EXPLORING THE DECISION BY STATES TO APPLY: ROUND 2 OF THE RACE TO THE TOP PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

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The Race to the Top (RT3) Program was an effort by the federal government to incentivize policy changes at the state level in exchange for the possibility of increased funds. This study places RT3 in the context of educational federalism, and evaluates why state policymakers decided to apply, or not, in round two of the competition. Framing the study in the theory of borrowing strength, the study explores the issues of capacity and policy momentum in four states that varied in the RT3 decisions they made. The study concludes that state policymakers viewed RT3 as a way to increase capacity, and policy momentum, but that they questioned the long term costs for adopting many of the policy changes. The study also explores how RT3 may influence educational federalism in the future.

To Jenny: my love.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout American history, the relationship between the local, state and federal government has been complex. Elected officials at each level seek to take advantage of politically popular initiatives regardless of the structural and historical traditions (Cohen-Vogel & McLendon, 2009; Gerston, 2007; Kingdon, 1995). Arguments about the appropriate role of the federal government extend to America's earliest days as a nation with some visioning the federal role as an unifying entity, while others supported limiting the federal role to national security allowing more state discretion and variation (Lowi, 1996; Lunch, 2001; Manna, 2007; Cohen & Moffitt, 2009;). With no empirical "right answer" to the proper role of the federal government in education, it has been, and continues to be, debated and reconfigured. However, for the vast majority of US history, education has been seen as a state issue (Reese, 2005; Manna, 2007; Sunderman & Kim, 2007; Mehta, 2013). Moreover, states historically delegated this responsibility to local authorities (Manna, 2007; Mehta, 2013). Thus, until recently, the vast majority of scholars of education governance focused on the relationship between state and local leaders. However, the federal government has recently expanded its role in educational policy.

The Obama Administration, for example, has not only continued the expansion of the role of the federal government in educational policy, it has altered the dynamics between levels of government (Manna, 2011). As Secretary of Education Arne Duncan indicated on many occasions, RT3 shifted the historic emphasis of the federal government from compliance to incentives, and the results have been far-reaching policy changes (Duncan, 2009). When announcing the program, Secretary Duncan remarked

that the federal government for the first time 'crossed an important threshold' in education policy, and that 'the perfect storm of reform allowed the federal government to expand in ways it never had before' (Duncan, 2009). RT3 established a state grant program to encourage educational reform. In exchange for significant federal dollars, states had to show evidence of, or the potential for, a series of educational policy initiatives. In order to qualify, states had to provide evidence that they were enacting specific reforms in the following areas: teacher evaluation, certification, compensation, measuring student growth, charter schools, common core standards, and school improvement (Learning Point, 2010).

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was passed in 2009 as the major federal effort to improve the nation's economy during the Great Recession. The total allocation for the ARRA was $787 billion, and included the Race to the Top program. The program was announced in the summer of 2009, and rolled out in three distinct 'rounds' (Manna & Ryan, 2011). States were invited to apply, with round one application due in January of 2010, round two applications due in June of 2010. Round three was unique, as only finalists in round two were invited to apply in the final round. As a result, all states really only had two opportunities to apply or not to RT3. In total, two states (Tennessee and Delaware) earned awards in round one, and ten states won round two grants., and seven states won awards in round three.

RT3, at its core, took an experimental approach that changed the way the federal and state governments interact around education policy issues. Rather than mandating that educational policy for states, like NCLB, RT3 offers states the choice on whether to apply. In this regard, the federal government relies on the appeal of federal funds and the

policies themselves to attract states to participate. Additionally, RT3 moves the federal government from a compliance role, where all states are treated equal under the law, to an incentive structure. The incentive structure creates competition between the states for funding, and provides funding for states at different levels.

The structure of RT3 fundamentally changed the interactions regarding education between the state and federal governments. Since the program was optional, the federal government needed to provide substantial funding to entice states to participate. While there was initial enthusiasm on the part of states to apply for RT3 funds, there was a significant decline in participation from round one to round two. Why are some states cooperating with and others rejecting this new relationship? As educational experts continue to cite US mediocre performance on international assessments (Zhao, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010), the relationships between the federal and state governments have important ramifications for future educational policy options. Understanding how state policymakers interpreted the specific components of RT3 could serve as an important lesson for policymakers looking to RT3 as a model for future programs.

This study is not designed to explore the effectiveness of the various policy areas within RT3. While researchers have explored education standards (Schmidt & McKnight, 1995), school accountability (Booher-Jennings, 2005), teacher evaluations (Harris, 2011), teacher compensation (Odden & Picus, 2008), and charter schools (Miron & Nelson, 2002; Zimmer et al, 2003), researchers have not explored how state policymakers reacted to RT3. As the major educational policy for the Obama Administration, and a new policy structure that places the emphasis on incentives, allowing states to determine if they want

to participate, RT3 provides a unique and important opportunity to explore the current and future political dynamics of federalism.

To shed light on changing nature of educational federalism and how state policymakers interpret federal policy, this study examines the decision, by state policy makers, to apply in round two of RT3 through case studies of four state governments that made different application choices. The goal is to analyze the reasoning states used to evaluate RT3. Put simply, how did state education leaders decide if it was worth it to apply? Did the criteria they used to make the decision vary across states? Was RT3 seen as a way to garner additional finances, expand policy, or advance a political agenda?

The organizational structure of this paper flows in much the same way as the study itself. First, background information and literature on educational federalism will provide context and framing for the work. Next, three specific hypotheses are described about why states may decide to apply, or not, are drawn from the literature. The methods section outlines the analyses, coding and case selection that was used throughout the study. Background information further situates each case within the political, financial, and policy context during the RT3 deliberations. Next, there are chapters for each major explanation (political, financial, and policy) where data across states is brought together to analyze the relationship between the state and federal government. For each state, a conclusion section provides a concrete argument on why they participated or not in RT3. Lastly, the paper explores potential future research, how this work adds to the literature, and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 1: Background

Federalism is a broad term that refers to the tension between various levels of government and is a central component of the U.S. political system (Gerston, 2007; Manna, 2007). Early support traces back to *The Federalist Papers*, where James Madison (1788) wrote, "The different governments will control each other, at the same time that each will be controlled by itself" (pg. 320). The design of the federal system was intended to balance state and national interests, and to limit centralization of power in response to the British system. A strong tenet of the leaders of the American Revolution was that centralization of power led to corruption and lack of citizen voice (Lunch, 2001). As a result, the 10th Amendment was enacted to limit the power of the national government to only those specified in the Constitution, with education being among those items left to states to decide (Manna, 2005; Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). The founders viewed federalism as a way to limit the consolidation of power by individuals or level of government (Madison, 1788; Gerston, 2007; Manna, 2007). This philosophical belief in a federalist system remains fundamental to the national narrative and political ethos.

When Horace Mann set up the first common schools in the 1840's, local government controlled school funding and governance. (Reese, 2005; Labaree, 2010). Since education was left out of the United States Constitution, the federal government did not challenge this development. "From the very beginning, control of the common schools was radically localized. Decisions about funding, hiring and curriculum rested in the hands of the elected (or sometimes appointed) board of a local school district …" (Labaree, 2010, p. 69). Education governance continued this way for over 100 years.

Beginning in the 1950s, the federal government increased involvement in education issues, mostly around issues related to equity and support for minority groups. This marked the beginning of changing roles for the federal, state and local governments in education issues. Over the next 60 years, there have been several key events that altered governmental relationships.

With the passage of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, the federal government expanded its role in education policy. Albeit small and primarily focused on supplemental funds for programs targeting children living in poverty, the passage of the ESEA is viewed as the beginning of the federal government using funds to direct national education policy (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). In this era, the federal government relied on setting broad guidelines for states and districts to meet, in order to secure funding. Money was divided up between nearly every district nationally. In exchange, districts were required to account for how the money was spent. However, districts were not required to show results for these programs beyond merely accounting and reporting how the money was spent (Reese, 2005; Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). In this regard, districts and states did not concern themselves with comparing with other states and districts.

The federal role in education began to grow significantly during the 1990s and 2000s. As American schools struggled in international comparisons, politicians at all levels passed legislation to improve student performance (Schmidt & McKnight, 1995; Manna, 2011). Because performance on these international comparisons was increasingly tied to economic productivity and global competition, state and national leaders who previously had little to no role in education policy entered the education policy arena

(Schmidt & McKnight, 1995; Zhao, 2009; Ravitch, 2010). In particular, presidents worked to expand the federal influence through a series of unprecedented programs designed to improve schools (Manna, 2007; Cohen-Vogel & McLendon, 2009). President George W. Bush continued the momentum from the previous two administrations in an effort to further influence educational policy, mainly through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. NCLB required states to annually test students in grades three through eight in reading and mathematics, allowed for more spending flexibility with Title I funds, and massively expanded the amount of information that school districts were required to track and report (Manna, 2007). Major reporting requirements included more information about teacher characteristics, student performance on standardized test, and student demographic characteristics (Sunderman & Kim, 2007).

To place this study -- and RT3 -- into the historical context of educational federalism, the following section provides information and analyses on key turning points in the relationship between the federal and state government. It also specifies the mechanism of action that the federal government used within each era to influence state policy.

Protection of Students' Rights

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s fought for racial equality in the United States. One specific strategy challenged the "separate but equal" Supreme Court precedent established in the *Plessey v. Fergusson* (1896) case as a violation of the equal protection clause in the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution (Reese, 2005). In the landmark *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* case (1954), the Supreme Court ruled that "separate is inherently unequal" (Reese, 2005). The Brown case

was a class action lawsuit, originally filed in 1951, which denounced the city of Topeka's policy of racial segregation in schools. The federal government intervened directly in communities that rejected the ruling. In extreme circumstances, this meant deploying the National Guard to physically protect African American students from angry mobs (Lunch, 2001; Reese, 2005). No longer could local communities have exclusive control over schools. The federal government made a decision to overrule local control to ensure that each student was treated equally under the federal law. This development fundamentally changed the philosophical paradigm of the federal government's involvement in schools, opening the door for much more federal presence in the future. The federal government, then, had changed its role to include the protection of students' individual rights.

Targeted Funding for Underserved Students

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was another turning point that changed the relationship between the national, state and local governments. The ESEA was passed as part of the broader "Great Society" program that President Lyndon Johnson initiated as a central part of his domestic agenda (Reese, 2005; Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Title I, passed in 1965 as a central component of the ESEA, expanded the role of the federal government financing schools. Initially a program that worked to help students living in poverty in a largely decentralized system, ESEA has transformed into an omnibus bill that asserts incredible power and influence (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Local school districts received Title I grants to based on the number of students from families with incomes below the federal poverty level (Odden & Picus, 2008; Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Title I provides insight into the historic divide between national and state

authority. "America's deep ideological divisions over state and federal authority were written into Title I; the legislation itself contained large political and structural barriers to federal influence on how Title I would be used" (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009, p. 3). As part of the political compromise written into the original Title I language, all states would receive substantial money from the federal government without being held directly accountable for producing student outcomes. Approximately $14.5 billion was allocated for the Title I program in the 2012 fiscal year (US Department of Education, 2012). Funds were to be used to supplement, not supplant current educational programs. As a result, districts focused on accounting for Title I funding rather than making sure that the funds were producing academic results (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009).

During this same period, legislation at the federal level also served to protect other groups of historically disadvantaged students. For example, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) of 1975 provided federal funds to improve the schooling for a specific demographic of students (Gordon, 2008). Later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), this law allocated money to states to improve the education of students with physical and mental disabilities. However, IDEA goes beyond mandating states to change behavior, and requires that each state provide a "free and appropriate public education" in the "least restrictive environment" to all children (Gordon, 2008). Prior to the passage of the initial law in 1975, the US Department of Education (USDOE) spent just 3.7 percent of its elementary and secondary education budget on special education. By 2005, this percentage grew to 27.1 percent. The federal government continues to increase funding for IDEA over time, allocating approximately $12 billion in FY12 (USDOE, 2012). The mechanism for

change then, was the federal government mandating that districts adhere to specific principles for the education of all students.

ESEA and IDEA changed the relationship between the various levels of government by substantially increasing the amount of federal funding to schools. Prior to ESEA, the overwhelming majority of education funding came from local taxes (Odden & Picus, 2008). As a result, vast disparities emerged between wealthy and poor districts. While ESEA's initial intent was to provide targeted programs for poor children, that mission evolved over the years. With each reauthorization of ESEA (roughly every eight years), Congress has molded the law to achieve different ends. The law grew from approximately six titles and a dozen programs in 1965 to 13 titles and over 100 program authorizations at the end of the 1970s (Manna, 2007). Two major changes to ESEA were the 1994 reauthorization, which led to several accounting changes to the Title I allocation formula, and the re-authorization of 2001 more commonly referred to as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which mandated testing in math and language arts for students in 3rd through 8th grade, and is discussed in depth below.

The Call for Increased Rigor in Schools

A Nation At Risk increased fears that U.S. students were falling behind their international peers in academic performance. The report, released in 1983, was the product of the National Commission of Excellence in Education (NCEE), a group created by then Secretary of Education Terrel Bell. *A Nation At Risk* argued that the U.S. educational system lacked rigor and needed to change dramatically, offering up a very negative analysis of American schools, and stressing the declining quality in schools over time (Manna, 2009). This message grew in prominence, and became an important

political symbol and tool for the Reagan Administration to advocate change in schools nationwide. This report led to increased fears that the U.S. needed to change the structure of the educational system or face dire consequences internationally. The federal government made the case that the US educational system performance influenced national security to justify an increased federal role in schools. Also, the lack of faith in the educational system led to concerns about the future of the American economy. While the message was pessimistic regarding the current state of affairs, it also argued that this declining trend could be reversed (Vinovskis, 2009). This strengthened the rationale for many to call on increasing the rigor of public schools nationwide.

While *A Nation At Risk* did not directly lead to an increase in the financial commitment by the federal government in education, it established the argument for why education mattered at the national level. Every president since the report was written has used arguments from the report that the US is falling behind internationally and that threatens US national security and economic superiority (Reese, 2005; Manna, 2009).

From Compliance to Performance Based Federalism

For decades, the federal government mainly allocated educational funds categorically. This led to relationships with states that were heavily compliance-driven. States were required to provide evidence that money was spent in the appropriate way, but were not held accountable for the educational outcomes. As long as districts could provide evidence that the money was being spent in the appropriate areas, the federal government seemed to be satisfied (Wong, 2008): "This categorical federalism tended to focus on the level of resources, regulatory safeguards, and other 'inputs' to meet the learning challenges of special-needs students" (p. 2).

The change from this categorical, or compliance-driven, federalism to one that is performance based began in 1994 with congressional approval for the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA). Performance-based federalism is a broad term that refers to the federal government focusing on educational outcomes at the state level. A key component of IASA aimed to monitor schools that persistently failed to meet state proficiency standards. The state standards movement helped states develop capacity by encouraging states to develop common learning objectives at the state level. As a result, states became increasingly able to compare performance across schools (Manna, 2007). While IASA did not provide consequences for failing to meet these standards in the 1990s, it did set the stage for NCLB to set stringent consequences years later (Wong, 2008).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 fundamentally altered the relationship between the national, state, and local government. While technically an extension of the existing ESEA, it further expanded the federal role in American education. The new relationships between the federal, state and local officials under the law have contributed to a growing conflict over implementation. The policy changes in ESEA included an emphasis on equal educational outcomes, the imposition of timelines for improving student achievement, the addition of subgroup accountability, the mandating of specific sanctions for schools not performing well that relies on exit strategies or the transfer of money away from public schools, the expansion of testing requirements to all students in public schools, and the definition of proficiency as test scores in reading and math (Sunderman & Kim, 2007).

Most notably, NCLB increased federal accountability standards and regulations, but without support mechanisms (Sunderman & Kim, 2007). This led to three factors that varied substantially across states that contributed to the growing dissatisfaction with the law including: the Bush Administration's approach to federalism, the states' limited capacity to meet the new requirements, and the fiscal constraints facing state governments. The Bush Administration is noted for dramatically changing educational federalism, as the federal government mandated many new educational practices through NCLB, including mandated testing for all students in grades 3-8 in reading and mathematics (Reese, 2005). These factors contributed to a conflict between state and federal officials, leading to a decrease in state commitment to the law, and further complicating implementation efforts (Sunderman & Kim, 2007).

NCLB cemented the shift from compliance-driven to performance-based federalism. By setting clear targets, criteria for who should be tested, and standards for adequate yearly progress (AYP), NCLB effectively created a new paradigm with regards to the relationship between the federal and state and local governments (Wong, 2008). The federal role expanded into an area in which states had played a dominant role, the new politics of school accountability (Wong, 2008). NCLB mandated states to adhere to the new laws, and threatened to remove federal funding if states decided to not comply.

Competitive Funding

Race to the Top represents the most recent shift in educational policy at the federal level, one from standard block grants to a competitive model. While RT3 is not the first federal program aimed at influencing state and local education policy, it breaks from previous federal initiatives in important ways that have increased its influence and

reach. These changes raise questions about the new balance between federal, state, and local influence in education policy issues. There are four important ways that RT3 breaks from previous federal funding initiatives.

RT3 departs from previous federal programs by allocating funds to only a small portion of applicant states. In the traditional political model, money is dispersed broadly to gain the support from a wide range of Congressional Districts (Kingdon, 1995; Lunch, 2001). RT3 rewarded a small number of states with a high percentage of the program funds (USDOE, 2010). By creating clear winners and losers, the federal government established a highly stratified funding system. It is likely that this stratification may influence the relationship between the state and federal government moving forward. Some evidence suggests that lower performance on national assessments was correlated with a lower chance of receiving RT3 funding (Manna, 2011; McGuinn, 2012; Shelley, 2012). As a result, states that have historically lower educational achievement relative to others may not cooperate with the federal government in the future, if they continually fail to receive grant money (like RT3).

Return on investment is another important component of RT3. The expectation from the federal government of states that were awarded funds is that they will be able to produce extensive reports each year of the grant on the progress of the state's implementation plan (USDOE, 2010). Since the grants are typically four-year awards, states must demonstrate significant progress according to the grant application in order to continue to receive funding each year. (USDOE, 2010). This return on investment component goes much further than federal reporting guidelines from previous programs, which relied mostly on general accounting for how money was spent on an annual basis.

Some states were at a significant disadvantage to qualify for funds due to the breadth and timing of the application requirements (Nicholson-Crotty & Staley, 2012). Unlike previous federal programs that provided almost universal access to supplemental funds to all states to ensure compliance, RT3 placed some states -- which had already begun the process of implementing reforms including statewide data systems, teacher evaluation systems, and/or merit pay -- at a significant advantage. The new emphasis on competition and return on investment put a premium on capacity. While capacity has always been important for program implementation and success, this structure favored states with higher capacity prior to the announcement of RT3 (Nicholson-Crotty and Staley, 2012). The federal government used policy leverage and momentum developed at the state level to advance similar reforms at the national level and gain legitimacy for their efforts (Manna, 2007). Beyond capacity, the short timeline for applications led to difficulties for states with legislatures that did not meet full time. As a result, some states did not have an opportunity to pass laws directly related to increasing the probability of getting RT3 funds. For a complete list of areas included in RT3, see table 11 in the appendix.

RT3 has a large incentive structure. Placed within the context of the worst national economy since the Great Depression, RT3 provided the possibility of funds to states experiencing large budget shortfalls. In 2010 in Michigan, for example, the state economy contracted 2.9% in 2009, and another 0.7% in 2010 (Olson, et al., 2010). Forty-four states in all had either budget shortfalls in fiscal year 2009 or 2010 (Center on Budget Priorities, 2010). By allocating over $4 billion to the RT3, the federal government incentivized various reforms. The initial competition announcement did not

specify the amount that each state would win, which left open the possibility of a state 'winning' a large portion of the funds. This turned out to be the reality, as Tennessee was awarded approximately $500 million in round one (Hamilton, 2010). In exchange for specific educational reform policies, states could receive substantial funds. While these funds were not designed to backfill budget shortfalls at the state level, many state educational officials viewed RT3 as a way of offsetting state budget cuts (Shelley, 2012). RT3, then, presents a unique opportunity to explore how incentives influence the relationship between the state and federal government.

The federal government moved away from the traditional model of allocating funds (block grants) for specific programs toward the competitive grant model (Collins & Gerber, 2006). While older policy initiatives such as IDEA and Title I continue to utilize this traditional model, which helps broaden the political appeal to gain momentum for a policy, a series of new programs have taken a different approach. The RT3 competition does not allocate funds to all, or even a majority of districts/states that qualify. This has created not only a difference in federal funding between states, but clear winners and losers for each policy. RT3 moved away from mandating certain policies by allowing for state officials to decide on whether to apply to the competition or not. Instead, RT3 relied on incentivizing reform with a large sum of money ($4.35 billion).

Applications were reviewed by a group of academics, federal state department of education officials, and other policy experts, who used a 500-point rubric to score each application (McGuinn, 2012). Broad categories for the scoring rubric included great teachers and leaders, state success factors, standards and assessments, general selection

criteria, turning around the lowest achieving schools, data systems to support instruction and prioritization of STEM education.

RT3 represents a major shift in the direction of educational policy at the federal level, yet there is limited knowledge on how state officials interpreted the competitive nature of the program. Current research focuses on questions around the 'which' states won grants, and 'how' RT3 was distributed. For example, some have examined the probability of success within the RT3 application of a state deciding to apply to RT3 (Manna & Ryan, 2011). Others have studied which specific policy changes occurred at the state level in response to RT3. Additionally, researchers have analyzed the implementation of RT3 and have compared RT3 to previous reforms in the 1970s (Shelley, 2012; Venters, et al., 2012; Vergari, 2012). However, no study has analyzed state decision makers rationale for applying to RT3 (Manna & Ryan, 2011; Koppich & Esch, 2012; McGuinn, 2012; Shelley, 2012; Superfine, et al., 2012). Beyond merely accounting for variables that increased the probability of success throughout the process, what was the rationale for state policy makers as they weighed the decision to apply to RT3? With the goal of better understanding the relationship between the state and federal government, this study seeks to provide extensive and specific data on why states applied for RT3 or not.

The study examines three explanations (the financial, political and policy) for why states chose to participate in RT3. These explanations are rooted in theoretical framework from educational federalism. Without a deep understanding about how decision makers at the state level came to understand and act on messages from the federal government, we may misinterpret state cooperation, or lack thereof. As the

federal government looks to continue programs like RT3 in the future, understanding the rationale that state policymakers used will help predict the reaction to the future federal efforts.

CHAPTER 2: Competing Influences on Decision Making

There are multiple explanations for why state decision makers supported, or opposed, applying in round two of RT3. One clear possibility is that decision makers weighed the financial costs and benefits of applying (Manna & Ryan, 2011; McGuinn, 2012). This financial explanation presupposes that decision makers worked through the application and implementation of the RT3 program, and prioritized the financial calculations over other considerations. In this regard, RT3 may have been viewed as a way to increase capacity to pay for existing programs or policies that already existed at the state level. Possible costs of applying for a state include personnel and infrastructure costs of component prerequisites for RT3, as well as implementation costs associated with changes in standards, data systems, testing, and teacher preparation programs (McGuinn, 2012). There were also many possible financial benefits that decision makers may have included in the decision, including increasing federal funding, additional funds during a state budget shortfall, and/or the ability to attract additional funds from other external sources (mainly foundations). This hypothesis anticipates that states would need increased capacity for all the required policy changes. The theory of borrowing strength suggests that one level of government may seek to 'borrow' capacity from another level (Manna, 2007). Capacity, on the other hand, refers to the ability to act once policymakers decide they want to. In the case of RT3, borrowing strength could take the form of states gaining increased capacity through additional funding from the federal government. The financial hypothesis uses this theory as a way of framing states using funds from RT3 as a way of increasing capacity for existing, or new, reforms. If this

hypothesis were true, state policymakers would emphasize the need for additional funds to pay for educational policies within the state.

A second possible explanation for why states applied is political. Perhaps state decision makers weighed the political advantages and disadvantages as a central component when deciding whether or not to apply (Kingdon, 1995; Cohen-Vogel & McLendon, 2009). Possible political benefits include positioning a state as a leader in the educational reform movement, or increasing the support from constituent groups. Some decision makers may have viewed applying to the RT3 program as something that would help or hinder their future political aspirations for higher office. Additionally, state policymakers may have viewed strengthening the relationship with the federal government vis-à-vis educational policy in a positive or negative light. Since many federal officials have experience working within state departments of education or large urban districts, some have suggested that these connections create an expectation for certain states to apply (Mehta, 2013). During the Clinton and Bush Administrations, for example, Arkansas and Texas were used as exemplars for how states should reform their education systems. While President Obama did not have similar gubernatorial experience, many senior officials in the USDOE did have strong ties to certain states and cities. The political ramifications of applying, or not, may also have been seen as too costly. State policymakers may have viewed RT3 as potentially harmful to political aspirations, because they didn't want to be tied to the federal government's agenda or to President Obama specifically. Conversely, others may have viewed the costs of not applying as potentially detrimental to fundraising efforts relying on national Democratic Party

donors, or to future political endorsements. This set of political calculations may have pushed decision makers to apply in round two, or not.

The policy explanation is a third possibility for why decision makers decided to apply to RT3. This hypothesis suggests that state decision makers would evaluate RT3 as a policy, and apply if they agreed with the policy design. Manna (2007) argues that policymakers at one 'level' of government may look to another level to strengthen their arguments and/or policy momentum for a policy. This theory, labeled borrowing strength, suggests that the federalist system provides an opportunity to cooperate; in this case between the state and federal levels, to achieve policy ends. In this regard, policy makers would either favor the approach of increasing the use of statewide data, common standards and assessments, performance pay for teachers and principals, and moving toward more charter and innovative schools, or not. The theory suggests that states could borrow strength in the form of license from the federal government to achieve policy ends that would not be possible without this cooperation. License refers to the strength of the arguments available to justify government to take action (Manna, 2007). In the case of RT3, states may use the justifications, or license, from the federal government discussing and advocating for RT3 to gain policy momentum for new policy initiatives at the state level that were previously not possible. This hypothesis frames RT3 as an opportunity for states to borrow strength in the form of license from the federal government to advance policies at the state level.

RT3 could have been viewed as a way to build a strong policy coalition, to further existing state policy initiatives, or as analogous with the arc of policy initiatives in a state over time. Additionally, individuals may carry policy ideas from one level to another

(Mehta, 2013). For example, a fundamental component of George W. Bush's presidential campaign relied on the standards and accountability policies he established as governor of Texas. From this angle, education policy isn't tied to one level of government. Instead, the policy hypothesis suggests that the decision to apply would be tied to whether the reform ideas make sense to the individual state officials or not.

These three explanations are not mutually exclusive. It is more likely that state decision makers weighed each of these explanations together in one larger calculation of the cost and benefits of the application overall. Rather than try and identify one category that explains why a state may have applied, or not, to round 2 of RT3, this study evaluates the relative importance of these explanations in each case. Using the theory of borrowing strength, these hypotheses were used to frame the study. While previous studies suggest that these explanations were the most likely factors in the decision to apply or not, interviews were only semi-structured, which allowed for respondents to discuss other factors.

CHAPTER 3: Methods

Case Selection

This research focuses on the decision to apply to round 2 of RT3. Focusing on round two applications will help understand how states may view the role of the federal government moving forward. Since the application process was voluntary, states selected into, and out of the process following the round one results (see table 7).

Analyzing round two applications also has the added benefit of having additional context and communication between the federal and state government from round one. While most states applied in round one, state officials had little data on how a grant program of this magnitude and design would play out (see table 8 for complete list of RT3 descriptive statistics). Since this is a study of the perceived costs and benefits of applying in round 2 of RT3, it is assumed that states gained and used knowledge from round one to inform their calculation on whether to apply to round two.

The selection focuses on selecting cases where states made different decisions in rounds one and two from one another. Using theoretical replication, the site selection will seek to identify states that are theoretically different (Yin, 1994). The four groups of states based on application in rounds one and two are: 30 states applied in both rounds (yes-yes states), 8 states applied in round one but chose not to apply in round two (yes-no states), 4 states did not apply in round one but chose to apply in round two (no-yes states), and 6 states did not apply in either round (no-no states, see table 8 for full descriptive statistics). For this study, one state from each of the four groups was selected. The purpose of this sampling strategy was to explore whether states that made different decisions regarding application to RT3 focused on different factors. In other words, were

states viewing RT3 in similar ways, or not? While an in-depth study of all fifty states was not plausible, this design selected states that made different public decisions regarding RT3. What was unclear during the selection process was whether or not the decisions regarding whether or not to apply were due to interpreting RT3 differently or not. It is possible, or example, that the states viewed RT3 in a similar way, but made different decisions. Alternatively, focusing on different components of RT3 could have led to states making different decisions. While answers to these possibilities are not known, the sampling did select states that were theoretically different based on their application status.

Within each group, states that switched leadership in the Governor's Office were removed as possible research sites, due to the possibility of the different Governor's simply differing in their view of RT3. Using the same rationale, states that had continuity in the state superintendent's office were chosen over states that saw changes in leadership. Finally, states were filtered for cooperation, and access, to state policymakers and decision makers. Since I had research experience and professional connections in some of these states, it made sense to prioritize my contacts over other states as when multiple states were still viable. The purpose of using these factors in the sampling strategy was to establish a diverse group of states that still had the same major 'players' within educational policy. One worry I had regarding RT3 was that in states with high turnover in statewide leadership positions, there might not have been in the institutional memory of the events surrounding RT3, or the same opinions. In this regard, picking states with consistency among leadership became very important.

Using the aforementioned criteria, Kentucky was selected as the state that applied in both rounds of RT3 (will be referred to as the yes-yes state). Kentucky was ideal due to a consistent Governor, state superintendent, and previous research contacts throughout the state. Idaho was selected from the yes-no states, as it too was one of the few states that had consistency at both major leadership positions. Idaho was selected as the state that applied only in round one of RT3 (yes-no state). Idaho had continuity in leadership, and had a number of contacts that made the research opportunities more readily available than other options. For similar reasons, the state that was selected that did not apply in round one, but chose to apply in round two, was Washington (no-yes), while Texas (no-no) was chosen as the state that applied in neither round.

To evaluate whether, and how, influences varied across states, the study specifically analyzes decision-makers in these four states. A multiple case study approach is used because they are useful for exploring research questions of "why and how" things work that are more explanatory in nature (Yi, 1994). Cases, in this study, are the individual states that were selected. Due to the unique nature of RT3, a multiple case study approach will help explore the hypothesis that different states may react and interpret RT3 differently based on certain, shared characteristics. The study focuses on the decision to apply in round two for two main reasons. First, state policymakers had more information about RT3 in round two, and could learn from the first round of this new program. Second, round three was really just an extension of round two; as the USDOE limited this final round to states who were finalist in round two. Therefore, there was no choice on whether or not to apply in round three. The subject of the study is

round two of RT3, while the object, or theoretical lens, is federalism, broadly defined (Gerston, 1997). The unit of analysis is the state.

Data

Studying why decision makers applied in round two, or not, requires multiple dimensions (see table 9 for complete list of data). The primary source of data was collected from interviews with a broad range of decision makers at the state level. These semi-structured interviews explored the influences on the decision to apply to RT3 at various time-points in the process. Additionally, the interviews were structured around the four broad categories: financial, political, policy, and structure of the federal program.

The sampling strategy targeted a broad range of actors who have historically had a strong voice in educational policy decisions. Included in the initial list of interview targets was executive branch members in state government including the Secretary of Education at the state level (or equivalent), the Governor, the Chair of the education committee in the state house, the chair of the education committee in the state senate, members of the education committee in both the house and senate, the teachers union president, the president of the statewide superintendent association, any name on the RT3 application, and any senior official at the state department of education (or the designees for aforementioned positions). Initially, the structure of the specific state government helped identify the interview targets within each state. Further, recommendations were accepted from interviewees as to other important actors in the decision making process. At the conclusion of each interview with the individuals listed above, interviewees were asked to name five individuals who they felt were directly involved in the RT3 decision

or application. This snowball technique provided additional data unique to a given state (for a comparison across states on which officials were interviewed see table 11).

The nine interviews that were conducted with state policymakers in Kentucky included the Commissioner of Education, the Chair of the Board of Education, the President of the Kentucky Education Association, officials within the Department of Education, and the Executive Director of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents (for a full list of interviewees, see table 12). In Kentucky, the decision to apply to RT3 was an executive branch decision only, and did not require legislative approval. Additionally, the Commissioner of Education is appointed by the Board of Education. As a result, the political unity amongst the executive branch is stronger in Kentucky than in states where the Commissioner, or State Superintendent, is popularly elected statewide.

In Washington, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Deputy Superintendent for K-12 Education, the Chief of Staff in the Governor's Office, the President of the Washington Education Association, and the Executive Director for the Partnership for Learning, were each interviewed. The Washington State Legislature did not have to approve of the RT3 application. However, Washington directly elects the State Superintendent in a statewide election. As a result, the Governor and State Superintendent may have differing views on educational issues, since the Governor has no direct authority over the State Superintendent. As a result, it was important to interview people from the Governor's Office as well as the State Superintendent's office (called the Office of Public Instruction, or OSPI).

Idaho policymakers pride themselves as having, 'the smallest government bureaucracy in America.' A cursory view of the structure of the state's executive branch confirms this statement. Interviewees included the Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, the lead author of the RT3 application, the Chief of Staff for the Department of Education, the Executive Director of the State Board of Education, the Senate Chair of the Education Committee, and the Executive Director of the Idaho Teachers Association, among others. In total, seven interviews were conducted. In Idaho, the state legislature was not required to approve of applying to RT3. However, since the Republican Party had control of the Governorship, and both chambers of the state legislature, an extensive dialogue throughout the state government regarding RT3 did occur. As a result, both executive and legislative representation was important for this study's purposes.

Thirteen interviews were conducted over a two-month period in Texas. Interviewees included the Commissioner of Education (during the RT3 applications), the Directors of the Senate and House Education Committees, and the Executive Director of the Texas Association of Business. Additionally, interest group representatives from the Texas Public Policy Foundation, Texas Star Alliance, Texas Association of School Boards provided additional information. In Texas, these lobby groups have a very powerful voice in educational policy in the state.

The majority of the interviews were in person, scheduled for one hour, recorded and transcribed. The first section of the interview was designed to gain information on the participants' background, and how they were involved in RT3. The second section of the interview had the participant describe the history of RT3 in his/her state. This section was deliberately open ended. Next, the policymakers were asked a series of questions

relating to the three major hypotheses: the politics, the policies, and the finances of RT3. A series of questions were developed within each of these categories to evaluate whether, and to what degree, each factored into the evaluation, and ultimately the decision, to apply or not. For the complete interview protocol, see table 13 in the appendix.

Document analysis was conducted of both round one and round two RT3 applications. Applications required states to explain progress in a number of key reform areas. As a result, states were evaluated based on their capacity. Additionally, the application called for states to outline timeframe and expectations for progress. This return on investment component of the application may provide details into the decision-makers thinking and reactions to RT3. The analyses of the applications also helped specify questions, and provide additional background information, for the interviews.

School funding data from 2008-2011 were collected to evaluate the how incentives from the RT3 program may have influenced state policymakers. Data was collected and analyzed in a variety of quantitative ways, including percent school funding of the total state budget, year-to-year net change in funding, and per pupil funding. Since RT3 occurred within the broader context of a national recession, possible funding to states may have had a large influence on decision makers. School funding is an important component to explore to provide the policy and political context for the state, and because one of the major selling points to states to apply to RT3 was the possibility of bringing in additional revenue.

Analysis

The analysis is organized into the various possible explanations for why states may have decided to apply to RT3 in round 2: the political, the policy, and the financial.

For each section, multiple sources (interviews, newspaper articles, government documents) were analyzed to triangulate the data. Semi-structured interviews with high-ranking state policymakers were designed to explore hypotheses, while maintaining an open enough structure to allow to new topics to be introduced.

Coding

The coding scheme was based on findings from the literature on educational federalism. This scheme was inductively augmented throughout the early coding process to more accurately capture the ways state policymakers talked about RT3. Interviews were coded using NVivo, and organized around the three major hypotheses. For the political explanation, coding focused on the role of the federal government in education, competition with other states, and whether the state wanted or needed the help politically (Manna, 2007). For the policy section, codes were developed around whether the interviewees discussed specific policies that a state had (or did not have), if they need policy momentum (Manna, 2007) to get things passed, or if they favored or opposed specific policies within the RT3 application (e.g. common core). Coding for the financial explanation focused on the timing of the grant, state general fund and school budget, and long-term cost of the grant. Finally, codes were added for quotes in favor or opposed to the application, as well as a code for great quotes in general. For the complete coding scheme, see table 13 in the appendix.

Document analysis

To explore the political advantages and disadvantages of applying to round two of RT3, state level student achievement data was used to evaluate if relative success, or failure, influences state policy makers' thinking regarding the application process. One

may posit that a state with low achievement results relative to other states would feel more pressure to 'race to the top' than others. Politically, it may be a tougher sell to not pursue a new federal program to the public if schools are underperforming. Data on the ACT, as well as college attendance figures were used to compare achievement across states. There are some who suggest that lower educational achievement at the state level may lead policymakers to be more, or less, likely to apply to RT3 (Manna, 2012). On the one hand, states that were performing below national averages may have seen a new federal program as a way to boost achievement. Conversely, policymakers may have doubted their chances of 'winning' RT3 funds if their state performed poorly relative to other states. Regardless, academic achievement data help to describe the policy environment, and conditions of the school system. Data on the political demographics of the state electorate, as well as those serving as elected officials, were used to evaluate whether the political parties may influence the relationship between the state and federal government. Some have suggested that political party is an important predictor when analyzing the degree of cooperation between levels of government (Manna, 2007; Sunderman & Kim, 2007; Mehta, 2013).

Analyzing legislative action

To further explore the 'policy explanation,' data were analyzed on the educational laws and policies that were approved at the state level in the time period between the first announcement of the RT3 program (July 1, 2009) and the application deadline for round two of RT3 (June 1, 2010). The purpose of these analyses was to evaluate whether states changed their laws and/or policies to meet the desired policy ends of RT3 (for a complete list of RT3 criteria, see table 11). Of course, a state may have had some or all of these

policies in place prior to the federal government program. As a result, state laws and policies were collected on education generally, to evaluate if this was indeed the case.

CHAPTER 4: State Context

Part of the difficulty of studying state politics, and policies, is wide variation across states. An in depth study of all fifty states is not practical, while studying one state exclusively does not shed light on the variation between states. This study uses four states as a way of exploring variation, and trying to decipher why policymakers decided to participate or not in RT3. This section provides background information on the political dynamics, policy environment, and financial history of each state in an effort to contextualize the decision to apply for RT3. Information is presented about why states decided to apply or not in round one of RT3 to provide additional context.

Kentucky

Kentucky is a rural state, with only one major urban center, Louisville. According to the 2010 census, approximately 87% of the population identifies as white/Caucasian. 14.8% of the Kentucky population was living below the poverty level (U.S. Census, 2010). Rural poverty is a particular issue throughout the state. Kentucky has voted Republican in every presidential election since 1996, including voting for Mitt Romney in 2012 by a margin of 23%, and John McCain in 2008 by 16% over Barack Obama.

Some have suggested that a part time legislature would have a more difficult time reacting to the short timeline of RT3 (McGuinn, 2012). The Kentucky Legislature convenes in January for a 'full session' (60 days) in even numbered years, and a 30-day session in odd numbered years. The legislature, referred to as the Kentucky General Assembly, is divided into the Kentucky Senate and House of Representatives. Since 2009, a Republican majority has led the Kentucky Senate, while the House of

Representatives has had a Democrat majority. Politically, Kentucky has a mix of southern Democrats and tea party conservatives. While they did elect a Democratic Governor, Steve Beshear in both 2007 and 2011, they are also represented by two of the most conservative members of the United States Senate: Rand Paul and Mitch McConnell. Both Senators have been outspoken in their opposition to the expansion of the USDOE in education. In fact, Senator Paul has called for the abolition of the USDOE on multiple occasions, especially on the campaign trail in 2010 (Paul, 2010).

The Kentucky Board of Education, which is a 12 member board appointed by the Governor on a statewide basis, appoints a Commissioner of Public Instruction through a simple majority vote. The current commissioner, Dr. Terry Holliday, was appointed in July of 2009, the summer before the first round of RT3. Dr. Holliday is highly involved in national educational policy, as has been a member of the Board of Directors for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) since 2009, and was appointed in 2011 to the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB). His national reputation and involvement has led to close relationships in Washington DC with the US Department of Education (USDOE) and the Gates Foundation, among others. His national reputation as a leader in educational policy, and his close relationships with the USDOE are important context for RT3.

Education reform has been a priority for Kentucky politicians and citizens for over twenty years. In 1990, Kentucky citizens and politicians worked to dramatically alter educational policy and funding in the state. A series of bills were passed, known as the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). The legislation was in response to massive funding inequities in across the state, mainly due to an almost exclusive reliance on local

property taxes. The Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) formula, a part of KERA, was a new funding scheme was developed to equalize funding across the state between the most property poor districts and others. KERA also developed a State Board for Elementary and Secondary of Education, which had the authority to oversee educational policy for the state, and to appoint a commissioner of education.

Education achievement on national tests in Kentucky has been mixed relative to national averages. For example, in the years leading up to the RT3 announcement, the statewide average on the ACT in Kentucky was below the national average in 2007, 2008, and 2009. However, the percentage of students going directly from high school into college in Kentucky was slightly higher in these years than the national average. Since academic achievement was below the national average, Kentucky policymakers may have been more likely to apply to RT3 (Manna, 2013).

Kentucky saw another major educational policy shift in 2009; right before the RT3 competition was announced. Informally referred to by some as "reform 2" policymakers passed a series of bills designed to improve the quality of education at the state level. The major bill, Senate Bill 1, adopted new college-ready and career ready standards, and assessments to measure student learning (Holliday, 2013). Additionally, Kentucky was the first state to formally adopt the common core standards in math and language arts (Karem, 2013). The Kentucky Assembly also established a new continuous instructional improvement technology system (CIITS), which was designed to provide student data and teaching resources directly to teachers and principals. Finally, the reform efforts in 2009 led to a new statewide growth model approach for support and evaluation of teachers and principals.

The list of 2009 reforms in Kentucky may look familiar. Nearly all of these policy areas were also included in the RT3 competition rubric. In fact, standards and assessments, the common core, teacher evaluations, and statewide data systems were all specific components of the application for RT3. It is important to note, however, that Kentucky passed these reforms before any public announcement by the USDOE. While there is wide speculation by state policymakers exist on whether or not Commissioner Holliday knew the details of RT3 before the public announcement, nothing was ever confirmed. What is clear is that Kentucky seemed primed for the competition that incentivized many reform areas that were already enacted at the state level.

However, Kentucky has never passed charter school legislation into law. With the overwhelming majority of the legislative districts in rural areas, no champion for the issue has emerged (Holliday, 2013). Many rural communities have voiced concerns that charter schools are not designed for rural education (Parrent, 2013). Louisville, the only major urban center has had a small pro-charter movement emerge over the years. On the eve of the RT3 competition, Kentucky policymakers knew that the charter school issue would be a critical issue to address moving forward (Holliday, 2013). While the state Senate has passed a charter bill on numerous occasions, the House has never advanced charter legislation.

Since some posit that state policymakers based their decision to apply to RT3 on finances, understanding Kentucky's state budget situation is important. According to the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, state lawmakers cut the state General Fund budget (for the state) 13 times since 2008, for a total of approximately $1.6 billion (Bailey & Baumann, 2014). Education cuts have been particularly sharp. For example, in 2008, the

state cut all money for textbook purchases. Further, "between 2008-2013, funding for afterschool programs was reduced by 61 percent, professional development by 65 percent, school technology by 21 percent, career and technical education by 22 percent and school safety by 60 percent" (Bailey & Baumann, 2014, pp. 3).

According to the Chair of the Kentucky Board of Education, there was not much public, or even private, debate amongst policymakers on whether Kentucky should apply in round one of RT3 (Karem, 2013). Policymakers, led by the Commissioner of Education Terry Holliday, saw RT3 as an opportunity to bring in additional funds for existing policies. Dr. Holliday emphasized how RT3 had the potential to expedite policy initiatives that already existed within the state. Kentucky was one of ten finalists for round one, and was invited to Washington, D.C. to make a formal presentation to the panel that evaluated the RT3 applications.

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) was in charge of writing the application. David Cook, a senior official at the KDE, was assigned to be the project lead. However, Kentucky also received funding from the Gates Foundation to assist them in the submission of the RT3 application in round one (Holliday, 2013). The Gates Foundation facilitated the matching of various states with consultant groups, which would work directly with members of the state DOE to produce the application. In Kentucky, the Bridgespan group was chosen. Bridgespan is a consultant group based in San Francisco that worked to coordinate the application process, and to identify policy areas where Kentucky could bolster it's likelihood of landing an RT3 award (Cook, 2013).

When round two was announced, Kentucky policymakers were hopeful (Holliday, 2013; Karem, 2013). Many thought that since Kentucky was a finalist in round one, and the federal government indicated that more states would receive awards in round two, Kentucky had an excellent chance to gain additional funding. Would Kentucky officials continue to view RT3 through the lens of increasing capacity, or would they shift their vision of RT3 due to their experience in round one? Would Kentucky maintain a high level of support amongst policymakers, or would a larger opposition to RT3 emerge? In round one, Commissioner Holliday was clearly led the movement to apply to RT3, would he maintain enough political capital, or need to rely on others to help him rally the education community in round two? These were the major questions and issues that emerged in Kentucky heading into round two of the application cycle.

Washington

Washington is divided politically, economically and culturally by a series of mountains that run north to south across the state. The largest urban centers and businesses lie west of the mountains, while rural farmland dominates the eastern portion. While most states have an urban/rural divide in their politics, the population and financial differences between the Seattle/Tacoma area and western Washington have led to very different political representation in the state. Additionally, philanthropic interests play a key role in Washington state politics, especially within educational policy debates.

Christine Gregoire was first elected as Governor of Washington in 2004, and served two terms (2005-2013). Just prior to the 2008 Washington Democratic caucus, Gregoire endorsed Barack Obama for President, becoming the first Governor in the nation to do so. A Democrat, Gregoire rose to national prominence by serving as Chair of

the National Governor's Association from 2010-2011. The state legislature did not have the authority to approve of submitting an application for RT3, so the decision came down to a negotiation between the Governor's office and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Randy Dorn was elected in a statewide race as the State Superintendent of Public Instruction in 2008. He has experience as a teacher, principal, and legislator. Prior to his election as the Superintendent, he spent nine years as the executive director of the Public School Employees of Washington, which is the second largest interest group representing educational employees in the state. One key political dynamic in the state is that the State Superintendent does not report to the Governor. Instead, the Superintendent runs the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) independent of the rest of the executive branch. This differs from Texas and Kentucky, where the superintendent is appointed. Thus, the State Superintendent in Washington is a particularly powerful and important voice in the decision to apply to RT3. As a result, a tension has existed in the state between the Governor and the Superintendent when the two have disagreed on the future direction of educational policy in the state.

Like most states during the recession, Washington struggled financially starting in 2008. From 2007-2013, education was cut roughly $4 million (Keim, 2013). The state allocations have been consistently less than agency request during this time as well. For example, in the 2009-2011 biennial budget bill, the state allocation of approximately $15 million was almost $2 million short of the OSPI requested budget (Washington State Fiscal Information, 2014). As a result, some in the state, particularly the WEA, were interested in pursuing additional funding from the federal government.

Washington, in a bit of a surprise nationally, chose not to apply to RT3 in round one. With the strong influence of the Gates Foundation, and the Governor having a very close relationship with the Obama Administration, many thought that Washington would be the first to submit an application to RT3. In fact, Governor Gregoire continued to be one of the most outspoken supporters of Obama throughout his presidency. However, State Superintendent Randy Dorn was not convinced that Washington could submit a competitive application. He was particularly concerned that Washington's lack of charter schools would hinder the state. Some national educational policy experts outside of the government instructed Dorn that RT3 money would not flow to the state without charter schools. In 2009, Washington was one of only nine states without charter schools. This led many in the OSPI to oppose applying in round one, because they argued it would be a waste of time to apply without charter legislation first.

Five major educational groups were brought together by the Office of Public Instruction to work on the RT3 grant in round two including the Washington Association of School Administrators, the Washington State Principals Association, the Washington Education Association, the state Parent Teacher Association, and the Washington State School Director's Association. As they worked through the RT3 application, they identified charter schools and teacher/principal evaluation as the two critical areas where Washington needed to improve (Dorn, 2013). However, the Washington Education Association (WEA), the largest teacher's union in the state, was resistant to both reforms. As a result, the OSPI was only able to secure approximately 80 percent of the district signatures endorsing the RT3 plan (Dorn, 2013). While policymakers continued to press forward with the application, they realized that with no charter schools, a teacher

evaluation system that was in proposal stage, and a lack of support from districts would most make it nearly impossible to land an award in the competition (Dorn, 2013).

Philanthropy groups are heavily involved in educational policy and advocacy in Washington (Butts, 2013). The Gates Foundation, headquartered in Seattle, has poured hundreds of millions of dollars into educational initiatives nationally in the past decade. In Washington, the Gates Foundation joined with other businesses in the state to fully endorse RT3 and the related reforms. This put pressure on the Gregoire Administration, who had also received substantial support from the Washington Education Association during her campaigns.

The charter school issue has been contentious in Washington for many years. In 1996, I-177 first presented the charter school issue to voters. A number of additional ballot measure were sent to voters following the defeat of the measure, which would have allowed charter schools to be authorized in the state. Voters defeated charter school ballot measures again in 2000 (I-729) and 2004 (Referendum 55). In each of these elections, the Washington Education Association and school administrator groups publicly opposed creating charter school laws.

There were three large areas, or questions, that were looming on the eve of round two of RT3 regarding whether Washington would apply or not. First, would the charter issue be too great of an obstacle for Washington to overcome, or would policymakers see RT3 as an opportunity to try and build policy momentum to establish charter legislation? The state had a long history with the issue, and still seemed very divided over how to proceed. Second, would Superintendent Dorn once again push to not apply, emphasizing that Washington could not compete due to lack of charters, or would the Governor be

more aggressive in advocating for Washington to participate? The divide between these two major state officials was a clear issue during the debate on whether or not to apply in round one. The third big issue for Washington heading into the second round of RT3 was how negotiations with the WEA and school administrator groups would develop around reforming the evaluation process.

Idaho

Idahoans have historically emphasized small government, and local control. Politically, Idaho is historically very conservative, electing a Republican Governor in every election since 1995, and Republican majorities in the State Senate and State House since 1962. The current Governor, Butch Otter, was first elected in 2006. He was re-elected in 2010 by a margin of 26%. Similarly, Tom Luna was elected in both 2006, and re-elected in 2010, as the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. As a result, both Otter and Luna have a strong mandate, and plenty of political capital, to pursue whatever policies they deem necessary (Flachbart, 2013).

Idaho applied in the first round of RT3. One Idaho Department of Education senior official, when asked about the decision to apply in round one, stated, "It (applying in round one) was *how* (Idaho would apply), it wasn't *should* (Idaho apply). We came together with the express purpose of developing the state proposal. It was not a discussion about should Idaho go forward at all, no" (Clark, 2013). Many other officials reiterated that Idaho policymakers were sold on RT3 from the beginning. Superintendent Luna, for example, made it very clear that he favored the policy approaches of RT3, particularly citing the teacher evaluations and merit pay as issues that he agreed with.

However, Idaho only received a 331/500 score, which was one of the worst scores of the 41 applications in round one.

State officials cited doubts about the ability to dramatically alter the RT3 application in the short timeline between rounds one and two. Since Idaho did not receive a competitive score in round one, there were serious questions regarding whether putting time and energy into another application would be worth it (Rush, 2013). Additionally, some members of the senior staff at the Idaho Department of Education were particularly frustrated with the reviewer comments from round one (Willits, 2013). For example when describing the reaction of state officials to the round one score, Luci Willits, who was the Chief of Staff at the Idaho DOE stated, "Obviously, we were disappointed. And one of the criticisms that we had for RT3 was that we actually had in one of our (reviews) a reviewer call us by a different state name. Yeah, yeah. They did, they called us Ohio. We felt like a large part of the reviewers were east coast academics" (Willits, 2013). Other senior level officials in the state government echoed sentiments that as a western state, officials involved in evaluating RT3 did not understand Idaho's educational policy, politics, or even culture (Willits, 2013). Additionally, there was a sense that the DOE would have a difficult time getting districts to sign onto the reforms that were included in the RT3 application. This was one of the areas where Idaho scored particularly low on round one.

Two major issues emerged out of round one of RT3 for Idaho policymakers that were key for the decision of round 2. First, how would policymakers decide to respond to the low round one score and comments from the reviewers? Would the remarks lead to more determination to apply and 'win over' the USDOE, or would Idaho officials turn

the cold shoulder to federal policy? Second, officials needed to figure out if they would continue to pursue the policies within RT3. Much of the rationale for applying in round one was to build policy momentum to pass legislation at the state level. Those changes did not happen during the round one process. As a result, would policymakers maintain the same course of action, or would they shift strategies? In other words, how did the information learned from round one help Idaho officials decide how to approach round two? These were the major issues for policymakers to figure out heading into the decision on whether or not to apply to RT3 for the second time.

Texas

Texas is one of only four states that did not apply in either round one or round two of RT3. Texas is extremely important politically as it is the 2nd largest state in total area and economic productivity. The state has a tradition of conservative politics and policies, and a unique belief among its politicians and citizens in independence from the federal government. In recent years, the Republican Party has dominated the Governor's Office and the Texas State Legislature.

Rick Perry became Governor by default in 2001 when George W. Bush transitioned from the Governor's Office in Austin, to the President's Office in Washington, DC. Perry, who was Lieutenant Governor under Bush, was re-elected in 2002, 2006, and 2010. Governor Perry has been adamant in his opposition to nearly everything coming from the federal government. In fact, much of his bid for the Republican nomination for President in 2012 was rooted in his strong support for state's rights, and a limited federal role in policy. He even went so far to write a book, titled *Fed Up! Our Fight to Save America from Washington*, which thoroughly criticized the

expansion of the federal government into education policy, among other areas (Perry, 2010).

To many, the decision by Texas to not participate in the RT3 decision was assumed due to the strong tradition of conservative values in the state. However, prior to the deadline for round one application, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) spent a great deal of time preparing and strategizing to apply (Brownson, 2013). One estimate by the Texas Tribune suggested that the TEA spent over 800 hours preparing an application for RT3 before they were informed that Texas would not participate (Texas Tribune, 2013). In Texas, the Governor appoints the Commissioner of Education, who leads the Texas Education Agency. This is an important difference between Texas and both Idaho and Washington, where the head of the state department of education is directly elected in a statewide election. As a result, the Governor and Commissioner of Education in Texas are almost always in agreement on policy questions. In the case of RT3, both Governor Perry and Commissioner Rick Scott came out against applying.

Governor Perry emphasized not wanting to give more influence to the federal government through RT3. In his press release announcing the decision not to apply in round one, Governor Perry stated, "Texas in on the right path toward improved education, and we would be foolish and irresponsible to place our children's future in the hands of unelected bureaucrats and special interest groups thousands of miles away in Washington, virtually eliminating parents' participation in their children's education." Clearly, RT3 became a symbol of a larger political ideology for Perry.

Texas didn't seem to have many issues looming heading into the decision about round two of RT3. There were no major groups pushing for officials to apply, and there

weren't any elections or shifts in the major players who would be involved in the decision. Instead, the major issue for Texas was whether or not the Governor would want to change direction or not, since state policymakers followed his lead.

The next three sections specify the data across states to support and refute the major hypotheses: the financial, political, and policy factors. Following each of these sections is a conclusion that answer the main research question, "Why did state policymakers decide to apply for RT3 in Round 2" for each individual state.

CHAPTER 5: Financial Factors

At its most basic level, the financial hypothesis is perhaps the most intuitive. The assumption is that since state educational systems were experiencing large budget cuts due to the Great Recession, an influx of cash would help lessen the impact on schools. However, the data on the financial considerations of state policymakers is more complex than the original hypothesis suggests. Across states, decision makers included discussions of the costs and benefits of the RT3 money in both the short and long term, the initial draw to the money, as well as the timing of when the funds would be released. Since states had differing laws and policies in place already, the implementation projections differed greatly. This section provides data from interviews with policymakers in the four states to further explore whether, and to what degree, the financial explanation contributed to the decision to apply in round two of RT3.

There was a wide range of interviewees who described financial components as a positive reason for applying to RT3. Table 1 details the number of interviewees that discussed the finances of RT3 as one criterion in the decision to apply or not.

Table 1: Descriptive data on interviewees who stated financial component as a positive consideration in the decision to apply in round two of RT3

	KY	ID	WA	TX
Stated financial component as a reason to apply (# of respondents)	7	4	5	0
Did not state finance as a reason to apply (# of respondents)	2	3	5	13
Percentage of total interviewees in the state who described finances as a reason to apply	77	57	50	0

As the table shows, the interpretation of money tied to RT3 varied substantially across states. In Kentucky, 7 of the 9 interviews included at least one positive mention of the federal money. A positive mention is anything where the policymaker mentioned the increase in funding from RT3 as something that state officials viewed as a reason to apply. Conversely, in Texas, none of those interviewed spoke positively about the additional federal funds. Washington, which had 50 percent of respondents include a positive reference, and Idaho, which had four of the seven, were more mixed. This suggests a much more nuanced vision of the federal funding provided by RT3 than some current literature suggests (Manna & Ryan, 2011).

The Large Pot of Money- A Powerful Initial Draw for All States

Policymakers were very blunt in their descriptions of the initial draw to the financial components of RT3. Across states, many key policymakers mentioned the financial components of RT3 before other considerations. For example, the Chair of the State Board of Education in Kentucky stated:

> I think everybody's initial thought, as members of the state board, was money. I mean, the era of hideously diminishing budgets, if there were any opportunities to explore anywhere to get additional money, the initial thing was, how do you get money?

The clear emphasis in this quote, and many of the interviews, was that the financial component led policymakers to explore questions like, how do we get this money and what do we need to do to maximize our chances for winning funds? One state senator in Idaho stated:

> Well, there are a number [of policymakers thinking about], where we were economically at that point. We needed every dollar we could [get] for education, and this was an opportunity to bring some additional federal dollars into the system.

Regardless of the overall calculation that policymakers made, the potential dollars coming into the state through RT3 captured their attention very quickly.

The Great Recession

Many state policymakers placed RT3 in the context of the Great Recession when discussing school finance as an initial draw to apply. The suggestion, for some, was that RT3 was viewed primarily as a way of fixing school budgets in a difficult time. Others specifically stated that RT3 would not have been up for discussion if it were not for such dramatic cuts to education in the preceding years. For example, the Chief of Staff of the Idaho Department of Education stated:

> The environment in which RT3 came about was really crucial for states because many states were going through the recession, and Idaho was certainly one of those. Obviously as part of recession there wasn't a lot of discussion about how to improve education, it was more about how do we keep what we have?

This is a powerful statement, as it suggests that some didn't really focus on RT3 as a policy designed to improve education. Rather, this Idaho policymaker viewed RT3 as a way to maintain what the educational system in its current form. Since the local and state tax revenues were down throughout the country in the years preceding RT3, the emphasis on additional federal money for schools is not surprising.

One may hypothesize that people working directly for districts or schools would be more attracted to bringing in additional revenues. These folks are likely the people who have to implement budget cuts, and experience negative feedback from the community (Manna, 2011). However, individuals working across a broad range of areas within educational policy stressed the importance of dollars when thinking about RT3. One representative from the Kentucky State Superintendent's Association stated:

> Obviously, we were talking about a ton of money. So in the early recession, the money was huge, and it seemed to be directed at improvement of instruction. Money that would reach the level of children. So, without sounding trite, that's what superintendents ultimately looked to when they saw a lot of money that might come into local districts, and how would that impact instruction. So we were contrite.

The Executive Director of the Idaho Superintendent's Association expressed a similar message. She stated:

> The superintendents I think were fairly supportive of the concept. And by this time, by the time that we were looking at RT3 we had already suffered some pretty severe cuts in education and I think there were a lot of folks out there kind of grasping at straws saying, what in the world can we do to get some more money into the public schools, the funding stream.

The adjectives used when discussing the money included words like 'huge' and 'crucial'. State and local budgets, however, were described as 'struggling' and in 'crisis'. As a result, the financial components were discussed with a tone of necessity. Finally, one official in the Kentucky Department of Education expressed how the budget situation led to few voices speaking out against RT3.

> Yeah, I don't think there were very many voices that were against it, simply because it hit at the right time. In most states, because everyone was struggling with budget, we had just hit the market crash, and in the recession and all that stuff. Funding and property values were going down, so how were you going to pay for education? So any amount of money I think would have helped.

The data clearly show that policymakers across states embedded the RT3 decision into the context of the Great Recession, and that they were more likely to apply because of state budget problems.

The timing was right in Kentucky and Idaho

Another related, and important, financial detail that many policymakers discussed in the context of RT3 was the timing of the finances as a reason for applying. Within the federal system, a new policy at one level is not independent of other policies changes. Policymakers in multiple states mentioned how the timing of RT3 made applying more attractive. In Kentucky, for example, they used the recent educational policy changes at the state level as rationale for why applying to RT3 made sense. As Commissioner of Education Terry Holliday stated:

> It was great timing for us. We had the state legislation and this was a vehicle to fund a few things but also to give our state plan some credibility because outside reviewers said this was a great plan.

Individuals in Idaho also discussed the timing of the grant in a positive light. While both Idaho and Kentucky policymakers stressed the timing, they did so in different policy

contexts. In Kentucky, SB 1 already passed many of the reforms that RT3 incentivized. Timing for Kentuckians, then, referred to the timing of additional funding for existing reforms at the state level. In Idaho, however, timing referred to money for policies that Idaho Department of Education policymakers wanted to pursue. The executive director of the Idaho State Superintendent Association described the timing this way:

> Well I think, I think initially the motivation, obviously the money was interesting to the state. That obviously gets any state or districts attention. And … the timing of it, made it interesting.

As lessons are drawn about how state policymakers interpret federal policies, and choose whether to participate, the timing and context of RT3 is important to remember. Many policymakers stressed the importance of the timing to their decision.

The timing was wrong in Texas

There were others who indicated that the timing of the RT3 grant was a negative for policymakers deciding on whether or not to apply. Since the grant had a relatively short timeline between the announcement of the program and when the grant was due, some states felt like they were at a significant disadvantage. Since most state legislatures are not full time, some states did not have time to pass legislation to increase the chances of wining the competition. One Texas Education Agency official stressed this by stating:

> But, um, the timing when money comes is always critical for states, with federal money. And what I mean by that is where are they in their legislative cycle.

Timing was important in the decision for state policymakers when deciding whether or not to apply to RT3. However, the interpretation varied across states based on the cycle of the legislature, and which state policies existed prior to the grant announcement.

The long term costs too much in Texas

While many looked to RT3 as a way of filling gaps in the state budget, others were more skeptical about the long term costs associated with implementing the program. In fact, some state policymakers were openly critical about the amount of RT3 funding being too little relative to the total costs of the various policies involved. For example, policymakers in Texas pointed to the very small increase in the amount of money per pupil statewide. In Idaho, the Executive Director of the State Board of Education discussed whether the funding in RT3 was a positive factor in the decision to apply in this way:

> No [funding wasn't seen as a reason to apply]. And I think part of the reason is that, our board is pretty astute and they realize that short term funding is not a solution to long-term problems. Short term funding is, in some ways, a catalyst for additional long term spending, not less.

This statement seems to indicate a general cynicism toward one time funding. Of note, no official cost benefit analysis was done on RT3 in Idaho. Instead, policymakers emphasized the general belief that one time money would increase long term spending. Some went further, calling RT3 an unfunded mandate. Here, one of the primary authors and coordinators of the RT3 effort in Washington said:

> But it was still seen by some as an unfunded mandate. Some of the things that (Washington) would have had to have done under RT3.

This is powerful language, and echoes criticism of previous federal policies, including the American with Disabilities Act and No Child Left Behind Act (Sunderman and Kim, 2007; Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Much of the criticism historically of federal educational policy has emphasized how the creation of programs has left state departments of

education and local district with additional long-term costs, without providing the necessary funds.

Others said that RT3 funds were not substantial relative to other school funds. In Texas for example, one Texas Education Agency stressed:

> That's about right (when referencing the $500 million award). For the state size (of Tennessee). You know it's great money for the state size, but a state the size of Texas it's a drop in the bucket. It just wasn't enough. I mean, I had funds in my agency that were more than RT3 was going to give them.

What is interesting is that the possible funding across states were roughly the same per pupil. In other words, states that emphasized needing the money to fill gaps were deciding to apply for funds that other states said were too small. While the state budget gaps differed across states, so to did the interpretation by policymakers of how and if the money would help the states financial situation.

Finances played a key role in the decision by policymakers in Kentucky. However, the interpretation of the extent that RT3 funds would benefit the state varied substantially across states. While policymakers in Idaho and Kentucky mentioned the initial draw of the money, there is evidence that some in Texas believed that RT3 would be a net cost in the long term. When most interviewees discussed the timing of the grant, they spoke in positive terms and emphasized the importance of the money during the recession. While finances were mentioned in some capacity by at least some policymakers in each state, Kentucky was the only state where officials repeatedly emphasized finances as major component to the decision to apply in round two.

CHAPTER 6: Political Factors

Policies can take on symbolic meaning as they are interpreted at different levels of government and the public (Stone, 2002). For some, the decision whether to support a policy is less about the potential effectiveness of that policy, and more about the political dimensions of how constituents, donors, and other members of the political party may react (Lunch, 2001). Analyzing the data across states, one finds three major political themes emerge; overreach by the federal government, ignorance by the federal government and personal political opportunities for state policymakers. First, some state policymakers viewed RT3 outside of the federal governments role. This ideological opposition stemmed from a philosophical belief in state and local control of schools. Second, some policymakers didn't oppose RT3 on the basis of ideology, but because the federal government failed to understand the internal dynamics of the state. In this regard, some in Idaho and Kentucky weren't inherently opposed to federal involvement, but were not convinced that the federal government understood the intricacies of the state well enough to improve education there. Finally, evidence clearly showed that RT3, to Governor Gregoire in Washington and Governor Perry in Texas, was a political opportunity to exploit for personal gain. Governors Perry and Gregoire viewed this policy, and the decision to apply, as a way to advance their own political career by 'taking a stand' as an education champion or defender against an external threat to the system. This is consistent with other literature within educational federalism (Hess &

Kelly, 2011). There is considerable evidence that the decision to apply to RT3 was heavily political, particularly in Washington and Texas.

Table 2: Descriptive data on number of state policymakers stating political factor was a reason to apply to RT3

	KY	ID	WA	TX
Stated political component as a reason to apply (# of respondents)	4	0	5	0
Did not state politics as a reason to apply (# of respondents)	5	7	5	13
Percentage of total interviewees in the state who described politics as a reason to apply	44	0	50	0

A strong division appears in table 2 between Kentucky and Washington on the one hand, and Texas and Idaho on the other. To some degree this isn't surprising, since Texas and Idaho were the two states that chose not to apply. However, Kentucky shares more politically with Texas and Idaho than with Washington. For example, Kentucky, Texas and Idaho all have a strong traditional of electing conservative, state's rights proponents to their respective state legislatures. Perhaps this suggests the power of political dynamics when they are present. While not all officials in Kentucky and Washington

mentioned politics as a reason for applying, those who did used very strong language, indicating that politics may have trumped other possible explanations.

Not the federal government's role

For some policymakers in Idaho and Texas RT3 was viewed through a lens of the expansion of the federal government in education. This federalist view of the government, and of the federal role, emphasizes that education is not included in the U.S. Constitution, and therefore should be left to the states to set policy (Manna, 2011). RT3 was viewed as a symbol of the federal government trying to dictate policy in an area where they had no authority. In Texas, Governor Rick Perry, for one, was concerned about the federal government expanding its role in education. At the press conference announcing his decision to not apply in round one, he stated:

> Texas is on the right path toward improved education, and we would be foolish and irresponsible to place our children's future in the hands of unelected bureaucrats and special interest groups thousands of miles away in Washington, virtually eliminating parents' participation in their children's education.

Note that Perry does not specifically go after the content of RT3 here. He doesn't specify that this will hurt student achievement or increase the dropout rate. Instead, Perry focuses on the various people and groups involved in policy development in DC. Additionally, he claims that allowing the federal government to step in through RT3 would decrease parental participation. For Perry, where RT3 was created was more important than the content of the policy. He clearly did not want the federal government to increase its role in education.

This theme ran strong throughout Texas. In fact, ten of the thirteen interviewees mentioned that something regarding RT3 and 'not the federal government's role.' One official in the Texas Education Agency described the situation this way:

> And honestly it boils down to states rights, and I was probably, either the only one or one of the few that kind of agreed to not apply, having the state not apply for the RT3 funds, and I'll tell you why my views were synonymous with the Governor's decision. Of course, his were more politically motivated than anything else.

This quote emphasizes the importance of states rights to Texas policymakers. For some in Texas, RT3 became a powerful symbol of a federal government that continues to expand its power. The political faith in education as a state issue is a core value for many conservative Texans. In fact, Governor Perry, in response to a variety of federal policies, went so far to say that secession was a possibility at a 2009 Tea Party event (Mooney, 2009).

In Idaho, officials throughout the state government also consistently brought up the role of the federal government as a factor in the decision on whether or not to apply to RT3. Four of the seven interviews mentioned that RT3 was viewed as an extension of the federal government, and a possible front on Idaho's states rights. Idaho, a politically conservative state with Republicans sitting in every statewide office, had policymakers with many of the same concerns heard in Texas. One policymaker stated, "…[T]here were legislators that were opposed to it (RT3) because they saw it as more government intervention in our (Idaho) state."

Table 3: Number of Officials by State who mentioned political components as a reason not to apply to RT3

	KY	ID	WA	TX
Stated political component as a reason to not apply (# of respondents)	4	4	3	8
Did not state political component as a reason to not apply (# of respondents)	5	3	7	5
Percentage of total interviewees in the state who described politics as reason to not apply	44	57	30	62

Every state had at least a few officials mentioning political factors as a reason to not pursue RT3. However, Texas was the only state where officials consistently mentioned the politics as too much to overcome when policymakers were deciding to apply or not. In the other states, the dialogue regarding political factors seemed much more mixed, as there were both political advantages and disadvantages to applying.

For some in Texas and Idaho, the decision about whether to apply or not was really a philosophical one that relied heavily on their idea of federalism. The debate on

the appropriate role of the federal government has been a consistent political theme of this country from its inception. RT3 is a healthy reminder that this debate continues on in present day policy discussions. Viewed primarily as a policy coming from the federal government, RT3 came to provide an opportunity for policymakers who strongly favor states rights to take a stand. In this regard, RT3 never really stood a chance at being supported by these folks who opposed any expansion of the federal government into education policy.

The Feds Don't Understand Us

While many policymakers stressed that RT3 violated their political belief in states rights, others pointed to the federal government not understanding the specific political context of their own state as justification to oppose applying. This was less of a philosophical opposition than a practical one. For example, some used information gained from round one of the competition as evidence for this lack of knowledge by the feds. Others pointed to the background of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan as a proxy for what the federal Department of Education understood about various demographics of students or communities. Regardless of the specific source of the information, policymakers across states claimed that one reason for not applying, or supporting an application, for RT3 was that the federal government did not understand the people, and political, contexts within their individual state.

Background of Federal Officials Limited

Adding to this concern was the belief that many in Idaho considered the people involved in the design and evaluation of RT3 to not have the background experience or knowledge to understand Idaho's educational system. Many described those involved in

the design of the policy as 'east coasters', 'bureaucrats' or 'academic types.' These various terms all seemed to be used as a way of describing the feeling that those in the USDOE were fundamentally different in their understanding of schooling. For example, one person directly involved in the decision on whether to apply to RT3 in round 2 stated, "We (Idahoans) felt like a large part of the reviewers were east coast academics" (Willits, 2013). This was stated in reference to the reaction of the reviews of the round one application.

In Kentucky many interpreted the signals from Washington, DC as evidence that the federal government did not understand their state. Some pointed to the lack of knowledge about Kentucky on the east coast. For example, one policymaker in Kentucky emphasized the general perception that Kentucky's RT3 applications were not given a fair evaluation. She stated:

> But, you know we are a poor state, who would think that Kentucky would make progress? There are folks on the east coast that still look at us, as you know, hillbillies. And I think they have a hard time imagining that KY could make the progress that we've made. I don't know if that's valid or not, but there is a sense, there was a sense with that of the scoring. Especially on the second round, there was one scorer who rated us low on everything, and others that scored us pretty well.

There are strong perceptions here about how some Kentuckians felt the federal government treated them. The notion of the hillbillies in the state, not knowing how to improve schools, was used to contrast the demographics and background of the reviewers of RT3. This fed into a larger belief that the scorers may not have given Kentucky a fair shot when evaluating their application.

Some officials in Kentucky extended the argument that officials in the federal government did not understand Kentucky by specifically going after Arne Duncan. The

Secretary of Education was used as further evidence of how the USDOE didn't understand the Kentucky education system. Here, the Chair of the State Board of Education in Kentucky stated:

> I mean, you had all kinds of stuff that gave local schools opportunities to heavily involve parents to really have great flexibility for schools to try and invent new strategies, a lot of new technology came out of Kentucky Education Reform, so again get off your rear end, again Arne, you big tall son of a bitch, get off your high horse, get out here, and find out what really is going on. The whole world is not downtown Chicago.

This statement contains two important ideas for how some in Kentucky viewed RT3. The first is the idea that Duncan only understands Chicago. The statement is less about his particular background as CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, and more about how Kentucky doesn't fit into his knowledge of schooling. The second, and perhaps more important point, is that Duncan does not know what's 'really is going on' in Kentucky. While the first point contrasts his experience, the second is about his lack of effort to understand the educational system in Kentucky. This quote, among others, paints Arne Duncan as someone who over relies on his experience in one urban setting, and who designs policies in exclusion of 'the real world.'

In Washington, policymakers also used Duncan's experience as a symbol of his lack of understanding the state context. When Randy Dorn, the Superintendent of Public Instruction was asked about how RT3 may be implemented in large and small districts, he emphasized how many of the issues in Washington would not come up in a place like Chicago. The Superintendent went on to discuss on the political dimension of implementing RT3 would be too big of an obstacle in many rural communities. For example, he described how school board members in small communities often have family members who work in the same school district, how teachers are often the most

educated in rural communities, and how difficult it is to recruit and retain quality employees in these areas. While some of these concerns are more focused on the policy, there was a clear effort to tie these considerations to political concerns for rural communities. Superintendent Dorn spoke in a negative way about Secretary Duncan's experience, and lack of knowledge of the context in Washington.

Across states, there is evidence of policymakers at the state level viewing RT3 as a policy that was designed and evaluated by people that didn't understand their respective states. One theme that emerged was that RT3 divided urban and rural populations. This was seen most clearly in Kentucky, where many state legislators were skeptical that RT3 would help improve rural schools. In Louisville, the one major urban center in the state, advocates pushed for RT3. While the rural/urban divide is present in most political decisions, the specific arguments around RT3 were stronger and more frequent than anticipated. For example, some policymakers in Kentucky specifically cited Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's background working in Chicago as evidence that he doesn't understand rural education. Others spoke of the evaluators from round one as 'mostly east coast, academic types.' Similarly, some pointed to errors in the evaluation and review of round one applications as further evidence of the federal government not understanding state context. Since the focus of this study is on state policymakers, further inquiry was not required into whether or the federal government understood what was going on in states or not. What is clear is that some policymakers across states believed that the federal government didn't understand their individual state context, and that was used as one reason to oppose submitting an application for RT3.

RT3 was a political opportunity

Some policymakers used RT3 to make a political statement about their values, or to help define them as having a certain political view. RT3, then, wasn't about the federal government overstepping its bounds, or not understanding the state context. To some, RT3 became an opportunity to signal something important to their constituents. The really fascinating part about this group of individuals is that they used RT3 in different ways. For example, some opponents of the applying used RT3 to prove their conservative ideology, depicting them as a champion of states rights. Others, however, saw RT3 as an opportunity to expand their education agenda. Finally, some state policymakers used RT3 to help build their national image as an education champion. Across states, there is clear evidence that key state officials used RT3 to score political points.

An Eye Toward Higher Office: Texas Governor Perry Postures as a Defender of States Rights and Advocates that Texas Not Apply

Governor Perry of Texas provides a clear example of using RT3 for political gain. Rounds one and two of RT3 occurred in the first part of 2010, which was an important year leading up to the 2012 presidential election. Perry didn't announce his own candidacy for the Republican nomination until 2011; he was considered a strong candidate as early as 2009 (Page, 2011). Perry strategized to play to the Republican base in the primary by becoming the favorite for the Tea Party, a group that particularly abhorred the federal government (Page, 2011). RT3 came along at a perfect time for Governor Perry to make a political statement opposing the federal government. One state legislator described the situation this way:

> … because the Governor (Perry) was running for President. And, the essential core message of his campaign was 'we don't need Washington, we need Washington out of our business.' This (RT3) became a symbol of that, and let me be clear that I'm not saying that the decision was a good one or a bad one.

Governor Perry had a strategy of opposing the federal government, and RT3 was a policy that he could use to prove this point. The political calculation here was less about the state as a whole, and more about boosting his political career. Another state legislator described the situation this way:

> And in other areas, you know, this [RT3] was consistent with what the [Perry] administration decided to do in other areas that session, because we [Texas] also turned away enhanced I think it was unemployment funds, and of course we've turned away Medicaid expansion money.

Governor Perry then, placed RT3 in a larger series of federal policies at the time to make a larger point about his personal political views. With one eye on the Republican nomination, RT3 provided an opportunity for Perry to prove his conservative credentials to segments of the party who placed a high priority on states rights. The general sense by a diverse group of policymakers throughout Texas was that Governor Perry might very well oppose anything that President Obama supported. In this regard, Governor Perry saw the decision to apply to RT3 or not as one that could improve his political standing with Tea Party conservatives nationwide.

A Champion of Education: KY's Superintendent Pushes the State to Apply

Personal political considerations also played an important role in Kentucky, but in a very different way. Instead of using RT3 to make a political statement against federal expansion in educational policy, State Superintendent Terry Holliday used it as a way of building his own national reputation. The political calculation by Holliday, then, saw RT3 as an opportunity to work with others outside of Kentucky. One State Board of Education member stated:

> One of the things that's very important for you to understand is that Terry Holliday is very interested in developing very positive relationships with Arne

> Duncan and everybody at the federal level and looking for every avenue to enhance money flowing to the state of Kentucky but also building a relationship with the folks in the, at the federal level. So his approach from our perspective would be what you would call holistic. It's not just about applying for money it's about building relationships.

Holliday placed RT3 in the broader context of a national movement to reform schools. RT3 fit into a larger strategy for Kentucky, and Holliday more specifically, that relied on trust from the federal government and the ability to attract outside money into the state for pay for educational infrastructure.

Some went so far to suggest that the decision about RT3 wasn't about Kentucky as much as it was about Terry Holliday. Here a member of the State Board of Education is very open about Holliday's national reputation:

> I would say, it would not be stretching to say probably as far as state superintendents of public instruction or commissioners of education, whatever that title is for the state, he's probably one of the probably ten or fifteen that people would know across the country. And that's, and Terry sees that, as beneficial, as does the board. So we have a lot of trust in what he does and what he says. I mean, maybe instead of Race to the Top this is more about Terry Holliday, but he's gained a great national reputation and he's done well.

So the political calculation by Holliday placed RT3 in a larger context. Being known throughout the country helped Kentucky bring in outside funds from philanthropies, like the Gates Foundation. In fact, some in Kentucky stressed how the RT3 funds were no match for current, and future, philanthropy dollars. Superintendent Holliday wanted to continue his role as a major player in the national educational policy scene. RT3 fit into the same logic that led Superintendent Holliday to pursue seats on the NAEP board, and to be named the president of the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Political Loyalty: Washington's Governor Pushes the State to Apply

Washington Governor Gregoire similarly placed RT3 squarely into a larger political context. In her case, Governor Gregoire had to reconcile what it would mean to not participate in a program that was the major educational program of the Obama Administration. As a Democrat, and perhaps more importantly as the first Governor to endorse then Senator Obama for president, Gregoire had a close relationship with the President. Further, the Governor was involved nationally with the Democratic Party. One official at the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction described the situation this way:

> There was a lot of political pressure. You know, we got Obama, everyone loves Obama, we got to be a part of the team, and we're Democrats, the whole Democrat/ Republican thing.

So the political calculation by Governor Gregoire was also a personal one, but revolved around her relationship with the President and with her party. The decision to apply to RT3 became a symbol for her support of President Obama.

Political calculations played an important role in many different ways across the states. Political leaders in Texas saw not applying to RT3 as an opportunity to express strong philosophical views on the role of the federal government in education. In Kentucky and Idaho, policymakers picked up signals that the federal government did not understand the details of what their individual state was going through, which led them to question whether RT3 would truly be beneficial for their state. Reviewers' comments on round one application were interpreted as evidence of the lack of federal USDOE understanding of state contexts, particularly in Idaho. Finally, individuals in Kentucky and Washington used RT3 as a way to send a message to their constituents and other policy officials. For example, in Kentucky, the Superintendent of Public Instruction used

RT3 in a broader national strategy to attract additional dollars into the state. Governor Perry used RT3 as well, but to help boost a future presidential bid that relied heavily on a state's rights platform. Conversely, Governor Gregoire in Washington used RT3 as a way signaling her strong support for the Obama Administration. Overall, politics played a central role in the decision to apply for RT3 across states.

CHAPTER 7: Policy Factors

Policymakers across states supported, or opposed, RT3 because of details of the policy itself. Perhaps the most intuitive of the hypotheses, the policy argument suggests that states will apply if they believe RT3 is good public policy that will improve schools. In this context, neither the money nor the politics interfered with the evaluation of whether policymakers thought RT3 would help move their individual state in the right direction.

One challenge when analyzing the data through the policy lens is that RT3 had so many different policy areas. It is easy to imagine, for example, how one might support reforming the teacher evaluation system and creating new ways to turn around low performing schools, but opposing the expansion of charter schools. In this hypothetical, how would a policymaker decide whether to support or oppose applying for RT3? Throughout the data, policymakers frequently mentioned having differing opinions of the various policy areas in RT3. However, in the majority of cases they indicated a specific policy area that stood out to them within RT3. Instead of commenting on RT3, officials quickly narrowed in on a specific part of the program that he or she particularly loved or hated.

Table 4: Number of officials who stated that policy was a reason to apply to RT3

	KY	ID	WA	TX
Stated policy as a reason to apply (# of respondents)	7	7	6	0
Did not state policy as a reason to apply (# of respondents)	2	0	4	13
Percentage of total interviewees in the state who described policy as a reason to apply	78	100	60	0

This table shows how many state officials were drawn to RT3 as a policy. Of note, the three states that applied in at least one round all had a majority of policymakers mention that policy factors were important in their decision to apply. In Texas, however, no official stated that policy reasons encouraged the state to apply.

Policy was a reason to apply

There is substantial data across states showing that RT3, as policy, was a reason for many officials to support applying in round two. In Kentucky, for example, policymakers emphasized how they already had many of the policies that RT3 was incentivizing. Instead of viewing RT3 as a grant, which led to the altering of state policy,

many in Kentucky saw it as a way of applying for something they were already doing. The project lead on the RT3 application for the Kentucky Department of Education explained this phenomenon this way:

> The other thing that was key to our reasoning was, we've always been a state that is very focused on strategic planning anyway, so the way I've always presented this to people is that we didn't write a race to the top application, we simply took our strategic planning application, or our strategic plan, and popped it into the race to the top application. So we didn't, nothing that we wrote in our application was something that we had not already decided we were going to do. So it's like, "wow look at this, it fits perfectly in this space."

This differs from how much of the literature discusses RT3 as an incentive for states to change policy quickly (i.e. Manna & Ryan, 2011). Instead, Kentucky policymakers viewed the state policy as something that fit nicely into RT3, rather than having to adjust things prior to applying. A member of the Kentucky State Board of Education echoed much of the same sentiment by stating:

> I think from my perspective, as a board member and not for the board, it (RT3) was a good opportunity for us to pursue federal funding for what happened to be in our case things that were already going on in the state as a result of Senate Bill 1.

So in this regard, many in Kentucky felt like their state laws fit nicely into what the federal government was trying to do vis-à-vis RT3. Many also spoke of the relatively easy time they had convincing people in Kentucky to support RT3 because so many of the policy areas had already been debated and accepted by the state legislature.

Policy momentum

Many state policymakers agreed with the various policies in RT3, but did not have pre-existing state policies that Kentucky did. As a result, they looked to use the RT3 application as a way of building policy momentum at the state level. The borrowing

strength model of federalism suggests that policymakers at the state level may look to the federal level to strengthen their arguments and/or capacity for a policy (Manna, 2007). In this section the analyses will focus on if, and how, state policymakers used RT3 to strengthen policy arguments at the state level. Borrowing strength suggests that state and federal officials could cooperate to achieve policy ends. For example, Washington policymakers used RT3 as a way of reforming the teacher and principal evaluation systems. In Washington, the Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, when asked about whether RT3 helped incentive state policy reform, explained:

> Yeah, it (RT3) did. I think the incentive for all that RT3 money out there was a big mover in terms of getting the legislature and the superintendents and the districts and everything to really get moving. It really did and helped us to say that we needed to change our evaluation system; we had 99% of our teachers as satisfactory, that there are too many things that are counted in the evaluations that aren't related to student learning. Clearly what counts in what happens in the classroom and what moves kids from point A to point B. So I think it did help.

Clearly, RT3 helped move reform faster at the state level. Many of these policies had been proposed previously in Washington, but RT3 helped to strengthen the argument for why they should be passed. Beyond the financial components of RT3, state policymakers used evidence from other states RT3 applications as justification for passing laws at the state level. In many cases, policymakers emphasized how policy reforms were necessary to be more competitive in the RT3 competition, as well as in the education system more broadly.

In Idaho, a failed RT3 application in round one led to three separate bills that were endorsed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and passed by the state legislature. In this sense, the RT3 application became the educational policy plan of the

future for the Idaho educational system. One of the main authors of the RT3 application in Idaho explains this here:

> But, interestingly, the, what we applied for in that grant did then become three separate bills that were put together as 'students come first.' That included pay for performance, elimination of tenure, and that provided funding for students to receive some sort of personal computing device. Also for students to receive funding to take dual credit courses in high school for college credit. So Idaho did what I think a lot, kind of that western thing about, you know, we take care of our own. So a lot of the things that were in the application then became law.

This is a clear example of borrowing strength. The creation of RT3 by the federal government provided an opportunity, and incentive, to pursue policy reforms. Policymakers then used RT3 to build momentum for passing laws at the state level. The fascinating thing about Idaho was they passed these laws after deciding not to apply in round two of RT3. So clearly the passage of the policies at the state level were not related to trying to attract additional money into the state to pay for schools. Instead, round one provided Idaho policymakers with strong enough justification to move forward on pay for performance, the elimination of tenure, and for moving to expand online options for students. Known as the 'student first laws' these policies are directly related to numerous policy areas of RT3.

There is evidence that some state policymakers borrowed strength to pass educational legislation at the state level. Instead of viewing RT3 as a way to increase capacity through additional funding, these states used the momentum from the federal government to change state law. Officials took a very pragmatic view of RT3 in Idaho and Washington, and used it as a way of achieving their own state ends. Of note, many of these changes in Idaho and Washington at the state level occurred after the RT3 application was submitted. In other words, the application itself helped provide additional

justification for state policy changes. Borrowing strength, in this case, was about using a federal policy (RT3) to strengthen arguments for changes in charter school and teacher evaluations policy.

Policy as a reason not to apply

While many state policymakers enthusiastically supported RT3, others in Texas, Kentucky and Washington opposed the policies within it. As states debated whether or not to pursue these extra federal funds, they had to evaluate a very broad range of policy areas. The two policy areas that were of biggest concern for state policymakers were the expansion of charter schools, and agreeing to join the common core. Both policy areas were a large part of the application, and officials in Washington and Kentucky expressed strong feelings that a state would not be able to win an RT3 award without reform in these areas. As a result, charter school policy and the common core took on a central role in the debate in many states. Further, some policymakers in Kentucky and Idaho expressed a strong belief that RT3 was fundamentally a policy designed for urban districts and states, not for their rural populations.

Table 5: Number of officials who stated policy was a reason not to apply to RT3

	KY	ID	WA	TX
Stated policy component as a reason to not apply (# of respondents)	5	2	3	10
Did not state policy as a reason to not apply (# of respondents)	4	5	7	3
Percentage of total	55	29	30	77

interviewees in the state who described policy as a reason to not apply				

While each state had at least two policymakers mention policy as a reason not to apply to RT3, table 14 shows that Texas clearly had the largest proportion. Of note, Kentucky, Idaho and Washington had more policymakers mention policy as a reason to apply than a reason not to apply. Part of the difficulty of analyzing the policy component is the wide range of topical areas within RT3. Table 14 demonstrates that each state questioned the policies within RT3, at least to some extent.

Charter School Policy

State officials in both Washington and Kentucky expressed concern about the charter school section of RT3. RT3 asked states to increase, or eliminate altogether, the state cap on the number of charter schools allowed in the state. However, neither Kentucky nor Washington had state laws even allowing charters. As a result, each state was at a significant disadvantage in the competition for funds. In Washington, charter school legislation had been turned down on three occasions prior to RT3. One official from the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction explained:

> The first thing that comes to mind is charter schools. Our state had rejected three different efforts on charter schools. There were two citizen initiatives and then there was a legislative effort, but there were enough citizen signatures to have a referendum put on it, and all three of those issues were voted down by the citizens.

The majority of interviewees in Washington emphasized this history of opposition to charter schools. Some officials went beyond explaining the history, and spoke with anger

when the issue came up. For example, the Executive Director of the Washington Education Association stated:

> So, um, you know, that (passing charter legislation) was not going to happen in our state. And if indeed the Race to the Top was tied to charter, we realized that. And that's another one of those high control things from the feds. So whose to say that charter schools, ok, are the way to go? Our state said no, hell no, we're not going there. So within the evaluation context and the charter schools you hit two of our hot buttons. Both the union, ok, does not support charters. Neither does the school boards, ok? And neither do the superintendents, and neither do the principals.

Charters were opposed by many of the most prominent groups within educational policy in the state. Further, the public had turned down ballot measures that would have allowed charters. As a result, the inclusion of charter policy within RT3 was very problematic for policymakers deciding on whether to apply or not. In the end, many policymakers in Washington opposed applying because they did not want charter schools legalized, and did not think that Washington could win an award without it.

In Kentucky, there was similar concern regarding charter school policy. When asked about the opposition to RT3 in the state, Superintendent of Public Instruction Terry Holliday described the situation this way:

> [There was a] Huge voice against charter schools. That's why I could never, we couldn't get it (charters) in the application. Because I couldn't get it (charters) in legislation. But I don't know if I could have even gotten it into the application with legislation because some of the pushback is from our largest urban, Louisville, who has low performing schools, and they just didn't want to see charters come into Kentucky.

Above, Dr. Holliday describes the struggle to reconcile a policy that he knew would not pass in the state. In Kentucky, many wanted to apply to RT3 to increase capacity for existing reform efforts. However, the charter school component made the decision much

more difficult. The case of Kentucky shows how RT3 as policy was difficult to evaluate for many policymakers.

The Common Core

A second policy area that caused some officials to oppose applying for RT3, particularly in Texas, was the common core. RT3 gave points to state applications for agreeing to join the common core state standards consortium, a group that agreed to use new standards that were developed at that national level. Common core became a both a symbol of federal expansion in educational policy, and a practical concern for state officials. As a symbol, the common core represented a loss of state autonomy over schools. As a practical concern, many high ranking Texan officials worried about changing direction on standards, since the state had recently past new state standards just prior to RT3. Bill Hammond, a key player in educational policy in Texas, explained common core this way:

> So the common core, is just, you know, not politically viable here. I mean we've developed our own standards which, best I can understand them, are pretty much in general equally rigorous to the common core. So, the fact that we haven't adopted the common core, to us, is not an issue, in terms of maximizing outcomes. I mean we worked on curriculum, we worked hard on math last year, hired an expert, and testified, and I think that the outcome was that the common core might have been a little bit more coherent, perhaps, in terms of the standards, but I don't think in terms of rigor there was much difference. Which, is a long way of saying that you know, the Governor opposed the common core, therefore, RT3 was not an option.

Hammond clearly states that RT3 was not an option due to the Governor's opposition to the common core. One of the difficulties this statement mentions is how much work Texans had recently done on state standards. Since they had already invested a great amount of time and resources into new standards, many saw the common core as repetitive and unnecessary. There were additional concerns about who had the authority

to control the content of the common core standards. An official from the Texas Education Agency stated:

> With a lot of states pulling out now (of the common core), Texas may have made the right choice on it because the common core is just out there. Like I said, if somebody wants to change it, who gets to? And what, they want to do math and English, and reading? I mean, there's so much more that needs to be done, and it's not even there. We felt like a camel is a horse by committee. That's what common core has turned into. Just a bunch of people with their hand in it, and no one really controls it. And Texas was not going to turn that over to the federal government.

As a policy, the common core was confusing to the officials who had a direct role in determining whether or not to apply to RT3. Some policymakers felt as though the questions they had about common core went unanswered. As a result, many Texan officials opposed RT3 because of the common core. In this respect, the policy within RT3 was a major factor in the decision for Texas to not apply to RT3.

RT3 Would Not Help Rural Schools

Policymakers in Idaho expressed the concern that the USDOE in general, and RT3 more specifically, were not addressing rural districts. The overwhelming majority of districts in Idaho are rural. One policymaker, who had worked in DC, and was involved in Idaho's RT3 decision, stated:

> Having always worked in an urban environment I became acutely aware of the federal government as a whole, the federal policy, that are biased toward urban as opposed to rural. You know, over half of the school districts in the US would be considered rural, and a lot of the policies just simply don't work in a rural situation.

The majority of Idaho policymakers included in the sample brought up the concern about the urban/rural divide. There was a sense of hesitancy in supporting RT3 because it may not represent the best interest of the state as a whole.

Additionally, many policymakers in Idaho, Washington and Kentucky viewed RT3 as a policy that was more designed for urban schools. In Kentucky, this was problematic, as the vast majority of the state is rural. The head of the Kentucky Education Association stated:

> And once you get past the Mississippi the middle of the country tends to be lower population, and high poverty. Rural poverty. The other thing that I think the federal government's model of schooling is that it reflects Arne Duncan's urban bias.

Arne Duncan is used here to describe the perception of RT3, and the USDOE more generally, as having an urban bias. This led some in Kentucky to question whether the state had a legitimate shot at winning funds. If the USDOE was really biased toward urban policy, some believed that submitting an application might not be worth the time.

Officials across states, particularly in Idaho and Texas, used policy rationale as a way of evaluating RT3. However, the range of how RT3 was viewed as a policy varied substantially. While some policymakers in Idaho and Washington viewed RT3 as a way of gaining policy momentum for state reforms, others in Kentucky, Washington and Texas opposed specific parts of RT3. Charter school policy and joining the common core, in particular, made many policymakers very resistant to applying for RT3. In fact, a few individuals in Texas specified that the common core component of RT3 was *the* reason that Texas did not submit an application. Clearly, how policymakers viewed the various policies within RT3 played a key part in whether or not they supported applying.

CHAPTER 8: State Level Findings

The aforementioned analyses focused on the data across the four case study states, and explored whether there was evidence of policy, political, and financial rationale in the decision by policymakers to apply for RT3. This section explores the specific reason(s) for each individual state applying for RT3 in round two.

Kentucky: Expand Capacity

Kentucky applied in both rounds of RT3, and most policymakers felt like the decision was not particularly difficult to make. While there was a very small opposition to participating in RT3, mainly due to a group of conservatives in the state that saw it as an expansion of federal power, the majority across party lines supported the Department of Education's decision to apply. Five themes, or factors, emerged from the data about why Kentucky policymakers applied for RT3 in round two.

Kentucky policymakers stressed that SB 1 fit into RT3 very well. Senate Bill 1, passed before RT3 was announced, was seen as the strategic plan for educational policy in the state. With the passage of SB 1, Kentucky became the first state to formally adopt the common core standards. Additionally, the bill increased the collection of student data, and moved to develop a statewide growth model to teacher and principal evaluations. For policymakers in Kentucky, applying for RT3 was an affirmation of the direction the state was already heading. One state board of education official stated:

> Race to the Top would help to support the ambitious goals that were set in SB1, and that it would be, it would support work that we needed to be engaged in anyway.

This quote is important, as many in Kentucky viewed SB 1 as a very aggressive policy that set high goals for schools.

The first theme, that RT3 fit into what Kentucky policymakers were already trying to do through SB 1, logically leads to the second: the need for increased capacity for these reforms. Kentucky, like most states, was struggling financially when RT3 was announced. As a policy, Kentucky officials were excited because RT3 fit into previous work. However, one of the main draws of applying for the grant was that it could help expedite existing reform efforts. One official directly involved in the discussion about whether to apply to RT3 stated:

> Because we've since 2008, our state money for professional development, textbooks, after school tutoring has all dried up, and it used to be substantial. Our funding for basically school based social service clinics has flat lined. All of the supports that we had hoped when SB 1 based, the financial supports we hoped that SB 1 happen, from the state, dried up. So this appeared to be the best pot of money available to do what we all wanted to do for SB 1. So it really was all about the money. We had the vision about what we wanted to do, we just needed the money.

The explanation here clearly draws the connection between the SB 1 and the need for an increase in capacity through RT3. 7 of the 9 interviewees in Kentucky stressed that the money, or financial components, involved with RT3 played a significant role in why policymakers decided to support an application. When describing these funds, officials mentioned how important, and substantial, the potential $200 million would be for the state. In contrast to other states, they did not indicate an official cost/benefit analysis or discuss long-term implications of accepting the money. The story was straightforward; RT3 money would help Kentuckians pay for reforms they had already begun.

Applying for RT3 was politically important to Superintendent Terry Holliday. Superintendent Holliday saw participation in RT3 as a way to move Kentucky forward.

Through his connections at the US Department of Education, Dr. Holliday said that the RT3, "came as no surprise" when it was announced. Others in Kentucky echoed the sentiment that Dr. Holliday's connections may have led him to know about, and plan for RT3, before it was formally announced. Further, Superintendent Holliday saw it as an opportunity to keep Kentucky in the national conversation about educational policy. As the main author of the Kentucky RT3 application stated:

> He (Terry Holliday) was the one who kind of challenged us to think about whether or not we wanted to apply. He thought it was a great opportunity.

A theme when talking with many of the people involved in the decision to apply to RT3, and educational policy more generally in Kentucky, was that Dr. Holliday was a strong advocate for application. As a national leader in numerous educational groups, Dr. Holliday viewed RT3 as a symbol of a broader strategy to garner national attention, and money, for the state's education system. When discussing RT3 and policy in general, Dr. Holliday mentioned that the state receives 'way more (money)' from philanthropies than they would have received through RT3. While disappointed that were not awarded funds in either of the first two rounds, Dr. Holliday stressed that he was still content that Kentucky had applied. For him, the political costs of not applying were too great. Superintendent Holliday calculated that RT3 was a political opportunity to remain close allies with the USDOE and the foundations that supported the program. By placing himself as the main advocate for Kentucky participation in RT3, Dr. Holliday looked to continue and expand his reputation as a major national player in educational policy.

While the vast majority of RT3 fit nicely into the strategic plan for Kentucky, the issue of charter schools did not. Kentucky has never had a charter school law, and many

officials viewed charter school policy as something that did not fit into Kentucky's policy context. When charter schools came up, many board members and policymakers at the state department of education mentioned how charters don't work in rural settings. Kentucky is a state with only one urban area, Louisville. In terms of deciding whether or not to apply to RT3, policymakers were very open about their opposition to charters. However, this was not a 'deal breaker' policy that it was in other states. Instead, Kentucky officials seemed to oppose charters, recognize that the state would not be able to pass charter legislation, and still support applying to RT3. For Kentucky, the opposition to one of the policy areas did not trump the overall enthusiasm to expand capacity for existing reforms.

A second issue that had some questioning whether to apply for RT3 was that some officials felt that the USDOE, and Arne Duncan, did not understand Kentucky. A number of interviewees mentioned that RT3 seemed to be designed for urban states. For example, the Executive Director of the Kentucky Education Association explained:

> Arne Duncan's department of education gets that. So whether it's SIG money or race to the top or whatever, the department sees things through an urban, I mean sees education through an urban lens. That's sort of big picture view of where I see things and this issue. I can't point to any one specific issue and say, well yeah, race to the top, the requirement for turn around models that people transfer. When you are in a single high school, single middle school district in rural America, so the school is failing and you get rid of your physics teacher, there are no other physics teachers to come in and fill those gaps.

The majority of policymakers included in the sample brought up this general perception. While this didn't seem like an obstacle that led people to oppose applying to RT3, it did provide many to question the program. While some described the issue as rooted in the USDOE generally, others specified Arne Duncan's background in Chicago. The issue for some officials in Kentucky was that Duncan's experience was limited to one very large

city. This led many to express a concern that Arne did not understand the context for Kentucky educational policy. One member of the state board of education vented:

> Then, so that pisses me off about Arne Duncan, and the other thing is Arne, come and read Kentucky education reform because there is an enormous amount of flexibility in KERA that school districts can take advantage of.

This board member described his frustration with the inflexibility of RT3. In his mind, RT3 did not recognize how KERA, the series of 1990 education reforms, as fitting into the RT3 framework. Interestingly enough, many in Kentucky explicitly placed RT3 within the state policy context. However, others seemed to criticize the federal government for not reciprocating. As a result, some expressed hesitation to apply to RT3.

Overall, the data indicate that Kentucky applied for RT3 because state officials decided that RT3 fit into the direction that state policy had been heading already. Policymakers that were directly involved in the writing of the RT3 application emphasized that RT3 was viewed as an opportunity to pay for reforms that were already established through SB1. The decision, therefore, focused on borrowing strength in the form of capacity. State funds for education had been cut repeatedly, and RT3 was seen as a way to fill the budget gap, and to expand current programs.

Idaho: Policy Momentum

The case of why Idaho policymakers chose to apply in round one of RT3, but not in round two, is quite fascinating. While the majority of states made the same decision in each of the rounds of RT3, Idaho policymakers did not. Since there were only a few months between rounds of RT3, the economic and political conditions remained relatively constant. What about round one led key policymakers in Idaho to write off

continuing to pursue additional federal funds? What were the reasons for applying in the first place, and why were those reasons not as persuasive to policymakers the second time around? This section focuses on Idaho's decision to not apply in round two of RT3. As policymakers across the political spectrum clearly indicated, Idaho officials viewed RT3 as a way of gaining policy momentum to pass reforms at the state level. Round one of RT3 also reinforced a negative impression of the federal government.

Like many nationwide, some policymakers in Idaho initially associated RT3 with additional money. For example, the one senior policymaker stated:

> The environment in which RT3 came about was really crucial for states because many states were going through the recession, and Idaho was certainly one of those. Obviously as part of recession there wasn't a lot of discussion about how to improve education, it was more about how do we keep what we have? And RT3 provided part of the impetus to look past just survival and look for the future. And certainly Superintendent Luna is a visionary when it comes to what can be in education and he has a very strong vision in terms of what can occur. So we looked at RT3 as an opportunity to implement his vision with new resources in a time when our state wasn't going to have, didn't have, the resources to do what we wanted to do.

Others noted how the motivation early on when evaluating whether or not to apply to RT3 surrounded the additional money. In this regard, RT3 appeared to get the attention of policymakers within the Idaho Department of Education and the Idaho State Legislature.

However, other policymakers spoke of the hesitation to target RT3 funds. The concern by these folks was that one time money would complicate the financial situation in later years. Some policymakers went so far to describe the RT3 funds as 'seductive' because they delayed reforms to what they referred to as a fundamentally flawed educational finance system. For example, the Executive Director of the State Board of Education explained:

> Sometimes the federal money, or outside money of any kind, can kind of distract you from the goal. In other words, even if the ultimate goal is somewhat similar, often times a federal grant will place in certain requirements that will distract staff efforts and shift you away from progress.

While finances were clearly a reason for some policymakers in other states to pursue funding for RT3, it was not a major factor in Idaho. As some mentioned the initial draw, the finances of RT3 were repeatedly put in the context of one term funding that would not solve the larger issue of systemic reform in the state.

One main reason that Idaho chose not to apply in round two was the negative experiences that state officials had in round one. To understand how this perspective developed over time, it is important to note the conservative nature of the state. Idaho has elected Republican majorities in both chambers of the state legislature, as well as the Governorship. Within Idaho, there is a strong belief in states rights, particularly in education. When RT3 was first announced, there were some who spoke out against the grant program as an expansion of federal power. However, these voices were overshadowed by policymakers who were excited about the possibility of changing the policy direction of the state.

The evaluation comments from Idaho's round one application were used as further evidence that the federal government does not understand the state. For the state with an already rich tradition of championing states rights, the evaluators represented a DC establishment that was removed geographically and philosophically from Idahoans. For the officials who spent time writing the application, one specific issue came to represent the federal government. One of the three anonymous evaluators for Idaho's

application referred to Idaho by the wrong name in the report. As the Chief of Staff for the Governor explained:

> And one of the criticisms that we had for RT3 was that we actually had in one of our reviewers call us by a different state name. Yeah, yeah. They did, they called us Ohio. We felt like a large part of the reviewers were east coast academics. That there wasn't a large western contingency. So we really felt like it played to the east coast, versus the mountain west. I wasn't surprised that we didn't get it because it was very competitive and there are certainly states that are favorites in terms of what they are doing. I think, I was surprised with how low we scored and particularly the reviewer's comments. And then the whole, you guys don't even know who we are. You can't even call us the right name. It was just a really sour experience for us.

While there was hesitation to apply in round one due to the large states rights contingent in Idaho, officials were furious with this reviewer's mistake. It became a powerful symbol for how the federal government viewed Idaho, and how the state might be viewed if it applied in round two. In that regard, there was a sense of inevitability that Idaho would not receive federal funds regardless of the content of the application. How could Idaho successfully win a competition if the evaluators didn't even know its name?

On a more practical note, Idaho policymakers viewed RT3 as a way of gaining policy momentum for reforms they wanted to pass at the state level. According to the borrowing strength model, policymakers at one level of government may look to another level to strengthen arguments and gain momentum for specific policy initiatives (Manna, 2007). Idaho's experience with RT3 fits into this framework very well. In round one of RT3, policymakers at the state level were gathered to discuss how to increase their chances of winning federal funds. This led to conversations about teacher tenure, merit pay, and the expansion of the use of technology within k-12 classrooms. The policies

within RT3 were of specific interest for the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Luna.

For the round one application a group of representatives from the different educational interests groups was brought together to discuss the application. This group discussed the various policy areas, helped write the application, and served as liaisons to their respective constituencies. While the group was not reconvened to discuss round two of the application, the group was used as evidence of collaboration when Superintendent Luna announced his new educational reform plan, formally titled the 'Students Come First' laws. The State Superintendent proposed these laws, commonly referred to as 'the Luna Laws,' with support from the Governor. The series of reforms paralleled many of the policies in RT3. Specifically, three bills were proposed in the Idaho State Legislature. Proposition 1 proposed annual evaluations that were required to have at least 50% measureable student growth for district superintendents, principals, and teachers. Additionally, Prop 1 altered the way teachers contract with districts in several ways including limiting negotiations to salary and benefits only, and allowing the school board to set compensation if there is no agreement reached by June 10th (Cotterell, 2011). The student growth component of Proposition 1 echoes much of the language from the 'great teachers and leaders' section of the RT3 application.

Senate Bill 110, which became Proposition 2, created a pay for performance system for teachers. The system relies on student tests scores each spring, and would award bonus pay for any teacher or principal in a school that had an average score in the top 50 percent statewide. Additionally, the bill allowed local school boards the flexibility to expand the pay for performance system to include incentives for other outcomes (like

graduation rate), hard to fill positions, or for teachers taking on leadership roles (Cotterell, 2011). Proposition 2, as a policy, also strongly resembles the language in the great teachers and leaders section of the RT3 rubric.

The final 'Luna Law' was Senate Bill 1184, or Proposition 3. This bill expanded technology for schools substantially including providing funding for a computer for all high school teachers and students in the state. The bill also expanded the availability of online education courses. Finally, the bill allowed for all post-secondary schools in Idaho to operate charter high schools. The charter piece, in particular, can be directly tied to the RT3 section on creating conditions for successful charter schools.

These three bills represent a policy shift in Idaho. What policymakers continued to emphasize throughout the interviews was that these reform efforts were tried in Idaho prior to RT3, and rejected. In other words, these weren't new ideas taken from RT3. Second, officials remarked that the series of laws that were passed at the state level seemed to come from the RT3 application directly. There was a clear connection from the round one application to the series of students first bills.

There was also a sense that the work of the committee that helped explore and eventually write the RT3 application for round one was used as evidence of support for the students first bills. Some involved with the committee were frustrated, and caught off guard by this. For example, one district superintendent who participated on the committee stated:

> But the ah, he actually, this is an aside, but he (Luna) actually tried to use the work of this committee as support for his laws. Well, the pay for performance thing specifically. Yeah. He (Luna) took that provision from the RT3 grant and that became what was called proposition 3, which was the pay for performance, and the Luna Laws.

The connection between the RT3 application in round one and proposition 3 is clear. Following the failure of the state in round one, Superintendent Luna used specific provisions of the RT3 application to draft legislation. Further, he used the committee, whose sole purpose was to draft an RT3 application, to support his bills at the state level. As a result, RT3 became a means of getting Idaho policymakers to pass reforms.

It is important to note that similar efforts were tried, and failed, in the past in Idaho. For example, in 2008, Superintendent Luna introduced a piece of legislation to create a system of pay for performance. However, that effort failed, as those in the legislature claimed that teachers were not involved in the process of creating the proposal. Interestingly enough, a similar plan was passed through very quickly after Superintendent Luna used the policy momentum, and committee work, from RT3.

The three bills were passed through the Idaho State Legislature, and signed into law by the Governor in 2011. However, all three laws were then petitioned to the voters through the referendum process in 2012. In November of 2012, voters rejected all three propositions.

Idaho policymakers, particularly Superintendent Luna, used RT3 to garner policy momentum and political support for reforms at the state level. There are a number of key components of the story that makes Idaho a fascinating example of borrowing strength. First, Idaho tried to pass some of these policies prior to RT3, and failed to get the legislation passed. This suggests that the support for these policies did not exist in the state. Second, Idaho applied only in round one of the competition. The work of the committee, convened to write the round one application, was then used to justify the creation of legislation at the state level. Idaho policymakers chose not to apply in round

two of RT3 because they felt as though they could get the changes they wanted at the state level without having the federal oversight as designed by RT3. All three of the 'students first' bills passed the legislature very quickly.

However, the policy momentum seemed to be limited to the state legislature. Despite passing through the state legislature quickly, the public did not support the bills in the same regard. When the public voted to overturn all three laws, it sent a clear message about the lack of public support for these policy changes. Borrowing strength, in Idaho, seems to have helped sway public officials. However, the same cannot be said of the public at large. While Idaho serves as a clear example of the state government borrowing strength from the federal government, it also brings up important future questions regarding how the public may respond. Since many states, particularly out west, have a strong history of ballot initiatives and referenda; how the public reacts and interprets borrowing strength is extremely important to understand. Nevertheless, Idaho's experience with RT3 clearly shows how state policymakers used momentum from the federal level to pass legislation through the state legislature.

Washington: Political Pressure

Of the four cases, Washington is the most complex in terms of unpacking how and why the decision was made to apply to RT3. While there was much discussion on whether to apply for round one of RT3, Washington policymakers ultimately decided not to submit an application. However, in round two, Washington did participate. What changed in such a short time? To understand how policymakers shifted gears in a few short months, it is important to unravel the governance structure within educational policy in the state of Washington. Washington elects a Superintendent of Public

Instruction in a statewide election every four years to run the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). As a result, the executive branch in the state of Washington is at times divided between the Governor's Office and the OSPI on issues of educational policy. This is in contrast to states, like Texas, where the Governor appoints the head of the state education department (or in the case of Texas, the Texas Education Agency). When RT3 was announced, it was not clear on whether the Governor's Office or the OSPI would have the authority to make the decision on whether to apply. While the Governor is the head of state, the Superintendent also claims statewide support. This tension played a key role in the complexity of Washington's experience with RT3.

During round one, there were many concerns that Washington would not be able to secure money through RT3. The main sticking point for many policymakers in the state was charter school policy. Washington, like Kentucky, was one of the few states in the country that did not allow charter schools when RT3 was announced. As a result, many in the OSPI were concerned that time spent on preparing an application would not be worth it. In essence, OSPI officials considered the lack of charter schools in the state an issue that could not be overcome. The Superintendent of Public Instruction, Randy Dorn, mentioned that as conversations with the Governor's Office and other policymakers progressed regarding RT3, he continued to be very concerned with Washington's chances of winning an award. Superintendent Dorn decided to reach out to Tom Vander Ark. Vander Ark is a national figure in educational policy who Dorn called, 'one of the most connected people in the country in the business (educational policy).' Dorn stated that he asked Vander Ark directly whether or not Washington could win an award. After 'talking to some of his people' Vander Ark returned to inform Dorn that he

believed that Washington could not compete in RT3 without charters. However, the Governor's Office still wanted to apply in round one. Since the OSPI would ultimately do the work, no application was submitted. There were multiple factors that led to Washington changing course, and applying in round two.

Political Pressure

In round two of RT3, things changed. While the state still did not have charters, the Governor felt political pressure to support President Obama's main educational policy initiative. Governor Gregoire was the first governor to endorse then Senator Obama in the 2008 presidential election, and maintained a close relationship with the President and his staff. As a Democrat, Governor Gregoire wanted to keep these relationships strong, and her party happy. Superintendent Dorn discussing the Governor's stance on RT3, and the conversations he had with her and her staff:

> The Governor made it clear that there was no option not to (apply). Okay? That's just my opinion. I think it was clear that she wasn't going to not apply in the second round. This was about education moving forward, this was about what, the overall agenda from the business community and stuff, this was the right way to go with education and if you don't go there you are going to be left in the dust, sort of thing. And she felt like we had done a tremendous amount of work in STEM high school, moving to science, engineering technology and math. Aviation high school that we have these entities that look different that we are moving forward with those. We have another in Tacoma, so, and this time around she's had discussions with Arne Duncan and you're going to get credit for those types of things.

While the discussions involving whether to apply or not in round one seemed to genuinely be about making a decision collaboratively, the sense that OSPI staff had heading into round two was that the Governor had made up her mind. The political pressures from DC, and the political consequences of not applying, were too great. For example, there was the belief was that if Washington Democrats wanted to support the

Obama Administration; they needed to apply for RT3. Additionally, Washington has a number of businesses and philanthropies that were heavily involved, and invested, in RT3. Of note, the Gates Foundation was publicly in favor of RT3. One example of the close connection between the Gates Foundation and RT3 in Washington is exemplified in one person, Jana Carlisle. Dr. Carlisle was hired as a consultant by the State of Washington to be the project manager for the development and submission process for the round two application. Prior to her three months in that consulting role, Dr. Carlisle served for two years as the Senior Program Officer and Team Leader at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. As she explains in the quote below, the business and foundation communities were very interested in Washington applying to RT3.

> So, what you need to know, there, there was a strong interest from the business community as well as the foundation community in having WA submit an application, but WA did not have, first of all we didn't have a charter law. We also didn't have anything on teacher and principal evaluation and there were several other pieces in terms of intervening in low performing schools with the state superintendents office. So there were a number of things that didn't quite click. So it was kind of a set of contingencies that there was pressure from the advocacy community …

Another example of the influence of philanthropy involvement in Washington educational policy was seen by the role of the McKinsey consultant group during the RT3 application (Butts, 2013). McKinsey, paid for with money from the Gates Foundation, is a firm that focuses mainly on consulting for businesses. Individuals from McKinsey were assigned to analyze the RT3 application and compare them to existing Washington laws. Next, the consultants told Washington policymakers what they should do to get the RT3 money. There were some within the OSPI who felt that the McKinsey workers focused too much on the money aspect of things, and that they lacked expertise in education.

Further, there were some who felt that McKinsey did not understand the political or cultural dynamics of Washington.

It is clear that the foundation community applied pressure, specifically to the Governor's Office, to submit an application in round two. The political pressure applied to the Governor from the Obama Administration, the business community, and the foundations in Washington were key reasons why the state decided to apply to RT3 in round two.

Finances

In Washington, there was no consensus on how money factored into the decision to apply in round two. For some, the money was an important incentive to put in the work of the application. One Assistant Superintendent who was a key author of the application explained:

> That (the financial component of RT3) was a big incentive, as I mentioned earlier. We just felt like we were trying to grasp at straws to come up with money to keep things going and that this would be a wonderful addition funds to help with the reform agenda, but also to help, you know, teachers and kids and line up the curriculum and on and on and on. So, if the money wasn't there, there is no way we would have the same kind of support base.

To some officials, the money played an important part of the decision. In fact, the budget for Washington schools had decreased substantially in the session preceding RT3. The majority of interviewees included in the sample stressed the importance of the funding to the decision to apply, as well as supporting RT3 more generally.

Other policymakers in Washington were not convinced that the money was all that important to the decision. In fact, a representative from the Washington State School Directors Association, a group that represents the district superintendents, emphasized

that the money may not be worth all the policy changes, and strings attached, that came with RT3. She stated:

> And so it was kind of like, well, and I think that that's where the school boards themselves were not enticed with that money because they knew that there's always strings attached. And is the money worth the amount of policy changes, and change in the community? Change in what was going to happen, was that going to be worth it? Was it change their community wanted? And I think that's where the school boards said, you know, we don't think our communities really want to go there. So it's not worth it to us, even though we are financially strapped, and wow this would be very good, we could put all these programs in and have all this support for the kids, but, there's a price we pay. So I think it was really about the community needs vs. the financial investment. And I think that most all the boards said, you know, that it's not going to be worth it.

What is interesting here is that even though school boards were facing budget cuts, most did not see RT3 as a way to improve things. Instead, RT3 money was placed in the context of the policy changes and loss of autonomy. Washington, in this respect, differed greatly from other states. Superintendent Dorn went one step further, stating:

> I wouldn't say that money inserted it that much, because, it would be nice to have to do professional development, but we had already, we were kind of in a unique spot. I had just taken over as Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Superintendent Dorn's perspective was shaped by his personal view that cuts to education were necessary and unavoidable. Since he had just taken office as superintendent, he stated that he anticipated having to make changes to the education budget. As a result, his stance was that RT3 should not be viewed through a financial lens. Instead, Superintendent Dorn focused on the policy and politics of the reform. It seems then; that the finances played a small role for some involved in the decision to apply for RT3, but was not a main factor.

Policy

Policymakers repeatedly focused on charter schools and teacher evaluations as the two major policy areas involved in the decision to apply to RT3. The grant application included points for tying a measure of student growth to teacher and principal evaluations. While policymakers spoke in favor of reforming the evaluation system, they discussed how the reforms were passed much more quickly due to RT3. For example, Superintendent Dorn explained:

> And again, I agree about the evaluation system. I think that the new accountability system, some of those pieces, probably the common core. I think those things probably would have happened but it would have been a longer term, probably 3-5 or even 7 years rather than just six months.

Here, the Superintendent suggests that many of the policy areas were rushed through the state legislature as a way of increasing the possibility that the state would land an RT3 grant.

Senate Bill 6696 was designed to improve Washington's chances of winning a RT3 award. The bill altered the school accountability structure by increasing the use of a statewide data system and assessment systems to monitor and evaluate student achievement. The bill also required the state to take action to identify and rank the lowest achieving schools, using much of the same language the federal government did in the RT3 application. SB 6696, passed during the 2010 legislative session prior to round two of RT3, also included an expansion of alternative route certification for teachers and principals.

Washington has a long history of proposing, and rejecting charter schools from coming into the state. While the business and philanthropic groups have pushed for charters schools in the state, many of the other groups invested in educational policy in

the state have rejected them. Advancing policy, particularly in the areas of teacher evaluation and charter schools, was an important factor in Washington's decision to apply in round two of RT3. As one senior official in Washington at the OSPI stated:

> We felt like it was important for us to push the policies, they were the right thing to do, and even if we didn't get the grant, we would be able to get the word on the street, so to say, that we were a state agency interested in adopting one or more of the Obama/Duncan initiatives, and that we would certainly be also, politically, get the support of the business communities and the governor's office as well to kind of improve education as well. So it kind of came down to politics, you know, and a little bit of the one price glory. But even when we made the decision I think we still realized that it would be difficult to envision something where we still ended up winning.

Policymakers viewed the application as a means to a different end. Instead of viewing an application as submitting something to the federal government in the hopes of landing additional funds for education, many officials emphasized that the application would help pass policy at the state level, regardless of whether the state won funds or not. Since there was agreement in both the Governor's Office and the OSPI regarding reforming teacher evaluations, the application just became a way to develop more policy momentum in the state legislature.

Charter school policy is one of the most contentious educational policy within Washington, and nationally. The Washington Education Association has opposed charter school efforts every time they have come up in the state. Voters voted down laws that would have created charter schools in Washington in 1996, 2000, and 2004 (Butts, 2013). Additionally, the Washington House of Representatives passed charter legislation in 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, and 2004 (Dorn, 2013). Despite these efforts, Washington continued to be one of the few states nationally that did not establish charter schools. A key part of the RT3 rubric was charter schools. In round one, Superintendent Dorn

specifically mentioned that Washington would not have a chance at winning an award without charters. While this belief existed in round two as well, the Governor pushed back. The Governor's Office emphasized that they believed that Washington could win based on their strong record with STEM education. The Legislature used the RT3 application as justification to introduce charter bills in both chambers. While both the State House and Senate had hearings on the bills, neither was passed into law. A coalition of interests groups came together and filed a citizen initiative in 2012 (Blankinship, 2012). Did RT3 change the charter issue in Washington? Some policymakers believed it did. The Executive Director of the Washington Association of School Administrators commented on this by saying:

> The charter school citizen initiative, I think, it was very close, and it passed. There was a lot of money behind it, and because of RT3, there was a sense of inevitability that hadn't been there before. So I'm really doubtful that it would have passed had our RT3 application not been rejected and that rejection clearly characterized, as "we didn't get funding because we didn't have charter schools, and clearly we are out of step with the rest of the nation." So that piece, I would say no.

Charter schools, developed momentum coming out of the RT3 competition. The rejected RT3 application was used to advance a charter agenda that had been in the state for many years. In this regard, charter school policy was not a reason for applying, but used as a reason for failure to secure RT3. Initiative 1240, which allowed 40 charter schools to open in the state, was passed by with 50.8% of the vote.

The decision to apply in round two of RT3 in Washington came down to political pressure, and an opportunity to advance policy. The Governor wanted to maintain a strong relationship with the Obama Administration, and saw no reason to oppose the president's main educational initiative. Further, there was political pressure from the both

the business and philanthropic communities to push forward the reform agenda of charter schools and teacher evaluations. While the possibility of federal money did not play a central role in the decision, gaining policy momentum to pass reforms quickly did. Specifically, Washington policymakers emphasized how the policy changes could be passed very quickly as a result of applying for RT3. Because the OSPI was able to use RT3 as justification for moving legislation quickly, teacher evaluation reforms were passed despite resistance from teacher groups. Washington, then, was able to borrow strength from the federal government to change policies at the state level that they were not previously able to change. While the state did not 'win' funds in round two, policymakers did achieve their goals of policy reforms and maintaining a strong political connection with the Obama Administration.

Texas: Politically opposed

Texas politics might be summed up best by the common statement, 'don't mess with Texas!' Texans have a long history of state pride that borders on obsession. This overzealousness has led to a political ideology that favors states rights ad nauseam. In fact, Texas has a strong history of independence. In 1835, for example, Texas gained its independence from Mexico, which established the Republic of Texas (Zinn, 1980). It took Texas until 1845 to formally join the United States (Zinn, 1980). This short-lived self-governance has created a strong ethos in Texans to this day that prioritizes independence, and questions any intervention from the outside. It is with this context in mind that policymakers in Texas were faced with the decision on whether or not to apply to RT3.

Another important part of the history leading up to RT3 in Texas is that federal educational policy has replicated Texan policy in the 21st Century. Since George W. Bush was elected President when he was the sitting Governor of Texas, he brought many of the same people who worked on education reform in Texas to Washington, DC. President Bush and USDOE officials referenced the success of accountability reforms in Texas as evidence for supporting NCLB when it was proposed in 2001. The 'Texas Miracle,' which credited state educational reform efforts for dramatically improving student achievement, became a part of the national dialogue on school reform (Booher-Jennings, 2005). The federal government was clearly using the Texan educational system of testing and accountability as an exemplar for others states.

Skepticism of the federal government

Despite general support for NCLB and President Bush, Texans still had the strong political and philosophical belief in state's rights. This view came through when policymakers discussed how they evaluated whether or not to apply for RT3. For many, RT3 represented an attempt by the federal government to extend its power and influence over Texas. One official from a prominent Texas think tank stated:

> I'm hesitant to put it in these terms, but I think that part of the reason we've really rejected this (RT3) was an ideological position. You know, I think that Texas tends to be mistrustful of any federal interference in the state education system. So I think that the initiatives like RT3 are kind of viewed as, if we take the federal dollars, with the federal dollars are going to come federal strings.

The issue of trust was something that was consistently brought up by Texans officials when discussing the role of the federal government in educational policy. As policymakers discussed RT3, there seemed to be confusion regarding how applying, or

winning, might impact governance and autonomy in the future. One senior official in the Texas Education Agency put it this way:

> I think that the largest concern, that I heard, was concern about giving up a level of control at the state, from the state side, the concern was that the state board of education has the authority to write the Texas curriculum, and we couldn't do anything that would usurp that authority in any way.

Because the issue of who has authority over curriculum was up for interpretation, many in Texas assumed that meant the federal government would take it away from states. This belief fed into the larger notion that RT3 was just a policy that was really trying to take power and autonomy away from Texas. Others pointed to the broad issue of rejecting most things from the federal government as a reason for opposition to RT3. The Director of the House Education Committee explained the ideological opposition to the federal government this way:

> Um, but it (RT3) just sort of got tied into the feds are going to come in and tell us what to do, and common core. We were at the beginning of common core development, and particularly peaked with sort of, well if the feds want us to it, then we don't want to do it, sort of mentality. And it's not even just in education policy. You know, we didn't set up a health exchange and we didn't take the Medicaid expansion, so it bleeds into other policy areas as a philosophy.

Of note, the basic argument here is that if the federal government is for it, Texan policymakers will tend to oppose. This seems sophomoric, but came up in the majority of interviews. A key factor in the decision to not pursue RT3 funds in either round one or two was the philosophical opposition to the federal government.

Perry's presidential ambition

A second major factor in the decision to not apply to RT3 in Texas was strictly political. Governor Perry, who would run for president in the 2012 election, saw RT3 as

an opportunity to gain political support from the base of the Republican Party. The Tea Party, a libertarian subset of the Republican Party, also came out strongly against the expansion of the federal government, and played a key part in the Republican primary. RT3, then, became a powerful way for Governor Perry to send a message to voters. The decision to not apply to RT3 then, was placed into a larger political strategy by Governor Perry. Further evidence for this claim comes from Governor Perry's book, *Fed Up*. Written in 2010, *Fed Up* outlined Perry's hardline stance against the expansion of the federal government. Perry went so far as to emphasize that, "the academic standards of Texas are not for sale" (Perry, 2010, 88). His book was used as a tool to expand his national recognition prior to the 2012 presidential election. As one former Texas Education Agency senior official stated when asked why Texas did not apply for RT3:

> He, you know Gov. Perry ran very much on a states rights, federal overreach platform. If you look at his book, Fed Up, it's pretty much an ultra conservative book about the overreach of the federal government. The overreach of the federal government, and one of the departments he was going to eliminate, to the extent that any president can eliminate any department, was education. He indicated he would fight to eliminate the department of education.

What was clear to many senior level officials and state legislators in Texas was Governor Perry viewed RT3 through the prism of the 2012 presidential election. This political calculation heavily weighed on the executive branch decision not to pursue the grant. Another state legislator discussed Perry's political strategy.

> It's not resistance to change. It's a very, this is a Governor who suggested that secession might be a viable option. This isn't resistance to change as much as it's an anti-Washington crusade. An anti-Washington sentiment. You know, it has not ever in my time been a bad idea for a politician, a state politician, to run against Washington DC.

The emphasis here is important. RT3 was not rejected due to a resistance to something that was new by the federal government. Instead, the idea was to frame Perry's political message as anti-Washington. Taken together, these quotes place RT3 in a larger context of Governor Perry's political ambition. Policymakers who worked directly for the Governor, others who were involved in discussions about RT3, and still others elected to the state legislature continually referenced how the Governor placed RT3 in the larger context of state/federal government relations. As someone with a very strong states rights ideology, Governor Perry rejected participating in RT3 to send a message to Republican primary voters throughout the country. This political motivation was an important factor in the RT3 decision.

The Common Core

While political ambition, and political ideology, were the primary factors, the common core component of RT3 was a smaller factor in the decision to not apply. While nearly everyone I interviewed spoke of the opposition of common core related to RT3, people interpreted the issue of common core differently. For example, one former senior official in the Texas Education Agency stated:

> In my opinion, Texas would have been, the leadership would have been more open if the strings that connected it to common core were not there.

Of note, this policymaker indicated that the leadership would have been more open to RT3 without the common core, suggesting that the common core was not the deciding factor for the decision to not apply. There were other policymakers that placed the common core in a more of a pragmatic context. As a Texas Education Agency official noted:

> (We) Did not want to sign onto the common core because Texas had spent hundreds of millions of dollars developing it's own standards, that other states had not done. Texas had spent $100 million on textbooks, as you probably know. Until recently we kind of drove the textbook companies. So, Texas didn't feel like they should copy other standards and wait for standards to be developed when Texas already has their own and if you know anything about Texas it's the greatest state ever.

This official chose to focus on the fact that Texas has just developed new state standards. The common core, then, would be re-doing work. From a very practical standpoint, the duplication of efforts in such a major policy area was problematic. This official has stressed how much money Texas had spent on textbooks. The issue of the common core was about establishing standards, but would also have very important, and expensive, ramifications for the future of textbooks. Historically, Texas has been one of the few states that approved textbooks at the state level, which has driven the textbook market to react to Texas state standards (Ravitch, 2010). So the common core, then, threatened the relationship between the textbook companies and the Texas state government. Governor Perry wrote, "I turned down the money (RT3) because under the program we would have been required to adopt national standards without knowing what they would be and doing so would have further inserted Washington into the Texas classroom" (Perry, 2010, 166). The common core was the only specific policy within RT3 that was listed as a reason to not participate in RT3 by any of the interviewees. It was relevant as both a symbol of the federal government expansion and a concrete policy concern for many throughout the Texan Government.

Implementation Costs

Another concern for policymakers was the cost of implementing RT3. While many policymakers in other states mentioned that RT3 was attractive because it could

bring additional funds to help educational budgets, Texan officials told a different story. In fact, officials in the Texas Education Agency ran a cost benefit analysis that suggested that participating would cost Texas 'billions' in long-term costs. Governor Perry used the cost benefit analysis as justification for not applying for RT3 in his press conference. He also wrote, "And more than that (the common core), it (RT3) would have cost us (Texas) some $3 billion to change all our textbooks and materials to comply with the Washington standards" (Perry, 2010, 166). However, no formal cost benefit analysis was ever released to the public. When asked about how the leadership in the state viewed RT3, one senior official at the Texas Education Agency stated:

> Texas leadership is adamant about abandoning state standards and adopting new nationalized standards potentially costing Texas taxpayers $3 billion, and would likely weaken the rigorous college and career ready standards and assessments already in place in the state.

While there was no official realize of where this estimate of long-term costs came from, officials repeatedly used the $3 billion figure when discussing RT3 with me, and in the press. There was also a general sense that the common core would dilute the state standards. When asked about how the Commissioner of Education, Robert Scott, discussed RT3 with his staff, one senior official within the Texas Education Agency stated:

> And Robert, he made the point early on, when we began to have the discussion about the common core standards for math, language arts, and of course science. Robert's position was that it made no sense for Texas to participate in that because of the costs.

The financial calculation was that RT3 would lead to higher long-term costs. The only insight that was ever used to support this argument was that the common core would lead

to changes in textbooks and tests. In part, this was due to the timing of RT3, since Texas had just re-written many of the state standards, and authorized new textbooks off those standards. However, the numbers were never substantiated beyond that. Policymakers seemed to discuss costs as a secondary rationale for not applying for RT3. Similar to the issue of the common core, the financial calculation supported the political and ideological opposition to the expansion of the federal government.

The story of the Texas decision to not apply to RT3 is a story about ideological opposition to the expansion of the role of the federal government combined with political opportunism of Governor Perry. State policymakers from the executive and legislation branches emphasized how RT3 fit into the larger state philosophy of questioning the federal government. With the presidential election gearing up for Governor Perry, he saw RT3 as a major way to distance himself from the Obama Administration, and gain credibility leading into the Republican primary. The common core became a powerful symbol of an expanding federal government. As a policy, it was used not to rationalize not applying, but as additional evidence. The potential long-term costs were another factor, but did not seem to be the primary reason to not apply. Overall, the strong political tradition of wanting Texas to keep as much autonomy as possible led to an overwhelming majority of policymakers to never seriously consider applying for RT3.

CHAPTER 9: Conclusion

Limitations

This study had a number of important limitations. Like many studies of state politics, the study lacks a large sample size. While this can be expected of a case study approach, it is still a concern. Additionally, the study's findings are not statistically generalizable. However, the sampling strategy was designed to explore differences in states that made different decisions across the four cells created by combining the decisions in the first two rounds. While the sampling strategy did help in the selection of states, it may have influenced the results in unknown ways. For example, the two states that applied only in one of the two rounds, Idaho and Washington, borrowed strength in the form of capacity. While this was unanticipated, it may be a function of the structure of the study design. In a similar vein, Kentucky borrowing license does not indicate that other states, which applied in both rounds, also saw RT3 as an opportunity to increase license. Therefore, it is unclear how the sampling strategy impacted the results of the study.

A second limitation of this study is a concern for any historical analyses. The majority of the research, and all of the interviews, occurred in 2013. As a reminder, RT3 was announced in 2009, and applications were due in 2010. Interviewees may forget their own perspective, or their ideas about why the decision was made might be influenced by events after the decision (Becker, 2007). In this light, this is less a study about why the decision was made to apply in 2010, and more a study about what

policymakers *think* it was about in 2013. It is unclear how policymakers may have been influenced by the allocation, and implementation, of RT3 in some states by 2013. For example, Governor Perry's political ambitions were known in 2010, but in 2013 officials knew that he in fact did run for president. Therefore, what may have been suspicions about his future political ambitions were affirmed, possibly leading to people overemphasizing the importance of it back in 2010.

In a related note, it is important to consider that the study relied heavily on data from personal interviews. While the semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility, they also relied on honesty on the part of those being interviewed. To mitigate this concern, I triangulated the data through newspapers, government documents, and other interviews. In many cases, interviewees had documented responses to RT3, from press releases or other public documents, which confirmed their statements. Regardless, the concern about honesty is still a concern.

Finally, the author recognizes that his personal experience with RT3 may have influenced his perception. As an elected school board member, in a state not included in this study, the author was involved in discussions about whether or not one small school district should sign off on the state's RT3 application. This experience helped provide context of how policymakers may have been thinking about RT3, but it may have also led to assumptions heading into this study that were not warranted.

Contribution to the literature

This study explores how state education leaders make decisions about how to proceed in the federal context. More specifically, it is a study that analyzes RT3 through the theoretical frame of borrowing strength. There is evidence that states borrowed

strength from the federal government through RT3 as a way of expanding capacity to pay for existing reform efforts, or build policy momentum. However, the increase in capacity or policy momentum did not overcome concerns of losing autonomy for some policymakers. Many officials questioned whether the short-term increase in capacity would really be worth the long-term costs associated with reforms. Finally, some policymakers could not overcome the long-held philosophical belief in a limited federal government when they evaluated RT3.

Differences emerged across the four categories of states in the sample. Texas, the no-no state, held strong to the philosophical belief in the limited role of the federal government. This suggests that there are state policymakers, and perhaps states more generally, who will not pursue optional reforms in the future. Despite policy agreement on many of the initiatives within RT3, Texas policymakers were not willing to move in a direction that they viewed as expanding the federal role in education. On the other end of the spectrum, Kentucky, the yes-yes state, held strong in the desire to borrow strength in the form of capacity. Of note, both Washington and Idaho applied to RT3 to gain policy momentum. Neither of these states applied in both rounds, suggesting that the discussion in one round within states may have been enough to garner the desired momentum to pass legislation. In contrast, Kentucky continued to apply because increased capacity could only be secured by 'winning' a grant. Federal officials may better predict state behavior in the future if they can anticipate whether states are viewing a program as a way of increasing capacity or policy momentum.

This study provides important implications for state policymakers looking to navigate federal programs in the future. The evidence from this research suggests that it

is easier for states to borrow strength in the form of policy momentum than for capacity. Idaho and Washington, for example, were able to pass reforms that were previously rejected at the state level, in part due to the extensive discussions surrounding RT3. However, the competitive nature of the program made borrowing capacity, in the form of additional funding, from the federal government difficult. In the future, state policymakers should understand that borrowing policy momentum is easier, and more predictable, than borrowing capacity.

Federal policymakers can learn from this study as well. While many state officials commented that the money was the initial draw to the program, most emphasized that it was not a main reason to apply. Kentucky was the only state in the sample to list the financial components of RT3 as a main reason to apply. Federal policymakers should be encouraged that RT3 allowed for substantial policy momentum, creating changes in policy in Idaho, Washington, and Kentucky that were previously rejected. As one state official in Washington stressed, the federal government provided 'cover' for states to change controversial laws. Federal officials should also be encouraged by the amount of policy change that RT3 created in a short timeline. The sample states dramatically altered teacher evaluation systems, state standards, and teacher preparation programs within six months. This led one department of education employee in Kentucky to claim that there had never been a federal policy (within education) that created as much change in as little time as RT3.

Policymakers at the federal level should take note that small mistakes can make a large difference. State policymakers in Kentucky, Idaho, and Texas all questioned the federal governments intentions and role in education. Idaho officials, in particular,

repeatedly cited how one reviewer referred to Idaho by the wrong name. This was viewed as a symbol of a disconnect between the USDOE and Idaho. In the future, officials at the federal level should take additional precautions to avoid such mistakes. Some state policymakers, it seems, are looking for any evidence of USDOE naivety to confirm their suspicions about the federal government.

The study also demonstrates that communication could be improved between levels of government. For example, states calculated the costs of RT3 very differently. While some differences between state costs projections can be anticipated, the variation between states was striking. In the future, federal policy makers could specify projected costs as a way of trying to minimize this variation. Obviously costs will differ across states, but the estimates across states were not close to one another. In fact, some policymakers contended that RT3 would help the financial situation of the state, while others bemoaned the long-term repercussions of winning a grant. For example, officials in Texas claimed that RT3 would end up costing the state $3 billion, while Kentucky policymakers emphasized how the state needed the additional federal funds. Regardless of which policymakers are correct in terms of the costs of RT3, what is clear is that state policymakers were unsure of how RT3 may impact the state budget.

Future Research

State policymakers are forced to make complex decision when evaluating how to interact with the federal government. While some work has analyzed the relationship between state and federal policymakers, very limited research has explored how local officials think about state, or federal, policy. Researchers should look for ways to study

educational federalism at each level in the future. As policy has shifted to the state and federal levels, how are local school board members interpreting these changes?

Future work should also explore how borrowing strength works in policy areas outside of education. For example, the federal and state governments have a unique and similarly complex history and relationship in health care. Do state's borrow strength in terms of capacity or policy momentum from the federal government within Medicaid policy? Perhaps the directionality of borrowing strength in health care also moves from the state to the federal government. Borrowing strength is an important theoretical framework to explore federalism, but it has been largely untested outside of educational policy.

Third, research on borrowing strength has analyzed policy from the federal level down. However, the theory may work for policy to gain momentum from the local level up as well. Future research should look to evaluate how federal policymakers borrow strength, through policy momentum, from local and/or state policy. For example accountability reform expanded dramatically at the state level in the 1980s. These reforms were the policy foundation of the NCLB law. Future work should look to expand the existing literature on borrowing strength by exploring how federal officials gain policy momentum from state efforts.

Finally, there will be an opportunity to explore federalism within education further as the federal government continues to delay the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act. The last reauthorization, in 2001, dramatically expanded the role of the federal government in educational policy. Recent developments, including the NCLB waivers, which have allowed states more flexibility from federal

regulations, suggest that the tide is ebbing back toward state policy. However, Congress is bound to act on ESEA eventually, and may not want to allow the executive branch the authority to alter policy to the degree they have through the NCLB waivers. Regardless, educational federalism will remain an important topic for research to explore.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Table 6: Race to the Top Criteria for Evaluating Applications

Category	Number of Points
Great Teachers and Leaders	**138**
Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58
Equitable distribution of teachers and principals	25
Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers-principals	21
Providing effective support to teachers and principals	14
State Success Factors	**125**
Articulating state's education reform agenda and LEA's part	65
Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, sustain proposed plans	30
Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30
Standards and Assessments	**70**
Developing and adopting common standards	40
Supporting transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20
Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10
General Selection Criteria	**55**
Ensuring successful conditions for high performing charters/innovative schools	40
Making education funding a priority	10
Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5
Turning Around the Lowest Achieving Schools	**50**
Turning around the lowest achieving schools	40
Intervening in the lowest achieving schools and LEA's	10
Data Systems to Support Instruction	**47**
Fully implement statewide longitudinal data system	24
Using data to improve instruction	18
Accessing and using state data	5
Prioritization of STEM Education	**15**
TOTAL	**500**

Table 7: State RT3 Designation

	Applied in Round 1 and 2	Applied in Round 1 only	Applied in Round 2 only	Did not apply either round
States	AL, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CN, DC, FL, GA, HA, IL, IA, KY, LA, MA, MI, MO, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NY, CN, OH, OK, PA, RI, SC, UT, WI	ID, IN, KS, MN, OR, SD, VA, WV, WY	MD, ME, NV, WA	AK, ME, MS, ND, TX, VE
Number of states	30	9	4	6
*TN and DE excluded as winners of round 1. Total n= 51 (50 states plus Washington, D.C.)				

State RT3 designation: Descriptive Statistics

Round 1 (Applications due January 19, 2010; Winners announced March 4, 2010)
Applied- 41
Did not apply- 10
Applied non-finalist-24
Applied finalist- 17
Applied won- 2

R2 (Applications due June 1, 2010; Winners announced August 24, 2010)
Total Applied- 34
Total Did not apply (excluding previous winners)- 15
Applied R2, did not apply R1- 4
Applied finalist R2, applied R1- 30
Applied finalist R2, finalist R1- 14 (Colorado, Washington DC, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and South Carolina)
Applied finalist R2, did not apply R1- 1
Applied won R2, finalist R1- 8
Applied won R2, applied not finalist R1- 1
Applied won R2, did not apply R1- 1
Applied non-finalist R2, did not apply R1- 3
Applied non-finalist R2, finalist R1- 0
Applied non-finalist R2, applied non-finalist R1-12 (Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah, Wisconsin)
Applied finalist R2, applied non-finalist R1- 4
Did not apply R2, did not apply R1- 6
Did not apply R2, applied R1- 8 (Idaho, Indiana, Minnesota, Oregon, South Dakota, Virginia, West Virginia, Wyoming)
Did not apply, finalist R1- 2
*bold indicates a proposed group for one state selection

Table 8. Data Sources

	Examples of Data Source
Interviews	State Superintendents, Governors, State legislative education committee members, union president
RT3 Documents	Round 1 application, Round 2 application, public meeting notes
Funding	- per pupil state funding - changes in funding over time

Table 9: Interview participants across states, by position

Title	Kentucky	Idaho	Washington	Texas
Superintendent/Commissioner of Education (state level)	X		X	X
Chair of the State Board of Ed	X			
President of Education Association	X	X	X	X
Superintendent Association Representative	X	X	X	X
Superintendent (district level)	X	X	X	X
Member of the State Board	X			X
Assistant State Superintendent		X	X	X
State Legislator		X		X
Total N	9	7	10	13

Table 10: List of interviewees, by state

State	Individual	Title (During RT3)	Date
Kentucky			
	Terry Holliday	Commissioner of Education	6/14/13
	David Karem	Chair KY Board of Education	6/14/13
	Mary Blankenship	President KY Education Association	6/26/13
	Jonathan Parrent	Member State Board of Education	6/18/13
	David Cook	RT3 Lead and Primary Contact KDE	6/18/13
	Cindy Heine	Prichard Committee	6/26/13
	Jeff Hawkins	ED KY Valley Education Cooperative	6/24/13
	Wilson Sears	KY Assoc. of School Superintendents	6/28/13
	Lija McHugh	Consultant, Bridgespan Group	7/2/13
Washington			
	Randy Dorn	Superintendent of Public Instruction	8/8/13
	Dan Steele	Gov't Affairs Dir. WA Assoc. of School Admin.	9/6/13
	Bill Keim	ED WA Assoc. of School Admin	9/6/13
	Jonelle Adams	ED WA State School Dir. Association	8/8/13
	Alan Burke	WA Deputy Superintendent	8/6/13
	Jennifer Wallace	ED Professional Ed Standards Board	8/9/13
	Bob Butts	Ast. Superintendent for Early Learning	8/6/13
	LaSenda Young	Washington Education Association	8/8/13
	Jana Carlisle	Partnership for Learning	8/9/13
	Jessica Vavrus	Ast. Superintendent for Teaching and Learning	8/6/13
Idaho			
	Marybeth Flachbart	Deputy Superintendent	7/2/13
	Mike Rush	ED State Board of Education	7/24/13
	Luci Willits	Chief of Staff- Dept. of Education	7/31/13
	Rob Winslow	ED State Superintendents Association	10/11/13
	Robin Nettinga	ED Idaho Teachers Association	7/30/13
	John Goedde	State Senator, Chair Sen. Education Committee	9/6/13
	Linda Clark	Meridian County Superintendent	9/3/13
Texas			
	Robert Scott	Commissioner of Education	10/23/13
	James Golson	Texas Public Policy Foundation	10/14/13
	Marian K. Wallace	Dir. Texas Senate Ed. Committee	10/9/13
	David Anthony	Raise Your Hand Texas	10/15/13
	Bill Hammond	Texas Association of Business	10/17/13

Table 10 (cont'd)

Texas	Jenna Watts	Dir. of the House Ed. Committee	10/15/13
	Jennifer Canaday	Assoc. of Texas Prof. Educators	10/16/13
	Rueben Longoria	Texas Association of School Boards	10/28/13
	David P Anderson	Texas Education Agency	10/18/13
	Jerel Booker	Texas Education Agency	10/24/13
	Scott Hochberg	State Representative, Chair House Education Subcommittee	10/23/13
	Amanda Brownson	Texas Education Agency- Finance Department	10/23/13

Interview Protocol State Decision Makers
* Indicates that the question is vital, and will be asked. All others will be asked if time allows.

I. Background

1. *What is your formal title and how were you involved in RT3?
2. *What do you think about RT3?
3. *Why did STATE NAME HERE decide to apply for RT3 funds in round 2?
4. *How did you think RT3 funds would help education in STATE NAME HERE?
    a. Did you think there were any drawbacks to applying?
5. *Was there widespread debate about applying or not?
6. *As you talked with others about RT3, what were the main issues that came up?
7. How did you first hear about RT3?
8. What was initial reaction? Did you view of RT3 change?
9. Did you involvement change between round 1 and 2 of RT3?

II. Political

1. *Who were the leading voices in favor/and opposed to application and what were they saying?
    a. NOTE: Follow up questions on intergovernmental relations if discussed by respondents when answering above question.
2. *Which interests groups were involved with the RT3 discussions? Were these groups chosen, or did they insert themselves into the process?
3. *What should the role of the federal government be in education?
4. *How do you think states and the federal government should work together on education issues?
5. If you were to redesign the RT3 program, what would you change? Why?
6. Was RT3 a publicly popular program? Why or why not?
7. How did party leaders respond to RT3? Why?
8. Do you hope to see more federal programs like RT3? Why or why not?
9. What are your thoughts on competitive grants between the states?

IV. Policy

1. *Do you think that RT3 will improve schools in (insert state)? Why or why not?
2. *How would winning RT3 in Round 2 influence educational policy efforts in [insert state]?
3. I'm going to run through a couple of the specific components or RT3, and I want you to tell me if you support or oppose them, and provide rationale for why.

Table 12 (Continued)

4. *Are the mandated components of RT3 good policies to improve educational outcomes?
    a. The Great teachers and leaders section (improving teacher/principal effectiveness based on performance pay, equitable distribution of teachers/principals, providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers/principals, providing effective support to teachers/principals, improving effectiveness of teachers and principal preparation programs)

Interview Protocol State Decision Makers **(**cont'd)

b. State Success Factors (articulating state's education reform agenda and LEA participation, building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans, demonstrate significant progress in raising student achievement and closing gaps)
c. Standards and Assessments (Developing and adopting common standards, supporting transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments, developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments)
d. General Selection Criteria (ensuring successful conditions for high performing charters and other innovative schools, making education funding a priority)
e. Turning Around the lowest achieving schools
f. Data systems to support instruction (fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system, using data to improve instruction, accessing and using state data)
g. Prioritizing STEM

V. Financial

1. How were the financial components of RT3 discussed?
2. Was the large amount of money available a significant point of discussion?
3. How did STATE NAME HERE want to use the additional funds?

VI. Conclusion

1. *Based on what you know now about RT3, would you apply again? Why or why not?
2. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments about RT3 and your state?
3. *Here is a list of individuals that I am interviewing to understand the influences of various factors on the state. Who else would you recommend I talk with?

Coding Scheme

Hypothesis 1- State made RT3 decision based on political factors and vision of federalism

1. Political- politics of federalism and states relating to federal gov't, any mention of federal role
    - A. Not the federal gov't role, turf war
    - B. Wanted/needed the help
    - C. Competition with other states
        - i. Positive mention 'we wanted to compete'
        - ii. Negative mention 'we knew we couldn't, or didn't want to compete'

Hypothesis 2- State made RT3 decision based on contents of the policy

2.Policy (as a reason to apply or not)
    - A. Had policies already
        - i. As reason to apply
        - ii. As reason not to apply
    - B. Needed policy momentum to get policies through (borrowing strength)
    - C. Would hinder states ability to pursue policy goals
    - D. Didn't like policies

Hypothesis 3- State made RT3 decision based on financial calculations

3. Fiscal
    - A. State budget shortfall/ needed the money
    - B. Timing (of when the money was available)
        - i. Positive
        - ii. Negative
    - C. Too costly long term (not worth the money)

Hypothesis 4- Decision wasn't about state; it was about personal political gain.

4. Personal- About an individual wanting to advance political career
    - A. Against applying to RT3/ taking a stand
    - B. For applying to RT3/ wants to be seen as education champion

5. Great quotes
    - A. In favor of application
    - B. Opposed to application

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