teach them those."[29]

By the late 1980s the reading curriculum at Atwood looked somewhat different, but the changes were neither uniform nor consistent across classrooms, and many elements of modal practice continued to dominate. Principal Ron Chapman believed the reading curriculum changed considerably since he had arrived at Atwood in 1987, but "it has changed differently for different people."[30] The most traditional teachers at the school no longer use workbooks and use literature "to some extent."[31] At the other end of the continuum, he reckons six or so of the staff do not use the reading textbook at all, opting instead to teach reading through children's literature and trade books. The strategies are widely used among teachers who use literature exclusively, while teachers who use the literature-based reading program use strategies less often. Teachers are also paying considerably more attention to expository selections and teaching students strategies that help them comprehend these informational texts.

But these changes to more innovative instructional practice are far from permanent: Many teachers who shifted to using literature exclusively, especially first grade teachers, are now moving back to "a combination of literature and basals."[32] Teachers find that the "controlled vocabulary" that the basal provides is really "very, very, helpful for new readers," Mr. Chapman explained. "It is better for getting kids increasing their vocabulary because literature books don't have that same kind of controlled vocabulary."[33] In fact, in 1990 the school decided to purchase a textbook other than those adopted by central office. Many

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[29]Adams interview, 4 Mar. 1992.
[30]Chapman interview, 18 June 1992.
[31]Chapman interview, 18 June 1992.
[32]Chapman interview, 18 June 1992.
[33]Chapman interview, 18 June 1992.

teachers at Atwood were not convinced about the efficacy of using real literature to teach reading. Ms. Olson, the school learning specialist, expressed similar concerns and acknowledged that she continued to use traditional basal readers with controlled vocabulary. She also continued to teach "basic skills" such as "vowel sounds" and other isolated vocabulary and decoding skills.[34] Recent efforts by teachers to identify language arts outcomes for each grade level paid considerable attention to discrete reading skills, such as, phonics and decoding. First grade reading outcomes included, "use of phonics, blends, digraphs, ABC order to first letter, antonyms, and high frequency words." Furthermore, comprehension outcomes have a certain skills flavor, listing discrete comprehension skills such as "sequence, cause/effect, use of context clues, and main ideas."[35] Although reading instruction at Atwood elementary has changed, the changes reported were less extensive and less ambitious than those reported at Howard elementary.

Ignoring and Resisting Calls for Change

Until 1988 school-level personnel at Atwood seemed to have ignored and resisted central office and state efforts to reform reading instruction. John Banks who was the principal at Atwood until 1987 paid little attention to issues of curriculum and instruction, leaving these decisions to teachers.[36] As a result, Clara Olson, the school's learning specialist, was responsible for disseminating the instructional reform initiatives. But Ms. Olson's beliefs about reading instruction were in conflict with many of the new ideas being pushed by state policy-makers and central administrators.

Based on her experience as a remedial teacher, Ms. Olson strongly believed that students needed drill in decoding, phonics, and vocabulary skills.

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[34]Olson interview, 8 May 1992.
[35]Draft of Atwood Grade-level Outcomes, Summer 1992.
[36]Adams interview, 4 Mar. 1992.

Furthermore, she believed students needed exposure to texts with controlled vocabulary because it gave them a sense of success in reading. The reading practices to which Ms. Olson subscribed were the very types of teaching practices that state policy-makers and central administrators were attempting to change. While she was familiar with much of the terminology of the reforms from attending central office workshops on reading and the state reading conferences, she was not convinced that these reforms were desirable alternatives to modal practice. One of the main thrusts of Ms. Olson's interpretation of the state and central office reform efforts was the need to use reading strategies. "Due to the redefinition of reading, we certainly began to change and began to teach according to the strategies" (e.g., KWL, story mapping, graphic organizers).[37] In addition, she also understood the reading reforms as supporting whole class reading instruction, and the need to use children's literature to teach reading.

But aside from the reading strategies, Ms. Olson expressed strong reservations about the new instructional ideas and refused to change her teaching practice. She was not convinced that children's literature was more effective in teaching reading, so she continued to use basal readers, noting that she liked "controlled vocabulary for those children that need repetition of words."[38] She also held reservations about abolishing ability grouping, remarking that, "I am afraid that working in whole groups some kids will get left out and fall behind [in reading]."[39] While Ms. Olson's practice as a learning specialist changed in that she no longer operated a pull-out program, her reading instruction changed little. She continued to teach isolated pieces of vocabulary, decoding, and phonics skills using "a lot of seeing and repeating."[40]

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[37]Olson interview, 8 May 1992.
[38]Olson interview, 8 May 1992.
[39]Olson interview, 8 May 1992.
[40]Olson interview, 8 May 1992.

Accommodating External Mandates Within Modal Practice

With Ron Chapman as principal and increasing pressure from central administrators for changes in modal reading instruction, the momentum for reform at Atwood increased somewhat in 1988. Principal Chapman's beliefs about reading instruction were in harmony with many of the reform ideas that Ms. Jensen (director of elementary education) and other central administrators were pushing. He interpreted central office efforts to disseminate the state policy as supporting many of the approaches to reading (focusing on comprehension rather than isolated skills, using children's literature) that he had used when he taught at Lorton elementary in the 1970s when Ms. Jensen was principal there. He was convinced that the state reform meant "more real reading opportunities for kids."[41]

Chapman's beliefs about reading gelled with those being pushed by central administrators and resulted in some changes in reading instruction at Atwood elementary. The adoption of the central office mandated reading program meant that the basal reader was no longer the primary text for teaching reading. Furthermore, Chapman enforced the central office ban on workbooks in 1988. His efforts at change received further momentum in 1989 when the revised MEAP was implemented. Teachers at all grade levels responded to MEAP, paying greater attention to the reading strategies and to expository texts in their reading lessons.[42] Mr. Chapman noted that:

> the MEAP test I think is really driving a lot of decision making about reading now. I know it has in this building about expository text. We published results, we have parent meetings about results so, we make a bigger deal out of it so it's going to be a bigger deal for parents as well.[43]

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[41]Chapman interview, 13 May 1992.

[42]Chapman interview, 18 June 1992; Olson interview, 8 May 92.

[43]Chapman interview, 13 May 1992.

Teachers' attention to the reforms was stimulated by the attention Atwood parents gave to MEAP scores. Consequently, the need to teach reading strategies and comprehension of expository texts became two of the primary ideas for reforming reading instruction at Atwood.

Reading strategies were also the dominant message for change in the workshops Ms. Olson organized for teachers at Atwood. One of Ms. Olson's tasks, as the Atwood learning specialist, was to disseminate the ideas that state policy-makers and central office administrators were pushing about reading instruction. Unlike reform initiatives at Howard, Ms. Olson's efforts to promote change at Atwood focused entirely on the reading strategies (e.g., KWLs, QARs). She followed the state scripted modules closely, encouraging teachers to perfect the steps of the different reading strategies.

> I began by telling teachers why the strategy was important and who developed the strategy and what the research says about the strategy. Then I told teachers how to do [the strategy] and finished by reviewing it -- when to use it, why to use it, and how to use it.[44]

Using sample reading lessons, Ms. Olson and participants worked through the strategies together. Her efforts suggested few other ideas about reading reform to Atwood teachers besides the need to use reading strategies.

Although the changes in reading instruction at Atwood were significant when compared with existing practice, they were considerably less ambitious than the change envisioned by central administrators, such as Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts. Principal Chapman's efforts to introduce change in reading instruction were limited by teachers' resistance to many of the new ideas and their

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[44]Olson interview, 8 May 1992.

reluctance to work together. "One troublesome issue," Chapman remarked, "is that I never [have] been able to get this whole building focused on reading things all at one time and make that a really high priority."[45] Chapman believed that the inability of staff to work together in changing instruction curtailed efforts to reform reading instruction at Atwood Elementary.

Discussion

The efforts of central administrators in Parkwood to disseminate the state reading policy contributed to changing reading instruction in these two schools. By the late 1980s, reading instruction had changed in both schools when compared with instruction in the early 1980s. Basal reading programs no longer dominated reading classrooms. Teachers paid more attention to students' ability to comprehend what they read as they began to use the reading strategies. Workbooks, which provided drill in isolated reading skills, were no longer part of the landscape of reading classrooms. And expository reading selections received more attention than they had in the past. These changes reflected significant departures from modal practice. From this perspective, central office efforts to disseminate the state policy made a difference at the school-level.

But the impact of the central office dissemination efforts on instruction was far from uniform across Parkwood schools. Despite central administrators' consistent calls for reform, school-level personnel enjoyed enough autonomy to tailor these calls to their own school and classroom circumstances. Although the Atwood reading curriculum changed in response to central administrators' dissemination initiatives, the changes were less ambitious and less extensive than those undertaken at Howard Elementary. While the reading strategies and literature-based reading programs were introduced in both schools, other

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[45]Chapman interview, 18 June 1992.

instructional ideas pushed through central office dissemination efforts received limited attention at Atwood Elementary. Efforts to push the integration of reading and writing instruction, for example, received attention from only a handful of Atwood teachers, while the majority of teachers at Howard paid close attention to this idea. Furthermore, the literature-based reading programs were more widely adopted at Howard Elementary compared with Atwood Elementary. In fact, at Atwood Elementary many teachers who initially adopted literature-based reading programs were reverting back to reading selections with controlled vocabulary by the early 1990s. And the school learning specialist continued to use traditional basal readers. In contrast, at Howard literature and literature-based reading programs had become a more enduring feature of the school's reading curriculum. So although central office dissemination efforts influenced reading instruction in both of these schools, the manner in which it did was not uniform across schools.

The state reading policy and at least initial central office efforts to disseminate the policy created a climate that was favorable to instructional reform at Howard. But state and central office reform efforts are but part of the change equation at Howard elementary. Giving state policy-makers, and especially central office administrators, the credit for the instructional changes at Howard, fails to acknowledge a critical part of the change equation, that is, the school-level receptivity and desire for alternatives to modal practice. These local streams of ideas and dispositions to change coalesced with the streams of ideas on reading instruction flowing through the state reading policy and central office dissemination efforts, such as the staff development workshops, resulting in extensive changes in modal reading practice. In many respects, the streams of ideas on reading instruction emanating from the state policy and central office staff development workshops added force to the instructional ideas and

aspirations of Ms. Bolton and her staff. Regardless of the central office mandates on reading instruction, the indications are that Ms. Bolton and her staff would have undertaken significant changes in reading instruction at their school. The story seems altogether different at Atwood Elementary. Many of the changes undertaken were only introduced when central office administrators mandated them; for example, requiring the use of literature-based reading programs. In sum, the contribution of central office efforts to school-level change varied across schools.

How do we explain the variable impact of central administrators' dissemination efforts at the school level? Both of these schools served almost identical student populations, primarily students from middle income families. Furthermore, parents of students in both schools took a keen interest in their schools, especially their children's MEAP scores. Yet, these two schools responded differently to central office efforts to disseminate the state policy. The mini-cases suggest a number of explanations.

One explanation is the interpretation of the central office dissemination efforts and the attention they received in these two schools. Like central office administrators' response to the state reading policy, school-level personnel interpreted and attended to the policy in very different ways depending on their prior beliefs about reading instruction. Take for instance, Ms. Olson and Ms. Bolton. Ms. Olson had strong reservations about most of central administrators' reform efforts and her dissemination efforts at Atwood Elementary ignored many of the more ambitious ideas that central office administrators were attempting to convey to schools. Her traditional beliefs about reading instruction influenced the instructional ideas she learned from the state reading conferences and central office efforts to reform reading instruction. In contrast, the state reading policy and central office efforts to reform instruction in response to the

policy resonated with Ms. Bolton's beliefs about reading and her agenda for instructional change at Howard. Even though the opportunities Ms. Bolton had to learn about the state policy and central office efforts to reform reading instruction were similar to those of Ms. Olson (e.g., central office staff development workshops), her interpretation of the calls for reform were much more ambitious. She interpreted the reform efforts as promoting much more than the use of reading strategies: She saw it as a call to use literature to teach reading, and integrating reading and writing instruction among other things. And she pushed these ideas at Howard. School-level personnel interpreted the instructional reform ideas that central administrators were pushing very differently and as a result conveyed different ideas about reforming reading instruction to their teachers.

The authority of central administrators' calls for instructional reform also varied between these two schools, depending on how school staff interpreted the reform initiatives. Central administrators' control over important resources, such as textbook adoptions, added to the authority of their efforts to reform instruction at the school level. Despite this, however, central office efforts to reform reading instruction had significantly more authority in Howard Elementary compared with Atwood Elementary. The authority of central office reform efforts depended to a certain extent on whether the ideas school administrators understood from the reform initiatives fit with their beliefs about reading instruction. For Ms. Bolton at Howard Elementary, for example, central office efforts to reform reading instruction had considerable authority in part because the ideas she understood from these reform efforts were consistent with her own agenda for reforming reading instruction. In contrast, for Ms. Olson at Atwood Elementary central office reform efforts had less authority because the

ideas she understood central administrators to be advancing were in conflict with her own strongly held beliefs about reading instruction.

A related explanation concerns the instructional leadership role taken by principals in these schools. Take for instance, Mr. Banks, who was principal at Atwood until 1987, and Mr. Chapman, who replaced him. Mr. Banks paid little attention to issues of instruction, resulting in few changes in reading instruction at Atwood despite central office dissemination efforts. In contrast, Mr. Chapman took a keen interest in issues of instruction and introduced considerable change at Atwood once he became principal. Principals who take a leadership role in instruction promoted instructional change. This echoes earlier research findings.[46]

But although school principals who are instructional leaders may facilitate change, the absence or presence of instructional leadership is not sufficient to explain the differences between Howard and Atwood. Both Mr. Chapman and Ms. Bolton provided strong instructional leadership for their staff and held similar beliefs about reading instruction. Yet, their efforts to attend to central office reform initiatives had very different results. The success that school principals enjoy as instructional leaders in facilitating and introducing change depends to a great extent on those they attempt to lead. A cadre of innovative teachers at Howard, many of whom were anxious to change existing reading instruction and at ease sharing instructional ideas with colleagues, provided Ms. Bolton with an attentive audience for her efforts to reform reading instruction. At Atwood, teachers were less eager for reform. Many teachers supported rather traditional notions about reading instruction similar to those espoused by Ms. Olson. More importantly, teachers at Atwood did not work as a group around

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[46]See for example, Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Emrick & Peterson, 1978 for a more detailed account of the importance of the school principal in promoting change at the school-level.

common instructional reform initiatives. As Mr. Chapman acknowledged, these factors curtailed his efforts to reform reading instruction at Atwood.

THE HAMILTON SCHOOLS RESPOND

Central office administrators in Hamilton provided few incentives for school principals and teachers to change their existing reading instruction. Ms. Wood's (language arts coordinator) trainer workshops and to a lesser extent the research and development unit's newsletter were the only efforts to disseminate ideas from the state reading policy to schools. These dissemination initiatives called primarily for teachers to add reading strategies to their existing instruction. Other central office instructional guidance instruments, including curriculum guidelines, reading tests, and the instructional monitoring system, all suggested to school-level educators that there was *no need* to change existing reading instruction.

According to Ms. Wood, although school-level personnel had become aware of the state reading policy, few had "gone beyond awareness."[47] A number of school personnel corroborate her account.[48] At Camden elementary, a fifth grade teacher noted how no more than three or four of the teachers on the staff were using the reading strategies and that was the extent of change in modal reading practice.[49] In another inner city school the principal explained that due to inadequate training and the failure of central office to monitor and encourage change, "teachers are not using those [new reading] strategies."[50]

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[47]Wood interview, 12 Oct. 1990; also Jackson interview, 5 June 1992; and Little interview, 3 June 1992.

[48]My analysis of the district response is based on the account of central office administrators and interviews with school principals and/or teachers in five elementary schools in Hamilton.

[49]Nathon interview, 7 July 1992.

[50]Trexler interview, 15 June 1992.

Reading instruction had changed little since the mid 1970s: children were still grouped according to their reading ability and used "skills oriented textbook."[51] Although this was the dominant pattern in 1989, things were beginning to change.

Due to limited resources and little support from her colleagues, Ms. Wood's efforts to reform instruction depended on school principals and the approximately 70 teachers who attended her workshops for any impact at the school-level. Most Hamilton principals, however, took little interest in issues of instruction, providing no encouragement for teachers to attend to Ms. Wood's efforts at reforming reading.[52]

Salmon elementary is one of many inner city schools that predominate in Hamilton. Principal Mike Kuwalski has little time to deal with issues of curriculum and instruction. In contrast, Sanford Heights is considered by many central office and school personnel to be one of a handful of innovative schools in Hamilton. Principal Tim Nettles is interested in instruction. Both schools serve very different student populations. At Salmon Elementary 18 percent of the students are minorities, compared with two percent at Sanford Heights. Students at Salmon come from poor, working-class homes, with 93 percent of the student population eligible for either free or reduced cost lunch services. Students at Sanford Heights come from middle class and upper middle class homes, with only 8.7 percent of the student population eligible for either free or reduced lunches. None of the students at Sanford Heights are eligible to receive chapter one services. Twenty-nine percent of the students at Salmon are eligible to receive chapter one services.[53]

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[51]Trexler interview, 15 June 1992.

[52]Little interview, 3 June 1992; Wood interview, 22 Apr. 1992.

[53]These figures are based on central office quarterly reports for the 1991-92 school year.

Salmon Elementary

According to Principal Kuwalski, reading instruction at Salmon elementary has changed little over the past six or seven years.[54] Teachers continue to use the central office mandated basal reader, and teach isolated vocabulary, decoding, phonics and comprehension skills as they follow the central office monitoring system and curriculum guidelines closely. Ms. Wood's efforts to get teachers to use the reading strategies received brief attention at Salmon elementary. Despite the efforts of one fifth grade teacher, Nel Murray, to initiate change through presentations on the reading strategies, few teachers made an effort to change their reading instruction. Most teachers seemed content with their existing approaches to teaching reading, and with little or no prodding from central office or from Mr. Kuwalski there was little incentive to change their instruction.[55] But a few Salmon teachers did incorporate new approaches to reading instruction into their existing practice in response to ideas they learned from university courses and Ms. Wood's staff development initiatives. One second grade teacher, for example, began to teach her students the reading strategies in addition to the central office mandated reading curriculum, as a result of some reading courses she took at a local university.[56] Although stability rather than change may have characterized the reading curriculum at Salmon there were a few exceptions to this norm.

Listening But Not Committing to New Instructional Ideas

Ms. Murray "just fell into" the position of reading contact person for Salmon Elementary.[57] She attended Ms. Wood's trainer workshops during the 1988 school year and was very excited about the reading strategies that were being

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[54]Kuwalski, 12 May 1992.

[55]Murray interview, 29 Apr. 1992; Laura Kemp (teacher at Salmon Elementary) interview, 14 July 1992; Kuwalski interview, 12 May 1992.

[56]Observation, 11 Dec. 1990.

[57]Murray interview, 29 Apr. 1992.

presented. The reading strategies (e.g., KWLs, DRTAs, reciprocal teaching) fit neatly with Ms. Murray's predisposition to structure: "I have always taught systematically but I haven't had the little techniques or the little strategies, I haven't had a mastery of them to teach them to the kids in the past."[58] The presentations followed the state modules closely. The presenter "would just simply go through the format of story mapping using a sample story and told us why it was important and we actually did a story map using a story."[59] The format for other strategies was identical. Other ideas about reading instruction that Murray learned from her training included the need to; activate students' prior knowledge by discussing the story prior to reading it, the need to distinguish between fiction and nonfiction, and the importance of comprehension.

Ms. Murray returned to Salmon elementary and organized some presentations for her colleagues on the reading strategies in "exactly the same way as it was presented to" her, following the state scripted modules closely.[60] "For instance, so today's strategy we're going to learn is a QAR and this [state module] had the script right in it."[61] She began by telling her colleagues why they should use the particular strategy. She then described the strategy and how to use it in reading instruction. In addition, she passed out descriptions of the strategies which she photocopied from the state modules.

But the three or four presentations Ms. Murray made on different reading strategies were typically tagged on at the end of a staff meeting which were held after school, a time when teachers had little interest in paying attention to new

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[58]Murray interview, 11 Dec. 1990.
[59]Murray interview, 11 Dec. 1990.
[60]Murray interview, 11 Dec. 1990.
[61]Murray interview, 29 Apr. 1992.

instructional ideas.[62] Ms. Murray's dissemination efforts were not a priority on Mr. Kuwalski's agenda, in fact, he paid little attention to instruction with the exception of the central office monitoring system which paid no attention to the reading strategies. "I see my role here is trying to deal with all of that outside nonsense and not the way teachers teach," he explained, "you do your thing in the classroom, let me serve as your buffer between you and some of those people out there that are coming to school to cause trouble."[63] Furthermore, parents of students at Salmon paid little attention to MEAP scores, providing even less incentive for Mr. Kuwalski and his staff to reform reading instruction.[64] As a result, Mr. Kuwalski did little to encourage his staff to attend to the new ideas that Ms. Murray was attempting to disseminate.[65] According to Ms. Murray, Mr. Kuwalski's inattention to the instructional ideas she was attempting to teach her colleagues undermined her efforts to change reading instruction at Salmon. She argued that if "we had a really good administrator that was looking for just one more thing, just show me [the strategies], you would have teachers at least attempting to try [the strategies]."[66]

Ms. Murray described her colleagues' response as "negative, very negative, I don't think they were very responsive to what I had to say."[67] She believed that while her colleagues listened to what she had to say they were "not necessarily committing to it in the classrooms."[68] She felt that she had limited impact on her colleagues guessing that only one or two of them use the reading strategies, an

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[62]Murray interview, 11 Dec. 1990; ????interview, 11 Dec. 1990.
[63]Kuwalski interview, 12 May 1992.
[64]Kuwalski interview, 12 May 1992.
[65]Murray interview, 29 Apr. 1992; also Kemp interview, 14 July 1992.
[66]Murray interview, 29 Apr. 1992
[67]Murray interview, 11 Dec. 1990.
[68]Murray interview, 29 Apr. 1992.

impact which she felt based on her conversations with other trainers, was typical across most Hamilton schools. She remarked:

> I think if you took a survey today I would say there's probably two or three teachers [at Salmon] who really teach like this [use reading strategies]. The rest of them are still really using the basic program which is permissible.[69]

Ms. Murray also noted that, apart from her presentations, her colleagues have asked her little about the state policy and no one has asked to borrow the building notebook on the reading strategies.

Competing Perspectives on Reading Instruction

The existing central office instructional guidance system which continued to support the teaching of isolated reading skills (e.g., phonics, word decoding) had a strong influence on Ms. Murray's efforts to reform reading instruction at Salmon. The district reading guidelines, testing program, textbook and monitoring scheme remained unchanged, and made no reference to reading strategies or other reform initiatives. While Murray was suggesting new instructional ideas for reading, the central office instructional guidance system was suggesting to Murray and other Salmon teachers that they needed to continue to teach discrete reading skills: Modal reading instruction was both legitimate and necessary. Because students are "tested on all those key parts," Ms. Murray explained, "I teach it, I teach the decoding and I teach the study skills and so forth because I have to."[70] If she ignored the skills identified in the district reading curriculum she would "be identified as not a very good reading teacher because [her] scores wouldn't be very good."[71] The importance which

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[69]Murray interview, 29 Apr. 1992.
[70]Murray interview, 13 Feb. 1991.
[71]Murray interview, 13 Feb. 1991.

Ms. Murray and her colleagues placed on the central office instructional guidance system meant that new ideas such as strategies were "extras" to the existing central office mandated curriculum. Few teachers at Salmon have incorporated the strategies into their reading instruction, and those that have use them to supplement the existing central office curriculum.[72] Efforts at reform at Salmon have been constrained by the existing central office instructional guidance system.

Since Ms. Murray's presentations in 1988-89 there have been no further initiatives to reform reading instruction at Salmon. The 1990-91 school year "has been real laid back" as far as anything new and innovative, and the previous year was similar.[73] The principal's scant attention to instruction coupled with the continued focus on discrete reading skills in the existing central office instructional guidance system provided little incentive for the majority of Salmon teachers to change their reading instruction.

Sanford Heights Elementary

The scenario was rather different at Sanford Heights Elementary. During the late 1980s and early 1990s significant changes were undertaken in reading instruction despite relatively few incentives from Hamilton central office. The basal reader was replaced with a literature based reading program. Teachers began to pay much more attention to students' ability to comprehend text. And workbooks and ability grouping were no longer part of reading classrooms in upper elementary grades.

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[72]Kemp interview, 14 July 1992; Murray interview, 11 Dec. 1990.
[73]Murray interview, 29 Apr. 1992; interview 11 Nov. 1992.

Reformed Reading Instruction Despite the Constraints

Until 1989 reading instruction at Sanford Heights centered on the district adopted basal reader. Reading instruction focused almost entirely on teaching students discrete reading skills with teachers following the elaborate central office instructional guidance system closely.[74] Principal Nettles remarked that as a result of the central office monitoring system "teachers didn't feel that they had elbow room."[75] The central office instructional monitoring system is very "upsetting" to teachers who feel that it is a "lot of book work, that it isn't professional."[76] Some teachers' antipathy to the central office monitoring system resulted from the basic reading skills the system pushed, while others had little problems with the instructional ideas but resented central office intrusion in their territory.[77] Despite their aversion to the central office instructional guidance system, both Mr. Nettles and his staff felt obligated to attend to it.[78] They felt obliged, for example, to use the central office adopted Silver, Burdette and Ginn reading program. "I might not have chosen Silver Burette five years ago," Mr. Nettles explained, "I probably would have pretty much stuck with the Houghton Mifflin program and that was a change for me."[79] As school principal he felt he had to "implement" the central office reading curriculum .[80]

While the central office instructional guidance system constrained school-level personnel at Sanford Heights, by 1989 they had found sufficient elbow

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[74]Nettles interview, 5 Feb. 1991; Irwin (fifth grade teacher at Sanford Heights) interview, 23 Jan. 1991.

[75]Nettles interview, 5 Feb. 1991.

[76]Nettles, 5 Feb. 1991.

[77]Ms. Irwin, for example, objected to the focus on discrete reading skills that the central office instructional guidance system pushed (interview, 23 Jan. 1991). A third grade teacher in the same school, had few problems with the focus on discrete reading skills but resented central office efforts to direct her work.

[78]Nettles interview, 5 Feb. 1991.

[79]Nettles interview, 5 May 1992.

[80]Nettles interview, 5 May 1992.

room to begin to change reading instruction. Increasingly, Mr. Nettles and his staff began to use a literature based reading program. Initially, in 1990 trade books were used together with the district-mandated basal reader. A year later, the building began to pilot a literature-based reading program for the district. As a result, teachers began to spend more time on reading comprehension. These changes were significant when compared to the instruction in discrete skills that dominated reading classrooms up until the late 1980s, and they reflected some of the central ideas of the state reading policy. The changes at Sanford Heights were even more dramatic when one considers the lack of encouragement for instructional reform from Hamilton central office.

But for many teachers, these innovations supplemented rather than supplanted modal reading practice. Instruction on discrete skills, which continued to form an integral component of reading instruction for many teachers, co-existed with new approaches to reading instruction.[81] One fifth grade teacher commented that her colleagues "all feel committed to skill instruction because they are required to" by central office.[82]

Responding to External Reform Initiatives

Ms. Wood's workshops on reading strategies and the administration of the revised MEAP test in 1989 provided two initial prompts for change at Sanford Heights. Mr. Gary Gilbey, a third grade teacher, was selected to represent Sanford Heights at Ms. Wood's training sessions. Mr. Gilbey remembered little of the training sessions, recalling somewhat vaguely about hearing of story mapping and prior knowledge and greater attention to comprehension as the goal of reading. While he believed his reading practice changed some as a result

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[81]Hunt interview, 15 July 1992; Irwin interview, 23 Jan. 1991.

[82]Irwin interview, 23 Jan. 1991.

of his training, he still believed that teaching students phonics and other decoding skills were critical in creating successful readers.[83]

Mr. Gilbey returned to Sanford Heights and did a number of presentations on the reading strategies for his colleagues typically at the end of a staff meeting. He followed the state scripted modules, telling his colleagues why they should use the particular strategy, and then describing the strategy and how to use it in teaching reading. Mr. Gilbey's efforts seemed to have had as little an impact as Ms. Murray's efforts at Salmon elementary. Mr. Gilbey guessed that few teachers at Sanford Heights used the reading strategies and noted how none of his colleagues ever used the trainers' manual nor asked him for information about the reading strategies. Some teachers, however, began to use the reading strategies as supplements to their existing reading instruction.[84]

But momentum for reform in reading instruction grew in 1989 due in part to the administration of the revised MEAP test. Mr. Nettles and those of his staff who taught the senior grades had considerable incentives to pay attention to the revised MEAP, as parents at Sanford Heights took a keen interest in MEAP scores. "The whole community pays attention" to MEAP, Mr. Nettles commented, "at least ten parents mentioned the low comprehension scores to me."[85] He acknowledged that the efforts to use literature at Sanford Heights was "due to the greater emphasis on comprehension in the [MEAP] test."[86] The fact that students did not do as well as expected when the revised MEAP reading test was first given in 1989 heightened the attention given to MEAP at Sanford Heights. A few of the fourth, fifth and sixth grade teachers approached Mr. Nettles and said "the new state definition of reading really spends a lot more

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[83]Gilbey interview, 20 May 1992.
[84]Irwin interview, 23 Jan 1991.
[85]Nettles interview, 5 Feb. 1991.
[86]Nettles interview, 5 Feb. 1991.

time on comprehension and understanding, and our program doesn't seem designed to extend that reading for kids and emphasize comprehension and we think we need to do this."[87] Mr. Nettles supported these ideas believing that the state definition called for a change in how reading was taught: "Reading is just not skills . . . reading is a lot more than that, it's an extension of reading to understand and then to be able to interpret."[88]

As a result, Mr. Nettles and his staff sat down with students' scores on the fourth grade and seventh grade test and identified areas of student difficulty. Some adjustments were made to the central office reading curriculum, and with the help of a $1,000 grant from central office, the upper elementary grades began "to try some different things . . . to increase the kids length of reading and to work at comprehension."[89] Teachers selected a number of literature books which they used in addition to the basal and central office curriculum. Central office administrators were sending mixed messages to Mr. Nettles and his staff. Although the central office instructional guidance system was providing few opportunities and incentives for principals and teachers to reform reading instruction, central office grants to local schools were facilitating reform of existing reading instruction enabling teachers to use literature to teach reading. But the co-existence of the old and new was a difficult one. Mr. Nettles and his staff had to continue to use the central office basal reader while they attempted to reform reading instruction by adding a literature component to the existing skills focused curriculum. But "it was too much to cover all of that [new literature books and basal program] in the amount of time that we had allocated for reading."[90]

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[87]Nettles interview, 5 May 1992.
[88]Nettles interview, 5 May 1992.
[89]Nettles interview, 5 May 1992.
[90]Nettles interview, 5 May 1992.

Actively Seeking New Opportunities to Facilitate Instructional Change

The difficulties of teaching both the basal reading program and trade books were alleviated to some extent in 1991. Mr. Nettles and his staff managed to convince central office that Sanford Heights should be one of the district textbook pilot sites. Mr. Nettles' keen interest in instructional issues coupled with some upper grade teachers' desire for changes in modal practice resulted in noticeable reform of existing reading instruction.[91] The central office textbook piloting process provided an opportunity, which Mr. Nettles seized, to change reading instruction school-wide. Consequently, teachers no longer had to use the old basal reading program or follow the central office monitoring system. Teachers at Sanford Heights were excited about their piloting opportunity. [92] And, according to Mr. Nettles, reading instruction changed at Sanford Heights in that "we do whole group instruction, we use no workbooks in grades three, four, five, and six, we have trade books that we read at each grade level . . . and there's much more emphasis on comprehension."[93]

But traditional beliefs and approaches to instruction do not die easily. Even with the instructional monitoring system and central office mandated basal out of the way, many teachers still clung to the mainstays of modal reading instruction. While most teachers were excited about the literature-based approach, many, especially lower elementary teachers, had strong reservations about the lack of attention the program gave to discrete reading skills, such as decoding and phonics.[94] They were especially concerned that the new reading program paid little attention to phonics and did not have workbooks which gave

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[91]Hunt, 15 July 1992; Irwin interview and observation, 23 Jan 1991.
[92]Hunt, 15 July 1992.
[93]Nettles interview, 5 May 1992; also Hunt interview, 15 July 1992.
[94]Hunt, 15 July 1992; Nettles, 5 May 1992; Wood, 25 Nov. 1991; Gilbey, 20 May 1992.

students opportunities to practice reading skills.[95] "For the first grade and for second grade we started off without workbooks and I think that was something [teachers] felt that they needed that structure.[96] Mr. Nettles with the help of Ms. Wood, purchased the workbooks that accompanied the literature-based program for teachers within one month of the pilot program's start.[97] Furthermore, to alleviate lower elementary grade teachers' concerns about the teaching of phonics, they also purchased a phonics program for use in grades K - 3. Mr. Nettles efforts to introduce new instructional approaches though a literature-based reading program, were transformed in order to fit with teachers' concerns and beliefs about reading instruction. Ideas for instructional reform (e.g., whole group instruction, removing workbooks) became entangled with teachers' existing practice, so that new practices co-existed with many elements of modal practice (e.g., teaching discrete skills).

Many teachers' reluctance to relinquish some of the mainstays of their existing practice, such as reading workbooks, drilling students in phonics and decoding skills and ability grouping, resulted in the reform ideas that were introduced through the textbook pilot program being modified in significant ways. As a result, the new instructional ideas were modified in significant ways to fit with existing classroom practice. New instructional practices were created through old practices.

Discussion

Similar to Parkwood, central administrators' response to the state reading policy influenced reading instruction at the school-level in very different ways depending on the school. In Hamilton the opportunities and incentives central

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[95]Nettles, 5 May 1992; Wood, 25 Nov. 1991.
[96]Nettles, 5 May 1992.
[97]Wood, 25 Nov. 1991; Nettles, 5 May 1992.

office provided to encourage reform of reading instruction were fewer than those offered by Parkwood central administrators. Most of the central office instructional guidance instruments (e.g., textbooks, instructional monitoring system) supported preserving the existing discrete skills based reading curriculum rather than reforming it. But Ms. Wood's workshops on the reading strategies provided some opportunities for reform of reading instruction at both Sanford Heights Elementary and Salmon Elementary. Similarly, the central office grant monies and MEAP also provided an opportunity for reform. And some teachers in both of these schools took these opportunities and began to use the reading strategies to supplement their existing reading instruction. But the extent of change in reading instruction was neither as extensive nor as ambitious as that reported by Parkwood schools.

Perhaps the stronger central office influence on the school reading curriculum in Hamilton was central administrators' "buffering out" of many of state policy-makers' instructional ideas as they continued to enforce the existing instructional guidance system. Most central office efforts to shape reading instruction encouraged teachers to teach isolated reading skills, paying no attention to the state reading policy. In both schools, principals and teachers -- even those who disagreed with the central office intrusion into their work -- felt obligated to teach the mandated central office reading curriculum. The lack of encouragement from central office to reform reading instruction, resulted in only a handful of teachers at Salmon Elementary taking the initiative to add the reading strategies to their existing instruction. And these teachers' efforts to include the reading strategies in their instruction were curtailed by the central office requirements to teach a traditional skills-based reading curriculum. Similarly, at Sanford Heights although efforts to reform reading were more extensive, the existing central office instructional guidance system curtailed and

delayed efforts to reform reading instruction. Attempts to juggle trade-books with the central office mandated basal reader, for example, were extremely difficult for teachers.

But despite senior central administrators' limited attention to state reform efforts, the revised MEAP reading test provided important incentives and opportunities for change at Sanford Heights Elementary. Although the manner in which the revised MEAP interacted with central office policies on reading meant that Mr. Nettles and his staff had to try and cover two rather different reading curriculums (e.g., using basal readers and literature), the MEAP prompted substantial instructional change at Sanford Heights.

Although central administrators' failure to respond to the state reading policy seems to have impeded change at the school level, the central office control was not total. At Sanford Heights, a combination of school-level factors and opportunities provided by the language arts coordinator resulted in significant changes by the early 1990s. School-level concerns about the existing central office curriculum and parental concerns about MEAP scores became coupled with central office textbook piloting, to open up opportunities for change in reading instruction. Despite the lack of encouragement from central administrators, teachers used longer reading selections and began to focus more on students' comprehension. So despite a central office which was adverse to reforming reading instruction, Mr. Nettles and his staff undertook remarkable changes in reading instruction.

As in Parkwood, school personnel's beliefs about reading instruction and the instructional leadership provided by the school principal shaped the schools' responses to the state policy. Mr. Nettles took a keen interest in instruction, actively encouraging teachers to attempt new instructional approaches. In contrast, Mr. Kuwalski paid little attention to matters of

instruction leaving teachers to make their own decisions once they complied with the central office monitoring program. He provided little encouragement for teachers to attend to new instructional ideas.

Another explanation that is critical in understanding the differences in response to the state reading policy between these two schools concerns the communities they served. Parental concern about MEAP scores at Sanford Heights was in stark contrast with the lack of interest in students' test scores at Salmon Elementary. Consequently, there was little parental pressure on Mr. Kuwalski and his staff to pay attention to the revised MEAP and the new ideas about reading instruction it was designed to convey to local educators. At Sanford Heights Mr. Nettles and his staff had to attend to the revised MEAP to satisfy parents' concerns about the low test scores. The community that a school serves may provide a strong stimulus to either attend or not attend to state policy.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of whether central administrators actively disseminated the policy or practically ignored it, the influence of the state reading policy on reading instruction differed significantly between schools within the same LEA. One way to read this variable response is that central office initiatives mattered little in influencing how the state reading policy was enacted at the school level. Despite consistent efforts by central administrators in Parkwood to change modal reading instruction, for example, schools responded in very different ways, with many teachers continuing to use reading selections with controlled vocabulary. But although variations in response at the school level suggest that central offices do not exert complete control over the schools' reading

curriculum, it does not suggest that central office's instructional policies are trivial in understanding instructional reform at the school level.

Although central office reform efforts may matter in a non-uniform manner, they do matter. Another way to read these mini-cases is that in Parkwood, the central office which undertook extensive efforts to disseminate the policy, schools undertook substantial changes in their reading instruction. Even one of the district's most traditional schools undertook substantial changes, comparable to those undertaken by one of the most innovative schools in Hamilton. But more interesting perhaps is that in Hamilton, where most central administrators buffered out the state policy ideas, changes in reading instruction were less extensive than those reported in Parkwood. And the school that attempted to change was constrained in important ways by the traditional reading curriculum endorsed by central administrations. Central administrators' failure to respond to state instructional policy was as critical in influencing reading practice as their active efforts to disseminate it. Central administrators' responses to the state policy matters, even though they may matter in different ways for different schools.

Finally, the mini-cases suggest that to understand the LEA role in the relationship between state policy and local practice we need to attend to the efforts of school personnel. School principals, learning specialists and "reading contact teachers" played a critical role in shaping how central office efforts to disseminate the state policy played out in schools. Inattention to central office dissemination initiatives on the part of school personnel reduced the momentum for instructional reform in their schools. On the other hand, when school personnel actively attended to the state policy and central office efforts to disseminate the policy, the rate of instructional change was much greater.

CHAPTER FIVE

STATE INSTRUCTIONAL POLICY AND THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The cases document how central office and school administrators in two Michigan school districts responded to the state reading policy. This chapter considers what these cases tell us about local school districts in the relationship between state instructional policy and teaching practice. I argue, based on the cases, that central office and school administrators' responses to the state policy did not look like implementation. Rather, local administrators *made* curriculum and instructional policy. Central administrators' made policy on reading instruction, regardless of whether, and how, they attended to the state reading policy. Local administrators drew on a range of sources for instructional ideas in their local policy-making efforts: The state reading policy was but one of many sources. In other words, local curriculum and instructional policy-making efforts were influenced by an array of sources other than the local context and the state reading policy. For example, Ms. Jensen in Parkwood drew on instructional ideas from sources, such as the National Association for Teaching Young Children, the British Infant Schools, and the state reading policy, in her instructional policy-making efforts. These local policies addressed a broad range of curriculum and instructional issues including; the materials and instructional approaches teachers were to use, the level of student mastery, and where instruction was to take place. In fact, local policies provided much more detail on the reading curriculum and instruction than the state reading policy.

Viewing central offices and schools as *policy-making* agencies suggests that local administrators play an altogether different role in the relationship between state policy and teaching practice than has been typically suggested by the

implementation perspective. As noted in chapter one, the implementation frame posits policy as the activity of higher level agencies and draws a clear distinction between policy and its implementation. School districts are portrayed as implementors of state policies rather than as policy-makers. Furthermore, local practice is portrayed as the dependent variable with state policy as the independent variable which is designed to impact local practice. "Implementation consists of putting into practice an idea, program or set of activities and structures new to the people attempting or expected to change."[1]

I offer an alternative to the implementation perspective; an *interactive policy-making* perspective in which state instructional policy interacts with local policy-making endeavors. Central office administrators in both Parkwood and Hamilton made policy on reading instruction, and the state reading policy was but one source of instructional ideas from which they read in their efforts to craft local policy. Many teachers in these two districts were exposed to local versions of the state policy, as incorporated into the policy-making initiatives of local administrators.[2] The distinction between viewing local school districts as policy implementation agencies and viewing them as policy-making agencies will become clearer as we compare the responses to the state reading policy in Parkwood and Hamilton. This chapter will help elucidate the interactive policy-making perspective through the stories of Hamilton's and Parkwood's response to the reading policy.

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[1]Fullan, 1992, p. 65; see also Berman, 1978.

[2]Some teachers may have encountered the state reform initiatives through other sources, e.g., university course work, professional journals, staff development opportunities they availed of outside of those offered by the central office. I accept that these other intermediate agencies between state policy and local practice also play an important role but one which is not possible to explore here. The data suggests that while these other sources played an important role for some teachers, for the majority of teachers the central office was one of the primary sources from which they could learn about the reading policy, and for many it was the only source.

Comparing Between Central Offices: Embracing Change Versus Preserving the Status Quo

In the early 1980s, both Parkwood and Hamilton central offices began to take an active role in curriculum and instructional governance and policy-making, offering more prescriptive and consistent guidance to schools on the reading curriculum. Decisions which had traditionally been left to schools were brought under central office control. Central office and school administrators in both districts used a combination of curriculum frameworks, textbook adoptions, student assessments, teacher supervision and staff development activities to shape classroom reading instruction. Until the mid 1980s in both central offices, these local reading policies pushed similar, traditional ideas about reading instruction, encouraging teachers to focus on isolated reading skills (e.g., phonics and decoding skills) and to use basal readers with controlled vocabulary. Despite ever increasing involvement in this area by Michigan's SDE, both Parkwood's and Hamilton's central office continued to make policy on reading instruction. Neither of these central offices became implementing agencies for state policy on reading instruction.

The cases reveal how the state reading policy interacted with the instructional policy-making initiatives of these two school districts in distinctly different ways. Central office administrators understood the state policy differently and incorporated the ideas they understood into their local policy-making efforts in a variety of ways. The ideas on reading instruction that central administrators and school principals disseminated to teachers through local instructional policy became the local version of the state reading policy for many teachers and principals. After all for many local teachers this was the extent of their encounter with state policy-makers' ideas about reforming reading instruction. Although the state version of the policy was still available to

teachers and school principals through state policy documents (e.g., the revised MEAP reading test, state conferences), for many local educators these local versions of the policy as expressed through central office instructional policies was the extent of their exposure to state policy-makers' calls for instructional reform.

These local versions of the state reading policy were distinctly different in Hamilton compared with Parkwood, as state policy-makers' instructional reform ideas evolved in important ways as they interacted with the local policy-making efforts of these two central offices. A brief comparison highlights these differences and illustrates how state policy-makers' instructional ideas evolved as they interacted with local policy-making efforts. Although the cases suggest significant internal variability on instructional policy within each central office, there were ideas that dominated central office efforts to guide reading instruction in both Hamilton and Parkwood. I focus on these dominant policy messages in the next section and highlight briefly internal differences in concluding. The interaction of state and local policies is further complicated by school-level policy-making initiatives.[3]

Curriculum Frameworks

In Parkwood, central office administrators revised the curriculum framework for reading in 1988, mirroring much of the dramatic change in the state definition. Reading was portrayed as an "interactive process" and considerable attention was paid to the reading strategies (e.g., KWL, QAR) in order to emphasize comprehension over the learning of isolated decoding skills. Teachers were encouraged to teach reading through real literature rather than selections with controlled vocabulary. Furthermore, the local reading framework

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[3]Chapter four details how the policy-making efforts of school-level administrators interacted with both the state reading policy and central office policy-making initiatives.

encouraged teachers to pay attention to students' stage of literacy development and to integrate reading and writing instruction.

The situation was very different in Hamilton. Despite the state reading policy, the central office reading framework remained unchanged, continuing to support the teaching of isolated bits of vocabulary, decoding skills and comprehension skills. Although the reading framework was revised in 1987, central administrators made no effort to incorporate any of the instructional ideas being pushed by state policy-makers. The Hamilton reading framework, for example, made no reference to the reading strategies nor the need for teacher to teach reading skills in context rather than in isolation. The central office adopted curriculum materials shut out many of the new ideas about reading instruction being pushed by state policy-makers.

The interaction of the state reading policy with central office instructional policy-making initiatives resulted in distinctly different local versions of the state policy in Hamilton compared with Parkwood. Consequently, teachers and principals in Parkwood had access to a very different central office reading of the policy compared with their colleagues in Hamilton.

Textbooks and Curriculum Materials

In Hamilton, a central office mandated basal reader with controlled vocabulary continued to be the primary medium of reading instruction up until 1992.[4] These mandated materials suggested that there was little new about reading instruction and supported rather than questioned modal reading practice. The textbook central office adopted in 1987, for example, continued to emphasize isolated reading skills and made no reference to new instructional ideas, such as, the importance of students' prior knowledge in constructing

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[4]Four elementary schools in Hamilton began to pilot literature-based reading programs in 1991. The district plans to adopt a new reading program for all schools in 1993.

meaning from texts. An accompanying workbook provided students with drill in decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension skills.

The scenario was very different in Parkwood. Central administrators replaced the traditional basal textbook with three literature-based reading programs from which schools could select. Each of these programs paid attention to many of the ideas state policy-makers were advancing, including the reading strategies. Furthermore, central administrators actively encouraged school principals and teachers to use textbook monies to purchase children's literature as an alternative to adopting a commercially produced reading program. In addition, central office refused to purchase workbooks and practice books that accompanied commercially produced reading programs for schools. New literature based textbooks coupled with a ban on workbook use suggested that teachers should focus on students' ability to construct meaning from real literature.

The ideas about reading instruction that central office approved curriculum materials conveyed to schools were distinctly different between these two districts. While curriculum materials in Hamilton supported preserving the status quo, the materials mandated by Parkwood central office encouraged significant change in existing reading instruction. Again, central office policy decisions on instructional materials resulted in very different local readings of the state policy in these two districts.

Student Assessment

Although the MEAP test changed for both Parkwood and Hamilton, it was but one of the student assessment instruments used in these two districts. And these other student assessment instruments were used in very different ways in Parkwood compared with Hamilton.

In Hamilton central office-mandated standardized reading tests continued to dominate the central office testing program. The CAT test and essential skills test required students to show mastery of isolated decoding skills, such as, identifying syllables, prefixes and suffixes, synonyms. Questions that measured students' comprehension ability required students to read short passages and identify items such as the main idea and the author's purpose. Despite the significant revision of the MEAP test, Hamilton central administrators made no effort to revise or remove tests that encouraged the teaching of isolated reading skills. And no effort was made to incorporate any of the ideas from the state reading policy into student assessment instruments.

In Parkwood the situation was very different. Central office administrators no longer mandated standardized reading tests, and in the 1989 they selected a new third grade reading test that reflected many of the central ideas of the state reading policy. That test focused on students' ability to comprehend longer reading selections taken from children's literature, and also integrated reading and writing assessment requiring students to provide open-ended responses to questions. Student report cards were revised in Parkwood and aligned with the district reading guidelines and curriculum materials. These report cards focused on students' comprehension ability as well as addressing issues such as; a student's attitudes towards reading, types of books they read independently, a student's ability to make predictions and to discuss character development, and a student's stage of literacy development. Parkwood central administrators used student assessment instruments to convey many of the central ideas from the state reading policy to schools and classrooms and call for dramatic change in modal practice. The focus on students' ability to construct meaning in Parkwood assessment instruments reflected some of the central tenets of the state reading policy. Assessment instruments also focused on

students' attitudes toward reading and their propensity towards reading independently.

The local versions of the state reading policy in these two districts, as expressed through central office testing policies, were distinctly different. While central office testing policy in Parkwood encouraged teachers' to focus more on students' comprehension of texts, local testing policy in Hamilton continued to endorse the teaching of isolated decoding skills. Consequently, central office policy-making efforts resulted in very different local versions of the state reading policy from which teachers and principals could learn about new approaches to reading instruction.

Instructional Supervision

The elaborate central office instructional monitoring system in Hamilton continued to push the teaching of discrete reading skills, such as, phonics and comprehension skills. Central administrators made no effort to revise this monitoring system in order to incorporate new ideas about reading instruction (e.g., the reading strategies), in response to the state policy. Considering the close attention school principals and teachers paid to this instructional monitoring system, it provided a strong stimulus for school educators to continue to focus on teaching isolated reading skills, and no opportunities or incentives to consider any of the instructional ideas from the state reading policy.

In Parkwood, efforts to monitor instruction had changed considerably by 1988. Central office no longer required teachers to submit students' scores on end of unit and end of book basic skills tests. Instead, the director of elementary education visited classrooms twice each year to see if teachers were following the central office directives on reading instruction (e.g., flexible rather than ability grouping, no drilling on isolated skills). In Parkwood instructional supervision

was used to encourage teachers to adopt new approaches to reading instruction, many of which mirrored the ideas being pushed by state policy-makers.

Staff Development

Both Hamilton and Parkwood central offices used staff development to disseminate some of the central ideas from the state reading policy, but there were considerable differences between the two districts in the kinds of opportunities offered. The Parkwood staff development efforts were both extensive and ambitious calling for change in modal practice and encouraging teachers to consider a rich array of new ideas about reading instruction. These workshops not only provided teachers with exposure to the central ideas of the state reading policy (e.g., reading strategies, the need to focus on comprehension) but in many ways embellished these calls for reform by encouraging teachers to integrate reading and writing instruction and develop instruction that was appropriate to a child's stage of literacy development. Other ideas that received attention in these workshops included integrating reading and writing instruction, using authentic assessment, and using flexible rather than ability groups in reading classrooms.

Staff development was one of the main opportunities that central administrators in Hamilton provided for teachers to learn about the state reading policy. Hamilton staff development workshops, however, were not only less extensive than those in Parkwood but also suggested less ambitious ideas about changing reading instruction. Participants attended less than 15 hours of presentations compared to over double that in Parkwood, and only 70 of the over 2,000 teachers in the district were able to attend these workshops. These staff development workshops focused almost entirely on modeling the reading strategies for participants. Teachers were encouraged to use the strategies in their classrooms so as to pay greater attention to students' comprehension.

Furthermore, most staff development workshops provided by Hamilton central office paid little or no attention to reading instruction, focusing instead on ideas such as "effective schools" and "ITIP."[5]

Staff development efforts in both school districts encouraged teachers to use the reading strategies in teaching reading. But although the reading strategies were the only reform message in Hamilton's staff development efforts, they were but one of the ideas on reading instruction conveyed through Parkwood's staff development workshops. Yet again local versions of the reading policy differed significantly between these two central offices.

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Comparing Hamilton's and Parkwood's central office policy on reading instruction highlights a number of issues. Although Parkwood and Hamilton central administrators took an active role in curriculum and instructional policy-making and used similar instructional guidance instruments to enact their policies, by 1990 the ideas about reading instruction that these local policies on reading conveyed to teachers were very different in Hamilton compared with Parkwood. Responding to the state policy in distinctly different ways, central administrators in Hamilton and Parkwood pushed different ideas about reading instruction in their own policy-making initiatives. In Hamilton few of the state policy-makers' ideas found their way into central office policy initiatives on reading instruction. Central office policy on reading instruction continued to encourage teachers to focus on discrete reading skills (e.g., decoding skills, vocabulary), the type of reading instruction state policy-makers were attempting to change. The only message for instructional change in central office reading policy was the reading strategies which teachers were encouraged to use as a

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[5]ITIP refers to "instructional theory into practice", an approach to instruction popularized by Madeline Hunter in the 1970s and 1980s. The approach focused on identifying behaviors and the strategies that teachers should use in teaching.

supplement to their existing instruction. In contrast, in Parkwood central office policy on reading instruction was revised to push many of the central ideas state policy-makers were advancing. Central office administrators made policies on reading instruction that encouraged teachers to use the reading strategies rather than drilling students in isolated skills, and pushed teachers to focus on students' comprehension of literature. In Parkwood, the messages sent by central office policies on reading instruction seemed clear and mirrored the state policy -- drill in isolated skills is no longer acceptable reading instruction. Instead, teachers should focus on students' ability to comprehend authentic reading selections. Many other ideas that central office curriculum policy in Parkwood conveyed, such as integrating reading and writing instruction, were rather novel when compared with the state reading policy. These local policies on reading instruction became the local version of the state policy that was available to teachers and principals in Hamilton and Parkwood. Depending on the district, the instructional reform ideas pushed through these local versions of the reading policy looked very different.

Considering the intermediary position of central office between state policy on the one hand and schools and classrooms on the other, their policy initiatives had a strong influence on the efforts of state policy-makers to get their message for reform out to schools and classrooms. Central office curriculum policy in Hamilton buffered out many of state policy-makers' instructional reform ideas, providing few opportunities for teachers and school administrators to learn about state policy-makers' calls for change and even fewer incentives to attend to these ideas. In Parkwood, local policies on reading instruction provided numerous opportunities for teachers and principals to learn about state policy-makers' efforts to reform reading instruction.

Although there were significant differences between these two central offices' policies on reading instruction, there was also much variation between instructional policies within each central office. Some of these within district differences are evident from the discussion of the instructional guidance system above. In Hamilton, for instance, the staff development workshops organized by Ms. Wood, called on teachers to use new approaches to teach reading (e.g., reading strategies). But this call to reform was in stark contrast with other central office policies on reading instruction. The messages being sent through other central office policy decisions (e.g., textbook adoptions, curriculum frameworks) made no reference to reforming reading instruction and continued to support the teaching of isolated decoding skills. In Parkwood, although all central office instructional guidance instruments supported changing modal reading practice, the calls for change differed in important ways. Central office instructional policy initiatives, even within the same central office, conveyed mixed messages to teachers on reading instruction.

Increased State Policy-Making and the Local Role

Comparing Hamilton's central office response to the state reading policy with the response of Parkwood's central office also raises the issue of the implications of increased state policy-making for the work of local school districts. Both central offices continued to play an active role in curriculum and instructional policy-making, despite increasing SDE involvement in instructional and curriculum policy-making in the 1980s. Contrary to the expectations of many commentators[6], increased state policy-making activity did not reduce the activity of local central administrators around issues of curriculum and instruction, as they responded to the state policy as policy-makers rather than adopting an implementor role vis-a-via state policy. What then were the

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[6]Wise, 1979; Cantor 1980.

consequences of increased state instructional policy-making initiatives for central office administrators? The Parkwood and Hamilton cases suggest a number of answers. The issue can be considered on three dimensions - how state policy impinged on local activity, the control of state policy over the work of local administrators, and the influence of state policy on the work of local administrators.

There is nothing in these two cases to indicate that local activity in curriculum and instructional policy-making and governance decreased as a result of stronger state policy. If anything, local activity increased as district central offices began to make decisions on matters such as textbook adoptions and what materials were acceptable for use in classrooms (e.g., reading textbooks and reading workbooks). Not only did the level of central office activity on matters of curriculum and instruction increase in Hamilton and Parkwood during the 1980s, but the scope of central office activity also increased. For example, in Hamilton, central office administrators who had previously not even specified the reading textbooks teachers were to use, developed curriculum and instructional policies that not only detailed the textbooks teachers were to use, but also specified acceptable levels of student mastery in reading. Was the increase in local activity due entirely to increased state activity? Certainly, increased local activity on matters of curriculum and instruction coincided with increasing instructional policy activity on the part of state policy-makers. But the cases also reveal that the state reading policy increased local activism both at the central office and school levels.[7] Certain local activity on matters of curriculum and instruction was directly related to the state reading policy. Some staff

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[7]A number of other research studies have detailed increased local activism in response to higher level policies, see for example, Fuhrman, Clune and Elmore, 1988; Odden and Marsh, 1987; Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990. These studies examined earlier state-level policies that focused on graduation requirements and testing rather than recent state initiatives which attempt to push more ambitious visions of teaching and learning.

development initiatives on reading undertaken in both districts, for example, were in response to state policy-makers' calls for instructional reform. More interestingly, the state reading policy enabled a handful of innovative educators in both districts to advance more ambitious visions of teaching and learning than had been previously supported by local policy initiatives. There was a strong emphasis on basic skills instruction in both Parkwood and Hamilton up until the mid 1980s. More innovative educators in both Hamilton and Parkwood used the state policy as an opportunity to push more ambitious approaches to reading instruction. In Parkwood, both Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts used the state reading policy to move the existing central office curriculum away from a focus on isolated basic reading skills. In Hamilton, the state reading policy prompted the central office language arts coordinator and the principal at Sanford Heights Elementary to introduce new ideas about reading instruction that were very different from the basics skills dominated central office curriculum. The state reading policy increased local activism on curriculum and instructional matters, as it encouraged more innovative local educators to challenge the traditional basic skills dominated reading curriculum and advance new instructional approaches to reading.

Considering the implications of the state reading policy for the work of central office administrators from the second dimension, control, complicates the issue considerably. Was the work of central office administrators on curriculum and instruction controlled and constrained by state policy? The cases suggest many answers to this question depending on which central office administrator one considers. In Hamilton, Ms. Bates and Ms. Oldham claimed that increased state policy-making initiatives, especially state policy-makers' decision to tie state aid to MEAP scores and core curricula, constrained local curriculum and instructional policy-making efforts. They felt they had little choice but to

develop a core curriculum as requested by state policy-makers and to attend to some of the new ideas on reading instruction state policy-makers were advancing. From the perspective of both Ms. Bates and Ms. Oldham, state policy-making efforts constrained their work on curriculum and instruction; state instructional policy resulted in an increase in external control over their work. But if one considers Ms. Wood (language arts coordinator) working in the same central office the issue of control becomes significantly more complex. Rather than constraining Ms. Wood's work on curriculum and instruction, the state reading policy increased her opportunities to advance her reform agenda for reading instruction. From Ms. Wood's perspective, state policy (e.g., the reading policy, PA 25) enabled her to push more ambitious instructional policies in Hamilton.

When one considers Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts in Parkwood, both of whom paid close attention to the policy and undertook extensive efforts to respond to the policy, a similar story emerges. Neither Ms. Jensen nor Ms. Roberts thought that increased state policy-making initiatives controlled and constrained their work. Their stories provided little or no evidence of the state reading policy, and other state-level efforts on curriculum and instruction, resulting in a decrease in local control of curriculum and instruction. In fact if anything, rather than constraining Ms. Jensen's and Ms. Roberts' curriculum and instructional policy-making efforts, the state reading policy resulted in their discretion over central office policies on reading instruction increasing. The implications of the state reading policy for local control on matters of curriculum and instruction depend to a great extent on which local administrators one considers. When local administrators agreed with the instructional ideas they interpreted from the state reading policy, they tended to see increased state policy as neither controlling nor constraining their work. Furthermore, when

they viewed the policy as an opportunity to advance existing reform agendas they were less likely to see it controlling their local policy-making efforts. But when local administrators saw state policy-makers' reform initiatives to be in conflict with their own agendas and beliefs about reading instruction, then they saw their own influence over matters of curriculum and instruction decreasing. The control of state policy over the work of local administrators in these two districts depended to a great extent on how local administrators saw the policy.

Focusing on the implications of state policy for local administrators' work on curriculum and instruction from the perspective of influence provides few simple answers. In both the Parkwood and Hamilton cases there is evidence that the state reading policy influenced central office administrators' policy-making efforts on reading instruction, though the influence of the policy varied both within and between central offices. Central office administrators in both Parkwood and Hamilton included some of the ideas about reading instruction that state policy-makers' were advancing (e.g., reading strategies) in their local policies on reading. But the extent to which the state reading policy influenced local administrators policy-making initiatives on reading depended on how they understood the policy. And as the cases reveal central office administrators understood state policy-makers' calls for instructional reform in very different ways and their attention to these ideas also varied significantly across administrators. Furthermore, the influence of the state reading policy is difficult to gauge because it was but one of many sources of instructional reform ideas which could have influenced the work of local administrators. The state reading policy was part of "a much larger tide of instructional reform" which influenced central administrators instructional policy-making efforts.[8] Central office administrators in both Hamilton and Parkwood identified many sources that

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[8]Conversation with D. Cohen, 8/1/93.

influenced their ideas about reading instruction and many noted how pinpointing their efforts to reform instruction to any one sources was impossible. Consequently, although state reading policy influenced local administrators' instructional policy-making efforts to varying degrees, it was but of many influences. Identifying the strength of state policy-makers' influence relative to these other sources, as some local administrators remarked, is difficult.

In sum, the implications of state policy for the work of local administrators in Hamilton and Parkwood varied both within and between districts. Whether and how state policy controlled and influenced the work of central office administrators in these two districts depended on which local administrator with which one spoke. I argue, based on the cases, that the notion that increased state policy-making results in concomitant decreases in local control over curriculum and instruction and reduces local policy activity in these arenas, is flawed.

What shaped the central office response to the state reading policy?

Explaining and Exploring the District Response

Comparing the responses of these two school districts to the state reading policy suggests that in order to understand the district role in the relationship between state policy and local practice we need to pay close attention to the complexities of the local context. The cases reveal two analytically distinguishable dimensions of the local context that were critical in shaping how they responded to the state policy. One dimension of the local context was the personal resources that central office and school administrators brought to their encounters with the policy. Their beliefs and knowledge, especially their knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction, shaped the manner in which they incorporated ideas from the state policy into their local policy-making

efforts. A second dimension of the local context was the organizational resources of the central office to which central administrators had access. Central administrators' efforts to attend to and disseminate the policy were either facilitated or constrained by their organizational resources.

For the most part, social scientists tend to focus on either personal or organizational resources in their efforts to explain the local response to state policy. Each perspective (dimension) offers significant insights into the local central office and school response, though neither is sufficient on its own to explain how and why Parkwood's and Hamilton's central offices responded to the state policy the way they did. My main argument is that in order to understand the district role in the relationship between state policy and local practice we need to consider how each of these dimensions of the local context interacted with each other.

Personal Resources

Increasingly researchers are paying attention to how teachers' personal resources shape their responses to external reform initiatives.[9] Similarly, one perspective on why central offices and schools responded the way they did concerns the personal resources that central office administrators brought to their efforts to interpret and disseminate the policy. The cases reveal that central office administrators attended to the state reading policy for different reasons and their readings of the policy differed as well. Furthermore, central administrators' acceptance of these reform ideas and their efforts to disseminate these ideas to school principals and teachers were not consistent within either of these two central offices. As the cases show, central office and school administrators' interpretations of the reading policy and their efforts to disseminate the policy shaped whether and how these new instructional ideas found their way into

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[9]D. Cohen and Ball, 1990; Weiss and Cohen, 1991.

local reading policy initiatives. Central administrators' personal resources (e.g., beliefs, knowledge, personal agendas) influenced their interpretations of state reading policy and their efforts to teach these ideas to classroom teachers.

Constructing meaning: The importance of prior knowledge and beliefs. Central administrators' beliefs about reading instruction played an important role in how they understood the policy and their acceptance of the ideas they understood. Although all of the 40 district personnel I spoke with interpreted the policy as calling for change in modal reading practice, the types of change they perceived the policy to be advocating, and their acceptance of these ideas as legitimate alternatives to existing practice differed significantly among central office and school-level administrators. Administrators with commitments to many of the mainstays of modal practice (e.g., phonics and decoding) constructed less ambitious notions from the state reading policy, than those administrators who were highly critical of modal practice.

For instance, Mr. Green (assistant superintendent) in Parkwood and Ms. Bates (language arts coordinator) in Hamilton believed that phonics and decoding skills were fundamental to successful reading. They both interpreted the reading policy as centered on reading strategies which they believed should supplement existing phonics and decoding approaches to reading instruction rather than supplanting them. The beliefs and knowledge that Mr. Green and Ms. Wood brought to the policy were distinctly different from Ms. Roberts' and Ms. Jensen's beliefs and knowledge about reading. Both Roberts and Jensen were highly critical of modal reading instruction, especially drilling students in phonics and decoding skills. They both interpreted the policy as supporting a major transformation of reading instruction that involved much more than teaching students reading strategies. In their view, the policy called on teachers to no longer drill students in isolated skills and to focus instead on developing

students' appreciation, and ability to comprehend real literature. As the cases reveal, central administrators' interpretations of the policy shaped the ideas they attempted to disseminate to principals and teachers. In Parkwood, for example, when Mr. Green took over responsibility for the elementary school curriculum from Ms. Jensen and Ms. Roberts, central office initiatives on reading instruction changed significantly and pushed for less ambitious changes in modal practice. Likewise, in Hamilton the instructional reform ideas Ms. Wood attempted to disseminate were considerably less ambitious than those advocated by Ms. Roberts' and Ms. Jensen.

But, ambitious interpretations of the policy did not always result in the acceptance of these ideas as legitimate alternatives to existing reading practice. Ms. Bates (Hamilton director of elementary education) saw state policy-makers calling for a major transformation of modal reading instruction that questioned the appropriateness of instruction in decoding and phonics skills. Ms. Jensen (Parkwood director of elementary education) interpreted the policy similarly. The ideas that Ms. Bates understood the state policy to be supporting were in conflict with her own convictions and beliefs about reading instruction, and she rejected them as alternatives to her existing beliefs and practices. She did nothing to disseminate the policy to Hamilton teachers due to her rather ambitious interpretation of it. For Ms. Jensen state policy-makers' calls for instructional reform fit with her beliefs about reading and with her personal agenda for instructional reform. She embraced these ideas and undertook extensive efforts to incorporate them into her efforts to reform the central office instructional guidance system.

Dissemination efforts: Beliefs about teacher change and the central office role. The ideas central administrators constructed from the policy and their acceptance of these ideas as legitimate approaches to reading shaped their dissemination

efforts. But their beliefs and knowledge about teacher change and the role central office should play in such endeavors were also important in shaping these efforts.

Ms. Roberts and Ms. Jensen, for example, supported very similar ideas about reading instruction and saw the state reading policy as an opportunity to advance these ideas. Yet, they held different beliefs about teacher change and the role central office should play in such efforts, and saw rather different routes to achieving these changes. Believing that teachers needed to internalize the policy and make it their own in order to change their instruction, Ms. Roberts organized staff development opportunities that focused on giving teachers knowledge of different research perspectives on reading instruction. In contrast, Ms. Jensen believed that in order to reform instruction central office had to mandate change. Her efforts to disseminate new ideas on reading instruction were very different from Ms. Roberts, as she mandated new instructional approaches through the instructional guidance system. Central administrators' beliefs about how to teach teachers new instructional approaches influenced the opportunities they provided for teachers to learn about the state policy; these opportunities mediated between the state reading policy and schools and classroom.

Central office and school administrators' personal resources played a crucial role in shaping how these two central offices responded to the state policy and classroom practice. The cases show that central office efforts to attend to and disseminate the policy changed over time as different central office administrators came to the fore. Ms. Jensen's and Ms. Roberts' departure in Parkwood, for example, had a significant impact on central office efforts to push ambitious reforms in reading instruction. And although there were significant differences within districts in how central administrators responded to the state policy, comparing the two cases suggests even more dramatic differences

between Hamilton and Parkwood. Most central administrators in Hamilton believed that isolated decoding and phonics skills were critical to any reading program. Parkwood administrators, for the most part, held more ambitious beliefs about reading instruction, and many were openly critical of drilling students in isolated decoding skills.

The complexity of personal resources. The issue of personal resources, however, is a complex one which merits additional attention. Individuals' knowledge and beliefs about reading and instructional reform interacted in complex ways to shape the manner in which they respond to the state reading policy. There seems to be no simple equation to predict how these personal resources influenced central administrators' response to the state policy. Furthermore, there is a rich array of personal resources , aside from central administrators' personal beliefs and knowledge about reading instruction and teacher change, that are important. Administrators' disposition to change, their disposition to learn, their leadership and political skills, and their beliefs about teachers are all important personal resources that may influence how they respond to policy. The cases provide some evidence that these other resources were also important, but it was not possible to systematically compare these across all central office administrators. Ms. Jensen's leadership skills and her political acumen, for example, were important resources in understanding her extensive efforts to reform the Parkwood reading curriculum. Despite the superintendent's and the assistant superintendent's strong support for instruction in basic readings skills, Ms. Jensen managed to convince them to adopt more innovative instructional approaches as central office policy, by building support for her reform agenda in some schools in the district.

These types of policies (instructional) require very different local resources than other policies (e.g., finance policy). For policies which deal with other

aspects of schooling aside from curriculum and instruction (e.g., finance policy) one would expect that the personal resources that would be salient to the local response would also differ from those that were important in this study.

Another issue that complicates personal resources is the fact that this policy was an instructional policy, and furthermore, addressed a subject area that receives extensive attention in elementary schools. Consequently, the personal resources that were important for this particular policy may be different to the personal resources that would be pertinent in understanding the response to another instructional policy (e.g., mathematics, social studies). Local educators who support very ambitious beliefs about reading instruction may hold more traditional ideas and beliefs about mathematics instruction. Some earlier comparative research on teachers decisions in mathematics and social studies found significant differences between how textbooks and tests shaped teachers' content decisions.[10]

The issue of personal resources, especially administrators' knowledge and beliefs, is further complicated by the fact that these are usually not static entities. They change in different ways and to varying degrees as individuals encounter new ideas and perspectives. So central administrators' knowledge and beliefs about reading not only shaped their understanding of the policy, but these same resources were simultaneously shaped by their encounters with the policy.[11] Although these issues complicate efforts to understand how personal resources matter in the local central office and school response to state policy, the cases provide strong evidence for their importance in shaping central administrators' interpretation and dissemination of the state reading policy.

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[10]Stodolsky, 1989.

[11]For an excellent treatment of this issue see Jennings (1992) Teachers Learning From Policy: Cases From the Michigan Reading Reform.

Although central office administrators in each of these central offices interpreted and responded to the policy in different ways, these individual responses were situated within an organization which involved other administrators. Central administrators' work is social rather than solitary.[12] Individual responses interacted with each other to shape the central office response to the policy over time. At times individual responses coalesced with the responses of one or more of their colleagues adding momentum to their reform efforts. But their efforts to disseminate the policy often collided with one another, undermining the reform agendas of some. Ms. Wood's attention to the policy in Hamilton, for instance, was undermined by the disinterest of most of her colleagues. Similarly, in Parkwood Ms. Roberts' ambitious interpretation and dissemination efforts were modified by the more conservative response advocated by Mr. Green. Central administrators' access to a variety of organizational resources influenced their efforts to disseminate their reform proposals to schools. Consequently, another dimension of the local context that is important in explaining the local response is the organizational resources that different central office staff had at their disposal.

Organizational Resources

The organizational resources of the local school district are another dimension of the local context that has received significant attention from educational researchers in their efforts to understand how external policy is enacted at the local level[13] The cases reveal that the organizational resources that these two school districts had at their disposal were important in influencing their response to the state reading policy. Organizational resources, such as, instructional guidance instruments, money, central office structure, district size,

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[12]Weick, 1979.

[13]See for example, Baldridge and Burham, 1975; Gross et. al, 1971.

and community interest, both facilitated and constrained the efforts of central office and school administrators to attend to and disseminate the policy. The manner in which these resources were distributed both within and between districts had important consequences for how central office administrators responded to the state policy. These organizational resources were differentially distributed both within and between these two districts.

Financial resources and district size. Financial resources were differentially distributed both within and between these two districts and were important in shaping central administrators' efforts to revise their existing instructional guidance systems in order to respond to the state policy. Purchasing new curriculum materials and providing staff development for an entire school district is expensive.

Central administrators in Hamilton lacked the financial resources necessary to purchase new curriculum materials which would have supported state policy-makers' calls for change in reading instruction. Limited financial resources stymied any efforts to purchase new textbooks. In contrast, central administrators in Parkwood had sufficient funds to purchase new textbooks and other materials (e.g., children's literature) for classroom teachers; materials that supported efforts to reform reading instruction.

According to the language arts coordinator in Hamilton, her staff development efforts were also curtailed by limited funds. With only $14,000 dollars and more than 1,500 district teachers in close to 60 schools, professional development efforts in Hamilton were severely constrained. The language arts coordinator could reach only 70 teachers directly. Central administrators in Parkwood, in contrast, received a state grant of some $90,000 to fund dissemination efforts for fewer than 800 teachers in less than 20 schools. In other words, Parkwood had nearly six times as much in available funds to reach half as

many teachers. Differences in financial resources, which were heightened by differences in the size of these two school districts, shaped the extent and nature of local dissemination efforts.

Community interest in education. The cases show that community interest in the school system, especially attention to students' performance on the MEAP test, played an important role in how both central office and school-level administrators attended to the state reading policy. The salience of the MEAP reading test, which many state policy-makers believed would drive their instructional reform efforts, differed considerably between Hamilton and Parkwood communities. In Hamilton, for example, parents at Salmon Elementary paid much less attention to their children's MEAP scores than parents at either of the two Parkwood schools. Inner city schools like Salmon elementary predominate in Hamilton, with only 4 suburban schools similar to Sanford Heights, where parents take a keen interest in MEAP scores. Considering the lack of community attention to MEAP, there was little stimulus from the community for Hamilton central administrators to attend to the revised MEAP test. As a number of district personnel noted, the MEAP was not considered the most valid indicator of the success of the Hamilton school system. Only at Sanford Heights Elementary, a middle class suburban school, did parental concern about the MEAP test prompt the school principal and teachers to being to reform their reading curriculum, despite limited encouragement and opportunities from central office administrators.

The situation seems very different in Parkwood where the community and parents paid close attention to MEAP results, prompting both central office and school administrators to attend closely to the state reading policy. Many central office and school-level administrators paid close attention to the revised MEAP which provided a significant stimulus to revise the district reading curriculum.

When the community took an interest in education, especially MEAP scores, this interest prompted central office administrators to attend to state policy-makers' calls for reform and to revise their existing reading policies.

The instructional guidance system. Another organizational resource that was important in understanding central office efforts to respond to the state reading policy was the instructional guidance system. Instructional guidance instruments provided central office administrators with a medium through which to communicate central office instructional policy to principals and teachers. While there were considerable similarities between the instructional guidance systems in Parkwood and Hamilton, there were notable differences between these two central offices in how control of these instruments was organized.

Hamilton central office was segmented into a number of units each with responsibility for different aspects of the instructional guidance system, and each following rather divergent agendas. One unit took responsibility for testing, another coordinate staff development initiatives, another monitored elementary school instruction, and yet another provided support services to K - 12 teachers on language arts. The failure of central office to establish and agree on a single instructional reform agenda, a factor which was complicated by frequent changes in senior central office staff, meant there was little effort to coordinate the work of these different units as each followed their own instructional agendas. Consequently, teachers were sent mixed and often conflicting messages on reading instruction. While the language arts unit struggled with limited resources to change reading instruction, other units of central office (e.g., staff development, elementary education) continued to promote existing central office policies on reading. Such structural dissonance in Hamilton seems to have undermined any efforts to push for consistent calls for change.

Parkwood's central office was considerably less segmented with all instructional guidance instruments that pertained to elementary schools under the auspices of the director of elementary education. This more coherent central office structure facilitated reforming the entire district instructional guidance system to push for changes in modal reading instruction in response to the state reading policy. In contrast to Hamilton, Ms. Jensen was able to reform all instructional guidance instruments, including student assessment and staff development, to push for change in reading instruction.

The local policy cycle. The timing of the state policy further complicated the shortage of financial resources in Hamilton. The state reading policy was out of sync with the Hamilton instructional policy cycle.[14] While state policy-makers were conducting their workshops and developing MEAP items, Hamilton central office administrators were completing a revision of the district instructional guidance system in reading. Central administrators had purchased a new basal reading textbook and developed a monitoring and student testing program that was aligned with the basal. Having spent considerable money revising the central office reading curriculum, they were in no position to begin another revision considering the lack of money and the fact the district had over 40 elementary schools. In Parkwood, central administrators early attention to the policy meant that the timing of the policy was in line with the local curriculum review process for reading. As a result, Parkwood central administrators responded to the policy as they undertook their periodic review of their reading curriculum.

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[14] This policy-making problem seems unique to educational systems such as the United States where there are multiple tiers of instructional and curriculum governance, each working in their own time schedules and all attempting to guide classroom instruction.

The Local Policy-making Context: An Interaction of Organizational and Personal Resources'

Convincing arguments can be made to support the important role that organizational and personal resources played in shaping how these two school districts responded to the state reading policy. Many researchers focus on either one of these dimensions of the local context, at the expense of the other, in their efforts to understand how policy is enacted at the local level. In fact some researchers spend considerable time arguing the virtues of one of these perspectives over the other.[15] But focusing on only one of these dimensions of the local school district context ignores the complex interaction of organizational and personal resources in shaping the local response to state instructional policy. To understand how central office and school administrators respond to state policy we must adopt an interactive model in which the local response to state policy is seen within the context of a complex series of interactions between local organizational and personal resources and the state reading policy. These two dimensions of the local context interacted with each other to shape how central office and school administrators attended to, interpreted, and set about disseminating the state policy.

The cases demonstrate that although organizational resources mattered, the manner in which they mattered depended on how they were perceived and used by central office and school administrators. Central office and school administrators' personal resources influenced how they used the organizational resources to respond to the state reading policy. "Organizations may pose unique problems for their members and they may furnish unique mechanisms by which these problems are handled, but it is still people who implement these

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[15]See for example Baldridge & Burnham, 1975. They argue that research on diffusion of innovation should shift from an individual focus to an organizational perspective.

mechanisms."[16] But while these organizational resources were perceived and used in different ways by individuals, it is also true that the organizational resources that were available to central administrators circumscribed their response to the state policy. After all, central office and school administrators could only use organizational resources if they had access to them. The range of organizational resources available to central administrators was differentially distributed both between and within these school districts, and their distribution circumscribed individual efforts to disseminate the policy. In other words, the importance of central administrators' personal resources in shaping the central office response to the state policy depended to a great extent on the organizational recourses that administrators had access to. Organizational resources or "structures are constituted and constitutive."[17] A few examples will help illustrate the importance of focusing on how organizational and personal resources interacted to shape the local central office and school response to the state policy.

Take for instance the instructional guidance instruments, which were important organizational resources in central administrators' efforts to govern classroom reading instruction. Although these organizational resources were rather similar in both districts, the ideas that were conveyed through them differed depending on the personal resources of the central office administrators who used them. But limited access to the instructional guidance instruments also circumscribed some central office administrators' efforts to respond to the policy. Ms. Wood's dissemination efforts in Hamilton, for example, were curtailed by her limited access to certain instructional guidance instruments (e.g., testing, instructional monitoring system). Even though she believed (and was committed

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[16]Weick, 1979, p. 32.

[17]Ranson, Hinings and Greenwood, 1980; also Giddens, 1979.

to) that reading instruction in Hamilton needed to change, her efforts to communicate this message to teachers were curtailed because she lacked the funds to purchase new textbooks for teachers, and she did not control central office testing policy.

Staff development provides a good example. The cases reveal that staff development was an important organizational resource in central office efforts to disseminate new instructional ideas about reading instruction. But the manner in which staff development influenced the central office response to the state reading policy, depended on how this organizational resource was perceived and used by central office administrators. Central administrators' beliefs about reading instruction and teacher-change influenced the manner in which they used this resource and the ideas they attempted to convey through it. The manner in which Ms. Roberts perceived and used staff development to disseminate the policy, for example, was distinctly different from the manner in which Mr. Green did. While Ms. Roberts saw staff development as an opportunity to develop teachers' knowledge of reading research so they could construct their own alternatives to modal practice, Mr. Green saw staff development workshops as an opportunity to give teachers new, concrete approaches to reading instruction that they would use in their classrooms. Similarly, Ms. Roberts and Ms. Berry used staff development in distinctly different ways to disseminate the policy to Parkwood teachers. In contrast to Ms. Roberts' workshops, Ms. Berry's staff development efforts were centered around modeling reading strategies for students. Although staff development was an important organizational resource, the role this resource played depended on how it was shaped by the personal resources of the administrators who used it.

Financial resources are another example. Access to organizational resources, such as, money played an important role in central administrators'

efforts to disseminate the policy. Ms. Wood's efforts to respond to the state policy in Hamilton were curtailed by limited financial resources. She lacked the funds to purchase new textbooks and to organize more extensive staff development opportunities for teachers. In Parkwood, financial resources were plentiful, enabling central administrators to organize an extensive staff development program for district teachers and revise the entire instructional guidance system.

The availability of financial resources alone, however, is not sufficient to explain how these two school districts responded to the state policy. Even though more financial resources may have resulted in more extensive staff development efforts in Hamilton, Ms. Wood's account suggests that her efforts would have been more of the same. In other words, the staff development workshops would have followed a similar modeling format and focused on conveying the same instructional ideas. So even with similar financial resources the Parkwood and Hamilton staff development efforts would still have been distinctly different. How financial resources were used depended on how individuals used them. While the $90,000 from a state grant facilitated Ms. Roberts staff development initiatives, the nature of these workshops and the ideas they conveyed to teachers were shaped by her beliefs about reading instruction and teacher change, and her interpretation of the policy. Financial resources, while facilitating or constraining dissemination initiatives, do not design the workshops nor detail the content of presentations. So while the availability of money influenced individuals' efforts to respond to the policy, this organizational resource was simultaneously shaped by individuals' perceptions and use of it.

A similar interaction between organizational and personal resources was evident in the school level response to reform efforts. School-level

administrators also used their organizational resources in distinctly different ways. Both Atwood Elementary and Howard Elementary in Parkwood, for example, had access to similar organizational resources, including an elaborate central office instructional guidance system, a community with a keen interest in MEAP scores, and extensive staff development opportunities. But these same organizational resources were used in very different ways in these two schools depending on the personal resources of the school-level personnel. The personal resources that school administrators brought to these organizational resources shaped whether and how they used them. Ms. Bolton held ambitious beliefs about reading instruction and saw these organizational resources (e.g., staff development, reformed instructional guidance system) as an opportunity to transform modal reading instruction. She actively used these resources to encourage her staff to change their existing reading practice. In contrast, Ms. Olson paid little attention to these organizational resources, ignoring most of the opportunities for change that they provided, and did little to change her own reading instruction. Her traditional beliefs about reading instruction, which supported preserving rather than changing modal reading instruction, shaped the manner in which she perceived and used the organizational resources that were available to her. School administrators' personal resources influenced the manner in which they perceived and used the instructional guidance system in response to central office reform initiatives.

A final example of the interaction of personal and organizational resources is found in the community that these school districts served. As noted above, community interest in test scores, especially MEAP scores, was distributed differently both between and within these two school districts. Limited community attention to MEAP scores provided few incentives for central office administrators and most principal and teachers to attend to the policy. When the

community took a keen interest in education, as expressed in parental concerns about MEAP, central office and school administrators paid more attention to the state reading policy. But again this organizational resource interacted with the personal resources of central office and school administrators. Community pressure to attend to MEAP scores and what this implied for reading instruction, was read in different ways by central administrators. Take for instance Howard and Atwood elementary in Parkwood and Sanford Heights in Hamilton. In all three schools, parents paid close attention to their students' MEAP scores, and school personnel believed that MEAP scores were important. Yet, school principals' and teachers' efforts to respond to this incentive to attend to the policy were very different. The reform initiatives at Howard were more ambitious than those undertaken at either Sanford Heights or Atwood. Furthermore, although this organizational resource seemed especially salient in explaining the response of some central administrators, it was less important for others. For example, although the MEAP was especially salient in Mr. Green's efforts to push reform it was considerably less important in explaining Ms. Jensen's and Ms. Roberts' attention to the policy and their efforts to disseminate the policy. Although MEAP was an important organizational resource which local administrators could draw on to support instructional reform , the manner in which this resource was used depended to an extent on the personal resources of the central office and school administrators who attended to it.

In sum, a number of organizational and personal resources help explain how these two school districts responded to the state reading policy the way they did. But what is crucial in any effort to explain the local response to the state reading policy is how these two sets of resources interacted with each other. Focusing on differences in organizational resources between central offices in order to explain why local central offices and schools respond differently to state

policy ignores the important role that local administrators play in using these resources. How central office and school administrators use their organizational resources is crucial to any effort to explain the local response to state policy. And the manner in which local administrators use their organizational resources is influenced by the personal resources they bring to their work.

State Policy and Local Government: Interactive Policy-Making

I argue based on the cases that local school districts make policy rather than just implementing the directives of higher level government agencies. The policies about reading instruction that central administrators and school principals made and disseminated to teachers became the local version of the state policy for many teachers. Consequently, although the state reading policy "as perceived" by central office and school administrators in these two school districts shaped their instructional policy-making efforts to varying degrees, state policy-makers' ideas were also shaped by central office and school administrators as they attended to and interpreted them within the local context. The cases reveal that state policy-makers' instructional reform ideas, as expressed through different policy documents, evolved as they were interpreted and incorporated into local policies by central office and school administrators. Consequently, defining the state reading policy only in terms of state documents, tests, and staff development initiatives, is problematic. Policy is made in a continuing set of interactions between different policy-making agencies. If interaction is key what does this imply for the state policy context?

The State Policy Context and Local Policy-making

State policy documents and the intentions of state policy-makers are not irrelevant in our efforts to understand the relationship between the state reading policy and the practice of local central office and school administrators. What

state policy-makers did in designing and disseminating the reading policy mattered at the local level. But how state policy-makers' efforts mattered depended to a certain extent on the manner in which local administrators construed them.

Researchers in the implementation tradition, as detailed in Chapter One, argue that attributes of state policy, such as clarity, authority, and consistency are crucial for the successful implementation of state policy at the local level. In other words, state policy-makers' efforts to strengthen the authority of their policy initiatives and their efforts to write clear policies that send consistent messages about instruction to local educators, improve the chances that these initiatives to reform instruction will be attended to and enacted at the local level. As described in Chapter One, state policy-makers in Michigan believed that a revised MEAP reading test would drive changes in reading instruction. By tying their efforts to reform reading instruction to a revised MEAP test, state policy-makers believed they would strengthen the authority of the reading policy. Although the policy may have had some authority by virtue of the revised MEAP test, it seemed to lack both clarity and consistency. Even though state policy-makers in Michigan had a clear vision of the type of reading instruction they wanted to change, there was much ambiguity surrounding the vision of reformed practice they were proposing; the reading policy proposed rather ambiguous visions of reformed reading instruction. Furthermore, as described in chapter one there was questionable consistency across different state policy documents, especially between the revised MEAP test and the state reading definition, in their efforts to push changes in reading instruction.

But analyzing the authority, consistency and clarity of the state reading policy separate from the local district context, as the implementation perspective suggests, establishes a problematic dichotomy between the attributes of the state

policy context and the local context, and provides only limited understanding of how these attributes of the policy shaped the local central office and school response. In other words, the authority, clarity and consistency of the state reading policy depended to some extent on how local administrators understood state policy-makers' efforts to reform reading. In order to understand how characteristics of the state policy context influenced the school district response we need to focus on how the state context interacted with the local context (both organizational and personal resources) in influencing the local central office response to the reading policy.

The authority of state policy-makers' calls for change, for example, depended to a certain extent on how state policy-makers' efforts were understood by local educators. As the cases show, the authority of the state reading policy differed significantly between these two central offices and even within them. For Ms. Bates in Hamilton, for example, state policy-makers' reform efforts had little authority over her policy-making efforts. Her response suggested that she saw little need to attend to the state reading policy. The manner in which she understood state policy-makers' instructional reform ideas as being inconsistent with her own beliefs about reading instruction, coupled with little community attention to MEAP, undermined the authority of the state policy in Ms. Bates' eyes. Although the state reading policy seemed to have little authority in Ms. Bates' view and the view of most of her colleagues, it carried considerable authority for Mr. Green in Parkwood. Community attention to MEAP scores in Parkwood, coupled with Mr. Green's belief that local districts needed to attend to what the Michigan SDE proposed, resulted in Mr. Green seeing the state reading policy as having considerable authority. The authority of the state reading policy to forge change at the local level, therefore, depended on how it was perceived by central administrators within the local context.

But such an analysis is not meant to suggest that the manner in which state policy-makers design policy is irrelevant in understanding the authority of state policy. State policy-makers' actions to strengthen the authority of their reform efforts did make a difference in how the reading policy was received at the local level. New state initiatives in the early 1990s, which tied a percentage of state aid to improved MEAP scores, added some authority to the state reading policy, even if it did so differently in Hamilton compared with Parkwood. In Hamilton, for example, Ms. Bates and other central administrators who had previously ignored efforts to reform reading instruction felt obligated to attend to the reading policy as a result of state policy-makers' decisions to link a proportion of state funding to improvement in the districts' MEAP scores.

Similarly, whether the policy was consistent and clear, or not, had as much to do with the local context and how local educators perceived it, as it had to do with the manner in which state policy documents were written and the alignment of instructional ideas across the different policy documents developed by the SDE (e.g., MEAP test, state reading definition, state workshops). Policy clarity was not something which state policy makers could have rubber stamped on the reading policy. Certainly some policy statements are more clearly written than others but their clarity depends ultimately on how they are perceived by local educational personnel. In fact, none of the central office and school administrators I spoke with thought that the state policy lacked clarity nor did they think that the different state policy documents pushed ideas that were inconsistent. Instead, the clarity and consistency of the reading policy depended to a great extent on the prior knowledge and beliefs that central office and school administrators brought to their efforts to understand the policy. Take Ms. Jensen for example. The importance of consistency in understanding her response to the policy had as much, if not more, to do with the consistency which she perceived

between state policy-makers' ideas and her own instructional reform agendas than with the consistency among state policy documents. And in Hamilton the inconsistency between Ms. Bates' interpretation of the policy and her own beliefs about instruction was what shaped her response to the policy rather than any inconsistency in policy documents. Although state policy-makers' instructional reform message was clear to her, it did not fit with her beliefs about reading instruction and she readily ignored it.

The clarity and consistency of the state policy, just like its authority, did not depend solely on how state policy-makers' developed and disseminated the policy. Policy clarity and consistency were influenced by the manner in which local administrators understood the reading policy. I contend that how the state context matters depends to a great extent on how it interacts with the local context. My intention is not to suggest that what state policy-makers do does not make a difference to the clarity, consistency, and authority of their policies. Local educators were bounded, albeit loosely, in important ways by the actions of state policy-makers. For example, although state policy-makers' calls for reform were interpreted in a variety of ways, all local educators' understood this stimuli as calling for change in modal reading instruction.

Characteristics of the state reading policy, such as its authority and clarity, depended on how the policy interacted with the personal resources of central office and school administrators in Hamilton and Parkwood. In other words, these attributes of the policy (e.g., authority, clarity) became attributes of the policy, and influenced the local response by virtue of how local educators perceived the policy: Policy authority and clarity were as much attributes of the local context as they were attributes of the policy-making context.

Although characteristics of the both the state policy context and the local school district context (organization and personal resources) all contribute to

explaining how Hamilton and Parkwood responded to the state reading policy, none of these contexts on their own is sufficient. Taken *together*, however, and focusing on how each of these contexts *interacted* with each other provides a much better understanding of the role these two school districts played in the relationship between state policy and teaching practice. Adopting an interactive policy-making perspective results in the dichotomy between attributes of the policy context and attributes of the local context being blurred.

Complicating the Equation: The Issue of Time

The interaction of the state policy context with the local district context is further complicated by a *temporal* dimension. Both the local context and the policy context changed over time, further complicating efforts to explain the central office response to the reading policy. The state policy context, for example, was not static. As noted in chapter one, in the decade between 1982 and 1991 the state policy context changed in significant ways. Initial state efforts to encourage change in reading instruction were centered on curriculum review workshops which encouraged districts to review their existing reading curriculums in light of research findings. By 1986, state-wide workshops which were centered on the reading strategies were the primary focus of state policy-makers' dissemination efforts. By 1989 a revised MEAP test was implemented by state policy-makers. In addition, state policy-makers tied a percentage of state funding to improvement of local school districts' MEAP scores, as well as introducing legislation that required districts to establish outcomes for all subject areas, including reading. Changes in the state policy context resulted in the stimuli from state policy-makers that were sent to local administrators being transformed overtime.

And the local contexts were also in a constant flux. As some central office and school administrators retired or took new positions within the district, others

took more central roles in crafting the local response to the policy. Ms. Jensen's retirement in Parkwood, for example, had a significant impact on the central office response to the reading policy. Likewise, in Hamilton shifts in central office personnel resulted in considerable changes in how central office responded to the reading policy. A new assistant superintendent for curriculum in 1988, who had strong reservations about the state reading policy, abruptly halted Ms. Wood's efforts to reform reading instruction. Similarly, the organizational resources of these school districts also changed over time. In Hamilton, for example, a periodic review of the central office reading curriculum provided Ms. Wood with additional funding enabling her to pilot a literature-based reading program and renew her efforts to reform reading instruction in response to the state policy. Changes in both the state and local contexts over time complicates efforts to explain the central office response to the state reading policy in Hamilton and Parkwood.

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The interactive policy-making perspective allows us to explore the relationship between state instructional policy and local practice, focusing simultaneously on how the state instructional policy "as perceived" by local administrators influences, and is influenced by local policy-making initiatives. Central office and school administrators' interpretation of the policy, their attention to the state policy ideas, and their efforts to disseminate these ideas to teachers were central to understanding the school districts' response to the policy in Parkwood and Hamilton. The personal resources which these administrators brought to their work, coupled with the organizational resources to which they had access, shaped their interactions with state policy-makers' instructional reform ideas. Consequently, in order to understand the role of central offices and schools in the relationship between state policy and local practice we must pay

attention to how the local context and policy context interact with each other. Viewing the district central office and local schools as policy-making agencies rather than implementing agencies complicates the relationship between state policy and local practice and has many implications for educational policy-making and policy analysis. I take these issues up in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Both school districts in this study responded to the Michigan reading policy in distinctly different ways. State policy-makers' calls for instructional reform were much more warmly received in Parkwood than in Hamilton, with most of Parkwood's central office and school administrators attempting to incorporate ideas they constructed from the state policy into their local policies on reading instruction. But although the difference in responses between these district were considerable, there was also notable variation in response within each of these local school district. School administrators within the same school district responded in very different ways to the state policy. And in both Parkwood's and Hamilton's central office, administrators interpreted the state policy-makers' calls for instructional reform in distinctly different ways, and they set about disseminating these ideas to principals and teachers in a variety of ways. Similarly, school administrators within both of these school districts, constructed very different interpretations of the state reading policy and central office policies on reading instruction. Local administrators, within the same LEA, sent very different messages to teachers about reading instruction. In Hamilton, for example, while some central administrators called for change in existing reading instruction, others continued to endorse modal reading instruction.

The local response to the state reading policy was influenced by both the organizational resources of the LEA and central office and school administrators' personal resources. Organizational resources such as money, community interest in education, and the instructional guidance system influenced whether and how local administrators responded to the policy.

Similarly, local administrators' personal resources, such as their knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction and teacher change, shaped their interpretations of the policy and their dissemination efforts. I argue that in order to understand the local response to state instructional policy we need to focus on how organizational resources of the LEA and the personal resources of local administrators interacted with each other. Although central office organizational resources were important in explaining the local response, their importance depended on how they were used by central office administrators.

The cases suggest a different account of the role of local school districts in the relationship between state policy and local practice than has been typically posited by the implementation perspective. The implementation perspective portrays local government agencies as "doers" of the wishes and directives of higher level agencies. From the implementation perspective, central office and school administrators follow (or should follow) state-level policy decisions. Consequently, attempting to understand the local response to state policy focuses on whether and how local administrators follow the directions of state policy-makers. The cases, however, reveal that rather than acting as implementors of state-level policy decisions, central office administrators made instructional policy. In both Parkwood and Hamilton, instructional policy was made both at the central office level and at the school level, and these local policy-making endeavors interacted with the state reading policy, shaping how state policy-makers' calls for reform played out at the local level.

Accepting that local agencies make policy then, we need to focus on how local policy-making initiatives interacted with the state reading policy. The state reading policy was but one of the many streams of instructional ideas from which local policy-makers read as they made local policy on reading

instruction. One possible metaphor for capturing the interaction between state policy and local policy-making efforts is teaching and learning.[1] Some local administrators in Parkwood and Hamilton noted how they learned from the state reading policy. Like all learners, central office and school administrators learned from the state policy in distinctly different ways depending on their prior knowledge and beliefs, and the context in which they learned. The cases document how central administrators' beliefs and knowledge interacted with the state reading policy and the local policy-making context to influence the ideas local administrators took from the policy. The ideas local administrators learned from the state policy influenced their local instructional policy-making efforts. But the local response not only entailed learning, it also entailed teaching. Central office administrators had to teach teachers the ideas they learned from the policy.[2]

Viewing local administrators at both the central office and school levels as policy-makers, as the cases reveal, rather than implementors of state policy has many implications for the relationship between state policy and local practice. I consider these implications below.

Implications for Policy Design

Policy analysts and researchers have devoted considerable time and effort attempting to improve the design of state and federal education policies to ensure that these policies find their way into classroom teachers' practice. I argue based on the Hamilton and Parkwood cases, that caution is necessary in

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[1]Cohen and Barnes, 1993 argue that all policy implies learning.

[2]Only some of the administrators which I spoke with in Parkwood and Hamilton spoke explicitly about their learning from the state reading policy. This was due in part to the fact that I did not explicitly ask local administrators about their learning from policy. I use teaching and learning in this chapter as a metaphor to explore the interaction between state and local policy -making initiatives.

current efforts to redesign both state and federal education policy. Two arguments for designing state and federal policy have received substantial attention over the past decade or so. One perspective focuses on designing higher level policies based on an understanding of the local context into which policy falls. A second perspective focuses on strengthening the efficacy of higher level policies through aligning different policy instruments. This latter perspective forms a pivotal component of systemic reform efforts. I argue for a third perspective on policy design which focuses on policy as an issue of learning and pedagogy.[3]

Policy as Pedagogy and Learning

All new policies imply learning for local teachers and administrators, as policies propose new ideas and new approaches to current local practices.[4] If all new policy implies learning for local administrators, therefore, policy also entails teaching. Viewing policy design from the vantage point of teaching and learning raises numerous questions for policy-makers at all levels of the school system. Local administrators' responses to the reading policy, like all learners, were influenced by the learning opportunities provided by state policy-makers as well as the personal resources they brought to these learning experiences.

New state instructional policies, such as the Michigan reading policy, require exceptional learning for local educators as they challenge existing conceptions of subject matter, and both teacher and student roles.[5] These policies raise new design issues for state policy-makers as they require more of local educators than merely supplementing their existing practices with new techniques, or adopting new techniques to do old things. Instead these policies

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[3]Cohen & Barnes, 1993 argue that all policy implies learning and show how the pedagogy of educational policy has for the most part been very didactic; Weiss & Cohen, 1992,

[4]Cohen and Barnes, 1993.

[5]Cohen and Spillane, 1993.

challenge local educators' existing conceptions of teaching and learning, challenging them to adopt new roles and new approaches that allowed students to become co-constructors of knowledge. Furthermore, this new hybrid of state policy not only imply ambitious learning on the part of local educators, but also requires ambitious pedagogy on the part of local administrators who not only have to learn new ideas from state policy but also have to teach these ideas to teachers within their districts. The cases reveal that the pedagogy of the state reading policy was for the most part didactic with policy-makers telling teachers and local administrators what to do rather than providing them with opportunities that enabled them to discuss new ideas, and challenge their existing beliefs and knowledge.[6]

One issue, therefore, concerns the types of learning opportunities that would be most helpful in challenging local educators' existing ideas and approaches to reading instruction. If policy-makers wish to push more ambitious views of reading instruction, they may need to provide learning opportunities that challenge local educators' existing beliefs and practices, rather than just telling local educators about new instructional approaches. Involving teachers and local educators in developing policies, constructing tests, and developing curriculum frameworks and materials, provides one avenue through which policy-makers might teach local administrators and teachers about these new instructional ideas.[7] But the task is not an easy one. State policy-makers' task, for example, is complicated by their limited organizational resources with which to construct learning opportunities and by a large array of learners spread across some 562 school districts in the state.

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[6]The one exception to this didactic pedagogy was initial staff development efforts in Parkwood where Ms. Roberts attempted to get local teachers to take ownership of the state definition.

[7]Cohen and Spillane, 1992.

And the cases reveal how local policy-makers' efforts to teach teachers were curtailed by limited financial resources among other things. Furthermore, the incentives of state policy-makers' positions are such that attending to the pedagogical implications of their policies may be difficult. The state policy environment is more concerned with policies that provide short-term and highly visible changes,[8] rather than the long-term and less tangible results that are likely to result from focusing on the teaching and learning implications of their policies. Many questions remain as to whether or not state and local policy-makers are in a position to pay attention to the pedagogical and learning implications of their policies.

These concerns aside, however, many questions still remain about whether and how instructional policy design would be improved by focusing on its pedagogical and learning implications. If policy-makers focused more on issues of teaching and learning in designing policy, would these changes result in greater attention to policy by teachers and more dramatic changes in existing classroom teaching at the local level? Although the cases point out difficulties in looking at policy from the traditional implementation perspective, and suggest that understanding what happened as an occasion of teaching and learning might be more sensible, they stop at the suggestion stage. The one occasion of more ambitious efforts to teach teachers about reading instruction in the cases, initial staff development efforts in Parkwood, suggests that local teachers' response to policy-makers' efforts to redesign policy around ambitious pedagogy may be thwarted at the local level. Many Parkwood teachers resisted the highly uncertain and ambitious pedagogy that they were exposed to through the workshops which Ms. Roberts organized. Furthermore, many questions remain as to how policy might be re-designed so as to

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[8]Fuhrman, 1993.

highlight the teaching and learning aspects of policy. If debate about the most effective approaches to classroom instruction are any indication of the contention that surrounds this issue, then there are more than likely few simple and straightforward answers to this question.

Viewing policy design from the vantage point of teaching and learning, also highlights the fact that local administrators, similar to all learners, learn different ideas, even from the same policy. In both Parkwood and Hamilton, central office administrators, even those who read the same state policy documents, learned very different ideas about reforming reading instruction. Such a scenario should come as little surprise even to those who know only a little about classroom teaching and learning. Students in the same classroom, listening to the same teacher, frequently learn very different ideas, depending on the knowledge and beliefs they bring to the lesson and their attention to the teacher. Similarly, local administrators brought different personal resources (e.g., beliefs and knowledge) to their learning encounters with the state reading policy and consequently constructed very different instructional ideas from these learning opportunities. In addition, the attention which the state policy received also varied widely among administrators depending on their interest in the topic (reading) among other things. Learning from policy is further complicated by the fact that school principals and teachers have many different sources from which they can learn about instruction (e.g., professional journals, state policy, central office policy). Many teachers and school principals in this study received different and often conflicting messages from the policy-makers in their learning environment.

One implication of this study is that policy-makers at the state level (and also at central office or school-level) may wish to pay more attention to the fact that their policies require ambitious learning on the part of local administrators

and teachers. How best to design policy so as to facilitate this ambitious learning and whether and how this would improve the manner in which policy is received at the local level, however, remains unclear. This study provides sketchy glimpses of these issues. Many factors do not portend well for such an approach to policy design. State policy-makers, for example, would have to adopt a role which they have not traditionally been accustomed to; the role of teacher. Opportunities would have to be provided that invested in local educators' personal resources -- their prior knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction, teacher change and the role of teacher and student. Looking at policy design from the perspective of teaching and learning not only poses new tasks for state policy-makers but also suggests some cautionary notes about other approaches to policy design.

Bottom -Up Rather than Top-Down Policy-making

Efforts to take account of the local influence on state and federal policies are not new. Over the past couple decades many commentators have argued for the need to pay greater attention to the local context in designing higher level educational policy. The "bottom -up approach" to policy design is perhaps best developed in Richard Elmore's backward mapping concept. Elmore, in an effort to attend to and take account of the local context argues that the "last possible stage" of implementation should be the point of departure for developing higher level policies, with policy-makers working backwards through the system identifying ways to improve the design of policy.[9] Similar to my efforts to understand the particulars of the local context,

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[9]Elmore, 1979, developed the backward mapping approach. In order for state policy-makers to deal effectively with the lack of attention their policies receive at the local level, Elmore argues that, policy-makers need to backward map from the point of delivery through the system. The point of departure for crafting policy alternatives is the statement of specific behaviors at the lowest level of implementation, that is, where administrative actions intersect with private choices. Having identified the specific behavior one works backwards through the educational system stopping at each level of the system to identify the potential of this

proponents of the bottom-up approach to policy design argue that in order for policy to be relevant every effort must be made to take account of how the local context impinges on the local behaviors that policy-makers wish to change. With respect to instructional and curriculum policy, therefore, one would begin with the classroom teacher and identify the behavior of the teacher that generates the need for policy.

Applying the backward mapping concept to the Hamilton and Parkwood cases, however, raises a number of dilemmas for policy-makers wishing to apply this approach in designing state instructional policy. Imagine for a moment backward mapping from any one of the four schools in this study through the multiple units and administrators in both Parkwood's and Hamilton's central office to the Michigan Department of Education. Take Sanford Heights Elementary as an example. If one mapped backward from Mr. Nettle and his staff through the different units of Hamilton central office what advice might one offer state policy-makers? One plausible conclusion would be to tell state-policy-makers to provide resources directly to the school and do something to free staff at Sanford Heights from the restrictive central office monitoring system. One might conclude that the effective unit for instructional change is the school rather than central office. Finally, one might conclude that the MEAP is an effective instrument for changing classroom instruction and drawing teachers' attention to new ideas about reading instruction. Now take Atwood Elementary in Parkwood and undertake a similar backward mapping exercise through the Parkwood central office to the SDE. What advice might one offer to state-policy-makers' about designing policy that would be effective for this school? A number of plausible answers come to mind. One would be

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particular level to affect the target behavior, and to delineate the resources necessary for this unit to have this effect on the target behavior.

for state policy-makers to invest more resources to assist Parkwood's central administrators' efforts to get classroom teachers to change their reading instruction. In addition, one might conclude that the MEAP was the most effective instrument that state policy-makers used to gain the attention of teachers at Atwood elementary. Backward mapping from Sanford Heights and Atwood Elementary in an effort to improve the design of state policy, although resulting in some consistent advice to state policy-makers, suggests many inconsistent ideas about policy design. In contrast with Sanford Heights, the advice one would offer to state-policy-makers with regard to Atwood Elementary would recommend investing resources at the central office level rather than at the school-level. The most consistent advise one could offer state policy-makers was that the MEAP was an effective instrument for drawing classroom teachers' attention to state policy.

Now briefly consider a third school, Salmon Elementary. Unlike Atwood and Sanford Heights, at Salmon Elementary one would conclude that the MEAP was not an effective instrument for changing local reading instruction since few teachers paid attention to it. Finally, backward mapping from Howard Elementary would also suggest that the MEAP was not a primary mechanism for changing local practice even though local educators paid considerable attention to it. Instead, investing in development opportunities for school staff would be the most likely conclusion one would arrive at after mapping backwards from Howard Elementary to the SDE.

Backward mapping from just 4 Michigan schools, which account for a tiny fraction of the 3,500 schools in the state, would suggest very different options to state policy-makers on how best to design policy to push more ambitious approaches to reading instruction in Michigan classrooms. Furthermore, add to this that each of these schools contain approximately 20

teachers and one adds even further complexity and variety to the advise one could offer state policy-makers. Attempting to offer specific advice that would apply equally to instructional reform efforts in each of these schools is impossible.

Calling attention to the particulars of the local context, as both Elmore's backward mapping and this study argues for, poses a dilemma for state policy-makers. On the one hand it is critical to take into account the particulars of the local contexts into which policy falls, in order to increase the efficacy of state policy at the local level. But on the other hand the particulars of the local context which matter in shaping the local response to policy are so varied that it seems impossible for state policy-makers to take them all into account in designing instructional policy. Which local conditions should state policy-makers take into account in designing instructional policy? The tension between specificity and universality is endemic to the relationship between state policy and local level policy-making. Local administrators' policy decisions are highly specific and their responses to state-policy vary dramatically according to the particulars of the local context, especially the personal resources that administrators bring to their encounters with the policy. This local specificity is in tension with the state policy context in which interests are aggregate interests designed to influence school districts in general, rather than the specific circumstances of particular central offices and schools. "The rhetoric of public policy is the language of what happens in general, on the whole, for the most part, and only in relation to differences of rather large magnitude."[10] State policy-makers work at high aggregate levels and state policy is designed to reach the "average" LEA or school, rather than to address the particulars of each local policy-making agency and the highly

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[10]Green, 1983; p. 322.

specific nuances of adventuresome teaching for each school and classroom in the state.

So how can state policy-makers deal with this dilemma? There are no simple answers. Perhaps, one implication is that state policy-makers' should not undertake ambitious instructional policies, such as the Michigan reading policy. Instead, instructional policy-making should be left to local policy-makers. Another, more optimistic, possibility is that state policy-makers must accept that their instructional reform efforts will be understood differently and have varied manifestations at the local level. Seeing the local response to policy from the perspective of teaching and learning suggests that variability rather than uniformity is inevitable in the ideas that local educators interpret and enact in response to higher level policies. The fact that local educators respond differently to the same policy or that the ideas they understand from the policy are different from those taught is not an indication of failure - such diversity of outcomes is endemic to teaching and learning. In fact, some commentators suggest that local variability may be a sign of policy strength rather than an indication of policy weakness.[11]

Yet another possibility is that SDEs may want to use differential treatment of central offices and schools as a policy instrument.[12] Although addressing the wide array of differences in what matters in influencing the local response to state policy seems impossible, SDEs may be able to identify

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[11]See for example Johnson and O'Connor, 1979. The issue of local variability, however, is troubling, especially when one considers issues such as educational equity. Local variation in how central office and school administrators respond to state instructional policies can result in students in some schools and districts being exposed to better instruction than students in other schools and districts. In other words, as some districts and schools actively embrace ambitious ideas about reading instruction while other districts and schools ignore these ideas, inequality between students' opportunities to learn to read seem to increase. This issue merits further attention.

[12]For a more detailed account of differential treatment of schools as a policy instrument see Fuhrman, 1990.

some central tendencies and use these as the basis for differential treatment. For example, the SDE might provide special grants to districts who lack the organizational resources necessary to provide staff development opportunities for teachers, so they can learn about new instructional ideas. But financial resources alone would not solve the problem. Money would have to be combined with initiatives that challenge local administrators' existing beliefs and knowledge about instruction. The effectiveness of differential treatment as a policy instrument, however, depends on the ability of state policy-makers to identify and anticipate local needs and responses to state policy. This in and of itself seems a huge task requiring substantial resources on the part of the SDE.

Attempting to take into account the local influence on higher level policies highlights a crucial dilemma of state policy: Policy-makers have to try and balance their obligation to all local school districts (usually through gearing their policies to the average central office, school or teacher) with efforts to attend to the specificity and variability of the local contexts. To ensure state policy benefits all classrooms in the state, policy is designed so that it is geared to the "modal" classroom. Such a scenario does not portend well for efforts to encourage state policy-makers to take account of the local influences on their policies.

Curriculum Alignment and Systemic Reform

Another perspective on policy design is evident in what has become commonly known as the alignment movement. Supporters of this perspective focus on the "top" end of the state policy and local practice relationship, arguing that if higher level policies were more consistent, prescriptive, and authoritative that local educators would pay more attention to them.[13] More recently, the alignment strategy has been incorporated into efforts to push

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[13]Floden et al., 1981; Porter et al., 1988.

"systemic reform" of the educational system around ambitious student learning outcomes.[14] One of the basic tenets of both the alignment and systemic reform efforts is that alignment of key policies and instructional guidance instruments (e.g., student testing, teacher certification, teacher evaluation, and curriculum frameworks) around ambitious goals would send coherent and consistent messages about instruction to local educators, thereby, increasing the efficacy of higher level instructional policy in changing local practice. The belief is that if you send instructional messages that are clear and consistent local educators will receive the same instructional messages and act on them.

Viewing the local central office and school response to state policy from an interactive policy-making perspective suggests that the expectations of alignment advocates need to be tempered with some caution. I argue, based on the cases, that advocates of curriculum alignment have failed to address one important component of the relationship between higher level policies and local policy-making, that is local administrators' personal resources which shape how they interpret state instructional policy. The cases reveal that local administrators who attended to the state policy learned different ideas about reforming reading instruction, depending on their knowledge and beliefs about reading. In other words, like all learners local administrators learned different ideas from the same curriculum (i.e., the state policy). Advocates of alignment seem to view these different local readings of state and federal policy as a problem of poor curriculum (i.e., inconsistent and weak policy), and they pay little attention to the vast differences in local administrators' prior knowledge and experiences and how these personal resources shape their readings of policy.

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[14]Smith & O'Day, 1991.

Although increased prescriptiveness, more authority and greater consistency among state and federal policies may increase local attention to state policy it remains to be seen what influence these implementation instruments will have on local administrators interpretations of these policies. Regardless of efforts to align state policies, the instructional ideas local administrators learn from their encounters with these policies will continue to be shaped to a great extent the personal resources they bring to their learning. I caution proponents of curriculum alignment and systemic reform to pay due attention to the critical role that local administrators' personal resources play in influencing what and how they learn from higher level instructional policies. And also to attend to how this learning shapes local administrators' policy-making efforts.

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My intention is not to suggest that efforts to map backwards from the point of policy delivery or to align key state policies around more ambitious visions of teaching and learning will not improve state efforts to reform instruction. Rather, I wish to caution against over-optimism about the efficacy of such endeavors and highlight a perspective on the policy and practice relationship that has received little or no attention in policy design - an interactive policy-making model in which local administrators learning from state instructional policy shapes their local policy-making efforts.

Implications for Policy Analysis and Research

Seeing the relationship between state policy and local practice from the vantage point of interactive policy-making in which local policy-making efforts are shaped to varying degrees by what local administrators learn from state policy, also has implications for policy research and policy analysis. Accepting

that local educators learn different things from state policy, one issue concerns how best to gauge the effectiveness of state policy initiatives at the local level. A second issue, which received considerable attention in Chapter Five, concerns researchers' efforts to explain why local government agencies respond to state instructional policy the way they do.

The rational approach, typically used by policy analysts, is to go in search of evidence of policy-makers' vision of reformed instruction in local practice. Holding up *a* vision of reformed practice as depicted in state policy-makers' statements, analysts look at incidents of local practice to see how closely they approximate this vision. Adopting such a strategy, for example, with both the Hamilton and Parkwood cases would lead one to conclude that the state policy had a rather weak and variable impact on local practice. Although Parkwood LEA might be held up as a model of state policy success, the reading curriculum in Hamilton would suggest that state policy-makers' reform efforts had only limited effectiveness. Taken together these cases suggest that at best the state reading policy had inconsistent effects at the local level. Our evaluation would focus on how far more local educators would have to travel to attain state policy-makers' vision for reading instruction.[15] Such an analytical approach is not inconsistent with viewing policy from the perspective of teaching and learning. Classroom teachers frequently assess students' achievement based on their mastery of specified curriculum.

But the rational approach to policy analysis, focused from the state policy-makers' vision of reformed instruction, is but one method of gauging the effectiveness of state policy-makers' efforts. This approach to analyzing policy assumes that state policy enters a uniform local context; an assumption which the cases in this study call into question. The cases reveal that the local contexts

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[15]Jennings, 1992.

were far from uniform - local educators brought very different beliefs and knowledge to their encounters with the reading policy and their existing practices were very different. Local educators in Hamilton and Parkwood constructed very different visions of reformed practice depending on their prior knowledge and beliefs. Furthermore, the rational perspective assumes that state policy-makers held up some clear vision of reformed instruction which local educators could struggle to emulate. As revealed in chapter one, however, state policy-makers held rather different and often unclear visions of reformed reading practice.

Viewing policy from the vantage point of pedagogy and learning suggests an entirely different approach for analyzing the effectiveness of state policy than has been traditionally used by policy analysts. Many classroom teachers evaluate their instruction based on the progress of individual students in their classroom, rather than holding all students to the same standard. This method of evaluation acknowledges that students enter the learning situation at different stages of development, and with different knowledge and experiences. Acknowledging that policy entails learning requires us to take into account that local administrators and teachers, as learners from policy, brought very different experiences and knowledge to their encounters with the policy. Furthermore, these local administrators' policies and practices varied significantly, both within and between local school districts, prior to the policy. So they constructed very different ideas from similar learning opportunities. The learning perspective, therefore, suggests another approach to policy analysis. Rather than gauging how close local agencies approximate state policy-makers' vision of reformed practice, we need to focus instead on how far

these agencies have moved from where they were prior to the policy.[16] In other words, what becomes important is how local administrators have changed as a result of their learning from policy rather than how close they have come to attaining some external standard vision of reformed reading instruction established by state policy-makers.

Looking at where these central office and school administrators were prior to the policy and focusing on how they have changed would suggest a much more favorable evaluation of the effectiveness of the state reading policy, than suggested by the traditional rational approach to policy analysis. Although the response of most central administrators in Hamilton to the policy may have been a rather pale reflection of state policy-makers' visions of reform practice, local reading policy did change when compared with prior local policies. Similarly, although Mr. Nettles' and his staff's efforts at reform may have been a rather poor approximation of state policy-makers' vision, the changes they undertook in response to the policy were considerable when compared with prior reading policy and practice at Sanford Heights.

A second issue concerns efforts to identify variables that help us understand how local government agencies respond to state policy initiatives. Policy researchers spend considerable time and effort attempting to identify variables that help explain the local response to higher level policy initiatives. Typically these research efforts draw a clear distinction between organizational resources and personal resources of the local context, with many researchers arguing the merits of one perspective over the other. Frequently, researchers propose simple linear models which identify particular explanatory variables

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[16]Jennings, 1992, makes a similar argument with regard to teacher change as a result of their learning from the state reading policy. See also Cohen, et. al., 1993, Reading Policy (work in progress).

and attempt to assign them importance relative to other explanatory variables (e.g., money, local expertise).

I argue based on the cases, however, that linear models of the policy and practice relationship fail to capture the complexity of the local response to higher level policy. Both organizational resources (e.g., money, curricular materials) and personal resources (e.g., beliefs and knowledge) matter, but they matter as interdependent rather than independent dimensions of the local context. Although money and other organizational variables may shape the local response, whether and how they do depends to a great extent on the personal resources of the central administrators who use these organizational resources. Consequently, identifying particular organizational variables, such as size and money, fails to capture how these resources interact with local administrators' personal resources to shape the local response to state policy. Linear models of impact do not capture the complex interaction of organizational and personal resources in shaping the local response to higher level policies. Instead the local response to state policy initiatives is best portrayed as a non-linear model. "Nonlinearity means that the act of playing the game has a way of changing the rules."[17] Accepting that what is crucial is the interaction of organizational and personal resources means that one cannot assign a constant importance to any one variable as their explanatory power depends on how they interact with other variables. Consequently, although a variable like money is important in explaining the local response, how and to what extent it is important depends on how it interacts with other variables (e.g., local administrators' personal beliefs and knowledge). These interactions are complex and fluid making predictions of how districts will respond to state policy initiatives difficult. "Analyzing the behavior of a non-linear equation . . .

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[17]Gleick, 1987, p. 24.

is like walking through a maze whose walls rearrange themselves with every step you take."[18] Consequently, efforts to understand the local response to state policy require additional in-depth case studies that capture how these variables interact in particular local circumstances.

Conclusion

Viewing local administrators in Parkwood and Hamilton as policy-makers who learn from state policy, rather than implementors of state policy who either follow, or refuse to follow, the directives of state policy-makers, suggests an entirely different relationship between state policy and local school districts than has been typically posited by researchers in the implementation tradition. Much of the implementation research tradition is based on the assumption that higher level agencies have, or should have, control over local government agencies. The fallacy of control misconstrues the relationship between state policy and local practice, portraying SDEs as makers of policy and local agencies as implementors of these state policies.

I argue, based on the cases, that the relationship between state government and local agencies in the two school districts in this study is best characterized as one of influence rather than one of control or power.[19] Accepting that local administrators, at both the central office and school levels, make instructional policy suggests an interactive policy-making model in which the state reading policy is but one of a number of potential influences on local policy-making endeavors. Increased state policy-making initiatives in Michigan since the 1970s, especially in the area of instruction, did not result in a decline in the policy-making activities of local government agencies in

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[18]Gleick, 1987, p. 24.

[19]Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990; Fraatz, 1987.

Hamilton and Parkwood. Central office administrators in both Hamilton and Parkwood exercised considerable autonomy in the attention they gave to the state reading policy, the ideas they understood from the policy, and whether and how they decided to incorporate these ideas into their own instructional policy-making efforts. Many central administrators in Hamilton, for example, ignored state policy initiatives to change reading instruction. And in Parkwood's central office the state reading policy was but one source of instructional ideas that local administrators drew on in their local policy-making efforts. Local instructional policy-making efforts continued and the reading policy was but one source of ideas from which local policy-makers' constructed instructional ideas in their efforts to make local reading policy. The state reading policy, therefore, influenced local policy-making efforts, but the extent to which it did depended on how local policy-makers attended to and interpreted it.

Furthermore, the influence of the state reading policy on local policy-making initiatives differed significantly within these two LEAs. In other words, central administrators and school principals within the same LEA responded to the state policy in diverse ways and these individual responses were not always in agreement with one another. Most of the policy implementation literature fails to capture the complexity of the local response to state policy, treating local districts and schools as organizational entities that act in unison in responding to state policy. Central offices and schools are classified as either adopters or non-adopters of federal and state policy initiatives. Schools and central offices are either innovative or traditional. Such categorizations are not incorrect - all of these descriptors capture these local government agencies at some level of generalization. But below the surface of this uniform outward face, there was considerable variation within central

offices and schools in Hamilton and Parkwood in how they responded to the state reading policy. For example, even though the state-policy had a relatively weak influence on policy-making efforts in Hamilton's central office, it had a significant influence on policy-making initiatives at Sanford Heights Elementary. Similarly, the state reading policy had a much stronger influence on policy-making efforts at Sanford Heights Elementary compared with Salmon Elementary in Hamilton.

Increased instructional policy activity at the state-level in Michigan did not result in a concomitant decrease in policy activity at lower levels of the school system (e.g., central office and schools). Power and influence between the SDE and these two school districts grew in a positive-sum fashion rather than in a zero-sum fashion. In other words, central office and school administrators' discretion over instructional issues did not decrease as state policy-makers began to pay greater attention to issues of instruction. State policy-making efforts on reading interacted with local policy-making initiatives, enhancing rather than curtailing local policy-making efforts. This finding parallels earlier research studies which suggest that increased policy activity at one level of the system does not result in a concomitant decrease in activity at lower levels.[20] This study, however, was based on a new wave of state policy initiatives which were designed to encourage fundamental changes in the manner in which teachers teach by pushing ambitious visions of instruction.

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[20]D. Cohen, 1982; Berman & Pauly, 1975; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

Research Design

The Michigan Reading Policy provided an ideal lens through which to explore the role of local school districts in the state policy and local practice relationship for a number of reasons. First, the reading policy represented a new hybrid of state policies designed not only to change the content of curriculum but also the manner in which teachers taught. There have been few efforts to understand how this new hybrid of state instructional policy plays out at the local level and no attention to the role central offices play in disseminating these policies to teachers. Second, the reading policy provided an opportunity to explore how local government agencies responded when SDEs enter an area for which central office and school administrators had traditionally taken responsibility. The reading policy represented such an area since local administrators in Michigan had traditionally taken responsibility for curriculum and instructional policy decisions.

This study explored how two Michigan school districts responded to the state reading policy. In order to explore the role of the local school district in the relationship between state policy and local practice, I constructed case studies of the central office response in both districts. In addition, I constructed mini-cases of the school-level response for two schools in each district. My intention was to construct pictures of how two Michigan school districts responded to the state reading policy, in order to better understand the role of these local government agencies in relation to state instructional policy. I used a field study approach, as

an "attempt to unravel and explain a human event giving particular attention to the collective understandings of those who created the event."[1] My study attempted to unravel local administrators' stories about the role of the school district in relation to a state reading policy.

Site Selection

This study was part of a larger research project which has been exploring the relationship between state instructional policy in mathematics and reading, and teachers' practice in three states, Michigan, California, and South Carolina. The school districts and schools in this larger research study were selected to represent research sites that contrasted on socio-economic and demographic characteristics. School districts in this study vary on dimensions of socio-economic status, size, ethnic population, and geography. The school districts include large urban districts, medium sized urban districts, suburban districts, and rural districts. Furthermore, the reputation of the district for responsiveness to instructional innovations was a factor that was also taken into account in selecting school districts in Michigan. As part of this larger study, I observed teachers in three Michigan school districts beginning in Fall 1989. My work with teachers in two of these districts, Hamilton and Parkwood, suggested that there were considerable differences between districts in the opportunities provided by central office for teachers to learn about the state reading policy. Teachers in Parkwood had received many opportunities to learn about the reading policy and much encouragement to change their reading teaching. In contrast, the teachers I spoke with in Hamilton received few opportunities from central office to learn about the state reading policy and little or no encouragement to change their existing practice. The differences in the opportunities teachers had to learn

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[1]Cusick, 1983.

about the new reading policy between Parkwood and Hamilton prompted my interest in exploring the role of the central office in the relationship between state instructional policy and local practice. I wanted to find out what efforts central administrators in these two school districts had made to disseminate the policy and, if teachers' accounts were accurate, why these two central offices' dissemination efforts looked so different. My objective was to explore carefully the role played by two central offices (and four schools) in disseminating state instructional policy in order to come up with ideas about how districts and state departments relate in instructional policy-making. Given my objective was not to develop findings I could generalize, but rather to generate hypotheses about the relationship which was not apparent initially, I was not concerned with selecting a representative sample of school districts. Rather I selected a theoretical sample which allowed me "to discover categories and their properties and to suggest their interrelationships."[2] To develop ideas about the categories, it seemed important to have some variance in district response to "facilitate the expansion of the developing theory."[3] Because my initial work in elementary classrooms in these two school districts suggested significant variance between Hamilton's response and Parkwood's response to the state reading policy, I selected these two school districts for my study. Adding more districts would no doubt have increased the variance within my sample but because I was closely looking at the district response this would also have made my study less manageable.

Within each local district I selected two schools in order to explore the school-level response to the state reading policy. Again, in order to ensure variation between the sites I selected schools in each district which had

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[2]Glaser and Strauss, 1970, cited in Cusick 1983.
[3]Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 67.

responded differently to state reform efforts. With the help of central office administrators and school personnel, I chose a school in each district which had a reputation for supporting instructional innovation. The second school that I selected in each of these districts had a reputation of being less enthusiastic about instructional reform and innovation than the first school selected. This variation allowed for a more in-depth exploration of the role of school-level administrators in responding to state instructional policy.

Informants

In both Parkwood and Hamilton I interviewed informants at both the central office, school and classroom levels. Initially, I contacted and interviewed the language arts coordinator, the director of elementary education, and the assistant superintendent for curriculum in both districts. These informants, coupled with the teachers in each district with whom I had been working as part of the larger study, recommended other administrators and teachers who played an active role in developing the local reading curriculum or had been involved in crafting the district response to the state reading policy. I followed their recommendations by interviewing the informants they identified (see Table 6.1). In each district, I also interviewed five members of the district reading committee whom I selected at random.

At the school level, the principal and at least two teachers were interviewed. I asked them about the school reading curriculum and their efforts to respond to the state reading policy. At the two schools in Hamilton, I interviewed the school principal and the "reading contact teacher" who had represented the school at district workshops on the reading policy. I also used interview and observation data on teachers with whom other researchers in the larger project had worked. At Sanford Heights Elementary, this data included

interviews and observations of a fifth grade teacher and a second grade teacher. At Salmon Elementary, in addition to observing and interviewing the "reading contact teacher" (a fifth grade teacher), I also drew on observation and interview data with one of the second grade teachers. Furthermore, I interviewed one of the specialist teachers at the school who was a member of the district reading committee. At the two schools in Parkwood, I interviewed the principal and the school learning specialist. At Howard Elementary I interviewed one second grade and one fifth grade teacher, and observed the fifth grade teacher as part of the larger study. At Atwood Elementary, I observed and interviewed one fifth grade teacher.

By the end of the study 65 interviews had been completed with 40 informants. The positions held by the informants I interviewed are shown in Table 6.1 for both districts. All informants of whom I requested an interview agreed to be interviewed.

Table 6.1 Positions Held by Informants

Position Held By Informant	In Parkwood	In Hamilton	Total
Assistant/Deputy Superintendent	1	3	4
Directors of Central Office Units	1	4	5
Curriculum Consultants and Supervisors	1	3	4
Elementary School Principals	4	4	8
School Learning Specialists & Media Specialists	4	0	4
Elementary Teachers Serving on District Reading Committee	5	5	10
Other Elementary Teachers	2	3	5
Totals	**18**	**22**	**40**

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected primarily through interviews with central office and school-level personnel. The data collected through interviews were supplemented with two other sources of information: document analysis and observational data. I collected central office and school documents, which addressed issues pertinent to reading instruction. Also, I attended committee meetings and staff development workshops which addressed reading instruction. Furthermore, I observed a number of teachers as part of the larger study, and I drew on this observational data as I developed the cases in this dissertation, in particular the mini-cases of the four schools. Observational data and the data gathered through document analysis provided me with an opportunity to understand more completely the informants' descriptions of the local reading program and local efforts to respond to the state reading policy.

I did most of the interviews and collected most of the documents during a three month period in Spring 1992. Some interviews, however, were conducted as early as Fall 1990 while others were done during Summer and Fall 1992. Data analysis was undertaken simultaneously with data collection and completed by December 1992. My work in both of these districts continues.

Interviews

Most informants were interviewed once with the average interview time being one hour. Interview time with informants ranged from 20 to 90 minutes depending on the time the informant had available. In all, the study involved over 70 hours of interviews. Some informants were interviewed more than once, ranging from two to four different occasions. All interviews were tape-recorded, with the exception of one in which the informant refused.

Interview protocols were developed to ensure comparable data across sites. Interview questions were open-ended and every effort was made to adapt questions and the protocol to the particular informant being interviewed and the information they were providing. The exploratory nature of the research study provided a strong rationale for open-ended interviews which provided informants with maximum opportunity to identify issues. I tried at all times to provide opportunities for informants to identify salient issues. Such an approach to interviewing allowed me to be sensitive to and guided by the informants' point of view.[4] I made every effort to balance the open-ended adaptive interview procedure with my need to gather comparable and reliable data. For example, on occasions when I failed to cover all the categories on an interview due to the informant identifying other issues that were salient to my study, I re-visited the informant for an additional interview or conducted a telephone interview.

I designed all interview protocols to elicit: first, a description and understanding of the local reading curriculum and curriculum review process; second a description of the local responses to the state reading policy; and finally, explanations of central administrators' and school administrators' responses to the state policy. Two different interview protocols were designed, one for central office informants and another for school-level informants (See Appendix B - C). Comparing the accounts of informants at the central office, school and classroom levels with one another provided a means to check on the accuracy of informants' descriptions.

Interviews with central office personnel focused on three areas (See Appendix B). First, the interview protocol focused on administrators' beliefs about reading instruction and teacher change, and the role of central office in

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[4]Fetterman,1982, argues that researchers need to employ methods that allow the insider's viewpoint to guide the research.

such endeavors. Second, the interview protocol included questions on administrators' knowledge of the state reading policy, their reaction to the policy, their beliefs about how best to facilitate change in response to the policy, and their interpretation of how the policy influenced their work as administrators and central office instructional policy. Third, the interview protocol included questions that were designed to develop an understanding of, a) current central office instructional policies on reading, b) the central office instructional policy-making process, and c) what the district did in response to the state reading policy. Although all three areas were covered in each interview, questions were tailored to informants' positions within central office and their area of expertise (e.g., staff development, testing).

Interviews with school personnel focused on similar issues (See Appendix C). First, the interview focused on school administrators' beliefs about reading instruction and teacher change, and how instruction in their school reflected these beliefs. Second, school administrators were asked questions to gauge their knowledge of the state reading policy, their reaction to the policy, their beliefs about how best to facilitate change in response to the policy, and their evaluation of how the policy was received in their school. Third, the interview included questions that were designed to develop an understanding of current school and central office instructional policies on reading, the school and central office instructional policy-making process, and the school and central office response to the state reading policy.

Observations

Where possible, I observed locally-sponsored workshops on language arts instruction, and central office meetings relating to local policy on reading instruction (e.g., textbook adoption committee meetings). These observations enabled me to better understand the local policy-making process and the

opportunities that local educators had available to learn about the reading policy. Observing meetings and workshops provided me with access to issues and aspects of these central offices that would not have been possible through interviewing local administrators. Politically sensitive issues surfaced more easily at central office meetings than in one-to-one interviews. During one reading committee meeting in Hamilton, for example, a number of teachers voiced concerns about whether the committee's proposals would have any impact on central office instructional policy. Some committee members implied that the committee was only a front for central administrators who would make the real decision about the central office reading curriculum. Observing this event provided me with a new angle on the central office policy-making process in Hamilton, one which I was able to pursue in a non-threatening manner in subsequent interviews with committee members. Observational data, therefore, suggested additional issues for interview questions as well as a means of grounding my interviews with informants. In addition, these observations provided another means of checking-up on administrators' descriptions and accounts of how local agencies responded to the state policy.

In Hamilton I attended four meetings of the district reading committee during Spring 1992. In Parkwood, the reading committee had already completed its work so I was unable to attend meetings and had to rely on participants' accounts of how the committee worked and what they achieved. In Parkwood I observed a number of staff development workshops on language arts. During the Summer of 1992, I attended a district sponsored workshop on reading instruction which shed considerable light on the instructional ideas Parkwood's central administrators supported and how they believed teacher change could be accomplished. In addition, Parkwood's staff development workshops, which were organized in response to the state reading policy in 1987, had been

addition, state policy documents were collected, and I observed a number of state workshops on the reading policy.

Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis in this study occurred simultaneously. Once I completed an interview it was transcribed, and then I analyzed it. The interaction of my data analysis with the collection of data proved to be invaluable in that it enabled me to refine interview questions as I went along and to clarify informants' accounts and information. Furthermore, this iterative process between analysis and collection allowed me to check-out working hypotheses that began to emerge from my data during interviews. Toward the end of the study, I also began to test my hypotheses by trying them out with informants.

The data was analyzed in order to gain an understanding of the three issues which had guided my study: (a) an understanding of the local reading curriculum and curriculum review process, (b) a description of the local responses to the state reading policy, (c) explanations for the local response to the reading policy. My data analysis was also informed by the implementation literature reviewed in Chapter One and frequent conversations with other researchers who were part of the larger research project. Members of the larger research project read initial drafts of my cases and some of my working hypotheses. Their responses to my work provided me with alternative perspectives to consider in my data analysis.

Analysis of Interview Data

I analyzed all interviews using two different sets of analytical categories for coding informants' responses. I developed the first set of coding categories based on a review of the implementation literature, from reading three initial

interviews I had completed in each of the school districts, and from conversations with colleagues in the larger research project. The implementation literature provided me with a rich array of possible explanations for why local government agencies respond to state policy the way they do. Furthermore, reading six of the initial interviews that I had completed enabled me to develop my coding categories that adequately captured informants' responses. I used six coding categories during my first round of data analysis. These categories included: (a) informants' beliefs about reading instruction, teacher change and the role of the central office; (b) informants' interpretations of the state reading policy and other instructional ideas on reading; (c) descriptions of the central office and school efforts to disseminate the state policy and informants' opinions on these efforts and their involvement with them; (e) informants' explanations for the nature of the local response to state policy; (f) changes in central office and school reading policies and practices over the past decade with explanations for why these changes occurred; and (g) other themes. I read and hand-coded each interview by writing a brief description of the relevant response and a page number reference for the original interview on the coding protocol. The responses were then compared across informants for patterns of similarity and dissimilarity.[5] Based on this analysis, I wrote initial drafts of the cases.

As a result of conversations with my research colleagues on the first draft of my cases in the larger research group, I developed a second set of analytical categories and coded each interview again. Responses to initial drafts of my cases from researchers on the larger research project suggested that I needed to adopt a broader perspective in attempting to understand the local response to the state reading policy. The second analytical protocol focused on organizational issues and included the following categories: (a) central office structure (e.g., size,

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[5]Babbie, 1986; M. B. Miles, 1983.

staff stability, monies); (b) instructional guidance system; (c) MEAP; (d) the school and district community; (e) networking among staff. I revised the cases again based on this second analysis of the interview data. Both protocols were also helpful in refining interview questions and keeping track of where additional data was required.

Analysis of Observation and Document Data

I analyzed observational data and document data in order to supplement my interview data. I read my field notes of observations and wrote analytical summaries. These summaries focused on the same issues that I used in analyzing interview data. In addition my analysis of observational data resulted in the formulation of additional questions for my interviews with central office and school administrators.

I read each document, taking notes and referencing material that related to the central issues of my study. I also compared central office curricular documents over time and between districts. For example, I compared central office reading objectives for second and fifth grades in Parkwood with those in Hamilton. This comparative approach to analyzing curricular documents enabled me to document changes in local reading policy over time and also provided an indication of how instructional policies were similar and different between Parkwood and Hamilton. Again, this analysis of central office and school documents provided many questions for my interviews with central office and school administrators and also provided an ideal means of grounding many interview questions in material that was familiar to informants.

One issue concerning the documents I gathered concerns the reliability of my analysis. As my study illustrates, local administrators read the state policy documents in very different ways. Consequently, my reading of local policy documents was but one of many possible readings. In an effort to check-up on

my readings of these documents, and not to rely entirely on my own interpretations, I asked local informants for their interpretations of pertinent selections from the documents and took heed of their responses in reporting my data. In Parkwood, for example, I asked all central office administrators to explain what "developmentally appropriate practices," one component of the district reading curriculum, meant to them.

Validity and Limitations of the Study

The field methods approach that I used, like all research methods, has a number of limitations. I undertook a number of exercises during data collection and analysis to minimize these limitations and to improve the accuracy of my account.

First, relying on the accounts and explanations of local administrators, I ran the risk of parochialism in my account. Reviewing the implementation literature helped off-set the threat of parochialism to a great extent by offering a host of different perspectives on how and why local government agencies respond to higher level policies. Furthermore, having my colleagues in the larger study read and respond to my cases provided me with a rich array of alternative perspectives and explanations from which to view my data and helped off-set the threat of tunnel vision posed by over-reliance on informants' responses.

A second concern, endemic to all research ventures, is subjectivity. Researchers' biases, values and beliefs, play a major role in the questions they ask, what they see when they observe, how they react to what they see, and how they analyze the data they gather.[6] I was no different from any other researcher in this respect. I made a conscious effort to try to address the issue of subjectivity during the course of this study. Following Peshkin's advice, I kept a diary in

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[6]Peshkin, 1982.

which I recorded my reactions after I completed each interview and observation. My diary allowed me to record my reactions to what I heard in interviews and provided me with an opportunity to systematically seek out my subjectivity as I collected my data.[7] These accounts provided an important record of how some of my personal beliefs and values may have been shaping my research project. Sensitizing myself to some of these personal biases through diary entries prompted me to reconsider questions and to develop alternative hypotheses about particular administrators, central offices, and schools. For example, I found myself having rather unsympathetic responses towards informants who supported traditional, didactic approaches to reading instruction. In contrast, my response to informants who supported more innovative approaches to reading instruction was much more positive. Keeping a diary enabled me to identify some of these personal biases early on in my data collection and pushed me to develop ways to deal with them in subsequent interviews and as I set about reporting the data. This is not to suggest that my account is value-free -- to claim that would be to claim the impossible -- rather, I attempted to reduce the impact of my personal biases on my study.

A third limitation results from the fact that I had to rely on local administrators' accounts of how local agencies responded to the policy. Relying on the oral histories of local administrators meant that I had to devise strategies to check on the accuracy of my data. One strategy I used was to compare the informants' accounts with one another. The fact informants worked at different levels of the local system and within different units of central office added strength to this strategy. I triangulated this data across participants with what I found in the documents I gathered, observed on the videotapes, and observed in

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[7]Peshkin, 1988, argues that researchers should constantly attempt to observe themselves in order to identify their subjectivity throughout their research projects.

meetings. Constructing my account of the local response to the policy by comparing across different data sources added to the accuracy of my study.

I undertook a number of steps to ensure that I considered a wide range of interpretations of the data I gathered. As noted above, I reviewed the educational policy literature in order that I would consider a rich array of plausible explanations for what I saw and heard in these two districts. I also enlisted the support of other researchers who were working on the larger project. They read my field notes, some of the interviews, and various drafts of the cases, and pushed me to consider a wide array of different perspectives on my data. The responses of other project researchers not only prompted me to re-read and re-analyze my data in order to confirm or disconfirm alternative hypotheses, but also prompted me to re-visit some informants in order to gauge the accuracy of alternative interpretations of local events. Finally, I tested various hypotheses with a number of informants towards the end of the study. These strategies provided me with a means of checking on the accuracy of my account.

Cusick notes how "it is not the duty of the researcher to argue for that abstracted generalizability, but to accurately portray the events in the selected site, adding a sufficient amount of information about the circumstances surrounding those events to make them intelligible to the readers."[8] In other words, according to Cusick and other researchers it is up to the reader to "decide what aspects of the case apply in new contexts."[9] Acknowledging that readers may be able to apply some of the findings in this study to other contexts, I urge caution in such endeavors considering the complexity of the local response to the policy in Parkwood and Hamilton. Furthermore, my study focused on a particular type of educational policy - instructional policy. Attempting to apply

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[8]Cusick, 1983, p. 134.

[9]Wehlage, 1981, p. 216; see also, Kennedy, 1979; Stake and Trumball, 1982.

aspects of the cases in this study to other types of educational policy, such as finance policy, is not advisable as local administrators are likely to respond in distinctly different ways to other educational polices. Finally, the cases in this study focused on reading policy. Applying aspects of the cases to instructional policies in subject areas other than reading is also precarious, because the response of local administrators may vary widely depending on the subject matter.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol For District Personnel

[Interview topics will be standardized across districts to ensure comparable data. Depending on the job of the informant, topics covered in interviews may vary].

1. General Information:

Nature of your work, years with district, title.
Contact with school personnel - frequency, type, substance.
Visits to schools, why? how often?
Contact with state personnel who? why? frequency? type? substance

2. District Reading Program:

[The purpose of questions 2.1 - 2.4 is (a) to identify issues that have been salient in the district over the past 7 years and (b) understand how and why particular issues become salient.]

2.1 Are there any issues that the district has had to address in reading over the past 7 years? If so, what are they? Why were they issues in this district? How did the district address these issues?

2.2 Any issues in other areas of language arts (e.g., writing)? If so, what are they? How did the district address these issues?
[Probe for commitment of informant to task and informants goals in undertaking this task].

2.3 Did you have any role in addressing the above issues? What role?

2.4 Has your ideas about reading instruction changed over the past 5 to 7 years? How and Why? Has this influenced your work? If yes, how? [Probe for increases in the range of ideas about reading instruction in recent years].

[The purpose of questions 3 - 6 is to: (a) understand the nature and structure of the district instructional guidance system; (b) understand how and why changes in the instructional guidance system are introduced; (c) identify recent changes in the instructional guidance system; (d) understand the message(s) district personnel believe the instructional guidance system send to teachers; (e) understand district staffs" beliefs about teachers, teacher change, students, particular schools, and reading.

3. Reading Guidelines and Objectives:

3.1 Does the district have (a) reading curriculum guide, (b) district reading objectives, (c) district reading philosophy? If so, why? if not, why not?

3.2 Has there been any changes in these objectives over the past 7 years? Why?, Nature of change? How were these changes introduced?

3.3 What is the focus of these guidelines and objectives? Do you have any idea why such a focus was developed?

3.4 Do you expect teachers to teach in response to these objectives? If yes, how should a teacher teach to meet these objectives? Do most teachers teach like this? If not, why not? How would you go about helping these teachers to change?

3.5 Communication of reading objectives and guidelines to schools and teachers? What did you hope to achieve? How effective was your efforts? Did some school react differently to others? If yes, how and why? Does this influence the way you communicate objectives to different schools?

3.6 Are there any efforts to monitor teachers' instruction to see if the guidelines are being followed? If yes, how?

4. District Reading Testing Policy:

4.1 Types of test used by district, why use this test? What types of reading skills/abilities does this test measure? How do you think a teacher should teach so students do well on this test? What would a teacher need to know to teach like this?

4.2 Who decides what reading tests are used in this district?

4.3 Have there been any changes in district reading tests over the past seven years? If yes, when and why? How were these decisions made? Did you play a role in these decisions? If so what role? Were these changes communicate to teachers? If yes, how?

4.4 Have the above changes influenced (a) your views about reading instruction (b) your work in the district? If yes, how? [Probe for range of variance of reading ideas in district]

4.5 Did schools, teachers, and parents have anything to say about the above changes? If yes, what? How did the district respond to these critiques?

4.5 Use of test data by district office and schools? Why this use?

5. Reading Textbooks:

5.1 Textbook adoption process? Books currently in use? Why these books? How do you feel about these textbooks?

5.2 Latest revision of books? When? Why? How? Issues raised during adoption process?

5.3 How do books fit with (a) curriculum guides, (b) tests used?

5.4 Did you play any role in this process? What role? What was your reaction to the books adopted?

5.5 Teachers' and parents response to textbook decisions?

5.6 How should a teacher use these textbooks? Would a teacher need to learn anything to use these textbooks as you described?

6. Staff Development in Reading:

6.1 Current focus? why this focus? goals they hope to obtain? Who decides focus? Any recent changes in focus? Why?

6.2 Is there greater variability today in the types of reading staff development offered to teachers compared to 7 years ago? If so, how and why?

6.3 Description of staff development sessions? Why such a format? how they would do it differently with unlimited resources? How do you think teacher learn best?

6.4 How do you hope teachers will teach as a result of these workshops? Do most teachers teach like this? If no, why not? What would these teachers need to learn/know in order to change?

7. State Reading Policy:

[Questions 7.1 - 7.8 focus on: (a) district officials' knowledge and interpretation of the state reading policy; (b) their feelings and commitment to the reform; (c) how and what they learned from the reform; (d) their efforts to disseminate the state reform to teachers; (e) the impact the reform had on their work in the district; (f) their beliefs about teachers,

teacher-change, reading instruction, students, and particular schools in the district.]

7.1 Have your heard anything about state reforms in reading? If yes, what have you heard? How did you hear this? Interpretation? What does it mean to read according to this definition? Have you always seen reading like this? If not, how has your view changed and why?

7.2 Do you think teachers should teach to the definition and objectives? If yes, how do you think a teacher should teach to achieve these objectives? Do you think there is anything a teacher needs to learn to teach like this? If yes what and how would you teach them?

7.3 Do most teachers teach like you described above? If no, why do they not teach like this? [Probe for informants beliefs about teachers]. How would you help them to change?

7.4 Has the definition and objectives had any impact on your work in this district? If yes how and why? (Probe for how it has changed informants perspective of reading, teacher staff development, and variance of ideas about reading)

7.5 Has the district made any changes in its reading curriculum in response to the state definition? If yes, what and why?

7.6 Did the district disseminate information about the reading policy to teachers? If yes, how? Is there anything else that you think teachers need to learn in order to teach for the policy? If yes, what? How would you teach this if you had no constraints re. Time and resources?

7.7 Have your heard about the revised MEAP test? what have you heard? how have your heard? how has the test being revised? How do you think teachers should teach so students do well on this test? What would teachers need to know to teach like this?

7.6 Has the MEAP revision had any impact on your work? If yes what and why? (Probe for variance in ideas re. reading)

7.7 Has the district made any changes in its reading curriculum in response to the revised MEAP? If yes, what and why?

7.8 Have parents, teachers, or School board members responded in any way to the revised MEAP? If yes, what have they said? When and how informant heard? reaction of informant?

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol For School Personnel

1. General Information:

Time at present job, nature of current position?
Student body, enrollment, parental involvement and interest, staff, any special problems and issues the school is dealing with?
Relationship with district administration?

2. School Language Arts Program:

2.1 Describe language arts instruction in the school? Any recent changes? If so, what and why?

2.2 Does the district have language arts guidelines? If so, how are they used in the school? Who develops them? What impact do you think they have on language arts instruction in this school? Why?

2.3 Who decides what textbooks and other materials are used in the school? when were these changed last? by whom and how?

2.4 Have you or your staff attended any language arts inservice sessions recently? Who provided the session? What was the focus? Why did you and/or members of your staff decide to attend? Describe what went on at the session?

2.5 What tests are used in the school? Who decides? Why? How do you and your staff feel about these tests? Any recent changes? Who was responsible for the change? Can you use a text other than those officially adopted? Why not?

3. Relations with District:

3.1 Frequency of contact with district personnel? Nature of this contact?

3.2 Resources and support from district personnel for language arts instruction in this school? Nature of support and resources?

3.3 Your involvement in district level decision making regarding language arts? If involved, describe decision-making process?

4. State Definition and MEAP:

4.1 Have you heard about Michigan's new definition and objectives, and the revised MEAP? How did you hear? When? From whom? What can you remember being told?

4.2 What is your interpretation of the definition and objectives? What are the implications of these reforms for classroom instruction? Your response to this? Did you do anything on finding out about (a) the definition (b) MEAP? Why did you do that?

4.3 Was there any effort to inform teachers and parents about the definition? By whom? Who decided to do this? Why?

4.4 Impact of the reading definition in this school? Explanations for type and degree of impact? What inservice did you and your staff receive on the definition? From whom? Description of workshops?

4.5 How did (a) teachers (b) students and (c) parents respond?
(Probe for specific information on the central office contribution to the informant's knowledge and understanding of the definition)

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