TEACHER SENSEMAKING IN CROWDED REFORM ENVIRONMENTS

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degrees of

Educational Policy – Doctor of Philosophy
Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education – Doctor of Philosophy

2015

ABSTRACT

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This study examines how reforms penetrated schools, how principals and teachers shaped reforms once they were introduced, and how teachers ultimately reconciled myriad reform messages.

First, this research argues that much productive knowledge can be generated from establishing a typology of different reforms and analyzing how local actors (e.g., principals and teachers) respond differently to different types of reforms. For example, in this study mandated reforms were typically shaped through legislation and came to schools through traditional bureaucratic channels. Thus, principals had a particularly important role with mandated reforms, as they served as conduits for reforms and their responses shaped teachers' experiences and to a large extent determined what a mandated reform became.

Most reforms to come to the three schools in the study, however, were not mandated. Of these, some reforms were affiliated (but not coterminous) with mandated reforms; some were supported by the state but not required; and some were generated at the county or district level and independent of both mandated reforms and state sponsorship. Unlike mandated reforms, the non-mandated reforms came to schools through diverse routes and often shifted the organization of the reform activity. These reforms typically created a relationship of mutual reliance across different system actors.

While each of the reforms types provided for teacher learning in some way, the characteristics of teachers' opportunities to learn varied considerably. Mandated reforms

provided the most impoverished opportunities for teachers to learn, most often relying on reform documents to which teachers paid only modest attention. Non-mandated reforms were split between behaviorist and situated learning opportunities. Behaviorist learning opportunities relied on training teachers in large batches and expected teachers to take a passive role in their learning. Teachers were often assigned to participate in these reforms and they did so without complaint. At the trainings themselves, however, potential teacher resistance to the trainings created a barrier to teacher learning and reform enactment.

Situated learning located teacher learning in local contexts and required teachers to construct their own understanding of reforms through consideration of reform ideas with their own experiences and situations. Non-mandated reforms that relied on situated learning were particularly difficult to achieve. They required one or more *reform entrepreneurs* who would generate enthusiasm for a reform and then use their social connections to secure the teacher commitment necessary for a reform to become established. Entrepreneurship and social connections were not enough. The teachers also needed their own compelling reasons to participate.

Finally, this study considers how teachers reconciled messages from multiple reforms. Each of the reforms penetrated schools only weakly and teacher learning about and knowledge of reforms remained limited in most cases. Consequently, teachers highlighted congruence across reforms and, when pressed, decided easily between reform imperatives. Consequently, this study suggests that perceptions of congruence and highlights the difficulty securing substantive teacher learning that might cause teachers to re-evaluate their practice in a fragmented system that relies on entrepreneurship, social connections, and teacher discretion.

To my wife, Jennifer, and to my sons, Zachary and Andrew

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

So many people to thank, so little space. It has not escaped my notice that my name stands alone on this dissertation as its sole author, but in point of fact this dissertation could not and would not have been written if not for the contributions of the numerous people who have nurtured me and fostered my development over the years. In the text that follows, I will try to acknowledge these debts as best as I can knowing that I will undoubtedly come up short. Please be gracious.

First, I would like to thank those who have provided thoughtful and tireless intellectual guidance over the past five years. The support of my mentor and advisor, Peter Youngs, defies description. He has supplied a wonderful blend of pressure and support, always insisting that I do my best work and complementing this insistence with vociferous encouragement that I could successfully make my way as a scholar and a researcher. Michael Sedlak, who first recruited me to Michigan State University, delivered on all of his promises and then some. At every turn, my graduate experience was improved because of Michael's advocacy for me. When someone believes so strongly in you, it is hard not to believe in yourself. Kenneth Frank taught me how to engage in scholarly conversations and how to be both tenacious and flexible—to fight for your ideas but to be open to correction and revision. BetsAnn Smith's insight and clarity of thought have helped me navigate the inevitable complexities and uncertainties of field research. She has also marked my thinking about educational reform for the better. Amelia Gotwals brought me into her research project from the beginning of my doctoral studies and always treated the other graduate students and me as serious, emerging scholars and researchers. Your contribution

to my development is more significant than I can say. Finally, Gary Sykes and Suzanne Wilson offered me weekly encouragement and showed a genuine interest in my work. You taught me so much about how scholars formulate and pursue ideas through sustained discussion and attention.

My graduate student colleagues have been there for every step of the journey and the mutual support we have provided one another is an instrumental feature of my graduate school journey. The list of colleagues is extensive and while I cannot recognize everyone to whom I have an intellectual debt, I would like to mention a few of my colleagues by name. I am indebted to Michael Broda, Alisha Brown, Kri Burkander, Dante Cisterna, Walter Cook, Ben Creed, Joseph Harris, Alan Hastings, Laura Holden, Justina Judy, Tara Kintz, Alyssa Morley, Andrew Saultz, Jeffrey Snyder, and Rachel White. I am honored to know you all.

On a personal note, I have enormous gratitude for my family that has been so supportive. To my parents, John Dowell Lane and Mary Lane, what is there to be said? I did not understand the discouragement that you must have felt when I was an incorrigible slacker in high school, but, with one son currently enrolled and another son approaching high school, I do now. Thanks for raising me in a loving home and for your unwavering support. To my in-laws, Robert and Janine Berger, whose interest in and support for my 30-something graduate school adventure made the entire experience both possible and more enjoyable. I would also like to extend thanks both to my biological extended family and my family at University Reformed Church, from whom I derived an enduring source of renewal and support.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife and sons. To my wife, Jennifer Lane, I owe the

biggest debt of all. It occurs to me that not everyone is married to the most amazing person

he has ever met. You enrich my life in every way. You left your family, friends, and financial

security because we felt like we were called to go with an enthusiasm and steadfast

commitment that defies understanding. You put up with the long days and nights while I

was away collecting data for this dissertation and if you ever got tired of watching me work

from the couch, you never said a thing. I love you more than I can express. My sons Zachary

and Andrew also left family and friends without complaint. Your support and enthusiasm

for life is a constant reminder that there is more to life than scholarship. I also appreciate

that you are both far better students than I ever was. You make your dad so proud.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Since the launch of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, educational policymakers, politicians, and the American public have come to embrace a remarkable goal: high levels of academic achievement for all youth (Cohen & Moffit, 2009; Cremin, 1990). The report's authors argued that if the United States was to regain its competitive edge, schools needed to stem the rising tide of mediocrity and do a much better job preparing students for the rigors of the emerging global, post-industrial economy.

In many ways, public schools were remarkably successful, even at the time of the report's release. For example, school attendance and achievement had increased sharply in the decades leading up to the 1980s (Cohen & Neufeld, 1981; Labaree, 2010); yet these gains were often won at the price of relaxing academic expectations, sorting students into different curricular tracks, and appealing to student interest without regard to educative value (Labaree, 1988; Powell, Farrar & Cohen, 1985; Ravitch, 1983; Sedlak et al., 1986). School's inability to achieve unequivocal success left many feeling worse about their efforts and the performance of America's schools despite modest academic improvements (*The Nation's Report Card*, 2012), a common phenomenon among reformers and students of public policy (Wildavsky, 1977).

To make matters worse, schools were also floundering in the particular as well as the general. Race and social class were closely associated with school success. White students did far better in school and achieved at far higher levels than racial minority students. The affluent outperformed the impoverished. The promise that schools would negate disadvantage and become the great social equalizer remained unfulfilled (e.g., Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Jencks et al., 1972).

This confluence of conditions—general dissatisfaction about the academic performance of America's youth combined with concern over the particularly dismal performance of low-income, minority students—provided the tinder that fueled the pyre of reform. After *A Nation at Risk* was released, most states quickly responded to the report's call for extended length of the school day and the school year, heightened requirements for high school graduation, and strengthened teacher preparation. Within three years, over 40 states had increased their graduation requirements, 44 states required students to pass minimum-competency tests for a high school diploma, and 38 states took steps to improve teacher quality through compulsory standardized testing for teacher certification (Goertz, 1988).

In his analysis of A *Nation at Risk's* impact, Odden (1991) concluded that several of *A Nation at Risk* report's recommended reforms were quickly realized for four reasons. First, there was an underlying consensus that the educational system needed fixing. Furthermore, the proposed solutions did not require a significant departure from current practice. Rather, these reforms intensified familiar conceptions of schooling. Odden (1991) wrote, "the impetus was to teach…more algebra, and less general mathematics, not a new form of mathematics" (p. 309). Third, states provided direction and guidance but allowed local schools to plot their own course to achieve policy aims. Finally, Odden argued that local practitioners already had the capabilities needed to successfully implement the reforms, in large part because they were already familiar with the schooling that reforms envisioned.

Not all states limited their efforts to "first-order" changes, responses that intensified schooling but left the core work of schools undisturbed (Cuban, 2013). *A Nation at Risk*

expanded state capacity to formulate and deploy more ambitious policy designed to penetrate to the heart of instruction (Cohen & Hill, 2001). In the 1980s and early 1990s, some states released curricular frameworks that reimagined how teachers and students would interact with content, standards that stated learning expectations, and assessments that would measure student learning against these standards. This work intensified in several states with the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (more commonly known as Goals 2000), and later with the introduction of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002.

Goals 2000, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, called for states to develop academic standards in reading and mathematics and assessment programs to gauge student proficiency but did not impose sanctions on schools or districts that failed to promote student success in line with the law's expectations. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, a later reauthorization of ESEA, employed a detailed accountability plan to complement academic standards and proficiency testing. States that failed to comply would forgo federal Title I funds.

Whether schools improved student performance amid all this policy activity remains unclear (Fuller et al., 2007), but it is apparent that despite ambitions from policymakers, educators, the general public, and even the students themselves (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999), academic success remained uneven and disproportionately awarded to those who were white and affluent. Schools continued to provide access for all and advanced academic achievement only for the select few (Cusick, 1992; Labaree, 2010; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985).

The intractable problem of low student achievement particularly among low-income and minority students did not dampen enthusiasm for instructional policy. If

anything, the federal government has extended its reach into local schools. Partially in response to the failure of any state to reach the target of universal student proficiency by 2014, the U.S. Department of Education introduced the Race to the Top competition in 2009 and ESEA waivers in 2011. The federal Race to the Top initiative — which pitted participating states against one another in competition for roughly four billion dollars of federal stimulus money — based awards on a state's willingness to adopt the Common Core State Standards, base educator evaluations at least partially on student performance, and construct longitudinal data systems. ESEA waivers allowed states to avoid the sanctions associated with NCLB in exchange for state plans to increase graduation rates, intervene in high schools with low graduation rates, continue to focus on racial and socio-economic achievement gaps, provide aggressive assistance for their lowest performing schools, and develop robust teacher assistance and evaluation systems.

In most cases, state policy activity also increased in the waning years of NCLB. Many states made changes to their education laws to satisfy the criteria for successful Race to the Top applications. These changes (specifically to educator evaluation systems) are now being enacted in states throughout the nation, even in states that did not receive Race to the Top funding. In addition, 40 states applied for and received ESEA waivers and are in the process of implementing the reforms that their applications detailed. These changes often complement those listed in the Race to the Top scoring rubrics, but several extend beyond those requirements. For example, as promised in waiver applications, many states are becoming more aggressive in their dealings with chronically underperforming schools. As a result of federal ESEA waivers, schools in many states find themselves in danger of state takeover. Michigan, for example, created a state-run Education Achievement

Authority (EAA) specifically for the purpose of dealing with the state's chronically underperforming schools.

Finally, most states have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that were endorsed but not mandated by the federal government. The CCSS, developed by the Chief Council of State School Officers (CCSSO) and National Governor's Association, have been adopted by 45 states. Supporters of the CCSS believe that the standards represent a step forward from NCLB, which allowed states to develop their own standards and assessments, many of which critics claimed were of dubious quality. The CCSS, proponents argue, will transform teaching and learning, as they call for high-level engagement with rigorous academic material and then test students using assessments designed to elicit and measure conceptual thinking and understanding (Rothman, 2011). Two consortia, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (23 member states) and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (19 member states) have formed to achieve the latter purpose and produced assessments that are being administered during the 2014-15 school year.

Today's educational landscape is crowded with policies aimed at improving school performance. Current plans for improving schools differ from the calls for intensified schooling characteristic of the recommendations of the *Nation at Risk* report or ambitious reforms with nearly total state autonomy as detailed in Goals 2000. Policies have even moved past the singular standards and accountability scheme detailed in NCLB. Rather, today's reform environment is a mixture of ambitious expectations for student achievement and accountability for results enacted in a multiplicity of policies.

These policies range from common standards for ambitious teaching and

learning, performance assessments to gauge student achievement, evaluation systems that measure teacher impact on student growth as well as their pedagogical practice, and accountability plans for the lowest performing schools. It is unclear how all this policy activity will affect the performance of schools. Nor do we know how these myriad policies affect the work of teaching. In other words, what teachers make of this crowded policy environment is under studied. The purpose of this research is to understand how teachers manage the mounting and perhaps competing demands of multiple policies simultaneously and what effect, if any, these demands have on classroom practice. The research was conducted during the 2013-14 school year in Michigan, a state then on the verge of implementing several initiatives: Common Core State Standards, a new teacher evaluation system that tied teacher evaluation to student performance, pressure for underperforming schools to improve or face state takeover by the Education Achievement Authority, and a small but significant program to improve classroom instruction via the use of formative assessment strategies and tools.

The latter effort—which provided a vision of reform teaching and attempted to provide the types of teacher learning experiences that would promote it—was a particular focus of this research. Specifically, I studied learning teams from three middle schools that were involved in the Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) program. As will be explained in greater detail in the following chapters, the FAME program was a state generated and supported but locally managed and maintained program that encouraged teacher enactment of formative assessment practices through state supplied resources (e.g. initial professional development, documents) and local teacher team meetings where formative assessment components were highlighted. These three schools were also in the

midst of implementing the CCSS, educator evaluation systems, and other instructional reforms of the districts' or schools' own choosing. With this in mind, the research endeavored to answer the following question:

1. How do teachers interpret and respond to multiple and potentially contradictory policies (i.e., innovative instructional policies, curricular policies, accountability/teacher evaluation policies)?

    1A. How do teachers, both individually and collectively, make sense of multiple policies and reconcile the dilemmas, if any, that the multiple policies present?

    1B. What roles do multiple contextual factors (e.g. supportive principal leadership, strong collegial norms) play in teacher "sensemaking"?

The chapters that follow establish the relevant literature, conceptual frameworks, method, and findings of this inquiry. Chapter 2 provides a brief history of instructional reform since 1965. Chapter 3 grounds the work both conceptually and in existing research. Chapter 4 articulates the method. The findings begin with Chapter 5, which establishes a typology for the different types of instructional reforms and examines the diverse routes through which reforms arrived at each of the three schools in the study. Chapters 6 and 7 investigate the role of principal leadership in both connecting teachers to reforms and shaping teacher experiences with them. Chapters 8 and 9 consider teachers' opportunities to learn about reforms in different contexts and explains how teachers make sense of and reconcile the messages from multiple policies. I conclude with Chapter 10 in which I consider both the scholarly and practical implications of this research.

CHAPTER 2: Review of Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to describe what researchers have learned about educational policy's promises and pitfalls over the course of the past 50 years while trying to improve instruction in the nation's classrooms. This review provides a historical context for my study of how teachers responded to multiple and potentially conflicting policies in 2013-14. This chapter also sets up Chapter 3 which establishes the analytic framework that, in turn, guided data collection and analysis. This chapter, then, firmly grounds the entire dissertation in a stream of scholarship that extends over five decades and will allow for the findings to be contextualized in a larger and long-established body of literature.

Research on Policy and Practice

Research on the impact of policy began in earnest shortly after Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" and the myriad programs that flowed from this unprecedented level of federal involvement in local affairs. A "War on Poverty" was a major component of Johnson's vision, and hopeful reformers and social critics felt the nation was on the brink of stamping out destitution if only the nation had the appropriate priorities (e.g., Harrington, 1962).

Education and training would play a key role in the federal effort to wipe out human misery, as it had become obvious to officials that the truly disadvantaged were those without the requisite skills or academic preparation to compete for gainful employment in the new economy (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). Of these new legislative endeavors to bolster the nation's workforce particularly for the disadvantaged, none would affect public schools more than the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. ESEA introduced direct federal aid to schools for the first time in the nation's history, culminating

nearly a century of political wrangling and failure (Ravitch, 1983).

Federal attempts to subsidize schools had long been ensnared in debates about race, religion, and the proper role of the federal government (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009; Ravitch, 1983). The authors of ESEA learned from past failures and ultimately produced a bill rife with political compromise and interest group concessions.

First, ESEA focused on poverty, not race. This priority was at least partially due to good timing. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which forbade federal support of programs in states with discriminatory practices, effectively removed a key roadblock that had thwarted previous legislation (Bailey & Mosher, 1968). Issues of race (e.g., desegregation) were relegated to the former act, freeing ESEA from racial entrapments that had stymied federal support for public schools. Since nearly every district served low-income children regardless of race, payment to local districts based on how many poor children they served was widely appealing.

ESEA also avoided religious entanglements. Four years prior to the passage of ESEA, President Kennedy's bill to introduce federal aid to schools was defeated primarily because the bill forbade federal aid to parochial schools. In response to this and other defeats, the authors of ESEA crafted sections of the bill to garner Catholic support. ESEA's Title I (aid to deprived children), Title II (library resources, textbooks, and instructional material), and Title III (development of innovative programs) all promised funds to public schools and private schools alike.

ESEA addressed the third objection to federal involvement, the pervasive fear that federal aid would equate to federal mandates. The federal role in the lives of local communities had been debated elsewhere, but this argument was particularly relevant to

schools, which had for so long provided avenues for democratic participation and were bastions of local self-government (Katznelson & Weir, 1985). The authors of ESEA effectively sidestepped this historically thorny issue by writing in a weak role for the federal government. The United States Office of Education (USOE) would provide resources with little constraint. The federal government established the criteria for locally developed programs but left oversight completely up to the states. The law required only that states submit periodic reports attesting to the compliance of local schools. Furthermore, the federal criteria were vague and thus provided little guidance for states and districts. Local districts were to "meet the special educational needs of educationally deprived children in school attendance areas having high concentrations of children from low-income families" by developing programs of "sufficient size, scope, and quality to give reasonable promise of substantial progress" (Public Law 89-10, section 205). Furthermore, districts were required to generate evidence that detailed "effective procedures, including provision for appropriate objective measurements of educational achievement" (Public Law 89-10, section 205) and to make these reports available to the state.

Under ESEA, the state role was also quite weak. True, states had regulatory responsibility but they had no role in allocation of funds. The vast majority of federal dollars were formulaic, non-competitive and issued at the county rather than the state level. States did have oversight of district proposals for funding, but most state departments had neither the capacity to effectively regulate district programs nor the political clout to reject applications.

In sum, ESEA subtly shifted existing arrangements but left local priorities largely unchallenged. The USOE would set the program criteria, the states would review the

proposals of local districts, but the districts would develop, administer, and sustain

programs of their own devising. With this in mind, Cohen and Moffitt (2009) observed that

early in ESEA's history, federal money was "a near entitlement for states and localities…a

funding stream, not a program that offered substantive guidance for teaching and learning"

(p. 7).

The federal government was in no position to provide such guidance even if it were

so inclined. In the late 1960s, the United States Office of Education (USOE) was politically

vulnerable, severely understaffed, and inexperienced in the work of leading major reform

in districts throughout the country. Of the USOE, Bailey and Mosher (1968) wrote, "there

was…no machinery for developing a nationwide educational policy; the very phrase

created shivers" (p. 73). In the immediate aftermath of ESEA's passage, after the initial

excitement of the bill's success had subsided, the arduous work of implementing the

legislation's ambitions began in earnest.

Large-scale educational policy research, then, began with ESEA in the foreground.

Early research focused on the political nature of policy implementation at the macro level,

particularly on the lack of skill and will among federal, state, and local agencies. For

example, Bailey and Mosher (1968) examined the myriad challenges that emerged once the

implementation of ESEA's Title I commenced. In their analysis, they echoed the same

sentiments of contemporary researchers in other fields of public policy—when the

challenges were carefully considered, implementation to any degree was remarkable

(Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). They outlined these challenges faced by local, state, and

federal agencies:

When, as in the case of ESEA, a law unprecedented in scope has to be administered

through State and local instrumentalities, on an impossible time schedule; by an

understaffed agency in structural turmoil, beset by a deluge of complaints and

demands for clarification of the legislation at hand, as well as cognate legislation

already on the books; the wonder is not that mistakes are made—the wonder is that

the law is implemented at all. (p. 99)

Bailey and Mosher also detailed the dilemmas the USOE faced. Among other challenges, the

USOE had to determine how to balance providing criteria for Title I programs (as was their

charge in ESEA legislation) without being overly prescriptive and thus violating another

section of the law that forbade them from "exercis[ing] any direction, supervision, or

control over the curriculum program of instruction…of any educational institution or

school system" (Public Law 89-10, section 604). USOE also had to encourage fiscal

responsibility and experimentation, as one of the legislation's driving impulses was for

educational innovation.

Perhaps most significantly, USOE had to find a way to evaluate programs while still

honoring traditional political arrangements among local, state, and federal actors. While

modest by today's standards, ESEA's requirement that "effective procedures, including

provision for appropriate objective measurements of educational achievement…be adopted

for evaluating at least annually the effectiveness of [Title I] programs (Public Law 89-10,

section 205.5)" was a revelation in 1965. Bailey and Mosher (1968) remarked, "In the case

of ESEA…the legislative mandate for formal reports and evaluations of programs was loud

and clear, and unprecedented in scope" (p. 163). Bailey and Mosher determined that the

USOE was unaccustomed to evoking information from local districts and local districts

were woefully unprepared to detail their internal functioning or make coherent reports to

the federal government. Nor could the USOE coerce LEAs to improve their capacity and provide them useful information. Consequently, the data that was eventually used to demonstrate program effectiveness was subjective, unverifiable, and entirely self-serving (Bailey & Mosher, 1968).

In summarizing the administration of ESEA, Bailey and Mosher (1968) wrote, "Bargains were struck, faces were saved, ambiguities were purposefully employed, credits were tactfully distributed, desirables were conditioned by possibles" (p. 207).

The conflicting responsibilities specific to administration also caught the interest of other early researchers. Three works are illustrative of the breadth of this concern, one conceptual and two empirical. First, Cohen (1970) argued that evaluation, because it has the potential to upset existing power arrangements, is primarily political rather than rational. The information generated in the evaluative process can threaten the interests of those who supply it. Thus, locals have little interest in forwarding information that may ultimately harm them (Cohen, 1970).

Three factors made this dilemma particularly acute in administration of Title I. The first of these concerns the policy environment in which ESEA was formulated and deployed; Title I's origins were decidedly political. The legislation would not have been possible without significant concessions from vested groups that had delayed federal funding for decades. Most significantly, section 205.5 of Title I brokered a compromise between reform-minded members of Congress (most notably Robert Kennedy) and local and state administrators who feared that evaluation would soon be used to document their schools' shortcomings. Thus, even those who enthusiastically endorsed the passage of ESEA had mutually exclusive, competing interests.

Nor did these political convictions vanish after the bill was passed. The success or failure of Title I to improve the educational experiences of poor children would have far-reaching political consequences (Cohen, 1970). Dozens of interested groups had a stake in the performance of the first federal endeavor in significant school pecuniary support. Information about the programs was put to political purposes to further special-interest agendas. Hence, any information that was culled was highly suspect by political opponents.

Second, the construction of Title I undermined the very evaluation that the legislation mandated. As noted previously, USOE distributed Title I (which accounted for more that 80% of total ESEA expenditures) on a formulaic basis. LEAs needed only to submit applications to their state office and await the inevitable approval. They had no incentive to carefully track the effects of their programs let alone to pass their findings along to central authority.

Finally, the federal arrangement favored local control that was not specific to ESEA or Title I but promoted by it, which made quality evaluation nearly impossible. While ESEA initiated a remarkable new level of federal environment in education, the tradition of local control remained intact. Programs developed locally and with minimal state or federal guidance were difficult to characterize let alone compare to other programs that emerged in other districts or states. And, again, locals were under no compulsion to cooperate. Under this arrangement, virtually no good information was forwarded.

Joseph Murphy (1971) corroborated each of these points when he looked into two failed attempts of the USOE to improve targeting of Title I funds and to establish parental councils. In both cases the USOE, after attempting to influence the behavior of SEAs and LEAs, had to retreat in the face of local resistance. For students of the federal system and

those attending to the developing implementation research of federal policy, this was hardly surprising. Political arrangements resulted in locally-dominated outcomes and there was little either states or the federal government could do to countervail local prerogatives.

Murphy argued that all other characteristics of the policy landscape were auxiliary to the lack of political clout, but even these peripheral conditions (e.g., lack of groundswell from the affected population, disinclination of the USOE, separation in physical and ideological space among reformers, USOE administrators, SEA officials, and LEAs leaders) frustrated successful realization of centrally-designed policy.

Milbrey McLaughlin (1975) reiterated many of Bailey and Mosher's (1968) findings, Cohen's (1970) observations, and Murphy's (1971) research. McLaughlin found that "in practice, the Title I evaluation policy reflects local interests and priorities for evaluation, not the concerns of federal reformers" (p. 26). She also concluded that USOE officials were not ardent reformers, their charge was vague and contradictory, and they had existing relationships to maintain that they were loath to ruin in pursuit of better Title I evaluation. Nor did they have pressure from Congress to violate the long-standing stance that deferred to local control. Ultimately, the USOE efforts to evaluate local Title I programs did not yield information that would lead to better policy formation, better implementation of Title I, or better information upon which parents might put pressure on local schools (McLaughlin, 1975).

Because of Title I's requirement for the evaluation of local programs, the potential for policy analysis was vast. Yet this potential was unrealized. Consequently, researchers learned very little about how well Title I "worked" to the benefit of poor students nor did they learn much about practitioner responses or how Title I money affected classroom life.

Researchers learned much about local resistance to evaluation and local, state, and federal incapacity to carry out the intent of ESEA but very little about the quality of the programs themselves, what burdens and dilemmas they created for practitioners, or how institutions shaped policy impulses. Early research on ESEA, Odden (1991) wrote, "showed not only that most local educators did not want to implement such programs (the will was not there), but also that they did not know how to implement them (the capacity was not there)" (p. 1).

Researchers in the early 1970s thus dashed initial hopes that policy enactment could be a rational process once the political wrangling of policy formation was complete. However, after this first wave of research, little was known about how policy played out in schools and what role, if any, policy played in educational innovation. If implementation (as the activity of policy enactment would come to be called) was not strictly a rational process, what sort of process was it? In response to this knowledge gap, many researchers began to focus on implementation as a distinct phenomenon worthy of study. In the early 1970s when interest in implementation heightened, social science researchers were unprepared for the work of studying implementation. "Implementation" was simply not in the lexicon of most researchers. In the preface to the first edition of their book *Implementation*, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) wrote, "implementation in recent years has been discussed but rarely studied…[with one exception] we have not been able to locate any thoroughgoing analysis of implementation" (p. xxi). A cursory search through the ERIC database confirms this point. "Implementation" does not appear as a key word in any peer-reviewed journal articles prior to 1974 (there would be 602 such articles by 1980).

While implementation studies were intriguing, the concept of implementation itself was so new that researchers spent a great deal of time defining it, conceptualizing it, and describing how they envisioned implementation related to policy in general and its sub-dimensions (e.g., goals, programs, evaluation). Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) defined implementation as the "process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieving them" (p. xxiii) and "the ability to forge subsequent links in the causal chain" (p. xxiii) implied in the theory of how a policy works. For Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), then, implementation is what happens when actors pursue a policy's goals. Furthermore, Pressman and Wildavsky argued that policy studies should attempt to bring the reciprocal interaction among policy formation, implementation, and goals into sharper relief.

Pressman and Wildavsky's aspirations were straightforward. They hoped that studying implementation could promote policy success. They wrote, "by concentrating on the implementation of programs, as well as their initiation, we should be able to increase the probability that policy promises will be realized" but they also conceded that in response to research, "Fewer promises may be made in view of heightened awareness of the obstacles to [policy goal] fulfillment" (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973, p. 6). In other words, research would quite possibly yield as much information about the wisdom of policy goals as it did about improving policy implementation.

Pressman and Wildavsky were not hopeful that policy could be successful, particularly when many actors with varying and conflicting interests are involved, as was most often the case in the policy initiatives of The Great Society. After all, in the book's subtitle the authors refer to themselves as "two sympathetic observers who seek to build

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morals on a foundation of ruined hopes." They wrote:

> Our normal expectation should be that new programs will fail to get off the ground
> and that, at best, they will take considerable time to get started. The cards in this
> world are stacked against things happening, as so much effort is required to make
> them move. (p. 109)

What made implementation more frustrating, Pressman and Wildavsky argued, is that actors typically agreed about the goals of policy but not the means for achieving them. Pressman and Wildavsky described this phenomenon as "the complexity of joint action" and concluded that goals are always just around the corner but means are constantly in the here and now where there are myriad possibilities for entanglements. The complexity of joint action exposes conflicts with other priorities, preferences for other programs, limited commitments, role ambiguities, incommensurate relationship between interest and clout, and the like.

To make matters worse, implementation includes "multiple decision points" that further complicate complex joint action and make policy success unlikely. Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) concluded, "the probability of agreement by every participant on each decision point must be exceedingly high for there to be any chance at all that a program will be brought to completion" (p. 107). Yet, universal agreement could hardly be expected. Policy inevitably alters both the relationships and interactions among people and the relative standing of targeted groups. Thus, local interests are often pitted against one another. Policy, for all of its good intentions, agitates local conflict. Furthermore, policy evokes high intensity beliefs about what should be done, and when negative and positive sentiments alike begin to accumulate about a proposed course of action, delays can be

momentous and can eventually spell a policy's doom. The high intensity commitment

needed to bring policy programs to completion could quickly derail efforts when beliefs

clashed about what should be done, as they almost always did. Thus, Pressman and

Wildavsky marveled when policy programs worked at all given the considerable odds.

While ultimately concluding that the status quo was a terrifically powerful force,

Pressman and Wildavsky did concede that perhaps policy could be successful despite the

long odds against it if programs "adapt themselves to their environment over a long period

of time…a negative act by a participant at a decision point need not signify that the

program is dead…accommodations may be made, bargains entered into, resistances

weakened. The price of ultimate agreement is…modification" (Pressman & Wildavsky, p.

116).

The Rand "change agent" studies in the 1970s were built on the premise that

successful policy required the mutual adaptation that Pressman and Wildavsky suggested.

In these studies, Berman and McLaughlin moved away from conceptions of implementation

as compliance or goal attainment to an institutional understanding that considered

implementation in terms of the change that it affected in both the institution and the

program being administered. In contrast to Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) who

conceived of implementation as the evolving relationship between goals and the attempts

to achieve them, Berman and McLaughlin (1974) defined implementation as the process

that occurs as an innovative program shapes and is shaped by the institutional

environment.

Berman and McLaughlin constructed a useful theoretical foundation for

implementation studies and also challenged the existing research on educational

innovation. To the latter point, they took exceptions with the two dominant lines of existing research—the case studies of successful projects and far more rigorous studies that attempted to detect program effects. Berman and McLaughlin claimed that the former type of study rarely documented data to support its conclusions and considered program characteristics in exclusion of institutional environments (and therefore was of limited generalizability). Consequently, the sum of these studies provided a rosier picture of programs associated with Title I that was warranted by actual program performance.

Policy-effects studies, on the other hand, generally portrayed a bleak picture of the impact of Title I programs. These studies typically failed to detect a link between school treatment and student outcomes, leading many researchers to conclude that Title I programs and others like them simply did not work. Berman and McLaughlin contended that this conclusion was premature, at least, and quite likely overly pessimistic. While they did not dispute these findings, per se, they did point out that the source of the problem remained unclear. It was possible, for example, that incremental change went undetected, that the success of "leading edge" programs was obscured in the aggregate, or that the duration of typical research was too brief to capture positive program effects (Berman & McLaughlin, 1974). Furthermore, and more to Berman and McLaughlin's point, the absence of effects could be due to unspecified or mis-specified institutional variables. For example, they wrote, "it is possible that institutional variables are not identified in policy or project evaluations and that they change within sites as the institution adapts to the project" (Berman & McLaughlin, 1974, p. 5).

In sum, although the two strands of research varied widely, they both ignored institutional variables critical to program success. Berman and McLaughlin believed that

contemporary research fundamentally misunderstood the implementation process and that the studies left the field without any meaningful theoretical approach through which it could accumulate knowledge coherently. In other words, Berman and McLaughlin felt that prior to their change agent studies, the field of implementation research was in utter disarray.

In response, Berman and McLaughlin sought innovative programs that would allow them to study implementation as they conceived of it—the process of mutual adaptation of both program and institution. Title I programs would hardly suffice for this type of research. ESEA's Title I was not implemented, at least not as implementation researchers conceived of the enterprise. Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) believed that for implementation research to occur, the policy itself must include clear policy direction and goals, neither of which were characteristic of Title I's programs. Title I's goal of "meet[ing] the special educational needs of educationally deprived children in school attendance areas having high concentrations of children from low-income families (Public Law 89-10, section 205.1)" was terribly ambiguous and the goal was not subject to revision based on practitioner experience. By most accounts, LEAs were not doing much to pursue any explicit goals and the prospect of observing goal-oriented action in Title I programs was even more remote. In brief, most programs were not "forg[ing] subsequent links in the causal chain so as to obtain the desired results" (p. xxiii) as Pressman and Wildavsky believed implementation should.

For Berman and McLaughlin, early Title I programs lacked the mutual adaptation between policy programs and institutions necessary for productive implementation research. Since Title I funding was but a short step from general aid, the incentive to

innovate was almost entirely absent. Furthermore, programs were developed locally and thus adapted to local preferences and commitments. It is unlikely, therefore, that LEAs would devise programs that required a substantial institutional response and where there is no change there cannot be innovation. Nor can there be implementation research.

ESEA's Title III, which awarded grants for innovative programs on a competitive basis, provided a nice alternative and would serve as one of the key sources of innovative programs under study in the "change agent" research. This research, conducted over several years in the mid-1970s, concluded that implementation—the degree to which the local institution and the innovative program underwent mutual adaptation—dominated outcomes.

This overarching conclusion was supported by several related findings. Reflecting on the change agent studies over a decade later, McLaughlin (1991) recalled, "federal change agent policies had a major role in prompting local school districts to undertake projects that were generally congruous with federal guidelines" and that "adoption was only the beginning" (p. 144). Diffusion scholars at the time (e.g., Rogers, 1962, 1995) contended that the decision to adopt is the culminating event of the innovative process and that initial adoption relied primarily (but not exclusively) on the qualities of the innovation itself. As McLaughlin (1976) argued, however, this was rarely the case in education; new educational practices "possess none of the features traditionally thought to encourage local decision makers to adopt a given innovation" (p. 342).

First, diffusion of innovation scholars suggested that an innovation's ability to be easily communicated to others was a key determinate of successful adoption. Truly innovative endeavors in education, however, which tried to fundamentally alter how

students and teachers interact around content, resist easy specification that can be seamlessly translated from one "user" to another. McLaughlin (1976) commented, "Advocates can only offer general advice and communicate the philosophy or attitudes that underlie innovation" (p. 342).

Second, whereas traditional diffusion of innovation researchers stressed the importance of "trialability" the effects of educational innovations can rarely be assessed piecemeal or with divided attention. In contrast, educational innovations of the type Berman and McLaughlin were studying (e.g. open classrooms, team teaching) required a deep and total commitment.

Third, educational innovations are rarely easy to use as innovation scholars insist must be the case if an innovation is to take hold. Rather, educational innovations often require altering existing relationships and instructional arrangements. Such changes are complicated and can be exceedingly difficult.

Fourth, in addition to being difficult to communicate, adopted only in whole, and remarkably complex, instructional innovations challenge beliefs about proper roles of students and teachers that are deeply held and highly valued (McLaughlin, 1976; Cohen, 1988). Thus, educational innovations cannot assume congruence with existing values and beliefs typically believed essential for diffusion of innovation.

Finally, practitioners must commit to instructional innovation uncertain of its relative advantage over extant practices. The primary reasons that an innovation is adopted is that it promises a better way of solving an enduring challenge. However, when educators fully commit to a complex instructional innovation, classroom life may get worse, not better.

Because the five characteristics typical of innovations that are adopted and put into practice (communicability, "trialability", ease of use, congruence with existing values, relative advantage) are at odds with educational innovations, context in educational innovation matters. Specifically, how local institutions implement innovation dominates outcomes. In other words, educational innovations are not self-executing and therefore program and institutional adaptation are more important than innovation adoption.

The institutional receptivity required for program adoption, while necessary, was not sufficient (McLaughlin, 1976). As described above, innovative programs in education are not self-executing; rather, educational innovations tend to be highly resistant to local uptake. For this reason, the implementation strategy that accompanied innovation was crucial to program success. McLaughlin (1976) wrote, "Unless implementation strategies were chosen that allowed institutional support to be engaged and mutual adaptation to occur, project implementation floundered" (p. 343).

Three implementation strategies proved critical to successful adaptation. First, successful programs afforded teachers time to develop instructional material locally. Whether this affordance led to an improved pedagogical project is debatable. What seemed to matter is that through the process of material development, teachers committed more fully to the project, learned deeply about the method of instruction they were to employ, and bonded with colleagues over the common work of instructional improvement (McLaughlin, 1976). Successful implementation strategies also included opportunities for ongoing teacher learning. Beneficial learning opportunities extended beyond the typical one-stop training to prior program implementation. Schools that successfully implemented programs allowed for teacher collaboration, observations of other successful programs,

and training that was sensitive to discoveries made during the implementation process. Finally, successful implementation promoted adaptive planning and regular meetings. The best-laid plans of program designers fell woefully short of the requirements for mutual adaptation. Effective plans were subject to scrutiny and change as experience in the field informed it (McLaughlin, 1976).

Variation in implementation strategies helped explain why some projects were successfully implemented while others were not, even when the nature of project, the characteristics of the target group, the capacities of local educators, and supporting resources appeared similar (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; McLaughlin, 1976).

Above all, the change agent studies concluded that "it is exceedingly difficult for policy to change practice" and that "policy can't mandate what matters" (McLaughlin, 1991). Local capacity, commitments, and choices dominated policy outcomes. Berman and McLaughlin's change agent research revealed a new dilemma for the next generation of researchers and policymakers: no matter how well devised or supported, federal and state policy depended on the skill and will of local practitioners. Educational reforms defied the rules of typical innovations and success lay almost entirely in the local handling.

Policy from the Ground Up: The Dilemmas of the Street-level Bureaucrat

At the conclusion of the change agent studies in the late 1970s two general findings emerged: coordinating federal, state, and local reform efforts was remarkably difficult and changing practice, even when these difficulties could be overcome, was more difficult still. Local factors rather than federal policy, program characteristics, or project resources accounted for this variance in outcomes and ultimately determined a program's fate. Policymakers depended heavily on the commitment and expertise of local practitioners

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and it was unlikely that any policy could alter this dependency through better formulation or more thoughtful planning.

Prior to the late-1970s, policy research, for all its merits, had an almost exclusive focus on macro-level phenomena. Even the change agent studies, which argued persuasively of the power of the bottom over the top, nevertheless focused on the importance of local institutions, not the behaviors of individual actors. The first wave of policy research detailed the considerable difficulty of securing agreement within a federal system with weak central authority and agencies unprepared for the work. The next wave of research argued that even without much political wrangling among different levels of government, policy was a blunt instrument incapable of reliably securing successful outcomes.

The third wave of policy research would explore how individuals working at the level of service provision made sense of and managed the dilemmas of policy. These studies argued that what a policy turns out to be is determined in practice from the collective action of service deliverers, whom Lipsky (1980) termed "street-level bureaucrats." Lipsky (1980) argued that "the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out" (p. xii). For this reason, policy should not be understood through a description of legislative or higher-level administrator intent nor could implementation be understood as the constant negotiation of policy and goals as Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) understood it or through the concept of mutual adaptation favored by Berman and McLaughlin (1978). Rather, implementation happens when street-level bureaucrats attempt to reconcile the demands of policy, limited

resources, and the needs of clients while simultaneously honoring their professional

commitments and attending to their own personal well-being. According to Lipsky (1980),

when policy works at all, it was not because of well-formulated policy documents or clever

institutional adaptation but rather because street-level bureaucrats devise solutions that

satisfy competing demands.

Another way to think of this is that policymakers rely heavily on local institutions

and these institutions, in turn, rely on the individuals within them. The responsibility of

policy has effectively been passed down until it reached the smallest unit—the individual

practices of street-level bureaucrats.

The world of the street-level bureaucrat has several defining characteristics. First, it

is the street-level bureaucrat's job to administer programs to the people targeted by policy

to improve the plight of the individual or to serve the greater good of the populace, or both.

Thus, the street-level bureaucrat is a conduit of public power. The street-level bureaucrat

also enjoys a high degree of discretionary power in which to administer this authority and

this discretion is not easily reduced. Street-level bureaucrats need discretion because the

complex contexts in which they work defy comprehensive prescriptive guidelines for

behavior. Rather, non-formulaic responses are required to meet clients needs, and

autonomy helps to engender trust between the street-level bureaucrats and clients.

The conditions of street-level bureaucrats' work also make discretion a necessity.

First, street-level bureaucrats work with limited resources in the midst of escalating

demands for service. These resources can take various forms, and street-level bureaucrats

always seem to be in short supply. Partially in response to demands for services and

partially because the general public would like to limit budgetary allocations for the types

of services governments provide, street-level bureaucrats are chronically overburdened with a heavy caseload. Additionally, many street-level bureaucrats are unprepared to work with the type of client they are assigned, as the least experienced street-level bureaucrats are often assigned to the most difficult clients (e.g., city beats, classrooms), compounding the problem of large caseloads.

The problems that street-level bureaucrats face lay not only with inadequate resources but also with ambitious expectations about what they will be able to achieve with clients. Street-level bureaucrats engage in the work of human improvement (for more on this, see Cohen, 1988). Policymakers expect that as a result of service, clients will be less prone to drug use, more upstanding citizens, more capable readers, better parents, and so on. Such human improvement, when it happens at all, requires extensive investment of time and effort from both the service provider and the client, but, as described above, the resources required for the undertaking are typically scarce. To compound matters, street-level bureaucrats lack a technology through which the goals of human improvement can be consistently achieved. Curbing criminal recidivism or promoting student achievement, while typical policy goals, are uncertain enterprises, but they are activities street-level bureaucrats are routinely expected to perform. Street-level bureaucrats thus live in constant uncertainty of how their actual practices connect to both the goals of policy and client well being and must resign themselves to an existence where unmitigated success is sporadic, idiosyncratic, and somewhat mysterious.

The uncertainty of technology has several consequences. First, when there is debate over what works, a variety of approaches to practice must be permitted. Specifically, street-level bureaucrats are able to adopt practices that suit them best and this makes evaluation

of their activities and performance difficult. Furthermore, without a reliable way to achieve agency goals for client improvement, the goals themselves are subject to street-level bureaucrats who, of necessity, often co-opt agency goals and decide for themselves what constitutes success. Under these conditions, street-level bureaucrats are prone to manage dilemmas and provide care rather than solve social problems and achieve social engineering goals.

In fact, providing care becomes the main goal of public service and, within some general limits, the character of the treatment is of the street-level bureaucrats' own choosing. Street-level bureaucrats tend to settle for modest improvements in their clients' condition and use moderate and sporadic success as evidence of a job well done (Lipsky, 1980; Lortie, 1975). Thus, the ambitious goals of reformers that typically are made ambiguous during the legislative process (see Bailey and Mosher, 1968) are further dulled in the field by street-level bureaucrats who are overwhelmed by client needs and left without a reliable technology to satisfy them.

Because of the nature of the work of individuals in public service (competing and unachievable demands, limited resources, uncertain technology, needy and often unwilling clients), street-levels bureaucrats are given a wide berth in how they treat clients and what constitutes success. Consequently, inspection or correction of street-level bureaucrats' work is rarely easy and often not possible. In other words, the provider-client relationship resists penetration from either direct supervisors or policymakers who wish that street-level bureaucrats behaved differently, were more effective with achieving social engineering goals, or processed clients more efficiently. On the contrary, the street-level bureaucrats' job is characterized by uncertainty, independence, and, most of all, discretion.

Unfortunately, street-level bureaucrats often use the discretion needed to negotiate hierarchical demands and client care to further their own interests and to insulate themselves from accountability for the outcomes of the very clients they are charged with helping. As should by now be expected, this tendency presents a formidable challenge, as it is difficult to discern when a street-level bureaucrat is using his or her discretion to further the goals of the organization, improve client care, or serve his or her own needs at the expense of the institution and the client alike.

Delegated Responsibility and the U.S. System of Educational Governance

Scholarly writing on the conditions under which the street-level bureaucrat works revealed the difficulties facing reformers and the policies they endorsed. The sum of implementation research to this point (to which Lipsky's work contributes) introduced a perplexing question. How could a system characterized by unprecedented levels of policy activity at both the state and federal level be so utterly dependent on local schools and the decisions of practitioners who, with some restrictions, seemed to do as they pleased and whose behavior ultimately shaped what a policy became? Furthermore, why did it appear that massive amounts of centralized planning had not led to more centralized authority and influence?

In the early-1980s, David Cohen began to unravel this mystery. Cohen (1982) argued that public responsibility for educational provisions developed in a political context that intentionally frustrated public power. Consequently, the central sources of power were in no position—either politically or functionally—to make good on the new commitments of policy. Therefore, the federal government delegated many of the new responsibilities to state and local agencies capable of handling the work. This arrangement comprised Cohen's

major argument that massive expansion of public demands for education and consequent educational policymaking did not lead to a disproportionate amount of power settling at the federal level. Rather, because the federal and state governments lacked both political leverage and capacity, they delegated to local institutions (Cohen, 1982).

Heightened policy activity also encouraged the creation of subunits throughout layers of government. A subunit was charged with handling the administration of each new policy and, thus, subunits proliferated with most every new policy endeavor. This created a tremendous redundancy among subunits at various governmental levels and very little or no coordination among programs within any one level. The consequence for local institutions was profound. Cohen (1982) wrote:

> The lack of higher level coordination of state and federal policy implies one
>
> condition of local education: local schools must somehow fashion relations and
>
> priorities among the many policies directed at them by other agencies, and between
>
> those policies and local practice and preferences. (p. 487)

Not only, then, were local schools expected to absorb the ambitions of policy and construct practices locally in response, they also had to find a way to satisfy the myriad demands of several policies, none of which were designed with the crowded policy arena in mind. Delegation became the ultimate means through which policy activity could accelerate. However, delegation left all the critical details about what a policy would actually become in the hands of local practitioners. Thus, the challenge of central direction, difficult even under the best circumstances (for example, see Scott, 1999; Hayek, 1945), was particularly acute in a federal system that demanded solutions for social problems but forbid the use of central public authority needed to make much headway. In sum, delegation, while

necessary politically, leads to poorly coordinated activities at higher levels of organization

and great redundancy of federal, state, and local efforts. It also saps the power from the

center and plants it firmly in the periphery.

Delegation also exacts a price at the local level. The burden of coordinating multiple

policies and addressing multiple social pathologies assigned to schools is not easily borne.

It is not that schools were overly regulated (at least at the time of Cohen's writing), but the

multitude of interests and expectations that accumulated as a result of delegation

constrained what schools did, nonetheless. Cohen (1982) noted, "Reductions in slack will

probably reduce opportunities for innovation. In a more dense and active organizational

world, there is less room for teachers and principals to make little experiments...at just the

time that [they] are being presented with more problems in their work" (p. 497).

Cohen provided a conceptual explanation for how the federal government could

increase the size and scope of its involvement in education without a concomitant influence

on local practices. Federal policymaking fueled local power rather than threatening it,

while simultaneously constraining what schools did. With this in mind, two questions

become salient. First, how can federal policy be designed to accommodate the reliance of

federal ambition on local practices? Second, how does federal policy affect the efforts of

local schools to coordinate various policy demands?

At the time of Cohen's writing, Richard Elmore was pursuing the former question.

Elmore suggested that perhaps things were not as bleak as they appeared. In his view,

perhaps providing policymakers an alternative perspective would help to set things right.

After surveying the contemporary implementation literature, Elmore (1979-80) found that

research was long on descriptions of implementation failure but short on prescriptions for

how implementation might be improved. Elmore suggested that part of the problem was how researchers and policymakers approached the challenge. The typical approach was to *forward map* policy. Elmore contended that *forward mapping* is based on the faulty assumption of central control and rational action even though confidence in these assumptions had thoroughly eroded during the first several years of implementation research. Elmore (1979-80) wrote that forward mapping "begins with an objective, it elaborates an increasingly specific set of steps for achieving that objective, and it states an outcome against which success or failure can be measured" (p. 603).

Forward Mapping encourages a regulatory view of implementation in which each level of the hierarchy attempts to control the behavior of the level just below it with rewards and sanctions. The problem, as Elmore (1983) noted, "is that while we can demonstrate that greater hierarchical control produces greater compliance, we cannot assure that greater compliance produces better results" (p. 346). Elmore agreed with McLaughlin's observation that policy cannot mandate what matters, but added that policymakers continued to believe that they could, and this misunderstanding forbade productive policymaking efforts.

For this and other reasons, Elmore concluded that *forward mapping* is fundamentally at odds with the realities of policy arenas in the American political system. Policymakers are only tangentially involved in the important work that they attempt to influence and their capacity to plan the specifics of desirable practice that they can then dictate to those below is modest. In addition, persevering with *forward mapping* has real costs. First, central organizations must grow in size and complexity in order to increase their regulatory capacity. Furthermore, intensified regulation may create hard feelings

among the different levels of the system when it cuts across well-established boundaries of responsibility. Finally, regulation consumes resources that could otherwise be focused on areas critical to policy success and all involved may focus more on regulation than performance. As Elmore (1983) explained:

> At some point, the investment in regulatory machinery becomes greater than the investment in service delivery, and, at that point, the emphasis shifts from producing an effect to maintaining a complex surveillance and enforcement system. (p. 352)

In sum, the overregulation suggested by *forward mapping* policy thwarts local expertise and discretion and orients practitioners to the letter of the policy rather than its spirit.

Forward mapping persisted despite its well-recognized theoretical or practical limitations. This persistence resulted from the lack of a viable alternative that articulated how better to understand the realities of policy implementation or how a policy system with power and expertise situated on the periphery could effectively execute collective public action. Elmore (1979-80) felt that adopting the practice of *backward mapping* was the key to conceptual and practical progress in the policy realm. According to Elmore, *backward mapping* "begins not with a statement of intent, but with a statement of the specific behavior at the lowest level of the implementation process that generates the need for policy" (p. 604). In other words, when drafting policy, reformers must identify a policy's most critical point—typically that of service delivery. For most educational policy, this would require considering the life of the classroom. As Elmore (1979-80) explained it:

> Having established a relatively precise target at the lowest level of the system, the analysis backs up through the structure of implementing agencies, asking at each

level two questions: What is the ability of this unit to affect the behavior that is the

target of the policy? And what resources does this unit require in order to have that

effect? (p. 604)

This passage reveals *backward mapping's* main assumption: policymaking in a federal

system in which power and expertise abide at the lowest organizational and political level

can be effective if the policy intentionally establishes the conditions necessary for desirable

local practitioner behavior and then carefully considers how each level of government can

support the conditions that would make such behavior possible.

     Whereas *forward mapping* relies on the traditional notions of command and control,

backward mapping harnesses the delegated discretion of practitioners. Elmore believed

that the latter approach afforded several distinct advantages. *Backward mapping* deals with

the policy environment as it actually is and provides clear direction for policymakers trying

to affect classroom practice. Furthermore, *backward mapping* does not require an all-

knowing central authority that dictates how the periphery is to behave and then exhausts

valuable resources ensuring that local behavior aligns with centrally-devised plans. On the

contrary, *backward mapping* allows for policymakers to enable local practice without

knowing exactly what these practices might be. The whole point of backward mapping is

that it is responsive to the prevailing policy environment in which expertise and

responsibility both reside locally. The center, far removed from the most influential

activities, cannot dictate the specifics of practice. However, through careful consideration

about what the practitioners nearest to the problem might need and how each level of

government can support the efforts of level below it (as opposed to controlling its

behavior), policy has a reasonable chance of being successful. Elmore (1983) concluded:

The skillful use of delegated control is central to making implementation work in

bottom-heavy, loosely coupled systems. When it becomes necessary to rely mainly

on hierarchical control, regulation, and compliance to achieve results, the game is

essentially lost. (p. 358)

While the question of how to better formulate and implement policy in a loosely-

coupled, widely decentralized system provoked considerable research activity in the past

few decades, the second question Cohen raised about how local schools coordinate

multiple policies and craft them into coherent practice has received only passing

consideration.

A few exceptions that emerged around the time of Cohen's (1982) and Elmore's

(1979-80; 1983) writing are worthy of note. One example is Hill's (1979) report about

potential interference among federal policies. Hill detailed his conclusions at the outset of

the report:

The [federal] programs make many competing demands on local funds and

administrative capacity. Every program requires special arrangements for planning

and service delivery. No program provides resources to support its integration with

other programs; consequently, school districts must choose between letting the

programs operate independently or using local resources to integrate and adjust

different program activities. (p. 11)

In the remainder of the report, Hill provided the specifics. He determined that

federal programs can interfere with one another in four ways. First, federal policies

compete for the attention of school district administrators. LEAs increased in size and

responsibility as Cohen (1982) suggested as a result of the profusion of federal policies, but

this growth led to the development of separate, nearly autonomous departments, where administrators for various programs "operate with minimal guidance from the superintendent, and in virtual ignorance of one another" (Hill, 1979, p. 13).

Because many federal policies target specific students for services, Hill concluded that when any given student was targeted by multiple polices, administration of services was difficult to coordinate. Hill speculated that two specific difficulties emerged when policies overlapped in this way. First, most administrators were not familiar with the funding structures articulated in each policy and thus could not bring potential resources to bear. Additionally, the rules of each program often forbid the simultaneous orchestration of services according with each policy's intent.

According to Hill, federal policies also interfere with one another when some programs are federally funded while others are unfunded mandates that nevertheless impose considerable costs on LEAs. In such cases, LEAs were often using federal funds for some programs to subsidize others.

Finally, federal programs may compete with one another for local funds. As Hill wrote, "many federal programs are deliberately designed to affect the patterns of expenditure of state and local funds" (p. 20). Most programs (e.g., Title I of ESEA) forbid LEAs from diminishing local contributions once receiving federal money. Other programs provided matching grants that allowed the LEA some flexibility in determining how much of its own resources to commit. In either case, federal policies assume that local and federal programs can be concurrently sustained. However, districts vary in their capability to maintain local institutional services (Hill, 1979) and, even when local circumstances are favorable, federal programs will compete with each other for scarce resources. As a

possible consequence, "only one or two federal programs can operate as intended at the local level" (Hill, 1979, p. 22).

Hill conceded that his report was "based on fragmentary evidence" and, because it focused on how federal programs interacted with other federal programs, he could not speak to how federal programs might interfere with extant LEA practices. Furthermore, he framed his analysis in terms of the administrative and financial burdens federal policy imposed rather than on the dilemmas that policies created for administrators and practitioners.

Around the same time that Hill wrote his report, two other researchers were investigating how the construction of federal policy led to fragmentary educational programs. Ginsburg and Turnbull (1981) argued that the supplemental intent and categorical funding structure of most federal programs prohibited cohesive local programs that comprehensively addressed students' needs, undermined local investment and commitment, and encouraged data collection for compliance rather than performance. Ginsburg and Turnbull (1981) suggested that coherence would be achieved if only the federal government slackened its restrictions on categorical funding and instead required schools to develop "school-wide" programs that detailed how they would use comprehensive (that is, non-categorical) federal grants. If nothing else, Ginsburg and Turnbull hoped these plans would force local educators to consider how best to take disparate federal programs and meld them into a solitary plan for addressing students' needs.

Cohen (1982) and Derthick (1970) also noted some of the difficulties inherent in creating the "school-wide" programs that Ginsburg and Turnbull envisioned given the

categorical funding structure of disparate programs. Derthick (1970), for example, argued

that federal, state, and local administrators employed vertical allegiances for the purpose of

administering a particular program or policy. These policy allies then secured the

prosperity of their particular program, most often to the neglect of other programs

pressing for recognition and inclusion in a crowded policy environment. Pursuing this

same line of inquiry, McLaughlin (1982) wanted to understand why in some cases Title I

programs were integral in the general education program, while in others they remained

isolated on the fringe. She ultimately concluded that state educational agencies (SEAs)

determined integration of federal programs, specifically whether policy networks were

vertically or horizontally oriented. In vertically-oriented networks, administrators were

free to implement the program in their charge without consideration for its integration.

Such networks "create a special-project mode of implementation that impedes

coordination of federal funded activities with regular education programs" (McLaughlin,

1982, p. 569).

Conversely, horizontally-oriented SEAs were able to integrate federal policies with

extant practices. McLaughlin (1982) argued that SEAs who worked in "full partnership in

federal education programs" (p. 569) and which "define their priorities and allegiances in

terms of state goals and objectives" (p. 569) rather than compliance with mandates or

single-minded determination to implement isolated policies were better situated to

integrate multiple policies. But horizontal organization is not without its costs. In the

interest of integrating policies, no single policy can be implemented with fidelity.

McLaughlin, then, returned to an earlier argument that policy implementation is about

adaptation, not adoption. She would expect that any policy would, and indeed should, be

altered when practitioners operationalize policy ideas in their particular institutional settings. The same adaptation process is necessary when combining several policies into a single coherent instructional program.

In his report, Hill (1979) noted that his analysis was "exploratory, and meant to initiate, rather than to conclude, a line of analysis" (p. 4). Yet his, and the other related research about policy coordination described in this section, generated very few subsequent investigations. For example, Hill's work is cited by only 10 authors; McLaughlin's, 13; Ginsburg and Turnbull's, 5. Perhaps the dearth of interest can be explained by the dramatic shift set to occur in 1983 with the release of the *A Nation at Risk* report. It is to this report and the policy research it generated that we now turn our interest.

<div align="center">*Accountability Policy: The Release of a Nation at Risk*</div>

In the midst of policy research that concluded that policy depended on local-level experience, capability, and will and that policy was therefore a blunt instrument (Green, 1983), a series of unrelated reports emerged which were of like mind on the state of affairs in American education. The most impactful of these studies, *A Nation at Risk*, caught media attention, stirred public concern and, ultimately, generated a climate of accountability in education that has persisted for the past 30 years. In language typical of the authors' approach, the report claimed, "If an unfriendly power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war" (p. 7). According to the report, the nation's schools were languishing in mediocre achievement, a malaise that must be corrected if the nation was to return to global pre-eminence.

The report went on to claim that in 1983, "the average graduate of our schools and colleges…is not as well educated as the average graduate of 25 or 30 years ago, when a much smaller proportion of our population completed high school" (p. 11). In other words, watered-down academic expectations and unspectacular achievement levels seemed to be the price the nation had paid for universal access to high schools and nearly universal graduation rates. Many students, the authors of the report argued, were getting diplomas from high school but little else. The authors' call for more rigorous content, heightened standards and expectations, extended school year and school day, improved teacher pool, and better leadership and fiscal support suggested that schools could achieve the report's lofty goals by tweaking a few superficial characteristics.

The *A Nation at Risk* report helped initiate research that expanded understanding about the role of policy in improving schools in two ways. First, research either inspired or directly supported by *A Nation at Risk* brought the dilemmas of classrooms, particularly in the nation's high schools, into sharper focus. Researchers in the 1980s described the American high school as both remarkable and horrific, very good at accommodating students and garnering their attendance and good behavior and issuing diplomas as a reward, but frightfully bad at instilling advanced academic content. For the most part, these works explained classroom realities through examining the existing institutional context in which education occurred.

For example, Cusick (1983) argued that schools earned their legitimacy in their commitment to equal opportunity for everyone, even those who are violent, disruptive, or who otherwise would rather not be in school. Cusick found that this condition created three phenomena. First, in order to keep students in school, schools expanded their

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curricular offerings and teachers lowered their academic expectations in exchange for student attendance and cooperation. Second, students faced an expanded curriculum with very little institutional guidance. Schools were still reeling from revisionist and critical theorists' critiques that painted them as racist, hegemonic institutions (e.g., Illich, 1971; Katz, 1971; Silberman, 1970). However, instead of funneling students to higher-tracked classes, the un-tracked school failed to give poor, minority students the help they needed to make sense of the choices available to them and consequently curricular tracks tended to separate students along racial and class lines just as they had when school personnel took an active role in assigning students to classes. Finally, in an effort to find something that teachers were willing to teach and students willing to learn, the curriculum became highly idiosyncratic. In fact, in many high schools, it was impossible to say precisely what was taught and learned.

Other researchers reached similar conclusions. Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985) argued that the American high school resembled a shopping mall in that it "provides variety, something for everybody, does not force anybody to choose; it pushes nobody beyond his or her preferences. Those who want to buy can do so. Those who are not sure can browse or bide their time and still pass through" (p. 53). The distinguishing features of the "Shopping Mall High School", they said, were wide curricular offerings that were both diffuse and vertically organized, unfettered student choice, and institutional neutrality.

Theodore R. Sizer, another researcher who explored the dilemmas of public high schools in the 1980s, focused on the concessions that educators had to make as they go about performing their duties. This so-called "Horace's compromise" meant simply that teachers had to settle for approximations of the job because organizational constraints,

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namely the overwhelming course load and student-teacher ratio, made performing the job

as idealized impossible. Sizer believed that if the organization of schools were changed,

better schools would follow suit. In addition to reporting many of the phenomena listed

above, Sizer (1985) advocated for schools that granted necessary discretion to teachers

and students, held students accountable for mastery of academic content, provided

appropriate incentives, focused on higher-order thinking skills, and employed a simple and

flexible structure. However, Sizer warned that "Americans must come to terms with the

limits of compulsion" (p. 87). He believed that once students mastered the literacy,

numeracy, and civic dispositions needed for a healthy democracy, students should be free

to leave school if they so chose. Sizer wrote, "the state has no right whatsoever to compel a

citizen to attend school once those minima are demonstrably reached nor the right to

compel her or him to learn anything else. Encouragement, yes. Opportunity, yes. Mandate,

no" (p. 87). The implication was clear—we cannot achieve the schools we want without

much greater student commitment. Many students would have to be reconciled to the goals

of schooling, and if they failed in this, they would be jettisoned.

Michael Sedlak and colleagues also suggested that bringing academic learning in line

with educational attainment would change school composition, although these authors

were not nearly so positive about the effort. Like other researchers, Sedlak and colleagues

(1986) posited that "the system's ability to accommodate the aspirations of virtually all

constituencies, from the highly to the lowly motivated and engaged, appears to

demonstrate a healthy functional relationship to the larger society and to mask the overall

prevalence of low academic standards" (p. 179). Indeed, schools had low standards for

many reasons, the most important of which was that low standards allowed virtually all

adolescents to remain in school and find success there in terms of credential accumulation. The authors cautioned that a sudden elevation of standards, as advocated in *A Nation at Risk*, would unduly punish "the disadvantaged and low-achieving students, [for whom] many of the reforms will have a detrimental impact. Exit testing, increasing surveillance, monitoring behavior and attendance, and expanding administrative authority over teachers and the curriculum will force many adolescents out of high school" (p. 180). Sedlak and colleagues suggested that raising standards would be a pyrrhic victory, and one that left poor, minority children incurring the most cost. While the students from privileged backgrounds quickly acclimated to new expectations and translated the new conditions to accelerate their advantage, the disadvantaged would find the new requirements more than they were willing or able to bear.

These research projects detailed a previously overlooked challenge to policy implementation to which Lipsky (1980) had alluded, but not thoroughly explored— students were not pressing for the types of educational experiences that reformers valued, and as a result, teachers bargained away high academic expectations in exchange for student cooperation. Combined with the circumstances described previously, lack of consistent student demand for innovative practices and academically-rigorous experiences inhibited reform attempts and frustrated policy that was so designed.

Despite its detractors, *A Nation at Risk* allowed for researchers to better understand the micro-level dilemmas of policy implementation as states responded to, and often went beyond the report's recommendations, and put pressure on local schools to improve instruction.

California's effort to re-envision mathematics instruction in the mid-1980s generated a large amount of research and provides a nice example of the challenges of trying to improve classroom instruction through policy. In order for classrooms to be improved, or so this research argued, teachers must be improved. Researchers had known that local capacity mattered for some time (e.g., Berman & McLaughlin, 1976) but never before had the challenges inherent in this endeavor been fully explored. New policies, particularly in California, provided the opportunity to study what happens when teachers become both the agent and subject of reform (Cohen & Ball, 1990). Through a series of articles, researchers at Michigan State University concluded that teachers may embrace certain reform practices and ignore others (Ball, 1990), bend policy vehicles to current practices (Wilson, 1990), cling to prior instructional allegiances (Jennings-Wiemers, 1990), or mistakenly believe that they have changed their practice to achieve reformer ideals (Cohen, 1990).

This research suggested that teachers often misunderstood policy or their own practice, or both. Therefore, researchers became interested in how teachers came to know and understand the policies they were supposed to implement and began investigating teacher "sense-making," a process plagued with challenges of its own.

Policy Messages

Research on sense-making suggests that interpreting policy impulses is a dynamic, social process rooted in interactions and negotiations among peers and situated in particular contexts (Coburn, 2001). Sense-making requires teachers to interpret policy inputs, decide which of the inputs to accommodate and which to ignore, and, ultimately, to translate policy directives into classroom practice. However, sense-making is conservative

process. While organizationally-defined roles play the major role in determining who teachers talk to about policy demands (Spillane, Kim, & Frank, 2012), teachers often divide themselves within these groups and seek out those with similar world views and instructional practices (Coburn, 2001). Consequently, teachers' informal yet influential interactions about policy are most often with supportive, like-minded peers and thus these interactions are unlikely to challenge a teacher's current practice. In contrast, conversations with diverse colleagues tend to focus on the requirements of the external system (Homans, 1950; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) rather than on the pressing challenges of improving teaching and learning (Coburn, 2001).

Helping teachers make better sense of policy is difficult. One reason is lack of a common technical language through which policy intent can be reliably conveyed. When Philip Jackson looked inside classrooms in 1968, he was critical of teachers' simplistic, atheoretical language that shunned complex ideas and focused on the immediate practical difficulties of classroom life. Michael Huberman (1983) would later call this focus on practical solutions "craft knowledge" but the final verdict remains the same—different levels of the educational establishment have no way to meaningfully translate policy ideas. Thus, policy messages become increasingly distorted as they move from one organizational level to the next (Spillane, 2004). This distortion is instantiated in reformers' efforts to affect classroom practice via academic standards. Standards are constructed in highly specialized contexts not accessible to practitioners. Reform ideas are cloaked in language and the intent of the standards' writers is lost in the hands of those not privy to the original contexts of standards' formulation. Thus, standards lose their intended meaning once they leave the reformers' workshop, and a lack of a common language inhibits the spread of

reform ideas (Hill, 2001). Furthermore, the myriad sources teachers look to for help are equally confused and thus offer teachers confusing and contradictory guidance (Hill, 2001).

Problems with sense-making extend beyond the challenges of language. A significant part of the challenge is cognitive. Spillane and Zeuli (1999) described the process of enacting reform practices as one that "involves much more than getting teachers to notice and read reform proposals. Attention to policy proposals is more complex; it entails constructing new understandings and grappling with their meaning for existing practice" (p. 20). For many teachers this means changing epistemological understandings (what it means to *know* and *do* a particular subject) as well as more traditional teaching behaviors. However, such transformation is not easily done. The teachers that Spillane and Zeuli (1999) observed, who were enthusiastic about instructional reform and the new conceptions of teaching it endorsed, were nevertheless rarely able to enact instruction that reformers envisioned in either their discourse with students or their observable classroom practices.

This new line of research suggested that the link between policy and practice depended on teachers' preexisting knowledge, dispositions, and practices as much as it did on policy formulation, instruments, and incentives, if not more. As Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) summarized, "What a policy means for implementing agents is constituted in the interaction of their existing cognitive structures (including knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes), their situation, and policy signals" (p. 388). Policy messages are not simply received and either enacted or not, even when practitioners have ample opportunity for learning. Practitioners receive policy messages and frame them with their current knowledge, attitudes, experiences, practices, and contexts.

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Finally, even if policy messages can be translated faithfully and well understood, teachers may not be willing or able to change classroom practice. First, since policy is rarely constructed with classroom realities in mind (Kennedy, 2005), how teachers are to incorporate the new policy with existing demands is usually overlooked. As Kennedy (2005) described it, teachers must manage a myriad of intentions and, as these intentions will conflict, quite often must choose among them. In other words, it is not simply that teachers do not know how the new policy wants them to respond or that they are unsympathetic to new policy goals and thus reluctant to change their practice. Rather, teachers simply do not know how to manage new impulses while simultaneously honoring other commitments that seem equally important or essential to the functioning of the classroom.

Second, the new knowledge that policy provides may not be deployed on the aspects of classroom life targeted by reformers. Teacher goals extend beyond the goals valued by reformers and these goals often conflict, forcing teachers to chose among them. Of course, then, teachers can and often do use knowledge to improve aspects of classroom life of little or no interest to reformers (Kennedy, 2005). Teachers also accumulate knowledge primarily to solve practical classroom challenges (e.g., maintaining lesson momentum, fostering student good will) in line with their underlying values rather than seeking information to enact theoretically-informed reform teaching (Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975; Huberman, 1983; Kennedy, 2005). Finally, teachers are likely to suspend judgment on new information until it has been proven to work in real classrooms, but this process of trial-and-error often robs an idea of its innovative vigor, and a tempered version of the new practice usually results (Lortie, 1975; Cuban, 1993).

Conclusion: Policy and Practice

Research in the past several decades has illuminated the complexities of implementing instructional reforms. Research has moved further from rational choice theory that views implementation as a rather straightforward process of policy aims, agent preferences, utility maximization, and incentives. This is not to say that these elements are unimportant; however, the conception of policy implementation as a rational process is simply not sufficient to explain the complexities of implementation. Policy implementation also depends on consistency of aims and instruments, opportunity for extensive learning and grappling with new ideas and expectations for practice, all of which is filtered through one's pre-existing capabilities, attitudes, beliefs, values and contexts.

While much is known about the challenges of policy implementation, we know little about how competing instructional reforms affect schools. The line of inquiry into how policies might conflict and create dilemmas for schools has been pursued at various times since the 1980s. With federal and state policy activity at an all-time high, it is time to revisit this topic.

CHAPTER THREE: Framing the Research

Introduction to Research Framework

The previous chapter situated this research on the sensemaking of multiple

instructional reforms in the context of research on implementation of reform spanning the

last 50 years. Bringing evidence from data collection into dialogue with ideas from

previous research was one of my main goals (Ragin, 1994). In this chapter, I provide a

conceptual overview of this research and explain how the different sections of the

dissertation map onto this structure. I then focus on different levels likely to impact

instructional reform and detail the literature at each of these levels. Finally, I explain how I

constructed one particular element of the research—the analytic frame—which is the

culminating focus of this chapter.

First, I will outline the organizational logic of the dissertation. Specifically, I

describe the interrelationship among the dissertation's major components —literature

review, analytic framework, data collection, data analysis, and findings—as organized by

the four building blocks of social research: ideas, analytic frames, images, and data (Ragin,

1994). The intentional interaction among these components culminates in a representation

of social life (Becker, 2007).

During the course of the research, I used deductive and inductive processes when

appropriate. I used deductive reasoning (the imposition of pre-existing theories about the

social world onto novel social situations) to construct the analytic frame that informed

initial data collection. Inductive reasoning (the creation of new ideas or concepts from the

data) allowed me to generate hypotheses (Spradley, 1979) during data collection and

analysis. Ultimately, these hypotheses either became unsupported artifacts that I

eliminated or themes around which the findings section of this dissertation is organized.

An overview of how the building blocks of social inquiry (ideas, frames, images, and

evidence) are mapped onto the structure of the dissertation and the types of reasoning

involved is included in Table 3.1. A more thorough explanation of the four elements of

social inquiry is provided in the following section.

Table 3.1. Overview of the Research Framework

Chapter of the Dissertation	Section of the Dissertation	Component of Social Research (Ragin, 1994)	Type of Reasoning Required
Chapter 2	Review of Literature	Ideas/Social Theory	Mostly Deductive
Chapter 3	Framing the Research	Analytic frame	Mostly Deductive
Chapter 4	Methods: Data Collection	Evidence/Data	Equal Parts deductive and inductive
Chapter 4	Methods: Data Analysis	Constructing Images—Grounded Theory	Mostly Inductive
Chapters 5-8	Findings	Representation of social life	Retroductive

In the second part of the chapter, I provide an overview of relevant literature

organized by the different levels likely to be important in the implementation of

instructional reform. These levels include: the macro-level (state-level policymaking;

district support); meso-level (principal leadership; teacher learning communities and

teachers' opportunities to learn); and micro-level (classrooms).

Finally, I explain how the literature cited in the second section helped build an

analytic frame to guide the research. In this section, I draw heavily on the work of

McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) and Barr and Dreeben (1983) to construct a framework

that sees the work of implementation as a set of embedded structures that provide key

resources and serve as connective links with one another.

Conceptual Model of Social Research

This research is organized on the premise that the main purpose of social research consists of bringing ideas from previous research into dialog with evidence from field research to create a representation of social life (Ragin, 1994). This section provides an explanation of the different components of social research (Ragin, 1994) the make this interaction intentional. The correspondence between the components of social research and the sections of the dissertation is included above in Table 1.

Ideas

Ideas are research-generated knowledge about how the social world works. Researchers come to new research with varying levels of dependence on existing ideas, or social theory, but, as Miles and Huberman (1994) pointed out, "any researcher, no matter how unstructured or inductive, comes to fieldwork with *some* orienting ideas" (p. 17). I began this research with strong theoretical interests and these ideas shaped the questions that I asked and helped me focus data collection. The research-generated ideas that framed this research are synthesized in the forthcoming analytic framework.

Analytic Frames

An analytic frame can best be understood as the expression of the social theory one has selected to use to shape the inquiry. Thus, ideas and the analytic frame that derives from them are closely linked. An analytic frame "defines a category of phenomena…and provides conceptual tools for differentiating phenomena" (Ragin, 1994, p. 61). In other words, the analytic frame expresses theoretical ideas about how the social world under study works and details in simplified yet useful terms how the relevant concepts within the frame work individually and together.

The process of moving from ideas to analytic frames is primarily deductive. The role of the analytic frame and its importance in the research will vary by purpose. In this case, carefully constructing an analytic frame provided three advantages. First, the analytic frame gave purpose to early data collection specifically helping me organize a preliminary data collection plan and develop instruments. The analytic frame also ensured that I entered an ongoing stream of scholarly inquiry. Finally, the analytic frame provided a necessary contrast between the ideas of theory and the reality of the evidence I collected. To this point, Ragin (1994) wrote, "It is easy to miss what is absent without some sort of analytic frame to guide the analysis. Without this guidance, the tendency is to focus only on what is present" (p. 65). The specifics of the analytic frame are outlined later in this chapter and the impact of the analytic frame on initial data collection is discussed in Chapter 4 on methods.

Evidence

Evidence is simply the data I collected to answer my research questions. As noted, initial data collection was strongly influenced by previous research and my analytic frame. Gradually, collection became far more inductive, as emerging themes informed further interviews and observations. However, my strong theoretical interests and the initial influence of the analytic frame persisted throughout the data collection phase. A full description of the data collection plan and execution is included in the next chapter.

Images/Grounded Theory

Images are the themes that emerge from the data through the process of inductive data analysis. Typically, researchers use images to describe the themes that emerge from the data and how these themes are interrelated. Thus, images are "idealizations of real cases….abstractions that have grounding in a body of evidence,"(Ragin, 1994, p. 70). Abstracting themes allowed me to consider images in terms of the analytic frame that began the research. In sum, I used images to elaborate or challenge the analytic frames (Ragin, 1994).

Representations of Social Life

Ragin (1994) argued that the purpose of social research is to bring ideas as articulated through analytic frames and evidence as understood through images into a mutually challenging and refining dialogue. This mutually refining dialogue is often called retroduction (e.g., Ragin, 1994). Retroduction culminates in a representation of "something that someone tells us about some aspect of social life (Becker, 2007, p. 5)…a report about society…an artifact consisting of statements of fact, based on evidence acceptable to some audience, and interpretations of those facts similarly acceptable to some audience" (Becker, 2007, p. 14). Representations of society come in many forms (e.g., documentary films, newspaper articles, visual art), but social science is unique in that social scientists expect valid representations to address socially relevant phenomena, engage pre-existing theory, incorporate deliberately and carefully collected evidence, and to depend on systematic analysis and synthesis of this evidence (Ragin, 1994). A simplified model of the process of social research (borrowed from Ragin, 1994) is included in Figure 1. In each of the chapters that follow, I address the relevant components of the model with the specific details of this research project.

Figure 3.1. A Simple Model of Social Research (Ragin, 1994)

```
  ┌─────────────────────┐
  │  IDEAS/SOCIAL THEORY │
  └─────────────────────┘
        ↘  ↖
Mostly deductive
          ┌──────────────────┐
          │  ANALYTIC FRAME  │
          └──────────────────┘
              ↑      ↓                ┌──────────────────┐
Retroduction                 →        │  REPRESENTATIONS │
                                      │        OF        │
                                      │   SOCIAL LIFE    │
          ┌──────────────────┐        └──────────────────┘
          │  GROUNDED THEORY │
          └──────────────────┘
          ↗  ↘
Mostly inductive
  ┌──────────────────┐
  │  EVIDENCE/DATA   │
  └──────────────────┘
```
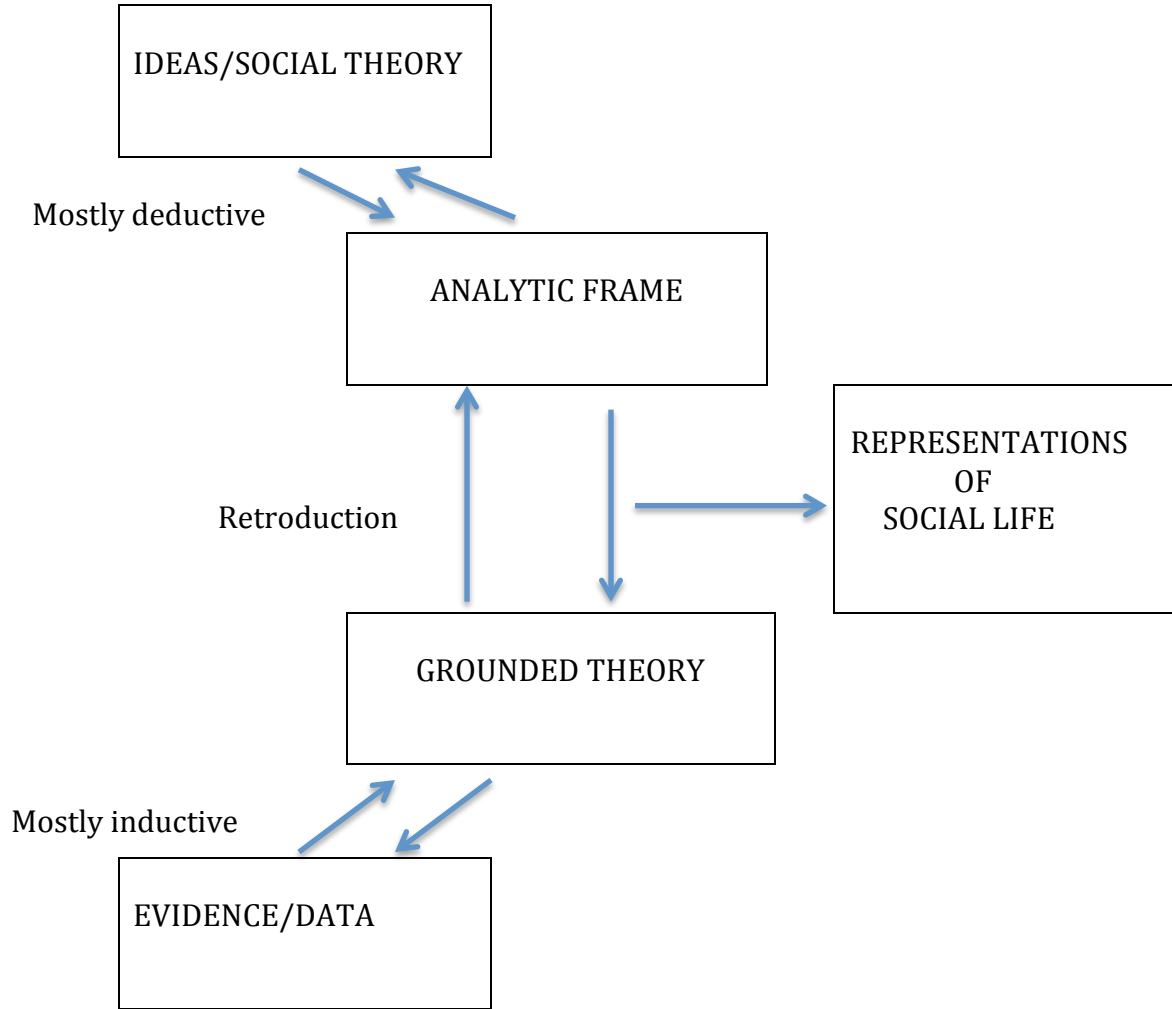
Research Supporting the Analytic Frame

With the overall structure of the research in mind, the rest of this chapter is dedicated to justifying and then describing the analytic frame that helped guide this dissertation. Ultimately, this frame includes five key contextual influences on teachers' instructional practice along three levels of the educational system: the macro-level (state policy, district), the meso-level (principals, teacher teams) and the micro-level (classrooms).

Most policy research is concerned with the macro-micro connection, how policy

affects the micro contexts of the classroom, or, rather, how policy all too often fails to effectively influence how teachers and students interact around content. Cohen and Hill (2001) noted that "When researchers have tried to explain problems of implementation, they have typically pointed to complex causal links between state or federal agencies on the one hand and street-level implementers on the other" (p. 6). My study shared the goal of understanding the macro-micro relationship between policy and practice, but focused primarily on meso-level structures that mediated reforms as their messages neared the classroom. After a brief treatment of state-level formation and district-level mediation of instructional reform, I turn immediately to research on how classroom life affects reform. I then work from the classroom out to the mediating structures (principal instructional leadership, teacher learning communities) upon which the findings of this research are focused.

Macro Level: State Policy

Early research on the effects of public policy was decidedly pessimistic. Researchers concluded that federal and state agencies lacked the inclination or the political power to provide active guidance to local schools (Murphy, 1971), practitioners bent policy instruments to their own purposes and thus defined policy in practice (Lipsky, 1980; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977), highly variant local response dominated outcomes (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978), and, in sum, policy depended on the skill, will, and inclination of local practitioners. In other words, policy could not mandate what mattered (McLaughlin, 1991).

This wave of research led one to the conclusion that policy was indeed an ineffective instrument and that excellence was achieved exclusively at the local level (e.g., Green, 1983). Amidst the growing despair about the potential of policy to affect what matters

most, Cohen and Hill (2001) contended that policy, done properly, could positively influence teacher practice. These authors argued that policy could work, provided that "teachers had significant opportunities to learn how to improve….teaching…We found that where teachers had opportunities to learn about student materials or assessments, students posted higher scores [on standardized achievement tests]" (pp. 2, 4). Cohen, in particular, was following through on a line of research he and others had begun over a decade earlier. In the mid-1980s, California became one of the few states that went beyond the recommendations of the *A Nation at Risk* report. The state developed several new frameworks for its core academic disciplines that had plans for changing teacher practice. For example, the state's mathematics framework sought to reshape mathematics teaching and learning from traditional instruction focused on procedural correctness to instruction that encouraged complex conceptual understanding through presentation of concrete mathematical problems, physical manipulation of math tools designed to aid learning, and student interaction about their math reasoning and experiences.

Researchers followed the developments in California with great interest and, ultimately, generated a prodigious amount of research about the promises and perils of policy. In one of the final research endeavors, Cohen and Hill (2001) highlighted the circumstances under which policy could be effective. They were, however, quick to note that despite potential for policy to influence teacher instructional practice as intended, the effects of policy were uneven and teachers who changed their practice in response to the policy were in the minority.

Cohen and Hill focused on the minority of teachers who reported reform-based practices and then probed the conditions that seemed to support this teaching. From

previous research (e.g., Cohen, 1990), Cohen noted that teachers were both the agents and objects of reform. Therefore, ambitious policy that sought to influence teacher practice needed to provide ample opportunity for teachers to learn about such teaching in the context of authentic student work. Coherence among policy instruments (e.g. reform documents, textbooks, aligned assessments) mattered a great deal, but the most powerful resource that policies could provide, Cohen and Hill argued, was sustained opportunity for teacher learning. In fact, when it came to reforming instructional practices, teachers' opportunity to learn mattered more than principal leadership, collegial influence, or the character of the policy itself. Cohen and Hill (2001) concluded, "Professional learning formed the crucial connective tissue between the elements of California's instructional policy" (p. 179).

Despite these auspicious findings, Cohen and Hill lamented that "most teachers in California adopted only a few fragments of elements of the state reforms, adding nothing that would disturb their solidly conventional practice" (p. 154). The policy's fractured impact had several contributing sources. First, traditions of decentralized governance and local discretion in the provision of education weakened the state's ability to create greater coherence and uniformity. Under this traditional arrangement, teachers had considerable autonomy and they used this discretion to select professional development experiences from a panoply of options, most of which did not align with the state's vision for mathematics instruction. Thus, professional development providers had incentive to respond to teacher interests rather than state interests (Cohen & Hill, 2001). Consequently, only those teachers who intentionally sought out professional development that aligned with the state frameworks received the kind of professional learning opportunities capable

of enabling reform practices.

In sum, Cohen and Hill argued that ambitious educational reform could work if it provided coherence among policy instruments and sustained opportunity for teacher learning about the policy and its implications for their instruction. However, because of the decentralized nature of educational authority, weak incentive structure for universal participation in state-endorsed professional development opportunities, and difficulty of policy to learn from its mistakes and respond accordingly, the ability for policy to affect universal change in teacher practice was considerably limited.

Macro Level: Districts

School districts are often overlooked in educational reform. However, some research helps illuminate the potential for districts to provide apt instructional leadership and clarifies how districts factor into policy formation and implementation. In this section, I consider two papers that bring the district role in the policy process into sharper focus.

The first article describes the behavior of the modal school district in the early 1980s. Conducting research before the release of *A Nation at Risk*, Floden et al. (1988) concluded that "districts do not leave teachers to their own devices, but neither do they make systematic use of the tools available to adopt patterns of content decision making" (p. 98). This conclusion left Floden and his colleagues at odds with the conceptual dichotomy between autonomy and control typically used to explain a district's treatment of its teaching force. Districts relied neither on traditions of autonomy (infusing teachers with the capacity to make informed professional decisions and then providing teachers considerable discretion) nor did they rely on control (using organizational power to reward and sanction) that tightly circumscribed teacher behavior and oriented them to

central directives.

Floden et al. (1988) proposed a framework for understanding district instructional leadership that included four domains: consistency of policies; prescriptiveness about what should be taught; authority, the appeal to law, rule, or legitimacy; and power, the use of organizational rewards and sanctions.

The results regarding the consistency among districts' mathematics policy were mixed. Districts did not typically have a well-articulated, coherent policy agenda that would guide teachers' work, but, on the other hand, teachers did not perceive that the districts' piece meal policy created conflicts in practices. Apparently, in the face of uncertainty from the district teachers crafted their own coherence.

Lack of coordination among policies made district prescriptions about what should be taught more difficult. Roughly half the districts did not indicate which sections of the textbook should be covered and which of these covered concepts should receive particular attention.

Furthermore, districts were also reluctant to rely on organizational power to control teachers' work. Only a small fraction of teachers surveyed believed that rewards or sanctions were imminent for those who complied with or resisted district directives, respectively.

Floden et al. found that districts were far more likely to appeal to authority (i.e., legitimacy) than they were to use organizational power. Most teachers felt that their districts used a variety of methods (e.g., appeal to law, consistency with social norms, agreement with expert knowledge, support from charismatic individuals) to secure their voluntary commitment. Still, since rewards and sanctions were not forthcoming for

teachers who deviated from the district plan (even when these plans were ill-formed), many teachers felt no compulsion to do as the district wished.

In sum, Floden et al. (1988) concluded, "many districts take some steps to gain teachers' support for their policies but...much more could be done both to add additional authority to individual policies and to coordinate policies so that they combine to provide a clear and authoritative message about the content decisions teachers should make" (p. 119).

As noted, Floden and colleagues conducted their survey research before 1983, and, if Cohen (1982) was correct in his conclusion that increased policy activity at the state level create opportunity for increased activity along the different educational levels, the modal district should have taken a more active role in the affairs of local schools following the release of *A Nation at Risk*.

Spillane (1996) determined that this was indeed the case, at least in the two districts he studied. He conducted case-study research in two Michigan districts and detailed their response to state reading policy in the late-1980s and early-1990s. He discovered that how state policy was received at the district level was important to understanding policy effects in schools and classrooms.

Part of the ambiguity surrounding the role of local school districts in the policy process concerns their uncertain role and responsibilities. Spillane (1996) found that district administrators saw themselves as policymakers, not policy implementers. Districts shaped policy rather than transmitted it. Furthermore, pre-existing loyalties and commitments determined the district's response. In the first district, Parkwood, a core group of administrators used the state policy to further their agenda for more literature-

based reading instruction. To this end, district administrators orchestrated opportunities for teachers to learn, revised curriculum guides, and purchased instructional material not directly endorsed by the state. In other words, administrators in Parkwood shaped state policy and, in effect, amplified its message.

In the second district, Hamilton, rather than amplifying the state's intended instructional reform, district administrators buffered local schools from the state's new vision of reading instruction. Hamilton administrators actually intensified their existing policies favoring phonics-based instruction and basal reading through the use of exams that tested traditional, basic reading skills. Furthermore, Hamilton renewed its commitment to the previously adopted textbook series and initiated an elaborate teacher monitoring system that required basic reading instructional practices.

Spillane (1996) offers additional context to Cohen and Hill's (2001) conclusion that policy success depends on teacher learning—namely that teacher learning depends, at least in part, on the policy's reception at the district office. Consequently, teachers received more guidance because of district involvement, and the guidance they received was not always consistent with state priorities. State policy, then, has the potential to create great variation in practice as it is shaped by district officials to whom local practitioners are most accountable.

Micro Level: Teachers and Classrooms

In many ways, Cohen and Hill's (2001) conclusions about mathematics reform in California re-enforced a finding from the previous generation of implementation research—policy cannot mandate what matters and is therefore at the mercy of local will and competence (Berman & McLaughlin, 1974; McLaughlin, 1991). Many of those willing to

engage in reform-oriented professional development were able to change their practice, but these teachers remained in the minority. Most teachers clung to their conventional practice.

Sociological work about the conservatism that dominated classroom affairs was by this time well-developed, though it did not explicitly address how policy can conflict with the demands of classroom life. These researchers concluded that teachers practice under considerable conservative forces including the characteristics and experiences of the typical teacher, a lengthy exposure to conservative instruction, teacher dependence on psychic rewards, and the dilemmas of teaching (Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975).

Lortie (1975) noted that most teachers enter the profession with positive sentiments toward the existing state of teaching practice and that these sentiments are not easily swayed. Most teachers had positive school experiences as students and therefore counter-identifiers (those who enter the profession with the intent to deviate drastically from traditional practice) are rare.

The extensive exposure that teachers have to traditional instruction is another driving force behind the inertia of conservatism. This period, which Lortie (1975) termed the *Apprenticeship of Observation*, is particularly influential in regard to the beliefs and behavior of aspiring teachers and confounds attempts at reform teaching in many ways. First, the *Apprentice of Observation* offers students a simplistic view of teaching that denies students access to the complexities of teacher thought. As Lortie wrote, "Students do not receive invitations to watch the teacher's performance from the wings; they are not privy to the teacher's private intentions and personal reflections on classroom events" (p. 62). The version of teaching that develops in the minds of future teachers is therefore one that

is traditional, simplistic, and easily mastered. The *Apprenticeship of Observation* also provides exposure to only certain types of teaching. Teacher candidates are unlikely to have much exposure to the reform teaching admired by progressive reformers. In fact, the *Apprenticeship of Observation* offers overwhelming exposure to pedagogy that is traditional, conservative, and primarily concerned with transmission of information (Cuban, 1993).

Finally, the *Apprenticeship of Observation* undermines efforts to promote reform teaching because this apprenticeship, which highlights teaching's simplistic and traditional nature, has particularly powerful effects on the minds and behaviors of future teachers. In her research on the complexities of teacher life, Kennedy (2005) contended that teacher practice is largely determined by the experiences that current teachers had while students. She argued, "Underlying teachers' accumulated principles of practice is a set of standing beliefs and values that they may have held since childhood, or at least have held for many years" (Kennedy, p. 35). Furthermore, teachers do not contrast their simplistic view of teaching that they accumulate during the *Apprenticeship of Observation* against more sophisticated conceptions they develop years later as practitioners (Lortie, 1975).

Lortie (1975) and Kennedy (2005) help explain why teaching is so difficult to change. When compared against the overwhelming socialization during the *Apprenticeship of Observation*, policy outlining the merits of reform teaching is unlikely to be sufficient. The *Apprenticeship of Observation* is a self-perpetuating mechanism of conservatism that cannot be overcome by a handful of courses or field experiences designed to reorient candidates to reform ideology. This is particularly true since the typical teacher candidate, through exposure, experience or ideological orientation, is not predisposed to provide the

type of teaching to future students that reformers value. In sum, then, the *Apprenticeship of Observation* shapes teachers' dispositions and conceptions of teaching and then sets teachers on a career path in which they accumulate teaching strategies and tools consistent with their beliefs (Kennedy, 2005).

The rewards of teaching also invite conservatism. Lortie (1975) referred to the rewards that teachers value as psychic rewards, those rewards that they experience when positive things happen in the classroom. Unlike many professionals, teachers cannot rely on extrinsic (e.g., higher pay for exemplary service) or ancillary rewards (e.g., working conditions or fringe benefits), but rather must depend on intrinsic, or psychic, rewards in which they devise their own criterion for quality job performance. This criterion almost always concerns student performance as teachers set goals of what they expect students to know and be able to do. Teachers then feel good about themselves and their students when students successfully meet or exceed these expectations. Teachers begin to rely on this cycle of goal setting and attainment, and this reliance is inevitably complicated by Cohen's observation that any effort to improve the human condition is rife with uncertainty (Cohen, 1988). In order to accommodate uncertainty and ensure success, teachers lower their academic expectations and often employ the most traditional instructional methods to achieve results (Lortie, 1975; Cohen, 1988).

The final factor of conservatism can best be described as the dilemmas of teaching. As Kennedy argued, teachers have intentions for their classrooms and their students that are invariably much broader than the intentions that reformers envision (Kennedy, 2005). It should come as no surprise that these multiple intentions can be incompatible and contradictory. Thus, teacher life is rife with dilemmas that surround the pursuit of often

mutually exclusive intentions. For example, teachers may prize deep student learning on the one hand while also valuing lesson efficiency on the other. Upon extensive classroom observation, Kennedy (2005) concluded that while teachers value student engagement in intellectually demanding activities, lessons so constructed require teachers to relinquish control and deal with unwanted uncertainty. Consequently, teachers are apt to pursue student engagement and progressive techniques only so long as doing so does not interfere with lesson momentum and efficiency.

The four factors that encourage conservatism described here are hardly exhaustive. Indeed, teacher candidate characteristics, the *Apprenticeship of Observation*, dependence on psychic rewards, and dilemmas of teaching are only a few of many phenomena that drive teachings' conservative tendencies, but they do help explain why the nature of teachers and teaching so often frustrate the designs of reformers trying to improve classroom instruction.

At first glance, Cohen and Hill's (2001) account seems irreconcilable with Lortie (1975) and Kennedy (2005). However, it is important to remember that Cohen and Hill (2001) argued that ambitious policy could be effective only when teachers were provided extensive opportunity to learn how to improve their practice, which they seldom were. More typically, fragmented governance and traditional arrangement limited coherent, consistent opportunities for all teachers to learn. Additionally, policymakers had no compulsory or incentive structure in place to promote needed learning experiences, much less ensure them. Ostensibly, then, most teachers were able to persist in the isolated, autonomous practice to which they had become accustomed even in the midst of a promising and ambitious policy.

Meso Level: Teacher Learning Communities and Teacher Learning

A contemporary group of researchers embraced Lortie's characterization of teaching and the work of teachers as isolated, uncertain, and idiosyncratic, but rather than focusing on the experiences of teachers, these researchers adopted an organizational perspective to explain the status of American public schools.

Primarily, these "institutionalist" researchers wanted to track the relationship between the institutional environment and the organizational structures of schools. Institutionalists typically argued that environmental pressures bifurcate school organization into formal and informal structures (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Weick, 1976). In the face of multiple, competing demands and an uncertain technology through which results can be achieved, schools become "loosely coupled" organizations where the functions and activities at one level of the education system are only weakly affected by activity at other levels. The formal structure of schooling embodies environmental values and expectations and satisfies the environment's "socially constructed" expectations for performance (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 349), while the informal structure—comprised of the actual work of the organization—manages the dilemmas inherent in environmental expectations free from external scrutiny. Thus, the informal system is buffered from environmental or formal system influence (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Weick, 1976).

In the world that institutionalists depicted, instructional reform would be exceptionally difficult. Loose-coupling, which provides organizational stability for the uncertain and dilemma-riddled work of teaching, also prevents the formal system from guiding collective action toward communal goals. However, new research emerging in the early-2000s argued that, while schools were firmly rooted in institutional environments to

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which they were beholden, local practitioner interactions in the informal "organic" system allowed for local adaptation, problem solving, and collective effort (Bidwell, 2001).

Bidwell believed that researchers must account for informal structures when considering school production. He wrote, "[Researchers] must consider the problem-solving capacities of faculty networks, the ways in which these networks sustain and enforce local norms and standards of teaching practice, and the consequences of these network specific processes for the ways in which instruction is conducted" (p. 110).

While Bidwell expected "collegially focal subgroups to be strongly bounded and for their local cultures of practice to resist change" (p. 112), he did allow for the possibility that schools with influential "boundary spanning" teachers could innovate and successfully enact reform. In any event, he challenged the notion that teachers were strictly independent, isolated practitioners. Rather, they were affected, at least to some degree, by the internal functioning of the informal group.

Other work in the same year examined the qualities of faculty networks and their role in instructional reform. Conducting research in secondary schools, McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) argued that teacher teams created key contexts for teachers' work and could potentially influence how teachers responded to shifting student demographics.

In most cases, teachers continued to teach as they always had, and then blamed students for their failure to learn course material. Other teachers lowered their standards in response to their new student clientele. Only a small minority of teachers innovated. These teachers held firm on traditional expectations for academic proficiency but changed their practice, engaging students in course content and building on students' strengths and interests.

The bulk of McLaughlin and Talbert's work focused on explaining why, in the face of greater student diversity and academic need, some teachers clung to past practice, or lowered their expectations while others innovated. Ultimately, McLaughlin and Talbert argued that teachers' behavior stems from their beliefs about students and that these beliefs are shaped in their professional communities. The variation in these communities helps explain teachers' different responses to diverse students.

In accord with Lortie's (1975) contention, McLaughlin and Talbert determined that many teachers were isolated, private, and unaffected by colleagues. In these circumstances, teachers were highly unlikely to adopt new practices designed to suit diverse students. Typically, teachers in this environment adhered to prior conceptions of practice. Innovation in this context required herculean individual teacher effort.

Other school climates imposed strong communal norms on teacher behavior. However, these strong teacher communities were typically conservative rather than innovative. Traditional communities established norms of teacher-centered practice and student-centered difficulties. In contrast, teacher learning communities used frequent collegial collaboration to springboard innovative changes to their practice. Both traditional community and teacher learning communities assume a collective stance in defining beliefs about content, students, and instruction. They differ primarily in where the teams placed the locus of control for student success. In traditional communities (like weak communities), teachers placed the burden of success and failure squarely on students. In contrast, in strong professional communities teachers assumed the responsibility for ensuring student success with rigorous academic content. Thus, strong learning

communities blended collective expectations for teaching *and* a collective responsibility for student learning.

McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) described professional communities as "the ultimate makers of educational policy for their students," (p. 138). Professional communities frame practice, either by leaving teachers to their own devices in schools with weak professional communities; pressuring colleagues to cling to traditional conceptions of subjects and students in strong, but traditional communities; or releasing collective teacher energy and expertise on new challenges and solutions, as was typical in professional learning communities. How teachers frame the enterprise of teaching and the purpose of collaboration mattered.

Further research around the same time confirmed the dual importance of institutional environment and collegial interaction, but argued that teacher interactions varied significantly within teams as well as between them. Coburn (2001), for example, conducted research in elementary schools and found that teachers made sense of policy impulses collectively from myriad environmental sources and acted accordingly. Teachers couched policy messages in their pre-existing instructional practices, worldviews, and shared understandings; they then engaged in sensemaking, a process comprised of constructing understandings, gatekeeping, and operationalizing policy.

Despite a common process of sensemaking, teachers often made different meaning of the same policy messages. This variation can be partially attributed to a few factors that affected the sensemaking process. First, organizational arrangements mattered but did not dictate individual teacher's experiences (see also Spillane, Kim, & Frank, 2012). Teachers were formally grouped into grade-level teams, but influential informal networks soon

developed within these teams. Formal teacher networks (i.e., those determined by the organization) brought a diverse group of teachers together to discuss policy demands. In contrast, informal groups were comprised of like-minded teachers. Consequently, "informal settings, because of their pedagogical homogeneity, were more supportive, but also more conservative" (Coburn, 2001, p. 157).

In the formal setting, Coburn found that teachers had difficulty bridging the differences in their worldviews and, thus, formal group meetings featured "out-facing" conversations focusing on how the teachers could satisfy environmental demands. In heterogeneous, formal groups, conversations that challenged teachers' instructional beliefs or practices were rare.

Conversely, Coburn also determined that informal teacher groups had "in-facing" conversations in which teachers talked about matters salient to their classroom practice. Consequently, informal groups appear to have greater potential to change teacher practice. As noted, however, these groups tended to be formed by homogeneous colleagues. Therefore, conversations that challenged existing teacher practice were also rare in informal teacher groups.

Despite the typically conservative sensemaking process, informal networks had the potential to create vastly different teacher experiences within the formal group. If teachers within formal groups self-selected into innovative informal groups, their sensemaking was likely to have ambitious rather than conservative implications. In other words, Coburn's work helps explain how differences within formal groups can account for differences in teacher practice.

In addition to helping teachers make sense of and act upon policy messages, social networks are also influential in the diffusion of instructional innovation (Frank, Zhao, & Borman, 2004). Like Bidwell (2001) and Coburn (2001), Frank, Zhao, and Borman (2004) assumed that teachers are employed in complex organizations that shape their work. They argued "the organization establishes the context for sharing resources and social pressure that is targeted toward the implementation of an innovation" (p. 162).

Frank, Zhao, and Borman found that in addition to teacher perception of the potential of computers and ample resources for implementation, teacher social interactions played a key role in determining the diffusion of an instructional innovation. Specifically, teachers who had access to expert colleagues and who perceived social pressure to use computers increased their technology use for instructional purposes.

The reliance on social connections for innovation has several implications and helps us understand how teacher social interactions shape school performance. First, expert colleagues are an important, but potentially scarce resource and teachers may find themselves either beneficiaries or victims of circumstance (Frank, Zhao, & Borman, 2004). Furthermore, members of any social group will vary in the amount of resources they can secure from their social connections (Coleman, 1988), and those with the greatest need of instructional improvement may also be those who lack the social connections that would help facilitate a change in practice. Third, social interactions can be a conserving as well as an innovating force (Coburn, 2001; Little, 1990; Portes, 1998). Finally, even in the most socially well-connected and thriving school, social resources can be exhausted by a handful of simultaneous initiatives. For schools with little or no social resources or expertise to

leverage, the situation can be much more dire. Schools in greatest need of instructional change are precisely those least equipped to innovate.

Understanding the inner-workings of teacher social interactions helps explain how teachers bridge the formal and informal structures of organizations. Furthermore, focusing on teacher groups reveals how teacher interactions shape organizational performance, how teacher teams influence their colleagues' sensemaking and response to policy messages and innovative practices, and how variation within teams provides teachers different opportunities and explains uneven implementation even among teachers in the same formal teacher group.

Teacher communities and teacher learning. Since Berman and McLaughlin's (1978) findings that local skill and will were the primary determinants of an instructional reform's success, researchers and reformers alike have been interested in how to cultivate the capability of teachers. In other words, reforms would take a considerable learning and, therefore, teachers became both the target and the instrument of reform (Cohen & Moffit, 2009).

One particularly popular response to the need for teacher learning was to call for the work of improvement to occur in situated small communities of same grade-level or content-area teachers. However, such an arrangement would be difficult to attain as typical school organization did not encourage joint teacher work, at least in elementary schools (Bird & Little, 1986). Reformers and researchers were virtually unanimous on the point as the very complexity of the reforms forbid the reliance on the "training paradigm" (Little, 1993) most often relied upon to infuse capacity in the teaching ranks (e.g., Ball & Cohen, 1999; Little, 1984, 1993; Spillane, 2002).

For example, Spillane (2002) drew a sharp distinction between the "behaviorist" tradition where "transmission is the instructional mode, and to promote effective and efficient transmission, complex tasks are decomposed into hierarchies of component subskills" (p. 380) and "situated" experiences where "knowing is the ability of individuals to participate in the practices of communities" (p. 380) and where "learning involves developing practices and abilities valued in specific communities and situations" (p. 380). Furthermore, Little (1999) argued "subsidized teacher inquiry permit[s] learning that is closely tied to the classroom and responsive to the histories and contexts that teachers bring to the discussion" (p. 238).

Despite the promise of joint teacher effort in the work of reform, challenges have proved formidable. Teacher learning in situated contexts requires extensive resources that must be secured at both the organizational and individual teacher level (Little, 1984; Spillane, 2002) and as McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) suggested, close teacher-to-teacher associate is not uniformly positive. Still, teachers can and do learn from their interactions with peers and these interactions could lead to more careful consideration of practice and understanding of teaching (Horn & Little, 2010; Little, 2002) and teacher communities continued to be a locus of improvement of both scholarly and practical interest.

Meso Level: Principal Leadership

The role of the school principal in instructional innovation has been the subject of much debate. For example, neo-institutional theory would suggest that principal-led innovation is unlikely. Bidwell (2001) argued that principals are under constant pressure from the central office to uphold institutional legitimacy and are therefore unable to promote significant departures from conservative practices. Furthermore, he believed that

principals are likely to lack the power, influence, and legitimacy from teachers that would

enable them to lead instructional reform, even if they were so inclined. According to

Bidwell, because of its independent nature, teachers' work requires little administrative

coordination and, as a consequence, principals have little to report to the central office. In

this depiction, the school principal becomes "a major locus of loose coupling" whose main

job responsibility is to manage teacher unrest and prevent unwanted inspection of the core

work of the school.

Earlier qualitative work supports this conception of the principalship. It depicts

principals as being preoccupied with school image and community relations and the

smooth operation of the school's administrative components, but relatively uninvolved and

ineffectual concerning curriculum and instruction (Cusick, 1983; Lightfoot, 1983; Metz,

1978; Wolcott, 1973).

Not all researchers have arrived at this conclusion, however. In the past decade and

a half, research has uncovered ways that principals can play a key part in facilitating or

inhibiting instructional reform. For example, McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) argued that,

just as teacher communities influence what teachers do in the classroom, these

communities, in turn, can be influenced by principal leadership. They wrote:

> Principals set conditions for teacher community by the ways in which they
>
> manage school resources, relate to teachers and students, support or inhibit
>
> social interaction and leadership in the faculty, respond to the broader policy
>
> context, and bring resources into the school. (p. 98)

Still, McLaughlin and Talbert were not optimistic about the prospect of administrators

altering the professional culture once it was well established. They concluded, "teacher

communities, strong and weak, are robust in their resistance to attacks on shared values and knowledge built from experience" (p. 100). In brief, principals are subject to prevailing school norms. Principals who ignore prevailing norms do so at their peril. Principals who disregard established norms for practice are vulnerable to marginalization, ostracism, and ridicule (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

This is not to suggest that principals are completely impotent in the face of established norms. Principals' behavior can, over time, garner them support necessary for leading instructional reform. By showing respect for teachers, regard for others, competence, and integrity, principals can generate trust and build influence (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). McLaughlin and Talbert only pointed out that teacher communities are well insulated against reorientation and that principal influence cannot be assumed. But leadership matters, and in the case of instructional reform, it typically matters a great deal.

Spillane (2006) argued that school leadership is not a zero-sum game, and schools where leadership is distributed among formal and informal leaders are better able to respond to reform efforts. In complex organizations, informal leaders are bound to emerge (Homans, 1950) and capable principals capitalize on this phenomenon to strengthen their schools' capacity to take collective action. Principals can foster or smother teacher leadership endeavors by creating routines that call for the exertion of informal leadership or by ignoring opportunities to secure teacher commitment.

In addition to manipulating the formal and informal structures of the school to develop leadership capacity, principals are also able to shape the policy messages that teachers receive. Coburn (2001, 2005) found that principals shaped the teacher "sense-making" process that ultimately determined how teachers responded to reading reform

policy. Principals privileged some policy ideas and eschewed others; that is, they "bridged"

or "buffered" and thus served as a gatekeeper of reform messages. Coburn concluded that

principal treatment had profound impact for classroom practice. She wrote:

> The principal's construction authorized teachers to use the reading series in
>
> a wide range of ways…There was enormous diversity in the way teachers
>
> came to use the reading series, including several teachers in each grade level
>
> who chose not to use the reading series at all. (Coburn, 2001, p. 161)

However, Coburn did note that such leadership was only possible after "current levels of

collegiality and collaboration….were fostered over many years" (p.160) over which time "a

culture of collegiality outside of formal settings" (p. 160) slowly emerged.

In addition to facilitating teacher social interaction, building trust among the

instructional staff, providing opportunities for informal and formal instructional

leadership, and bridging or buffering policy messages, principals can also shape the

opportunities that teachers have to learn (Youngs & King, 2002). Conducting case-study

research in four elementary schools, Youngs and King (2002) determined that principals

can build capacity for instructional reform "by establishing high levels of trust, creating

structures that promote teacher learning and either…connecting their faculties to external

expertise…or helping teachers generate reforms internally" (p. 665).

Finally, Goddard et al. (2010) used survey research to examine the link between

principal leadership and teachers' collective instructional norms. They found that teacher

perception of principal support was positively and significantly associated with self-

reported use of reform teaching practices (Goddard et al., 2010). This research suggests

that principals can have an indirect, yet powerful, effect on student learning via encouraging teacher use of reform strategies and helping to establish collective norms.

Research in the past decade has contested the image of the impotent principal incapable of leading ambitious instructional reform. Researchers have concluded that principals can foster trust necessary for ambitious reform (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), distribute leadership to secure teacher commitment for reform efforts (Spillane, 2006), bridge or buffer policy messages (Coburn, 2001; Coburn, 2005), promote the teacher learning necessary for successful reform (Youngs & King, 2002), and directly support reform teaching practices (Goddard, et al., 2010).

Analytic Framework

Constructing an Analytic Frame

My study addressed questions about how contextual factors (e.g., supportive principal leadership, collegial interaction) influence teachers' sensemaking of and reconciliation of reform messages in crowded policy environments.

The analytic framework constructed for the purpose of answering this question accounted for two competing and perhaps contradictory notions. First, as I will explain in greater detail in the following section, I assume that individuals in similar contexts act in similar ways. This research requires that assumption. If teaching sensemaking is entirely idiosyncratic, the research can detect no patterns nor reveal social phenomena that help teachers understand their world and act accordingly. The second, perhaps contradictory, idea comes from the implementation literature: local response to policy initiatives is widely variant (e.g., Berman & McLaughlin, 1976).

The purpose of this analytic frame is to account for these two seemingly irreconcilable ideas. In short, the framework must explain how classroom instruction is "produced" while also explaining why local variation—which dominates outcomes—is so prevalent. For this purpose I rely heavily on the prior work of Barr and Dreeben (1983), McLaughlin and Talbert (2001), and Kennedy (2005). Note that the analytic frame provides a broad, general explanation for instructional practice, but in this dissertation I focus strictly on the "meso-level" structures (i.e., principal leadership, collegial communities). This focus is intentional, but the results should be contextualized in the larger analytic frame that makes it clear that these structures are part of a larger system of phenomena.

Barr and Dreeben (1983) argued that the productive work of schooling occurs at several different levels of the educational enterprise and that in order to understand what teachers do in classrooms, one needs to account for the effects of the resources and constraints provided to or imposed upon classrooms. According to Barr and Dreeben, "each level of a school system has its own core productive agenda…We see…a set of nested hierarchical layers, each having a conditional and contributory relation to events and outcomes occurring at the adjacent one" (p. 7). Barr and Dreeben, then, contended that production at one level creates resources for the next, and in order to understand instruction one must examine how resources are translated among contexts. They concluded, "While there is every reason to believe that instruction occurs inside classrooms, the resources consumed in the course of instruction do not necessarily originate there. A proper examination of instruction requires considering how events

happening in various parts of the school system make it possible for instruction to transpire where it does" (p. 62).

Finally, because they were convinced that schools produce instruction but students produce the actual learning, Barr and Dreeben believed that research should focus on how schools provide opportunities for learning (i.e., how they produce instruction) rather than focusing on the student learning itself, an idea that I embrace in my analytic frame.

Like Barr and Dreeben, McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) contended that the contexts of instruction matter and that the additive assumption of traditional regression was misleading if one is seeking to understand school production. In accordance with McLaughlin and Talbert (2001), I assume that school contexts are *embedded* rather than *nested*. In contrast to conceptions of *nested* structures that promote a relationship among levels, that is "hierarchical in structure and additive in…effect on educational processes," (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001, pp. 144-145), *embedded* structure assumes that outputs from each context "are not transmitted directly and evenly by higher-level organization units to lower-level units" (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 145). In other words, rather than transmitting the pressures or resources from the level above, each level actively shapes policy inputs from above and decides what to pass along. Thus, each level can bridge or buffer pressures and resources from the level directly above it to the one directly below it. Among other things, this helps explain why policy messages become increasingly distorted as they approach the classroom (Hill, 2001; Spillane, 2004), why it is so difficult for policy to influence the instructional core (Cuban, 1993; Elmore, 2002), and why local variation in policy implementation is the rule rather than the exception (Berman & McLaughlin, 1976). This "multiple context framework" allows the researcher to consider

how multiple contexts affect teachers' work and to determine how different contextual

combinations shape teacher learning and teacher sensemaking differently. In summarizing

their analytic frame, McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) wrote:

> The notion of embedded contexts cautions against assumptions of additivity
>
> implicit in much of the school-effects research. Attention to context means
>
> more than measuring conditions and assessing their average effects on
>
> teaching and learning; it means looking at effects of coincident conditions. In
>
> this sense, the significance of a particular condition, or a context effect on
>
> teachers' work, is embedded in other context conditions. (pp. 145-146)

Thus, McLaughlin and Talbert preserve Barr and Dreeben's (1983) two tenets that

production of one level of schooling provides resources for the next and that resources are

mediated rather than additive, but the former authors maintained that the contexts were

embedded rather than hierarchical. For the purpose of conceptual clarity, I will use

"contexts" rather than "levels."

Despite the conceptual contributions McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) and Barr and

Dreeben (1983) provide, however, both sets of authors obscured the importance of

classroom circumstances in production of instructional practices. While McLaughlin and

Talbert recognized the importance of students and subjects, they ultimately focused their

investigation on teacher teams. Barr and Dreeben contended that resources at hierarchical

levels determined how teachers grouped students for instruction, and that how these

groups were formed determined the quality of learning opportunities available to students.

However, neither account probed deeply into the dilemmas of classroom life or how these

dilemmas influence what teachers do. For this consideration, I will use Inside Teaching (Kennedy, 2005).

Kennedy described how classroom life undermines the practices that reformers value. Reformers, Kennedy argued, typically press teachers to provide more rigorous content, more intellectual engagement, or universal access to knowledge. Teachers, who are often sympathetic to these goals, have myriad other intentions that cannot be simultaneously achieved and often thwart the demands of reform. My analytic frame assumes, as Kennedy argued, that classroom contexts matter. Teachers' beliefs, preparedness, and competence matter. Students' aptitude, willingness to participate, and classroom dispositions matter. Subjects also influence teacher practices as do the circumstances of teaching. Each of these classrooms factors will be explained more fully in the next section in the context of the entire framework.

Explaining the Analytic Frame

While I am deeply indebted to McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) and how they thought about classroom practice, my analytic frame differs from theirs in key ways. First, it allows for the possibility that the interaction between collegial communities and classroom practices is not uni-dimensional. It is equally likely that classroom practices will affect collegial communities as well as being affected by them. This analytic frame also articulates classroom contextual factors more fully than does McLaughlin and Talbert's analytic frame. McLaughlin and Talbert did not ignore the importance of within-class contexts that shape teaching but their analytic frame obscures the importance of the four within-class contexts I have articulated in my analytic frame (Figure 2.). By placing classroom practice at the

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center of the frame, I have conceptualized how classroom instruction is embedded in larger

contexts and how it is influenced within classrooms.

Each of the classroom characteristics (students, teachers, subjects, circumstances)

warrants further explanation. First, students affect teaching practices. Teachers are likely

to align their goals with perceived student aptitude (Lortie, 1975) or with perceived

student willingness to engage in academic activities (Cusick, 1983; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen,

1985; Sizer, 1985). In response to these considerations, teachers often "bargain" with

students by offering them relaxed academic expectations in return for cooperation and

good behavior (Sedlak et al., 1986).

The teachers themselves also determine teaching practices, as teachers vary in their

preparedness and interest in providing innovative instruction. Teacher behavior is

influenced by their beliefs about students, subjects, and what constitutes good practice, but

these beliefs develop over time and teachers accrue practices in line with their beliefs

(Huberman, 1983; Kennedy, 2005).

Furthermore, subjects may shape attempts to reform teaching practice. It is possible

that some reform teaching strategies (e.g., providing students timely feedback to help them

guide their learning) are more conducive to some subjects than others. Finally, the

circumstances of teaching matter. Teaching practices may depend on how many students

are absent, when the fire drill is scheduled, unplanned disruptions, or the time of day and

the teacher's and students' consequent energy level.

In sum, my analytic frame (Figure 2) accounts for both similarities and differences

in school phenomena. I have embraced the idea that phenomena are influenced by outside

forces that become more salient the closer they get to the classroom and that instruction

also depends on students, teacher characteristics, subjects, and the circumstances of teaching. Furthermore, I have rejected the additive production-function model in favor of an analytic frame that argues that contexts (rather than levels) are interactive and inner contexts mediate those outside them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I had several objectives. I outlined the overall logic of the research as articulated by Ragin's (1994) Simple Model of Social Research (see Figure 3.1). I then used this model to organize the ideas from previous research and explain how these ideas contributed to the construction of the analytic framework. The analytic frame allows for consideration of the dissertation's focus (i.e., mediation and sensemaking of reform at the level of principal leadership and collegial learning teams) in the larger embedded context that other researchers often investigate. In the next chapter, I explain how the analytic frame provided guidance for data collection and analysis. In it, I describe the methods I used to pull evidence from the social settings I studied and explicate how I analyzed these data to construct the findings that I will present in chapters 5-8.

Figure 3.2. Analytic Frame

Larger Institutional and Cultural Environments

State-Level Policy Environment

District Characteristics

Site-Level Characteristics: Principal Leadership

Collegial Communities and Teachers' Opportunities to Learn

Students

Subjects

Instructional Practice

Teachers

Circumstance
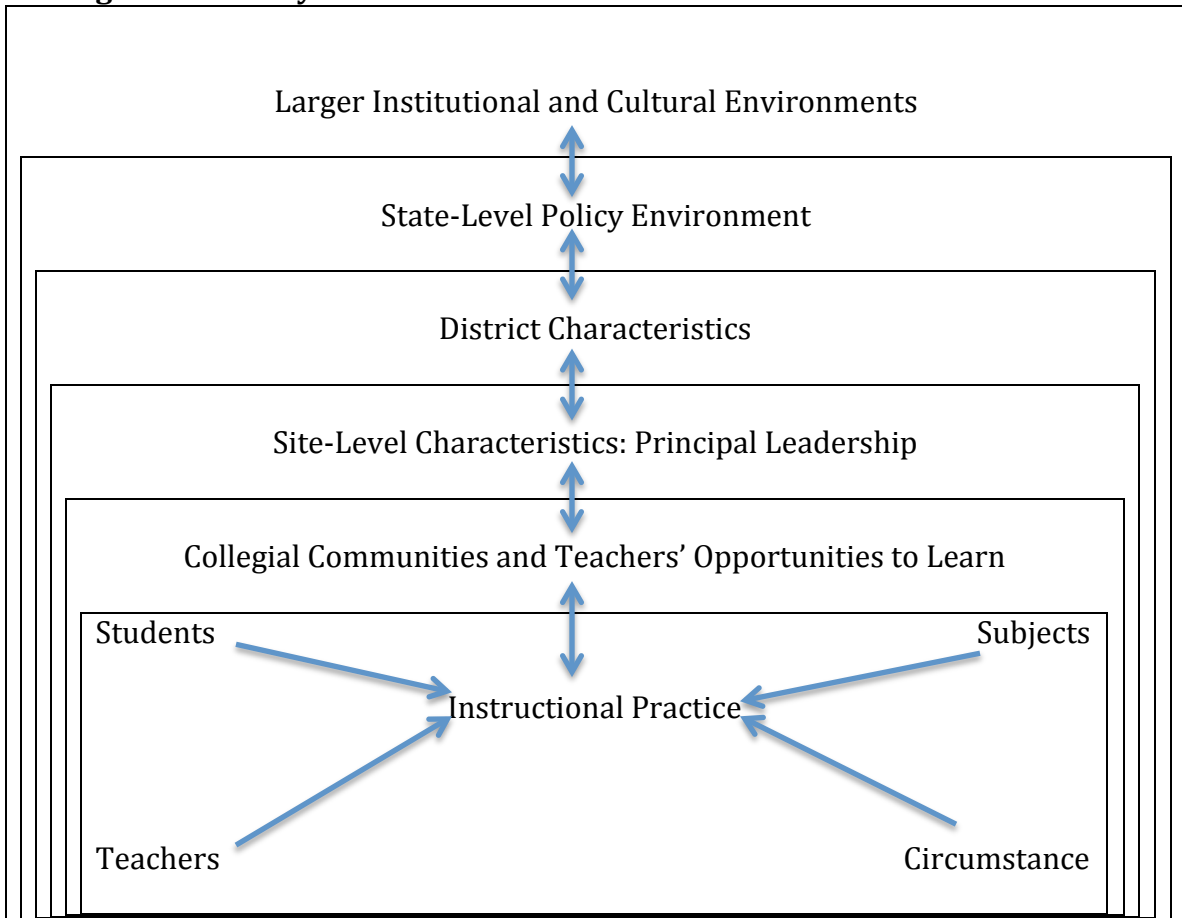
CHAPTER 4: Methods

Introduction

Recall from the previous chapter that I am using Ragin's (1994) model of social research to frame the dissertation. In the last chapter, I built an *analytic frame* from the *ideas* and *social theories* generated from previous research. In this chapter, I describe the *evidence/data* I collected and explain the processes through which I used this data to describe and explain how teachers make sense of multiple reforms. Thus, in this chapter I am focusing on the bottom portion of Ragin's model, as represented in figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1. Data Collection and Analysis
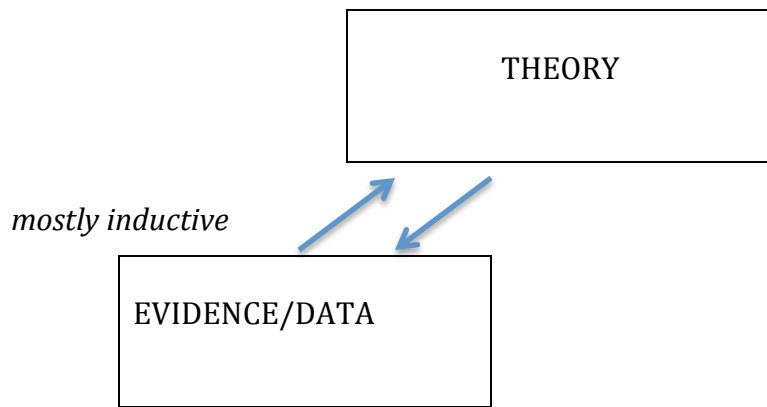
Overview

Howard Becker (1958) once observed that "faced with such a quantity of 'rich' but varied data, the researcher faces the problem of how to analyze it systematically and present…conclusions so as to convince other scientists of their validity" and that "qualitative analysis generally has not done well with the problem, and the full weight of evidence for conclusions and the processes by which they were reached are usually not presented, so that the reader finds it difficult to make his own assessment of them and must rely on his faith in the researcher" (p. 653). The purpose of this methods chapter is to

countermand this tendency and convince the reader of the systematic collection, analysis, and synthesis of data in order to enhance the reader's confidence in the veracity of the findings (Metz, 1983).

The Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to provide an account that describes and explains the social world that surrounds teacher sensemaking of multiple reforms. I wanted to understand the culture—the web of meaning people have constructed in their mutual lives together (Geertz, 1973)—and how this web of meaning affected what people knew and did, and the things they made and used (Spradley, 1980). In other words, this research was intended to generate theory.

By *theory* I mean the relation among general categories of cultural meaning, or *cultural domains*, that help interpret and make sense of data (Becker, 1998). For clarity, my goal was to use the existing ideas about the phenomenon under study generated by decades of implementation research to construct an analytic framework that would help uncover categories of cultural meaning and the interrelationships among these categories. So doing would allow me to describe and explain the particulars of what people said and did and capture the more general patterns of meaning and action.

Once the analytic frame helped me get underway, I used inductive methods to pull theory from the social world and then to explain the logic of that world (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, the patterns of meaning can be generalized to the relationships among the cultural categories in the cases observed and not to some larger population of schools, teachers, or students. With that said, the interrelationship among categories of meaning and the qualities of the categories themselves would likely help explain the cultural

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meaning systems in a larger variety of schools than simply the three observed in this research.

Research Design

While there is some dispute about the term (e.g., Ragin, 1992), the design for this research can most aptly be described as an embedded case study (Yin, 1994). This means that I collected data from several "cases," "sites," or distinct groups of people who were embarking on endeavors similar enough to be productively compared (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Furthermore, each case was embedded with several actors who helped illuminate the social phenomena in similar, but slightly different, circumstances.

This research can also be described as a case study because I had some sense of the major categories of meaning (e.g., principal leadership, teacher collegiality) and the phenomenon of interest (e.g., teacher learning and sensemaking in multiple-reform contexts) before the research began. I used the analytic framework described in the previous chapter to guide the research, direct site and informant selection, and to help construct early instruments for data collection. In other words, this research differed from ethnography in that ethnographers typically search for both general categories of meaning and interesting phenomena in the course of their data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Metz, 2000).

Assumptions about Human Interaction, Behavior, and the Nature of Group Life

I make several assumptions about the nature of human interactions and human behavior. I base these assumptions primarily on Blumer's (1969) work on symbolic interaction which, in turn, rested on the work of pragmatists John Dewey (1915) and George Herbert Mead (1938). Namely, I conducted the research under the assumption that

people make meaning in interaction with one another in specific environments and construct lines of action in response to situations as they have interpreted them.

Symbolic interaction assumes that meaning is socially created, that people respond to meanings of the objects they encounter (objects being any person or thing of which one has reason to take note), and that people craft lines of action in response both to how they have interpreted their situation and how they think others in their social world are likely to have interpreted it.

In any situation, we do not do just as we please. We note the important aspects of the situation (e.g., physical objects, observed actions of others) and the meanings that we and others have made of these same objects. That is, we define our situations as best we can through interpreting the meaning of the objects present in our situation. Once this initial meaning is made (and indeed as it evolves through the course of the situation), we counsel ourselves about the best course of action given the likely actions of others and we act accordingly. Over time, we develop routine ways to act in routine situations, but our actions are always crafted as part of an active process. They are never automatic. As Blumer (1969) wrote, "established patterns of group life exist and persist only through the continued use of the same schemes of interpretation; and such schemes of interpretation are maintained only through their continued confirmation by the defining acts of others" (p. 67).

Social organization can influence (but not determine) human action. In schools, for example, middle school students are organized into subject-specific classes of 50 minutes or so each day, five times a day, for five days a week. This organization directs students to

many routine situations. Over time, students develop perspectives from which they organize their behavior. As Becker et al. (1961) wrote:

Perspective refers to a coordinated set of ideas and actions a person uses in dealing with some problematic situation, to refer to a person's ordinary way of thinking and feeling about and acting in such a situation. These thoughts and actions are coordinated in the sense that the actions flow reasonably, from the actor's point of view, from the ideas contained in the perspective. (p. 34)

People's behavior makes sense if you can understand their situation and the underlying meaning system they have created to help them craft their actions. Culture exists to the extent that the meanings extend beyond the individual and some generalized or group perspectives can be revealed. For the most part, people working in routine situations will craft joint actions that allow for peaceful group functioning. The general patterns of behavior that emerge in response to similar situations make theory building possible. In other words, socially objective and verifiable facts emerge from the study of the subjectively constructed meanings consequent of social interaction. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) wrote, "Society does indeed possess objective facticity. And society is indeed built up by activity that expresses subjective meaning" (p. 18). In sum, the basic representation of symbolic interaction is as follows:

social organization ➔ routine situations ➔ perspectives ➔individual and social acts

Role of the Researcher

It was important that I adopt a role as a researcher that was congruent with the purpose of the research (understanding, describing, and explaining the cultural web of

meaning) and the assumptions that I make about the nature of human interaction and activity.

The role that I assumed during this research project can most accurately be described as that of the participant observer. Since there is some ambiguity about the nature of this role, the purpose of this section is to both define the role and describe the logic that governs its employment. Becker (1958) described the participant observer role in this way:

> The participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group he studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters into conversation with some or all of the participants in these situations and discovers their interpretations of the events he has observed. (p. 652)

Since my primary objective was to generate theory using symbolic interaction to help describe and explain the social world of teachers and administrators, the participant observer role made sense. I needed to experience the routine situations from which teachers and administrators formed their perspectives and generated action and to observe others as they were thus engaged. During the course of the research, I regularly graded papers, helped teachers organize classroom materials, attended professional development sessions and staff meetings and sat among the teachers and participated in activities, walked the halls, ate lunch with the teachers, played basketball with students, sat among students during class, and the like. In sum, I observed people in the routines of their daily life while at school and participated in many of the activities they did.

In Spradley's (1980, pp. 58-62) description of the various levels of participation in the participant observer role, my role can most accurately be described as the "moderate participant." In this role the researcher "seeks to maintain a balance between being an insider and an outsider, between participation and observation" (p. 60). As will be more evident in the pages that follow, I never intended to abandon the observer role and acquit myself as a full participant.

Context of the Study

Michigan provided a suitable context for studying how teachers make sense of crowded policy environments, how embedded contexts affect teacher sensemaking, and how instructional reforms are defeated on their way to the classroom.

First, at the time of the study, Michigan was on the verge of launching a new educator evaluation system. In 2011, Michigan State Assembly Bill 4627 was enacted into law. The law, written in response to the federal Race to the Top competition, significantly altered how teachers in the state would be evaluated and how personnel decisions would be made.

The new evaluation system dictated that decisions about teacher retention be based on a system of teacher performance, replacing a system in which most important decisions about teachers were based on teacher seniority. New legislation forbid this prior arrangement. The language of the law demanded that "individual performance shall be the majority factor in making [personnel] decisions" (Public Act 451. 380.1248, 2011) and that individual performance be determined by evidence of student growth, a teacher's demonstrated pedagogical skill, content knowledge, classroom management, and disciplinary and attendance record.

Although individual performance constituted the majority of a teacher's evaluation under the new system, the law also allowed for other contributions to be factored in a teacher's overall evaluation. Specifically, any accomplishments that strengthened school-wide improvement efforts or relevant training that could be applied to the classroom in meaningful ways could count in a teacher's favor.

Despite these latter considerations, however, by the 2015-16 school year, the bulk of the new evaluation system's weight would rest on how a teacher's average student achievement relates to the mean student achievement of the average teacher, or a teacher's "value-added." According to the law, at least half of a teacher's overall evaluation must be based on a teacher's "value-added" score by this time (with the other half being based on observations of teacher performance). If using a combination of these measures results in a rating of "ineffective" for three consecutive years, that teacher must be terminated.

As suggested in the previous paragraph, the teacher evaluation system in general and the "value-added" component in particular were ramping up during the time of the study. After a pilot year in 2012-2013, the evaluation system was implemented throughout the state in the 2013-2014 school year (the year when I collected data for this study). The value-added component was scheduled to increase in its importance as the system matured. For example, value-added measures were only expected to constitute 25% of a teacher's evaluation in 2013-14. This number increased to 40% by 2014-15 and was then to increase to 50% in 2015-16.

Michigan also was in the process of implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) at the time of the study. The supporters of the CCSS believed that the standards represented a step forward from *No Child Left Behind*, which allowed states to develop

their own standards and assessments, many of which critics claimed were of dubious

quality. The CCSS, proponents argued, would transform teaching and learning, as they

called for high-level engagement with rigorous academic material and then testing students

using assessments designed to elicit and measure conceptual thinking and understanding

(Rothman, 2011).

Finally, at the time of the study the Michigan Department of Education was

sponsoring a small, voluntary instructional reform designed to help teachers enact

formative assessment tools and strategies in their classrooms. In 2008-09, the Michigan

Department of Education launched the Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators

(FAME) project. The project was designed to encourage formative assessment practices in

the classroom of participating teachers.

The project began and remained relatively small. In the 2013-14 school year, FAME

included roughly 100 school-based teams and 500 teachers across the state. Coaches and

learning team members were selected on a voluntary basis, and before joining a learning

team, prospective learning team members were informed of their responsibility to attend

regular meetings, implement formative assessment tools and strategies in their classrooms,

commit to staying with the program for at least three years, and participate in research on

the project conducted by a team from Michigan State University.

The concept behind the FAME project model was straightforward—offer initial

training for all learning team members with additional training for coaches, make reform

documents and online resources readily available, and provide enough local flexibility to

allow for productive adaptation.

The meaning of the formative assessment process itself was contested both in scholarly communities and in practice, but the MDE promoted a version of formative assessment that extended far beyond the benchmark testing for which formative assessment was sometimes confused. Rather, the MDE believed that formative assessment should fundamentally alter the instructional triangle—how students and teachers interacted around content (Cohen, McLaughlin, & Talbert, 1993). Formative assessment was a process through which teachers and students interacted about content in the context of clear instructional goals for and iterative reflection on current levels of understanding. Essentially, formative assessment required that teachers mediate student thinking and help propel student learning as a consequence of this mediation. Heritage and Heritage (2013) referred to formative assessment as "edge work" in which both students and teachers worked on the boundaries of current understanding—students as they sought to understand new concepts and teachers as they attempted to keep up with evolving student understanding and to devise ways to effectively intervene.

Sampling Strategy

During the course of the study, I collected data at three middle schools in three different school districts in Michigan—Willard Waller Middle School, Edgar Allan Poe Middle School, and Middleton Middle School. The three schools selected for study were involved in the FAME project and the teachers studied were restricted to those on the FAME team at each school. Despite this restriction, I wanted to collect and analyze data that captured the variation in the larger case of all FAME schools as well as possible (Becker, 1998). To this end, I sampled learning teams according to theoretical interest rather than representativeness to a larger population (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The three schools

varied considerably in geographic location, ethnic makeup, and urbanicity. Teachers within

teams were likewise various. Each of the three learning teams was comprised of middle

school teachers from various academic disciplines: mathematics, English/language arts

(E/LA), Spanish, science, history, and electives. Teachers varied in their rationale for

joining a learning team and their demonstrated commitment to the program. Finally,

learning team coaches of the three learning teams also varied in their positions in the

school. A summary of each school's characteristics is included in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Overview of Middle School Sample

School	Urbanicity	School Size	Learning Team Coach	Race Composition
Willard Waller Middle School	Urban	1200	Administrator	Mostly non white
Edgar Allan Poe Middle School	Rural	750	Teacher/Instructional Coach	Mostly white
Middleton Middle school	Semi-rural	500	Teacher	Mostly white

This sampling scheme was designed to capture variation of the embedded contexts

of teachers' work that might explain how such contexts (described in the analytic frame)

affect teacher sensemaking, but it was not without tradeoffs. As McLaughlin and Talbert

(2001) noted:

An embedded sampling design is never able to capture all important context

variables or their combinations. However, it offers perspective on the

embeddedness of teachers' work in multiple settings and contexts—a

perspective that is lost in both large random samples of schools and in-depth

case studies. (p. 150)

The sample of schools and teachers allowed me to investigate the "embeddedness of

teachers' work in multiple settings" that McLaughlin and Talbert wrote about. Below I

provide an overview of the teacher sample. Please note that these teachers are those that I

interviewed at least once and that, for reasons of my own capacity and some teacher

reluctance, I was not able to actively collect individual data from all teachers on the

learning team at each school. For these teachers, I only captured their participation while at

learning team meetings.

Table 4.2. Teacher Sample Overview

Teacher	School	Subject
Mrs. Quincy	Middleton	Mathematics
Mrs. Herman	Middleton	Reading
Ms. Carroll	Middleton	English
Mr. St. Johns	Middleton	Science
Ms. Turner	Middleton	History
Ms. Dixon	Edgar Allan Poe	Math
Mrs. Reid	Edgar Allan Poe	E/LA
Ms. Cunningham	Edgar Allan Poe	E/LA
Mrs. Monahan	Edgar Allan Poe	E/LA
Mrs. Curtis	Willard Waller	Spanish
Mrs. Jackson	Willard Waller	E/LA
Mrs. Hall	Willard Waller	Science
Ms. Stickle	Willard Waller	Science
Mr. Bridges	Willard Waller	Science
Mr. Trotter	Willard Waller	Science

Data Collection

Overview

Teachers involved in the study had several potential levels of participation. First, teachers

could agree to being videotaped during learning team meetings and not otherwise

participate in the study. Securing this initial agreement was a prerequisite consideration

for a team's participation in the study. Next, individual teachers could make themselves

available for one-on-one interviews. The number of interviews varied depending on a

teacher's interest and availability. I interviewed 14 teachers an average of four times over

the course of the year. The typical interview lasted between 45-60 minutes. Finally,

teachers could allow me to observe them teaching in their classrooms. Observations were

of two types—video recording and fieldnotes.

Observations

The purpose of the observations was to capture meaningful encounters among students, teachers, and administrators; note the different roles that people assumed under different institutional circumstances; and to detail the practices—those "recurrent categories of talk and action[that] the participants regard[ed] as unremarkable and as normal and undramatic features of ongoing life" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 103)—that result from institutional living. I conducted observations of meaningful encounters, roles, and practices in three broad areas: hallways, teacher meetings, and classrooms.

Hallways. As is common in the participant observation approach, not all of my observations were focused or intentional. I spent a good amount of time wandering the halls or sitting in the office and striking up conversations with teachers, administrators, and students. After these brief and serendipitous encounters, I would typically go off and write about what had happened and any insights I had gleaned during the conversation. These informal encounters proved a great supplement to the more formal observations of teachers' classrooms, learning team meetings, staff meetings, and other professional development opportunities.

Teacher meetings. Teacher meetings included FAME learning team meetings, staff meetings, and other professional development sessions in which teachers participated. While I attended and videotaped each of the learning team meetings (see Table 4.3 below) at the three schools in the study, my data collection at the other teacher meetings was much less intense. In total, I attended only a single staff meeting, the all-day FAME Launch into Learning event, two professional development sessions (Waller and Poe), and one department meeting (Waller only). I compensated for this relatively light collection by

interviewing teachers at length about their professional development experiences aside

from their participation in the FAME program. All FAME related teacher meetings (i.e.,

learning team meetings and the FAME launch) were videotaped in their entirety. I wrote

extended fieldnotes for the few professional development trainings and staff meeting I

attended.

Table 4.3. Teacher Meeting Observation Overview

School	Learning Team Meetings*	Professional Development Trainings	Staff Meetings	FAME "Launch" Professional Development
Willard Waller	5	1	1	1
Edgar Allan Poe	3	1	0	1
Middleton	4	0	0	1

* The disparity in observed learning team meetings is due to the variance in the number of times each team
met. All learning team meetings at each of the three sites was observed and videotaped

Classrooms. Although I will be restricting the findings to the consideration of the

meso-level (i.e., principal leadership, teacher learning teams), I collected a considerable

amount of data at the classroom level. Over the course of the 2013-14 school year I visited

and either videotaped or recorded fieldnotes for 122 class periods and 14 teachers. Table

4.4 provides an overview of the classroom observations I conducted.

The original research design called only for video recording teachers, but when

some of the teachers were hesitant about being video recorded I asked if I could observe

them and record written notes (fieldnotes) about what I saw. Each of the 14 teachers who I

asked to observe consented to have me in their classrooms. Only one of these 14 teachers,

Mrs. Turner, requested that I not return after I sent her the fieldnotes I recorded during my

observation. Of the 122 full class sessions that I observed, I recorded fieldnotes for 97 of

these sessions. On the other 25 visits, I video recorded the teacher. The decision to combine

the fieldnote and video recorded observations afforded me several advantages that will be

discussed at length in the pages to come.

Table 4.4. Teacher Observation Chart (Videotaped lessons bolded)

Teacher	School	Subject	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	Total
Mrs. Quincy	Middleton	Math	3.5A	3.5B	4.02	4.30	5.01						5
Mrs. Herman	Middleton	Reading	2.19	2.19	2.19	3.3	3.3	3.3	4.02	**6.02**	**6.03**	**6.04**	10
Ms. Carroll	Middleton	English	3.4A	3.4B	4.03	4.29	4.30A	4.30B	**6.02**	**6.03**	**6.04**	6.04	10
Mr. St. Johns	Middleton	Science	2.20	3.5A	3.5B	3.24	4.02	4.30	5.1				7
Ms. Turner	Middleton	History	2.19										1
Ms. Dixon	Poe	Math	**2.24**	2.24	2.24	**2.25***	**2.26**	2.26	2.26	5.12	**6.05***	**6.06***	10
Mrs. Reid	Poe	English	3.31	4.14	4.16	4.21	4.28	5.01	**5.12**	**5.13**	**5.15**		9
Ms. Cunningham	Poe	English	3.17	3.17	3.26	3.26	3.31	4.14	4.16	4.28	5.05	5.20	10
Mrs. Monahan	Poe	English	3.27	3.31	4.21	4.28	**5.14**	5.14B	**5.15**	5.15	5.19	6.09	10
Mrs. Curtis	Waller	Spanish	**11.19**	**11.20**	2.06	2.06	2.06	2.13	2.14	3.13	3.14	3.14	10
Mrs. Jackson	Waller	English	2.07	2.07	2.13	2.14	3.13	3.14	3.19	3.20	**5.21**	**5.22**	10
Mrs. Hall	Waller	Science	**12.04**	**12.05**	2.07	3.19	4.17	4.24	5.06	5.21	5.23	5.28	10
Ms. Stickle	Waller	Science	3.19	3.21A	3.21B	4.24	4.25A	4.25B	5.06	5.27	5.28	5.29	10
Mr. Bridges	Waller	Science	2.14	3.19	3.20A	3.20B	4.24	5.21	**5.21**	**5.22**	**5.23**	5.27	10
Total													**122**

Writing Fieldnotes

Writing fieldnotes was a more demanding endeavor than videotaping and, as such, I

will briefly explain the logic behind the fieldnotes before describing the logistics that

surrounded my writing them.

Observations of administrators, teachers, and students conducting their routine

activities and composition of fieldnotes based on these observations were one of my

primary methods of collecting and analyzing data. Culture is public (Geertz, 1973) and will

become manifest as people go about their lives in interaction with one another (Blumer,

1969). For this reason Geertz (1973) wrote, "Behavior must be attended to, and with some

exactness, because it is through the flow of behavior—or, more precisely, social action—

that cultural forms find articulation" (p. 17). Through writing fieldnotes, I attended to

behavior as Geertz suggested the researcher must.

Writing fieldnotes is a diverse activity that can differ in purpose and process. In this section, I describe the process of writing extended fieldnotes from the jottings I recorded in the moment and the "headnotes" (Sanjek, 1990) I made while observing the various activities at each of the schools.

Jottings. My in-the-moment writing was never comprehensive. Rather, when conducting informal classroom visits, sitting in the front office, walking the halls, or watching a meeting, I often hastily wrote brief notes, or j*ottings*, that I could rely upon later to write an elaborated account of the day's events.

Jottings were a necessary and integral part of the research. While in the field I often had little chance for in-the-moment writing, yet I wanted to capture what people said and did in concrete detail for later analysis. Events in the field often happened too quickly or withdrawing from the field to write more extensively would have interfered with observations. Thus, jottings were an attractive compromise that I employed often.

Even under these constraints, I honored a few key principles when writing jottings as best I could. First, I used jottings to record sensory details that would likely trigger memories that I could record more fully when I had more time to write. I also focused on the specifics of what people said and did and avoided recording generalized patterns of meaning. The goal of the jottings was to record concrete details of social interactions, not to interpret.

Although I avoided recording generalizations or ascribing meaning to events in in-the-moment writing, the process was not free of analysis or speculation about an interaction's importance. Inscription is its own type of analysis (Geertz, 1973) and by writing anything I was making certain judgments about what was potentially significant

about a social scene. Theoretical interests informed the types of interactions I was interested in and several moments of intuition emerged when writing the jottings. I tried to be sensitive to these feelings of importance and I often wrote these speculations as *asides*, but not at the expense of recording the salient concrete details.

Extended fieldnotes. At the end of field visit, I combined the jottings I made during the observation with my headnotes to write extended fieldnotes. This section describes how I achieved these elaborations. While it is true that fieldnotes are not "collections or samples decided in advance to set criteria" (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 2011, p. 14), I nevertheless adhered to several guiding principles when writing fieldnotes.

The first principle required that I attend to writing extended fieldnotes as quickly as possible. This commitment to timely writing was one that I seldom breached despite the many temptations to put off writing until later. I committed to immediacy for two reasons. The first reason was personal. I reasoned that I would dread the prospect of writing extended fieldnotes if jottings began to accumulate. The second reason was more important to the quality of the research. As Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) explained, "notes composed several days after observation tend to be summarized and stripped of rich, nuanced detail" (p. 49). In the field, this meant that I would look for a quiet place to sit and, whenever possible, write (with the help of the jotting) immediately after an observation.

When elaborating jottings into full fieldnotes, I tried to recall and record events as quickly and accurately as I could using vivid language and active verbs without concern for proper grammar, usage, word choice, or the quality of the prose.

Next, I wrote extended fieldnotes using active voice. I drew on narrative conventions to add context and coherence to the observations that, in this way, extended the jottings written hastily in the moment. Extending jottings with active voice and concrete details allowed me to capture the specific interactions among teachers and students that were vital to my research. Active voice is a syntactical construction in which sentences include a subject, action verb, and, typically, a direct or indirect object. Committing to active voice was not strictly a stylistic choice, but also a substantive one. As Becker (1986) explained:

> We seldom think that things just happen all by themselves, as passive verbs suggest, because in our daily lives people *do* things and *make* them happen. Sentences that name active agents make our representations of social life more understandable and believable…Almost every version of social theory insists that we act to produce social life…but…syntax often betrays [these] theories. (Becker, 1986, pp. 79-80)

Since understanding interactions is the key to unlocking constructed social meanings (Blumer, 1969), it was essential that I first captured what people said and did and to whom accurately. This would not have been possible using passive voice, which obscures action.

Advantages of fieldnotes. In this research, writing fieldnotes began as a way to get administrators, teachers, and students to become more accustomed to my presence and to get a better sense of what I was interested in. I hoped that by achieving these two goals, teachers would eventually let me videotape their classrooms, and when they did, my presence would not be a major distraction. This approach was successful, and I ultimately videotaped seven teachers after first conducting several observations and writing

fieldnotes that corresponded with what I saw. However, fieldnotes became a major part of the research in their own right and exposed many of the limitations of videotaping.

First, conducting observations and writing fieldnotes (for the sake of simplicity I will call these fieldnote observations) helped me capture typical routines. For example, teachers were more likely to try something innovative or ambitious on the days I videotaped (although this was less true of the teachers I taped after conducting several observations). In contrast, during fieldnote observations I was able to observe a teacher's typical instructional sequence.

Fieldnote observations also allowed me to observe the mundane activities of school life. For example, during fieldnote observations teachers talked at length about upcoming fieldtrips, a class's behavior for the substitute the previous day, or upcoming school events.

Collecting and sharing fieldnotes. While much of what follows concerns the interactions I had with teachers surrounding their teaching, it captures my approach to the research more broadly and describes how I established the validity of the fieldnotes I wrote. I also shared fieldnotes from the meetings I observed (but did not videotape) with any teacher or administrator who was present. However, neither teachers nor administrators ever commented on the meeting fieldnotes I sent them.

As noted, when many teachers were reluctant to be videotaped at the beginning of the research I asked teachers to let me observe in their classrooms. I told them that, given their permission, I would be coming into classrooms to observe and record. I would come in with a notebook and nothing else. Finally, I would share with teachers what I had written. All 14 teachers who I asked to observe obliged and only one teacher (Mrs. Turner) requested that I not return.

I was very careful at the beginning to arrange fieldnote observations ahead of time, but as the year went on teachers seemed much less concerned and most teachers (with the exception of Mrs. Dixon, Mrs. Monahan, and Mrs. Quincy) welcomed me anytime.

I also shared my extended fieldnotes with the teachers first as a way of building trust (or at least being transparent about my intentions). Fieldnotes, while strictly descriptive, often did not portray teacher's classrooms favorably. Via email, I sent teachers the notes within 2-3 days and each time I included a note in which I encouraged teachers to treat the fieldnotes as a work in progress and to challenge the fieldnotes if they were errant. Some teachers (Mrs. Quincy, Mr. St. Johns, Ms. Dixon, Mrs. Reid, Ms. Cunningham) likely never read the notes, or if they did, said nothing to me about them. However, most teachers did respond to the notes either verbally or in writing.

Teachers' verbal responses to the notes were exclusively favorable. Several teachers (Mrs. Herman, Ms. Carroll, Ms. Turner, Mrs. Monahan, Mrs. Curtis, Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Hall, Ms. Stickle, Mr. Bridges) mentioned how they found the fieldnotes entertaining to read and appreciated the way the notes captured classroom life, particularly the fieldnotes' emphasis on the student experience. Many of these same teachers expressed to me that the fieldnotes were also of great benefit to them, particularly as they helped them reflect on their teaching.

While verbal exchanges with teachers about their notes were entirely positive, on three occasions (once each for Mrs. Herman, Mrs. Jackson, and Mrs. Monahan) teachers either provided helpful feedback or commented on the notes in such a way that made me concerned that the notes were making some teachers feel bad about their teaching.

In one of the three cases when my notes elicited a written response from a teacher, Mrs. Jackson provided me with additional information to help me understand the contexts of her classroom and make better sense of the interactions between her and her students. I have included three sections of the extended fieldnote that I wrote and sent to Mrs. Jackson and her subsequent email that provided me with more information. What I wrote:

With one notable exception, students begin reading when Mrs. Jackson instructs them to do so. One student in the back has a desk full of binders and assorted paper but no book. He is sitting with his arms crossed, leaning back with the hood of his sweatshirt pulled over his head and looking straight ahead.

Later I wrote:

Most students begin writing immediately. The student who had his arms folded and his hood on and was not reading earlier is a notable exception. Mrs. Jackson seems to notice this, too. She approaches the young man and sits in the vacant desk directly in front of his. She talks to the student in a very quiet whisper. The talk appears to be of a personal (rather than academic) nature.

Finally I wrote:

The student who did not read during silent reading time and did not write during the 5-minute writing time is also not sharing his ideas for writing. Mrs. Jackson approaches him yet again, but seems reluctant to confront him directly. The student makes it clear that he does not want to share his ideas nor does he intend to. "Can you just listen, then?" Mrs. Jackson asks, evidently hoping that the young man will be willing to attend to his classmates' ideas as they share.

Once Mrs. Jackson leaves, the young man stretches, leans back, and yawns. It is difficult to tell whether he actually listens to any other student as he or she shares their options for writing.

A few days later, I received the following email from Mrs. Jackson:

John,

Just some quick notations on the notes. 2nd hour, the student you noted that refused to write, or read, or really do anything, (with his hood up) he is SEVERELY AUTSITIC. He does well responding one on one to me verbally, but ANY attention (helping or otherwise) sets him into a frenzy. I am often walking on eggshells around him. The students are VERY good with him. I have weekly conversations with mom (who is also a teacher in the district) and she works with him one on one at home, he completes all work with her, and then gets it back to me. This system is working for him for the time being.

Mrs. Jackson

I quickly replied by thanking Mrs. Jackson for her diligence and adding the information to the fieldnote (being sure to separate it as information learned later).

In neither this nor the other two cases did the teachers' written feedback to the fieldnotes jeopardize or in any way impair the working relationship between the teachers and myself. In fact, in all three cases the teachers expressed their approval of the notes and their gratitude for having access to another, non-evaluative perspective on their teaching.

I never heard directly from the one teacher (Mrs. Turner) in my sample who did not want me to return. I heard only through Mrs. Herman that Mrs. Turner was uncomfortable with my presence. I would still see Mrs. Turner in the hallway from time to time and we

would talk cordially, if briefly. If she had any lingering animosity toward me, she hid it well and I was unaware of it.

Finally, while the fieldnotes may be altered slightly for stylistic and grammatical reasons, they appear in the findings sections almost exactly as the teachers saw them. However, the later analysis and the meaning I constructed from the classroom events would be new to them.

Limitations of the fieldnotes. Fieldnotes, then, provided me with a unique data source. However, fieldnotes have limitations. First, although I did the best I could to record concrete details, fieldnotes do not provide a verbatim or comprehensive account of classroom life. Undoubtedly, I missed interesting events when I was scribbling notes in my notebook rather than looking up and observing. There were also times when the speed of classroom interactions overwhelmed my capability of writing them down or remembering them all when I later sat down to write the extended notes.

Furthermore, one might suspect that teachers, upon reading the fieldnotes, altered their practice to make a more favorable impression on me or that they used the fieldnotes to reflect on, and immediately improve, their classroom instruction. If anything, however, the fieldnote record that I constructed over several months in each teacher's class captures the routine consistency of teaching that persists over time. If I redacted the date from each of the notes and scrambled them, one would be hard-pressed to reconstruct them in the proper order. In other words, I do not believe that teachers altered their practice in any measurable way in response to having access to my notes.

I relied heavily on Spradley's (1979; 1980) ideas for the construction of interviews and for the collection and analysis of interview data. I interviewed all of the 13 teachers who I observed more than once or videotaped plus one other teacher (Mr. Trotter) who declined to be observed or taped but who wanted to participate in the interviews. In total, I interviewed each of the three principals (Ms. Shriver, Mr. Delancey, Mrs. Novak) at least twice. Finally, I interviewed students over the course of two days in the late spring. In total I interviewed eight groups of 4-5 students each. With the exception of the student interviews, I adhered to the development sequence for interview constructed as outlined in Spradley (1979). It is important to note, that collection and analysis of interview data occurred simultaneously, but for the sake of clarity I separate them here for the reader's consideration. Greater consideration for some of the terms introduced in this section (e.g., cultural domains) will be discussed at greater length in the data analysis section. All interviews were audio recorded in their entirety. A summary of the interviews I conducted is included below in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Interview Summary

Informant Name	School	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	Interview 4	Interview 5	Interview 6	Total
Mrs. Jackson	Waller	11.21	2.07	5.22	5.23	5.27	5.28	6
Mrs. Curtis	Waller	10.10	11.19	2.07	5.22	5.23	5.27	6
Ms. Shriver	Waller	10.10	01.23	4.21	5.21			4
Mr. Trotter	Waller	12.05	02.14					2
Mr. Bridges	Waller	10.10	02.13	05.06	5.21	5.22	6.05	6
Mrs. Hall	Waller	10.10	12.05	5.27	6.05	6.12		5
Ms. Stickle	Waller	11.07	2.14	5.28	5.29	6.05	6.12	6
Ms. Dixon	Poe	12.03	6.06					2
Mrs. Reid	Poe	3.31	5.05					2
Ms. Cunningham	Poe	3.17	5.05	5.15	5.30			4
Mrs. Monahan	Poe	3.31	5.19	6.09	6.09	6.09		5
Mr. Delancey	Poe	3.26	5.13	5.19				3
Mrs. Quincy	Middleton	6.10						1
Mrs. Herman	Middleton	2.19	5.01	6.02	6.03A	6.03B		5
Ms. Carroll	Middleton	3.04	6.03	6.04	6.10	6.11		5
Mr. St. Johns	Middleton	4.03	5.01	6.10				3
Mrs. Novak	Middleton	4.03	6.03					2
Students	Waller	6.12	6.12	6.12	6.13	6.13	6.13	8
Total Interviews								75

Initial Interviews

Initial interviews were semi-structured and intended to establish rapport with informants. These interviews featured *descriptive* questions that asked informants about their experiences in education, how they joined a FAME learning team, their impressions of the FAME project, what they hoped to gain by participation on a FAME team, and any challenges they anticipated in the coming year.

Follow-Up Interviews

As is typical of the ethnographic interview approach, follow-up interviews probed into the various themes that emerged from initial data collection and were universally asked of all informants. Other questions were based on particular interviews or observations and were thus informant-specific. These latter question types emerged from earlier interviews, comments the informant made at a learning team meeting, or through conversations that surrounded viewing the informant's classroom teaching. In any case, interview questions stemmed directly from prior interviews, classroom observations, and learning team meetings.

Descriptive questions. Descriptive questions ask informants about the "setting[s] in which [they] carry out routine activities" (Spradley, 1979, p. 85). Many of my initial interview questions were descriptive. For example, I asked informants to tell me about their background in education, their current role, and about the challenges they faced. While interviews gradually became concentrated on structural and contrast questions, all interviews were sprinkled with periodic descriptive questions.

Structural questions. Structural questions require informants to comment on their cultural knowledge and the contents of the cultural domains (e.g., categories of meaning)

that populate their lives. In Spradley's (1979) words, "structural questions all function to explore the organization of an informant's cultural knowledge" (p. 131). Cultural domains are the categories in which people organize their social life and are critical to understanding the social phenomenon under study.

Structural questions are of five varieties: *verification*, *cover term*, *included term*, *substitution frame*, and *card sorting questions*. A brief description and example of each of the types of structural questions is included in table 4.6.

Table 4.6. Types of Structural Questions

Type of Structural Question	Purpose of Question Type	Example
Verification	Confirms or disconfirms hypothesis about a cultural domain.	Do teachers try to engage students in course material? Is student engagement something that you think about often?
Cover Term	Determines the possible existence of a cover term that might contain two or more included terms.	Are there different ways that teachers try to engage students in course material?
Included Term	Establishes the existence of terms that belong to the "category of knowledge named by the cover term" (Spradley, 1979, p. 100).	What are some ways that teachers try to engage students in classroom activities?
Substitution Frame	Explores other included or cover terms in a cultural domain by omitting a key word and asking informants to complete the cloze sentence with an appropriate term.	*Original statement:* Building relationships with students is a way to encourage student engagement. *Substitution Frame:* Complete the following sentence by substituting an appropriate term that is not about building relationships: _____ is a way to encourage student engagement.
Card-sorting	Establishes the boundary of a cultural domain through asking the informant to organize cards with included terms under the appropriate cover term.	Interviewer writes one potential included term on each of several 3x5 cards, presents these cards to the informant, and asks, "Which of these strategies do you use to help students engage in classroom activities?"

Contrast questions. Once I had some sense of the cultural landscape (i.e., I knew something about the meaning systems that informants used to make sense of their lives

and organize their experience), I was ready to ask contrast questions. Unlike structural questions, which I used to exhaust the contents (e.g., included terms) of a cultural domain, contrast questions allowed me to understand how the included terms within a domain were similar and how they differed. Asking informants to contrast two or more included terms from the same domain is what Spradley (1979) termed *restricted contrast questions* and these questions, he wrote, are "goldmines of cultural meaning" (p. 158).

Over the course of the research, I used restricted contrast questions of several different sorts. First, I asked questions that verified that a contrast existed, and if it did, I followed up with a variety of different types of restricted contrast questions. For these questions, I often used 3x5 cards with included terms from previously discussed cultural domains. For example, I would show informants two included terms from a particular domain and ask about any differences between the two terms that were meaningful to them. At other times, I would hand informants a stack of terms from a cultural domain and ask them to sort the cards along any dimensions of contrast that were meaningful to them. I would then follow up by asking them why they sorted the cards the way they did. In a similar way, I sometimes asked the informant to rank the cards along some dimension of contrast that I had in mind (e.g., ranking the influences on their instructional practice). Finally, I sometimes handed informants the stack of included terms and asked if the informants could arrange the cards spatially into a system and then asked them to walk me through the logic of the system they had created. In sum, the restricted contrast questions that I asked in dozens of interviews were exceptionally informative and many of the findings are based on the information I gleaned from these questions.

General Interviewing Principles

During data collection, I honored several interviewing principles. First, I adhered to the *concurrent principle* which states "that it is best to alternate the various types of questions in each interview" so that descriptive, structural, and contrast questions are "thoroughly mixed together in an almost random fashion" (Spradley, 1979, p. 121).

I also built the *explanation principle* into the interviews. The explanation principle has a two-fold purpose. First, this principle allowed me to repeatedly express my research goals—namely to understand how teachers made sense of multiple instructional reforms— with the intent of reminding informants that I really did want to know about what they might find commonplace or uninteresting in their work-a-day lives.

Providing explanations also helped me provide informants reminders of past discussions with the hope that these recollections would lead to greater informant clarity and insight, and, consequently, to expanded cultural domains.

With similar goals in mind, I followed the *repetition principle*. That is, I returned to familiar cultural domains time and again both within and across interviews. The logic of the repetition principle is straightforward: many cultural domains are extensive and require repeated attention. In addition to allowing me to exhaust cultural domains, repetition, like ample explanation, sent the message to informants that I really did care about the details of their social worlds.

The fourth principle, the *context principle*, required that I describe the setting in which a cultural domain might be relevant before asking a question. Spradley (1979) writes, "adding contextual information expands a structural question. It aids greatly in

recall and will avoid the problem of making an informant feel he is being tested with a series of short questions" (p. 125).

Finally, I found the *cultural framework principle* useful. With this principle in mind, I varied my questions between the personal and the cultural. For example, I might ask an informant a personal question like "What are some ways that you try to engage your students in academic learning?" and later in the interview, I might ask the same question in cultural terms "What are some ways that you have heard about that teachers try to engage students in academic learning?" Spradley (1979) states the rationale of the cultural framework principle simply: "sometimes an informant needs to be reminded that they know about the experience of others" (p. 126).

Data Processing

All videotaped learning team meetings; student, teacher, and administrator audiotaped interviews; and classroom videotapes were transcribed in their entirety. In addition to the transcripts, I added descriptive detail to all learning team meetings and classroom videotapes. These details included physical movements and other visual artifacts (e.g., gestures, facial expressions).

Data Analysis

Domain Analysis

In Chapter 3, I detailed the process of using deductive analysis to create an analytic frame to guide the beginning of the research. Briefly, this process required reading widely, identifying relevant theory from previous research, and then bringing these theoretical ideas to bear on the data by translating these ideas into a frame around which I could organize the research and develop a plan of action. Constructing an analytic frame before

the research started informed where I would observe, who I would talk to, and what I would ask.

As helpful as this process was, my main intent was to build theory, and for this I needed to induce patterns from the data in a systematic way. That is, using inductive reasoning allows the researcher to be receptive to new ideas that emerge from the data. While the inductive method appeals to a wide variety of researchers, it is of particular importance to ethnographers, whose sole purpose is to understand how people "make constant use of…complex meaning systems to organize their behavior, to understand themselves and others, and to makes sense out of the world in which they live" (Spradley, 1980, p. 5).

Inductive analysis helps researchers uncover and understand cultural meaning and behavior not anticipated or understood by their theoretical framework and thus likely to be missed if one relies on deductive reasoning alone. And since theoretical understanding is both incomplete and inexact, this is sure to be the case (Ragin, 1994). This is not to suggest that deductive analysis is an inferior process, but, simply, an incomplete one.

In this section I detail domain analysis, a method that originated in ethnography (Spradley, 1979; 1980), but also one that can be used by qualitative researchers more generally. While there is no way to "substitute [for one's] own intuition and ingenuity" (Spradley, 1980, p. 92) when conducting inductive inquiry, domain analysis is one method that prevents researchers from having to rely solely on gut feelings or having to wait for meaningful patterns to pop up from the data as a consequence of mysterious processes. Rather, while no definitive method of ethnographic inquiry exists (Van Maanen, 2010),

researchers have devised ways to make inductive inquiry more methodical. Creating

cultural domains via domain analysis is one such way (Spradley, 1979; 1980).

Domain analysis is the foundation of greater cultural understanding, but is only the

first step in a lengthy process that involves identifying cultural domains, selecting the

domains most salient to one's interests, and determining how these domains combine to

create a cultural system of knowledge. Spradley (1979) writes:

An informant's cultural knowledge is more than random bits of information; this

knowledge is organized into categories, all of which are systematically related to the

entire culture. Our goal is to employ methods of analysis that lead to discovering

this organization of cultural knowledge. (p. 93)

Domains are categories of cultural knowledge which, taken together, form an "intricately

patterned system" (Spradley, 1979, p. 97) of social meaning. Domain analysis is the

inductive process of discovering categories of cultural knowledge, and, as will be described

later, using these categories is the foundation upon which ethnographers build a more

complete understanding of the social world.

For the sake of simplicity, we shall substitute the phrase "categories of cultural

knowledge" with the term *cultural domains*. Each cultural domain consists of three

components: *semantic relationships*, *cover terms*, and *included terms*.

Semantic relationships. While the sheer number of cultural domains people create to

organize their worlds are nearly endless, the types of domains are not. Spradley identified

only nine, which are described in detail in Table 7.

Spradley (1979; 1980) calls these nine terms *semantic relationships.* Once one

becomes aware of these semantic relationships—which again Spradley insists are limited

in variety—he or she begins to see them virtually everywhere. People routinely talk about how they do something, why they do it, or in what order. At other times they may talk about the consequences of theirs or other's actions or where actions takes place. Likewise, they are likely to describe an object's characteristics or what the object is used for.

Cover terms and included terms. Finding the appropriate semantic relationship to link *included terms* with *cover terms* is the essence of inductive domain analysis. Simply, cover terms combine with semantic relationships to name the topic of the cultural domain. For example, cultural domains can include "parts of a hand" or "types of cars." Included terms list all of the things that logically fall under the name of the cultural domain.

Table 4.7. Domain Analyses. (Adapted from Spradley, 1980)

RELATIONSHIP	FORM	EXAMPLE
1. Strict Inclusion	X is a kind of Y	*Making in-the-moment instructional decisions (is a type of) challenge teachers face when trying to teach formatively*
2. Spatial	X is a place in Y	*A classroom (is a place in) a school*
3. Cause-effect	X is a result of Y	*Lack of sufficient trust (is a consequence of) unfamiliarity among learning team members*
4. Rationale	X is a reason for doing Y	*Building up one's repertoire of instructional strategies (is a reason for) joining a learning team*
5. Location for Action	X is a place for doing Y	*Learning team meetings are (a place where) teacher sense-making occurs.*
6. Function	X is used for Y	*Trade books (are used for) spreading ideas about teaching*
7. Means-end	X is a way to do Y	*Having students lead conversations with their peers (is a way to) get students to think deeply about content*
8. Sequence	X is a step (stage) in Y	*Allowing students to retake the quiz or complete the learning task (is a step in) the process of improving student performance*
9. Attribution	X is an attribute (characteristic) of Y	*Collecting data to guide instruction (is a characteristic of) formative assessment practice*

Consider for example the statement "a thumb is a part of a hand" or "a Corvette is a kind of car." Each statement contains a cover term (hand, car) and an included term (thumb, corvette) that are linked together through a semantic relationship ("is a part of", "is a kind of"). Granted, cultural domains in social science research are typically more complex than these rather simple examples, but not greatly so. For example, during this research, teachers often talked about the difficulty of eliciting student understanding. Thus, I quickly created a cultural domain like the following in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. Cultural Domain

Included Term	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Eliciting student understanding	Is a kind of	Challenge with trying to teach formatively

Through the year, I created a cultural domain that listed several types of challenges teachers faced when they tried to enact formative assessment practices. Thus, cultural domains contain one cover term, one semantic relationship, but a potentially vast number of included terms. It is the researcher's job to exhaust a cultural domain by discovering as many included terms as possible. Consider, for example, a more complete cultural domain for "types of challenges teachers face when trying to teach formatively" found in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9. Complete Cultural Domain

Included Term	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Eliciting student understanding		
Making in the moment instructional decisions		
	Is a kind of	Challenge with trying to teach formatively
Time and/or schedule constraints		
Providing Effective Feedback		

In the field, cultural domains often occur in bunches and are connected to one another. Researchers can build connections among cultural domains through the process of taxonomic analysis to be discussed in the next section.

Taken together, included terms, semantic relationships, and cover terms comprise a cultural domain. Finding these domains in one's data is the process of inductive domain analysis. The types of cultural categories are small in number, though they contain infinite cultural domains within each of the 9 types (see Table 4.7). Think, for example, how quickly you could come up with "ways to do things" or "characteristics of things" that you encounter daily.

Analysis of cultural domains was instrumental in helping me understand the data and prepare for further data collection. However, I did not abandon my theoretical interests in pursuit of disconnected and diffuse new cultural domains. Rather, through the data collection and analysis, I maintained a balance between inductive and deductive analysis. The forthcoming section on taxonomic analysis provides details of how I narrowed my inductive inquiry with these theoretical interests in mind.

Taxonomic Analysis

I used domain analyses as the primary means through which to analyze and make sense of the interview and observational data I collected. This approach proved quite fruitful. In fact, I soon created more cultural domains than I had time or interest in pursuing. This is not surprising. Spradley (1979) wrote simply, "some aspects of the culture will have to be studied more exhaustively than others" (p. 132) because "an exhaustive ethnography, even for a rather limited cultural scene, would take years of intensive research" (p. 132). Thus, narrowing the focus of one's inquiry is a significant but necessary challenge facing all field researchers. Nor is narrowing of focus exclusive to ethnographic inquiry. Ragin (1994) writes of general social inquiry, "As more is learned about the subject, either through data collection or data analysis, the research becomes more focused and fewer avenues are kept open" (p. 20). This section details how I narrowed my focus to a few salient cultural domains and ultimately how I used taxonomic analysis (Spradley, 1979, 1980) to organize these domains.

There are several ways to narrow one's focus. Researchers can listen to informants' suggestions, pursue their own theoretical or personal interests, or attend to domains that they believe are of particular importance. Because I had strong theoretical interests upon entering the field, the second of these narrowing rationales seemed most sensible. While this rationale provided a guiding principle for narrowing my inquiry, this rationale, by itself, provides no explicit procedure for achieving this end.

After I used my theoretical interests to narrow the cultural domains under consideration, serious taxonomic analysis began. Spradley (1979) wrote, "A taxonomy differs from a domain in only one respect: it shows the relationship among *all* the

[included] terms in a domain." A taxonomy is an outline that details how the cultural

domains one has analyzed all fit together. I began with a cultural domain for which I had

gathered a great deal of data both through interviews and observations. Thus, I started

with the types of challenges teachers faced as they tried to teach formatively.

I then used *substitution frames* (Spradley, 1979) to accumulate as many included

terms as the data warranted. Below is the substitution frame for challenges facing teachers

who try to teach formatively.

1.	Domain: *Types of challenges with teaching formatively*
2.	Semantic Relationship: <u>*Accessing student thinking*</u> (is a type of) <u>*challenge with*</u> <u>*teaching formatively*</u>
3.	Underlying semantic relationship: <u>X</u> is a type of <u>Y</u>
4.	Substitution frame: _____(is a kind) of_____

With each new interview or observation, I added new included terms or added new data

under pre-existing included terms. About midway through the data collection, I began

constructing taxonomies to help me make sense of what I was learning and to point to

holes in the data that I could fill with further data collection.

Componential Analysis

I conducted componential analysis in order to understand the similarities and

differences among the included terms in a cultural domain and among the cultural domains

themselves. Once I had outlined the basic cultural scene using taxonomic analysis, I had a

general map that included a great number of cultural domains and their included terms.

However, I need componential analysis to flesh out the characteristics of the included

terms and the cultural domains. I used restricted contrast questions (see section on

interviewing) that asked the informant about the differences between included terms from

the same cultural domain (hence the *restricted* contrast). For example, when I was working

with Mrs. Jackson, I handed her a stack of 3x5 cards and asked her to separate her

colleagues into two or more piles along any dimension of contrast that was important to

her. She identified 6 *types of teachers* (see Table 9 left column). Thus, the activity allowed

me to determine that Mrs. Jackson had six included terms in her cultural domain *types of*

teachers but I was still unsure about how *friendly, not professionally close* colleagues

differed from *grade level, different subject* colleagues. I wrote each type of colleague on a

separate 3x5 card and I presented Mrs. Jackson any two of the cards and asked her to list as

many differences or similarities as she could think of. She came up with four differences

(see columns 2-5 in Table 9). And I was then able to ask follow-up questions to complete

the *paradigm* for the cultural domain *types of colleagues*. By the conclusion of the research,

I had hundreds of domains like the one included in Table 4.8.

Table 4.10. Paradigm for Types of Colleagues

Type of Colleagues	Different Subjects or Grades Taught	Discuss Curriculum	Discuss Instruction	Discuss Student Behavior
Friendly but not professionally close	Yes	No	No	No
Administrators	NA	No	No	Yes
Grade Level Teachers, Different Subject	No	No	No	Yes
Colleagues with expertise but no routine organizational contact	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Same Subject (PLC) teachers	No	Yes	Yes	No
Same grade and subject (Leo)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Thematic Analysis

Once I had created hundreds of cultural domains (domain analysis), mapped the

cultural scene through outlining how the cultural domains fit together (taxonomic

analysis), and determined the characteristics of the included terms that populated the

cultural domains (componential analysis), I was ready to conduct a thematic analysis. Themes are connective tissue of meaning that bind the cultural domains together and help one make sense of the cultural scene. Spradley (1980) describes themes as "any principle recurrent in a number of domains, tacit or explicit, and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning" (p. 141). Ultimately, by identifying few important themes the researcher should be able to tie the cultural parts (i.e., cultural domains, included terms) together into a more coherent whole. In other words, the researcher should be able to use themes to help make sense of the many seemingly disparate parts that he or she has studied.

While the method for inducing themes from the data is not well worked out, I did employ several strategies to help me to this end. First, I immersed myself in the social worlds I was studying and later in the data I had collected that captured this world. There was no substitute for hours of walking around the school; talking to people; observing social interactions; interviewing informants; writing fieldnotes; listening to and transcribing interviews; analyzing interviews, fieldnotes, and videos; and writing memos about possible connections and larger meanings. Next, I reworked taxonomies I had created to see if another organization scheme was possible. If so, I wrote memos about what made the change possible. If changing the taxonomy (i.e., the relationship among cultural domains) was not possible, I tried to articulate what meaning prevented this change from being sensible. This often led to overarching meaning that impacted the cultural scene. Finally, I reviewed the paradigms I had created during the componential analyses to see if there were any consistent *dimensions of contrast* prevalent across cultural domains.

Writing a Comparative Case Study

        In the chapters that follow, I take the final step in the research process. I write a comparative case study that describes and explains the how the embedded contexts influenced teacher sensemaking of multiple policies.

CHAPTER 5: Instructional Reforms Come to the Three Schools

Introduction

One of the principles of symbolic interactionism is that people take account of objects in the environment, interpret what these objects mean, and construct lines of action in accordance with the way that they understand their situation. This chapter examines how instructional reforms entered into the three schools in the study and thus became objects in school environments that teachers were then required to interpret and enact.

Previous research more or less assumes that instructional reforms travel through traditional channels that extend from federal government or state departments to the district to the principal and ultimately to teachers and classrooms. Furthermore, most research assumes that teachers take some account of instructional reforms and that differences in enactment are due to differences in interpreting the meaning of reform, the teachers' own values and beliefs, and the teachers' prior instructional practices. The accounting, in other words, is taken for granted. This chapter and the chapters that follow challenge this assumption. Ultimately, I will argue that the accounting that serves as the necessary foundation of sensemaking cannot be taken for granted and that many instructional reforms have difficulty pressing in on teachers and being noticed by them, effectively making sensemaking a moot point.

As described in previous chapters, Michigan was a promising state in which to explore the challenges of making sense of and responding to multiple reforms. At the time of the study, Michigan schools—at least to the interested observer—were active with several reforms meant to influence the quality of classroom instruction. However, reforms differed both in kind and in the pathways through which they entered schools. This

diversity of type and route led to differences in reform activity across the schools in this study.

This chapter provides an account of the types of reforms and how the different potential reform routes help explain observed differences across schools. Please note that I define instructional reforms as any program or policy intended to change what teachers teach or how they teach, or both.

Instructional Reforms: Types and Characteristics

This section focuses on the types and characteristics of the different instructional reforms and the routes through which they penetrated school walls. Notably, not all of the instructional reforms that came to the three schools were a result of official state policy. In fact, most of the instructional reforms that emerged as important in this study were not centered around formal legislation. For analytic purposes, I constructed four types of instructional reforms based on their salient characteristics as they emerged from the data: mandated state policies; voluntary state-endorsed and supported programs; ISD/district wide coverage programs; and ISD/district select coverage programs. In what follows, I detail the characteristics of each type of instructional reform.

State Mandated Policies

State mandated policies were those that were state-required through formal legislation. At the time of the study, there were two mandated state policies that affected each of the three schools—educator evaluation systems and the Common Core State Standards.

New educator evaluation systems. As explained in the previous chapter, Michigan was implementing a new law that would significantly alter how teachers were evaluated.

The law required that teacher evaluation be based on an amalgam of how well teachers performed against either a district-created or state-endorsed qualitative rubric of teacher performance and how well teachers promoted student achievement.

At the time of the study, the state allowed districts to measure and determine teacher influence on student performance locally and the state also allowed districts to use a qualitative evaluation framework from an approved list or to develop their own. Two of the three districts in the study (Poe, Middleton) developed their own evaluation instrument. Waller's district used a teacher performance rubric (the *Framework for Teaching*) from the state-approved list.

Despite the varying instruments used by the three schools in this study, these documents sent teachers similar messages about desirable classroom instruction and professional behavior. For example, the rubric for evaluating teaching at Middleton included four domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instructional Pedagogy, and Professional Responsibility. These four domains closely mirrored the *Framework for Teaching* used at Waller which also included four domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. Although the evaluation rubric used at Poe differed in structure from the other two (Poe's rubric was not broken into domains as the rubrics were at the other two schools), many of the specifics were similar. For example, all three rubrics included consideration for clearly articulating academic goals; demonstrating mastery of academic content; providing instruction that actively engaged students in learning activities; establishing procedures that make effective use of instructional time; and varying assessments by purpose and using assessment results to modify instruction.

Common Core State Standards. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were first

adopted by the Michigan Board of Education in 2010. The CCSS were designed to give K-12

teachers clear guidance of what to teach each year in mathematics and language arts,

although the CCSS also contain some implications for cross-curricular reading and writing

of relevance to a wider range of teachers.

To accompany the standards, Michigan signed on with the Smarter Balance

Assessment Consortium (SBAC), one of two large consortia designing large-scale

assessments for the CCSS. However, during the year of the study (2013-14) the SBAC

assessments were not yet available.

The CCSS included messages about both what skills teachers should teach and also

how they were to engage students in learning. In short, the CCSS envisioned a very active

student role in the learning of the standards. The standards were full of active words to

describe what students should be doing. Among other active verbs, for example, the CCSS

required students to cite, determine, explain, present, analyze, and compare in language

arts and to interpret, understand, represent, and display in mathematics.

Voluntary State-Endorsed and Supported Programs

Voluntary state-endorsed and supported programs aimed at improving instruction

were those that were offered, but not required, by the state. The schools in this study were

involved in only a single voluntary, state-endorsed and supported program—Formative

Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME).

Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators. The FAME program was a small

statewide effort undertaken to encourage the enactment of the formative assessment

process. The FAME program designers wanted the program to be a combination of state-

level guidance and support and local commitment and effort. To this end, the state

provided initial teacher team trainings, documents that delineated the important elements

of the formative assessment process including a myriad of online resources (e.g., webinars

in which critical elements of formative assessment were discussed), and links to research

demonstrating the impact of formative assessment on student achievement. In turn,

locally-constructed, volunteer teams of teachers committed to meeting regularly to discuss

formative assessment topics and remaining with the team for three years.

The FAME program endorsed the version of formative assessment as defined by the

Council of Chief State School Officers (see Popham, 2008):

> Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction
>
> that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students'
>
> achievement of intended instructional outcomes. (p. 6)

Specifically, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) organized the formative

assessment process into eight components: planning, learning target use, student evidence,

formative assessment strategies, formative assessment tools, student and teacher analysis,

formative feedback, and instructional decisions. Furthermore, designers of the program

stressed strategies that teachers could use to engage students in the formative assessment

process. These strategies included: activating prior knowledge, goal setting, feedback use,

self-assessment, and peer assessment. Finally, the FAME project detailed a variety of

instructional behaviors teachers could enact, particularly strategies for gathering evidence

of student learning.

ISD/District Wide Coverage Programs

      ISD/district wide coverage programs were provided by an intermediate school district (ISD) or local school district and were designed to provide for wide coverage of teachers in a region or district. During the year of the study, Poe and Waller were involved with an ISD/district wide coverage program.

      Teach Like a Champion. In Poe's district, the Intermediate School District (ISD) partnered with local school districts to provide the Teach Like a Champion (TLC) program designed to assist teachers with the implementation of the CCSS. TLC was a three-year program. In the first year, program administrators familiarized participating teachers with the standards at the teachers' particular grade levels and then had teachers map these standards onto a course of study that the teachers at these sessions were responsible for teaching. In the second year of program (the year observed during the study), teachers were tasked with creating benchmark tests that would coincide with the course of study they had created the year before. Teachers spent most of the time in the professional development activity creating test items and constructing and formatting benchmark exams. In the year following the study, administrators of the program expected that teachers would implement the benchmark exams and then develop lessons that they could use in response to assessed student need.

      Interestingly, during the year of the study none of the three schools offered teachers an opportunity to learn about the new educator evaluation system or the frameworks that would be used to evaluate their teaching.

      Classroom Instruction that Works. The Classroom Instruction that Works (CITW) program in Waller's district was based on the work of Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock

(2001). The program focused on enactment of strategies to engage students and improve student achievement. Only Waller was involved with this program.

As the name suggests, CITW provided teachers with a set of nine strategies designed to improve student academic achievement. These nine strategies included: identifying similarities and differences; summarizing and note taking; reinforcing effort and providing recognition; homework and practice; nonlinguistic representations; cooperative learning; setting objectives and providing feedback; generating and testing hypotheses; and cues, questions, and advance organizers (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

ISD/District Select Coverage Programs

ISD/district select coverage programs were those that offered by ISDs or district but were not intended for wide coverage of teachers in a region or district. During the study several ISD/district select coverage programs emerged.

Close and Critical Reading. The Close and Critical Reading (CCR) program emphasized reading skills and strategies outlined in the History/Social Studies and the Science and Technical Subjects section of the CCSS for grades 6-8. Only the science teachers at Waller participated in this reform.

Universal Design for Learning. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) program involved teachers in planning for and enacting lessons intended to ensure wide access to rigorous academic content, particularly for learners with special needs.

UDL administrators encouraged teachers to design learning expectations that were informed by concepts and skills necessary in an academic discipline and to make these goals clear to students. Furthermore, UDL focused on the importance of teachers using a variety of instructional methods and materials to provide access to rigorous academic

content. Finally, UDL stressed that teachers accurately assess student understanding in order to make instructional decisions that would accelerate student learning. Only Waller was involved with this program.

Standards-Based Grading. Two of the schools in the study were involved with the Standards-based Grading (SBG) program. Standards-based grading emphasized the importance of frequent assessment and feedback, but also stressed the importance of infrequent scoring of student work for the purpose of assigning a final grade. Specifically, the focus of standards-based grading is on the ultimate understanding of individual academic concepts that students achieve after extended opportunities to learn, in contrast to the more traditional method through which grades are calculated as the average student achievement over time. Both Waller and Middleton were involved with this program.

Summary

As defined in the introduction to this chapter, instructional reforms are any policies or programs that attempt to influence what teachers teach or how they teach. Thus defined, instructional reforms extend beyond mandated state policy. Indeed, in the schools in this study there were four types of instructional reforms: state mandated policies, voluntary state-endorsed programs, ISD/district wide coverage programs, and ISD/district select coverage programs. The three schools in the study varied in type and total amount of instructional reforms they engaged. Only one of the three schools—Waller—had each of the four types of instructional reforms. Waller also had more instructional reforms (7) than either of the other two schools. In sum, there were two mandated instructional policies, one state-endorsed program, two ISD/district wide coverage programs, and three ISD/district select coverage programs across the three schools in this study. It should be

noted that the schools were sampled on their participation in the FAME program and while representativeness was not the primary concern in the sampling design it is nevertheless important to point out that many schools like Middleton, Poe, and Waller would have had no connection to voluntary state-endorsed programs. A summary of the instructional reforms at the three schools is included in Table 5.1.

While each of the reforms had distinct ambitions and foci, there was a general congruence among many of the instructional reforms. In other words, an examination of the reform documents does not reveal cross-purposes among instructional reforms or incompatible visions of teaching and learning. A summary of this congruence is included in Table 5.2.

Table 5.1. Instructional Reforms: Comparing the three schools

School	State Mandated Policies	Voluntary State Endorsed Programs	ISD/District Wide Coverage Programs	ISD/District Select Coverage Programs	Total Instructional Reforms
Middleton	2	1	0	1	4
Poe	2	1	1	0	4
Waller	2	1	1	3	7

Table 5.2. Comparison of the Content of Instructional Reforms

Instructional Reform	Clear objectives about what is to be taught and learned	Descriptive feedback to promote student learning	Frequently checking for student understanding	Multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding	Instructional decision making sensitive to demonstrated student understanding
Common Core State Standards	Yes	NSA	NSA	NSA	NSA
Rubrics to evaluate teaching	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FAME	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teach Like a Champion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NSA
Classroom Instruction that Works	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Close and Critical Reading	Yes	NSA	NSA	NSA	NSA
UDL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Standards-Based Grading	Yes	NSA	Yes	Yes	NSA
Total Number of Reforms	8	5	6	6	4

*NSA = Not Specifically Addressed

Ways that Instructional Reforms Came to the Schools

The previous section provided evidence that instructional reforms varied by type, schools differed in the number of instructional reforms that penetrated them, and the reforms themselves sent teachers compatible messages about instruction. This section provides evidence that instructional reforms reached schools in diverse ways and that this potential for diverse paths led to the variance in the total number of instructional reforms across schools.

The Traditional Route

Most reform research considers instructional reforms that originate at the state or federal level and make their way to schools through traditional channels. The typical path of instructional reforms follows the linear trajectory depicted in Figure 5.1.

Indeed, instructional reforms came to each of the three schools in this study through the traditional path. However, this traditional path was only employed for the two mandatory instructional reforms—Common Core State Standards and the new educator evaluation system. The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to describing the nontraditional routes through which instructional reforms came to schools.

Figure 5.1. Traditional Trajectory of Instructional Reforms

State/Federal Policymaking

⬇

District Shaping/Policymaking

⬇

Principal Bridging, Buffering, and Framing

⬇

Teacher Individual and Collective Sensemaking

⬇

Classroom Enactment
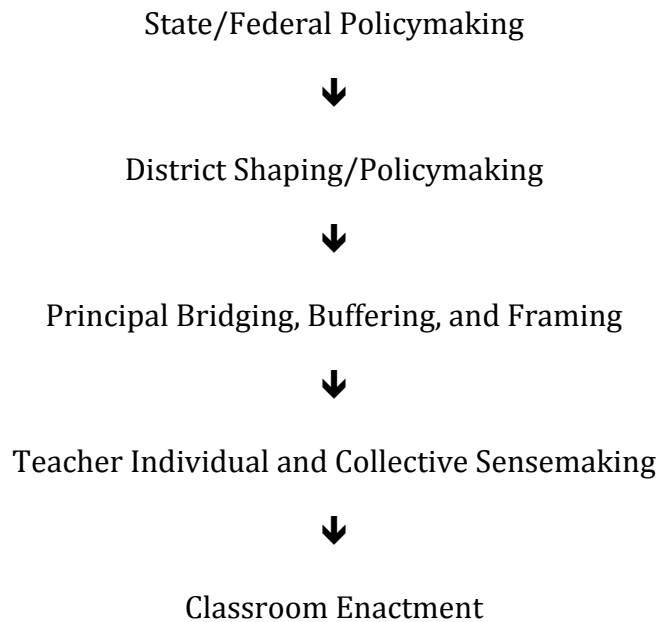
Nontraditional Routes

Most instructional reforms penetrated schools through nontraditional and diverse pathways. These pathways included: state-to-teacher, state-ISD-district-teacher, principal control, and teacher outreach.

State-to-teacher. In one case, a state administrator connected to the FAME program contacted a teacher directly to see if the teacher would be willing to construct and coach a learning team. This happened to Ms. Dixon at Poe Middle School when a former Poe District counselor who had since moved on to an administrative position at the Department of

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Education called a teacher at Poe to encourage her to participate in the FAME program. Ms. Dixon recalled:

> [The district administrator] contacted our building and contacted a teacher who is no longer here, and that teacher was talking to me and another 6th-grade teacher [saying] 'why don't you guys join this group and stuff? We need more people.' And I really didn't know too much about it, but I was like, 'sure, you know, I'll try it.' And I didn't know anything about formative assessment or what that word meant, or anything like that...[but] we joined the group.

As is evident from Table 5.3 presented near the end of this chapter, the state-to-teacher connection was rarely a pathway through which reforms reached schools. Nevertheless, it points to the diverse routes that are possible, particularly for instructional reforms that originate centrally but are voluntary.

State-ISD-district-teacher. Instructional reforms could also come to schools through the district's direct contact with a teacher. District-to-teacher contact occurred for two separate instructional reforms (FAME, Teach Like a Champion) at separate sites (Middleton, Poe). However, the nature of the contact in the two instances where qualitatively different.

One instance of the state-ISD-district-teacher route occurred at Poe and began with the state's general call for participation in the FAME program through an email sent by a state administrator to all immediate school districts (ISD) in the state soliciting their participation in the program. An ISD administrator noticed this call and contacted the superintendent of Middleton School District to see if he knew of any teachers who would be willing to participate. The superintendent then contacted Mrs. Herman, a teacher and

instructional coach at Middleton whom the superintendent knew to have an interest in instructional reform. Like Ms. Dixon at Poe Middle School, Mrs. Herman knew very little about formative assessment or the FAME program but she agreed to participate anyway, as she explained:

> [The superintendent] showed [the FAME announcement] to me and another teacher…We were both interested, so we both applied to be formative assessment coaches. We didn't know anything about the project, except what was in the flyer; we didn't know [the state administrator working with the FAME project] then. We hadn't talked to anybody about it. We just thought, 'this sounds cool.'

The pathway in this case originated with the state and weaved through the ISD before coming to the superintendent and finally to the teachers. In this instance the Middleton principal, Mrs. Novak, was cut out entirely and the instructional reform—FAME—penetrated the school without her foreknowledge or consent.

In one other instance an instructional reform reached directly from the district to the teachers. As in the prior case at Middleton, Mr. Delancey, the principal at Poe, had a modest role in the instructional reform. The district-to-teacher contact in Poe for Teach like a Champion was much different than the district-teacher contact in Middleton surrounding the school's participation in the FAME program. At Poe, district officials simply asked for Mr. Delancey's permission to contact the teachers and release them for a few days during the year to participate in the program. Mr. Delancey obliged and that was the extent of his participation in the program. All other considerations were worked out between the district and the teachers.

Principal Control. At one of the three schools in the study, Waller, the principal

played a gate-keeping role that prevented reforms from coming to teachers through other

channels. Ms. Shriver, Waller's principal, was an active instructional leader who ushered in

several instructional reforms and, consequently, Waller had nearly twice as many reforms

as either of the other two schools (see Table 5.1) during the year of the study. This can be

explained by the role that Ms. Shriver played in accommodating one district instructional

reform program and reaching out to several others.

First, Ms. Shriver accommodated instructional reforms that the district promoted.

For example, when the district created a series of professional development opportunities

to promote the instructional ideas of Classroom Instruction that Works (CITW), Ms. Shriver

willingly sent her teachers to participate. Unlike Mr. Delancey and the Teach Like a

Champion (TLC) program in Poe Middle School's district, Ms. Shriver knew the reform

ideas well, kept in touch with teachers about the going-on through periodic attendance at

professional development sessions, and followed up on sessions through informal

conversations with teachers and classroom observations.

It is also important to note that the increased participation in instructional reforms

at Waller cannot be attributed to district pressure. Ms. Shriver insisted that she was not

required to participate in any of the non-mandated reforms (CITW, UDL, FAME, CCR, SBG)

in which Waller participated, even when the reform (e.g., CITW) was directly supported by

the district and intended for broad coverage. In fact, several of the district's principals had

declined the district's invitation to participate in CITW and sent none of their teachers.

However, because Ms. Shriver agreed with the program's reform ideas she readily obliged

the district's request and sent as many of her teachers as she could.

Ms. Shriver also accommodated FAME, a reform not directly supported by the district. As at Poe and Middleton, Waller's district had no role in shaping the school's participation in the FAME program. However, unlike Mrs. Novak or Mr. Delancey, Ms. Shriver had an important role in bringing the program to the school and (as will be explained in the following chapters) shaping the program once it arrived.

Four years prior to the study, a district official forwarded the district principals in Waller's school district an email from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) soliciting participation in the new FAME program. Ms. Shriver recalled:

So [the district administrator] sent out [an email] to the entire staff in the district and said, 'Hey, who wants to join this?' So I…filled out an application, not really understanding the scope of the project, but formative assessment was something that I was interested in…There are decisions that teachers make every day in the classroom and the paper pencil tests only tell us after things have happened. So let's look into this.

Ms. Shriver's application was accepted and she formed her own FAME learning team through soliciting individual teachers and issuing a call for volunteers. She continued to lead the FAME learning team during the year of the study and she also became one of the state's most recognized advocates of the program.

In other cases, Ms. Shriver reached out to instructional reforms. In sum, Ms. Shriver reached out to three reforms (all of which were ISD/district select coverage programs): Close and Critical Reading (CCR), Standards-Based Grading (SBC), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

First, Ms. Shriver involved her teachers in CCR because of the need she perceived that social studies and science teachers had in teaching the informational reading expectations of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). CCR included a set of strategies that teachers could employ to help students improve their understanding of expository text.

In Ms. Shriver's work with the school's leadership team surrounding the CCSS, the group noticed that the standards had rigorous expectations for the content area reading. Ms. Shriver explained, "We started looking at those and we were like '[CCSS] is really asking a lot more of our kids to really look at text differently. So what is out there to really support that?'"

Ms. Shriver looked for a program that might address this perceived need and she found that the Intermediate School District (ISD) offered training in CCR. Ms. Shriver then sent some members of the leadership team to attend the training. After these members completed the training, she arranged for a consultant to come to Waller and train social studies and science teachers during department meeting time.

Ms. Shriver reached out to other instructional reforms not because of perceived need as exposed by new mandatory instructional policies but rather because she was dissatisfied by current teacher practices in a specific domain.

For example, when Ms. Shriver read the book *Classroom Grading that Works* (Marzano, 2007), she became convinced that the modal grading practice at Waller was out of line with what both she and the book considered to be best grading practices. Ms. Shriver then had several conversations with two members of the FAME team—Mrs. Hall and Ms. McCarthy—about current grading practices at the school and how they conflicted with

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reform ideas. Ms. Shriver suggested that the three attempt to learn more about alternative, more reform-oriented methods of student grading. Specifically, Ms. Shriver suggested Standards-Based Grading (SBG) and both Mrs. Hall and Ms. McCarthy were interested in finding out more about SBG and being trained in it.

However, trainings were hard to find. The nearest training was in Kentucky and that was too expensive. Ultimately, when a school in another part of the state became recognized because of its work with Standards-Based Grading, Ms. Shriver and the two teachers attended the school, looked in classrooms, and talked with administrators and teachers. After the visit, Ms. Shriver set up a sub-committee on the leadership team (headed by Mrs. Hall and Ms. McCarthy) to explore the ideas of standards-based grading further and discuss it with the staff.

Finally, as was the case with Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Ms. Shriver reached out to instructional reforms simply because she became interested in the ideas embedded in the reform. Ms. Shriver became aware of the UDL program when she attended a separate and unrelated training at the ISD. She encountered two teachers she knew from a previous position who extolled the virtues of the UDL program and when she returned to the school site, she called the ISD to inquire about signing some of her teachers up for the program. The program providers asked that Ms. Shriver send one (and only one) department and so Ms. Shriver consulted with the science department and when they consented to participate, she sent the department to the initial training.

In sum, instructional reforms could come to schools through principal control as they did at Waller. Ms. Shriver controlled the flow of instructional reform through accommodating those that the district or state provided (e.g., FAME, CITW) or she could

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reach out to reforms because of perceived teacher need (e.g., SBG, CCR) or because of general enthusiasm for the reform (e.g., UDL).

Teacher Outreach. The final route through which instructional reforms penetrated schools in this study occurred when a teacher reached out to a particular reform and brought it back to other teachers in a school. This occurred only once during the study, when Mr. St. Johns at Middleton reached out to Standards-Based Grading (SBG) and involved several Middleton teachers who showed interest in learning about SBG's principles.

Mr. St. Johns became interested in SBG when he heard teacher colleagues talking at a FAME learning team meeting about how SBG principles aligned well with those of formative assessment. Mr. St. Johns left the meeting wanting to know more about SBG and he subsequently sought out and attended a regional SBG conference. He also encouraged some of his Middleton colleagues to attend. He recalled:

> I went to a conference…so I could learn specifically [about Standards-Based
> Grading]. I wanted to teach standards-based grading. I knew they were doing it
> there and I took some colleagues with me. That is the way I want to do it [because] I
> have to do things to better myself to make me better.

Mrs. Herman, Middleton's instructional coach, concurred with this account. She added that after the conference, Mr. St. Johns led several Middleton teachers to a state-sponsored event that highlighted the enactment of the principles of SBG at a district in the state. She said:

> I went...[and] the whole district is standards-based grading. So twice a year MDE
> works with them to put on a big [professional development], so you go to the

school…and then you have time observing in classrooms, and then you have time in breakout sessions to talk with the teachers that you observed…[We] really get to the nitty-gritty of what this looks like in my grade book…Most of our staff has been there.

Of Mr. St. Johns' role in bringing SBG to Middleton, Mrs. Herman said, "Mr. St. Johns is about as much of an initiator as we have" and that because of Mr. St. Johns' interest and subsequent efforts, many of the Middleton teachers were involved in enacting the principles of SBG.

Summary

In contrast to previous research, which primarily considers the traditional routes through which reforms come to schools, evidence presented here suggests that reforms can penetrate schools through multiple pathways. Only the two mandated reforms (CCSS, educator evaluation systems) arrived through the traditional route. The other, more numerous, non-mandated reforms arrived through myriad channels including: district-teacher; state-teacher; principal control; and teacher outreach. A summary of the routes reforms took to the schools is included in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3. Reform Pathways Summary

School	Traditional Route	District ê Teacher	State ê Teacher	Principal Control	Teacher Outreach	Total Instructional Reforms
Middleton	2 (MR)	1	0	0	1	4
Poe	2 (MR)	1	1	0	0	4
Waller	2 (MR)	0	0	5	0	7

Chapter Summary

This chapter considered the types of reforms the schools in this study engaged, the multiple pathways through which the instructional reforms came to the schools, and the

surface congruence among these reforms. These findings stand in contrast to most reform research (e.g., Coburn, 2001; Cohen & Hill, 2001) which examines single reforms that are specific to academic discipline in early elementary school contexts, come to schools via traditional channels, and are more or less mandatory. In contrast, this research reports that reforms came in bunches, were general to many disciplines (with the exception of CCSS), came to schools through a variety of paths, and were mostly noncompulsory.

The diversity of reforms—both in kind and in route—suggests that the work of instructional reform is likely much more various than previous researchers suspected and our understanding of principal leadership, teachers, and instructional reform is much narrower than it could be. Considering the diversity of reforms is likely to afford new perspectives on the work of trying to improve classroom instruction.

In order to analyze the diversity, I categorized the reforms into of four types— mandated state policy; voluntary state-endorsed and supported programs; ISD/district wide coverage programs; and ISD/district select coverage programs. Furthermore, I demonstrated that reforms came to schools in diverse ways: the traditional route, state-to-teacher, state-ISD-district-teacher, principal control, and teacher outreach.

In all but the traditional route, reforms required entrepreneurship. "Reform entrepreneurs" could come at any level of the system—state, ISD, or district administrator; principal; or teacher. However, actors at different levels were important in different ways and the relationship among these actors was one of mutual reliance. State and district administrators relied on principal consent and principals, in turn, relied on state and district administrators to generate reform activities to which they could connect. Teachers were oriented toward the specific challenges of their classrooms and unlikely to seek out or

generate reforms, but, as will be detailed in the coming chapters, both state and district administrators and principals relied on teachers' willingness to participate. This was particularly true for reforms that expected teachers to learn through close collaboration with a small group of peers (e.g., FAME, UDL, SBG). Despite the mutual reliance among actors, principals were particularly powerful potential reform entrepreneurs. When the principal bridged to reforms and cultivated teacher participation, as was the case at Waller, reforms proliferated. Other pathways of the non-mandated reforms appeared to be idiosyncratic and it is not difficult to imagine a school being bereft of all but mandatory reforms when the principal played a passive or resistant role.

Reforms also relied on social networks. When entrepreneurs generated reform activity, they used their connections to get others involved. For example, when the state administrator was trying to generate support for FAME, she called Ms. Dixon at Poe and encouraged her to participate. Furthermore, Ms. Shriver became excited about UDL when she talked about former associates who spoke highly of the program. She then sought out both further information about the program from a contact at the ISD and solicited participation among teachers at Waller.

Reforms that located teacher learning in large training sessions (e.g., CCR, CITW, TLC) diminished, but did not eliminate, the importance of reform entrepreneurship and the use of social networks. For instance, the TLC program required ISD and district administrators to generate a reform program and then reach out to local principals and secure their consent. Likewise, the CITW trainings at Waller required district officials to construct the program and make it available to principals who could then choose whether or not they wanted their teachers to participate.

In every case, then, non-mandated reforms involved at least one policy entrepreneur (i.e., one person who demonstrated initiative in generating and/or securing others' participation in reform) who used his or her social networks to generate the active interest or participation of others. The social networks and the relational trust embedded therein were particularly important for reforms that situated teacher learning in small communities because these reforms required a more intense participation and participants frequently had to commit to reforms without knowing much about them. Without entrepreneurship and activation of social networks, reforms seemed unlikely to generate the necessary momentum to penetrate schools.

Mandated reforms (CCSS, the new educator evaluation system) were of a different type. They came to schools via the traditional bureaucratic channels and only required reform entrepreneurship at the state or federal level. Because they were mandated, these reforms did not demand actors to generate interest in or support for the reforms, but they did demand a response. Consequently, these reforms were shaped and reshaped as they approached and entered the schools. As we shall see in the following chapter, mandated reforms placed an even greater responsibility on the principal who became remarkably important in determining what mandated reforms became when they arrived at the school.

CHAPTER 6: Reforms, Principals and Instructional Leadership

Introduction

The previous chapter built the case that instructional reforms differed in kind, instructional reforms penetrated schools through diverse pathways, and that the different routes instructional reforms could take helps explain the differences in total reforms observed at the three schools. It also argued that voluntary reforms were the most numerous and that these reforms typically did not arrive at schools through the traditional bureaucratic route. These reforms required the emergence of reform entrepreneurs who used their social networks to build support for a reform and secure the participation of others. The need for entrepreneurship and social networks was particularly important for those reforms that organized teacher learning into small communities of learners as several of the ISD/district select coverage programs did. In contrast, mandated reforms required entrepreneurship only at the level of policy formation, although they also demanded activity from other actors in the system.

This chapter focuses on the role of the school principal as either a potential entrepreneur of reform or an important actor in the system whose activity was required by a mandated policy. This chapter answers questions about how principals built support for voluntary reforms and how they shaped mandatory reforms. It also examines differences among principals' backgrounds, priorities, and knowledge that help account for their different responses to reform. In sum, I will provide evidence that the principals at the three schools played a significant role in the disparity of instructional reforms across schools and the opportunities teachers had to learn about them. I conclude with a closer examination of a single case—Waller Middle School—to explain how one principal who

embraced the role of reform entrepreneur nevertheless provided teachers with unequal opportunities to learn within her school.

Social Organization

Principals at each of the three schools were charged with similar responsibilities. For example, principals needed to ensure that the school functioned smoothly, broadly defined. In practice this meant that principals attended to district office demands for completion of a school site plan and other necessary paperwork, evaluated teachers on a schedule with the evaluation tools decided upon for this purpose at the district level, dealt with unruly students who had been referred to the office from one of the classroom teachers, monitored the hallways and ushered students into class, met with parents, attended district office administrator meetings, and the like. Despite these myriad responsibilities, there were few instances when the principal had to deal with a particular responsibility at a specified and inflexible time. For the most part, the three principals in the study seemed to have very few pressing organizational demands that placed them in routine situations over which they had little control. In fact, schools' organizational routine actually freed principals from immediate demands most of the time. When the bell rang and class started, principals typically found themselves alone when virtually everyone else in the school (students and teachers alike) was occupied on well-specified tasks with others.

Situations

Because organizational demands and routines dictated the situations in which principals found themselves only broadly, the situations that principals faced were mostly of their own choosing and were much more varied than the situations in which either

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teachers or students found themselves. This observation leads to the following questions about principals and instructional leadership: With the great flexibility afforded to principals, how did they structure their work? What accounts for how the principals structured the work in the way they did?

Because the analysis to follow is restricted to the principals' role in instructional reform as either reform entrepreneurs of voluntary reforms or shapers of mandatory reforms, I can narrow the inquiry to examining how the three principals structured their work of promoting reform teaching given the great organizational freedom afforded them.

Perspectives

Recall from the methods section that symbolic interactionism assumes that people form perspectives and craft lines of action in accordance with how they have defined their situation. I will argue that because the situations in which principals found themselves were largely of their own choosing, principals' perspectives were as likely to dictate their situations as situations were to dictate their perspectives. In other words, there were few situational imperatives that dictated principal action. Principals were much more able to construct their own jobs than were other people at the school and they seemed to construct their jobs in line with their long term perspectives as influenced by their personal backgrounds, values, and priorities. Long-term perspectives shaped the principals' routines and ultimately determined how they envisioned and carried out the role of instructional leader.

Introduction to the Three Principals

This section builds the case that the principals in the study varied in their backgrounds, beliefs, and commitments. In short, three principals can be characterized as the nurturer, the coach, and the instructional leader.

Mrs. Novak: The Nurturer

Mrs. Novak had been a Middleton resident nearly all her life. She was enrolled in the district as a K-12 student and after graduation she attended a nearby state university. Upon graduating with her bachelor's degree, Mrs. Novak moved to the east coast to attend a large state university where she earned a master's degree in gifted and talented education. She then returned to Middleton in 1986 and began teaching middle school in Middleton School District. During this time, Mrs. Novak completed a second master's degree in educational administration at the same local university where she earned her bachelor's degree several years previously. After teaching in the district for nearly 20 years, in 2005 Mrs. Novak assumed the principalship at Middleton and she held the position for eight years leading up to the study.

Since becoming principal, Mrs. Novak stressed the importance of fostering students' emotional and social development. She believed that students "grow by leaps and bounds from fifth to ninth grade emotionally" and she saw her job and the job of the staff as one "try[ing] to help [students] through puberty and socialization…in the unique problems that span the years. That is my number one priority."

Mrs. Novak understood that her focus on the social and emotional wellbeing ran counter to many instructional reforms that stressed student achievement and academic growth. However, Mrs. Novak was unapologetic for her priorities. Her focus was based on

the belief that "it is hard for some kids to learn when there are other things socially and emotionally going on." Mrs. Novak believed that the social and emotional demands were particularly acute during the middle school years, as students transitioned from childhood to adolescence. Mrs. Novak elaborated, "Even the smart kids have to go through socialization. No kid can escape what is going on during these years." Mrs. Novak felt that all students—regardless of socio-economic background and home circumstances— struggled with social and emotional issues during adolescence.

Mrs. Novak's beliefs had consequences for how she perceived her responsibilities as an instructional leader. Specifically, Mrs. Novak's philosophy of education led her to de-emphasize academics considerably. She explained, "I taught 7th grade. It is not about learning. It took me till about December [of my first year of teaching] when I figured this is not about geography. This is about how to teach them to be decent people."

As will become apparent throughout this chapter, Mrs. Novak's focus on the social and emotional development of students shaped her responses to reform and her work with teachers.

Mr. Delancey: The Coach

The year of the study was Mr. Delancey's first year as principal of Poe Middle School. Mr. Delancey started his career working with troubled youth in detention centers and residential treatment programs. Mr. Delancey believed that his passion for troubled youth could be accredited to his background. He explained, "I grew up as a foster kid, so it was important for me to work with kids that had struggling backgrounds." In addition to this work, Mr. Delancey also coached football for a decade.

After working as a counselor at the detention center for a few years, Mr. Delancey decided to go back to school and get a degree in teaching (he had only a social work degree at the time). Once he got his degree, he had no trouble finding employment. He recalled, "[When I] graduated from St. Paul's College with a teaching certificate in special education, K-12, right away I was hired by a school where I had been coaching football, an inner-city school in Centerville." Mr. Delancey taught at the school for two years and then he and his wife moved to Porterville because his wife got a job as a counselor at a nearby Catholic school. And Mr. Delancey secured a job at Poe High School as a special education teacher. He also coached football, girls' basketball, and girls' track.

Mr. Delancey became principal at Poe Middle School suddenly. With six weeks to go in the school year before the study began, Mr. Delancey was called to fill in as the assistant principal because the former principal decided to take a job at the local energy company. At the end of the year, the interim principal (the former assistant principal) decided that he, too, did not want the job and he found a job as a band director in a nearby town. Mr. Delancey applied for the principalship, went through the interview process, and was hired. Looking back, Mr. Delancey said, "It was a pretty quick jump."

Porterville is a small, close-knit community and Mr. Delancey believed, "I'm definitely an outsider. I did move my family into Porterville and we live in Porterville, but we are definitely outsiders." To make matters even more challenging, Mr. Delancey's wife worked at the Catholic school in town and there was "big friction between the Catholic school and the public school." Mr. Delancey's experiences were atypical for Porterville. He explained, "I've worked in a different industry. I've worked for different districts. Most of

the time the people [who] come here and work here have lived here and married

somebody they grew up with here...[I am] definitely an outsider."

In his first year as principal, Mr. Delancey reported, "I have tried not to change

anything. I came in and kept the same handbook for the staff and the students." Mr.

Delancey attributed this approach to his personality. And he noted that his approach was

much different than the previous principal. Mr. Delancey said:

> I'm much more collaborative, I'm not a micromanager...I think the other principal
>
> was very intelligent and he knew curriculum and the ins and outs of every part of
>
> the school that you'd want to know, but I think he also controlled more than what a
>
> principal—in my mind—should.

Mr. Delancey did acknowledge that this more relaxed style and collaborative

approach presented its own challenges. First, Mr. Delancey said, "[teachers] want to be told

what to do." However, Mr. Delancey insisted that he "wants to coach [teachers] through

things." This was Mr. Delancey's style and the style that he appreciated when he was a

teacher. He said, "I'm the kind of a principal I would want my principal to be. When I ran

my classroom...I didn't want somebody micromanaging me and looking over my back...I

want to give the teachers power." Mr. Delancey believed that this was a sensible approach

because "[teachers] know the curriculum best, and I believe that they are professional. I

believe they are the ones that are truly going to make change happen. I'm not going to

make change happen in this office all by myself."

Ms. Shriver: The Instructional Leader

Ms. Shriver, principal at Waller Middle School, was in her 20th year in education.

Prior to coming to Waller, where she had been principal for eight years, Ms. Shriver was an

elementary and middle school teacher, assistant principal, and principal in a nearby district.

Since assuming the principal position at Waller, Ms. Shriver spent the bulk of her time and energy attempting to improve the quality of classroom instruction and to this end she ushered in and supported several concurrent instructional reforms. She also attempted to use existing formal and informal structures to help support the reforms. For example, teachers on staff met monthly with their departments to discuss salient issues for their individual and joint work. Ms. Shriver encouraged teachers to accomplish more than housekeeping tasks during this time. She thought of and referred to the time that teachers spent together as professional learning community (PLC) time and she expected teachers to discuss important issues of curriculum and instruction. Consequently, she regularly talked with department leaders about meeting content, reviewed PLC agendas, and she and the assistant principal personally attended meetings to ensure a tight focus on teaching and learning.

Ms. Shriver believed that the department PLC work helped teachers negotiate multiple instructional reforms. For example, Ms. Shriver expected teachers to develop common plans for curricular coverage of the standards and discuss how they would promote formative assessment teaching (even though they did not recognize the term "formative assessment" as such because they did not participate in the program).

Specifically, she tasked teachers in each PLC to create a curriculum of "essential content" that all teachers would commit to teaching and to make a plan for how teachers would elicit evidence of student understanding of this essential content and make instructional decisions based on student understanding when necessary. Ms. Shriver

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argued that this process of goal setting, checking for understanding, and making instructional decisions was the cornerstone of formative assessment practice.

Ms. Shriver also used her informal conversations with teachers to promote reform ideas and to highlight the congruence of several reforms. During the year of the study, the language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies teachers on staff were attending *Classroom Instruction that Works*, a series of workshops that highlighted nine effective instructional strategies that teachers of various subject matters could employ. In talking with teachers about their experiences at the workshops, Ms. Shriver incorporated the language of formative assessment into her conversations. She explained:

> So the way we talk about things, you know, we try to bring in some of the language from formative assessment as well [into discussions about the ideas in *Classroom Instruction that Works*], if that helps. When I talk to staff, "Well, what's your learning target?"..."How are you going to check for understanding throughout the lesson?" So I think the language of FAME is not just from the [learning team] teachers. I talk that language with staff too. It's all over. It's all over our building.

In many instances, these informal conversations were based on Ms. Shriver's observations during her frequent informal "walk-through" visits in which she would "pop in and sit for five or ten minutes." The conversations that stemmed from these walkthroughs allowed Ms. Shriver to both help teachers make connections among multiple reforms and they allowed her to provide teachers specific feedback about their instruction.

Ms. Shriver also wanted these conversations to remain focused, but informal and, consequently, she did not use a formal tool for evaluation or feedback. With this constraint

in mind, taking time to talk with teachers about their practice in a follow-up conversation

was an appealing option. As Ms. Shriver said:

> I'm trying to find ways [to provide informal feedback], because teachers want to
>
> know. "What did you think?" "How did it go?" So giving them feedback about it.
>
> Whether it be a question I asked them or "Hey, I talked to the kids; they knew what
>
> the target was"...I think that is one way that I try to help facilitate [teacher
>
> instructional improvement]. It is not just the two full observations in our evaluation
>
> cycle.

In sum, Ms. Shriver saw her primary responsibility as improving the overall

instructional quality at Waller, and to this end, she brought a variety of instructional

reforms to the school. Once these reforms arrived, Ms. Shriver shaped the meaning of the

reforms through influencing the structure of teacher collaborative time and through her

direct contact with teachers in which she talked with them about the principles of the

reforms and her observations of their instruction.

Principals' Normative Statements

The three principals in this study differed considerably in their beliefs, priorities,

and behavior surrounding instructional reforms. Mrs. Novak wanted to nurture students'

social and emotional development and she wanted her teachers to share this focus. She

paid very little attention to her responsibilities as an instructional leader. Mr. Delancey was

new to the school and still trying to establish himself as a legitimate leader. Ultimately, he

wanted to give teachers general guidance and have them assume responsibility for

flourishing while he balanced involvement in teachers' classrooms with respecting

teachers' professional identities. Ms. Shriver, in contrast, was a very active and involved

instructional leader. Instructional reforms did not come to Waller except through her careful screening and she played a central role in the reforms once they arrived. She saw her job as one of improving instructional quality at the school and helping teachers both enact reform practices and see connections among the multiple reforms.

Before considering the actions that principals took in regards to a variety of instructional reforms, it is important to consider the link between principals' beliefs and their actions. So doing will help us better understand the differences observed among principals as both potential reform entrepreneurs ushering in and generating support for voluntary reforms and as gatekeepers shaping mandatory reforms that demanded that they play a key role. Thus, this section has two goals. First, it will establish each principal's perspective as expressed through his or her beliefs about what principals and teachers should be doing and what schools should be like. Second, it will determine to the extent possible how well principal's beliefs about instruction aligned with reform ideals.

Overview of Principals' Beliefs and Priorities

The principals varied considerably in their beliefs and commitments as determined by the normative statements they made during interviews about what principals should do, how teachers should teach, and what ideal classrooms should be like. Mrs. Novak talked predominately about the importance of fostering students' social and emotional development. She occasionally blended talk of social and emotional development with academic development but rarely talked exclusively about the importance of promoting academics. She never talked about creating organizational structures to improve school functioning, nor did she talk about the importance of maintaining order and enforcing discipline.

Mr. Delancey balanced his talk with normative statements about creating

organizational structures, promoting academic achievement, and maintaining order

through enforcing standards of behavior. He never talked about nurturing social and

emotional development nor did his statements blend social, academic, and behavioral

priorities.

Of the three principals, Ms. Shriver's normative statements during interviews were

the most singularly focused. She talked exclusively about the importance of improving

instructional quality at the school and, by extension, promoting student achievement. An

overview of the normative statements principals made during interviews is provided in

Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Summary of Principal Normative Statements

Principal	Nurturing Social and Emotional Development	Creating School Organization Structures	Sharpening Instructional Prowess and Improving Academic Achievement	Disciplining Children and Enforcing Standards for Behavior	Blending the Social, Academic, and Behavioral	Total
Mrs. Novak	16	0	4	0	6	26
Mr. Delancey	0	9	56	13	0	78
Mrs. Shriver	0	0	67	0	0	67

Analyzing Principals' Normative Statements about Instruction

The statements that principals made about the importance of academics and

instructional quality can be further separated into two categories—characteristics of

instructional leadership and characteristics of instructional quality. The instructional

leadership category contains those normative statements that principals made about what

their role as instructional leaders should be. Mr. Delancey made the most of these types of

statements (41), more than doubling the statements of Ms. Shriver. Mrs. Novak made no

normative statements about her role as an instructional leader during our interviews.

The characteristics of the instructional quality category include those statements that principals made about what instruction should be like. These statements typically described how teachers should teach and what student academic activity should entail. Ms. Shriver made the most normative statements about the characteristics of instructional quality, doubling Mr. Delancey's normative statements about instruction. Mrs. Novak made only four normative statements about instruction over the course of the interviews. An overview of each principal's normative instructional statements by category is included in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2. Normative Instructional Statements by Category

Principal	Total Normative Instructional Statements	Characteristics of Instructional Leadership	Characteristics of Instructional Quality
Mrs. Novak	4	0	4
Mr. Delancey	65	41	24
Ms. Shriver	67	19	48

Qualitative Differences of Normative Statements

While the quantity of normative statements reveals each principal's beliefs and priorities, strict attention to the total amount of each type of statement does not provide much detail about how well principals understood instructional reforms or what precisely they made of their role as instructional leaders.

As explained above, Mrs. Novak spoke only rarely about the characteristics of the reform classroom and she never spoke of her role in providing instructional leadership that might help promote these types of classrooms at Middleton. Of the reform classroom, Mrs. Novak's statements were vague and did not reveal a thorough understanding of the reforms. For example, when asked what types of instructional practices she would like to see in Middleton's classrooms, Mrs. Novak responded:

The biggest thing that I wish all [teachers] did was [use] some random way to call on kids...Just a random [way]. I don't care if it is Popsicle sticks or a deck of cards with the kids' names on them, but that avoids [teachers] teaching to the top [students] and it avoids them [allowing] some kids from just being able to put their heads down and not engage.

In another instance, Mrs. Novak's comments suggest that current reforms merely recycled ideas from the past. She said "I love to see the learning targets posted and referred to, not just posted...Madeline Hunter knew that years ago...We just called it something different now but she had it right back then."

Even when pressed both within and across interviews, Ms. Novak did not elaborate on the qualities of instruction that she would like to observe and she did not express reform ideas in precise terms. Nor did she describe instruction as complex set of interactions among teachers, students, and content. For Mrs. Novak, reforms were pressing teachers to add a few vague and general-purpose features to their existing instruction.

Mr. Delancey had a much more developed sense of the role he wanted to have in teacher's classrooms but, like Mrs. Novak, he did not have a well developed understanding of reforms. When speaking of his role as instructional leader, Mr. Delancey talked of the importance of balancing respect for teachers' professionalism with involvement in their classrooms. Above all, Mr. Delancey did not want to overly manage teachers or tell them explicitly what to do. Rather, he wanted to have discussions with teachers about their teaching without appearing domineering. He felt he could achieve this balance by providing teachers with carefully worded feedback about their teaching that would offer teachers

insights into their practice but would still respect their professional standing. Several times he mentioned the importance of feedback, as is captured in the following passage:

> What I'm working on as a principal is making sure that I'm giving feedback appropriately…I don't [want to] give [teachers] feedback that shuts them off using teacher language instead of 'have you ever thought about this?' which right away shuts people off. I have to figure out how to raise that area of growth without it looking like I'm questioning their intelligence or their teaching.

While Mr. Delancey did not want to "micro-manage" teachers and their instructional approach, he did expect that they would heed his carefully worded feedback. He insisted:

> If I'm in your room five times and I've told you five times in a row to have a student friendly objective on the board and you didn't do it then it's on you, but if I come into your room and you change that, then it's positive. It's all about how you take the feedback.

In alignment with the stated intention of writing effective and non-offensive feedback, Mr. Delancey could often be observed in his office wordsmithing the feedback he planned to give teachers about their instruction.

In addition to involvement in teachers' classrooms, Mr. Delancey also talked frequently about school governance and the organization of joint teacher work. For example, he wanted teachers to assume control of the school improvement team. One of the functions of the team of 6-7 volunteer teachers was to set a course for professional development for the staff. Mr. Delancey felt that previous administrators had had a controlling influence on team decisions and he wanted to alter that tradition during his principalship. Mr. Delancey also wanted to reorganize joint teacher work. Specifically, he

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wanted teachers to work together on cross-curricular teams as opposed to the disciplinary teams that the teachers at Poe had engaged in in the past.

Despite having a much stronger role in teachers' classrooms and in influencing decision-making structures and the structure of teacher joint work than Mrs. Novak did, Mr. Delancey, like Mrs. Novak, had only a vague sense of the types of instruction envisioned by the reforms at Poe.

First, Mr. Delancey wanted teachers to conduct cross-curricular writing assignments (which in part explains why he wanted to reorganize teachers' work in this way). He also wanted teachers to employ general strategies that would promote student engagement and the interaction between teachers and students. For example, Mr. Delancey wanted teachers to employ a particular strategy for checking for student understanding:

> Have you ever heard of thumbs up? It's like, 'oh hey did you guys get that?' Everyone gives the thumbs-up. Just tell your partner what I just said.' Kind of makes them think about, articulate what the teacher just said, just involving the students more instead of talking at them for 20 minutes or half an hour, and then having them do an assignment...There are a variety of strategies that teachers don't necessarily use here.

Furthermore, Mr. Delancey wanted teachers to use "thinking maps" that he believed would help students engage with and organize academic content. As he understood them, the thinking maps could be used, "in each curriculum, so they are not just maps or graphic organizers, you can use in English, you can use them in math and science, but they do go across the curriculum." In the year following the study, Mr. Delancey planned to hire a consultant to come to Poe and train the teachers on how to use the thinking maps. He then

planned to "hold teachers accountable" for using the thinking maps during his visits to teachers' classrooms.

Mr. Delancey's articulation of the principles of reforms was less developed than the role he wanted to have as an instructional leader. Like Mrs. Novak, Mr. Delancey had an anemic view of the teaching and learning articulated in reforms. He, too, felt that teachers should improve their instruction through the employment of general-purpose tools and strategies that helped students organize and engage in academic content. He did not, however, share the understanding that reform teaching and learning would require deep engagement with academic content, clear expectations of what knowledge and skills students were expected to master, robust interactions between teachers and students around content, and timely and actionable feedback.

In contrast to Mrs. Novak and Mr. Delancey, Ms. Shriver had both a well-developed conception of her role as an instructional leader and a thorough understanding of the instructional reforms at Waller.

Ms. Shriver had several self-perceived responsibilities as an instructional leader. She believed one of the primary objectives was to build instructional capacity in the teachers on staff and she attempted to accomplish this capacity building through involvement in a variety of instruction related activities. More specifically, Ms. Shriver felt that it was important for her to ask teachers questions in the context of their own instructional practice that encouraged them to reflect upon the principles of the various reforms at Waller.

Thus, Ms. Shriver believed that principals should seek to engage teachers in a variety of instructional situations where they would either be discussing or enacting

reform instruction. For example, Ms. Shriver talked of the importance of attending department PLC meetings and asking insightful questions when appropriate. Furthermore, Ms. Shriver felt that she should carefully plan staff meetings to focus on improving instruction. As compared with PLC meetings, Ms. Shriver noted, "With [staff meetings] I am more deliberate... I can set the agenda and we can have a focus and create questions to get [teachers] to think differently, or to bring student work and ask questions about student work."

In addition to shaping teacher meeting time, Ms. Shriver also wanted to observe teachers in their classrooms as they were providing instruction and then meet with them briefly to discuss what she observed. She explained:

When I conference with individual teachers I can ask lots of questions. I get that feedback right away from that teacher, 'like this is kind of what I was hoping, or what I thought might happen.'...Conferencing with individual teachers can be really individualized. I think I probe their thinking and push their thinking.

Ms. Shriver also believed that principals should connect teachers with valuable resources and she believed that the most valuable resource at Waller was expertise among the teachers on staff. She reported that she often told teachers, "We have people that are really good at that. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. Go talk to this person."

Ms. Shriver hoped that her presence in a variety of context-specific situations, her insightful questions and conversations with teachers about instruction both during their collective work and during their classroom instruction, and her intentional connections among teachers on staff would help improve instruction at Waller. Importantly, Ms. Shriver wanted all of these activities to focus the instructional reforms active at Waller during the

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time of the study and she saw it as one of her main responsibilities to help teachers

understand the various reforms and to make connections among them.

Ms. Shriver believed that carefully crafting multiple initiatives could create a type of

instructional mosaic, that when one stood back, revealed a coherent and improved picture

of teaching and learning. Ms. Shriver felt her job was to help teachers "see connections" and

congruence among instructional reforms while retaining a focus on students and student

learning. For example, Ms. Shriver insisted that rather than competing ideas for how

student learning should be assessed, formative assessment practices and end-of-the-year,

high-stakes accountability tests were part of a "balanced assessment system" that worked

together to promote student learning. Furthermore, Ms. Shriver routinely had

conversations with teachers in which she argued that elements of *Classroom Instruction*

that Works could be used with formative assessment practices from the FAME team which

could, in turn, be combined with notions of good teaching embedded in the *Danielson*

Framework for Teaching.

Ms. Shriver believed that the instructional amalgam that resulted created a more

robust curricular and instructional climate. And she felt that keeping the focus on student

learning and universal commitment to professional improvement helped alleviate conflicts

that might arise. Ms. Shriver explained:

I think we've tried to make it something that is not just one more thing to do, but it's

the students at the center, how do we get better? And the *Classroom Instruction* [*that*

Works] and [the other reforms] are going to give us more instructional strategies

because the same thing doesn't work for all kids. So how do we engage more

students in learning? That is one of the components in *Danielson* [*Framework for*

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Teaching]. *Classroom instruction that Works* is going to have some of those

strategies...It's about kids being able [and] everyone having a part, talking and

having a part in the learning. I think it's just helping [teachers] get better

and...helping them see how these [multiple reforms] we're doing help improve their

practice.

In sum, the three principals in the study varied considerably in their beliefs about

what principals should do and their knowledge about their role as instructional leaders and

the instructional reforms themselves. A summary of principal's knowledge about the

specifics of multiple reforms is included in Table 6.3. The next section considers the

consequences of these differences in beliefs, priorities, and knowledge.

Table 6.3. Principals' Understanding of Specific Elements of Instructional Reforms

Principal	Clear objectives about what is to be taught and learned	Descriptive Feedback to promote student learning	Frequently checking for student understanding	Multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding	Instructional decision sensitive to demonstrated student understanding
Ms. Novak	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Mr. Delancey	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Ms. Shriver	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Of the three principals in the study, then, Ms. Shriver was best prepared to shape

mandatory reforms in ways congruent with reformers' intent and to provide reform

entrepreneurship for voluntary reforms. First, Ms. Shriver believed her primary

responsibility was to develop instructional capacity in her teaching staff and she believed

that instructional reforms could serve as the foundation for this improvement. She also had

a much more thorough sense of each of the instructional ideas pressed by reformers than

either Mrs. Novak or Mr. Delancey and she had a developed sense of how these

instructional reformers might work together to improve teaching and learning at her

school as evidenced by her frequent reference to the specifics of reform teaching during interviews. She also had the legitimate standing among teachers necessary to influence teachers' work with mandatory reforms and the social resources necessary to generate teacher commitment to voluntary reforms.

Ms. Shriver's normative statements about instruction demonstrated that she understood the reforms well and agreed with the messages that they sent about quality teaching. Her statements also revealed that she believed that reforms, for the most part, agreed with each other. On some occasions Ms. Shriver would mention congruence among reforms without being prompted. At other times, Ms. Shriver would reinforce her beliefs of general agreement among reforms when prompted. At still other times (but not often) Ms. Shriver's comments indicated that she sensed some conflict among the reforms. Each of these cases centered around the tension between messages for curricular coverage and the needs of students. When it came to ideas about how teaching should be conducted, however, Ms. Shriver's statements never suggested that she believed the reforms were incompatible. A summary of the statements Ms. Shriver made in relating reforms to one another is contained in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4. Characteristics of Multiple Reforms

Congruence (informant offered)	Congruence (Researcher Prompted)	Conflict
16	8	3

Principal Beliefs and Perceptions of Teacher Quality

Principals' perceptions of teacher quality provide further evidence of their beliefs and values. For example, Mrs. Novak believed that teachers should be supportive of students' social and emotional growth, and when given the opportunity, she separated

teachers along her perceptions of the personal care and nurturing they provided students. In contrast, Ms. Shriver used willingness to innovate and instructional skill as dimensions along which to separate the teachers on her staff. Mr. Delancey, however, represents a bit of a puzzle. As noted, he had the most varied priorities as a principal and his perceptions of the teachers on staff reflected his multiple priorities and concerns. Generally, he perceived that teacher quality was closely associated with the ability to discipline students effectively and manage classrooms. An overview summary of each principal's perceptions of the teachers on his or her staff is included in Tables 6.5-6.7. These perceptions will be important later in the chapter when we consider how the only principal who acted as a reform entrepreneur, Ms. Shriver, generated support for voluntary reforms. Focal teachers from the study are bolded.

Table 6.5. Mrs. Novak's Perception of Teachers

Nurturing	Mixed	Non Nurturing
Mr. Stark	Ms. Lane	Mr. Varner
Mr. Kennedy	Mrs. Roberts	**Ms. Carroll**
Ms. Gladwell	Mr. Boyd	
Mrs. Hollins	Mr. Bryant	
Mrs. Kotch	Ms. James	
Mr. Yarborough	Mrs. Patrick	
Ms. Nelso	**Mrs. Quincy**	
Mrs. Herman		
Mr. St. Johns		
Ms. Voleck		

Table 6.6. Ms. Shriver's Perceptions of Teachers

Innovating	Receptive	Medium-Entrenched	Entrenched
Mrs. Hannigan	Mr. Reed	**Ms. Stickle**	Mr. Lum
Ms. Harris	**Mrs. Curtis**	Mr. Kennedy	Mr. Charles
Ms. Purvis	Ms. Evans	Mr. Givens	Ms. Berger
Mrs. Franzen	Mr. Cooper	Ms. Zimmerman	Mr. Scott
Mrs. McReady	Ms. Bell	Ms. Dozier	
Ms. Marshall	Mrs. Edgar	Mr. Murdock	
Mr. Trotter	Ms. Wheeler	Mr. Collins	
Mrs. McCarthy	Mr. Rogers	Ms. Cook	
Mr. Bridges	Ms. Reynolds		
Mr. Hanson	Mrs. Claiborne		
Mrs. Hall	**Mrs. Jackson**		

Table 6.7. Mr. Delancey's Perceptions of Teachers

Top teachers who excel at discipline and connections with students	Soft-spoken, but respected teachers	Abrasive but generally well liked by students	Group in the middle	Teachers unpopular with colleagues; also have a reputation for being harsh	"Clueless" group of relaxed teachers who are not strict, for better or worse	Teachers who struggle with making connections with students and discipline
Mrs. Wood	Ms. Price	Ms. Friese	Mr. Camburn	**Ms. Dixon**	Mr. Jones	**Ms. Cunningham**
Ms. Davies	Mrs. Mays	Ms. Ready	Mrs. Bell	**Mrs. Reid**	Mr. Brown	Mr. Gee
Ms. Polumbo	Ms. Portez	Mrs. Smith	Ms. Wright		Mr. Duke	Ms. Spencer
Mr. Givens			**Ms. Monahan**			Mrs. Farley
Ms. Firestone						Ms. Winger
Ms. Katz						

Principals Responses to Instructional Reforms

The previous sections of this chapter provided evidence the three principals in the study varied considerably in their backgrounds, beliefs, priorities, and knowledge of reforms. The following section demonstrates that differences along these dimensions reflected the actions that principals took in response to different reforms as characterized in Chapter 5. Ultimately, I will combine this understanding of contexts with actions to explain unequal opportunities for teachers to engage in and learn about instructional reforms across the three schools.

Principals and Mandated Reforms

During the year of the study each of the schools was implementing two mandatory reforms—The Common Core State Standards and a new educator evaluation system. This section will focus on how principals' beliefs, priorities, and knowledge influenced how they responded to the latter of these two reforms—the educator evaluation system.

The new educator evaluation system included expectations and responsibilities for administrators that were written directly into the policy, in essence forcing administrators to respond to the reform in some way. However, despite specifying a role for the principal, each of the principals responded to the policy in ways that reflected each principal's beliefs and priorities. These responses can be characterized as shaping, leveraging, and influencing.

Shaping. For the most part, Mrs. Novak ignored her responsibilities as an instructional leader and had very little to do with instructional reforms. However, as was the case with the educator evaluation policy, sometimes she could not avoid these responsibilities altogether. Under the new policy, principals were required to observe teachers on multiple occasions and measure their work against a state-sanctioned rubric that was either from an approved developer or was created locally and later approved by the state. Districts were also responsible for incorporating teachers' influence on student growth.

Since officials at Middleton School District decided to develop the evaluation rubric locally, Mrs. Novak's responsibilities to implement the new policy were compounded. In the year prior to the study, Middleton had decided to develop and pilot its own new evaluation rubric in anticipation of new educator evaluation policies. The district lacked the staff to develop its rubric without assistance from school personnel, so it employed its elementary, middle, and high school principals to work alongside the superintendent to create its observation rubric.

Participation on the district team afforded Mrs. Novak the opportunity to assert her beliefs and priorities while helping the district craft its observation rubric. For her first six

years as a principal, Mrs. Novak and the other two principals in the district had been using

an evaluation tool that required quite a bit of narrative description to accompany the final

evaluation. Mrs. Novak remembered that the previous evaluation tool was "all narrative

and [individual evaluations] were excruciating to write. It wasn't hard to go in and do the

observation. But then to come back to your desk and have to write about it…they were

laborious as all get out. I would go in and do an hour observation, and it would take me four

hours to compile it."

Mrs. Novak also believed the prior evaluation tool did not allow for her to evaluate

teachers on elements of the job that were important to her. Mrs. Novak recalled, "it was

very secondary oriented, it wasn't very elementary friendly, but [favored] knowledge of

subject matter. When I think 'knowledge of child development' would be almost more

important or equally important, but that wasn't even on there."

In contrast, rubrics created by approved developers did provide wider

consideration of teaching that extended to broader areas of student development, but these

still would have presented a challenge for Mrs. Novak had the district decided not to

develop its own evaluation instrument. According to Mrs. Novak, these rubrics (like the

evaluation tool used in Middleton previously) were cumbersome and labor-intensive. Mrs.

Novak believed "If we did [the *Danielson Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument*],

we would be buried up to our ears" in observation and evaluation requirements. The

district team worked on a streamlined instrument that Mrs. Novak characterized as a

"hybrid" of two commercially available evaluation rubrics. Mrs. Novak said, "Now it is like a

checklist, and it is easy to do. We have a program on our iPad. I can come downstairs [to my

office], do some summary notes, and click send, and it's done."

In sum, Mrs. Novak's involvement on the district team to create an evaluation tool allowed her to have input in shaping the instrument's construction in ways that she valued. Ultimately, the tool the team developed was parsimonious, easy to administer and complete, and it preserved elements of teacher performance that Mrs. Novak valued.

However, while Mrs. Novak was satisfied with the tool that the district developed, she did not use it to improve teaching and learning at Middleton. Despite the simplified evaluation tool, a relatively small teaching staff to evaluate, and the new policy's stipulation that principals observe teachers multiple times each year, Mrs. Novak fell behind late in the year and ultimately abandoned her plan to observe teachers once in the fall and then to conduct her formal evaluation in the spring. In an interview in early spring, Mrs. Novak explained, "The observation that I did in the fall. It was late fall. I didn't attach any numbers from the rubric because I just observed. Now when I go and actually do the evaluation…that will have a score."

Yet, Mrs. Novak never returned to teachers' classrooms for a second time. Thus, she did not execute her role as evaluator in terms of frequency and content of observations, an inaction that raised considerable concern among teachers. Specifically, Middleton teachers realized that Mrs. Novak's behavior did not compare favorably with other administrators in the district. Ms. Carroll explained:

> This year [Mrs. Novak] did [observations] in the fall, but another principal [in the district] did three, and he sat down with you and he talked with you after every single one…My brother is an administrator, and he said, 'I think you need to go in with your evaluation and say, 'what do I do to improve?' That is crap that she never met with you." It's not like I could have done anything anyway. It was April.

Ms. Carroll's concern stemmed, in large part, from the fact that evaluation scores had real consequences for teachers' livelihood in Middleton. The district was steadily losing students and had consequently been forced to lay off teachers for several consecutive years. And, according to many of the teachers on staff, there were no incompetent teachers left. As Mrs. Herman, Middleton's instructional coach explained, the evaluation scored had:

Super big, consequences. I hear people [from other districts] talking...saying these are designed to weed out the incompetent teachers. We don't have any teachers anymore who are scoring below "qualified." We have very few who are scoring below highly qualified. We are letting go highly qualified teachers. Whenever we have to make cuts, it comes down to a [single] point on an evaluation. Our elementary principal, and our high school principal, evaluate their staff three times a year. [Mrs. Novak] evaluates our staff once a year. So in the middle school your job rides on one 45-minute evaluation and that is not right.

Other teachers who had scored well in the past were less concerned about the evaluation but were puzzled about how Mrs. Novak was conducting observations for evaluative purposes. Reflecting on Mrs. Novak's first visit and observation, Mr. St. Johns, an 8th grade science teacher, recalled, "At the time, it wasn't told to us that it was a formal evaluation, [Mrs. Novak] was going to come in two more times. Whatever. So that [first visit] turned into a big evaluation I think."

Mrs. Novak said that she would "ding" teachers on the elements of the rubric she had helped influence when she worked on the district team that met for the purpose of constructing an evaluation tool. Specifically, Mrs. Novak would accentuate the areas of the rubric that allowed for her to score teachers on how well they provided care for social and

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emotional development and in some cases (e.g., Ms. Carroll) the few points lost in this one area was enough to separate her from other teachers and put her job in jeopardy.

None of the teachers interviewed at Middleton were sensitive to the Mrs. Novak's manipulation of the observation rubric to accentuate her beliefs and preferences. However, they did notice that observations had not impacted their teaching as the educator evaluation policy suggested it would. No teacher interviewed at Middleton indicated a change in the frequency or quality of principal observation and feedback as a result of the new educator evaluation policy.

The way Mrs. Novak handled the "value-added" component of the evaluation provides another example of how her response to the mandated policy reflected her personal beliefs and priorities.

During the year of the study, 25% of the teachers' evaluation score was supposed to be based on how well teachers influenced student achievement. However, evaluating teachers in this way conflicted with Mrs. Novak's beliefs about the importance of social and emotional development. She reflected, "Do [students] grow [academically] as fast as I would like them to? No. But that is developmental. That isn't the teacher's fault, necessarily. Some kids just don't have the intellect, or the skills." Mrs. Novak particularly faulted state educational policy, which she felt viewed schools as producers of academic achievement. The state's focus, Mrs. Novak argued, encouraged schools to be insensitive to diverse student needs.

In response to the incongruence between her beliefs and this element of the new educator evaluation policy, Mrs. Novak did not hold teachers accountable for influencing student achievement in ways congruent with the spirit of the new policy. She explained

that she gave every teacher full points on the portion of the evaluation that required

teachers to promote academic growth even if a teacher's student achievement gains were

modest. Mrs. Novak said that until the state provided more definite guidelines "if a teacher

can show me on a spread sheet or hand printed data that this is where [students] were and

this is where they are now then [teachers] get their 20 points. It is all or nothing. I have

never given anybody nothing." Mrs. Novak also believed that obtaining modest growth

should not be a difficult goal for teachers. She explained "I think a child, even with the

worst behavioral issues that I have seen, or the most emotionally impaired that I have seen,

hell they can get one more right even through osmosis. Even if they just sit in the class."

Finally, Mrs. Novak did not force teachers to use a particular test, allowing them to use

"whatever they want" to demonstrate student growth.

Mrs. Novak shaped both the observational and the student growth component of the

new educator evaluation policy to promote her own beliefs and priorities about what good

teachers should do. As a co-constructor of the new evaluation tool she imposed her beliefs

both in the design and the content of the evaluation rubric, making it easier to administer

and ensuring that it contained elements of social and emotional development, respectively.

Furthermore, she virtually ignored the state's requirement that she become more active in

teachers' classrooms and visit them multiple times during the school year. She visited each

classroom only once and hurriedly conducted the final evaluations at the end of the year.

Neither she nor the teachers noted that principal-teacher interaction around instruction

increased during the year of the study. Finally, because Mrs. Novak believed that teachers

should nurture student's social and emotional development, she effectively ignored the

policy's requirements that teachers be evaluated on their ability to promote student learning.

Leveraging. Mr. Delancey faced unique challenges. At the time of the study, he was a new administrator and had no chance to build rapport or relational trust with the staff before new educator evaluation policy was instituted across the state. To make matters worse, teachers at Poe Middle School had enjoyed a long tradition of being able to close their classroom doors and do as they pleased.

Both Mr. Delancey and the teachers believed that the previous principal had made unilateral decisions about administrative and disciplinary matters but had not engaged teachers in matters of teaching and learning. Mr. Delancey wanted his principalship to be different, and although he had an underdeveloped concept of reformed teaching, he nevertheless had aspirations to engage teachers in their classroom and help them with their instruction.

One of Mr. Delancey's main objectives was to improve student achievement at the school and he did not believe this was possible if the staff was fractured internally and teachers' classrooms were resistant to outside intervention. He explained, "We can't achieve raising the test scores and creating a culture where student learning is happening if we don't care about each other and we don't work together. If we are all just doing what we want to do in our own classroom. So I have to build more of a community." Mr. Delancey wanted to interact with teachers about their teaching and to redefine his role in the eyes of his staff. He argued:

> The principal is an instructional leader. That is what I'm trying to change. Right now I'm viewed, and the previous guy was viewed as, 'you take care of the discipline.' I'm

trying to create leaders in the building and say, 'no we take care of discipline as a

whole.' The principal has got to be in the classroom to lead us as instructors.

One way that Mr. Delancey could gain access to classrooms in a context with no

institutional tradition for such work and where he had little legitimacy was through

borrowing from the strength of state. In other words, Mr. Delancey frequently referenced

state law when teachers questioned him about why he was coming into their classrooms so

frequently. Despite this borrowing of strength, however, Mr. Delancey (as explained

earlier) was still careful with the feedback he offered teachers. His emphasis on carefully

worded feedback makes more sense if one understands the situation from Mr. Delancey's

point of view.

Mr. Delancey reported that he visited classrooms "pretty often" and that by the end

of the year "everybody will have at least four or five walk-throughs and observations."

Regardless of his appeals to state mandate and his commitment to sensitively written

feedback, Mr. Delancey admitted that he met with some resistance at first. He had to

convince teachers that he was not there to pick at their practice or to "crucify" them.

Rather, Mr. Delancey insisted that providing feedback was "no different than coaching the

team. You have to help the team become better than when they started."

Still, one of the main purposes of feedback was to critique teacher practice, however

well intentioned and carefully worded the feedback was. Mr. Delancey said, "I have to

figure out how to raise that area of growth without it looking like I'm questioning their

intelligence or their teaching, [but saying]…'you have an area of growth here, but you're not

an incompetent person.'"

Throughout the year, Mr. Delancey was working out which elements of instruction were under the teacher's discretion and what types of practices were non-negotiable. In other words, Mr. Delancey had to work out when to invoke state power to enforce his instructional preferences and when to honor the existing practices of the teachers. He insisted, "I'm not going to tell them 'you have to do this' or 'you have to do that,' unless it's a state mandate…That's their choice of how they implement the formative assessment as long as they are doing it in a correct manner. I'm not going to criticize that."

Mr. Delancey also recognized that wielding state power indiscriminately could be counter-productive. He explained:

> I think the change in the unions and the change of the power of the union is definitely changing what a principal could and could not do—you can still do it, but your popularity will go down. You can do it, before it wouldn't just be your popularity would go down, but your job would be at stake. Now, I think you can do it, but your popularity will go down. You have to figure out those relationship gouges that happen with those requirements, but you also have to figure out how to get them to buy in.

Despite this caution, Mr. Delancey's activity in classrooms often extended beyond the activity required by the new policy as he acknowledged, "[the frequency of my classroom visits is] not required by law. I just have to observe them so many times, but I felt it was really necessary at least my first couple of years to get into each classroom one hour. That gives me the opportunity to view their whole lesson, gives me the opportunity to see how they open a lesson and close a lesson. What they do in the middle, that sort of thing."

In sum, Mr. Delancey borrowed state power to establish himself as a legitimate presence in teachers' classroom. In selective ways, his activity, once established, extended beyond state mandates. However, Mr. Delancey still had to be careful that borrowing state power did not become counter-productive through overuse and abuse. One of his major challenges surrounded the effective use of state mandates to increase his legitimacy in teachers' classrooms and influence over their teaching.

Influencing. Like Mrs. Novak, Ms. Shriver was involved with the new educator evaluation system at both the district and the site level. Unlike Poe's district, however, Waller's district adopted one of the publisher-produced, state-approved evaluation tools and, thus, the principals had no role in shaping the tool's construction. Principals did have an important role in enacting the evaluation tool and Waller's district was the only district in the study to intentionally coordinate the efforts of site principals in evaluating teachers and maintaining some consistency across sites. There were many challenges to consistent scoring. Ms. Shriver understood that differences in principals' knowledge would influence how principals evaluated teachers according to the *Framework for Teaching* and this would be a problem for the district because it wanted to standardized scoring and compare teachers across schools. Ms. Shriver explained:

> We talk about [the specifics of the rubric] all the time, but no matter what we think about the rubrics they're still somewhat subjective. Like how my lense of formative assessment is much different than other people's lenses. I think Paul [a former Waller teacher who was teaching at the high school during the year of the study] was feeling kind of forced to have more evidence of the formative assessment process. I said [to Paul], "Ok, but remember that conferencing with kids and observations are pieces of

student evidence….It's not always a paper that a kid does." And [Paul] goes, "Well, that's what I'm told I need." I want to punch people in the throat [for not understanding the reform]. And every time I try to talk about it or invite [other administrators to Waller], it's "Oh. no. no. no. We don't...no.no. no." And I'm like, "Ok."

In part to overcome the disparities in understanding the reform, the district's curriculum director gathered principals together to familiarize them with the *Framework for Teaching* and to get administrators to discuss and come to a mutual understanding of *Framework*. Then later in the year she led groups of principals in observations of teachers' classrooms at the schools throughout the district. At first, Ms. Shriver recalled, the team would observe in a teacher's class, but in the group's meeting immediately following Ms. Shriver would be the only one who would offer insights or ask questions about what she observed. Of one such visit at the high school, Ms. Shriver explained:

We went to classrooms at the high school [but at the meeting afterward] nobody really said much. I asked some questions and…it was radio silence. Nobody wanted to respond. But, I'm like, "Well, I was wondering..." Because I walked into an 11th grade English class [and] they had just finished ACT prep for the first 20 minutes of class and then the teacher said, "Well, we just finished reading *Canterbury Tales* so we're going to watch the movie *The Knight's Tale*. I thought, "Are you freaking kidding me?"

Ms. Shriver's outspoken character and eagerness to provide instructional leadership occasionally ran her afoul of her principal colleagues and she admitted "I am not well liked sometimes." Even so, Ms. Shriver persisted in engaging in difficult conversations—which, after all, required that principals critique the quality of instruction at a peer's school—and she felt that the group was improving in its willingness to discuss the ideals embedded in

the *Framework for Teaching* with the realities of the district's classrooms. Some of this improvement was the direct result of Ms. Shriver's influence. She directed the team to particular classrooms and then helped principals make sense of what they saw there. For instance, Ms. Shriver suggested the group meet at one of the district's elementary schools where her mentee was principal. She then worked with her mentee to set the schedule for observations so the group could see the correspondence between the language of the *Framework for Teaching* and the practices of one of the teachers on staff who Ms. Shriver believed to be exemplary. Ms. Shriver knew that she was intentionally shaping other principals experiences and, by extension, their perceptions of the educator evaluation tool. She explained that by the end of the year:

> I think there were some, "Oh...that's what that should look like" [moments] happening. Like we were just at an elementary school where Tanya [the former AP at Waller] is now principal and they saw [practices from the *Framework*] in action...We went into Meghan's classroom and they actually saw things happening. So they saw the connections that were made and so...that discussion afterwards [I would say] "Well, that's what this looks like." And "That 1st grade teacher when she was talking and introducing the first graders writing 'how to' stories...she showed them examples. Those were exemplars." So just trying to help people kind of see that that's what that looks like. Not just make an assumption.

Ms. Shriver had the knowledge, interest, enthusiasm, and position to shape how the district enacted the new educator evaluation system. This knowledge, interest, enthusiasm, and position also influenced how Ms. Shriver enacted the educator evaluation system at Waller. These qualities helped Ms. Shriver manage her conversations with teachers about

the multiple reforms being enacted at Waller and they influenced the organization of evaluation itself into a process congruent with the reform ideals.

First, and in contrast to Mrs. Novak and Mr. Delancey, Mrs. Shriver used the new educator evaluation system to organize the many instructional reforms at the school. She routinely talked with teachers both individually and collectively about how the instructional messages in the *Framework for Teaching* were related to the ideas about instruction represented in the other instructional reforms in the context of the teachers' actual classroom practices.

Ms. Shriver also adopted a formative approach to evaluation that she believed helped circumvent some of the issues that might otherwise emerge. Where Ms. Shriver believed that other administrators in the district waited until the end of the year to provide teachers summative feedback on their performance as measured on the *Framework for Teaching*, Ms. Shriver employed an approach similar to the one she hoped teachers would take with students. When describing the types of conversations Ms. Shriver had regarding evaluation, Ms. Shriver recalled that she would ask teachers early in the year, "For [the purpose of] feedback…where do you think you are at?…Let's collect evidence and let's move forward…Let's look at this domain or this component." This formative approach to teacher evaluation afforded Ms. Shriver and the teachers opportunities to discuss explicit areas of instruction, identify areas for growth, and to plot progress within these areas as the year progressed.

This is not to suggest that the dual role was entirely devoid of dilemmas. Ms. Shriver did face challenges in her role as supporter, colleague, confidant, and evaluator. This was particularly true when a discrepancy developed between a teacher's self-assessment of

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competency and needs for improvement and Ms. Shriver's own assessment of the teacher's progress. Ms. Shriver described the dilemma as follows:

> This is the hard coach/evaluator that I struggle with, because I want to support [teachers as an instructional leader] and I want to support them as their coach, but I think there are certain people that oversell [the proficiency of their practice or the improvement they have made]. That they think they are doing things and they are doing some things, but it's not necessarily getting kids to think deeper.

The situation above, however, was atypical. Overall, Ms. Shriver felt that she had built a great deal of trust with a staff who had mutual commitment to improving practice. And through her classroom observations, feedback, and conversations about what she saw, Ms. Shriver organized this improvement by considering teachers' instructional practice against the observation protocol and connecting other reform ideas to this framework. In sum, she organized instructional improvement around the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* her district had been using for several years and was now more formally associated with teacher evaluation in response to state mandates.

Principals and Non-mandated Reforms

As exemplified by the new educator evaluation system, principals had an influential role to play in how the mandatory reforms were enacted. In sum, principals enacted mandated reforms in ways that reflected their beliefs, knowledge, and available social resources. Ultimately, the principals' enactment of mandated reforms impacted teachers' opportunity to learn about reforms and improve their instructional practice.

Most of the reforms that emerged in this study, however, were not mandatory. As argued in the previous chapter, non-mandated reforms required entrepreneurship and

social resources and the principal seemed to be in favorable position to usher in and support reforms once they arrived. The following section compares how the three principals interacted with a single non-mandated reform—the FAME program—noting that principals' responses to FAME were similar to how they acted toward other non-mandated reforms. The chapter concludes with a closer look at how the only reform entrepreneur of the three principals—Ms. Shriver—built support for the reforms she brought to her school.

Principals Responses to FAME

As noted, most reforms were not mandated and had no specified role for the principal. Like the mandated educator evaluation policy, principals responded to these reforms in ways that reflected their personal beliefs and priorities, but they were under no obligation to shape non-mandated reforms. For example, in the case of the FAME program, the principals' responses can be categorized as *ignoring*, *commandeering*, and *supporting*.

Ignoring. One way to respond to a state-endorsed and supported program was simply to ignore it. For example, when the superintendent of Middleton School District bypassed Mrs. Novak and went directly to Mrs. Herman (the school's literacy coach) to solicit the middle school's participation in the FAME project, Mrs. Novak subsequently had nothing to do with the program. She did not attend meetings, assist with logistical challenges of arranging and preparing for meetings, or talk with teachers about their experiences on the team and how these experiences were affecting their work in classrooms. In fact, while Mrs. Novak was well aware that Mrs. Herman led the FAME learning team, she did not know which of her 19 teachers were learning team members. Ms. Carroll, one of the teachers who Mrs. Novak often maligned, detailed an incident in

which she met with Mrs. Novak, a district administrator, and a union representative to discuss Ms. Carroll's substandard evaluation. During this meeting, Ms. Carroll recalled:

> I had a union rep with me and some comments were made [by Mrs. Novak] like "Why don't you become a member of the formative assessment team?" And the [other] administrator was looking down and then the union rep was like [*mouth agape*] and I said "I have been on that team for three years now."

Other events corroborated Ms. Carroll's account. On several occasions while conducting the data collection Mrs. Novak asked me to remind her which teachers were participating in the research, suggesting that even though she knew I was focusing on the FAME learning team, she could never remember which teachers were involved.

Commandeering. Another way to respond to a state-endorsed voluntary program was to attend meetings and commandeer the meetings' purpose to align it with one's own priorities. For example, during learning team meetings at Poe Middle School, Mr. Delancey arrived unannounced and talked with the four learning team members at length about his plans for distributing leadership through changed decision making structures. Once Mr. Delancey left the meetings, the group typically had difficulty getting back to the task of learning about formative assessment and planning for enactment. Ms. Cunningham, a second-year teacher in her first year on the FAME team commented, "we have an agenda, but...sometimes it gets quite off task. We only spend an hour or so in really valuable time...FAME for me is kind of missing that step of actually having collaboration. I feel like a lot is talk and off topic."

Leading. The final way principals responded to a voluntary state-endorsed and supported program was to actively support and lead it as Ms. Shriver did. Recall from the

previous chapter that all non-mandatory instructional reforms that came to Waller came through the principal, Ms. Shriver. FAME was no different. Nearly five years prior to the study, a district administrator forwarded Ms. Shriver a "list-serve" email from the Michigan Department of Education. The email was looking for people from throughout the state to volunteer as either coaches or participants for the FAME project. Ms. Shriver promptly completed an application without "really understanding the scope of the project" and was just as promptly selected for participation. She hoped that the FAME project would allow her to explore an emerging interest in the "decisions that teachers make every day in the classroom" that helped them promote student learning rather than waiting to administer "paper-pencil tests [that] only tell us [about what students know] after things have happened." After attending an initial two-day training in the summer, Ms. Shriver was ready to construct her learning team.

Ms. Shriver started to build the learning team by emailing her entire staff to see who might be interested in participating. Interest was tepid. Only three teachers responded with interest in being on a learning team: Ms. Stickle, Mr. Bridges, and another teacher who had since left the school. In addition, another teacher from a district elementary school who had considered leading her own learning team but ultimately decided that the commitment to coach was too great, agreed to join Ms. Shriver's new learning team, as did her second-grade teaching partner. So the first year the team consisted of six members, including Ms. Shriver.

Ms. Shriver found leading a learning team challenging. Although she had extensive experience leading staff meetings and "following protocols" and leading teacher learning through carefully crafted activities and promoting teacher-teacher interaction, facilitating

teacher learning on the FAME learning team presented a new challenge. Rather than assuming the role of expert or boss, Ms. Shriver was careful to craft an identity for the rest of the team in which she is not "their principal and their evaluator" but rather their colleague on a joint endeavor "to get better at what we do."

As the years passed the team grew and Ms. Shriver continued to encourage membership from the staff through the time of the study. She believed that participating on a learning team, "helps build capacity in people" that would ease the loss that the school would experience if Ms. Shriver moved on to a different position either in the district or elsewhere.

Ms. Shriver believed that team membership was attractive because FAME meetings gave teachers a venue for collaboration and professional renewal. In her words, the FAME learning team was "a supportive team to kind of ask questions, give ideas, learn from one another. I like to think that because of the culture we've created, and the building as a whole and in our learning team that people want to join, to say, 'hey, what's that about? I want to do something with that.'"

Despite her view of herself as a colleague and co-investigator, Ms. Shriver took an active role in providing instructional leadership that was unique to her position as principal. First, she set the meeting times and carefully crafted the agenda. She also culled resources from various sources including practitioner-oriented articles about best formative assessment instruction and provided teachers tools that they could use to enact formative assessment practices. Third, Ms. Shriver set the meeting agendas and made sure the activities would closely align with the ideas pressed by formative assessment. Once in the meetings, Ms. Shriver carefully guided conversations that focused teachers on blending

the ideas of the instructional reform and the realities of their own teaching contexts. She quickly terminated teacher asides and brought the teachers back to formative assessment whenever the group wandered off into other topics. Finally, Ms. Shriver talked with members of the team frequently outside of meetings about their attempts to enact formative assessment. These conversations occurred about general practices of formative assessment and were likely to take place in hallways, the lunchroom, or the main office. Ms. Shriver also held more formal conversations with teachers in their classrooms as she referenced the ideas of the formative instruction with her observations about the teachers' instruction.

Summary: Principals Responses to Instructional Reforms

The previous chapter documented the various routes through which an instructional reform could arrive at a school and how principals influenced the total number of reforms that were active at a school. This chapter analyzed how principals' responses to mandatory reforms (e.g., the educator evaluation system) resulted in widely divergent experiences across the three schools. Principals' beliefs, knowledge, and priorities heavily influenced how they responded to mandatory reforms, and, in turn, these responses shaped teachers' opportunities to learn about the reforms and how the reforms might help teachers improve their instruction.

The previous chapter also argued that most reforms were not mandated and that these reforms needed entrepreneurs who would build support for the reform through their social networks. Principals had a great potential to act as reform entrepreneurs, yet only one of the principals in this study enacted her role in this way. Mrs. Novak had no inclination to serve as an entrepreneur for reform and for the most part she ignored

reforms when they came to Middleton via another route. Mr. Delancey was more interested in providing instructional leadership, but he was constrained by his lack of reform knowledge and his limited social standing among the teaching staff at Poe.

Ms. Shriver alone valued reforms, knew them well, and had the social standing among teachers necessary to support non-mandatory reforms. She led the FAME team as the team's coach. She attended professional development workshops for UDL and SBG and situated these reforms in teachers' work. Ms. Shriver was less involved in CITW and CCR, but she still arranged for her teachers to participate and, in the case of CITW, she knew the reform well and talked with teachers regularly about how the reform practices discussed at CITW workshops fit with other reforms, namely the *Framework for Teaching*.

The next section examines how Ms. Shriver, in her role as reform entrepreneur, utilized her social network to generate support for reform and the consequence that this utilization had for teachers' opportunities to learn at Waller.

A Closer Look at Principal Reform Entrepreneurship

Non-mandated reforms had two characteristics that could place a reform entrepreneur at cross-purposes. On the one hand, entrepreneurs needed to generate support for a reform. On the other hand, the reforms themselves had limited capacity and could not accommodate all teachers. This dilemma was particularly acute for those reforms that attempted to situate teacher learning into small, intimate groups (e.g. FAME, UDL, SBG). At Waller, where the principal held tight control over instructional reforms, this meant that Ms. Shriver had to devise ways to connect teachers to the instructional reforms, but she also had to limit this connection. This section provides a closer look at how Ms.

Shriver made these "connection decisions" and the consequences these decisions had for teacher opportunities to learn about reforms.

First, we return to the Ms. Shriver's perceptions of the teachers at Waller. This perceptions chart will be used throughout this section as we consider teachers' opportunity to learn within a school. The chart is reproduced in Table 6.8. As a reminder, focal teachers in the study are bolded.

Table 6.8. Ms. Shriver's Perceptions of Teachers

Innovating	Receptive	Medium-Entrenched	Entrenched
Mrs. Hannigan	Mr. Reed	**Ms. Stickle**	Mr. Lum
Ms. Harris	**Mrs. Curtis**	Mr. Kennedy	Mr. Charles
Ms. Purvis	Ms. Evans	Mr. Givens	Ms. Berger
Mrs. Franzen	Mr. Cooper	Ms. Zimmerman	Mr. Scott
Mrs. McReady	Ms. Bell	Ms. Dozier	
Ms. Marshall	Mrs. Edgar	Mr. Murdock	
Mr. Trotter	Ms. Wheeler	Mr. Collins	
Mrs. McCarthy	Mr. Rogers	Ms. Cook	
Mr. Bridges	Ms. Reynolds		
Mr. Hanson	Mrs. Claiborne		
Mrs. Hall	**Mrs. Jackson**		

Principal Connection Decisions

As noted above, Ms. Shriver had to connect teachers to reforms in some way because the reforms themselves did not have unlimited capacity to accommodate all teachers. These connection decisions were of three types—assignment, solicitation, and voluntary call—and they varied by reform. An overview of how Ms. Shriver connected teachers at Waller to reform is included in Table 6.9. In total, Ms. Shriver's connection decisions resulted in 64 connections between teachers and instructional reforms.

Table 6.9. Connecting Teachers to Reform

Instructional Reform	Reform Type	Mandated Participation	Principal Assignment	Principal Solicitation	Volunteer Call
Educator Evaluation System	Mandated Policy	X			
Common Core State Standards	Mandated Policy	X			
Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators	State Supported			X	X
Classroom Instruction That Works	Wide Coverage		X		
Close and Critical Reading	Select Coverage		X		
Universal Design for Learning	Select Coverage		X		
Standards-Based Grading	Select Coverage			X	X

Assignment

For three of the reforms (CITW, UDL, CCR), Ms. Shriver assigned teachers to participate. Interestingly, when Ms. Shriver used assignment she did so by department. In other words, she did not assign teachers to reform individually. Furthermore, assignment was of three types: availability, perceived department strength, and perceived department need.

Assignment—availability. As was the case with CITW, Ms. Shriver sent as many of her teachers as she could and, because availability was broad, many of Waller's teachers were able to attend. Consequently, all science, social studies, language arts, and math teachers were able to participate. Twenty-six of 64 (41%) of the connections between teachers and instructional reforms were a result of assignment by availability. The differences in participation across the first three columns of teachers were modest. Ninety-one percent of innovative-seeking teachers, 82% of receptive teachers, and 75% of medium-entrenched teachers participated in the CITW reform. By comparison, only 25% of the entrenched teachers were involved in CITW, but it should be noted that three of these

teachers (Mr. Lum, Mr. Charles, and Ms. Berger) were world language teachers whose department Ms. Shriver did not assign to the reform. A chart of the teachers affected by assignment by availability is included in Table 6.10.

Table 6.10. Assignment through Availability (CITW)

Innovating	Receptive	Medium-Entrenched	Entrenched
Mrs. Hannigan (1)	Mr. Reed (1)	**Ms. Stickle (1)**	Mr. Lum (0)
Ms. Harris (1)	**Mrs. Curtis (0)**	Mr. Kennedy (1)	Mr. Charles (0)
Ms. Purvis (1)	Ms. Evans (1)	Mr. Givens (0)	Ms. Berger (0)
Mrs. Franzen (1)	Mr. Cooper (1)	Ms. Zimmerman (1)	Mr. Scott (1)
Mrs. McReady (1)	Ms. Bell (0)	Ms. Dozier (0)	
Ms. Marshall (1)	Mrs. Edgar (1)	Mr. Murdock (1)	
Mr. Trotter (1)	Ms. Wheeler (1)	Mr. Collins (1)	
Mrs. McCarthy (1)	Mr. Rogers (1)	Ms. Cook (1)	
Mr. Bridges (1)	Ms. Reynolds (1)		
Mr. Hanson (0)	Mrs. Claiborne(1)		
Mrs. Hall (1)	**Mrs. Jackson (1)**		
10 (91%)	**9 (82%)**	**6 (75%)**	**1 (25%)**
Assignment by Availability: 26 of 64 (41%)			

Assignment—perceived department strength. Ms. Shriver still assigned teachers to reform by department even when the reform had a more limited availability. For example, in the case of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the professional development providers at the ISD requested that Ms. Shriver send a single department. Ms. Shriver explained that she assigned her science department because she believed they were the strongest department at the school and would get the most out of their participation. In the case of UDL, then, Ms. Shriver assigned teachers to participate by perceived department strength.

Ms. Shriver's assignment came after she first carefully cultivated the participation of two science teachers, Mr. Bridges and Mr. Murdock, who agreed to attend the UDL workshops the year prior to the study. When both teachers spoke highly of the program and the work they did related to UDL while working together at Waller, Ms. Shriver

consulted the approval of the rest of the science department, and with their consent
assigned the entire department to attend.

The department was sharply divided between those teachers whom Ms. Shriver felt
were exemplary (Mr. Trotter, Mr. Bridges, Mrs. Hall) and those she believed were mostly
set in their traditional instructional ways (Ms. Stickle, Mr. Murdock, Mr. Collins and Ms.
Cook). Only Mr. Rogers fell in the middle of these two categories. Assignment through
perceived department strength accounts for far fewer connections between teachers and
instructional reformers than assignment by availability. Only 8 of 64 connections (13%)
were a result of Ms. Shriver's assignment by perceived department strength. Also, as a
consequence of the sharp division (at least in Ms. Shriver's mind) within the science
department, both innovative-seeking and medium-entrenched teachers were well
represented (27%, 50% respectively). Receptive teachers (9%) and Entrenched teachers
(0%) had virtually no representation in assignment by perceived department strength. A
summary of this information is included in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11. Assignment through Perceived Department Strength (UDL)

Innovating	Receptive	Medium-Entrenched	Entrenched
Mrs. Hannigan (0)	Mr. Reed (0)	**Ms. Stickle (1)**	Mr. Lum (0)
Ms. Harris (0)	**Mrs. Curtis (0)**	Mr. Kennedy (0)	Mr. Charles (0)
Ms. Purvis (0)	Ms. Evans (0)	Mr. Givens (0)	Ms. Berger (0)
Mrs. Franzen (0)	Mr. Cooper (0)	Ms. Zimmerman (0)	Mr. Scott (0)
Mrs. McReady (0)	Ms. Bell (0)	Ms. Dozier (0)	
Ms. Marshall (0)	Mrs. Edgar (0)	Mr. Murdock (1)	
Mr. Trotter (1)	Ms. Wheeler (0)	Mr. Collins (1)	
Mrs. McCarthy (0)	Mr. Rogers (1)	Ms. Cook (1)	
Mr. Bridges (1)	Ms. Reynolds (0)		
Mr. Hanson (0)	Mrs. Claiborne (0)		
Mrs. Hall (1)	**Mrs. Jackson (0)**		
3 (27%)	1 (9%)	4 (50%)	1 (0%)
Assignment by Perceived Department Strength: 8 of 64 (13%)			

Assignment—perceived department need. Assignment by perceived department need was yet a third way that Ms. Shriver assigned teachers to reform. As explained previously, Ms. Shriver and a select group of teachers on the leadership team became interested in Close and Critical Reading (CCR) when the group became alarmed that many of the teachers on staff were unprepared to support the CCSS standards for reading informational text. Ms. Shriver reached out to CCR providers and assigned her social studies and science teachers to attend the training. Ms. Shriver's decision to assign teachers to CCR because of perceived department need resulted in 14 of the 64 connections (22%) between teachers and policy. Differences among the four categories of teachers (as Ms. Shriver perceived them) were modest. A summary of assignment through perceived department need is provided in Table 6.12.

Table 6.12. Assignment through Perceived Department Need (CCR)

Innovating	Receptive	Medium-Entrenched	Entrenched
Mrs. Hannigan (0)	Mr. Reed (0)	**Ms. Stickle (1)**	Mr. Lum (0)
Ms. Harris (0)	**Mrs. Curtis (0)**	Mr. Kennedy (0)	Mr. Charles (0)
Ms. Purvis (0)	Ms. Evans (0)	Mr. Givens (0)	Ms. Berger (0)
Mrs. Franzen (1)	Mr. Cooper (1)	Ms. Zimmerman (0)	Mr. Scott (1)
Mrs. McReady (0)	Ms. Bell (0)	Ms. Dozier (0)	
Ms. Marshall (1)	Mrs. Edgar (1)	Mr. Murdock (1)	
Mr. Trotter (1)	Ms. Wheeler (0)	Mr. Collins (1)	
Mrs. McCarthy (0)	Mr. Rogers (1)	Ms. Cook (1)	
Mr. Bridges (1)	Ms. Reynolds (1)		
Mr. Hanson (0)	Mrs. Claiborne (0)		
Mrs. Hall (1)	**Mrs. Jackson (0)**		
5 (45%)	**4 (36%)**	**4 (50%)**	**1 (25%)**
Assignment by Perceived Department Need: 14 of 64 (22%)			

Assignment Summary

Most of teachers at Waller were connected to reforms because of Ms. Shriver's assignment decisions. In total, 48 of 64 connections (75%) were made through assignment. As a reminder, Ms. Shriver assigned departments, not individuals, to three reforms (CITW, UDL,

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CCR) based on availability, perceived strength, or perceived need, respectively. Connecting

teachers in this way created unequal opportunities to learn by department and some of

these inequalities are evidenced when considering Ms. Shriver's perceptions of the

teachers on her staff. A summary of Ms. Shriver's connection decisions through assignment

is included in Table 6.13.

Table 6.13. Assignment Summary

Innovating	Receptive	Medium-Entrenched	Entrenched
Mrs. Hannigan (1)	Mr. Reed (1)	**Ms. Stickle (3)**	Mr. Lum (0)
Ms. Harris (1)	**Mrs. Curtis (0)**	Mr. Kennedy (1)	Mr. Charles (0)
Ms. Purvis (1)	Ms. Evans (1)	Mr. Givens (0)	Ms. Berger (0)
Mrs. Franzen (2)	Mr. Cooper (2)	Ms. Zimmerman (1)	Mr. Scott (2)
Mrs. McReady (1)	Ms. Bell (0)	Ms. Dozier (0)	
Ms. Marshall (2)	Mrs. Edgar (2)	Mr. Murdock (3)	
Mr. Trotter (3)	Ms. Wheeler (1)	Mr. Collins (3)	
Mrs. McCarthy (1)	Mr. Rogers (3)	Ms. Cook (3)	
Mr. Bridges (3)	Ms. Reynolds (2)		
Mr. Hanson (0)	Mrs. Claiborne (1)		
Mrs. Hall (3)	**Mrs. Jackson (1)**		
18	14	14	2
Assignment by Perceived Department Need: 48 of 64 (75%)			

Solicitation

      Assignment was not the only way that Ms. Shriver connected teachers to

instructional reforms. For two of the reforms at Waller (SBG, FAME) Ms. Shriver used a

combination of solicitation and voluntary call to connect teachers to reform. When Ms.

Shriver solicited participation, she asked individual teachers to participate. And, as

evidenced in Table 6.14, when she asked teachers to participate, she approached those

teachers whom she felt were the most innovative and willing to change their instructional

practices. Of the nine connections Ms. Shriver instigated between teachers and reforms

through solicitation, eight came from the category of teachers Ms. Shriver perceived to be

the most innovative. Ms. Shriver approached more than half (55%) of the teachers in the

innovative-seeking group to participate in either SBG or FAME. In contrast, she did not

approach any teachers whom she perceived to be medium-entrenched or entrenched.

Table 6.14. Connection through Solicitation (SBG, FAME)

Innovating	Receptive	Medium-Entrenched	Entrenched
Mrs. Hannigan (0)	Mr. Reed (0)	**Ms. Stickle (0)**	Mr. Lum (0)
Ms. Harris (0)	**Mrs. Curtis (1)**	Mr. Kennedy (0)	Mr. Charles (0)
Ms. Purvis (1)	Ms. Evans (0)	Mr. Givens (0)	Ms. Berger (0)
Mrs. Franzen (1)	Mr. Cooper (0)	Ms. Zimmerman (0)	Mr. Scott (0)
Mrs. McReady (0)	Ms. Bell (0)	Ms. Dozier (0)	
Ms. Marshall (1)	Mrs. Edgar (0)	Mr. Murdock (0)	
Mr. Trotter (2)	Ms. Wheeler (0)	Mr. Collins (0)	
Mrs. McCarthy (2)	Mr. Rogers (0)	Ms. Cook (0)	
Mr. Bridges (0)	Ms. Reynolds (0)		
Mr. Hanson (0)	Mrs. Claiborne (0)		
Mrs. Hall (1)	**Mrs. Jackson (0)**		
8 (55%)	**1 (9%)**	**0 (0%)**	**0 (0%)**
Total Solicitation: 9 of 64 (14%)			

Voluntary Call

In order to avoid appearances of favoritism, Ms. Shriver issued a voluntary call

whenever she solicited the participation of individual teachers. A voluntary call was an

email or an announcement at a staff meeting informing teachers of a reform and

encouraging all interested teachers to attend and participate. Responding to a voluntary

call was not a popular means of connecting teachers to reforms. In sum, only 7 of the 64

(11%) connections between teachers and reform resulted from a voluntary call.

Furthermore, although to a lesser extent than solicitation, a volunteer call was more likely

to connect a teacher held in Ms. Shriver's high esteem than those she felt were entrenched.

Table 6.15 provides a summary of the connections teachers made to reform via volunteer

call.

Table 6.15 Connection through Volunteer Call (SBG, FAME)

Innovating	Receptive	Medium-Entrenched	Entrenched
Mrs. Hannigan (0)	Mr. Reed (0)	**Ms. Stickle (2)**	Mr. Lum (0)
Ms. Harris (0)	**Mrs. Curtis (0)**	Mr. Kennedy (0)	Mr. Charles (0)
Ms. Purvis (0)	Ms. Evans (0)	Mr. Givens (0)	Ms. Berger (0)
Mrs. Franzen (0)	Mr. Cooper (0)	Ms. Zimmerman (0)	Mr. Scott (0)
Mrs. McReady (0)	Ms. Bell (0)	Ms. Dozier (0)	
Ms. Marshall (0)	Mrs. Edgar (0)	Mr. Murdock (0)	
Mr. Trotter (0)	Ms. Wheeler (1)	Mr. Collins (0)	
Mrs. McCarthy (0)	Mr. Rogers (0)	Ms. Cook (0)	
Mr. Bridges (2)	Ms. Reynolds (0)		
Mr. Hanson (0)	Mrs. Claiborne (0)		
Mrs. Hall (1)	**Mrs. Jackson (1)**		
3 (18%)	**2 (18%)**	**2 (13%)**	**0 (0%)**
Total Solicitation: 7 of 64 (11%)			

Summary: Connecting Teachers to Reform

In her role as reform entrepreneur, Ms. Shriver had to simultaneously use her social network to build support for reform and, because of reforms' limited capacity, restrict teachers' involvement. Thus, she had to make connection decisions that provided some teachers opportunities to engage with and learn about reforms but inhibited the participation and opportunities to learn for others. These connection decisions were of three types—assignment, solicitation, and volunteer call. Because of the way she handled these decisions, the teachers who she perceived to be the most able and willing to experiment with their practice ended up having the most extensive opportunities to learn about reform practices. While not enough to achieve statistical significance, the chart does highlight the general pattern that seems to favor the teachers whom Ms. Shriver believed were the most innovative. Those teachers whom Ms. Shriver felt were the most traditional and entrenched in their instructional approach had the most impoverished opportunities to learn about and participate in reform. A summary of teachers' connections to reform at

Waller (with an average number of instructional reform participation by category) is

provided in Table 6.16.

Table 6.16. Summary of Teachers Connections to Reform

Innovating	Receptive	Medium-Entrenched	Entrenched
Mrs. Hannigan (1)	Mr. Reed (1)	**Ms. Stickle (5)**	Mr. Lum (0)
Ms. Harris (1)	**Mrs. Curtis (1)**	Mr. Kennedy (1)	Mr. Charles (1)
Ms. Purvis (2)	Ms. Evans (1)	Mr. Givens (0)	Ms. Berger (0)
Mrs. Franzen (3)	Mr. Cooper (2)	Ms. Zimmerman (1)	Mr. Scott (2)
Mrs. McReady (1)	Ms. Bell (0)	Ms. Dozier (0)	
Ms. Marshall (3)	Mrs. Edgar (2)	Mr. Murdock (3)	
Mr. Trotter (5)	Ms. Wheeler (2)	Mr. Collins (3)	
Mrs. McCarthy (3)	Mr. Rogers (1)	Ms. Cook (3)	
Mr. Bridges (3)	Ms. Reynolds (2)		
Mr. Hanson (0)	Mrs. Claiborne (1)		
Mrs. Hall (5)	**Mrs. Jackson (2)**		
2.45	**1.36**	**2**	**.75**

Conclusion

Principals in this study were central in connecting to reforms and shaping the

reforms once they arrived at the schools. Principal support for reforms was not an

idiosyncratic phenomenon, but rather principal actions were deeply rooted in their

personal and professional backgrounds, beliefs about their role as instructional leaders,

and knowledge about reforms. The three principals in the study varied considerably along

each of these dimensions, as did the consequent actions in response to reforms. At Waller,

Ms. Shriver's deep engagement provided some teachers extensive opportunities to learn

about reform. At the other two schools, teachers had far fewer substantive opportunities.

At Middleton, Ms. Novak was indifferent to reforms and had virtually no role in

instructional leadership. She did not engage teachers in matters of teaching and learning

unless this interaction was required by state law. Even so, she shaped state mandated tools

to accommodate her priorities and then implemented the reform in a way that aligned with her values and beliefs.

Mr. Delancey had more ambitions as an instructional leader, but his lack of institutional position, the prevailing school culture, and his own lack of understanding of instructional reforms inhibited his ability to engage teachers deeply about their instruction or connect them to instructional reforms.

Only Ms. Shriver was able to usher in instructional reforms and sustain them once they arrived. However, unlike previous research tends to assume, Ms. Shriver's instructional leadership was not uniform and consistent across all teachers at Waller. Some teachers had more substantial opportunities to learn than others. This inequality was a consequence of the connection decisions that Ms. Shriver made as she was faced with decisions about how to manage the limited capacity of the reforms. All told, she connected teachers to reforms via assignment, solicitation, and volunteer call—the result of which left teachers whom she esteemed as innovative with more opportunities to connect with and learn about reforms than teachers she perceived as being entrenched in their traditional, teacher-centered practices.

In sum, only a small percentage of the teachers had the opportunity to learn about instructional reforms as a result of principal responses to reform. At Poe and Middleton, the principal played a modest role in promoting reform teaching. At Waller, these opportunities were more plentiful, but favored teachers who the principal perceived as exemplary. The following chapter looks at alternative sources for teacher learning and how these contributed to teachers' opportunities to learn about reforms.

CHAPTER 7: Teacher Learning

Introduction

This research set out to answer questions about how teachers made sense of multiple instructional reforms. To this end, the previous two chapters provided evidence that reforms varied by type and pathways through which they penetrated schools. Some reforms were mandatory and demanded a local response but most reforms were not and these latter reforms required at least one reform entrepreneur to use his or her social connections to build support for reform. Chapter 5 also argued that non-mandatory reforms established a mutual dependence among state and district administrators, principals, and teachers. State and district administrators generated reform activity but typically relied on principals or teachers to express interest and commitment. In turn, principals relied on state and district administrators to create reforms and provide reform opportunities and they relied on teachers to demonstrate a willingness to participate.

Chapter 6 contended that principals were particularly well situated to be reform entrepreneurs, but principal reform entrepreneurship depended on favorable beliefs, knowledge, priorities, and social standing among teachers that could not be assumed. Only Ms. Shriver had the inclination, knowledge, and social resources to serve in this capacity and her entrepreneurship explains the differences in the number of reforms observed across schools and the different experiences teachers had with both mandatory and voluntary reforms within a single school.

This chapter considers the perspectives teachers developed regarding reforms and the experiences they had with those reforms through opportunities to learn that organized learning by placing teachers into large training sessions. First, I will distinguish between

behaviorist and situated opportunities to learn. Through consideration of two cases, I explore the potential for teachers to serve as entrepreneurs of reforms that situated teacher learning locally and I establish the importance of social networks in this endeavor. In this same context, I demonstrate that teachers perspectives in committing to reforms with situated opportunities to learn is much more varied than their perspectives regarding behaviorist opportunities. Finally, I examine the instances of behaviorist opportunities in detail and highlight the potential and limitations for behavior learning to promote reform practices.

Understanding the Teacher Perspective

In keeping with the symbolic interactionist perspective, it is important to understand how teachers viewed their situations and how they developed perspectives from which they generated action regarding multiple reforms. For this purpose, it is necessary to point out all of the non-mandatory reforms to emerge in this study were embedded in programs that afforded teachers some opportunities to learn. It will be helpful to examine the learning opportunities that surrounded these reforms and to distinguish between those reforms that provided opportunities that required teachers to attend trainings and those that situated teachers' work in small learning communities, persisted over time, and encouraged teachers to consider reform ideals in the specific contexts of their own situations.

Reforms that relied on the behaviorist tradition were those that provided for teacher learning via trainings (e.g., CITW, TLC, CCR). As will be described later in the chapter, teachers sometimes resented the way they were treated and teacher commitment to learning varied at these behaviorist trainings, but no teacher expressed resentment in

being assigned to attend. When teachers were assigned to participate in the behaviorist training sessions, they went. Typically, they attended during school time or they earned credit toward their annual professional development growth requirement, or both, and this seemed reason enough to encourage teachers to attend trainings without complaint.

Reforms that provided for situated teacher learning placed teachers in small learning communities (e.g., FAME, UDL, SBG) required much greater teacher commitment and responsibility for learning. Because of the increased responsibilities on teachers to carry the learning, teachers were not assigned to participate in reforms with situated learning except under special circumstances (e.g., UDL at Waller). Thus, reforms with situated teacher learning were especially reliant on a reform entrepreneur with social connections necessary to secure teacher participation. As examined in the previous chapter, this entrepreneurship could come from the principal. However, two of the three principals lacked the necessary beliefs, priorities, knowledge, and social connections to sustain a situated reform. Indeed, in these two cases it fell to a teacher to become a reform entrepreneur and to use her social connections to solicit the participation of others. The next two sections examine each case.

Middleton Middle School and the Case of Mrs. Herman

Mrs. Herman was a reading teacher and instructional coach at Middleton Middle School. She taught full time for 10 years before assuming the position of literacy coach and interventionist, a position that she had held for just over a decade. Her position was originally funded by a state grant which had since expired, but Mrs. Novak kept Mrs. Herman in the position of part-time instructional coach and part-time teacher. In her role, Mrs. Herman provided the only instructional leadership that most teachers at Middleton

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would receive. Since Mrs. Novak abdicated her instructional leadership responsibilities, the faculty often referred to Mrs. Herman as the Middleton's "real principal."

Mrs. Herman's dual role was one she had crafted over time and at the time of the study Mrs. Herman executed her self-imposed duties with no noticeable oversight from site or district administration. This arrangement had persisted since the beginning, as Mrs. Herman explained:

> I don't know what they were thinking when they posted the job for the literacy coach, but...I had my own ideas about what a literacy coach should do and should be so my principal at the time, he didn't really know anything. So I just said, "Here are the things I think I should do" and he said, "Okay, do them.'"

For the most part Mrs. Herman enjoyed the wide latitude of her position that allowed her to craft her duties around her strengths and interests. She also believed that she tended to "take on too many responsibilities" because she had "a hard time saying no." She had good reason to be ambitious and to overcommit. She was enthusiastic for reform and she had come to believe in the past several years that if she did not do something, there was a good chance it would not get done.

Although the other teachers appreciated Mrs. Herman and generally acknowledged that she helped the school function as it should, much of the work that she did remained invisible to them. Just the paperwork burden alone that required ensuring that state exams were distributed, administered, and re-packaged correctly and that teachers organized and presented their data that demonstrated their impact on student growth (as was required by the new educator evaluation system) was considerable. Mrs. Herman had additional responsibilities providing mentoring and in-class coaching for several of the teachers on

staff. Although Mrs. Herman was the teacher of record for only three classes each day, she either team taught or modeled lessons frequently, so she was often teaching four, five, or six periods in a day. Finally, she was the coach of Middleton's FAME team and she had become one of the program's regional leads, a position in which she trained teachers throughout the state in the program's beginning of the year launch. These myriad responsibilities often kept Mrs. Herman at Middleton until late in the evening. Still, she feared, "I feel like people are walking by [my office] and saying 'she does nothing all day but sit at the computer.' They have no idea what kind of stuff has to get done, but it wouldn't be getting done."

It was true that other teachers did not know the extent of Mrs. Herman's responsibilities, but no one assumed that she was sitting around all day doing nothing. In fact, the superintendent, Mrs. Novak, and the teachers widely respected Mrs. Herman for her impressive work ethic and indomitable commitment to instructional improvement. Thus, Mrs. Herman possessed those characteristics necessary of reform entrepreneurs. She was well respected and well connected and she had a knowledge of and passion for instructional reform.

Mrs. Herman brought these qualities to bear on her work with the FAME program. She recalled that the superintendent, with whom she worked closely at the time, contacted Mrs. Herman about starting a FAME team at Middleton after he received a phone call from an administrator at the Michigan Department of Education soliciting local participation in the program. Mrs. Herman knew nothing about formative assessment or FAME but she thought the project sounded worthwhile and decided to submit an application to the state which was promptly accepted.

Once Mrs. Herman was selected as a coach, she faced the immediate challenge of forming a team and convincing teachers to commit to participating on a team that Mrs. Herman still knew little about. Even so, Mrs. Herman was able to put a small team together. That first year the team had only a few members, but Mrs. Herman continued to solicit participation from other teachers and those teachers who were on the team that first year reported the benefits of their participation.

For instance, Ms. Carroll joined the team after that first year primarily because she "respect[ed] Mrs. Herman a ton." Specifically, Ms. Carroll looked to Mrs. Herman for curricular and instructional guidance. Ms. Carroll viewed Mrs. Herman as an expert teacher who was "great with kids and great about following the research and what is the biggest bang for your buck with what you are teaching."

At the time of the study, Ms. Carroll was very concerned about her evaluation score (she had been laid off briefly the year before because of a poor evaluation) and she was searching diligently for ways to improve her practice. In Mrs. Herman, Ms. Carroll found an invaluable colleague. Ms. Carroll reported that Mrs. Herman had "always been super supportive. That class that we teach together is like on-the-job training for me. Like I am hungry to learn more about what to do with middle school kids." Mrs. Herman also helped Ms. Carroll organize and make sense of the curriculum, which in the past had "overwhelmed" Ms. Carroll "because there are so many pieces."

For Ms. Carroll, joining the FAME team made sense because she wanted as much access to Mrs. Herman as she could get. She felt that her job was at stake and she reasoned that keeping close proximity to and learning as much as she could from Mrs. Herman was her best option.

Other members of the Middleton staff joined the FAME learning team for other reasons. For example, Mr. St. Johns' commitment to the FAME learning team stemmed from his work with Mrs. Herman on earlier projects. The school received a state grant a decade before this study (the same grant that allowed Mrs. Herman to assume part-time coaching duties) that required that the school provide time for teachers to work collaboratively. It was is this endeavor that Mr. St. Johns first worked with Mrs. Herman closely. He recalled that his prior teaching was "stagnant" and he credited the collaborative work on teams led by Ms. Herman with helping him out of his instructional rut and isolation. Mr. St. Johns recalled:

> We got a very substantial amount of money to do some really cool things with team meetings and all the stuff that we have done in our school and we are still clinging onto that. And that has really helped to develop a lot of our middle school people. As a matter of fact, most all of them are still here as far as that goes. That is basically how things have changed and developed.

The tradition of teacher collaboration initiated by the grant and supported through Mrs. Herman's efforts transitioned into work in the FAME program. Through a long-established connection to Mrs. Herman and a changing perspective, Mr. St. Johns had "got[ten] involved in standards-based grading and got[ten] involved with formative assessment...It has kind of changed the way that I've looked at it and gave me an extra kick in the boots."

For yet another teacher, Mrs. Herman's influence was indirect and came through Mr. St. Johns, who was well respected for his instructional skill and his way with students. When he endorsed a reform, other teachers took note. This was particularly true because

Mr. St. Johns was discerning and difficult to convince as he said of himself, "I've been a teacher that has not always jumped on the bandwagon as far as the new things that come through. Just because I've been around enough to know that the cycle comes right back to the same thing again, unless I find it very valid." When Mr. St. Johns reported to other teachers that he enjoyed the work on the FAME learning team, Mrs. Quincy decided to join. She remembered that Mrs. Herman made a general call for participation at a staff meeting but that Mrs. Quincy did not decide to join until the program received a personal endorsement. She explained that when Mr. St. Johns spoke highly of his involvement "it surprised me because it seemed like an extra thing. [Mr. St. Johns and I] would confide in each other, our problems with the building and stuff like that. So when he was taking this seriously it made me think what it would do for me, and I was interested."

Mrs. Herman built the FAME team both through her enthusiasm for reform and her personal connections and she felt that her commitment to the program was worth the effort. She believed that if educators were to focus more exclusively on formative assessment, classrooms would be markedly changed for the better. Mrs. Herman explained that when teachers began to use formative assessment, their "whole philosophy about education starts to change." Specifically, she had seen "traditionally hard-core" teachers change their practice to be far more focused on "what kids know and what kids are learning." The improvement that she observed in the beliefs and practices of members of the team was enough to sustain her excitement for and commitment to the FAME program. However, despite her enthusiasm and her social connections, teachers seemed to need reasons to participate that extended beyond their sense of social obligation. Nevertheless, as a consequence of Mrs. Herman's efforts and teachers' interest, 7 of the 19 teachers at

Middleton were involved in FAME, the highest percentage of teachers of any of the three schools in the study.

Poe Middle School and the case of Ms. Dixon

Ms. Dixon was in her 13th year as a 6th grade social studies and math teacher at Poe Middle School and in her first year as coach of the school's formative assessment learning team. Before assuming the role of coach, Ms. Dixon participated on the FAME project as a learning team member for five years. Poe had a strong connection to the FAME program. FAME's main proponent, an administrator at the MDE, once worked at Poe. Soon after FAME's inception she contacted a teacher (who had since left Poe) and that teacher, in turn, contacted Ms. Dixon and Mrs. Reid to determine their interest in joining the team. Ms. Dixon recalled that this teacher told her "we need more people" and although she "really didn't know too much about it" she decided that she would give the reform program a try.

Since this first year, "the group has changed members, many times over" thus forbidding the team from establishing consistency. Ms. Dixon believed that because many teachers did not see the value in either formative assessment practice or team membership, they dropped out. Nevertheless, Ms. Dixon remained a firm believer, so when the need arose she recalled, "I agreed to step up and be the coach" even though she never aspired to the role:

> I feel too strongly about this group, and what we were doing was good and right for the kids, and it pushed me to make me do more formative assessment in my classroom because it's just like a reminder of I'm part of this team, you know. I need to be doing this. I need to be doing more with this. I need to educate myself more and try more things in the classroom and [team membership] pushes me to do that.

Where if I wasn't in that group, I would probably with all of the hectic busy-ness and

stuff it would be one of the things that got pushed to the side.

Had Ms. Dixon not taken responsibility to coach the learning team, she believed the team

"absolutely would have disbanded" thus bringing an end of the FAME program at Poe. As it

was, Poe had a four-member team that Ms. Dixon had taken great pains to construct.

Although Ms. Dixon was committed to the FAME program, she was not well

connected at Poe. By both her own and the principal's account, Ms. Dixon was not well liked

by many staff members and she had only a single close colleague, Mrs. Reid. Ms. Dixon and

Mrs. Reid had taught 6th grade together for several years and both had been on the FAME

team since the beginning. In that time, the two developed a good working relationship and

Mrs. Reid agreed to continue her work on the team when Ms. Dixon became the team's

coach despite Mrs. Reid's profession that she did so because of her feelings of loyalty to Ms.

Dixon rather than a strong commitment to FAME.

The rest of the team consisted of teachers with whom Ms. Dixon's professional

bonds were not strong. Despite only meager relational strength, Ms. Dixon used her modest

social resources and standing as a senior teacher to garner teachers' commitment to team

membership. For example, Ms. Cunningham was a teacher in her second year at Poe and

her first year on the learning team. Ms. Dixon recalled that she and Mrs. Reid "peer

pressured [Ms. Cunningham] into joining" an account that both Mrs. Reid and Ms.

Cunningham corroborated.

Ms. Cunningham recalled that her participation in the Teach Like a Champion (TLC)

reform program ultimately led to her participation on the FAME team. Ms. Dixon and Mrs.

Reid suggested that Ms. Cunningham join the team because the work on the two initiatives

was similar. Ms. Cunningham explained, "this year when [Ms. Dixon and Mrs. Reid] were looking for new people to join the formative assessment team, they said, 'Hey, you are already on TLC and it has so much formative assessment on there. We think it would be a really good idea for you to also join the formative assessment group, so the two would mesh a little bit more.'" Because she did not feel that she was in position to refuse the entreaties of a senior teacher and because she felt like FAME would help her improve her teaching, Ms. Cunningham agreed to join the learning team.

Another teacher—Mr. Brooks who taught 7th and 8th grade science—joined the team when Ms. Dixon approached him and said, "Come on, you can do this. You have an intern. You have this extra time on your hands. Why don't you try this out?" Despite not having a strong professional bond or close working relationship with Ms. Dixon, Mr. Brooks agreed. Early in the year, Ms. Dixon said of Mr. Brooks, "There isn't much camaraderie. I haven't worked much with him... He has taught here as long as I have, but he's a 7th and 8th grade teacher and he teaches science. We don't have much interaction with each other." Mr. Brooks' commitment soon wavered and he discontinued his participation before it began. He did not attend the initial, state-provided FAME launch event and he did not attend a single learning team meeting. By the middle of the year, Ms. Dixon had given up hope that he would eventually participate.

The fourth and final member of the team, Mrs. Monahan, was in her fourth year of teaching at Poe. She first joined the learning team the year before the study and, like Ms. Cunningham, Mrs. Monahan became involved through her work in the TLC program. Unlike Ms. Cunningham, Mrs. Monahan did not feel pressured to join the team. Rather, she joined

because she had an enthusiasm about reform and she liked to talk about teaching with other teachers. She said:

> The reason that I stayed with the team this year is because I really like the collaboration process. I really like to throw ideas out and get response back. I like to hear their ideas, and I just like that whole process. I feel that it is great to hear how they have taken formative assessment. Again, just the ideas part….To share with them like a unit and to say 'these were the struggles' and 'this is what we did.' Again, the feedback that is what I really like.

Ms. Monahan also valued learning about formative assessment because she felt that so doing would allow her to "stay in the loop" with other reforms including the CCSS. She explained, "I just believe that whatever can keep me up-to-date to make sure I'm doing what I need to do with my students and I want to be a part of it."

In sum, Ms. Dixon cobbled Poe's FAME team together with loosely connected teachers out of necessity. Three members had long-term standing on the team while two others, Mr. Brooks and Ms. Cunningham, were new. Ms. Dixon did not have strong professional ties with either. Mr. Brooks soon dropped out and Ms. Cunningham remained on the team primarily because she felt social pressure to do so. Mrs. Reid had no strong feelings of commitment to formative assessment or to FAME, yet she remained on the team because of the loyalty she felt to Ms. Dixon, her only close colleague on staff. Mrs. Monahan was the sole member of the team other than Ms. Dixon who was strongly committed to formative assessment. Mrs. Monahan joined and remained on the team because she was supportive of formative assessment, was looking for ways to improve her practice, and

enjoyed collaborating with other teachers. Since Poe was bereft of other opportunities for

teachers to work in close collaboration, participation in FAME was particularly appealing.

Although Ms. Dixon knew the situation was not ideal, she assumed the team would

have disbanded altogether had she not offered to coach and had she not actively recruited

new members. Still, this method of forming a team and the team's consequent composition

exacted a toll on her. She explained:

> I probably feel more comfortable with it if I knew [the other learning team
>
> members] really well, because I wouldn't feel like they were judging me or going to
>
> other people and saying, 'oh, Ms. Dixon has taken over this group and she has no
>
> idea.'... Even though we *teach* middle school. A lot of people act like they are still *in*
>
> middle school.

Ms. Dixon also believed that the team would have benefitted from consistency under more

ideal conditions: "I think if we would have had more of the same people still be there, it

would have been more comfortable instead of these new people that I just don't quite know

how they're going to take formative assessment. I'm not sure if they buy into it or not, or if

they see it as important. And then judging whether I'm doing a good job or not."

Teachers at Waller

Much was said in the last chapter about how Waller's principal, Ms. Shriver,

connected teachers to reform and how she often solicited teachers or issued a general call

to secure participation with instructional reforms. At Waller, Ms. Shriver was the reform

entrepreneur who ushered in and sustained reforms. Little was said in the previous

chapter about the Waller teachers and their perspectives. A closer look at these

perspectives, however, reveals that teachers at Waller were just as various in their reasons for joining the FAME program as the teachers at Middleton and Poe.

For instance, Mrs. Curtis was in her fourth year teaching at Waller and the school's only Spanish teacher. Mrs. Curtis felt socially isolated from her peers and often referred to herself as a "loner." To ease this isolation Mrs. Curtis expressed interest in the FAME program and Ms. Shriver, capitalizing on this opportunity, invited Mrs. Curtis to participate in FAME. Mrs. Curtis quickly obliged the request and during the year of the study she was in her second year on the FAME learning team. Mrs. Curtis persisted on the team because she enjoyed hearing her colleagues "share ideas" and describe what they did in their classrooms.

Mr. Bridges reasons for joining and continuing participation on the team were quite different. Mr. Bridges was in his 16th year teaching at Waller and in that time he had built an extensive network with teachers inside and outside the school and he prided himself on staying current on both the political challenges facing schools and the instructional innovations that might improve them. During the study he was also in the second year of his position as union president.

Although Mr. Bridges was often consumed with union business and the demands of regular classroom teaching, he made time for participating on the school's FAME team. He was one of the team's founding members, and like Ms. Shriver and Ms. Stickle, Mr. Bridges had been on the team for four years. When Ms. Shriver was looking to start a FAME team, she asked around, and Mr. Bridges responded, "If you don't get anybody to sign up. I'll gladly do it." Mr. Bridges enjoyed his participation on the team, mostly because he

considered himself someone who was not set in his ways and was always willing to try new ideas in the classroom.

Mr. Trotter was also a long-time teacher at Waller and he was also one of the most respected teachers on staff. While he did not have the extensive networks that Mr. Bridges did and did not have the pressure that accompanied the union presidency, Mr. Trotter did feel that recent policies (particularly for educator evaluation) were pressing teachers to stay current with instructional innovations. Mr. Trotter felt that participation on the FAME team allowed him to incorporate the best of outside pressures with his own desire to improve his teaching. In his recent experience, formative and summative assessment had become "keywords" that were "being thrown around often." For this reason, Mr. Trotter decided to investigate what these concepts meant and what implications, if any, they had for his classroom teaching. In Mr. Trotter's words, formative and summative assessment became "something I'm going to have to look at and something I'm going to have to embrace and become knowledgeable about." Because of this underlying curiosity, Mr. Trotter joined the FAME learning team when Ms. Shriver sent an open invitation email to the entire staff extending the offer of participation. He was in his second year on the FAME team at the time of the study.

Mrs. Jackson was in her second year of teaching and her first year on the FAME learning team. Of all the teachers on the Waller team, Mrs. Jackson's reasons for joining the team were the most utilitarian. When asked why she joined the team, Mrs. Jackson responded, "Complete and total honesty? I knew nothing about [FAME]. I needed more school involvement on my evaluation." Mrs. Jackson often mentioned improving her evaluation score as the main motivator for joining the team and she confessed, "My

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involvement in the team is minimal but for technicality purposes I am on the team." Mrs. Jackson attended the first few meetings during the year, but her commitment wavered as the year progressed and she began coaching the girls' soccer team at the high school and the practice and game times conflicted with the FAME team's meeting schedule.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Jackson "liked the idea of formative assessment" and believed that it was "really, really helpful in the classroom." She also noted that improving her use of formative assessment was "intriguing" and she believed that her use of formative assessment improved as a result of her participation on the team despite her less that wholehearted participation.

Mrs. Hall was widely considered the best teacher on Waller's staff. She worked very closely with Ms. Shriver on several of the school's reforms (e.g., FAME, SBG, CCR, UDL) and was the leader of the school improvement team. Other teachers recognized Mrs. Hall's effort and expertise and it was widely known that she had received the highest evaluation score of any teacher at Waller the previous year when the district was piloting the *Framework for Teaching* and NWEA (the test that would be used to determine teacher value added). Her fellow teachers would often joke with Mrs. Hall about her high standing at department and staff meetings but no one questioned, either publically or in private interviews, Mrs. Hall's legitimate standing as the school's top teacher.

Mrs. Hall admitted that she liked "being involved in a lot of things" and when it came to her attention on her very first day at Waller during a professional development session that she had an incomplete understanding of formative assessment, she looked for ways to improve her understanding. At the time, Mrs. Hall believed that formative assessment was an assessment "for me to know" but not directly for reporting back to students. When the

presenter asked for participants to discuss the meaning of formative assessment in small groups, her incomplete understanding came to her attention. She recalled, "I remember when [my colleagues] were sharing out. I discovered it wasn't just for me to know, but for students to know, too…so it made me interested." When Ms. Shriver issued a general call for participants on the FAME learning team, Mrs. Hall volunteered.

Mrs. Hall appreciated the opportunities to learn that being on the FAME team afforded her, as she was doubtful that she would have learned about formative assessment from other potential sources. She noted, "I don't think I would be at where I am now if it weren't for the team."

No one participated in more instructional reforms that Ms. Stickle. She was involved in FAME, UDL, CCR, CITW, and SBG. Like Mr. Bridges, Ms. Stickle had been on the FAME team since the beginning. When she heard about the program she thought that it would "be a really good thing" and, when Ms. Shriver issued the general call to participate, Ms. Stickle answered. Her experience on the team had been very positive. She even tried to start an all-math FAME team when she was the department chair (before coming over to teach science) but she could not generate enough interest or commitment among her colleagues, many of whom she believed were set in their instructional ways and skeptical about the implications that formative assessment might have for their teaching and how they ran a classroom.

Summary of Teacher Perspectives

Teachers' perspectives concerning their participation with reforms that organized teacher learning into teacher trainings can be stated simply. Teachers went when they were assigned to go and did not challenge district or site administrative authority to send

them. Teachers understood that leaving their classrooms for a day or two to attend a training was a normal and therefore unremarkable feature of teacher life.

Teachers' perspectives regarding participation in reforms with situated learning that devolved teacher learning to local, small groups of teacher teams differed sharply. As a general rule, teachers did not believe that administrators had the authority to command their attendance and participation in small collegial teams and, in any event, no principal in the study tried to compel teachers to participate. These reforms were particularly reliant on a reform entrepreneur (e.g., Ms. Shriver, Mrs. Herman, Ms. Dixon) who used her social networks to secure support for the reform locally. Ultimately, these entrepreneurs were constrained by the robustness of their own social networks but even when the entrepreneurs were well situated socially, they remained vulnerable to teachers' consent.

For the most part, teachers needed a reason to participate that extended beyond any binding social contract. Only Mrs. Reid and Ms. Cunningham at Poe seemed to join the team strictly because of social allegiance or social pressure. Ms. Reid and the team's coach, Ms. Dixon, were each other's only close colleagues and Mrs. Reid often mentioned that her feelings of loyalty to Ms. Dixon were the only reasons she remained on the team. Ms. Cunningham felt obligated to participated when Ms. Dixon and Mrs. Reid applied social pressure and Ms. Cunningham did not feel that she was in position to refuse.

In most cases, then, social connections were necessary but not sufficient. Teachers also had to find some personal use in their participation. For instance, both Ms. Carroll at Middleton and Mrs. Jackson at Waller joined and continued on the team to improve their evaluation scores. Mrs. Monahan and Mrs. Curtis enjoyed collaboration with other teachers and wanted to break out of their isolated situations. Likewise, Mr. St. Johns had a close

association to the team's coach, Mrs. Herman, but the usefulness of working closely with teachers that he discovered over the years had convinced him of the potential value of being on the FAME team. He shared the benefits with Mrs. Quincy who knew that Mr. St. Johns was fastidious in such matters and she followed his lead and joined the team.

Other teachers, like Mr. Bridges, Mr. Trotter, Mrs. Hall, and Ms. Stickle at Waller, were more reform oriented and they derived a benefit from being involved in several of their school's reforms. Mr. Bridges was the union president who felt the obligation to be a "connected educator" who innovated in his classroom and then shared these innovations with his social contacts within and outside the school. Mr. Trotter felt that joining a FAME team was a useful way to manage the mounting external pressures that he felt and cultivate his own internal desire to continuously improve. Mrs. Hall did not like the feeling of not being knowledgeable about a reform and she wanted to learn more. Ms. Stickle was exceptionally dedicated to the many reforms at Waller and she wanted to participate whenever she could.

The perspectives that teachers brought with them to behaviorist and situated opportunities to learn were therefore quite different. Teacher perspectives on behaviorist opportunities to learn were uniform and easily summarized—teachers went when they were assigned and did not question the authority of administrators to assign their participation. Perspectives of situated opportunities to learn were more complex. These opportunities required more extensive teacher commitment because they located teacher learning in small participatory groups. Therefore, administrators or other entrepreneurs did not assign participation. Rather, entrepreneurs relied on their social networks to build support for reforms that situated teacher learning locally. They also relied on teacher

willingness, as entrepreneurship and social resources were necessary, but insufficient, for teacher participation. Teachers needed their own compelling and often idiosyncratic reasons to participate that extended beyond feelings of social obligation.

Teachers' Opportunity to Learn

The remainder of this chapter and the next take a closer look at the teachers' opportunities to learn about instructional reforms and explore the relationship between teacher opportunity to learn and actual teacher learning. I divide these opportunities into those where teachers were "trained" and assumed a passive role in learning about reform (i.e., behaviorist opportunities) and those where teachers worked closely with a small group of colleagues actively investigating, discussing, and debating reform ideas in the context of their own situated instructional practices (i.e., situated opportunities).

Each of the reforms made some provision for teacher learning. This finding supports Cohen and Barnes' (1993) contention that all instructional reforms provide some way for teachers to learn even if these affordances are limited to documents, guidelines, tools for implementation, and the like. Each reform in the schools at the time of the study was enveloped in some opportunity for teachers to learn about the ideas upon which the reforms focused.

In the last chapter I argued that teachers had unequal opportunity to learn both across and within schools. I treated all opportunities to learn as if they were more or less the same. However, as partially explained in the first half of this chapter, this was not the case. In this section, I treat formal professional development as a vital part of teachers' opportunity to learn. I also tease out the characteristic differences between behaviorist and situated learning opportunities.

Distinguishing Teachers' Opportunity to Learn

For the past few decades, researchers have argued that if reform-oriented teaching practice is to be enacted on a widespread basis, teachers must be provided substantive opportunities to learn (e.g., Ball & Cohen, 1999; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Cohen, McLaughlin, & Talbert, 1993; Little, 1990, 1993; Shulman & Sherin, 2007; Spillane, 2002; Thompson & Zeuli, 1999). For example, Little (1993) claimed that schools would have to exit the "training paradigm" and provide teachers with profession learning opportunities that featured active teacher engagement with reform ideas and intense discussions with small groups of colleagues grounded in the contexts of teachers' work. Spillane (2002) called this work "situated," which he distinguished from the "behaviorist" work typically featured in teacher professional development. According to Spillane (2002), in the behaviorist tradition, "Transmission is the instructional mode, and to promote effective and efficient transmission, complex tasks are decomposed into hierarchies of component subskills that must be mastered in sequence from simple to complex" (p 380). The teachers' role in learning in the behaviorist tradition is a passive one in which trainers present a series of skills or strategies the teachers are expected to learn and later enact in their classrooms. Transmission of skills from expert to novice is the foundation of this approach.

In contrast, the situated perspective "views knowledge as distributed in the social, material, and cultural artifacts of the environment. Knowing is the ability of individuals to participate in the practices of the community…Learning involves developing practices and abilities valued in specific communities and situations" (Spillane, 2002, p. 380). Learning from the situated perspective requires extensive opportunities for teachers to engage with and make meaning of reform ideas at the same time they are working with colleagues to

discuss how these ideas fit with the realities and complexities of practice. Learning is "stretched" over several artifacts including reform messages, colleagues, instructional materials, curriculum, classroom contexts, and students.

A wealth of scholars (see above) have argued that teachers must have opportunities to learn in situated contexts if they are to be expected to enact reform practices consistent with reformers' visions. However, more recent research suggests that situated learning opportunities are rare despite heightened teacher accountability for enacting reform practices and eliciting robust student achievement gains (Hill, 2009; Hill, Beisiegel, & Jacob, 2013).

The following section considers the frequency and characteristics of formal opportunities for teachers to learn. Specifically, it will address the following question: What opportunities did teachers at Middleton, Poe, and Waller have for professional development and how can these opportunities be characterized?

Overview of Teachers' Opportunity to Learn

As research suggests, in this study most teachers' opportunities to learn occurred in behaviorist contexts. Even at Waller, where Ms. Shriver actively (albeit unequally) connected teachers to reforms, most of the learning opportunities associated with these reforms were behaviorist. Reforms with situated learning at Waller were more numerous, but because of the superior capacity of behaviorist learning opportunities to accommodate many teachers at once, most teachers learned about reforms in behaviorist contexts. An overview of the opportunities to learn by type at Waller is included in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1. Teachers' Opportunity to Learn at Waller

Reform	Characteristic	Connection Decision	Number of Teachers Involved
Classroom Instruction that Works	Behaviorist	Assignment: Availability	26
Close and Critical Reading	Behaviorist	Assignment: Perceived Department Need	14
Universal Design for Learning	Situated	Assignment: Perceived Department Strength	8
FAME	Situated	Voluntary Call/Solicitation	7
Standards-Based Grading	Situated	Voluntary Call/Solicitation	7

When one considers only situated learning, the unequal opportunities to learn at Waller are compounded. Only 38% of the total opportunities to learn (24 of 64 connections between teachers and instructional reforms) occurred in situated contexts. Furthermore, fewer than half of the teachers (44%) participated in any professional development that was rooted in situated contexts. And, as may be expected, these opportunities were uneven across the categories Ms. Shriver constructed when asked how she perceived her staff. While nearly two-thirds (64%) of the innovation-seeking teachers participated in situated learning, none of the teachers Ms. Shriver perceived as being entrenched had any learning opportunities in situated contexts. The middle two categories had modest situated opportunities with greater opportunities for medium entrenched teachers (50%) than for receptive teachers (36%). It must be remembered, however, that Ms. Shriver assigned some teachers to reforms, and four medium-entrenched teachers—Ms. Stickle, Mr. Murdock, Mr. Collins, and Ms. Cook—were science teachers who participated in situated learning because of this assignment.

This situation provides for some refinement about what was said earlier about assignment and situated opportunities—namely that administrators did not assign

teachers to situated learning as they did to behaviorist learning. Recall from Chapter 6 that

Ms. Shriver first solicited the participation of two Waller science teachers, Mr. Bridges and

Murdock, to attend the UDL workshops. After the first successful experience Ms. Shriver

wanted to connect more teachers to UDL but the program administrators insisted that Ms.

Shriver send an entire department. This request forbid solicitation of particular teachers

without concern for their department affiliation and she could not issue a volunteer call as

she otherwise might have. Instead she had Mr. Bridges and Mr. Murdock talk to their

department, share their enthusiasm, and gauge the department's interest. When the

department expressed its willingness to participate, Ms. Shriver registered each of the

science teachers. In sum, then, the connection mechanism can be accurately described as

solicited-assignment. With this in mind, a summary of the situated opportunities to learn at

Waller is included in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2. Opportunities to Learn in Situated Contexts at Waller

Innovative-Seeking	Receptive	Medium-Entrenched	Entrenched
Mrs. Hannigan (0)	Mr. Reed (0)	**Ms. Stickle (3)**	Mr. Lum (0)
Ms. Harris (0)	**Mrs. Curtis (1)**	Mr. Kennedy (0)	Mr. Charles (0)
Ms. Purvis (1)	Ms. Evans (0)	Mr. Givens (0)	Ms. Berger (0)
Mrs. Franzen (1)	Mr. Cooper (0)	Ms. Zimmerman (0)	Mr. Scott (0)
Mrs. McReady (0)	Ms. Bell (0)	Ms. Dozier (0)	
Ms. Marshall (1)	Mrs. Edgar (0)	Mr. Murdock (1)	
Mr. Trotter (3)	Ms. Wheeler (1)	Mr. Collins (1)	
Mrs. McCarthy (2)	Mr. Rogers (1)	Ms. Cook (1)	
Mr. Bridges (3)	Ms. Reynolds (0)		
Mr. Hanson (0)	Mrs. Claiborne (0)		
Mrs. Hall (3)	**Mrs. Jackson (1)**		
14	4	6	0
64%	36%	50%	0%
Total Percent Involved In Situated Learning: 15 of 34 teachers (44%)			

Of course, Waller was not the only school where teachers were engaged in learning

about instructional reforms. However, the formal learning opportunities at Poe and

Middleton were even more meager. Middleton had a small teaching staff (19) and its

learning team was as large as Waller's (7) providing for at least one situated opportunity to

learn for a larger percentage of the staff. However, Middleton was engaged in learning

about only two instructional reforms—FAME and SBG—at the time of the study and the

four teachers who participated in SBG were also on the FAME team. Thus, only 36% of

teachers at Middleton had formal opportunities to learn about reforms but all of these

occurred in situated contexts. Twelve Middleton teachers (63%) did not connect to reforms

in any way and did not participate in any situated or behaviorist learning about reforms.

At Poe, 8 of the 26 teachers on staff (31% of teachers) participated in Teach Like a

Champion (TLC) a behaviorist learning opportunity where teachers went to learn how to

create classroom assessments that aligned with the CCSS. Each of the teachers on the FAME

team also participated in TLC, so the overall percentage of Poe teachers who participated in

learning about reforms of any kind (31%) was quite low. Additionally, only the four Poe

teachers on the school's FAME team participated in learning that had situated intent,

although because the principal, Mr. Delancey, commandeered learning team time for his

own purposes it is more accurate to say that the learning was situated in intent but not in

practice. As will be detailed when we take a closer look at the evidence concerning Poe's

learning team meetings, in practice none of the teachers at Poe participated in situated

learning of any kind. An overview of teachers' opportunities to learn at the three schools is

included in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3. Overview of Types of Learning Opportunities by Reform

Reform	School	Approach	Number of Teachers Involved
Classroom Instruction that Works	Waller	Behaviorist	26
Close and Critical Reading	Waller	Behaviorist	14
Teach Like a Champion	Poe	Behaviorist	8
Percentage of Learning Opportunities that were Behaviorist			**56%**
Universal Design for Learning	Waller	Situated	8
FAME	Poe, Waller, Middleton	Situated	18
Standards-Based Grading	Middleton, Waller	Situated	11
Percentage of Learning Opportunities that were Situated			**44%**

Situated Versus Behaviorist Learning

The distinction between behaviorist and situated learning opportunities is not merely a theoretical one employed by researchers and reformers, but rather a distinction observed by most teachers.

When reflecting about their opportunities to learn during the year of the study, teachers were able to articulate a qualitative difference between those opportunities that situated their work in the complexities of practice with a select group of close colleagues and those that efficiently processed them in large batches. When asked about how SBG and FAME (two reforms with situated learning at Waller) differed from CITW, Mrs. Jackson, an 8th grade language arts teacher at Waller, reflected:

> SBG and FAME are very much based around the model of a professional learning community, around teachers working with one another to see what is working in our classes. CITW is like a college [seminar] where they are just lecturing at you. [In SBG and FAME] teachers are working with teachers. [CITW] is more us just being told what we should be doing.

In a separate interview, Ms. Stickle, a 7th grade science teacher at Waller who was actively involved in five non-mandatory reforms, referred to CITW as a series of "one-hit wonder" workshops and questioned the effectiveness of the professional development. She said:

> When [CITW] is six spread out [sessions] over the course of the school year, you have to revisit it…One-hit wonder workshops are 'like cool, that's nice.' And then you basically shelf it and you don't use it again.

When asked about the differences among the reforms, Ms. Stickle quickly distinguished between situated (e.g., UDL) and behaviorist (e.g., CITW) opportunities to learn. She said, "UDL was more active [than CITW] because you could approach it in whatever fashion you chose. [CITW] traveled so quickly through so much content. It was like a snapshot of each thing. They chatted at you for eight hours."

Teachers not only recognized the difference between behaviorist and situated learning opportunities. They sometimes voiced a clear preference for the latter. For instance, Ms. Stickle made it clear why she favored situated professional development:

> I would have rather been in my classroom [than going to CITW]. Or having the kind of dialogue that we have through FAME than a person standing in front of 120 people all over the county preaching what we should do. It doesn't work when they are preaching at you about it. It is too much of a time constraint…Plus, we are not allowed to speak to each other.

Despite this general preference, situated learning was not always considered superior to behaviorist learning. Recall that at Poe, Mr. Delancey arrived at FAME learning team meetings unannounced and talked at length with the small, four-member learning team about his priorities for restructuring the organization of teacher work and the politics that surrounded his principalship. While at least two members of the Poe learning team (Ms. Dixon and Mrs. Reid) indulged these diversions into school politics and seemed to enjoy aligning themselves with the principal and his purposes, Ms. Cunningham, a language arts and history teacher in her first year on the team, grew frustrated with the team's lack of direction and focus on formative assessment. She appreciated the strict adherence to the

agenda and the opportunities to accomplish tangible activities afforded at TLC, the

behaviorist professional development teachers participated in. She said:

> FAME sometimes…gets quite off task. We only spend an hour or so in really valuable
>
> time. While we bring and share what we've done, we kind of talk about it…but I feel
>
> like we don't do anything with that information…It would be great if we did
>
> something or could create something that we could take back and use…which I feel
>
> like TLC does a little bit more, we're actually creating and collaborating and looking
>
> at results…FAME for me is kind of missing that step of actually having a
>
> collaboration, creating and working with something…. A lot is talk and off topic.

Teachers' Opportunity to Learn Summary

Even for the focal teachers in this study who were selected because of their

participation in the FAME program, opportunity to learn was modest. Most of the

opportunities that these teachers had were behaviorist, and teachers were able to draw a

sharp contrast between the two types of learning that scholars sometimes use for analytic

purposes. Particularly at Waller, teachers preferred the learning that was situated in their

practice and gave them the chance for sustained interaction with a small group of

colleagues. Because they depended on local contexts, however, situated opportunities to

learn were also more variable, and at Poe the situated opportunity was commandeered for

other purposes and at least one teacher preferred the behaviorist learning opportunities as

a result.

<p align="center">Inside Behaviorist Learning Opportunities</p>

The previous section provided evidence that teachers at the three schools had both

situated and behaviorist opportunities to learn, that situated opportunities were relatively

rare, and that the teachers themselves often made the distinction between behaviorist and situated learning (although they did not use these terms). The section before that established that teachers did not typically resist attending behaviorist trainings when they were assigned. This section explores teachers' experiences as participants in behaviorist-oriented opportunities to learn. As will be demonstrated, teachers did resist these trainings in practice even if they consented to attend.

Professional development that adopted the behaviorist perspective accommodated teachers in batches and presented them with information that they were expected to use to improve their knowledge of reforms and their enactment of reform teaching practices. Teachers alternated between sitting passively receiving information and completing assigned tasks. I will now explore two behaviorist experiences in greater detail—CITW at Waller and TLC at Poe.

Classroom Instruction that Works

The CITW program had many of the characteristic features of the behaviorist approach to teacher learning. The program was organized, arranged, and administered by ISD personnel, its capacity for accommodating teachers was considerable, and discrete elements of program content were "chunked" into six separate full-day sessions scattered throughout the year. Furthermore, the intent of these sessions was to provide information to teachers about the importance of best practices and for the administrators to detail each of the nine strategies and several accompanying tools they could then take back to their classrooms to improve teaching and learning.

Despite its seemingly benign and potentially useful purpose, in practice many teachers at Waller resented the CITW program and over the course of the year, an adversarial relationship developed between the CITW trainers and the teachers at Waller.

Mrs. Hall, a highly respected teacher, explained that trainings got off to a poor start when trainers imposed rules on teachers that many felt were unfair. She insisted that teachers resented being treated in this way and began to resist the training. In response, she contended, the trainers began making unsubstantiated accusations. She recalled:

> [At CITW sessions] we were treated like we were students and not professional adults. We were not allowed to have our electronic devices out...People were accused of things. [Trainers] didn't talk to [teachers] about what they thought...[was] happening. They just made accusations. Some more extreme accusations like urinating on books and throwing them in toilets. And then it went further and it was investigated by the district. It was really awful.

Ms. Shriver, Waller's principal, had intended that teachers would return to school and have substantive conversations about CITW with their department colleagues during Professional Learning Community time. However, these conversations focused almost exclusively on the shortcomings of the training. Mrs. Hall admitted, "The conversation that we have at the PLC is really not about Classroom Instruction that Works," but rather the department members "ranting and venting" about the way teachers were treated.

Mrs. Hall's experience with CITW was particularly contentious. She was dismissed from the CITW workshop after trainers confronted her about a side conversation she was having with colleague. According to Mrs. Hall, she and the colleague were talking about one

of the reform strategies that had been previously introduced at the training. Nevertheless, the trainers expelled Mrs. Hall from the session and told her not to return.

Other Waller teachers had more success in remaining in the program, but they also noticed a lack of administrator regard for teachers' professional status. Ms. Stickle, a 7th grade science teacher, said:

> The instructors were very crass about how they didn't want you to speak. They didn't want you to answer a phone…When I go to an in-service, I have my laptop out and…I'm jotting down a few things I want to try…They didn't even allow laptops because you could be talking to the outside world and not be focused….I would never recommend anyone to attend the way that this one was taught; it was a disaster.

CITW trainers faced an overwhelming participant-to-trainer ratio. This ratio, and the intent of the program to impart strategies and tools teachers could use created a particular irony—trainers were not using the strategies and tools with teachers that the administrators of CITW claimed were so important for good teaching and learning. They sat teachers down and talked at them about each strategy and how to employ it. This irony was not lost on the teachers. Mrs. Hall's comment on the quality of instruction at the CITW sessions is typical, "[CITW trainers] were not using 'classroom instruction that works.' They were not interested in having any conversations and just wanted to point fingers at us. It was just bad."

Teachers in other departments found the CITW sessions more useful, if not completely satisfactory. Mrs. Jackson, an 8th grade language arts teacher, observed:

Right when I came back from CITW I gave [students] a star partner, moon partner,

raindrop and sun…that was one of the quick things that I got from CITW. Now it's

kind of ironic that a lot of the things I use from CITW could have been given to me in

15 minutes rather than 6 1/2 hours, but nevertheless it still works, and it is still

helpful.

Teach Like a Champion

Teach Like a Champion (TLC) also employed a behaviorist approach to teacher

professional development. The TLC program was a three-year project in which English

Language Arts and mathematics teachers from throughout the region devised plans for

implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In the first year of the project,

teachers deconstructed each of the standards at their grade level. This work required them

to determine each standard's depth of knowledge (DOK) expectation and, if the DOK

extended beyond recall, required them to build a scaffold of progressively ambitious

learning targets (starting at DOK 1, recall) that would prepare students for the type of

thinking and foundational skills that the particular standard required. The team of 60

teachers spent monthly, full-day meetings engaged in this work and it took the better part

of the year to complete. In the final two meetings, the teachers rushed to complete a scope

and sequence that they were trying to implement during the year of the study. The teachers

were now constructing quarterly assessments that aligned to the CCSS.

The following section examines a single, yet typical TLC session in depth to highlight

many of the features common to the behaviorist experience.

Three Poe teachers—Ms. Cunningham, Mrs. Monahan, and Mrs. Reid—attended this

day's TLC professional development session. Teachers would work today reviewing and

revising the versions of the language assessments they created in an earlier session. Deb,

the highly energetic and consistently positive facilitator hired by the ISD to conduct the

trainings, stood at the front of the room to one side of the SmartBoard as the session was

set to begin. Most of the roughly 60 teachers at the workshop were sitting at the round

tables in front of her. At this moment, Mrs. Reid was sitting with other members of her

"vertical" (i.e., cross grade level) team. Ms. Cunningham and Mrs. Monahan were scattered

throughout the room, sitting with their own teams. Many teachers were talking casually.

Momentarily, Deb began.

"Hey, good morning!" Deb announced. She explained that today's task would place

teachers in vertical teams which would structure teacher work with others who taught

either the grade below them or the grade above them, or both. She asked teachers to make

sure that they are sitting with their vertical teams for the purpose of completing this

activity. Deb then began to review the agenda. "These are our learning team targets," Deb

announced, referring to the screen that was now projecting the following:

<p align="center">Our Learning Team Targets</p>

- Review assessments (as if you were Chris)
- Suggest test corrections and review/build plausible distractor options
- Identify any editing layout and design notes to be addressed by the central
  Teach Like a Champion editor

To this first point, Deb explained that teachers would be taking the assessment they were

assigned as if they were Chris, a fictitious student. Deb next turned her attention to the

"TLC Assessment Blueprint Template" that teachers were supposed to complete for each

test item. For example, a completed sample entry of the template looked like this:

<p align="center">232</p>

Item #	CCS standard	Standard DOK	Item DOK	"I can" statement Assessed	Rationale for Distractors
1	7.1C	2	1	I can identify simple sentences	A. simple
					B. compound
					C. complex
					D. compound-complex

"Many of these have not been filled in," Deb said.

"Oh, I hate those!" Mrs. Reid said just loud enough for the other teachers at her table to hear.

Meanwhile, Deb briefly encouraged teachers to complete the template as they worked and then she continued to the next slide, which read:

- Review and apply suggestions from vertical teams

- Finalize 9W1 and 9W2 assessments and blueprints and submit electronically

Deb explained that this slide described the work that teachers would do after they reviewed each test item in their vertical team. Next, Deb told the group that she would like to have the first and second quarter language tests finalized before the group left for the day. Deb continued to the next slide and reviewed the criteria that vertical teams were to consider as they read through each test item. The slide read:

1. Does the DOK of the item match the DOK of standard?

2. What standards are we assessing?

3. What reteaching is built in through plausible distractors?

After briefly reviewing each of these criteria, Deb reminded the teachers that, in addition to the content, the formatting of each question was important. Deb told teachers to be sure that each item had the correct line spacing. She soon returned to the importance of distractors and began projecting a teacher-generated test item to make her point. It read:

Identify the collective noun in the following sentence.

A pack of wolves chased the deer.

      A. pack

      B. chased

      C. deer

After giving teachers a moment to consider the test item, Deb led teachers through the thinking required to answer the question correctly. If students missed the item, Deb asked, "What does that mean they need to know now?" Deb sat next to the document reader that she was using to project the item on the screen and, when no one responded, she pointed to *pack* and she wrote "correct" next to it. The other two choices were "distractors" that Deb explained were critical for understanding student thinking.

Deb suggested that if the student answered that "chased" was the collective noun in the sentence, they were mistaking collective nouns and verbs and if they answered "deer" they had confused "plural nouns" with collective nouns. Deb concluded by saying that to create effective items, teachers must ensure that "distractors" were informative.

"Agreed?" Deb asked. She had the habit of saying this. Whenever she received modest assent from the teachers (which was the most she ever received), she continued on.

Deb moved the group through several items in this way. However, some items were less straightforward. For example, one item required students to pick the response that defined the term "context clues." Choice A said, "Reference material found online." Deb read the choice and said aloud to the group, "Why would they be confused by this?" The group seemed unsure. In any event, no one offered a reason. Deb suggested that the student might

have been thinking that context clues could be found in reference material online and this could be the source of the confusion. She then tried to explain what erroneous student thinking could be behind other errant answer choices.

"What if it's just a wrong answer because a kid is stabbing in the dark?" Mrs. Reid said only loud enough for others at her table to hear.

"How can you infer that that's the reason that they got the answer wrong?" another teacher at the table asked the others. Both comments were met with general assent from the other teachers at the table.

Meanwhile, Deb had finished reviewing some of the notable test items that teachers wrote during the past several sessions. She then clicked to a slide that read:

Our Learning Targets—taking the test as if we were Chris

Deb instructed teachers to begin working with their vertical team to work their way through the test as if they were students.

This first section of this extended fieldnote reveals several characteristics of the behaviorist experience. Most notably, teachers were cast in a passive role while the facilitator led the group through a series of test items. Seating was assigned (teachers were instructed to sit with members of their vertical team) and the organization and substance of teacher work was predetermined and not of teachers' own choosing.

During this time the facilitator assumed virtually all the cognitive burden and there was little space for teacher input or dissent. The facilitator expected teachers to voice agreement when she cued them and was not dissuaded when very few of the teachers embraced this role expectation. Rather, teacher dissent was forced under the surface of the proceedings but did emerge among teachers who questioned the conclusions the facilitator

made about the content being presented. Nevertheless the teachers kept their comments contained at their table group. The teachers seemed content to let the facilitator present content so they could move on to the next activity. In many ways, then, teachers assumed the role of school children.

The fieldnote continues as teachers set about the work of completing the activity assigned to them—taking the exams they constructed as if they were a student.

Teachers each took a test from the middle of the table and began reading it silently. The first section of the test had the following directions: "Read each sentence carefully. In the space provided, write **r** if the sentence is redundant and **w** if the sentence is wordy."

Although Deb had instructed teachers to take the test "as if they were Chris" the teachers soon began to talk about the items like they were teachers. Perhaps this was because the teachers themselves found the items challenging. For example, one of the teachers at the table said, "I think this first one sounds like a good sentence." The sentence in question read, "During the basketball game, Sam shot four amazing baskets that made the crowd go wild with enthusiasm." The teachers then talked briefly about the merits of the sentence, and then debated about whether (if it has to be marked one) this sentence was wordy or redundant. The teachers concluded that this sentence was probably wordy, but that they were not sure.

"It's easier to pick out wordy [sentences] than redundant [sentences]," one of the teachers observed. The others nodded their heads in agreement without further discussion.

The next test section required test takers to determine whether a given group of words was a phrase or a clause.

"What's clause?" Mrs. Reid asked.

"A clause has a noun and a verb," the teacher to Mrs. Reid's left said.

"Oh," Mrs. Reid responded. She looked as if she might still be unsure about how to label the sentences but said nothing further.

"I have a question," another teacher said, "Are questions clauses?"

The teacher who answered Mrs. Reid's question about clauses replied that if a question had a noun and a verb, it would be considered a clause. The teachers then worked through the rest of the items in silence.

When each teacher had completed this section, they began discussing the responses. There was less confusion about the correct answers this time, although Mrs. Reid did comment, "I didn't even know what a clause was!" She attributed this to the fact that 6th grade (the grade she taught) did not cover clauses and phrases.

"Are we assessing only the standards or are we assessing the learning targets, too?" Mrs. Reid asked to no one in particular when the group had decided on the last item in the test section.

The "standards" were those benchmarks explicitly stated in the Common Core State Standards. The "learning targets" were the product of the TLC teachers' work from the first year—they had deconstructed standards into several skills and competencies that students would need in order to reach the standard. Mrs. Reid's question was followed by some discussion about whether they were only supposed to be assessing the standards or if they were to include items that captured student mastery of the learning targets.

In the end, one of the teachers commented, "There's not a clear answer—definitely." The others provided general assent, and the group moved on.

As the teachers moved through the assessment, they were supposed to be making comments about the test. They were to use red pens for content and blue pens for editing. They would then submit these comments to the event organizers, who would, in turn, make the changes on the computer.

When one of the teachers began to use the wrong pen, Mrs. Reid said, "Red for content, blue for editing."

The teacher looked at Mrs. Reid sharply.

Mrs. Reid added quickly, "I'm just stressing her lunacy, sorry." Mrs. Reid was referring to Deb. The teachers talked for a few minutes about how tedious this work was and then about how much money consultants made.

One of the teachers interrupted this conversation, as, for the past several minutes, teachers had abandoned their assigned work.

"Are we all done with the first page?" She asked. "We're just going to move on so we can look at the next one."

The teachers turned the page and seemed about to refocus on the task when Deb interrupted in a high-pitched voice, "Yoo-hoo!" She did not have all the teachers' attention, but she continued anyway, "Are we done with the first assessment? Are we ready to move on?"

Most table groups indicated that they needed more time. When Deb asked teachers how much more time they needed, one group suggested it needed 10 minutes. Mrs. Reid said, "We need a lot more than 10 minutes!" to the others at her table, who said nothing.

Deb then released the table groups to complete the work. Instead of starting again, however, Mrs. Reid's group became distracted when one teacher asked what the purpose of

the test was going to be. She wondered whether the assessments were strictly going to be used for teachers to know about student learning so they could intervene effectively or whether these tests were going to be used to compare teachers, schools, and districts. The teacher who introduced the topic said, "Whether they're doing this in Cedar County, I don't really care about."

The conversation at the table then shifted to a discussion about the utility and limitations of the test. For example, teachers began debating whether a student who could identify a productive writing strategy from a list of choices would be able to devise this strategy and execute it well when actually writing. Teachers also talked about the limits of the "on-demand" approach to measuring student academic proficiency.

Noticing the animated discussion, Deb walked over to the table and stood over the shoulder of the two teachers. She then asked what was going on.

"We're just having some issues about philosophy," Mrs. Reid explained, "and some issues about practicality."

Deb began to explain the importance of writing test questions that elicited student understanding. While she was talking, the teacher with her back to Deb looked intently to the teachers across the table and mouthed, "I hate her. I hate her so much."

Deb soon concluded her explanation without addressing the teachers' concern that test items did not translate to proficiency in writing. She walked back up to the front of the room by the projector screen.

"Let me draw your conversations to a final close," Deb said to the entire group, holding up one hand to signal for teachers' quiet attention. Some (but not many) teachers reciprocated the gesture to indicate that they understood. Momentarily, most of the

teachers quieted down and Deb continued. She asked teachers what challenges they encountered as they worked their way through the test. This was followed by several seconds of silence.

"The tests were hard!" A male teacher near the front eventually called out.

There was some laughter and statements of general agreement among teachers.

Another teacher said that she was unfamiliar with the standards at the other grade levels and this made the activity difficult. Again, there was a murmur of consent from others in the room.

Yet another teacher said that she realized how important directions were and "how terrible some of my directions are!" The teacher laughed at this, as did many of the other teachers in the room.

Still another teacher said that the challenge was more personal. At her table, the "vertical" team scrutinized the test that this teacher and her grade level team had written. The teacher said that while it was easy to say that one wanted feedback, it was another thing to really mean it. "And feedback stings," the teacher said, "And I don't want to revise."

"Kids feel that way all the time," Deb said. She then told the group that students are very sensitive to teacher criticism.

"Some don't," Mrs. Reid whispered although no one heard her. Many of the teachers were now engaged in spontaneous side discussions.

"Yoo-hoo!" Deb called, again with the same high-pitched tone.

"Oh, I hate that," Mrs. Reid said in a whisper and with a disgusted look on her face.

The preceding section of the fieldnote marked a shift from facilitator presentation to an facilitator-directed activity common to the behaviorist experience. It also highlights

some the features and limitations of these activities. First, teacher engagement in the activity could be shaped but not controlled entirely. Deb wanted the teachers to assume the role of a student taking the test and to work through the test accordingly. In practice, teachers quickly abandoned this perspective and talked about items like the teachers they were.

Second, teachers may resent and therefore resist the task but they will not completely neglect the work. Teachers found the task of reviewing the tests in vertical teams tedious and dull and only exerted modest effort in completing the work. Nor was the focal group's attention to the task atypical. A quick glance around the room would reveal teachers talking casually, leaving the room to use the restroom or get a cup of coffee, or checking their cell phones. Like the focal group, however, other teachers did not abandon the task entirely. Rather, most teacher groups balanced attention to the task with their own priorities and worked at a moderate pace with divided attention.

Because teachers resisted the work, Deb had to monitor the room to encourage teacher focus on completing the task. At the same time, this meant that she tried to extinguish other, potentially more substantive, teacher concerns. When Deb came by to check on the focal teachers, she did so because they appeared to be off task. However, this is a superficial interpretation of what the teachers were doing. They had larger concerns about the test that extended beyond whether the items appropriately assessed standards, had useful distractors, and correct formatting. They had concerns about the potential of using tests results that differed from the purpose stated at the workshop. They had questions about how well multiple-choice test items translated to actual proficiency. They sensed that their districts had wavering commitments. Yet in her monitoring, Deb was not

interested in any of these concerns. She framed teacher questions in the purpose of the task and her responses flowed from this framing. In the final section of the fieldnote, Deb reorients the group to the next task, but has an even greater challenge getting teachers to respond to her directives.

Deb next announced that groups would be configured back to grade-level teams. In this activity, grade-level teams were supposed to consider the feedback that both Deb and the vertical team had provided about the tests that the team had written. Deb said, "I want you to apply the thinking by me and your vertical team to improve the assessment."

One teacher raised a hand and Deb called on her to speak. The teacher was confused about which color pen was supposed to be used for content and which color for editing. Several teachers called out answers to this question. Deb then told teachers to find the members of their grade level team and to sit at the appropriate table (tables were labeled).

Mrs. Reid was already sitting at the 6th grade table and did not need to move. Ms. Cunningham came over from another table and joined Ms. Reid's group, as did four other 6th grade teachers. They were now expected to complete the work that Deb had assigned.

Of the six teachers at Mrs. Reid's table, only three were engaged in the activity. They were looking over the comments Deb or the vertical team made. Most (if not all) of the comments were in blue, indicating the need to make formatting and editing rather than content changes. These teachers were having some trouble understanding what Deb or their colleagues meant by some of the comments.

In a few moments, Deb came by. Mrs. Reid (who to this point had not been engaged in the activity) told her, "I have a question that's been bugging me all morning. Are we assessing the standard only or are we also assessing the learning targets?"

"It depends on the standard," Deb explained. She told the small group that they would make their decision based on the standard. First, Deb said that the depth of knowledge was important. If the standard was at a DOK of 2 or higher, she explained, teachers must build in test items that assessed students in foundational, lower-level skills.

"We have never discussed whether these will be assigned a grade," One of the teachers said when Deb was finished.

"Our intention is to know what students don't understand," Deb said. Then, she said, "Remember, our mission is to be data informed." She then said that the goal with administering these tests is to determine what must be retaught. "I've already said it 1,000 times," Deb said of the tests' purpose, "But that's cool. You only hear what you're ready to hear and now you're ready."

Deb left to monitor other groups' activity. "She puts up like 75 things up there," Mrs. Reid said with disgust in her voice, "I'm sorry, but you lose me after one."

"It's not meant to be a mark to pass or fail," another member of the group said, "It's meant to be a teaching tool. That makes total sense."

"Our district is ready to pull out," another teacher added. She meant that the district might no longer participate in the TLC professional development after this year.

To this point, the teachers had made very little progress on the assigned task of reading through and responding to comments. They now began to focus on working through the test with one clean copy of the exam (on which they would make the final suggestions for changes in light of the comments).

"I want to get out of [teaching] language arts like a 'Champion,'" Mrs. Reid said to the other members soon after the group got settled and began to focus.

Before the group made much more progress, Mrs. Monahan, an 8th grade language arts teacher from Poe, came over to the table and, still standing, she and Mrs. Reid began to talk. At this point, Ms. Cunningham and two other teachers were engaged in the work, one teacher was texting on her phone, and Mrs. Reid was talking to Mrs. Monahan about the pending changes at Poe Middle School. After about a 10-minute conversation, Mrs. Monahan returned to her group, prompting Mrs. Reid to turn to her group and say, "Sorry, I'm a bad group member."

Mrs. Reid did not, however, resume working. Rather, the teacher who had been texting began talking to Mrs. Reid about a program that teachers were using at her daughter's school called "Inventive Spelling." The two spent the next few minutes discussing the relative merits of this program.

One of the three teachers who was working on the task, turned to Mrs. Reid and the woman who was texting and said, "Ms. Cunningham thinks our second test is a disaster."

"Maybe that's because Deb rushed us," Mrs. Reid suggested.

"Yoo-hoo," Deb called in the high-pitched voice, "If I may, it is time for lunch."

"How many of you think this was incredibly helpful?" Deb asked. Two or three teachers raised their hands. Deb then summarized the tasks that groups would be working on after lunch. The work would be similar to what the group had already done. Deb then dismissed the teachers and told them to be back and ready in 45 minutes. Teachers slowly began filtering out of the room.

This fieldnote suggests several limitations of the behaviorist approach to teacher learning. In this approach, teachers are grouped in large batches, assume a passive role (at least at first) where the trainer disseminates information that will be used for completion

of a task over which teachers have little say. During the completion of the task, teacher-teacher interaction is circumscribed to task-related duties and the trainer assumes the role of regulator of teacher behavior. Consequently, resistance emerges and teachers progressively attend to their own priorities, most of which will be peripheral or in opposition to the requirements of the task. Because the regulatory capacity of the trainer is limited, teacher resistance may overwhelm the trainers' ability to control it and the activity devolves entirely. A minority of teachers does most of the work and when the time comes, the teachers are dismissed to go their separate ways.

Summary Chapter 7

This chapter examined the perspectives teachers formed in regard to their opportunities to learn and began the investigation of the qualities of these opportunities. The first half of the chapter focused on the distinction between behaviorist and situated learning and made the argument that teachers' perspectives regarding these two types of learning opportunities differed sharply. Typically, teachers were assigned to attend behaviorist trainings and they offered no overt resistance to attending. Behaviorist trainings, therefore, required that reform activity be generated at the district, county, or state level but did not demand a considerable local commitment.

In contrast, situated opportunities required entrepreneurship, viable social networks, and teacher commitment. Entrepreneurship could come from the principal, as it did at Waller and is detailed in Chapter 6. It could also come from the teachers, as it did at both Middleton and Poe. Regardless of the source, individual commitment and enthusiasm was not enough. Entrepreneurs had to have social networks through which they could support the reform. When these networks were strong, as they were for both Ms. Shriver

and Mrs. Herman, learning teams included many members and enjoyed other benefits that will be described in the next chapter. When the network was weak, as it was for Ms. Dixon at Poe, the team was small and the persistence of the team was tenuous.

Both entrepreneurship and social networks were necessary, but they were not sufficient in most cases. With few exceptions (Mrs. Reid and Ms. Cunningham) teachers had personal (and often idiosyncratic) reasons for committing to situated opportunities to learn. Thus, situated learning required entrepreneurship, social networks, and teachers who found personal value in participating that extended beyond feelings of social obligation.

The second section of the chapter used the distinction between behaviorist and situated learning to provide an overview of teachers' opportunities to learn at Waller, Middleton, and Poe. This overview supports the contention that situated learning opportunities are more difficult to secure than behaviorist opportunities. Even though the schools were selected for this study because of their involvement in the FAME program and opportunities for situated learning are likely overrepresented, most of the learning that teachers engaged in was behaviorist. Most of the teachers at the three schools had no involvement with situated learning opportunities and those that did usually had participation only in the FAME program. Behaviorist learning continued to be the primary vehicle through which schools secured teacher learning about reforms.

The final part of the chapter illustrated the basic features of the behaviorist experience. It made the argument that teachers were often resistant in their behavior during these sessions even though they did not resist attending the trainings themselves. This resistance stemmed from the treatment typical of behaviorist trainings. Namely,

teachers were treated as school children. Teachers assumed a passive role of information

processers, completed predetermined tasks not of their choosing, and were sometimes

disciplined for perceived misconducted. Teachers resisted the trainings through

inattention to the task and using the time at the trainings to pursue their own, unrelated

priorities. In sum, behaviorist opportunities could secure attendance but not commitment

and teachers often left these sessions having learned very little, a point that I will return to

in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8: Situated Teacher Learning and Teacher Sensemaking of Reforms

Introduction

This research set out to understand how teachers made sense of the multiple reforms they encountered. To begin the inquiry, it was important to understand how teachers came into contact with reforms and how reform ideas pressed in upon teachers once a connection was established.

The first two findings chapters considered the types of instructional reforms, the multiple and varied routes through which reforms arrived at the schools, the principals' impact on reform and how principals affected teachers' connections to policy both across and within schools. The first findings chapter suggested that non-mandatory reforms (particularly those which arranged teacher learning in situated contexts) required reform activity throughout the system. Therefore, these reforms created a web of mutual reliance and that these reforms required an entrepreneur to generate support for a reform through his or her social connections. The latter of these two chapters explored the potential for principals to serve as entrepreneurs and noted that, while principals were potentially well suited to be effective reform entrepreneurs, they often lacked the necessary knowledge, beliefs, and priorities or the social connections to make a reform work.

The last chapter considered the teachers' perspectives more closely and contributed to the findings of the previous two chapters. Namely, in addition to entrepreneurship and social connections, teachers needed to have their own reasons for participating in reforms that featured situated learning. In contrast, teachers were routinely assigned to reforms with behaviorist experiences and did not challenge administrative assignment to attend these trainings. The chapter also demonstrated that behaviorist experiences were more

common than situated experiences and that many teachers were scarcely involved in learning about reforms in either behaviorist or situated experiences. In other words, reforms were not pressing in on many teachers as expressed through opportunities to learn. Finally, the last chapter illustrated that behaviorist learning opportunities were significantly limited in their ability to carry reform messages and that teacher resistance did surface at the level of actual participation in the trainings.

This chapter has three purposes. First, it will examine teachers' situated opportunities to learn and contrast these experiences against the behaviorist opportunities described in the previous chapter. It will also detail what teachers learned from situated and behaviorist learning opportunities and will also consider the utility of teacher learning primarily from reform documents as was common for the two mandatory reforms in the study. I will conclude the chapter with an examination of how teachers made sense of and reconciled multiple and potentially contradictory instructional reforms.

Inside Situated Opportunities to Learn

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, behaviorist opportunities to learn left much to be desired. Typically, these opportunities to learn cast teachers in a passive role, insulted teachers' professionalism, and misrepresented the ideas of instructional reforms. In contrast, reforms with situated learning which depended on teachers' active inquiry into reform ideas in light of the complexities of practice and located learning at or near the school site had promise to be more robust learning experiences for teachers. But were they? This section considers the single non-mandated instructional reform—FAME—that was common to each of the three schools in the study and seeks to answer the following questions: What were the defining characteristics of the formal opportunities for teachers

to learn about formative assessment at each of the schools in the study? What differences existed across schools in the qualities of these learning opportunities and to what can we accredit these differences?

Team Focus

Of course, sensemaking could only occur if learning teams focused on the reform ideas, and, despite ample time for each of the teams to meet over the course of the year, the teams varied greatly in their meeting focus. For example, at Poe Ms. Dixon was unable to sustain the team's attention on formative assessment and she herself was often preoccupied with other pressing issues (e.g., the school schedule and governance structure). At other times, the principal, Mr. Delancey, would come in and commandeer the formative assessment meeting and its purpose. As a consequence of the team's divided priorities and Mr. Delancey's intrusions, the team spent only a minority of the meeting time talking about formative assessment. Furthermore, the commitment to formative assessment eroded as the year progressed. By the team's fourth and final learning team meeting of the year, the group talked about formative topics less than a third of the time.

Not all of this lack of focus can be attributed to Mr. Delancey. The group had trouble getting on or staying on formative assessment topics as the following excerpt reveals.

> Ms. Dixon: We're going to share formative assessments that we've been using and then if we have any time—
>
> Mrs. Reid: Is this all of them? (*She is referring to the envelope that she has been stuffing for administrative purposes during the meeting. The envelope contains the form that indicates the she intends to return to Poe the following year*).
>
> Ms. Dixon (*continuing her sentence*): Left...yeah. I put them all together (speaking of

the envelops).

Mrs. Reid (*smiling*): Can I see who's returning next year?

Ms. Dixon: No.

Mrs. Reid: As if I need to look. (Mrs. Reid gets up with envelope and leaves)

Ms. Dixon: Ted's coming back.

Mrs. Monahan: How old is he? He has to be in his forties, right?

Ms. Dixon: I would say mid forties, but I have no idea how old he is.

Mrs. Monahan: He has young kids.

Ms. Cunningham: Yeah.

Ms. Dixon: He didn't start teaching...like, right away. Like I didn't start teaching right
away either. But, um, by the way he was talking he wasn't sure if he was going to
be a teacher and he was like actually looking into being a prison guard for a
while. He was thinking about doing that.

Ms. Cunningham: I think he started being a prison guard and then he switched.

Ms. Dixon: Was it? Was that what it was?

Ms. Cunningham: I think so.

Ms. Dixon: Because living in Cedarville, when Cedarville opened that new prison then
all of his buddies getting good high paying jobs and stuff, so I can understand
when you're young and you're like, "Oh, yeah. I didn't go to college..." Well,
although I think now to be a guard you have to do a little bit of college.

This comment is followed by several seconds of silence.

In contrast to Poe, Waller's learning team—led by the school principal, Ms.

Shriver—was strongly focused on formative assessment topics. The team spent almost all

of it's time learning about or discussing implementation of formative assessment practices. The team typically adhered to an agenda that Ms. Shriver constructed for each meeting that allowed for ample time for team members to discuss enactment of formative assessment practices and to focus on new components of formative assessment practices and prepare for further enactment of new practices.

Although less focused than at Waller, Middleton's learning team meetings were more like Waller's than they were like Poe's. Middleton meetings, led by Mrs. Herman, were mostly focused and the team spent 76% of its time focused on formative assessment topics. An overview of team focus is included in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1. Overview of Learning Team Meeting Focus

School	Percentage of Time Dedicated to Formative Assessment	Percentage of Time Dedicated to Other Topics and Concerns	Total
Poe	33%	67%	100%
Waller	89%	11%	100%
Middleton	76%	24%	100%

Collective Sensemaking: Developing a Group Perspective

One of the great potential benefits of situated learning is that it may afford teachers the opportunity to make sense of a given reform and to work out what the reform messages mean for their instructional practice (e.g., Coburn, 2001; Spillane, 2004). This section examines the opportunities teachers had to make sense of reforms during FAME learning team meetings.

Each of the three learning teams worked out the meaning of formative assessment in their group conversations. For instance, the following abridged episode from Middleton's learning team exemplifies how the meaning of learning targets (a main component of the formative process) was shaped through group interaction. As the conversation begins, the

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learning team coach, Mrs. Herman, has asked the members to share how they have enacted

learning targets since the last meeting.

Mr. St. Johns: I linked a lot of my Next Generation [Science Standards] stuff to some

attempts at the learning targets. You know, it's funny, that little thing I did

was hanging up [learning targets]. Kids are really keying up on that. If I don't

have them up right away, they are "Hey, you don't have new ones up."

Mrs. Herman: That's good. So when we think about that point [about] targets not

being wallpaper objectives where they are not for your kids but [rather] they

are looking at them and using them.

Mr. St. Johns: And we use a lot of reflection, whether we are there yet or not. What

we need to do to get there and stuff.

Mrs. Van Fleet: Exactly. Even if it's not a GLEC (grade level content expectation),

I like it.

Mrs. Herman: Ok. Somebody else?

Mrs. Miles: My goal was just to start with the learning targets, and putting them

up as wallpaper. I'm not going to lie. I'm just starting the process….I know

what I need to do to get the kids more actively involved in them. I feel like

I've at least started the process since the beginning of the year.

Mrs. Herman: Baby steps for sure.

Mrs. Van Fleet: Mine are posted up but they are more wallpaper except that the kids

have individual copies and I always address it at the beginning of the unit

with pretests and then they assess where they are and do the target and then

I try to hit it three times. So mid time I'll hand them back out, "What do you

think? Where are you at?" And then with the post-test. I think I really need to modify the form. I really like Mrs. Quincy's but I haven't figured out how to modify that in yet. (*To Mrs. Quincy*) Kids like yours...so...

Mrs. Miles (*To Mrs. Quincy*): How do you do yours?

Mrs. Quincy: I just put them on a sheet of paper—the targets for the unit—and then they self-assess, with 4 being mastery, and then 3-2-1. And then we do a beginning, in the middle, and the end the way Mrs. Van Fleet described it.

Mrs. Van Fleet: I like the way you have them posted in your room...It's very clear. It's not wallpaper. It is not overloaded with stuff. I can see it from the hallway when I'm looking toward your room and you can see what they are talking about and I look at mine and think it's too many words, it's too small. I'm not happy with it.

Mrs. Miles: I think the subject depends, too. For English I know on some of them, how can I make it any shorter?

Ms. Van Fleet: I know. I know. And I have that issue too with social studies. It's like "How do I change all these?" And when a target is 30 words long you know [like] a GLEC, how do I make it different?

Mrs. Miles: And you don't want the kids to feel threatened when they are doing it. Just tell me how you feel about what you know and don't know. And that's great because it helps me teach you. Your grade is not based on what you put right here. Just to help me know where you are at.

Ms. Carroll: What were you saying, Mrs. Miles?

Mrs. Miles: [Mrs. Van Fleet] should look at the Common Core flipbook...You might be

able to get some ideas from that even though it's English. But it's just...I like a lot of the wording...It might give you some ideas about how to shorten what you have down.

Mrs. Quincy: My GLECs, I actually do Common Core, but are...I actually, take pieces out of each one, I don't expect to get the whole standard in one learning target. It wouldn't work.

Mrs. Van Fleet: That's a thought, too.

Mrs. Miles: Oh, yeah. I mean my research learning per standard...I mean I have Probably...well on the board right now there's probably almost 10 targets just for that.

Ms. Carroll: And you took the standards then and broke them down and chunked them into something smaller?

Mrs. Miles: Yes.

This excerpt contains several normative statements that helped the group collectively define the characteristics of learning targets. First, learning targets should not be "wallpaper" objectives that escape student notice, but should rather be something that teachers encourage students to think about during the course of their learning to guide student effort. For this purpose, learning targets should be clearly displayed and teachers should arrange some activities that require students to engage with the learning target and think about their own progress in relation to it.

Furthermore, learning targets can be "linked" to other instructional reforms. Mr. St. Johns, Mrs. Van Fleet, Mrs. Miles, Ms. Carroll, and Mrs. Quincy all mentioned that they used learning targets with the content standards for their subject area and grade level. Mrs.

Quincy and Mrs. Miles went further to suggest that the content standards needed to be translated into student friendly language and "chunked" in digestible pieces for student consumption.

Dozens of episodes at Middleton learning team meetings were of this character—group members constructing meaning of formative assessment through interaction. Group sensemaking also happened when confusion or concern arose around how reform practices would be enacted or what these practices' impact on students would be. In the same learning team meeting, for example, the group discussed the appropriate amount of learning targets students should be presented with at one time and the potential danger of breaking content standards down to the point that students lost a sense of the overall purpose of the unit.

> Mrs. Miles: Is there a number of targets that you feel shouldn't go over? Or give to them at one time? I'm just curious.

> Mrs. Johnson: It seems like we talked about that last time, because I remember... that my thinking was to make it very simple and break it down a lot. And then I went away from the meeting thinking I need to condense them.

> Ms. Carroll (*agreeing*): So [that] it is not so overwhelming.

> Mrs. Johnson: I'm sure science is different than math. So they can explain an overall concept and how they all go together as opposed to one little thing, one little thing, one little thing.

> Mrs. Van Fleet: And the strands that were in social studies...like if I have [standards] 4.4.1 through 4.7 is like the supporting things I use to teach that strand. And I thought that I had to target all of those. Kids look at it and are like, "No, this is

too much." But then if I'm doing 4.4 it covers all of that. It's all in there. So how do I break that down so it's smaller and I don't stay at 4.4 for four months trying to teach little sections at a time?

Mrs. Herman: There are so many differences just by content area. One of the things that [a book she has ordered for the group] recommends is that you have one learning target per lesson. Which means Mrs. Miles would say, "Today, this is the one learning target that we are really focusing on. Even though in our research [unit] we're getting to all ten of these." So kids see the big picture but [each] day she's pointing out the smaller picture.

Mrs. Johnson: That is what they did at Clear Lake [at the Standards Based Grading school visit] when we went there. Everyday they had this thing that they started with and it always started with a learning target for the day.

In this excerpt, teachers collectively recognized a problem (students and teachers can get bogged down in isolated learning targets and lose sight of the larger concepts) and discuss how it affects their work. The learning team coach cites a source that might help them solve the dilemma. Namely, teachers can focus students on a new learning target each day at the same time reminding them of the "bigger picture" so neither the teacher nor the students lose sight of the larger concepts. A second teacher confirms the merit of this suggestion, again bridging to another instructional reform at Middleton—Standards Based Grading.

Learning team meetings at Waller also included dozens of examples of teachers collectively making sense of formative assessment through conversations. Each of the meetings featured a strategy (e.g., learning targets, eliciting student understanding,

feedback) and teachers worked out what each of these practices meant in their interaction with one another. In contrast to Middleton, the Waller team was more likely to discuss the principles of formative assessment and its underlying logic. In the following vignette, three of members of the Waller FAME team discussed what constituted formative practice. Ms. Shriver (the school principal and learning team coach) and Mr. Bridges assumed the role of expert, while Mrs. Jackson (a second-year teacher in her first year on the learning team) asked questions about the meaning of formative assessment.

> Ms. Shriver: There are some [informal assessments] that are going to be a little
> quicker, but again, you know, what is the purpose? Is it attached to the
> learning target? You know, you might have a whole class period where you're
> having kids compare their work to exemplars where they're looking at the
> proficient exemplar and you have maybe some novice exemplars. "Ok, well, I
> know I'm here. I am not sure how I can get here." And then maybe they meet
> with you, or they conference, or they peer conference. So, you know, it's a
> layered approach.

> Mrs. Jackson: So any approach can be used as a formative assessment?

> Ms. Shriver: Yeah. I think so. I think it's how you use it and how the kids use it. Just
> because we give exit cards doesn't mean that it's formative assessment.

> Mr. Bridges: If you don't use it in your instruction.

> Ms. Shriver: You don't use it and the kids don't use it. It's just, "I'm checking to see
> if they can recall two facts about the American Revolution." Ok. Well, that's a
> check for understanding, but that's not a formative assessment in our kind of

work with formative assessment. It's a check for understanding. Definitely. Those are really interim benchmark assessments.

This interaction reveals many of the underlying principles of formative assessment as the Waller learning team had made sense of it. First, formative assessment was a "layered approach" that required students to reflect on the quality of their learning in reference to the learning target. Teachers should then arrange to meet with students to conference with them about their work. For members of the Waller learning team, then, formative assessment was a series of complex processes involving standards for learning, student reflection on academic progress, and teacher and student interaction. Thus, artifacts were not inherently formative. They must be used in a formative manner.

These are but a small sampling of the dozens of similar conversations that learning team members at both Waller and Middleton had and how, through extended interactions, these teachers collectively constructed meanings of what formative assessment was and what it meant for their classrooms.

Poe's learning team meetings differed sharply from those at either Waller or Middleton. Interactions about formative assessment were greatly restricted, primarily because the team lacked focus. However, lack of focus was not the groups' only roadblock to sensemaking. The structure of even the more focused sections of each meeting encouraged a certain type of interaction that both misrepresented the instructional reform and circumscribed teachers' interactions surrounding it.

Namely, Ms. Dixon, the team's coach, encouraged team members to bring in "formative assessments" that they had used to check for student understanding. Each teacher would present at length about a formative assessment tool they had used and

describe how they had enacted its use. The other team members would then ask a question or two about the specifics of the tool their colleague had presented and the group would move on to the next presenter. Thus, interaction among group members about matters salient to formative assessment was rare. The following excerpt is an exception albeit a limited one.

> Mrs. Monahan: I needed to make sure that [students] knew what a community was. The parts of the community. You know, just different things like that. And we talked about a community garden and things like that.

> Mrs. Reid (*suppressing a yawn*): So does that count as...

> Mrs. Monahan: Kind of like a graphing formative assessment.

> Mrs. Reid: Is it like the old KWL chart? Like you're trying to access their background knowledge. Is that the kind of formative assessment that would be?

> Mrs. Monahan: Yeah. Kind of. I'm checking for understanding.

> Ms. Cunningham: Is a KWL a formative assessment?

> Mrs. Monahan: It is.

> Mrs. Reid: Yeah.

> *Ms. Dixon nods her head in the affirmative*

What made a tool formative was never explained other than that a formative assessment could presumably be used to check for student understanding. Nor did the topic of formative assessment come up very often. Again, team members simply presented the tools they had used to check for understanding since the team last met.

Even in this very limited focus that misrepresented the principles of formative assessment, the tools that learning team members presented were often so specific to the

discipline that the teachers taught that they were of very little use to the rest of the group. For instance, Ms. Dixon presented for about 10 minutes on how she had used a sheet of paper to have students cut out shapes that they could then fold to construct three-dimensional shapes. Ms. Dixon had hoped that the shapes would help students think about surface area and volume and this tool likely would have been familiar to most math teachers. However, none of the other team members taught math and they became confused about how Ms. Dixon had used the squares and for what purpose. The team engaged in a lively discussion about the math involved and how the shapes could be constructed. During this time Ms. Dixon tried to clarify the purpose, logistics, and mathematical reasoning involved. At the end of Ms. Dixon's explanation, Mrs. Reid concluded, "No wonder [students] can't do it. That's confusing." At which point, the group moved on to the next presenter.

At another time, Mrs. Monahan presented on how she had used a plot chart to get students to think about narrative structure but she had to stop halfway through to draw a plot chart for Ms. Dixon who did not know what a plot chart was. Mrs. Monahan quickly drew the chart and continued on until the group got sidetracked when members began talking about a particularly troubled student with whom they were familiar.

The group did not couch these tools in discussions about the larger strategies and principles of the formative assessment process as reformers would have hoped. The Poe learning team came to understand formative assessment as a collection of tools that one could accumulate to make student learning more visible. Formative assessment for these teachers was not an interconnected process that involved both teachers and students in

setting goals, eliciting student understanding, providing actionable feedback, and making instructional decisions.

Summary

Situated learning opportunities as exemplified by participation in the FAME program varied considerably across the three teams. Two of the teams—Waller and Middleton—were able to focus on formative assessment topics and their patterns of interaction promoted active sensemaking by each of the members. Furthermore, in large part due to both Mrs. Herman and Ms. Shriver's expertise the interaction led to collective understanding that aligned well with reformers' intent. In contrast, the Poe learning team struggled to stay focused on formative assessment. Meetings were often commandeered by the school's principal and the teachers themselves had difficulty staying on task when left on their own. When the team did manage to focus on formative assessment, the task of sharing "formative assessments" fundamentally misrepresented the reform as a collection of tools teachers could use to check for understanding. Additionally, even in this highly circumscribed and errant endeavor, teachers' tools were most often so specific to their discipline as to be of very little use to the rest of the group.

Middleton's and Waller's efforts, while more promising, also highlight some complications. First, situated learning relied on local expertise. Both the Middleton and Waller coaches were also "regional leads" and experts in the formative assessment process. They were thus able to shape sensemaking in ways that agreed with reformer's intent. Sensemaking would have likely looked much different had it not been for these two coaches (neither school would likely have had a team at all) and the meetings quite

possibly could have resembled the meetings at Poe. In situated contexts, errant ideas can take root if there is no expertise to gainsay them.

Situated learning was also difficult to manage even with an expert leading the way. FAME was an incredibly complicated reform and reformers expected teachers to come to understand that formative assessment was an intricate process involving the orchestration of components (e.g., learning targets, student evidence, instructional decisions), strategies (e.g., activating prior knowledge, self-assessment, peer-assessment), and tools (e.g., concept maps, exit tickets, 4-corners) that teachers would somehow manage in order to establish the "assessment loop" where both teachers and students were in constant interaction about what is to be learned, how well the student was progressing toward this learning objective, and how the student could take action to move closer to mastery.

The complexity presented a daunting task even for expert coaches. At Middleton, for example, Mrs. Herman was successful at having teachers make sense of individual components, but the group rarely, if ever, talked about formative assessment as a comprehensive process for teaching and learning. At Waller, the team was more successful at uncovering and discussing the principles of formative assessment and what it meant to teach formatively. Even so, conversations did not encompass the totality of the formative assessment process. This suggests that the complexity of a reform can extend beyond even favorable situated opportunities to learn about it.

Reform Types, Connection Mechanisms, and Opportunities to Learn

Before venturing into the connection between opportunity to learn and actual learning, it is appropriate to summarize several of the findings regarding the patterns that emerged in the study regarding reform types, connection decisions, and characteristics of

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learning opportunities. Recall from the previous discussion that I created four reform typologies (mandated, state supported, ISD/district broad coverage, and ISD/district select coverage), three ways to connect teachers to voluntary reforms (assignment, solicitation, and voluntary call) to which I am now adding a forth (involuntary enrollment), and three learning types (reform documents, situated, behaviorist).

First, teachers were connected differently to different types of reform. Those reforms with broad coverage (i.e., mandated reforms, ISD/district broad coverage programs) connected teachers to reform through involuntary enrollment or assignment. For reforms that had more modest ambitions for coverage (i.e., state supported programs, ISD/district select coverage programs) teachers were either solicited to participate or they responded to a voluntary call.

Learning opportunities also varied by reform type. With one exception (UDL) teachers were not assigned to participate in reforms that employed situated learning. For these reforms, entrepreneurs (Ms. Shriver, Mrs. Herman, Ms. Dixon) solicited participation or issued a voluntary call, or both. By extension, then, reforms intended to affect a wide range of teachers—whether the reforms were mandated or ISD/district broad coverage programs—were not accompanied by situated opportunities to learn. When districts wanted to accommodate many teachers in broad coverage programs, they used more efficient behaviorist trainings to do so. State mandated reforms relied mostly on dissemination of reform documents. A summary of these patterns is provided in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2: Reform types, Connection Mechanisms, and Opportunities to Learn

Reform	Reform Type	Connection Decision	Learning Type
CCSS	Mandated	Involuntary Enrollment	Reform Documents
Educator Evaluation	Mandated	Involuntary Enrollment	Reform Documents
FAME	Voluntary: State Supported	Solicitation/Voluntary Call	Situated
CITW	Voluntary: Broad Coverage	Assignment	Behaviorist
TLC	Voluntary: Broad Coverage	Assignment	Behaviorist
CCR	Voluntary: Select Coverage	Assignment	Behaviorist
UDL	Voluntary: Select Coverage	Assignment	Situated
SBG	Voluntary: Select Coverage	Solicitation/Voluntary Call	Situated

Opportunity to Learn and Teacher Learning

So far I have described how behaviorist and situated learning opportunities differed fundamentally from one another and that situated learning opportunities were themselves variable across the three sites. This section answers questions about what teachers made of these opportunities and the impact opportunities to learn had on how well teachers knew and could talk about reforms.

Situated Opportunities to Learn and Teacher Learning

FAME. The FAME program at each of the three sites provides evidence about what teachers learned from behaviorist and situated opportunities. Notably, FAME was primarily, but not exclusively, situated. In fact, the teams' first exposure to the program was behaviorist. At the beginning of the year each of the teachers attended a regional FAME learning team launch in which one trainer led a group of 100 teachers or more through the design of the FAME program and an overview of the entire formative assessment process.

Teams were then to build on the learning from the FAME launch in their situated contexts during the remainder of the year. The meeting structure and topics among the teams varied. At Middleton, Mrs. Herman structured the learning team meetings so as to balance the group's focus between the formative assessment booklet provided by the state (*The Formative Assessment Process*) and the trade book *Embedded Formative Assessment*

(Wiliam, 2011). Over the course of the year, the team read three chapters of Wiliam's book that covered the following formative topics: clarifying success criteria, eliciting achievement evidence, and providing actionable feedback. As the team members discussed the ideas in each of these chapters in light of their own attempts at enactment, Mrs. Herman also highlighted sections of the state-developed TFAP that corresponded with the ideas in *Embedded Formative Assessment*.

Two patterns emerged. First, learning team members' learning was significantly influenced by the topics discussed at learning team meetings. Near the end of the year, team members learned and could thoughtfully talk about at least some of the topics the team covered. When asked how he would explain formative assessment to an interested colleague, Mr. St. Johns said:

> [I would say that formative assessment is] more of a communication situation where everybody is understanding what you are trying to learn. Students, teachers, administration, everybody is on the same page of what learning is and there are no surprises. Here is your goal. We are working towards this goal. What are the tools and methods we are going to get to that goal, and constant re-evaluation of are we hitting that goal? That is the way I see it.

On several occasions, Mr. St. Johns reiterated his understanding of formative assessment as clearly articulated and understood learning targets, but he did not demonstrate that his understanding extended to eliciting student understanding or providing actionable feedback—two of the other topics the team had addressed.

Mrs. Quincy was similar. Her understanding of formative assessment was also restricted to setting learning targets and making them clear to students. Like Mr. St. Johns,

despite multiple opportunities to demonstrate her understanding of formative assessment, she never mentioned the importance of eliciting student understanding or providing feedback.

The third focal member of the team, Ms. Carroll, expressed a more sophisticated understanding. Her interviews were replete with mention of the importance and difficulty of providing students informative feedback. She was also able to talk at length about the utility of learning targets and the many tools she was using to elicit student understanding. Ms. Carroll, then, demonstrated learning in each of the major components the learning covered over the course of the year.

Interestingly, none of the team members mentioned the importance of formative topics not addressed during learning team meetings even though the topics were covered at the FAME launch and the team members had access to these ideas through the resources Mrs. Herman or state administrators made available (e.g., *Embedded Formative Assessment*, TFAP). These topics included activating students as resources for one another and empowering student ownership over learning (both from *Embedded Formative Assessment*) and student and teacher analysis and instructional decisions (both from TFAP). In other words, learning team members learned at least some of what the team covered but only one of the three teachers learned extensively about each topic. Furthermore, learning team members did not extend their learning to other formative topics not covered at meetings despite having access to other resources that might have helped them do so.

The second pattern to emerge from learning team meetings was that teachers talked about components of formative assessment that echoed the discussions at learning team meetings. For example, when asked about what she liked about formative assessment, Ms.

Carroll said, "The learning targets are awesome. It seems like that would fit nicely with standards-based grading, where the kids would just know 'this is what I am being assessed on.' Put it in student friendly language and know what they need to do. [Be] more upfront before you start the unit. I love learning targets." Recall that the Middleton learning team talked about learning targets at length and through their interactions had established collectively that learning targets should be more than just "wallpaper" and that they should be carefully worded to provide greater access to students. These same sentiments are detailed in Ms. Carroll's quote from this interview nearly four months later albeit in lesser detail than that collective definition and purpose the group had constructed.

The general patterns of teacher learning held at Waller but there was one important difference between the two teams. Namely, the Waller team was able to cover each of the components of the formative assessment process during the year. Like Middleton, the teachers' knowledge of formative assessment reflected the focus of the group. Teachers were able to demonstrate at least partial understanding and the meaning the teachers made echoed the conversations at learning team meetings. And, also like at Middleton, none of the teachers reported that they spent time studying the TFAP booklet made available by the state or using any of the state electronic resources.

Among members of the Waller team there was some variation. Teacher understanding of formative assessment correlated with both the number of years teachers had been on the team and the degree to which they attended team meetings during the year of the study. For instance, a first-year learning team member, Mrs. Jackson, reported that she only joined the learning team to boost her evaluation score and she described her participation on the team as "minimal." She stopped attending meetings in the second half

of the year to coach the girls' soccer team. At the end of the year, she described formative assessment as "continuously checking" in with students "along the way" to the summative assessment. She did not express understanding of formative assessment as a process; nor did she mention topics that the group covered later in the year (e.g., providing actionable feedback) during the meetings she missed.

Mrs. Curtis, who was also in her first year on the team, provides another example. She was unable to attend most of the learning team meetings because of a professional conflict and consequently she had the most limited understanding of any of learning team member. At the end of the year, Mrs. Curtis reflected in regards to formative assessment, "I just feel unsure about everything, like if I'm even using it correctly. I feel like it is a mystery." Even so, she demonstrated some understanding that formative assessment required checking for understanding and some student self-reflection (one of the topics covered at a learning team meeting Mrs. Curtis did attend). Of her efforts to enact formative assessment, Mrs. Curtis said, "I gave a handout…this morning…It said, 'We have been working on this. How do you feel about it?' Tell me. Show me. So they had to provide the information."

In contrast, those teachers who had more years on the team and attended more regularly were more familiar with the components of formative assessment and had a much deeper understanding of formative assessment as a process. Ms. Stickle, who was in her fourth year on the team and attended all learning team meetings, said that formative assessment was a "culture more than a thing that you do" and that formative assessment is ongoing and "happens in different formats to check for understanding all of the time. It could be your summative assessment when you realize this is where the kids are at right

now. Then you have to go back and reassess. It changes with each hour. Certain groups need different formats. It could be peers to peers and watching the students assess each other. It could be the feedback that I am giving, to try to move a student forward." This quote reveals that Ms. Stickle thought of formative assessment as more than an isolated activity, that it included but was not restricted to checking for student understanding, that teachers needed to respond to student understanding in some way, and that it could involve peers working to assess one another.

The Waller case highlights two things about teacher learning that Middleton's case did not. First, commitment to the learning teams mattered. Active and engaged participation was important. Involvement in reform was not bivariate as the past chapter, for the purposes of analysis, assumed. Attendance at team meetings was consequential because it signaled a greater commitment to learning about and enacting formative assessment and because teachers did not supplement learning from the other sources (e.g., The TFAP booklet) that they had available to them. The second lesson of the Waller case is that robust teacher understanding of reform can develop over time through sustained and situated opportunities to learn and suggests that the complexities of reform can be understood under the right circumstances.

Poe's case is also instructive. As noted above, Poe's learning team meetings were crowded with peripheral concerns and the team spent very little time actually discussing formative assessment. Furthermore, during this time, the group talked about their use of "formative assessments" or tools that they used to gauge student understanding. Even the focused portions of the meetings were structured this way and the group did not work its way through discussion of the formative topics as the other two groups did. This lack of

focus and change in meeting structure allows us to consider how this format affected

teacher learning. Like at both Middleton and Waller, teacher understanding of formative

assessment at Poe reflected the content of the learning team meetings. In short, the Poe

learning team members described formative assessment as a collection of formative

assessments.

For example, Mrs. Monahan believed that formative assessment was "a great

checking point to see where students are currently….checkpoints to see where your

students are, prior to getting to the point of the assessment, so you as the teacher get a

clear idea where they are and if there's anything you need to backtrack on, before you go

further…It is a way for a teacher to not feel like they went through a whole unit and the

result in the assessment and then find out that your kids do not get it."

While she did not call them "checkpoints," another member of the Poe team, Ms.

Cunningham, also believed that "formative assessments" were tools to check for student

understanding (rather than a process). She said, "I have to plan and see where [the

formative assessment] is going to fit the best and where it's going to give the best feedback

at the right time for it to be the most useful and helpful."

Mrs. Monahan and Ms. Cunningham's description of formative assessment provides

evidence that even though Poe's team meeting structure and content restricted the

meaning of formative assessment to mean formative tools teachers could use, the teachers

understood that the tools were nevertheless used to achieve some larger purpose. In other

words the "formative assessments" were part of a larger context of teaching and this larger

context was important. The "feedback" that teachers received administering assessments

before the summative assessment might allow teachers to "backtrack" if need be. This all

indicates that teachers contextualized reform in terms of their existing grammars of practice. They "filled in" reforms with existing practices to help the reform practices take root.

Even in situated contexts, most teachers developed partial or erroneous understandings of formative assessment. Additionally, when asked about the challenges of teaching formatively, teachers did not indicate that they believed that lack of knowledge was a major obstacle. Incomplete or errant understandings of the reform did not seem to provoke much teacher concern. The Poe teachers had the most impoverished opportunity to learn. They spent hardly any time on formative assessment topics and the activities they did participate in distorted the reform. Thus, teachers interpreted formative assessment as a relatively simple collection of assessments and they did not show any concern that their understanding of reform was somehow in need of improvement.

At Waller and Middleton, Ms. Shriver and Mrs. Herman, respectively, had a clear and thorough understanding of the formative assessment process, but only Ms. Shriver was able to address each of these components in the situated contexts of learning team meetings. Furthermore, other potential sources of knowledge (e.g., trade books, state resources, and initial orientation to formative assessment) did not compensate for this limitation. Thus, in situated contexts teachers learning—even when their understanding was accurate and in line with reformers intentions—was fragmented and partial. Teachers rarely emerged from FAME learning team meetings with a comprehensive understanding of the formative assessment process.

Behaviorist Opportunities to Learn and Teacher Learning

Behaviorist learning had its own limitations, but teachers could and did learn about reforms in behaviorist contexts. For example, teachers at Poe who participated in the affiliated reform, TLC had at least the potential to learn something about the CCSS even if substantive learning was hardly guaranteed.

As described at length, TLC left a lot to be desired. Teachers were treated like school children and began to actively resist the facilitator's plans for productive teacher work. However, Ms. Cunningham was part of the minority of teachers who took the work seriously. She appeared to be paying close attention whenever Deb (the facilitator) was talking about Common Core or describing the work that would be related to it. She also engaged in the tasks and did much of the work for her group. At the end of the year, she had a fairly nuanced understanding of what the reformers supporting the CCSS had in mind. She explained:

> There is absolutely no reason that these kids couldn't do the standards. They could all be capable. But I think they haven't seen things that are asking them to do quite as much, and I've heard many times this year, 'this is really hard. I've never been challenged like this before.' I have no doubt that the kids can do the work, but it's the difference in motivation and rigor that the kids aren't used to, and I think we need to teach not only the standards and how to get there, but [also that students] have to put in some effort. These aren't just things that [students] can sit back and absorb.

This passage reveals that Ms. Cunningham did, in fact, learn about the CCSS through the imperfect exposure at a series of behaviorist training sessions. She shared Deb's optimism

for the CCSS and her understanding of the Common Core reflected the messages that she heard while at TLC workshops. Namely, the CCSS were not "just things that [students] can sit back and absorb." Rather, the Standards were much more rigorous and reformers expected students to capably take on a new role and meet a myriad of academic challenges.

Mrs. Monahan, another Poe teacher, took the TLC sessions less seriously. She was much more likely to engage in side conversations during Deb's presentations and she often neglected tasks when they were assigned, instead talking to colleagues about unrelated topics. At the end of the year, Ms. Monahan expressed an impoverished understanding of the CCSS:

> With the Common Core Standards the way that it directs my instruction is that starting next year, we are to follow Common Core and implement it...and have that drive our instruction as far as what we are teaching, not necessarily when we are teaching it...Basically, [the CCSS] are an overall plan, our layout for the year. The common core, the standards are directing what I teach... It is not telling me the materials to use, but it is telling me what I need to teach with the materials that I choose to use for my teaching.

Teacher learning from these sessions reflected the attention and commitment individual teachers had to the workshops.

The CITW training at Waller provides another nice example of teacher learning from behaviorist experiences. It, too, suggests that teachers could benefit from behaviorist professional development but that behaviorist learning also was limited in its reach.

CITW was presented as a series of tools and strategies that teachers could use to improve student achievement. While some teachers openly resisted the trainings and

refused to implement any of its strategies as a matter of protest, others did learn something from the trainings. For instance, although she felt the trainings were longer than they needed to be, Mrs. Jackson was able to detail some of the strategies that she learned at the CITW trainings and reported that she used these strategies in her teaching from time to time. Mrs. Jackson said that the program facilitators, "gave us a lot of tools for cooperative learning and how to pair up cooperative learning groups. They gave us tools for graphic organizers, for behavior management, for student involvement and how to engage students in a classroom setting. So, it encompassed the entire bell-to-bell learning."

Another Waller teacher, Ms. Stickle, could not recall many of the CITW strategies from memory, but she was quick to display the binder she received at the training and remarked that she used a strategy learned at the training in her teaching on occasion.

While behaviorist opportunities did not allow for the complex interactions of situated learning, some teachers did learn from them and change their teaching practice, even if these reported changes were modest. Just as in situated opportunities, teacher commitment to behaviorist opportunities mattered. The standardized messages and activities characteristic of the behaviorist experience did not shape teacher understanding in a uniform way and reported changes to instruction as a consequence of the behaviorist learning opportunities was therefore variable. In some cases teachers limited their attention to the trainings and their understanding of the reform messages were meager. In other cases, teachers reported having retained some of the learning and made some changes to their teaching.

Limited Opportunities to Learn

While both situated and behaviorist opportunities to learn had their notable shortcomings, both were superior to opportunities to learn that were restricted to the dissemination of reform documents. Although it may be surprising, many teachers did not have any formal opportunities to learn about instructional reforms that were (or were soon to be) mandatory and they were expected to learn about reforms by consulting these documents. This section investigates the consequences of this approach.

CCSS. The principal at Waller, Ms. Shriver, did not prioritize the CCSS and Middleton's principal, Ms. Novak, provided no instructional leadership at all for the CCSS or otherwise. Ms. Shriver believed that the school had already implemented the Common Core and that there was no more work to be done. She explained, "[The CCSS] is embedded within our district-approved curriculum. It's been a while since we've done the roll out of it with the staff… We've been working with [the CCSS] for a while."

In part because of Ms. Shriver's stance toward the CCSS, teachers at Waller had very little formal opportunities to learn about them. For example, the following interview section captures how little Mrs. Jackson, a language arts teacher at Waller, knew about the CCSS:

Mrs. Jackson: To be honest …I really don't feel like I know enough about Common

Core State Standards to be able to talk about it.

Interviewer: Have you forgone any opportunities to learn about Common Core?

Mrs. Jackson: No. We have had a lot of booklets given to us, but none of it really

makes complete and total sense. I know the standards that I have to teach. I

could tell you what I have to teach for literature, and things like that…I feel

like [the CCSS] is just a revamped version across the country of our old [State of Michigan content standards]. So it is just telling us what to teach, not how to teach it...But I don't know enough about the history or the background, where it's going, where it came from, to speak on it.

This passage highlights several points of interest. First, encouraging teacher learning through issuance of reform documents is mostly futile. Even when the documents had some real import for teachers, only the most affected teachers seemed to care much about the documents or what they indicated for teacher practice. Second, teachers tended to interpret new reforms in terms of their previous experiences and reforms of the past. Mrs. Jackson felt that the CCSS was just a "revamped" version of the Michigan State Standards for reading and language arts. Third (and related to the second point), the CCSS provided teachers curricular but not instructional guidance. Thus, teachers who understood the CCSS in this limited way were satisfied if they understood what they had to teach without considering the complexities of how they would teach the new content or what the students new role would be. Later in the same interview Mrs. Jackson reiterated that she knew virtually nothing about the Common Core, and she also doubted that anyone but reformers knew about it. That is, the knowledge that she lacked was simply not out there:

Mrs. Jackson: Across the state I don't think anybody really understands [The CCSS]. We all know we have to implement it, and we know what it says. But if there's any bigger broad-spectrum... I just don't understand it...Do I need [training]? I don't know. I know how to identify the standards that my kids need to know.

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Mrs. Quincy at Middleton also believed that she was implementing the CCSS despite

admitting that her knowledge and opportunity to learn about it was limited. Her use of the

CCSS closely resembled Mrs. Jackson's. In other words, she looked for the CCSS to provide

input about important content, but she did not detail the new role planned for students.

However, she did demonstrate a slightly improved understanding of the intent of the CCSS,

namely that mathematics content was supposed to be more focused and demanding. She

said:

> I try to pick the most important things that [students] need to be able to be
>
> successful in high school out of it. Most of our students aren't anywhere close to
>
> being at grade level. So it is really challenging in that respect to get through 8th grade
>
> content. So we try to make it… as simple as we can for them. That kind of defeats the
>
> purpose of Common Core, because when it was rolled out it was touting the more in-
>
> depth than the other curriculum that you may have had. Instead of having to teach
>
> so much, you teach less, but you have more thinking. And I actually find that that is
>
> not the case.

Like Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Quincy compared the CCSS to the familiar Michigan State

standards for mathematics. Yet, she did not embrace the ambitions of the CCSS even though

she had some vague understanding that they were supposed to be different in some key

ways from the Michigan State standards. However, due at least in part to her limited

opportunity to learn and limited understanding she interpreted and operationalized the

CCSS in ways that were familiar with her prior knowledge, experiences, and practices.

The educator evaluation system. Only language arts and mathematics teachers in the

study felt they were directly affected by the CCSS (although science teachers at Waller

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acknowledged that they had responsibilities to teach reading skills for expository text). In contrast, every teacher in the study was operating under the new educator evaluation system and every teacher understood the basics of how the new system worked—teachers would be evaluated based on how well they performed against a rubric for gauging teacher effectiveness and how well they were able to elicit student achievement. However, teachers varied in how well they knew of the observational rubrics that their districts were using.

There were some patterns in this variation. All the Middleton teachers, for example, knew the observational framework well. This attention to the framework is due to two circumstances. First, the Middleton framework was greatly simplified and easily memorized. Second, and more importantly, Middleton teachers were very concerned that Mrs. Novak, the principal, would evaluate the teachers unfairly and that any of the teachers might lose his or her job. Each of the Middleton teachers in the study knew the observation framework well enough should the need arise for them to contest their scores and potentially save their jobs.

Attention to the observation frameworks at the other two sites was more idiosyncratic. Some teachers knew the frameworks well and referred to them often. Ms. Cunningham at Poe and Mrs. Jackson at Waller were both probationary teachers and were new to any sort of evaluation. Both kept their district's observational rubric nearby so they could refer to it regularly and each could detail its contents without needing to consult it. Mr. Bridges was the union president and needed to know the evaluation framework when disputes between teachers and administrators began to emerge in the districts as he was sure was bound to happen.

Ms. Stickle and Mrs. Hall were both moderately familiar with the observational protocol, but neither could speak about the *Framework for Teaching* in detail. Mrs. Hall's reasoning for this lack of intimate familiarity was indicative of Ms. Stickle's understanding as well. Mrs. Hall believed that from what she knew about the *Framework for Teaching*, the rubric represented good instructional practices. Consequently, she resolved herself to continuing to strive to teach well, but she did not use the frameworks to guide her. When asked what she would say to teachers who were concerned about their observational score, Mrs. Hall commented that she would advise them to, "Just do what you do. If you're that concerned about it. Make it a practice and fix it. My evaluation or my observation, I don't do a dog and pony show. Come into my classroom whenever you want, because this is what I do. I don't adjust my plans for it."

Mrs. Curtis and Mrs. Monahan knew their respective observational rubrics only modestly well. Both reported having good observations in the past and very little principal involvement in their classrooms. Furthermore, both felt they had more pressing issues and calls for their attention.

Mrs. Reid stands alone in that she paid virtually no attention to her district's evaluation rubric. She made a personal habit of distancing herself from administrative and collegial influence (with the exception of her close affiliation to Ms. Dixon). An overview of the teachers' knowledge of the evaluation rubrics their districts were using is provided in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3. Teacher's knowledge of evaluation rubrics

Poor	Modest	Moderate	Good	Excellent
Mrs. Reid (P)	Mrs. Curtis (W)	Ms. Stickle (W)	Mr. St. Johns (M)	Ms. Carroll (M)
	Mrs. Monahan (P)	Mrs. Hall (W)	Ms. Quincy (M)	Ms. Herman (M)
				Ms. Cunningham (P)
				Mr. Bridges (W)
				Mrs. Jackson (W)

*Ms. Dixon is omitted from this analysis because of lack of systematic data

In sum, the potential of reform documents by themselves to promote teacher understanding of reform appeared to be quite limited. Teachers only attended to these documents out of necessity and determined at the individual level.

Summary

While a necessary element of any successful reform, securing teacher learning is a formidable task. The previous two chapters examined the difficulties that schools had in connecting teachers with reforms even when principals provided diligent instructional leadership. In this chapter and the last, I considered broad qualitative differences between behaviorist and situated opportunities to learn and then went further to understand teachers' experiences and how they differed across and within schools.

The behaviorist approach had several advantages. First, because of its batch-processing capabilities, behaviorist trainings could accommodate far more teachers and connect them with reforms more easily than could reforms with situated learning. Behaviorist opportunities also allowed the session providers to standardize the reform messages that teachers received. However, these messages were typically altered to adhere to the structure of these sessions and these alterations either undermined the spirit of the reform ideas as they did in the CITW trainings or misrepresented the reform by breaking it into a series of perfunctory tasks as happened in the TLC sessions.

Teachers also grew to resent their treatment like school children, the incongruence between the reform ideas the trainers espoused and the format of the training, and, perhaps most of all, the assumption that teachers would willingly adopt the subordinate role that the behaviorist opportunities seemed to require. When teachers were inclined to resist, there was ample room for them to do so. Resistance was as much a part of behaviorist trainings as any of the features detailed above. And the resistant teachers got very little from the trainings and there was no mechanism that would reorient teachers to the work; rather attempts to regulate teacher behavior more tightly only strengthened their resistance. Even so, teachers could attend to the trainers' presentations and activities designed to improve teacher engagement with both the workshop and the reform itself. In these cases, the teachers did seem to benefit by both increased knowledge and modest adjustments to practice. It is interesting to note that the teachers who benefited from behaviorist training were early in their career. Perhaps this was the case because new teachers were closer to their experiences of learning in large lecture halls or maybe because they had not grown weary of these experiences after years of shifting and ephemeral district priorities.

Situated learning opportunities solved some of the challenges that behaviorist learning brought into sharp relief. First, situated learning placed teachers in a much more active role and assumed that teachers had expertise that they could bring to bear as they collectively strove to understand new instructional reforms. Teachers were generally more satisfied with situated learning opportunities and consequently, these opportunities provoked far less teacher resistance than behaviorist opportunities did.

Teachers also learned more from situated learning and situated learning seemed like a better approach to familiarize teachers with reforms and elicit their ideas about how these reforms might be enacted. This was particularly true for complex reforms like FAME. Most teachers could articulate their understanding which reflected the collective sensemaking from learning team meetings. No teacher mentioned the ideas from the behaviorist one-day learning component of the FAME project that they attended at the beginning of the year.

However, situated learning also introduced problems of its own. Because teachers worked closely in a variety of settings, the main foci of the meetings were vulnerable to be overtaken for unrelated concerns, as Poe's case illustrates. Situated experiences also demanded more from teachers. If they showed up to meetings unprepared or reluctant to participate, meetings quickly faltered. This sometimes happened at the Middleton learning team meetings when teachers neglected to do the assigned reading, forgot the goals they had written for themselves at previous meetings, or had not enacted any of the formative assessment practices upon which the group had been focusing and thus had nothing to share.

Situated learning was also much more limited in its capacity to accommodate many teachers and only a minority of teachers at any of the three schools participated in any situated learning at all. Situated learning was also limited in its capacity to get through material quickly. Teachers at meetings shared their experiences at length, clarified and sometimes debated what reforms meant, and discussed best practices in general. All this took time and the two teams who progressed through the components of formative assessment—Middleton and Waller—did so at a deliberate and modest pace. Teachers who

had a comprehensive understanding of formative assessment as a complex process as reformers did were few and had been deeply engaged in the project for several years. Even at Middleton and Waller, teachers typically had a partial understanding.

Perhaps most importantly, once reformers placed teacher learning in situated contexts they no longer controlled message delivery and, consequently, situated learning had a greater probability that reform ideas would be distorted and teachers would make sense of reforms in ways that designers of the programs did not intend. For instance, the learning team at Poe came to understand that formative assessment was simply a collection of tools that teachers could use to check for student understanding. When this misunderstanding formed there was no one to step in and correct it.

A final and related challenge of situated learning is that it required local expertise. Recall that situated learning assumes that teachers will participate by actively bringing together reform ideas and the complexities of practice to work out challenges with small intimate collegial groups. Both Middleton and Waller had this expertise. Mrs. Herman and Ms. Shriver, respectively, had been involved in the program for several years and had dedicated a great deal of effort into understanding the reform better. Additionally, both had assumed more formal roles in the program as "regional leads" because state administrators noticed their commitment to and knowledge of formative practices. However, for teams like Poe, expertise was in short supply. While state administrators did make some provision to infuse teams with expertise (at least initially) through special coaches' training and the beginning of the year launch for all team members, these efforts were not always sufficient, as Poe's case makes clear. This highlights a dilemma for situated learning. These opportunities depend on expertise, but expertise is scarce and difficult to generate.

Finally, relying on reform documents alone, as was typical for the two mandatory reforms at each of the schools, provided the most meager opportunities for teacher learning. Teachers appealed to reform documents only out of necessity in dire situations, as happened at Middleton in the teachers' concern over fair evaluation. Even so, teachers looked to the documents more for their own protection than they did to improve their instructional practice. Teachers in less extreme but still evaluative circumstances tended to look to documents because they felt a sense of responsibility for knowing what the documents said or to get just enough from the documents to meet their obligations.

Through the three examples of teacher learning (behaviorist, situated, and reliance on reform documents) help bring context to the findings of the earlier chapters. Reforms that were mandated came to the schools through traditional channels. These reforms essentially enrolled teachers in reform with or without their consent. The concomitant learning opportunities for these mandated reforms were limited, in most cases, to dissemination of reform documents. This situation presents a paradox—teachers knew the mandated reforms least.

When one considers the requirements for the other two types of learning, this paradox is partially explained. Securing teacher learning took considerable effort for multiple actors through the system and this effort was not easily or quickly mobilized or secured. Behaviorist learning opportunities were more easily realized because they did not require extended teacher commitment and they did not place the burden of learning in local contexts. However, they still required ISD or district administrators to create learning opportunities, principals to consent to sending their teachers, and teachers who would attend without protest.

The requirements for situated learning are more daunting still. In order for reforms which relied on situated learning to prosper, they needed a reform entrepreneur with social connections and a group of teachers who, in addition to perceived social pressure, willingly participated for personal and often idiosyncratic reasons. In sum, neither behaviorist or situated learning were easily achieved and may not be a widely feasible solution to keep up with reforms that were rapidly and hastily introduced.

Sensemaking of Multiple Reforms

This research set out to understand how teachers were making sense of the multiple instructional reforms that were pressing in upon them. The previous chapters identified and categorized the reforms that came to schools and examined the routes that the reforms took; investigated the principals' actions in response to reforms and how these actions shaped teachers' opportunities to learn; analyzed the characteristics of the learning opportunities in greater detail and how these experiences contributed to teacher sensemaking. This final section focuses these finding to illuminate the following question from the introduction: How do teachers interpret and respond to multiple and potentially contradictory reforms?

Making Sense of Multiple Reforms: Highlight Congruence

The research assumed that teachers would be trying to navigate many instructional reforms at once, but for most teachers, this assumption simply did not hold true. Most teachers involved in the study were only managing two or three reforms (most commonly FAME, CCSS, and educator evaluation) at a time. When teachers were involved in several reforms, it would be inaccurate to say that this involvement preoccupied them. Even mandated reforms with potentially high degrees of accountability affected teachers only

modestly. When I asked teachers to tell me about life at their school or to detail the challenges they faced as they went about the routines of their work they rarely, if ever, talked about any of the reforms. Typically, teachers talked about reforms only when I asked about them by name.

The story here, then, is that instructional reforms, even when they penetrate schools, do so unevenly and rather weakly. None of the classes that I visited seemed to be profoundly impacted by any of the reforms, and that included the CCSS. Indeed, for most teachers life in schools appeared to be business as usual and schools and classroom looked very similar to how I remembered them. Even so, teachers needed to make some sense of the multiple reforms.

One way that teachers navigated multiple reforms was to cite a general congruence among the reform ideas. For example, Mrs. Hall said of UDL and FAME, "They both make me a better teacher. They both… were designed for all students to be a part of something. I guess both of them [require students] to be part of their learning. They don't conflict."

Some teachers knew the reforms well and could discuss the congruence between or among them at length. Generally, the more teachers knew about reforms, the greater they perceived the congruence among them to be. For instance, the following exchange with Mrs. Herman reveals a robust knowledge of both formative assessment and standards-based grading and a general understanding that the reforms were harmonious:

> Interviewer: You said something that I thought was interesting. You said
> standards-based grading and formative assessment go hand-in-hand. Can
> you talk about that a little bit?
>
> Mrs. Herman: Because standards-based grading…is not about the grade. It's about

'have you met the standards?' And in order to meet the standards, which kids don't really understand the standards, the teacher has to set up learning targets. So the kids can understand, 'What is it that I have to do to meet this standard?' So here is the learning target. And hopefully the teacher can do that in a way that is motivating for them so they say, 'I want to be successful in this. I want to understand these concepts. I want to learn this material.' And then the learning targets are really just like the first step in the formative assessment process, but in order to know if they've met the learning targets, students have to be able to get feedback along the way, either from themselves in the self-assessment or from the teacher, through feedback. And in order to give feedback, then the teacher has to have an understanding of where they want the student to be, and where the student currently is, and then give them that feedback to move in the right direction. And the peer assessment can be involved in that. And then all of the pieces of formative assessment and the learning targets and the checks for understanding, and the metacognition. I don't really get this yet. What is it that I'm not understanding. What can I do to help my understanding and then for the teacher, what are they not getting? what are their misconceptions and how can I give them strategies to move them along toward the learning target.

This same general pattern of perceived congruence held when teachers participated in multiple reforms. For instance, Ms. Stickle was involved in six instructional reforms during the time of the study and she only noted congruence among these reforms during interviews or learning team meetings. The following exchange, which occurred in an

interview when I asked Ms. Stickle to organize the reforms she was involved in spatially using index cards, is representative:

> Interviewer: You mentioned that CITW fits as a subcategory of the *Framework for Teaching*. Does UDL fit in the same way?
>
> Ms. Stickle: Yes, under instruction.
>
> Interviewer: Right next to CITW?
>
> Ms. Stickle: Or in place of. They almost...like this (*she puts one index card over the other*)
>
> Interviewer: They overlap?
>
> Ms. Stickle: Very much. They are exactly overlapping. They just have different titles. It is almost word for word.
>
> Interviewer: UDL and CITW don't conflict either?
>
> Ms. Stickle: Not at all.

As described at length, teachers often did not know much about instructional reforms either because they had no opportunities to learn about them or because they purposefully ignored reform messages even when given the opportunity. Mrs. Reid was an example of the latter, but even though she knew only a little about the reforms, she expressed her perception that they were in general agreement although she did not detail any specific evidence.

> Interviewer: So speaking of alignment you said that you felt with the new teacher evaluation came along, that it worked well together with the Common Core. How about formative assessment and the new teacher evaluation?
>
> Mrs. Reid: I think so.

Interviewer: They don't contradict?

Mrs. Reid: I don't think so.

Additionally, teachers anticipated congruence among reforms even when they had

not had much opportunity to learn about them. For instance, when Mrs. Curtis was

considering what she would be learning the following year, she said, "I'm going to be doing

the [CITW] training next year to learn more about it, but I know a lot of it is using your

learning targets and whatnot in the classroom. So I think a lot of it will be stuff that I

already know."

For an overview of teacher perceptions of congruence among reforms see Table 8.4.

Table 8.4. Perceived Congruence among Reforms

Teacher	School	Congruence	Incongruence
Mrs. Curtis	Waller	3	0
Ms. Stickle	Waller	12	0
Mrs. Hall	Waller	8	3
Mr. Bridges	Waller	7	1
Mrs. Jackson	Waller	11	2
Ms. Cunningham	Poe	2	0
Mrs. Monahan	Poe	5	0
Mrs. Reid	Poe	1	0
Ms. Dixon	Poe	NA	NA
Ms. Carroll	Middleton	5	0
Mrs. Herman	Middleton	3	0
Mr. St. Johns	Middleton	4	1
Mrs. Quincy	Middleton	2	0

Examining incongruence. Although teachers saw perceptions of conflict among

reforms were infrequent, these perceptions did emerge from time to time. For example,

Mrs. Hall believed that the isolated skills approach of Close and Critical Reading was at

odds with the hands-on approach of a reform that was on the horizon—the Next

Generation Science Standards—that stressed critical thinking and scientific inquiry. When

asked what she would do if the Next Generation Science Standards actually came to her

school, Ms. Hall suggested that she would limit the use of Close and Critical Reading, but might still use it from time to time.

Mrs. Jackson twice noted that there was a misalignment between the assessment the district was using to determine teacher "value-added" and the CCSS. Mrs. Jackson noted that her allegiance was to the standards and when it came to the test she hoped that students would do their best.

Mr. Bridges said that the he sometimes had to choose between making instructional decisions that were responsive to student learning needs and covering the curriculum, but he was the only teacher who made mention of this classic dilemma.

Teachers believed that each of these conflicts was mild compared with a general agreement among reforms. When faced with conflicts, teachers typically indicated that they decided among the two by preferring one, but did not neglect consideration for the other entirely.

Summary

For the typical teacher in the study, the reform environment was not that crowded. With the exception of educator evaluation (which did provoke at least modest concern of all teachers) teachers did not feel hard pressed by reform or obligated to enact reform teaching. When the teachers did consider two or more reforms at once, they predominantly felt that these reforms were well aligned and could be simultaneously satisfied. A summary of the findings from the past four chapters is included in the next, and final, chapter.

CHAPTER 9: Conclusion

Introduction

Before 1965, schools received very little federal or state direction in how to organize or enact instruction. With the passage of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), and more specifically Title III, schools had incentive and some direction to innovate. Section 301 of Title III of ESEA provided funds on a competitive basis "to stimulate and assist in the provision of vitally needed educational services not available in sufficient quantity or quality, and to stimulate and assist in the development and establishment of exemplary elementary and secondary school educational programs to serve as models for regular school programs" (Public Law 89-10). As described in Chapter 2, early implementation research focused on how these new federally inspired programs fared as they were implemented in local districts and schools (e.g., Berman & McLaughlin, 1974, 1978; Smith & Keith, 1971).

While federal policy made it possible to study implementation, these studies were limited because of their unavoidable reliance on federal programs that typically resulted in the alteration of school structures but not transformation of schools' instructional substance (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). Emboldened by federal policymaking and the *A Nation at Risk* report, states—which had been virtually bypassed in ESEA—began to generate instructional policy and became major reform actors in the 1980s. Initially, state reforms amplified those elements of schooling (e.g., improving graduation rates, introducing basic skills tests) that did not upset conventional notions of schooling (Odden, 1991). Over time, states like California became more aggressive policymakers and their ambitions led them to generate instructional policy in both mathematics and reading that

would fundamentally challenge extant beliefs, commitments, and practices regarding instruction. These efforts provided considerable fodder for researchers and much of what we know of policy implementation stems from studies conducted surrounding California's instructional policymaking efforts (e.g., Ball, 1990; Coburn, 2001, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, Cohen, 1990; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Cohen, McLaughlin, & Talbert, 1993; Wilson, 1990, 2003).

These studies were remarkably powerful and they ultimately shaped or inspired other researchers not directly involved in studying the California reforms (e.g., Spillane, 2004). In total, the studies created a robust picture of the promises and perils of state-generated, subject-specific (usually mathematics or reading), elementary focused mandated reforms that teachers engaged one at a time. At the same time, this clarity confined the phenomenon and, thus, provided a narrower view of instructional reform and the activity that surrounds it than can be found in the empirical world. This dissertation research was designed to understand the activity of instructional reform more broadly considered and, to this end, defined instructional reforms as any policy or program designed to influence curriculum or instruction. I set out to understand how schools engaged in multiple instructional reforms and how teachers made sense of the reforms. Finally, the dissertation endeavored to understand something of the nature of the system in which reforms were carried out and to consider how reforms and the system combined to shape reform and ultimately determine what a reform became.

Multiple and Diverse Reforms

Studies that examine the differences among reforms and how different types of reforms are taken up at the local level are rare (Cohen & Ball, 2007). Even the limited research that considers the challenges created by multiple instructional reforms still

focuses on centrally designed and mandated, disciplines-specific polices at the elementary school level (Mayrowetz, 2009). However, the paucity of studies is not due to either a lack of local engagement with multiple reforms or a lack of qualitative variation among the reforms themselves. The reforms in this study were both distinct (e.g., they all sought to change what or how teachers taught) from other types of school activities and distinguishable from one another. That is, actors at different levels had conceptually similar ways of dealing with reforms that were also sensitive to reform types.

To borrow terms from Cohen and Ball (2007) instructional reforms in this study were both "elaborated" and "scaffolded." Reforms were elaborated in that they articulated the central ideas of the reform. They were scaffolded to the extent that reformers made accommodations for teacher learning. While the instructional reforms in this study shared these two fundamental elements, the qualitative characteristics of a reform shaped its elaboration and scaffolding.

Mandatory Reforms

First, mandatory reforms were elaborated at the state level and expected district and school site compliance. They followed a familiar path from the statehouse to the district through principals and to teachers. Despite these similarities, there were differences between mandated reforms. Elaboration looked different between CCSS and the new educator evaluation system. The CCSS were elaborated through reform documents that detailed the types of learning expected by students at different grade levels. However, the learning was not scaffolded in any particular way. The state essentially left the provision of learning about CCSS to local ISDs and districts, and only one of the schools in the study (Poe) engaged in deliberate learning about the CCSS. Both Middleton and Waller

relied on dissemination of reform documents or technological tools to assist teachers with implementation.

For the other mandatory reform, the new educator evaluation system, the state specified rules for compliance, but essentially sub-contracted the work of elaborating ideas about instruction to publishers or local districts. Districts determined the rubrics they would use for gauging teacher performance (with some state oversight) and the tests they would use to determine teacher "value-added." The rubrics and tests that districts used for evaluating teachers then combined with the state regulations and became the de facto tools that elaborated evaluation reform. Like with the CCSS, then, learning for new educator evaluation was scaffolded only modestly. In Middleton's district, the superintendent worked with site principals to elaborate the educator evaluation rubric and to discuss the rules for determining value-added scores. At Waller, Ms. Shriver and the other principals participated in district-led workshops designed to help them standardized scoring across the district. Mr. Delancey, Poe's principal, attended district meetings where the district's evaluation of teaching rubric was disseminated, district officials specified the procedures of the new law, and principals were sent out to construct the practices of the new system virtually on their own. The districts did not provide on-the-job oversight for any of the three principals. Meanwhile, teachers were left to glean what they could from their districts' evaluation tool and access other electronic and print resources about the educator evaluation law.

Most reforms were not mandatory. For analytic purposes, I created three types of non-mandatory reforms based on each reform's characteristics: state supported programs, ISD/district wide coverage programs, and ISD/district select coverage programs.

The FAME program was a non-mandatory, state supported reform program. State administrators elaborated both the ideas about formative assessment and made arrangements for how teacher learning about reform ideas would be scaffolded. Notably, the FAME program situated teacher learning primarily in small, teacher-led teams that were conducted close to teachers' instructional contexts. These situated opportunities to learn differed significantly from behaviorist opportunities to learn that were characterized by their batch processing, trainer focused, and skills and task oriented teacher work. They also varied from the learning offered by the two mandated reforms that relied primarily on reform documents.

ISD/district wide coverage programs were those generated at the ISD or district level and designed to have wide coverage over teachers in an area. Some ISD/district wide coverage reform programs were generated in response to, but were distinct from, mandatory reforms. For example, the Teach Like a Champion (TLC) workshops guided teachers in a series of trainings about how to translate the CCSS into daily lessons and testable items that the teachers could then use to make instructional decisions. In so doing, the TLC workshops exemplified how reforms were elaborated at separate levels and the potential consequences of this arrangement. TLC shows how ISD or district reforms allowed for elaboration of particular reform ideas (e.g., content) to the exclusion of others (e.g., ambitious new role for students). CITW in Waller's district was the other non-

mandated wide coverage reform. CITW was independent of any mandated reform and the trainings led teachers through a series of 9 instructional practices that were designed to improve teacher and learning. Wide coverage reform programs used behaviorist trainings to secure teacher learning about the reform.

ISD/district select coverage programs were the fourth and final type of reform. Like wide coverage programs, these reforms were generated by the ISD or district but they were similar to state supported programs in that they were not intended for broad coverage. Three of the eight instructional reforms to emerge in this study were select coverage programs: Close and Critical Reading (CCR), Standards Based Grading (SBG), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Select coverage reform programs relied on both behaviorist (CCR) and more situated (SBG, UDL) learning opportunities for teachers.

Reform Pathways

In addition to differences across reforms in how they were elaborated and scaffolded and by whom, reforms differed in the routes through which they arrived in schools. Mandated reforms pursued the traditional bureaucratic routes typically considered by both reformers and researchers. In this route, reforms were generated at the federal or state level; they were then transmitted to districts that, in turn, passed the reform to principals. Finally, the reforms came to teachers, but only after having been handled and shaped at multiple levels.

The pathways through which non-mandated reforms came to schools were more various. Non-mandated reforms could come directly to teachers as FAME did to Poe's teachers. They could bypass the principal and come from the district directly to the teachers as happened with FAME at Middleton and TLC at Poe. They could be principal-

controlled like they were at Waller. Finally, as in the instance of SBG at Middleton, teachers could actively seek out reforms and bring programs into the school directly.

The above findings from earlier chapters establish the diversity in reform type and the reform pathways. However, accounting for the diversity of reforms and their effects (including how teachers made sense of them) remains to be done. Why, for instance, did reforms take on the many forms that they did? More specifically, why did mandatory reforms have both the power of legislation behind them and the most meager opportunities to learn? Why did reforms that provided situated opportunities to learn also require entrepreneurship, social connections, and individual purpose and motivation? To answer these questions one must know something about the nature of the larger system and how the system shaped efforts to improve classroom instruction.

Key Features of the System

The purpose of this section is to cull the findings from this dissertation and combine them with the previous literature in order to construct the characteristics of the system into which instructional reforms were launched. This dissertation set out to understand how teachers made sense of and responded to multiple reform initiatives and, in the midst of data collection and analysis, it ended up answering the question of how reform happens in a system of "overlapping collectivities" (Cusick, 1992, p. 210) characterized by an unusual blend of interdependence and independence. To understand why reforms did not create existential crises for teachers one must know something about the system into which these reforms were deployed.

Interdependence

Interdependence among groups was the first of the system's key features to emerge from the data. Actors throughout the system needed others at different levels and, as Cohen (1982) argued over 30 years ago, policymaking at the federal level increased policymaking throughout the system of fractured governance. But increased reform activity across levels also fostered mutual dependence. For instance, federal and state administrators not only needed one another, they ultimately depended on local ISDs, districts, principals and teachers to enact their reforms. The federal *Race to the Top* program would not have been successful if no states amended their education laws in exchange for a stronger likelihood of receiving federal money. Michigan willingly and quickly changed its laws governing teacher evaluation to include teachers' value-added contribution to student learning and qualitative evaluation of teacher performance.

These changing demands came to districts in the form of state mandates, but the state remained at the mercy of local districts administrators. For reasons specified below, centralized reforms respected traditional arrangements of deference to local control. The state left it to districts to adopt or adapt both rubrics for evaluating teachers and tests that would gauge teacher contribution to student learning. The state deferred to the local control for practical reasons as well. Other than providing general guidance and oversight, the state simply did not have the capability of incentivizing or regulating compliance. The state needed good faith efforts of both local districts and schools if the reform was to be a success.

The state's adoption of the CCSS tells a similar, yet distinct, story. The state adopted the CCSS in response to the criteria the federal government set forth concerning *Race to the*

Top applications. Unlike the new educator evaluation system, the CCSS were already well elaborated when they were enacted through legislation. Yet neither the educator evaluation system nor the CCSS scaffolded teacher learning at the state level and, while the state was relying on districts to provide for substantive opportunities for learning, districts failed to do so.

The two mandatory reforms in this study highlight two important findings regarding interdependence between states and districts. First, state governments are better at generating reform than they are at elaborating and scaffolding them. For this reason, states are likely to rely on ISDs or districts to implement reforms and to provide for teacher learning about them. This was particularly true for reforms that were hastily conceived, considered, and adopted. When there was a breakdown between levels of the system, teacher learning was likely to suffer and the impact of the reform was likely to be modest.

In addition to mandatory reforms, the state had a noteworthy, yet limited, role in promoting voluntary reforms. When state administrators created FAME, a state-supported but voluntary program, they also relied on local support. State administrators generated interest for the reform by contacting districts throughout the state and mobilizing their social networks by calling on particular administrators and teachers. State administrators in charge of the FAME project also developed reform materials and cultivated expertise in a small cadre of ISD and district administrators. They called on volunteers to lead and construct learning teams in their local contexts and to commit to meeting regularly to discuss the reform ideas as they had elaborated them in print reform documents and online resources. Finally, state administrators also provided learning opportunities for teachers

via the beginning of the year program launch. Notably, FAME provided evidence that, given

favorable circumstances, the state could elaborate and scaffold instructional reforms.

Unlike the mandatory reforms described above, FAME enjoyed the intense commitment of

a small group of state administrators and reformers. Furthermore, the program developed

over time and remained on a manageable scale for these administrators to accommodate

initial teacher learning and provide for print and online resources. Finally, the program

ostensibly engaged volunteers at the local level whose commitment to the program was not

only essential, but could also be assumed. The state did not take on a regulatory role but

relied on the good faith efforts of local teams who had voluntarily committed to the

program.

Other non-mandatory reforms were generated at the county or district level and

required little or no interaction with or mutual reliance on the state. ISD and district

administrators often worked in tandem to sponsor reforms and create professional

learning opportunities that would accompany them. While freeing themselves from state

involvement in these endeavors, ISD and district administrators still relied on local interest

and commitment. ISD or district administrators' ambitions varied for these reforms. With

wide coverage reforms, ISD or district administrators expected to reach a substantial

number of teachers in a county or district. TLC and CITW were of this variety. Other

reforms were generated at the ISD or district level and were intended only for select

groups of interested teachers and administrators. SBG, CCR, and UDL were of this type.

Two reforms reached schools through wide coverage programs. For example, in the

TLC program in Poe's district, ISD and district administrators worked together to provide

trainings that promoted teacher learning about elements of the CCSS. Yet, the reform was

distinct enough in that it featured district priorities (in this case getting teachers to use the CCSS to create a series of benchmark tests) that drew teachers' attention away from some other elements critical to the CCSS.

CITW was the other wide coverage reform to emerge during the study. It had no affiliation with any of the instructional reforms endorsed or mandated at the state or federal level. Because the goal of both TLC and CITW was to provide training for every teacher in a large coverage area, both reforms employed behaviorist opportunities to learn. While neither reform relied on the state, both needed to secure the support of local principals who would commit to sending their teachers. Thus, in addition to elaborating the reform and scaffolding the learning opportunities, ISD and district administrators had to ensure that teachers would participate. For instance, administrators in Poe's district called Mr. Delancey as a matter of courtesy before contacting the teachers about TLC and Mr. Delancey quickly obliged the request to send his teachers. Evidence from this study also suggests that administrator-principal contact was more than mere formality. Ms. Shriver sent her teachers to CITW training despite believing that she was under no compulsion to do so. In fact, several of the principals in Waller's district declined the invitation to have their teachers participate.

Other ISD and district generated reforms were not intended for district- or countywide coverage and were thus smaller in scale. These reforms were particularly vulnerable to local interest and commitment as they did not have the expectations of central district administrators behind them. However, as was the case with UDL, CCR, and SBG, administrators needed only a modicum of local interest for the programs to be a success. Therefore, the interdependence relevant to these reforms played out mostly, but

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not entirely, at the site level. Both principals and teachers still relied on ISD or districts to elaborate reforms and scaffold teacher learning but generating interest and commitment was mostly a local affair, especially if the principal was a reform entrepreneur as Ms. Shriver was at Waller. Ms. Shriver needed teachers to invest the time and energy because without it meaningful reform activity would not be possible.

Without principal sponsorship, it was likely that schools would not be involved in these reforms at all. In this way, nonparticipation highlights the interdependence of local actors. Teachers depended on principals to connect them to reform. Without this connection, it was unlikely (but not impossible) for teachers to be connected to reforms, especially programs that were sponsored by ISD and districts but not intended for wide coverage.

Independence

In all the ways listed above, actors at multiple levels relied on one another and reform activity can only be understood by first understanding this mutual reliance. Mutual reliance, however, was only one of the system's key features. One needs also to understand the principle of independence if he or she is to explain how teachers made sense of multiple reform environments.

The principle of independence meant that actors across levels could engage in reform primarily on their own terms. This independence was evident whether reforms were mandatory or voluntary or whether the learning opportunities that accompanied them were behaviorist or situated. Nevertheless, independence played out differently under different reform circumstances and it is important to consider each separately.

It may seem that mandatory reforms were generated centrally and demanded compliance through standardized local behaviors and responses. Yet, even mandatory reforms respected local independence and preserved the tradition of local control. District officials could decide whether they wanted to choose from a list of state-adopted rubrics for evaluating teaching or if they wanted to develop their own. While subject to state oversight, locally developed rubrics still reflected local priorities, commitments, and preferences. Furthermore, state policymakers allowed local districts to determine how they would gauge teachers' "value-added" as the new educator evaluation legislation demanded. As one might expect, respect for the autonomy of different levels resulted in natural variation across schools. While Waller's district purchased a series of national tests to determine teachers' contributions to student learning, both Poe's and Middleton's district further devolved this decision to the site level. Thus, district administrators did not merely implement mandatory reforms, they fundamentally shaped them (Spillane, 1993, 1996, 1997) and increased policymaking at the federal and state level increased the activity and influence of other levels (Cohen, 1982).

Still, district administrators had to be sensitive to the independence of both site principals and teachers. At the school level, principals like Mr. Delancey could borrow state strength to gain legitimacy as an instructional leader but principals could just as easily shape mandated reforms to align with their preferences and in so doing defeat the reform's spirit as Mrs. Novak did. Mrs. Novak wanted an evaluation tool that allowed for parsimonious scoring of the dimensions of teaching that she cared about and through her engagement in the system she was able to achieve this end. Alternatively, principals like Ms. Shriver could embrace the reform's role expectations and perform it remarkably well.

In each of the cases, principals enacted their role in ways that reflected their beliefs, priorities, and the way they understood their circumstances. In other words, the new educator evaluation reform did not threaten administrator independence.

For their part, teachers were not relegated to a passive role in which they were simply observed and evaluated. In each of the three schools, teachers' responses to educator evaluation reform varied and, like the principals in the study, this variation stemmed from teachers beliefs and understandings of their situations. In short, teachers in their local contexts knew how to preserve their independence and the reach of reform and because consequences differed across the three site, responses varied. For instance, Mrs. Reid at Poe completely ignored the new evaluation system. She knew nothing of the evaluation rubric and assented to only minimal compliance of forwarding her teacher-selected evidence of student learning. Since the principal, Mr. Delancey, was struggling for legitimate standing among a divided staff, he had few allies and needed the support of staff members like Mrs. Reid, who willingly gave it.

Teachers at Middleton understood their situations differently. They took the time to become familiar with the rubric for evaluation in case they needed it to contest their evaluation score. The parsimony that Mrs. Novak prized also made the district rubric more vague and, thus, more vulnerable to challenges of subjectivity and alternative interpretation. In other words, the teachers could manipulate the same tool that Mrs. Novak had helped shaped to meet their own purposes. The teachers knew this (the subjectivity of the rubric was repeatedly a topic of conversation in teacher interviews at Middleton) and they were well prepared to argue their cases if need be. They were also confident that they knew the elements of quality instruction better than Mrs. Novak and

could argue successfully against her. Finally, teachers felt that if they were scored poorly and Mrs. Novak would not relent, they could pursue their case at the district level and this would expose Mrs. Novak's incompetence rather than their own.

Even at Waller, teachers' responses to evaluation were largely independent of the reform itself and instead were closely linked with both how teachers understood their situations and with their personal beliefs. For instance, Mrs. Jackson was a probationary teacher and of all the teachers at Waller who participated in the study, Mrs. Jackson was the most concerned about her evaluation score. Rather than using the *Framework for Teaching* to improve her instruction, however, Mrs. Jackson joined the FAME team in order to boost her evaluation score under the section of the rubric that evaluated teachers' "professional responsibilities." Mr. Bridges was not concerned about his own score, but because he was union president he studied the rubric so that he could help fellow teachers when disputes arose around a teacher's score. Mrs. Hall virtually ignored the rubric, but for different reasons than Mrs. Reid at Poe. Mrs. Hall was very active in reform and was one of the most respected teachers on staff. She simply did not find the rubric helpful in improving her practice, and, because she received the highest evaluation score among Waller teachers the year before (when the district piloted their new evaluation system in preparation of the new state mandates), she reasoned that attending to the rubric for the pragmatic reason of securing a better score was unnecessary.

General respect for and deference to actors' independence across levels was also observed for reforms that were not mandatory. However, independence was not absolute. The interdependent nature of the system forbid it. Interdependence and independence could not be simultaneously maintained without compromises. Nevertheless, compromises

left independence more or less intact and, indeed, made independence possible. For example, teachers never questioned the legitimacy of ISD or district officials' attempts to generate reforms nor did they typically resist attending ISD or district workshops when assigned by their principals.

Evidence from the study illustrates how in compromise, independence was preserved. Teachers could be assigned to participate in reforms but had ample freedom to dictate the terms of this participation. For instance, at Poe Ms. Cunningham came to TLC trainings to learn about the Common Core and she attended to what Deb, the trainer, said and completed tasks Deb assigned. At the same training, Mrs. Reid privately derided Deb's presentation and both Mrs. Reid and Mrs. Monahan talked about unrelated school matters when they were supposed to be working their way through revising a benchmark exam. At Waller, Mrs. Jackson took notes at CITW trainings and tried many of the strategies she learned in her classroom while many of her colleagues symbolically boycotted the trainings by refusing to engage in activities or enact any of the strategies upon returning to their schools.

Because of this discretion, professional development trainers had good reason to be wary of teachers. When given a chance, teachers regularly talked about summer vacation plans, checked their cell phones, went on extended bathroom breaks, or dismissed assigned tasks. In response, trainers treated teachers like school children. They monitored group work, criticized teachers for not listening, and attempted to redirect teachers from their own interests to those of the training and the trainer. While informants sometimes complained about this treatment, no one suggested that the arrangement was unusual or exceedingly unpleasant. Teachers and trainers both knew that their mutual connection

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was ephemeral. All the parties involved seemed either to ignore or deal lightly with the tensions that emerged during training sessions and at the end of the day everyone went his or her separate way.

Aside from mild in-the-moment admonitions, trainers were wise not to censure teachers or threaten their independence or discretion. When professional development providers attempted to punish teachers, trouble ensued, as it did at Waller's CITW trainings. CITW trainers punished teachers by kicking out those who held side conversations during training sessions and asking them not to return, as happened to Mrs. Hall. Her case illustrates the consequences of the delicate arrangement of interdependence and independence across levels.

Notably, the system of overlapping constituencies that recognized mutual reliance and independence was incapable of effectively resolving disputes when they arose. The best and most often pursued course of action when trouble emerged was to ignore difficulties and continue conducting business as usual. For instance, Mrs. Hall wanted to address the accusations made against her, but when she approached Ms. Shriver about contacting the trainers to discuss what had transpired, Ms. Shriver suggested Mrs. Hall forgo further contact and forget the entire episode. Mrs. Hall did as Ms. Shriver advised and neither she nor Ms. Shriver heard anything further about it. The district did not contact Ms. Shriver or Mrs. Hall about the incident nor did either have any further interaction with the trainers. It was as if the event had never happened. Mrs. Hall's hurt feelings were the only vestiges of trouble. The system simply had no way of handling breaches of decorum and the whole thing was forgotten.

This is not to say that trouble did not resurface. When resistance to CITW trainings mounted, trainers accused teachers of urinating on training materials and trying to flush the materials down the toilet. Rumors, accusations, and counter accusations abounded. Pressed to do something, the district investigated yet quickly abandoned the effort and any investigative findings were never disclosed. Meanwhile, the program persisted. No training sessions were canceled. No additional teachers were expelled. No reprimands were forthcoming. And even though there was a general dissatisfaction among teachers that Ms. Shriver shared, she planned to send teachers to the CITW training again the following year and teachers were either resigned to or cautiously optimistic about attending.

Limited evidence from this study suggests that this pattern of respect for independence held even when the principals were assigned to professional development. For example, Waller's district was trying to standardized scores on the new teacher evaluation system across its schools and it conducted trainings to achieve this end. District administers familiarized principals with the *Framework for Teaching* and then led them in classroom walkthroughs at select schools in the district. Ms. Shriver embraced the new educator evaluation system but she had no reason to expect the other district principals to share this enthusiasm. While doing walkthroughs she reported that, when she asked questions and introduced problems, she ran afoul of her colleagues who simply wanted to get through the exercise. Ms. Shriver grew more and more dissatisfied by what she saw as a wasted opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions about teaching and learning (although she did achieve a modicum of success in pursuit as described in Chapter 6). Nevertheless, she was resigned to voicing her displeasure with her colleagues' apathy to a district administrator and during research interviews.

In several cases, then, careful and quietly maintained boundaries that respected individual independence became noisy if disturbed and, since there was no easy way to the system to respond, difficulties were quickly sundered and forgotten. In other cases, frustrations could be voiced, but the active engagement and good faith efforts of others could not be compelled.

The principle of independence was particularly important with voluntary reforms that relied on situated teacher learning (e.g., FAME, UDL, SBG). Situated learning placed the burden for learning almost entirely on teachers to take control of their own learning. For reforms with situated learning to be successful, then, a core group of teachers needed to be enthusiastic and committed. For this reason, assignment to reforms with situated learning was impractical and only employed in very particular situations (see chapter 6).

The compromises evident in enrolling teachers in reforms without their consent (mandated reforms) or assigning teachers to attend trainings (all wide coverage and some select coverage reforms) receded into the background. Indeed, with reforms like FAME that situated teacher learning in local contexts, individual autonomy held sway.

The first and most obvious challenge was involving teachers in the first place. As was demonstrated in Chapters 6 and 7, only a minority of teachers participated in situated learning of any kind. Not wanting to be involved in FAME, UDL, or SBG constituted reason enough not to participate. While the reasons that teachers gave for joining the FAME program were idiosyncratic and specific to their understanding of their situation, no teacher suggested that he or she was compelled to join.

The primacy of independence in the realm of voluntary reforms with situated learning is also illustrated by the number of teachers whose commitment to FAME

weakened over the course of the year without any apparent consequences. Involvement was contingent on the teacher not having something more pressing to do. Mr. Brooks' commitment to FAME faltered before the Poe learning team met for the first time. He never attended a single meeting and the team's leader, Ms. Dixon, stopped referring to Mr. Brooks as a member of the team halfway through the year. Mrs. Jackson, who by her own admission was only on the team for the "technical" reason of earning a higher evaluation score, never dropped from the team entirely, but she did stop attending meetings in the spring when she started coaching soccer. Mrs. Curtis often had meetings with the high school foreign language teachers that prevented her from attending FAME meetings. Mr. Bridges had union business.

When a member of the team dropped entirely or simply did not attend a meeting, no one spoke of this as noteworthy or alarming. Rather, failure to attend was just a routine fact of life that teams like these often had to deal with. Nor did any sanction befall teachers whose commitment to FAME wavered or lapsed completely. Attendance at meetings was solely a matter of one's personal preference and nonattendance was not subject to punishment or censure. If learning team coaches had difficulty assembling a critical mass for a particular meeting date, the meeting was canceled. Teachers were not expected to reschedule other commitments and compelled to attend FAME meetings. In each of the three cases learning team coaches scheduled meetings entirely around teachers schedules. Even so, meeting attendance was sporadic, but the meetings went on provided that a critical mass of people could attend.

Summary

The system as I have described it was characterized by both interdependence and independence. In order for reforms to be launched, diffused, and implemented, actors throughout the system needed to be active and they also depended on the activity of others at different levels. Independence accompanied this mutual reliance as the prerogatives of different individuals and groups were maintained while reforms made their way through the system. Mandated reforms stressed the existing balance between interdependence and independence most, but these reforms were constructed with the importance of individual discretion in mind or actors quickly re-established these boundaries in practice. But at each of the three schools in the study, district administrators, principals, and teachers quickly reached mutually agreeable solutions that preserved independence among actors, even if they did require some compromise. Indeed, the flexibility of the system to handle demands of this sort was remarkable.

The system was far less able to handle intrusions into independence not covered by compromises. Even with compromises, each group's influence over other groups had limits, and when these limits were threatened the system actors faced problems that they had no means of resolving. The typical solution in this situation was to retreat back to one's own fiefdom and resume business as usual where respect for individual and group autonomy held sway.

The consequences of the system are paramount. As we have seen in the sections above and as will be articulated more fully in the next section, interdependence and independence ensured that reforms did not push in on unwilling teachers too severely and, if pressed, teachers could manipulate reforms so that they were participating on their own

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terms. Furthermore, teachers could choose not to participate at all in non-mandatory reforms.

The Consequences of Interdependence and Independence on Instructional Reform

Interdependence and independence affected the way reform activity was generated and how people organized around it. Much has been said in the preceding pages about how the system of interdependence and independence combined to affect mandatory reforms. This account would be familiar to policy researchers (e.g., Ball, 1990; Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Cohen, 1982, 1990; Lipsky, 1980; McLaughlin, 1976; Spillane, 2006; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977). Namely, centralized reform activity generates activity from multiple levels and reforms are continuously shaped as they make their way from the statehouse to the schoolhouse.

While over the past four decades researchers have conducted a great deal of research on the phenomenon of mandatory instructional reforms, less is known about non mandatory reforms and how multiple-reform environments affect principals and teachers. In effort to describe these environments, I detailed the key elements of both the reforms themselves and the system of "overlapping constituencies" (Cusick, 1992) that would help explain the social organization that formed around reforms and ultimately shaped how teachers made sense of and responded to multiple reforms. In this section, I explore the consequences of the multiple reform environment in a larger system characterized by interdependence and independence.

Reforms, particularly non-mandated reforms, simply could not happen without the active participation and commitment of actors at several different levels of the system. In a system of interdependence and independence this was achieved through reform

entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs could come at any level of the system but they had to have the necessary social connections to make a reform happen. The state administrator created the FAME program and used her social contacts at Poe to secure their participation in the program. In turn, Ms. Dixon reached out to her small group of close contacts and encouraged them to participate. A very similar story could be told at Middleton. The superintendent contacted Mrs. Herman directly because he knew that she was generally interested in reform. For her part, Mrs. Herman was free to politely dismiss the invitation but because of her own interest she submitted an application to the state to participate and then set about constructing her team of close colleagues.

The case of Waller is the most illustrative. At Waller, all reforms came through Ms. Shriver. Ms. Shriver was the study's most remarkable reform entrepreneur as she was most active in connecting to reforms and then building support for them. In Ms. Shriver's case we see the differences between reforms with behaviorist learning opportunities and those with situated opportunities. Ms. Shriver typically assigned teachers to attend reforms with behaviorist learning opportunities and teachers did not object to this assignment (a similar pattern held at both Poe and Middleton). However, reforms with situated learning were another matter. Situated learning placed teachers into small groups and demanded that teachers take an important role in constructing their own learning.

For reforms with situated learning, reform entrepreneurs with social contacts were necessary, but not sufficient. Because the system allowed for widespread independence, individual actors had to have their own compelling reasons to participate. Forced participation in situated learning was not subject to compromise.

These features of the system are by now familiar, but what were the consequences of this arrangement? First, situated learning was unequally distributed among staff. This was particularly true at Waller. Ms. Shriver used a blend of solicitation and voluntary call to build support for reforms with situated learning. When Ms. Shriver solicited participation she did so by asking the teachers who she felt were the most capable and the most enthusiastic about reform. When teachers responded to her general call for participation, they were also generally the teachers who Ms. Shriver felt were most able and committed.

Likewise, Mrs. Herman at Middleton put her team together by approaching her peers who were of like mind about reform and the importance of collaboration. At Poe, Ms. Dixon's social contacts and interests in reform were much more modest than either Ms. Shriver's or Mrs. Herman's, but her approach to constructing a team was similar. She reached out to the few members on staff who she felt would be interested. In sum, when teachers learned in situated contexts in this study, they were surrounded by closely associated, like-minded peers.

This picture of formal activity surrounding reform differs sharply from previous accounts. For instance, Coburn (2001) argued that when teachers collaborated about reforms in formal groups, the groups themselves were heterogeneous and in these meetings teachers tended to talk about matters that turned teachers' focus from intense discussions about teaching and learning because the teachers had trouble talking across their differences. Teachers had to employ their informal personal networks to discuss instruction with homogeneous colleagues. Coburn's account is likely specific to mandatory reforms at the elementary school level that have dominated researcher interests. Yet, as we have seen, non-mandatory reforms were not organized in this way. Teachers participating

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in situated learning of non-mandatory reforms were free to associate with whom they chose and formal teams built up around colleagues with similar interests and perspectives on instructional improvement.

This research also offers a contrast to Coburn's (2001) findings that when teachers talk with like-minded colleagues their conversations tended to be "in-facing" and centered on issues of instruction. However, this research demonstrates how teachers work in formal teams was not only typically homogeneous, the conversations they had stemmed from the larger interests of the group. Consequently, conversations at Waller and Middleton were tightly focused on formative assessment principles and the enactment of formative assessment practices. In contrast, Poe's team was less disposed to do this and they spent their time on what Coburn termed "out-facing" conversations. Homogenously grouped teachers were no guarantee against unfocused collaboration.

Because teams formed the way they did in response to the larger system, expertise, interest, and commitment became concentrated leaving no clear path to scaling up a reform that situated teacher learning in local contexts. Splitting up learning teams and thereby dividing expertise around which other subsequent groups could form might be one way to increase a reform's reach. However, it does not appear that this was a natural solution. Although the FAME program had been at Waller, Middleton, and Poe for many years, it had not expanded and become more influential over time. The FAME program satisfied those who were reform seekers and wanted an experience working closely with colleagues but it did not seem to provoke wider interest in this type of work. And because the system honored individual independence especially in matters of situated learning experiences, teachers were free not to participate.

Situated learning requires both expertise and enthusiasm, but in a system marked by interdependence and independence it is unclear how either can be generated where it does not currently exist. It is clear that enthusiasm cultivates expertise in the current system as independent actors accrue learning opportunities congruent with their preferences and over time the most ingenious and dedicated teachers develop considerable knowledge about reforms. In other words, teachers do learn from these experiences, but how to cultivate enthusiasm that would propel such learning remains puzzling.

Finally, because teachers were free to participate they were also free to drop from participation in reforms with situated learning at any time. In reforms with behaviorist learning opportunities, teachers were generally assigned to attend during contracted school time and they consented to go. However, their commitment to the workshops differed and depended on their personal preferences. Teachers were essentially enrolled in mandatory reforms, but they could manipulate the nature of this participation and over time actors across levels settled on mutually agreeable compromises. Taking in the system's affect on these three types of reforms explains why multiple reform environments did not create crises for teachers. Teachers were not often coerced into reform participation and, when they were, they could engage with reforms on their own terms. When reforms were not mandated, teachers had even wider discretion. They could treat the reform as they would a mandated reform and shape it to meet their preferences or they could resist the reform entirely and choose not to participate.

Ultimately, teachers in the study did not see reforms as mandates that they had to satisfy, but rather as a set of sometimes helpful and sometimes burdensome activities that

rested on the periphery of their central concerns. With the system the way it is, it is

difficult to imagine how it could have been otherwise.

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