IMPLEMENTING CHANGE: THE DEVOLUTION OF TEACHER EVALUATION POLICY UNDER THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

A Dissertation by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to those dearest to me. Without my wife, Kelly’s, vision, belief in me, patience, understanding, and love, I would have never imagined earning my doctorate. She is the love of my life, and I cannot thank her enough. I would also like dedicate this to my daughter, Mikela. I am so immensely proud of her courage to take on the challenges placed in front of her, to live the life she envisions for herself, and for her grit and determination to make her dreams come true. I would also like to recognize my parents for whom I am extremely thankful. They are the epitome of supporting and loving parents. Finally, I wish to mention my cohort members Kristi, Connie, Karen, Felicity, and Jen. They made this journey enjoyable, and I appreciate their assistance, feedback, and most of all, their friendship.
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ABSTRACT

The devolution of federal education policy and initiatives from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), have far-reaching effects. ESSA reduces the federal footprint by shifting the power and giving autonomy for educational decision making back to state education policy makers. Officials in Kansas are continuing the devolution of policy by granting local school districts the authority to determine the most appropriate ways to enact the requirements of the new federal law. This scenario has recently been seen with teacher evaluation requirements in Kansas as ESSA has eliminated the mandate that student performance measures (SPMs) be included in teacher evaluation. Using a theoretical frame built upon the importance of implementation processes, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine administrator and teacher perceptions in one Kansas public school district regarding the district’s navigation of the SPM policy implementation process as it shifted from NCLB to ESSA. Findings indicate the district’s implementation procedures led to inconsistent practices with SPM use, and that educators valued increased local control even though challenges accompanied the increased authority. The results of this study may assist other local educational decision makers navigate similar change efforts in their schools.
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CHAPTER 1

Recent educational reform efforts and policies such as No Child Left Behind ([NCLB], 2002), hereafter NCLB, and Race to the Top ([RTTT], 2009), hereafter RTTT, have increased the focus on educational accountability, increasing student learning and achievement, and providing quality teachers in every classroom. In an attempt to determine the quality of the teaching force, many states sought to implement systems designed to better evaluate teachers (Goe, Holdheide, & Miller, 2011; Henchy, 2010; Peterson, 2004). The typical method used to gauge teacher effectiveness is a teacher evaluation system that includes a school administrator visiting classrooms, assessing performance, providing feedback to teachers, and assigning ratings to determine if teachers have adequately met minimum benchmarks. However, traditional teacher evaluation systems often fall short of determining a teacher’s effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012; Donaldson, 2010; Range, 2013).

Following the enactment of NCLB and RTTT, the addition of student performance measures (SPMs), which are generally defined as measures linking classroom teachers with changes in student assessment scores over the period of time spent within their classroom, has moved to the forefront as a promising method of determining teacher effectiveness. State policy makers have thrown their support behind this approach (Johnson, Lipscomb, Gill, Booker, & Bruch, 2012; Kane & Cantrell, 2010; Mathers & Oliva, 2008; Woulfin, Donaldson, & Gonzales, 2016). Policymakers posit the use of SPMs will result in a much-improved system of teacher evaluation and accountability as well as a more accurate reflection of teacher effectiveness (Braun, 2005; Corcoran, 2010; Johnson et al., 2012; McMillan, 2015; Peterson, 2004). Although an increase in the use of SPMs can be linked to efforts to produce a better evaluation process,
increase teacher effectiveness, and improve student learning, it remains unclear whether the use of SPMs produces these desired benefits (Baker et al., 2010).

Scholars assert there is insufficient evidence to conclude that SPMs can accurately isolate and determine the effects of a single teacher (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Goldhaber, 2015; Guarino, Reckase, & Wooldridge, 2014; Henchy, 2010). Concerns with integrating SPMs into teacher evaluation systems include misidentification of teachers’ abilities, inaccurate reflections of students’ achievement, and inaccurate SPM results (Corcoran, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). Another apprehension involves the many factors outside a teachers’ control that greatly affect student performance. These include the particular students assigned to teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012), the physical condition of the school, the resources available, the policies and practices of the school or district, and the students’ individual and family background characteristics (Braun, 2005; Goldhaber & Brewer, 1999; Ladd, 2012).

**Research Problem**

The changes in federal education policy and initiatives from NCLB and RTTT to the Every Student Succeeds Act ([ESSA], 2015), hereafter ESSA, have far-reaching effects. ESSA was a corrective response to what has been perceived as an excessive imposition of the federal government into state education policy making as exemplified by NCLB. ESSA reduces the federal footprint by shifting the power and giving autonomy for educational decision making back to the states and local school districts (Ferguson, 2016; Shoffner, 2016; [USDE], 2012). As state lawmakers and education officials implement ESSA’s less prescriptive reforms, they must decide which directives will be most beneficial to the state and local school districts. Consistent with the spirit of ESSA, officials in some states are continuing the devolution of policy by granting local school districts the authority to determine the most appropriate ways to enact the
requirements of the new federal law. However, while some school districts may welcome the ability to exert local control and decide for themselves the appropriate approach for implementing school reforms within ESSA’s less deterministic policy environment, other school districts may not have the capacity or will to implement challenging policies directed toward improving teachers and schools (Ferguson, 2016; Spain, 2016). This scenario has recently been seen with teacher evaluation requirements across the United States as ESSA has eliminated the requirements that SPMs be included in teacher evaluation. Early efforts by state education officials to give local school districts more autonomous control are likely to lead to conflicts between policy and practice when incorporating SPMs into teacher evaluation systems. Studying one district in one state should provide insight that may provide information about how school districts across the nation are negotiating this policy devolution process. Kansas is one such state that is addressing the policy shifts brought forth with the adoption of ESSA.

**Policy Ambiguity Surrounding the Implementation of SPMs in Kansas**

State and local school district education officials in Kansas are not immune from local control issues that occur with policy devolvement and changes between NCLB and ESSA requirements for SPM use in teacher evaluation. The state began the implementation of SPMs in 2012 with its federal waiver request to excuse it from many of the requirements of NCLB. The Kansas ESEA Flexibility Waiver Request required the state’s teachers and principals be evaluated in part on student performance. The application made by the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) included a teacher evaluation system with evidenced-based performance including multiple measures and valid and reliable student achievement data (USDE, 2012). Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, the approved federal waiver required Kansas public school districts to use specific, KSDE endorsed measures, submit teachers’ SPM data to KSDE,
and include SPMs as a factor in teachers’ final evaluation rating. By 2017-2018, administrators were expected to use evaluation data that include SPMs as a “significant factor” to inform personnel decisions (Koonce & Jordan, 2015; [KSDE], 2012).

Although KSDE provided policy requirements that all public schools were required to enact, the state’s educational decision makers altered their stance on SPM use by devolving the waiver policy and allowing each district to exert greater local control by determining for themselves the percentage of significance they wished to place on SPMs as part of the teachers’ overall final ranking. Because district officials struggled to determine an appropriate percentage, and a variety of calculations were used across the state, confusion ensued. Additionally, Kansas policymakers did not provide any definition of significance regarding the inclusion of SPMs as a “significant factor” in personnel decisions, thereby causing more uncertainty. This combination of waiver mandates, limited guidance, and local district control issues led to bewilderment regarding SPM use as well as a wide variance in SPM incorporation among Kansas districts.

The uncertainty of Kansas educators about how to proceed with the implementation of SPMs was exacerbated in December 2015 when ESSA replaced NCLB. ESSA’s devolution of federal education policy gave Kansas policymakers more freedom and opportunity to determine the parameters of the education the state provides its students. In response to these new freedoms, Kansas policy makers have begun to backpedal regarding many components of implementing SPMs they had promoted just two years before. Specifically, state education officials have deemed it no longer necessary to include SPMs as a formal aspect of the summative teacher rating, nor to include them as a significant factor in personnel decisions. Instead, they have resorted to guidance from Kansas Statute Annotated (KSA) 72-9004 (2015) which has never been removed from the record. KSA 72-9004 requires “student performance”
to be a part of the evaluation. Each district now has the flexibility to define student performance, select methods to measure it, and determine whether adequate student growth has occurred (Jordan, 2016).

The new freedoms granted to Kansas educators with the passage of ESSA may be creating new problems, as exemplified by emerging confusion associated with the implementation of SPMs. Decentralization and deregulation advocates have argued that because local school district leaders are located closer to teachers and students, they are positioned to make better decisions than state or federal policy makers (Spain, 2016). While some school districts may be equipped to meet the challenges of enacting significant policy changes, others may struggle without the political cover provided by federal and state mandates needed to implement tough policies aimed at improving teachers and schools. Districts nostalgic for the status quo of pre-ESSA days may experience ESSA’s relaxed policy guidelines as an unwelcome responsibility (Ferguson, 2016; Spain, 2016).

District culture, expertise in the use of data, and administrator and teacher beliefs in the value of SPMs can all influence local control decisions on how or whether SPMs are incorporated. The methods each district chooses to implement the use of student performance measures may be of major importance. If a local decision regarding the best methods to incorporate student performance is “top-down” without input from teachers who are most affected, these teachers could be hesitant to trust the process. Communication throughout the implementation process could also play a significant role in the success of the implementation. Some districts may choose to discuss student performance during the evaluation process, which might technically meet the requirements of KSA 72-9004 (2015). However, this action alone may do little to influence teacher performance or its effect on student learning. Other districts
may choose to continue down the recently established, potentially less problematic path and make no changes to their SPM and teacher evaluation practices. Due to the many factors that may affect school district official’s decisions, how school districts navigate these policy changes on their own necessitates closer examination.

**Theoretical Framework**

Because of the importance of the methods school districts use to incorporate SPMs into the evaluation process, I used implementation theory as the framework to guide this study. If program outcomes are evaluated without considering the program’s enactment, the results may prove meaningless because the implementation procedures used when initiating a program or policy can have a significant influence on the degree of success of the program’s outcomes (Patton, 2015). Analysts began investigating implementation during federal social reform movements and policies of the 1960s. When federal, state, and local officials responded to new policies, issues surfaced regarding how those policies were carried out. Analysts began studying the disappointing outcomes of these policies and movements, and found they were not integrated into practice with fidelity. They found those who enacted the policies did not always do so as envisioned by the policy makers, nor did they significantly maximize the policy’s objectives. These early, or “first generation” analyses demonstrated local factors such as organization size, commitment, capacity, and institutional complexity shaped the reactions and responses to policy (McLaughlin, 1987; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975).

A second generation of implementation analysts followed and studied the relationships between policy and practice. Analysts routinely discovered deviations from what was originally planned (Patton, 2015). Researchers found policy was incredibly difficult to implement, especially across the multiple layers of hierarchically structured institutions. Research confirmed
an original policy transformed as individuals interpreted and responded to it at each point of the process. Those at the “street level” played a major role in the success of reform movements. Lipsky (1969) noted the appropriateness of concentrating efforts toward reform on organizational structures and behaviors at the lowest levels of the organization. Individuals enacted change, and those responsible for carrying out policy acted on not only organizational incentives, but also from personal motivation factors. During the implementation process, internal factors took precedent over external ones (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; McLaughlin, 1987). Such research validated the need for qualitative studies to help better understand what caused the changes between the policy as envisioned and as implemented.

Educators interpreted policies in terms of their own experiences, interests, attitudes, and motivation to carry out the policy. Policies were made and remade through the implementation process (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Therefore, the original policy evolved and could differ in fundamental aspects depending upon the internal factors that occurred in varying settings (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; McLaughlin, 1987). The success of incorporating a policy depended upon an educator’s interpretation and response to it (Spillane et al., 2002).

The implementation of reform movements in schools proved especially daunting. In his framework, Labaree (2012) described educational policy implementation as having four levels:

1. Rhetoric was the highest level and gave the rationale for the movement. Many educational reforms began and ended at this level.
2. Formal Structure was where the reform rhetoric was incorporated into policy, organizational frameworks, curricular adoptions, and professional development priorities. This usually occurred at the district level.
3. Teaching Practice was the point where the reform ideas needed to pass through the classroom doors and be adapted into the content and processes of instruction.

4. Student Learning was the final level, where even if the reform movement passed through the first three levels, it still had to transform the learning of students.

Making change at the rhetorical level has proven easy, while changing the formal structure has been more difficult. Labaree concluded most implementation efforts failed because of their inability to penetrate the formal structure of the district or enter individual classrooms and affect teaching practice. According to Tyack and Tobin (1994), schools changed reforms, and teachers selectively implemented and altered policy. Elmore and McLaughlin (1988) suggested the success or failure of change in schools was contingent on the ability of the intended change to move across all levels of the school hierarchy. Utilizing implementation theory assisted in helping better understanding and explaining the beliefs and attitudes of Kansas educators regarding the implementation and use of SPMs in the teacher evaluation process.

**Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

Federal education policymakers reduced requirements and transferred decision making to states with the changes between NCLB and ESSA. This policy devolution was demonstrated by changes in directives from Kansas officials regarding SPM use. Prior to the adoption of ESSA, Kansas policymakers mandated SPMs be used in the final, summative teacher evaluation rating. However, districts could determine the percentage that SPMs figured into the final rating. After the passage of ESSA, Kansas policymakers granted greater discretionary power to districts to determine the extent to which they would incorporate SPMs into their teacher evaluation process, if at all. Many challenges accompanied this new, local control as districts revisited their SPM policy and determined their next steps. District officials could now determine whom to include
in shaping changes to the policy, examine and analyze research on SPMs, determine their beliefs and reach consensus on the appropriateness of SPM use, and tailor their own unique policy to align with these factors. They could also choose to continue down the recently established and potentially less problematic path they had previously worked so hard to implement.

Given these important policy implementation decisions now faced by each public school district, the purpose of this study was to explore how a representative, mid-sized Kansas public school district navigated the SPM policy implementation process as it shifted from NCLB to ESSA. In support of this purpose, administrator and teacher perceptions were examined to address the following research questions:

1. In response to ESSA’s devolution of federal control of education to the states, how do administrators and teachers in one Kansas public school district view having increased local control over policy decisions, particularly with regard to the inclusion of SPMs in teacher evaluation systems?

2. How does one representative Kansas public school district reassess its approaches to local decision making, particularly with regard to the inclusion of SPMs in teacher evaluation systems?

3. How has the exercise of greater local control over SPM policy affected the professional lives of Kansas administrators and teachers in one public school district?
CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

This review of literature presents the context and background for the recent emphasis on changing the methods used to evaluate teachers since 1981. It begins with a historical review of control over public education and the lessening of federal influence brought forth through the passage of ESSA. It then explores the importance of having an effective system to evaluate teachers. The review then defines an effective teacher and reviews the history of teacher evaluation, including shortcomings of traditional evaluation systems, and circumstances that have led to the belief that teacher evaluation systems need revision. The review concludes with the inconclusive research regarding the addition of student performance measures in teacher evaluation.

Historical Aspects of Federal, State, and Local Educational Control

Federal, state, and local public school policymaking goes back to the nation’s beginning. Although states are legally responsible for public education, they delegated much of this authority to local policymakers serving on boards of education. These boards existed because many citizens believed in the value of local control over centralized authority. Since the 1950’s, the control exerted over public schooling at both the federal and state level increased as a result of nationalizing influences regarding curriculum, testing, finance, and the organization of schools; court decisions covering desegregation, civil rights, assisting students with disabilities, and protecting student and due process rights; as well as reform movements that sought to increase school and teacher accountability and control funding (Faber, 1990; Jacobsen & Saultz, 2012).
In 1965, with the adoption of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the federal government’s role began to expand, but was mostly limited to Title I funding, which sought to assist schools with sizable populations of students living below the poverty line. Beginning in the 1980s, a marked increase was seen in reform efforts aimed at increasing accountability on public schools. Accompanying these reform efforts was an upsurge in state control. These accountability movements, where the state mandated reforms and monitored their implementation, may be the most intrusive aspect of state encroachment into local control. More recently, the federal government has also expanded its control on public education through policies and programs such as NCLB and RTTT. Although local districts did not have to accept federal mandates, funding tied to schools through federal programs made it difficult to reject these directives as districts could not afford to lose these federal funding sources. As a result, local districts began to see their previous level of control fade away (Faber, 1990; Jacobsen & Saultz, 2012).

States have mandated changes from the top down, many times with poor results, because they have either lost confidence in or do not believe local authorities have the capacity or will to improve their schools without these mandates. When mandates are handed down from state education officials, many local actors do not believe the state officials know what is most appropriate for their students. Local leaders, therefore, find ways to circumvent the rules they find unsuitable for their situation (Faber, 1990). Some states have attempted to appease local school officials by passing legislation that gives local education policymakers the opportunity to implement these mandates as they deem appropriate. This may work well for organizationally capable schools, but weaker schools may have no idea how to implement them into their own programs and policies (Timar, 1989). Responsibilities for education governance have been
shared among federal, state, and local officials for many years. With the passage of ESSA, the federal government has lessened its role and granted increased control of educational policies and decisions back to states and local school officials.

**National Policy Devolution from NCLB to ESSA**

In 2002, the nearly 40-year-old ESEA was reauthorized, and this new iteration became known as NCLB. Although originally deemed a necessary reauthorization, members of Congress and the executive branch of government agreed the act should be updated, and began working toward changes as NCLB was set to expire in 2007 (Shoffner, 2016; *Student success act facts sheet*, 2015). For years, state and school district officials have sought deviations in the overly prescriptive federal mandates of NCLB which did not account for the unique needs of individual communities (Ferguson, 2016; Klein, 2016; USDE, 2015). When passed, NCLB set national standards for school and student achievement, as well as for accountability testing. The law attempted to ensure school funding was justified, earned, and resulted in increased student performance (Cadei, 2015; Shoffner, 2016). Additionally, NCLB gave the federal government power to punish schools for insufficient performance and test scores. Concerns were voiced regarding NCLB’s simplification of accountability to performance on math and reading tests, which forced schools to “teach to the test” in order to be successful (Cadei, 2015; Shoffner, 2016; Steinhauer & Rich, 2015). Although the Obama administration created a waiver system which allowed states to bypass some of NCLB’s requirements by agreeing to a different set of mandates, the frustration over NCLB continued, and Congress determined reform was necessary to repair the flawed NCLB law and improve K-12 education (Shoffner, 2016; *Student success act facts sheet*, 2015).
Knowing the increase in the concerns and frustrations with NCLB, the Obama administration began evaluating it in 2012. Congress then reauthorized NCLB in December 2015 with full implementation scheduled for the 2017-2018 school year (Shoffner, 2016; "Understanding the new federal education law," 2016). The new act, ESSA, reduces the federal footprint by shifting the power and giving autonomy for making education decisions back to the states and local school districts (Ferguson, 2016; Shoffner, 2016; [USDE], 2015). ESSA continues the reading and math annual testing requirement for students in grades three through eight and once in high school, but allows states to significantly reduce the role those tests play in assessing schools. States and districts continue to be required to turn around their lowest performing schools, but they now can choose their own locally developed and evidence based interventions. Additionally, states get wide discretion in their accountability systems including having the ability to adopt their own challenging academic standards, without the Secretary of Education mandating or encouraging any particular set of standards (Klein, 2016, 2017).

Another change from NCLB and its waiver is the requirement that student performance measures must be included as an aspect in summative teacher evaluation ratings.

Previously, in order to obtain an NCLB waiver, states had to adopt a policy requiring SPMs as part of their teacher evaluation system (Klein, 2016). Under ESSA, states can determine whether to include SPMs as a factor in teacher evaluation. The new law prohibits the federal government from prescribing terms of teacher evaluation, and federal funds can no longer be conditioned on using test scores in teacher evaluation systems ("Understanding the new federal education law," 2016). These states can now rethink their evaluation policy laws, and make adjustments to remove SPM requirements. Teacher unions such as the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers desire less emphasis on evaluations that
rely heavily on student test scores (Klein, 2016). The changes brought about from ESSA’s deregulation of educator evaluation policies have many states and districts examining their teacher evaluation practices.

**The Importance of Effective Teacher Evaluation**

Because of the positive relationship between effective teachers and student learning, staffing all classrooms with excellent teachers should be a goal for all schools and districts. Assessing the effectiveness of teachers and teaching more meticulously than ever can provide beneficial data to assist in achieving this goal (Henchy, 2010; Marzano & Toth, 2013). The need for an evaluation system that appropriately measures teacher effectiveness and assists them in becoming more effective reflects the findings of much research. This section of the review covers these topics.

**Defining Teacher Effectiveness**

Teacher effectiveness has proven difficult to define. Recent policy trends and accountability pressures framed teacher effectiveness as a teacher’s contribution to students’ knowledge as summarized on assessment scores and curriculum-aligned, pre-and post-test results (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Sanders & Horn, 1998; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Although some believed student assessment scores could be useful in determining a teacher’s effect (Johnson et al., 2012; Kane & Cantrell, 2010; Mathers & Oliva, 2008; Sanders & Horn, 1998), others determined it should not be the primary criteria used (Breault, 2013; Goe, 2007; Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008; Varlas, 2009). Test scores may not give a full picture of teachers’ contributions to student learning, and when used in this manner, this definition overlooked many significant ways teachers contributed to students’ successes (Goe et al., 2008).
The definition of teacher effectiveness includes multiple components which extend beyond student learning gains and includes the ways in which teachers affect their classrooms, schools, and colleagues (Varlas, 2009). Effective teachers improved student outcomes through both their teaching skills and their beliefs and attitudes. The two most important teaching capacities found in effective teachers were content knowledge and quality of instruction. Classroom climate and classroom management, including efficiently using class time and managing student behavior, were additional teaching skills effective teachers consistently demonstrated. Possessing certain dispositions such as having high expectations and demonstrating a genuine concern for students also distinguished an effective teacher. That demonstration of concern led to quality instruction and positive teacher-student interactions. Effective teachers also enthusiastically and actively engaged their students and believed in the importance of professional development and collaborating with and supporting their colleagues (Breault, 2013; Coe, Aloisi, Higgins, & Major, 2014; Goe, 2007; Stronge, 2007).

Instead of a narrow focus defining an effective teacher by their students’ achievement gains, Goe et al. (2008) believed a 5-point definition better encapsulated them. Effective teachers: (a) had high expectations for all learners and insisted all students learn; (b) contributed to positive academic, attitudinal, and social outcomes for students; (c) used diverse resources to plan and structure learning opportunities that engaged students, consistently monitored student progress, and evaluated learning using several data sources; (d) contributed to the development of valuing diversity and civic-mindedness; and (e) collaborated routinely with all stakeholders to ensure student success. No matter the definition used, teacher evaluation systems are the most common technique in measuring the effectiveness of classroom teachers.
Traditional Teacher Evaluation Systems and Their Shortcomings

Teacher evaluation is the systematic process of collecting and analyzing data to determine to what degree teachers achieved the objectives (Boulmetis & Dutwin, 2000). Traditional teacher evaluation systems routinely included a school administrator visiting classrooms, assessing performance, providing feedback, and assigning ratings to determine if teachers have met minimum benchmarks (Mathers & Oliva, 2008; Peterson, 2004; Range, 2013). Traditional evaluation systems focused on teacher qualifications and degrees to rate their worth. However, much available research did not indicate these factors significantly influenced a teacher’s effectiveness (Goe et al., 2011; Harris, 2011). NCLB’s definition of highly qualified teachers included those with at least a bachelor’s degree, a state license, and could demonstrate competency in the subject matter taught. However, these minimum qualifications were not predictive of student performance, nor were they related to the likelihood of a teacher’s success or effectiveness (Corcoran, 2010; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2008; Scriven, 1981). Most indicators used in the past to determine teacher quality had been inadequate in differentiating teachers whose students performed well from those whose students showed little progress. The ability to identify both high and low-performing teachers might be a vital step in pinpointing instructional strategies that result in improved student performance. Thus far, traditional evaluation methods have not been useful in meeting this challenge (Goe et al., 2011; Peterson, 2004). In many traditional evaluation systems, most teachers were rated proficient, excellent teachers received no recognition, and struggling teachers were not provided the special supports they needed (Range, 2013). Another problem with traditional systems involved their vast differences.
Traditional teacher evaluation systems vary greatly in their rigor and usefulness. Most systems based their ratings on one or two classroom observations by a principal using a checklist or rating form with anecdotes (Mathers & Oliva, 2008; Peterson, 2004; Range, 2013). The principal was the supervisor who observed the subordinate teacher, appraised the quality of teaching across all subjects and grades, and single-handedly determined the outcomes. Such evaluation systems were one dimensional, hierarchical in nature, and contributed to a bureaucratic organization (DeMatthews, 2015). Although the principal has traditionally been the main evaluator, much research documents the inaccuracy of their classroom observations and teacher ratings.

Research has revealed the low accuracy of principals’ judgments regarding the performance of teachers they supervised. Data provided little support for the widely held belief the average principal was a good judge of teacher performance. Most administrators did not realize the difficulty in making accurate observations of teacher behaviors. There were sizable gaps in building principals’ present knowledge regarding the nature of effective teaching. These gaps made it impossible to provide conceptions or models complete enough to serve as an adequate basis for teacher evaluation (Buttram & Wilson, 1987; Medley & Coker, 1987). Administrators, assumed to be competent evaluators, received little training to standardize procedures or to maintain acceptable competency levels (Buttram & Wilson, 1987; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Principal reports of classroom performance lacked reliability and validity and included unresponsive sampling, biased reporting, and narrow anecdotal systems. Style preferences of the evaluator, the likeability of the teacher, and even the age and gender of the teacher led to inaccurate ratings (Jacob & Lefgren, 2007; Marzano & Toth, 2013; Peterson, 2004; Scriven, 1981). Principals were skilled in identifying teachers who produced the largest
and smallest standardized achievement gains in their schools. However, they had far less ability
to distinguish between teachers in the middle 60% to 80% distribution (Jacob & Lefgren, 2007).
Differences in principals’ perceptions of the purpose of evaluation can also lead to difficulties.

The two most frequently cited purposes for evaluation included accountability and
professional growth, which were both desired and needed. Evaluation for accountability, used to
make a judgment, often a high-stakes decision whether to award merit pay, to terminate, or to
offer tenure, may be termed summative. Formative evaluation, on the other hand, is used to gain
information to help teachers, even those already proficient, improve or expand their teaching
capacities (Barringer, 2010; Henchy, 2010; Marzano, 2012; Stronge, 2005). Although these two
purposes are usually bound together in the same evaluation system, educators should recognize
summative and formative evaluations each have different priorities and implications. Summative
evaluation systems intended mainly for measurement, usually look rather different from
formative systems, which are structured primarily for teacher improvement (Marzano, 2012).
The goal of teacher improvement has traditionally been a priority for schools. Teacher
evaluation attempted to provide information to assist teachers in improving, but evaluation
systems often fell short in reaching this goal (Barringer, 2010). Another persistent criticism of
the evaluation process has been issues with the poor quality of feedback from the evaluator.

A principal’s lack of meaningful feedback, necessary to promote reflection and achieve
new goals, might ultimately lead to a decreased sense of efficacy in teaching. Without quality
feedback, a teacher may not be able to create worthwhile goals for his or her professional growth
(Anast-May, Penick, Schroyer, & Howell, 2011; Barringer, 2010; Feeney, 2007). Teachers’
ability to receive and apply feedback is viewed as paramount to teacher improvement. When
feedback focused only on external performance and came from a place of judgment, the
messages heard by the teacher oftentimes were someone else knew better or they were not good enough, which reduced teacher efficacy. Evaluation feedback many times was based on a small slice of the context of the teacher’s classroom. Therefore, teachers may not have felt it was a true representation of their abilities and talents. When this occurred, teachers may not perceive the feedback as relevant or significant and could dismiss it. Teachers may have also feared feedback if they believed the evaluation was summative in nature. In many schools, the principal controlled the evaluation process as well as the final rating. When this took place, teachers may have felt powerless and thus experienced increased anxiety and vulnerability. These emotions could have triggered negative reactions that manifested into defensiveness or helplessness (Roussin & Zimmerman, 2014). Even though teachers desired more concrete, detailed feedback, evaluators seldom provided it. Not providing quality feedback proved detrimental because shallow and meaningless comments, void of connections to student learning, might have led to diminished teacher capacities over time (Donaldson, 2010; Feeney, 2007). Without quality feedback, the evaluation process may not assist the teacher in becoming more effective.

A lack of agreement on how best to recognize and measure effective instruction defines another inadequacy of traditional evaluation structures. Classroom observation has been categorized as an extremely poor method of assessing teacher quality because many evaluation systems do not distinguish between effective and ineffective teachers (Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2011; Marzano, 2012). In an investigation of evaluation systems across several states that included 14 large school districts, nearly 98% of teachers received satisfactory ratings. In these systems, professional development was rarely tied to evaluation results, new teachers were generally rated above satisfactory, and poor performance seldom led to dismissal. Most
observers rated teachers as proficient enough to prevent the teachers from feeling threatened or sanctioned in any way, and the vast majority of teachers in any school, district, and state received above average marks (Donaldson, 2010; Goldhaber, 2015; Marzano & Toth, 2013; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). Administrators have few incentives to give teachers low ratings (Woulfin et al., 2016). Too many schools had a culture where principals suppressed critical feedback and rated teachers above where their actual performance suggested. Therefore, any school no matter the location, wealth, or student achievement scores, likely employed more underperforming teachers than their evaluation scores showed (Donaldson, 2010). The numerous shortcomings of traditional teacher evaluation systems have led to efforts to change these systems.

**Reforming Teacher Evaluation**

The need for more effective teacher evaluation systems has long been noted. The evaluation process may play a powerful role in developing a teacher’s instructional capacity which leads to greater student success (Marzano & Toth, 2013; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993). Teacher evaluation has recently surfaced again as an underutilized resource that could prove helpful in measuring effectiveness in the classroom (Mathers & Oliva, 2008). Many policies implemented the past several decades including NCLB and RTTT, have greatly accelerated the focus on improving teacher evaluation systems as a means of improving the teaching force. Many legislators, parents, and taxpayer groups want student achievement data included in teacher evaluation (Peterson, 2004). Additionally, prominent foundations including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Milken Family Foundation, and the Broad Foundation have contributed financially in support of this movement (Corcoran, 2010).
Recent upgrades to evaluation systems not only included principal observations, but also multiple measures of teacher outcomes which allowed for a more complete view of a teacher’s effectiveness (Goe et al., 2011; Henchy, 2010; Peterson, 2004). Data sources for teacher evaluation should include student performance data, student and parent surveys, peer review, documentation of professional activity, teacher test scores, National Board Certification, and documented benefits from action research and school improvement participation (Marzano & Toth, 2013; Peterson, 2004). Synthesized research from over 275 articles and reports regarding evaluation systems showed an effective evaluation system combined several evaluation tools into a comprehensive system. This system could assess several elements and provide multiple forms of data and judgments. The use of multiple tools could help offset any weakness in a single instrument. Six categories of useful tools were identified including classroom observation, instructional artifacts, portfolios, teacher self-evaluation, student surveys, and value-added assessments (Henchy, 2010). The addition of SPMs to teacher evaluation systems has grown in recent years and warrants a closer look.

**Student Performance Measures as Assessment Tools**

For the past several years, the use of SPMs such as student growth models (SGMs) and value added models (VAMs) has moved to the forefront as a method of determining a teacher’s effectiveness. The term growth model generally referred to accountability models that measured progress by tracking achievement through test scores of the same students from one year to the next. The scores were used in order to determine students’ level of progress (Goldschmidt et al., 2005). As state policy makers and school district administrators incorporated SPMs into teacher evaluation systems, they saw the use of VAMs as especially promising.
Value added measures are defined as performance or growth models that use student background characteristics and/or prior achievement and other data as statistical controls. These controls attempt to isolate the specific effects of a particular school, program, or teacher on student academic progress (Auty et al., 2008). The developers of VAMs argued their analysis of the changes of student test scores from year to year allowed them to objectively isolate the contributions of teachers. The developers added statistical analysis and controls to SPMs in an attempt to lessen the influences originating outside the teacher’s or school’s control (Braun, 2005). Many of these models were designed to meet the requirements of NCLB and RTTT, therefore many states adopted them as part of their policies. According to Goe and Holdheide (2011), most current definitions of teacher effectiveness included their contributions to student learning, and states needed to consider measuring these contributions for all teachers. These models were viewed as a potential improvement over conventional indicators such as classroom observations, measures of educational attainment, and years of experience (Guarino et al., 2014).

Many states have not only considered the use of SPMs, but have mandated their use in teacher evaluation. In 2010, 12 states had put growth models in place and by 2013, the number had increased to 40 plus the District of Columbia (Blank, 2010; Hewitt, 2015).

Three main factors caused state education departments to prioritize SPM use. First, NCLB requirements for determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) created an interest. Second, educational leaders asked for SPMs to not only determine AYP, but also to be included for students and subjects beyond just language arts and math. Finally, states developed longitudinal student data systems that tracked student scores over multiple years, and there was a desire to use this data for analyzing student performance (Blank, 2010). Having highly qualified teachers in every classroom marked another mandate of NCLB, and states welcomed a focus on
teacher quality beyond their academic training and meeting their states’ licensure requirements. Some states took the lead in SPM use by seeking an empirical basis for evaluating teachers that included evidence of their students’ academic growth (Braun, 2005). Although many states currently require the use of SPMs as part of their teacher evaluation systems, the evidence is inconclusive whether this use is appropriate. The following sections explain these opposing views.

Positive aspects of student performance measures. One of the earliest and most substantial uses of applying SPMs over time to determine the effectiveness of teachers occurred with the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS). The TVAAS consisted of a massive, longitudinally merged database that linked student outcomes to the school they attended as well as the teachers who instructed them. Sanders and Horn (1998) conducted a wide-scale research project on the system and many of their findings, described in the following paragraphs, reveal positive results when including SPMs in teacher evaluation.

Sanders and Horn (1998) found the TVAAS showed teacher effectiveness was the major determinant of academic progress within the school. They believed linking teacher effectiveness to student outcomes was a necessary component for an effective evaluation system. Concerns surfaced over the use of student data in this way. Nonetheless, the authors reported thorough external appraisals from both statisticians and educational evaluation experts corroborated the TVAAS results were accurate when used as intended. They declared accurate teacher evaluation systems should include as a critical aspect, a reliable and valid measure of a teacher’s influence on the academic growth of students. The TVAAS database had over five million records in 1998, and made it possible to utilize several years of data to determine the effectiveness of personnel. In an attempt to insure fairness, the state also added provisions that included basing
the teacher assessment on at least three years of data and a requirement that teachers’ assessments included information in addition to that derived from TVASS.

The driving force of TVASS was for summative evaluation; however, the information aided as a basis for formative evaluation as well. Teachers annually received data that reflected their effectiveness with learners of all levels. They could use the data to better plan their lessons and methods to deliver them. The information could help in determining other unique programs and resources to better assist their students, and to direct resources to where they could make the most impact. The authors reported the use of the TVASS system removed barriers that previously impeded the use of standardized test data for teacher evaluation. They believed this information now provided individual teachers with an impartial rating (Sanders & Horn, 1998). Although some researchers do not concur with the TVASS findings, others saw them as a positive factor for including their use.

In addition to the reported positive outcomes with TVASS, other researchers believe adding SPMs will improve evaluation systems. In their study of VAMs for the Pittsburgh Pennsylvania Public Schools, Johnson et al. (2012) found the results from the VAMs were fair, valid, reliable, and robust. Their findings demonstrated that VAM estimates provided worthwhile information regarding educators and schools in Pittsburgh. They also discovered the VAMs provided a better indication of effectiveness than the average performance levels or the frequently used rate of student proficiency.

The use of SPMs appealed to many as they tracked growth in learning from year to year for individual students and attempted to relate that growth to the contributions of teachers. They provided an opportunity to examine the relationship between changes in student achievement scores, teachers, and schools (Guarino et al., 2014; Mathers & Oliva, 2008). Additionally,
because standardized testing has occurred in nearly all schools in the United States, results are
easily available and relatively inexpensive. Results have also enabled schools to measure the
effects instruction on student performance and build on an existing investment in testing
(Guarino et al., 2014; Mathers & Oliva, 2008). Commercially available assessments produced
measures of teacher performance that were stable over time. As an evaluation tool, these
measures appeared to be less subjective than traditional principal observations or teacher
portfolios because they accounted for the prior test scores of students, which led to better
conclusions (Gill, Bruch, & Booker, 2013; Guarino et al., 2014; Harris, 2011). Some National
Board Certified teachers thought because the system increased the emphasis on student learning,
there was potential for providing helpful information to balance the generally, unreliable
observations from administrators. In addition, emphasizing data-driven decisions and using the
information to drive instruction was a positive step (McMillan, 2015).

The initial findings from the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project showed a
teacher’s past value-added record was one of the best predictors of their students’ academic
gains. Furthermore, those teachers replicated those gains in subsequent years and classes.
Additionally, teachers with high value-added scores had students who performed well on state
assessments and had a deep conceptual understanding (Kane & Cantrell, 2010). When educators
comprehended how teachers influenced their students in the classroom, they could make
informed judgments about practices needing altered and those needing sustained. Linking
student results and teacher effects could provide important and useful information (Braun, 2005).

Value-added data is useful to principals as they can confirm their subjective, higher
ratings with teachers who were increasing the achievement of their students. Student gain should
play a major role in teacher evaluation, as many educators, parents, legislators, and taxpayers
desired the use of student achievement data. A system that does not include pupil data ignores some of the best information available and allows for trivial concerns to influence teacher evaluation (Peterson, 2004). Results of the New York City Teacher Data Initiative (2008) showed teachers rated as more effective by principals also had value-added scores that corresponded to those ratings. Additionally, principals who received data reports that included teachers’ value-added scores were more likely to rate a teacher as unsatisfactory if the data indicated a low score (Corcoran, 2010). Data released from the New York City Department of Education also showed more teachers with lower value-added scores were denied tenure than those with higher scores (Martinez, 2010). Given the importance of the personnel decisions of principals, any information that led to a better understanding of a teacher’s effectiveness was valuable (Kane & Cantrell, 2010).

Another positive aspect of SPMs, incorporating frequent feedback to the instructor, might help alleviate one of the shortcomings of traditional evaluation systems. Using performance measures helped focus the conversation about teacher quality on increasing student learning. The simple fact teachers and principals were receiving timely feedback on their students’ achievement was an accomplishment in and of itself (Braun, 2005; Corcoran, 2010). The addition of student learning assessment data over a marking period or even half a year provided substantive feedback on students’ mastery of material. It provided a broader and richer sampling of the teacher’s impact on students (Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Although the previously cited research illustrates positive aspects of SPM’s, conflicting research exists.

**Negative aspects of student performance measures.** Contrary to beliefs that SPMs enhance teacher evaluation systems, negative aspects associated with such measures are abundant. Policy makers believe relying heavily on SPMs to evaluate, reward, and remove
teachers will increase teacher effectiveness and therefore student learning. However, others believe measuring teacher effectiveness by using student test scores will not lead to improved teaching or learning (Baker et al., 2010; Master, 2014).

Some scholars do not believe that TVASS or other models can accurately determine the effects of a single teacher (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Goldhaber, 2015; Guarino et al., 2014; Henchy, 2010). States that implemented growth models early found little difference in ratings between traditional evaluation systems and those with performance measures added. Furthermore, numerous disadvantages occurred when making causal designations of instructor effectiveness founded on the information accessible to most school districts (Auty et al., 2008; Braun, 2005).

A number of problems have occurred with using VAMs as accurate measures of teachers’ effectiveness. Inconsistency in VAMs was observed when teacher ratings varied significantly from year to year and class to class. An investigation of five school districts uncovered that only 20% to 30% of the teachers who scored in the bottom quintile of VAM ratings one year, did so the next. Additionally, 25% to 45% of those bottom-ranking teachers moved to the top part of the distributions the next year, and the same inconsistencies held true for top scorers. VAMs may have accurately predicted those teachers in the top or bottom 5%, but school administrators would already know which teachers fell into those two categories (Corcoran, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Marzano & Toth, 2013). Some teachers were more effective at forms of instruction or in parts of the curriculum not assessed. Research also indicated teachers whose students did well on end-of-course tests were not necessarily good at promoting long-term achievement.
Using SPMs to assess teacher effectiveness is especially complicated for teachers who teach subjects where no standardized tests exist. Estimates revealed approximately 69% of teachers fell into this category. Few state models demonstrated how to measure and analyze contributions to student learning growth for those teachers. Another attribution problem they found occurred for those teachers who instructed students who received services in both the general classroom and a special services classroom, or for those students who had co-teachers. It was unclear how to sort out and fairly distribute contributions to student learning to teachers in these situations (Goe & Holdheide, 2011). Many instructors did not have confidence in their value-added ratings because they could not recognize a connection between their teaching practices and those erratic rankings (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012).

Another concern regarding SPM use is that student scores on assessments might not correctly reflect their achievement. Students in the same school could have access to different materials and have different end-of-year targets, not to mention how various schools in the same district may use disparate curricula or may follow alternate reform strategies. Peer-to-peer interactions, classroom climate, and missing student data that left gaps in the information needed for an accurate appraisal could also cause inaccuracies (Braun, 2005). Skills readily assessed by standardized tests reflected only a small proportion of the expectations of what students needed to know, and only certain skills conform to standardized testing. Many inappropriate assessment tools were being used as they were poor representations of the measured standards (Corcoran, 2010).

The accuracy of VAM results themselves has also come into question. The degree of error in estimates of teacher effects on student learning made the use of growth models untrustworthy for the specific purpose of evaluating individual teachers. Therefore, it would be
unwise to use these measures as the sole basis for decisions. The potential for inaccuracy created risks such as damage to a teacher’s morale and status, which outweighed the benefits of their use. Using a single measurement as the primary source for important decisions placed extreme emphasis on assessment scores alone. This could have consequences that undermined the goal of developing an excellent teaching force. When only standardized test scores are used to measure teacher effectiveness, other important ways that teachers affected students are ignored. These include classroom data such as student projects and performances, learning logs, and similar measures (Guarino et al., 2014; Henchy, 2010). Furthermore, standardized test scores do not account for teacher contributions to the recent emphasis on assisting students develop social and emotional characteristics, nor the development of students’ 21st century skills including creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, communication and accountability.

In Kansas, social, emotional, and character development standards are examples of such skills that are not formally assessed (KSDE, 2017a). Kansas education officials, based upon feedback received from businesses, parents, and communities across the state, believe non-academic skills such as teamwork, perseverance, and critical thinking along with social and emotional learning to develop skills to effectively manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, and develop empathy are vitally important. The “Kansas Can” initiative, which is the strategic plan implemented in 2016 by KSDE and the Kansas State Board of Education, includes social-emotional growth measured locally as one of five outcomes for student success (KSDE, 2017b). In fact, none of the outcomes in the Kansas Can initiative which Kansas school districts and teachers are responsible for implementing can be easily measured by standardized tests.

Current U.S. standardized tests, which many SPMs are based upon, are widely considered poor measures of the academic learning that educators, parents, and many policy-makers expect.
They are not reliable or valid enough to incorporate into decisions regarding personnel, even when adding advanced statistical methods including VAMs. The evidence these measures can improve teaching and learning rests on questionable assumptions (Baker et al., 2010; Harris, 2011). Educators in North Carolina evaluated by VAMs were largely opposed to their use. They had many adverse opinions about the precision and fairness of VAMs. They also believed many educators will avoid working with certain students (Hewitt, 2015). This belief leads to another argument against the use of SPMs.

Many factors beyond a teacher’s control greatly influence student performance. Although the classroom teacher provides the most significant in-school factor with regard to student achievement (Donaldson & Papay, 2012; Mathers & Oliva, 2008; Rivkin et al., 2005), elements outside of the school play a major role in student performance. Corcoran (2010) did not believe VAMs accurately isolated the teachers’ effects on learning due to countless out of school factors that may influence student development. These factors included how students were assigned to teachers. Most schools did not randomly assign students to teachers, and current statistical methods could not overcome the fact some teachers will have an unequal number of students with greater learning obstacles (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). Other factors included the physical condition of the school, the resources available, and policies and practices of the school or district. These factors were beyond the teacher’s control and could undermine the fairness of the performance measure and could influence student achievement (Braun, 2005). Most educational accountability systems did not take into account non-school factors, and the most variation in average scores were driven by factors beyond the control of educators (Harris, 2011).
Student background characteristics also factor into student achievement and are beyond the teacher’s control. Data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1998 found that approximately 60% of the variance in student test scores derived from individual and family background characteristics, not teacher nor school influence (Goldhaber & Brewer, 1999). Students from low socio-economic homes performed worse, on average, than did those from more advantaged families (Ladd, 2012). Historically, it has been difficult to raise the achievement of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and it would be unfair to hold teachers accountable for doing so. Such attempts could alienate educators and make it even more difficult to staff schools that serve needy populations (Ballou, Sanders, & Wright, 2004). Additionally, schools with low-performing students had a yearly teacher turnover rate of 20%. Therefore, those schools were more likely to have inexperienced or less effective teachers which could negatively impact student achievement (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). These non-school factors can greatly affect students’ performance; therefore, the inclusion of SPMs in teacher evaluation may not be appropriate.

**Implementation Processes Affect Results**

During federal social reform movements and policies of the 1960’s, policy makers were unsure why the reforms were not as successful as envisioned. Analysts began studying the disappointing outcomes of these policies and movements, and they found those who implemented the policies did not always do so as envisioned by the policy makers, nor did they significantly maximize the policy’s objectives. Analysts discovered when federal, state, and local officials responded to new policies, implementation issues surfaced. During the beginning stages of implementation research, it was discovered that local factors such as organization size, commitment, capacity, and institutional complexity shaped the reactions and responses to policy
Early analytic models depicted a linear process where the producers simply transferred the policy to the implementers (Nilsen, 2015). However, many factors interrupted this linear model.

The process of communication between the policy makers and implementers can have a significant effect on the implementation. Effective implementation requires the implementers to clearly understand what they are to do. As messages move through the organization’s communication networks, misinterpretations, distortions, and inconsistencies in directives may occur (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). All those involved in the implementation process must clearly understand the meaning, philosophy, and objectives of the policy, and be clear on not only what they are to do, but also why (LaRocque, 1986; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975).

Successful policy implementation also relies on an organization’s capacity and will to make the required adjustments to current practice in order to incorporate the new policy requirements. For example, if the organization’s personnel are overworked and poorly trained, or there are insufficient financial and time resources, it becomes less likely the policy will have a fruitful outcome. Components that may comprise an organizations’ capacity to implement policy include resources allotted to the policy, inter-organizational communication, policy enforcement activities, organizational characteristics including leadership and staff competency; and the economic, social, and political environment. While it is possible to increase local capacity through training, additional funding, and employing consultants to add missing institutional expertise; will, or the attitudes, beliefs, and motivation of the implementers, is much more difficult to address and control (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975).

Implementation efforts face difficulties as factors outside of the policy greatly influence the will to implement. The goals and objectives of the policy may be rejected for various
reasons. They might offend one’s personal values, go against the self-interests of the actors, or conflict with features of the organization some may wish to maintain (Kaufman & Couzens, 1973). Competing priorities and pressures can influence the implementer’s willingness significantly, and no policy can mandate its level of importance at the ground level of implementation. A balance between pressure to implement policy and support for the policy is paramount for success. Because most individuals are wary of change, pressure can be important to focus attention on the policy objective and to encourage movement toward it. Support is therefore needed to assist and enable individuals in the actual implementation of the policy (McLaughlin, 1987).

Research confirms an original policy transforms as individuals interpret and respond to it at each point of the process. Individuals implement change, and those responsible for carrying out policy act on not only organizational incentives, but also from personal motivation factors. During the implementation process, internal factors take precedent over external ones. The individuals’ interaction of their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and situation all affect their behaviors toward a policy change (Spillane et al., 2002). Therefore, the original policy evolves and can differ in fundamental aspects depending upon the internal factors occurring in varying settings (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; McLaughlin, 1987). The success of the implementation of a policy depends upon an educator’s interpretation and response to it (Spillane et al., 2002).

Because individual choices and interpretations transform the policy through the implementation process, it is imperative to analyze the outcomes through the institutional context (McLaughlin, 1987). Improving education reform implementation necessitates focusing on not only what is implementable and what will work, but also on the interactions between the policy, people, and the organizational situation (Schechter & Shaked, 2017). According to Nilsen
(2015), context is active and dynamic and can significantly impact the implementation process and outcomes. For example, did a new policy not produce the desired results because of a lack of training, or did the institution merely make poor choices for the training it provided? Did the institution and individuals within the institution receive the necessary supports for success? Did they commit to the policy and make good-faith efforts to learn the new routines? It is important to understand what each individual involved in the implementation process needs and to provide them with those items. Those responsible for implementation may fail to notice, purposefully ignore, or selectively attend to policies that are inconsistent to their own or their organization’s interests (Firestone, 1989). Ultimately, the quality of the individuals’ responses to the policy determines the quality of its implementation (McLaughlin, 1987). Researchers also found it incredibly difficult to instigate policy, especially across organizations that have the multiple layers of hierarchy such as school districts.

Policy Implementation in Districts and Schools

Reform movement implementation in school systems proves particularly problematic. Labaree (2012) stated most educational reform efforts lie at the periphery, rather than the core of schooling. Reform processes have difficulty moving through the complexity of educational institutions, including its hierarchical structures. Labaree described educational policy implementation as having four levels:

1. Rhetoric is the highest level and gives the rationale for the movement. Many educational reforms begin and end at this level.

2. Formal Structure is where the reform rhetoric is incorporated into policy, organizational frameworks, curricular adoptions, and professional development priorities. This usually occurs at the district level.
3. Teaching Practice is the point where the reform ideas need to pass through the classroom doors and be adapted into the content and processes of instruction.

4. Student Learning is the final level, where even if the reform movement passes through the first three levels, it still must transform the learning of students.

Integrating change efforts at the rhetorical level has proven easy, while altering the formal structure has proven more difficult. Most implementation efforts fail because they lack the ability to penetrate the formal structure of the district or enter individual classrooms and transform teaching practice. Educators interpret policies in terms of their own experiences, interests, attitudes, and motivation to carry out the policy. The extent to which a policy’s intent is achieved depends upon the implementation processes and any changes that actually occur in the school district or its schools (LaRocque, 1986; Spillane et al., 2002). Elmore and McLaughlin (1988) agreed stating the success or failure of change in schools is the ability of the intended change to move across all levels of the school hierarchy.

The hierarchy in school districts begins at the school board and district administrator levels, who are responsible for crafting policy and who believe the change efforts should focus on the policy verbiage itself. These groups spend more time developing the policy than on planning and/or monitoring its implementation. Furthermore, they believe the policy enactment process involves merely providing the implementers with the appropriate information and training. The implementation activities can take on a negotiation-type process where the school board and district administrators attempt to “sell” the policy to the principals and teachers who in turn must “buy into” the policy’s ideals. Additionally, it is not merely the dispositions of the individuals within the implementing system that are important because the differences in the
beliefs and values between the hierarchical groups of the district can also play a pivotal role in the success of policy implementation (LaRocque, 1986).

School building principals can have a profound influence on the execution of reform efforts aimed at improving education (Spillane & Kenney, 2012). Effective results of educational reforms aimed at improving schools rely on the building principals who lead the process in their schools (Gawlik, 2015; Young & Lewis, 2015). Such reform typically involves an array of external demands which requires building principals to determine whether to incorporate the changes and begin the implementation process, or find methods to forego the implementation and maintain the schools’ current practices (Murphy & Torre, 2013).

Oftentimes, principals become the local policymakers who play an active role in adjusting reform efforts to match their particular school contexts. Many principals desire to not only follow instructions and comply with the new policy, but also to have the freedom to use discretion and make adjustments to the policy based on their educational experiences (Schechter & Shaked, 2017; Spillane & Kenney, 2012).

This review of literature began with examining the history of education control at the federal, state, and local levels. It reviewed the federal policy changes that were enacted when ESSA replaced NCLB, and the effects those changes had on state decision makers. A historical perspective of judging teachers’ effectiveness using teacher evaluation systems followed, along with a look at traditional evaluation systems and the reform movements that have attempted to overcome their shortcomings. The review then covered the use of SPMs, examining both positive and negative aspects of using performance measures to identify effective teachers. The review concluded with literature explaining how the methods used during policy implementation can affect the outcomes. The policy devolution choices made by state and local education
officials regarding SPM use in teacher evaluation will affect the nation’s educators and demonstrates the need for additional research to better understand this decision-making process.
CHAPTER 3
Research Design and Methodology

I utilized a qualitative case study approach for this research project. Qualitative methods, deemed especially suited for studying program implementation, allowed me to describe the phenomenon in context using a variety of data sources (Yin, 2003) through various lenses that allowed for multiple aspects of the phenomenon to be revealed (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Because a case study can provide in-depth description and analysis of a system bounded by time and place (Creswell, 1998, 2015; Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012) that focuses on the culture in a group, program, or organization (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), I was able to gather rich descriptions from the study participants. Their descriptions were paramount in assisting me to determine how the devolution of policymaking under ESSA from federal authorities to Kansas state education officials affected the local decision makers in Sinclair Public Schools. The study highlights the beliefs and attitudes of district administration, building administrators, and classroom teachers regarding the impact of increased local control, particularly with regard to the inclusion of SPMs in teacher evaluation systems, and how the increased local control directly affected the professional lives of administrators and teachers.

Study Site

I selected the Sinclair Public School District, located in Sinclair Kansas, as the research site. Sinclair is located in south central Kansas, approximately 30 miles from Wichita, with a total population of 8,131 in 2017 ("KS Home Town Locator," 2017). The Sinclair Public School District’s total enrollment in 2016-2017 was 1619 students. Demographically, the students were approximately 81% white, 10% Hispanic, and 9% other ethnicities. Sinclair schools had 59.79% economically disadvantaged students (Kansas State Department of Education, 2017b). The
mixture of Sinclair’s economically disadvantaged and racially and ethnically diverse student population made Sinclair well-positioned to address issues of student variability when confronting the issues regarding the use of SPMs in their teacher evaluation system.

The district is comprised of one high school serving students in grades 9-12; one middle school with grades 6-8; four K-5 elementary schools; and one educational center serving elementary and secondary students who struggle academically or have special needs that are better served in a non-traditional school setting. The district has five district administrators and directors, nine building administrators, and 139 licensed teachers and staff members (Kansas Association of School Boards, 2017; Kansas State Department of Education, 2017a).

**Participant Selection**

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants as it allowed me to discover, understand, and gain insight from those with relevant information and who could assist in providing data to answer the research questions (Lapan et al., 2012; Merriam, 2009). I contacted via email the district superintendent, all building principals, and the 48 teachers who were evaluated during the 2016-2017 school year to inform them of the study, invite them to participate, and to provide them with a copy of the informed consent. Including teachers, building administrators, and the superintendent provided a diverse and wide-ranging view of the process the district uses for policy decisions, especially with regard to SPM use, and its effects on the various roles of educators. I also gathered demographic information about the individuals including total years of experience and years in their current position in Sinclair schools which allowed me to purposefully select participants with broad experiences. From this information, the superintendent, six building principals, and six classroom teachers were selected and participated in the study.
The superintendent has been an educator for 32 years and this school year is his second in Sinclair. The building principal participants included the high school, middle school, special program school, and three elementary school principals. Their experience levels ranged from 15 total years in education to 30, with the average years in education at 20. Their years as a principal in Sinclair ranged from one to 22. The average years as a building principal in Sinclair was 7.2. Two elementary, two middle, and two high school teachers took part in the study. The range of total experience teaching was from three to 31, with the average years in teaching of 16.2. Their years teaching in the Sinclair district ranged from two to 18. The average number of years teaching in Sinclair was 7.67.

Data Collection

Data collection resulted from individual interviews that took place at each participant’s work location. The interview sessions were digitally audio recorded in order to have accurate data for analysis (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 2009). Because information gained may be sensitive, either personally or professionally, and may include remarks regarding their principal and district administrators, maintaining confidentiality was of utmost importance. Individual interviews protected the participants’ confidentiality and allowed them to openly share perspectives without the risk of being judged or influenced by others (Creswell, 2015). A semi-structured interview process was used which included pre-selected, open-ended questions (see Appendix A for interview protocols). I also asked follow-up or additional, probing, and exploratory questions to obtain clarification and additional information. These semi-structured interviews provided the ability to gain information and gave participants opportunities to describe their perceptions in greater detail (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009).
Although I proposed using document and artifact review to gain additional information and perspective for the study, the Sinclair district did not have any pertinent documents. They could not provide a blank copy of the evaluation document, as all evaluations are done electronically, and cannot be accessed unless assigned to a specific teacher. They had no committee work specific to SPMs, nor could remember email correspondence regarding them that would have provided additional information not gained through the interview process.

**Data Analysis**

In qualitative research, data analysis is an ongoing process that takes place simultaneously with data collection. It is a complex procedure involving consolidating and interpreting what participants have said as well as what the researcher has found in other data sources such as document and artifact review in order to make meaning from the data (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). Analysis involves reducing data to their smallest components to compare them for similarities and differences. This assists in placing them into categories, then reconstructing them in ways which make them more meaningful (Lapan et al., 2012).

To organize the data from the interviews, I transcribed the audio recordings into Word documents. Following verbatim transcription, I unitized the data into single elements and entered them into an Excel spreadsheet. I then established preliminary codes that organized the data into broad categories. Coding and organizing the data in this manner allowed for easier data retrieval throughout the study.

I used the constant comparative method to find similarities and differences in the data (Lapan et al., 2012). This form of analysis continually compared new data to previously collected information and challenged the plausibility of the emerging categories and themes. The constant-comparative method assisted in reducing all data into relevant, meaningful, and
useful pieces (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009). I also utilized reflective journaling throughout the data analysis process. This audio journal captured my thoughts, speculations, and hunches regarding my interpretations of the data as well as design decisions made throughout the process. The journal entries helped serve as building blocks during data analysis and the development of findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009).

Collected data was sorted into emerging categories. As additional data was collected, recurring patterns and major themes developed and drove category construction (Creswell, 2015). I continually referred back to the purpose of the study—how the devolution of policymaking under ESSA from federal authorities to Kansas state education officials affects Kansas district policymakers. The research questions: (1) “How do Kansas administrators and teachers view having increased local control over policy decisions, particularly with regard to the inclusion of SPMs in teacher evaluation systems?”; (2) “How do Kansas school districts reassess their approaches to local decision making, particularly with regard to the inclusion of SPMs in teacher evaluation systems?”; and (3) “How has the exercise of greater local control over SPM policy affected the professional lives of Kansas administrators and teachers?” were also continually reviewed to assure my analysis, coding, and organization into categories aligned with and helped answer those questions. As categories developed, I ensured categories derived from earlier data continued to be appropriate as subsequent data was collected, and made any necessary adjustments to them. I revisited the data often and on-going analysis provided justification for the established categories and themes. As the analysis concluded, the data led to the development of research findings and conclusions that addressed the research problem and questions developed for this study.
Research Quality

I employed multiple qualitative research techniques to assure excellent research. In qualitative studies, valid, reliable, and credible research is typically deemed “trustworthy” (Amankwaa, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). When applied to a qualitative study, trustworthiness also means the findings capture what occurs and can be trusted given the data presented (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Silverman, 2013). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated employing the strategies of credibility, transferability, and dependability can help ensure the research is trustworthy.

Credibility. Using the techniques of triangulation, respondent validation or member checks, and peer examination of findings assisted in producing credible research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation in my study was reflected by utilizing multiple data sources and participants (Amankwaa, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). A heterogeneous participant sample included teachers from the elementary, middle, and high school levels who taught different grade levels, were from various buildings in the district, and had different years of teaching experience. Participant diversity also came from administrators who worked at the district, elementary, and secondary levels.

A study can also gain credibility and therefore, trustworthiness, by using member checks or respondent validation (Lapan et al., 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Following verbatim transcription, I sent each respondent their interview transcription and asked if they believed I had accurately captured their thoughts and had reflected their experiences correctly. I also asked respondents if they had anything to add after having an opportunity to reflect upon the interview.
Peer examination also assists in establishing credibility. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), having outside, neutral peers analyze the various aspects of the inquiry allows for the researcher’s biases to be exposed, derived meanings explored further, and interpretations explored. I utilized a cohort member as well as other students who had completed their doctoral studies to examine my research techniques, data, findings, and conclusions. All study location and participant identifiers were replaced with pseudonyms prior to the peer review.

**Transferability.** A study has transferability when the reader can transfer all or some of the research findings to their own situation or context. Providing thick, descriptive data of the study’s participants and research settings, and collecting direct testimony assists in achieving transferability (Lapan et al., 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Tracy, 2010). Therefore, I presented the participants, setting, and context using highly detailed and illustrative language so readers may determine how my findings might relate and transfer to their own context. Additionally I selected participant language that resonated their perceptions of policy changes regarding SPM implementation and use (Lapan et al., 2012; Merriam, 2009). The findings and conclusions were described with sufficient detail and context to increase the likelihood of the transferability of the study.

**Dependability.** When the study results and findings are consistent with the data collected, the study is deemed to have dependability (Lapan et al., 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Providing abundant detail regarding the methods used, as well as the reasons for their selection for my study, assisted in confirming the report’s dependability. Maintaining an audit trail throughout the study also enhanced dependability. This audit trail produced a running record of my interaction with the data (Lapan et al., 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). I reviewed and reflected on the contents of the audit trail in an attempt to
discover areas that needed to be addressed further and to analyze if my own thoughts, beliefs, or values had unduly influenced the findings or conclusions. I also increased dependability by using rich description of the participants’ perceptions to ensure the findings were consistent with their views. Including these significant details allows the reader to understand the effectiveness of the methods used in the study. Additionally, exposing my positionality, using peer review to analyze the various aspects of the inquiry, along with my use of triangulation increased the study’s dependability (Merriam, 2009).

**Research Ethics**

Ethical guidelines and principles serve to connect researchers to ethical practice. Qualitative researchers have additional ethical considerations as they serve as the research instrument interacting with individuals (Lapan et al., 2012). The study proposal was submitted to the Wichita State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. Following approval, the study participants received informed consent documents (see Appendix B for informed consent documents). These documents included specific information about the study including the purposes, expected duration, and descriptions of the procedures, foreseeable risks, and potential benefits from taking part. They also received information regarding methods of maintaining confidentiality, and that subjects who chose to take part did so voluntarily and could withdraw from participating at any time and for any reason.

Data collection techniques, to the greatest extent possible, maintained the participants’ anonymity. No participant names were used when reporting the findings in final documents, and I exercised extreme care in protecting each participant’s identity. I maintained all digital files of recordings from interviews on my personal computer, which is password protected. Additionally, these files were encrypted. Following study completion, the files were
downloaded to a flash drive for storage. This flash drive was stored in the offices of the WSU Counseling, Educational Leadership, and Educational School Psychology department. Following the download, they will be removed from my computer. The files will be destroyed 5 years following study completion.

**Researcher Positionality**

In qualitative research, the beliefs, values, and personal life history of the researcher play an important role and can shape the research, analysis, findings, and conclusions (Chiseri-Strater, 1996; Haller & Kleine, 2001). Therefore, the need to understand my own cultural perspectives and subjectivities cannot be underestimated. Positionality, or the researcher’s relationship with the topic, participants, and data, must be considered (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Yates & Leggett, 2016). According to Peshkin (1988), the researcher’s personal qualities that come into contact with their research phenomenon have the ability to filter, shape, and transform all that transpires during their research project. It is therefore paramount to “consciously attend to the orientations that will shape what I see and what I make of what I see” (p. 21).

As an educator for more than 30 years, I have been in the role of the evaluated teacher and the administrator who performed teacher evaluations. Being exposed to many types of evaluation philosophies, tools, and purposes has undoubtedly shaped my thinking. I have taken part in professional development opportunities to gain additional knowledge of evaluation processes. More recently, my experiences have included observing the purpose of evaluation and the systems used to evaluate educators become more formative in nature. The use of student data for formative purposes has also become more widespread. These collective experiences have all shaped my views regarding teacher evaluation and the use of student data.
My current role as assistant superintendent in a suburban Kansas school district includes coordinating the evaluation process including the addition and implementation of SPMs. I served as the chair of a committee comprised of both teachers and administrators who determined appropriate methods to incorporate SPMs in our district. Including teachers and building administrators enhanced the acceptance of the use of SPMS in the evaluation process. I have served as the district’s primary administrator in disseminating information from KSDE regarding the implementation and use of SPMs, as well as training our administrators to incorporate them into our evaluation system. Through the state’s implementation process, I experienced many frustrations. The state did not give clear expectations, and I had no way of knowing if our extensive work toward meeting the mandates regarding SPMs would suffice. After working several months toward implementation in our district, Congress enacted ESSA, and the requirements and expectations changed regarding SPM use. Much of the implementation work was no longer relevant, and retraining staff on the new expectations, including how they would now fit into our evaluation system, had to occur. Again, I led a committee that discussed the changes to SPM mandates, the enhanced local control, and guided our district’s reshaping of SPM use in our teacher evaluation system.

During the extensive literature review and my own knowledge of Kansas’ and my district’s implementation processes and SPM use, I had formed personal opinions as to many aspects of the appropriateness of SPM use. I realized the choice of the research topic itself, the questions I chose to ask, and my thoughts during analysis were liable to shaping by my experiences and positionality. Because I acted as the research and data collection instrument (Haller & Kleine, 2001; Merriam, 2009), I attempted to identify where my positionality became entangled with the phenomenon under study, and to the greatest extent possible, mindfully
separated my personal beliefs from the data collection and analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As Peshkin (1988) noted, doing so limited the opportunity for me to seek out my own sentiments and present them as data. My results attempted to reflect only the data collected, and minimized the orientations I held. Using reflexivity and peer review helped limit my positionality creeping into the study results.

Reflexivity, or the process of looking inward upon ourselves as researchers and our subjectivity, leads to both understanding and owning our own perspective (Chiseri-Strater, 1996; Patton, 2015). By building in times, spaces, and contexts for this inward inspection of self as part of the research process, reflexivity can be enhanced (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). As Kleinsasser (2000) posits, a close connection exists between the researcher’s reflexivity and writing. Reflecting in this manner and sharing these reflections with a peer reviewer throughout the process helped ensure good data and analysis.

The use of peer review assisted in assuring the findings and interpretations reflected the participants’ perceptions and not those I held (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2015). Throughout the research and analysis process, when discussing with peers, I reviewed the data, my reflections about it, and my thoughts regarding the emerging categories and findings. This review assisted in making sure the raw data supported the findings as they developed (Merriam, 2009).
CHAPTER 4

Findings

The research data was designed to provide insight into teacher and administrator perceptions regarding policy devolution from NCLB to ESSA, especially regarding the use of SPMs in teacher evaluation. This information is organized by themes that emerged from the data that include inconsistencies surrounding SPMs, value found in local control, and challenges that accompany being responsible for making educational decisions at the local level. Although many participants were not familiar with changes in policy or practice specific to the passage of ESSA, their responses to questions regarding the use of SPMs in teacher evaluation and increased local control indicated they possessed a working knowledge of the educational policies and practices that directly affected them.

Teacher Evaluation Policy in Sinclair Public Schools

Similar to most Kansas public school districts, Sinclair Public Schools began the implementation of SPMs in 2014 following the granting of the NCLB waiver. Because the state required teacher evaluation to include SPMs, many schools adopted a new teacher evaluation instrument. Sinclair chose the state-developed Kansas Educator Evaluation Protocol (KEEP) as their tool. The KEEP is now in its second iteration, called the KEEP 2, which has an electronic format not available in the original version. When the Sinclair school district was deciding which new evaluation tool to select, they wanted something with a strong emphasis on student performance. One principal shared that a major factor why the district adopted KEEP was it incorporated SPMs as an aspect of a teacher’s summative ratings so the use of SPMs automatically became part of what they did.
Inconsistencies Surrounding SPMs in Sinclair Public Schools

Participant responses demonstrated inconsistencies in the understanding of SPM use in the current teacher evaluation system. Inconsistencies were noted with how SPMs were selected, how the percentage of growth needed for adequate progress was determined, and how SPMs were to be used in the summative evaluation rating. Each of these is discussed below.

Selecting Student Performance Measures

The methods to determine which SPMs were used for the evaluation process varied across the district. Participants reported differences in the methods used to select measures, the types of measures used, and the number of measures required in the evaluation process. Sinclair teachers who were on the evaluation cycle typically met with their evaluator in September to discuss the use of SPMs in their evaluation. One principal stated he sat down with his teachers at the beginning of the year to develop the SPMs they will use. He said, “I want them to come up with something they’re comfortable with, and if I’m comfortable with it, then we use it.” He described being flexible with this process: “So everything we do, student performance measure wise, is kind of developed right here by myself and the teacher.” Another principal added as part of the goal setting process, the teacher chose, or he and the teacher chose together, the different measures used as part of that year’s evaluation. One principal stated, “I think it’s important to give them a choice” so she allowed the teachers to choose which SPMs they wished to include. One secondary teacher said she and her evaluator talked about the SPMs that would enable her to demonstrate her students’ performance at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. When describing the SPM selection process, an elementary teacher stated he was unaware of any consistent expectations from the district for using certain assessments. Although the participants
were aware of the need to use SPMs, some were not clear on the policies or practices of incorporating them into the evaluation instrument itself.

Both teachers and administrators had differing answers regarding the number of SPMs required for evaluation. One secondary teacher stated she merely had to provide samples of student work. An elementary teacher said the administrator in her school looked at test results, but did not specify how many were to be examined. Another elementary teacher discussed the pre-and post-tests many teachers in the district had implemented for the KEEP process, and stated, “I mean, I guess I’m assuming they’re using that as far as their information.” An elementary and a high school teacher believed three SPMs were required. One secondary principal said he thought they used two, but could choose up to three. An elementary principal stated the teachers were able to choose two options to include in the evaluation. The inconsistency of this information corroborated the thoughts of the superintendent. When he arrived two years ago, there was no set policy in the district and minimal guidance from the district office. Because there were seven schools in Sinclair, principals interpreted it seven different ways. “It probably wasn’t done very well in our district, I would say” added the superintendent with significant understatement.

Many participants discussed the actual measures they were able to choose, especially the frequently used pre-and post-tests developed specifically for use as an SPM. Both middle school teacher participants described this process as being asked to develop a pre-and post-test over the curriculum or over the standards. They were then asked to give this test at the beginning of the year, and then give the same test toward the end to determine student growth. A building principal stated two or three years ago that teachers were encouraged to develop a pre-test, usually their final exam, and administer it at the beginning of the year. Teachers would then take
those results and compare them with the results at the end of the class to show student progress. One elementary teacher explained it as giving a baseline test at the beginning of the year and giving that same test again at the end of the year to show if student growth had occurred. However, a middle school teacher explained she gave the post-test long after her evaluation was complete. She said, “I don’t know for sure when we’d have that conversation-- in May, I suppose,” indicating that SPMs were not an aspect of her conversations nor her summative ratings during the evaluation process. Another teacher stated she gave her post-test right before the second evaluation of the year instead of at the end of the course so her students did not have the opportunity to demonstrate a full year of growth.

Participants also shared other SPM options they were able to use. Many elementary teachers described the various formative assessments they used as SPMs in their evaluations. These included Measures of Academic Progress (MAPS), Fastbridge, Star AR, PAST, and QPS, which are all commercial measures that claim to break down student weaknesses or gaps in their learning. Those assessments were given frequently to monitor progress and were easily incorporated into the evaluation process. One principal shared, “We’re actually doing more progress monitoring and more assessments than we ever have to make sure we’re not missing anything and that the kids progress.” She added, “Oh, my gosh, we have so much data now. Way more than we did two years ago.” Some teachers described using chapter or unit assessments, student portfolios that included work samples from throughout the year, and progress toward meeting Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals for students with special needs.
Percentage of Growth Needed for Adequate Progress

Participants had varying perceptions regarding the percentage of growth needed to show progress in the evaluation process and ratings. Answers regarding the target amount of growth students needed to demonstrate on SPMs for teachers to meet the expectation for evaluation purposes indicated much variety within Sinclair schools. A principal noted that in her building, 2% growth was the standard achievement gain they wanted to see in each classroom. Another principal shared they expected to see 80% of the students reaching the proficient level on the chosen assessments, which is a completely different technique or measure for determining growth. One middle school teacher stated she did not know for sure what growth percentage she was expected to meet. Other participants declared there was flexibility in determining the growth needed to rate a teacher. Said one high school teacher, “The principal told me . . . I would set that percentage [of growth] that I wanted to see.” She added it was the principal’s practice to give teachers the discretion to decide what percentage they thought it appropriate to reach. Both secondary principals confirmed using this approach. One said he sat down with his teachers and they decided together the percentage of growth that was attainable and would realistically demonstrate the students learned the material. He added:

I want it to be something I truly believe is growth. I don’t want them [teachers] to think it was a 50 so I think 55 is great. That’s only 5% growth. I don’t think that’s realistic. I don’t think that’s showing growth.

When the other secondary principal explained the KEEP process to his teachers, they determined together the percentage of increase they expected to see. He added they tried to make this an achievable goal. One elementary principal explained they began with the current achievement level of students and then figured the amount of increase they wanted to make.
Student Performance Measures in the Final Summative Rating

Study participants also had differing perceptions about how SPMs contributed to a teacher’s final, summative rating. One elementary teacher said she was uncertain how the SPMs figured in her performance during the evaluation process. A middle school teacher said she was not sure how SPMs figured into her final rating. She stated, “We had a formula we were to follow, and off the top of my head, I can’t think of exactly the formula, but there is a formula for a certain percentage of kids mastering [the academic content] and moving on.” One principal said the KEEP system weighted the scores but he did not remember exactly how that weighting helped determine the final summative rating. A high school teacher stated she was able to choose any class she wanted for the SPM aspect of the evaluation. In fact, it was even permissible for her to use a different class for each SPM. A secondary principal explained that in order for a teacher to be rated as highly effective for the student performance piece of the evaluation, they must meet the growth goals in three SPMs. If the teacher met two of three SPM targets, they received an effective rating and by meeting only one SPM growth target, the teacher was rated as developing. He believed the SPMs were 50% of the overall rating, however, he was not certain. Although SPMs contributed to the final rating, several participants noted they did not believe there was much focus or worry on the SPM portion of the evaluation. They believed that more traditional aspects of teacher evaluation, primarily principal observation, played a more significant role in their final summative rating.

According to an elementary teacher, during walk-throughs, her principal liked to observe how she worked with kids, how she incorporated technology, and how she used all learning styles in her everyday lessons. She explained after the walk-throughs, the principal visited with her to discuss how she worked with and engaged the students, not about her SPMs. A middle
school teacher stated that thus far, her evaluations had been based more on what the principal observed in the classroom. When referencing SPM use in the evaluation process, she said, “I haven’t seen a lot of reference to the progress shown on those.” A secondary principal concurred: “My evaluation is just based on observations and discussions with the teacher.” For one elementary principal, the SPMs played a small role because she knew the teachers only chose SPMs that would display growth. She believed being in classrooms gave her a better understanding of teacher and student performance. “My evaluation is based on my informal observations that I see, my formal observations, and looking at the data” she declared. “I’m pretty knowledgeable with my staff and what they do. Their evaluations lie more heavily on their instruction-- how their class is organized, are the students engaged, are they making growth in general.”

Some teachers shared they did not believe their jobs were on the line if students failed to show adequate growth. Observed one middle school teacher: “I’m not getting the message from central office that their focus is on holding teachers’ jobs on the line for student performance.” Although she knew she would be graded on student performance, she did not believe she would be released if her students did not improve. “I hate to say they’re not paying attention to student performance measures” she commented, but “so far, they’re not saying my evaluation is linked to it.” One secondary principal informed his teachers that SPM use was intended for their growth, not for some type of “gotcha.” He said, “We are not going to use this to fire you or anything like that.”

The inconsistencies found in the understanding and use of SPMs in the Sinclair district proved challenging for participants. Both challenges and advantages accompanied the exercise
of local control for school districts. Participants shared their perceptions of the ability to determine the policies and practices best suited for them that result from having local control.

Value of Local Control

The passage of ESSA in 2015 marked a significant shift in the control of educational policies from that of NCLB. ESSA granted more power to state education decision makers, and in Kansas, those decision makers granted local school districts increased control to tailor their local policies and practices to benefit their individual situations. Many participants were not familiar with policy devolution under ESSA, nor were they aware of any specific local control increases or changes in policies or practices for the Sinclair district because of it. However, the district was undertaking major change efforts in an attempt to better the education delivered to their students. Therefore, participants placed value on being granted more authority to internally control their educational practices and policies.

When asked their thoughts on having local power to shape their educational policies and practices, all participants believed this had positive effects. One middle school teacher said, “Oh I think it’s a totally good thing to have more control.” A secondary principal explained an increase in local control was a positive because it allowed schools to create their own policies. An elementary principal added local control had given them “a tremendous amount of power to be able to change things for the better.” When describing the opportunities gained through an increase in local control, the superintendent said, “It’s monumental. I’ve been waiting for this moment for 20 years.” The advantages described included an increased opportunity for teacher and administrator input for decisions that affected them, increased flexibility to tailor educational programs to better suit their needs and to better individualize instruction for their students, and the capability to tailor their use of SPMs in evaluation.
Increased Opportunities for Input

When educational decisions are the responsibility of local school district officials, teachers and administrators have increased opportunities to provide input as those officials contemplate potential changes to their policies and practices. Two participants believed the ability to provide input meant more people were engaged and involved in decision making than ever before. Participants discussed several aspects of having a voice within the district’s decision-making process. Nine interviewees shared similar perceptions of the structures in place for providing input. They said each building had a Building Leadership Team (BLT). The primary responsibility of BLTs was to represent other teachers in their building to bring their thoughts, ideas, and questions to the building leader, along with relaying information from the principal back to those whom they represented. An elementary principal stated the BLTs responsibility was to help make decisions about certain aspects of the school and to act as a go-between with the staff and her. She said, “They [BLT] are truly an asset to myself and the school. I would say they have a large input and I truly value their opinions.” One elementary teacher said, “I feel all of them [BLT] work together on a common goal, and they do put their input to the administration.” A middle school teacher explained everyone knew who their representative was and felt those representatives did a great job of seeking input from others. The ability of BLTs to iron out problems and fix them before they became serious issues was appreciated by a high school teacher.

Another team in the district, the District Leadership Team (DLT) was comprised of all building and district office administrators. The BLTs communicated their needs, ideas, and thoughts to the DLT which allowed the entire leadership team to keep a pulse on the change culture in each of the schools. Three principals explained this structure permitted constant
feedback to take place between the different hierarchical levels. “When the staff took issues to the BLT, that group in turn, brought them to me. Then I had the ability to take those issues to the DLT if appropriate,” stated an elementary principal.

The superintendent explained how decision making was distributed within the district. He had a group he met with called the Superintendent’s Cabinet. This cabinet was composed of one teacher from each building and principals who rotated each meeting. He stated the group worked on big picture items such as the district’s vision, but he sought their input on a variety of topics. The cabinet also served as a liaison between the schools and the district office. The study participants believed the opportunity to have a direct voice in the decision-making process was a positive aspect of local control. Another positive aspect was an increase in flexibility.

**Increased Flexibility**

An increase in flexibility was another positive aspect of local control. Both teachers and administrators in the Sinclair district believed local control provided increased flexibility to tailor their educational practices and programs in ways that better meet the needs of the district, its teachers, and its students. When referencing the attributes of increased local control, a secondary principal noted, “We need to be able to have the flexibility to do what’s best for our community and our schools and our district. I like it, so I’m all for it.” Two elementary principals agreed local control was a positive development in recent years. They explained because districts were different with regard to culture, demographics, communities, and the staff and student makeup of the buildings, having the freedom to ascertain items that would be most beneficial for them was extremely important. A middle school teacher concurred, saying, “Different populations require different things.” She appreciated the ability to tailor the education system to the needs of their students because regional or statewide systems could not take into account the key differences
between each district. A high school teacher said, “I think it’s good for every district to have its own autonomy to decide how they’re going to develop their programs.” One secondary principal explained he preferred more local control. When describing the radical changes the Kansas Commissioner of Education had been promoting, this principal believed districts would need a great deal of local control. He said:

    Districts are going to have to have a lot of leeway in how they implement things, how they choose resources that they purchase and implement, how they make partnerships with other community agencies like colleges and local businesses, and how that looks as far as curriculum, as far as programming, as far as school schedules and that kind of thing.

He believed these types of changes had to be made to meet the commissioner’s goals and to serve their students.

    An elementary principal’s comments reflected similar thoughts when she declared, “It [local control] is huge. It’s enabling us to be able to completely turn around our building and do what’s best for our students.” The superintendent agreed and stated he felt educators in Kansas had been given the opportunity to do things that could potentially radically change education in the state. He described how increased local control allowed them to discontinue certain practices that had proven ineffective. He hoped many traditional aspects of teaching and learning would cease, including the use of worksheets, traditional lecture model of instructional delivery, and even where students were placed within the learning continuum. He believed making these changes would engage every student instead of just the “traditional, middle-class girl that likes school and can sit still and be quiet and do what the teacher asks.”
The flexibility to tailor educational programs and policies yielded another advantage as well, namely, increased individualization for students. Increased local control allowed the participants to improve their capacity to individualize the educational programs so they were more congruent with the needs of each student. An elementary teacher explained it allowed teachers to take control of their class because they knew what their students struggled with. A high school teacher thought local control was positive because it allowed her to teach in a way that specifically met the needs of her students, instead of being forced to use the same methods and techniques as another teacher who taught the same subject and grade level. Another high school teacher explained she was now able to invest more time into each individual student. She believed she now had the ability to increase time spent on each student and communicate more with them which made it easier for her to reach them and easier for them to learn the material. An elementary teacher noted teachers in the district were now helping students succeed, no matter what weaknesses the students demonstrated. He said, “We’re trying to help those students. Whether it’s a student with a disability or a gifted student or an average student, we’re trying to meet all those students’ needs.” A secondary principal appreciated local control because of the need to individualize the education for each student. He added districts could also individualize their expectations because what fit for Sinclair was not necessarily going to fit in another location due to differences in types of students and communities. An elementary principal corroborated these thoughts:

You have to look at each student, not the district as a whole, not the school as a whole.

It's giving us more time to focus on the individual student. I think when it comes down to the individualized student and you're looking at every student instead of a class or school
as a whole, we're actually focusing on the whole child and making sure each student succeeds instead of a district succeeding... which I like.

The increased flexibility to determine the most appropriate district policies and programs and the capacity to better individualize instruction led participants to respond affirmatively regarding the ability to refine SPM use in Sinclair.

While under the auspices of the NCLB waiver, the state mandated certain aspects of SPM use in teacher evaluation. These included the use of state assessments, along with the requirement that any other district-selected SPM had to be approved by the state. Additionally, the state mandated SPM results were to play a significant role in personnel decisions, therefore, the accountability tied to those measures were concerning to educators. With the passage of ESSA, those requirements as well as several others were no longer in force.

Many participants described this flexibility when discussing the use of SPMs. The superintendent explained that school districts had been given significant expectations under NCLB, and that the current expectations made more sense. In the past, the indicators students were to learn were determined by state education officials and teachers responsively “drilled and killed those indicators, and our kids became great test takers that didn’t have a whole lot of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.” He added having the freedom to determine what worked best for a district regarding teacher evaluation resulted in a much better situation. A secondary principal shared that when originally implemented, SPMs meant the annual state assessment. He questioned why decisions would be based on one data point. He declared doing so was a, “statistically stupid way to make a decision.” He added, “I think it’s a terrible idea; logically, statistically, practically, to base an entire evaluation around state assessment measures.” He explained by no longer being mandated to use the state assessment as an SPM,
school districts would be able to choose assessments they believed would better reflect student progress. Another secondary principal welcomed the freedom to have more control over SPMs because if educators were forced to continue to follow a checklist from the state, changes they were trying to make in Sinclair would not occur. He noted the methods SPM results were incorporated in the KEEP evaluation model were good because he and the teachers could determine, to a certain extent, how to combine them with other evaluation tools to determine teacher effectiveness. An elementary principal also appreciated the flexibility with SPM use because they could choose many different methods of student assessment that would allow a better picture of student learning to be reflected in teacher evaluation. A middle school teacher said:

And I think it’s a great thing because then it became the focus from the test to actually the student. And to me that was a very positive move because instead of trying to generate these students that could master a test, we’re now generating students that can learn in different ways so that they can, you know, be a more well-rounded student.

Those thoughts were also expressed by a high school teacher who liked there were multiple ways to assess students which would allow teachers to better assist them. Participants valued local control regarding SPM use in teacher evaluation because it also allowed them to determine the appropriate level of teacher accountability for student performance.

**Improved Determinants of Teacher Accountability Tied to Student Performance Measures**

Reform efforts such as NCLB and RTTT increased the focus on teacher accountability and the emergence of SPMs as a method of monitoring and increasing teacher responsibility for student learning is well documented in the literature. Participant responses mirrored the research findings that SPMs could be helpful in holding teachers accountable for student learning.
Participants believed local control could assist in determining the appropriate amount of teacher accountability tied to SPMs. Said one high school teacher, “It’s up to the teachers, you know, to improve what they’re [students] doing and I’m sure you can measure that.” An elementary teacher believed reducing the pressure that accompanied the former system of SPM use was beneficial because a teacher would no longer feel pressured to have their students perform well on only a single measure. Another elementary teacher noted the need to potentially manipulate the assessment scores would be reduced. He stated through local control, the accountability aspect had been granted to districts to determine what would be most appropriate for their situation. An elementary principal said, “Teachers are here to help the kids grow, and to give them skills and knowledge. So yes, I think it’s important that we are held accountable for that.” Not using SPM scores to determine who was an effective or ineffective teacher was deemed a positive use of local control by a high school teacher. She expressed a suitable use for SPMs would be for teachers to use those scores to reflect upon and learn what they could do to improve their instructional strategies. A secondary principal stated teachers should be held accountable to some extent on what they’re doing in their classrooms, and believed local control was helpful as it had given them flexibility in incorporating SPMs. An elementary principal feared if SPMs were not included, teachers and administrators might not look closely at student growth. She stated that even if SPMs were not a required aspect of the evaluation system, she would still address student growth with her teachers. The superintendent agreed that student progress must be considered. He said, “If you see a majority of kids that are not achieving and
are not making good progress, then I think we have to think there’s something going on here and we need to address that.”

Under the NCLB waiver, SPMs were to play a significant role in personnel decisions, and participants shared their relief that through the increase in local control, districts no longer had to conform to that mandate. When discussing relying too heavily on SPMs to determine his teaching ability, an elementary teacher declared, “If you feel like you have to work extra to support that you’re a good teacher, and back that up, I don’t like that.” A middle school teacher appreciated the district office not holding teachers’ jobs on the line for student performance. Those same thoughts were expressed by a high school teacher who did not recall her principal stating the SPMs would determine whether or not she would continue to be employed. She said, “I think teachers should be held accountable for kids’ growth, but at the same time I don’t think it should be pinned on whether they’re doing their job and if they’re a good or bad teacher.” Participants also expressed their perceptions about the pitfalls of placing too much accountability on SPMs as they are not always a valid reflection of their teaching abilities.

**Mitigation of Factors Beyond a Teacher’s Control**

The classroom teacher is widely thought to provide the most substantial in-school factor with regard to student achievement (Donaldson & Papay, 2012; Mathers & Oliva, 2008; Rivkin et al., 2005). However, elements beyond the teacher’s control have a significant influence on student performance (Braun, 2005; Harris, 2011). Participants expressed relief that changes in SPM use due to increased local control limited the affect that factors beyond a teacher’s control had on performance outcomes. A high school teacher was pleased SPMs were no longer used as a significant factor in her evaluation because it would be unfair to compare her student’s results with that of another teacher. She noted students have differing learning styles, and teachers use
many teaching techniques that may not align with the students who happened to be assigned to them. She said, “I don’t think that means one [teacher] is better than the other, so why should their job depend on that? Just because my kids didn’t show as much growth as the one [teacher] across the hall, does that make her a better teacher?” An elementary teacher discussed the fact that many times, student assessment results differed from the student performance she had observed in her classroom. She noted how several times, right after students successfully completed a task and she gave them an assessment related to that same task, students could not demonstrate what she believed they had learned. Another elementary teacher knew some students could make the required performance gains no matter the quality of instruction they received, which he deemed problematic when using SPMs as a high-stakes measure of teacher effectiveness. Although participants perceived many advantages from increased local control, they also noted many challenges that coincided with having the authority to determine their own educational policies and practices.

**Local Control Challenges**

Difficulties can accompany being granted the authority and responsibility to improve teaching and learning. Although study participants did not directly associate changes recently implemented in Sinclair with policy devolution under ESSA, the atmosphere surrounding increased freedoms may have been a contributing factor to the recent changes in the district. While the teachers and administrators from Sinclair shared many positive perceptions regarding the ability to tailor their educational programs and policies for their district, they also expressed challenges that accompanied that duty. These challenges fell into several broad categories.
Unanticipated Local Control Challenges

In regard to the implementation of recent change in Sinclair, several participants noted unforeseen challenges that accompanied having local power to alter policies and programs. One such challenge was teachers being inundated with change. The Sinclair district had made several recent changes that led to challenges for participants. Said a secondary principal, “I realize that anytime you start something, it’s a daunting task to get going, but eventually it will level off. But right now, we feel a little overwhelmed.” A middle school teacher explained teachers who had been in the district many years had especially struggled with the amount of change that had been made in the last year. “Everyone was a little bit reeling, you know, trying to keep their head above water,” she said. A high school teacher explained how for some people, new changes were extremely difficult. She added some teachers were not open to change, and they wanted to maintain the status quo. She said, “Those who don’t want change have the hardest problem with it because they don’t want to try something new or they don’t see the positive of it.” An elementary teacher believed without everyone being willing to make the changes, difficulties would ensue.

One elementary teacher mentioned beginning this year, the district had implemented major changes to their Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) programs, class schedules, math curriculum, and resources for both reading and math interventions within MTSS. She noted all those changes had teachers working extra hard and by the end of the day, “I’m just tired.” An elementary principal had counted 14 new initiatives over the past two years and expressed some initiatives received a higher priority than others, hinting that some new programs had been put on the back burner. Another elementary principal agreed the number and frequency of recent changes were difficult to keep up with. She said, “We have a new schedule. We have
a new math program along with new math interventions, new reading interventions, and a whole new computer system. You know, it’s just like, oh, my gosh!”

The volume of changes in the district was the primary reason given for a lack of change in teacher evaluation and the use of SPMs. Said one elementary principal, “There are so many other things we are behind on, and so that little piece [SPMs] on the KEEP to me is not that big a deal.” An elementary and two middle school teachers believed with all the other changes taking place, changing the teacher evaluation system was not the highest priority.

The principals in the study discussed several challenges they now faced due to increases in local control. One such difficulty expressed by an elementary principal was bearing the weight of having the responsibility for making choices that affect everyone in her building, which meant more learning for her. She said, “I have to do more research. I have to figure out what is going to be best for kids. How am I going to improve not only teacher performance but student performance?” Another administrative challenge she mentioned was convincing some of her teachers to stop using students’ poverty and home life as excuses for their lack of adequate performance. She explained that when the Kansas state mandates were in place, it was easier for teachers to make the excuse that the state decision makers did not understand Sinclair students or the community. Teachers must now take greater ownership for student progress.

A secondary principal mentioned being the learning leader of the building had become a greater challenge with increased local control due to several new initiatives noted above. He stated a big challenge was to make sure he was not only requiring teachers to meet the expectations, but also that he was modeling those expectations for staff. He said, “Yeah, I think that’s a challenge, but it’s ultimately our number one responsibility to be the learning leader of the building.” Another secondary principal believed the increased local control over evaluations
was a positive change, but was unsure whether local control, in and of itself was beneficial for his students. He was supportive of giving additional responsibilities to the district, but realized good decisions had to be made at the local level in order to prosper from that authority. With increased decision-making power comes additional choices that must be made. Participants expressed the uncertainty surrounding many decisions was an additional challenge.

Uncertainty Surrounding Local Decision Making

Participants expressed uncertainty encompassed many local control decisions and knowing which direction to move or what program to implement was challenging. “There are struggles any time you change things,” said a secondary principal. He expressed the need to carefully select what would work for their situation because when many things were changing, some people do not know what to do. He said, “Do people know where they’re going? Do people know what to do?” The superintendent explained the district was researching the changes they were potentially going to make. He stated, “We’re grappling with some really big picture ideas. What’s the assessment going to look like? How do we know students are progressing?” He explained the difficulty lies in conceptualizing what these changes were going to look like. A middle school teacher worried that with all the possibilities available, teachers would lose focus on the important matters. She felt the need to ensure the selected items would lead them where they needed to go. Another middle school teacher shared concerns of what could happen with a change in leadership. She believed the superintendent was the driving force behind much of the change efforts and worried someone else might not drive as hard with as much success.

Some participants believed having parameters from the state would help curb fears surrounding local decision making. A middle school teacher believed the state needed to set some parameters for expectations because “some people would push the easy button too much.”
She thought local control needed a broad framework set at the state or national level, with districts being given the freedom to achieve that framework according to what they deemed appropriate. When discussing the state establishing broad guidelines for student learning expectations, the superintendent said, “I’m comfortable with that.”

**Implementation Challenges**

Owing to the volume of recent changes, on several occasions, the methods used to implement new initiatives impeded their level of success. The implementation procedures used when initiating a program or policy can have a significant influence on the degree of success of a program’s outcomes (Patton, 2015). Participants believed some methods used during the rollout of these changes led to unnecessary difficulties for them. Not knowing the purposes for the changes was one such challenge. When discussing the explanation that took place at the beginning of the year for a recent change, one elementary teacher said, “It would have been nice if they would have better explained it.” A high school teacher noted they were not explicitly given the reasons behind some changes in her building. She said the building administration merely said this is what we want you to implement this year. A middle school teacher also expressed the importance of knowing the purpose behind these changes.

Several participants described in detail the particular classroom-level challenges they encountered during the implementation of district-wide changes. For example, an elementary teacher expressed frustration because after receiving training for a new math program and after using it for 9 weeks, they discovered the training gave them incomplete or inaccurate information. He shared they visited with teachers from another district who had successfully used the program for a few years. After hearing this information, they completely changed how they taught the new program. He wished they would have gotten that input before
implementation, so they would not have had to learn how to use the new program twice. An elementary principal experienced difficulty when implementing a new program in her school. For younger students, the changes were easier because they had not spent many years learning the old program, and they could start closer to square one in the new program. For her older students however, the teachers had to attempt to catch them up by teaching several foundational aspects of the new program that students learn in the earlier grades because they did not have the background knowledge necessary to learn the more advanced material.

Participants also described how Sinclair’s implementation of changes in programs and policies strained the district’s time and fiscal resources. With regard to time, an elementary teacher said finding the extra time needed for professional development to assist in enacting changes was difficult. He explained they had a set number of inservice days built into the contract, and if more professional learning time was needed, it had to take place outside contracted times. A secondary principal said even though a necessary evil, the amount of time his teachers were out of their classrooms to receive training for the new initiatives was a concern. Balancing the time spent on training with the time teachers needed to be in the classrooms implementing the programs created a difficult tradeoff. “We’re gone at least two to three times a month and that takes away from classroom time,” he explained regarding the consequences of these unanticipated externalities.

The financial challenges accompanying the district’s change efforts were mentioned by several participants. “If you want to do something different, it’s going to cost something,” explained one elementary teacher. A middle school teacher noted the district was still trying to recover financially from the lack of monetary resources the past several years. Therefore, trying to catch up and implement new programs was especially difficult. She noted they were behind
with four core area curriculum updates as well as technological updates. She believed the financial burden was the biggest problem associated with the establishment of local control changes. A secondary principal expressed frustration with differences in financial resource availability for some districts such as Sinclair. He said, “So we may have the ability to choose, but we may not have the choices available that other places will.” He added they must try to find alternate methods of funding to make the changes happen and believed larger districts had more freedom of choice due to the increased resources available to them.

When implementing changes, clear communication was vital, and the significance of adequately communicating all facets of change efforts did not go unnoticed by the Sinclair teacher and administrator participants. A secondary principal said, “The biggest struggle is probably communication with the staff; just getting them to understand what the expectations of the district are.” When discussing hindrances to change, a middle school teacher stated, “I think communication is key. I mean probably the biggest stumbling block is communication and making sure that everyone has a buy-in to it and they see the value behind the program.” To mitigate resistance to change, an elementary teacher believed teachers needed to receive communication and feedback from administration regarding the purposes for change. He said many times it felt like teachers did extra work without receiving any results from it or understanding the reasons prompting the change.

The superintendent reflected on challenges when communicating with the broader Sinclair community regarding the changes they were potentially incorporating in the schools. He expressed difficulty in communicating with the Sinclair community on issues for which they had little or no knowledge. “Our community doesn’t have background knowledge of anything other than what we’ve always done, which is the traditional model,” he said. What may seem like
innovative or radical ideas to the community may be practices other districts had been doing for years. He therefore had to be very strategic with his messaging. He had communicated with site councils, news media, local service organizations, and made multiple school board presentations regarding the big ideas they were possibly going to implement. He said their tactic with the community conversations was to relate their ideas in terms the parents and community could connect with. An example for this was using the term vocational education instead of career and technical education. He believed using that tactic helped many in the community have a better understanding of the district’s proposed direction. There was need for the district to be somewhat ambiguous in conversations with community stakeholders because “if we’re not fairly ambiguous at this point, our community won’t support it [changes]. We are trying to get the word out, but we’re careful about how we message it.”

This chapter provided an awareness of teacher and administrator perceptions regarding policy devolution from NCLB to ESSA, especially with regard to the use of SPMs in teacher evaluation. The information included participant perceptions of the inconsistencies surrounding SPM use, the value they found in having local control, and the challenges that accompanied being responsible for making educational decisions at the local level. It also demonstrated that participants were not familiar with specific changes in policy or practice as it has devolved with the passage of ESSA.
CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Implications

Changes in federal education policy between what some considered the overly prescriptive NCLB and ESSA, which has restored a significant degree of educational policy decision making freedoms to states, have a multitude of effects at the state and local levels. Where the federal government’s involvement in educational policy expanded under NCLB, calling for increased testing, mandated proficiency goals, and prescriptive interventions for low-performing schools that failed to achieve those goals, ESSA allows states more latitude in crafting their own policy agendas (Hess & Eden, 2017; Remer, 2017). State lawmakers in Kansas have responded to the devolution of educational policy by granting local school district officials the authority to determine the most appropriate approach for implementing school reforms. One such decision facing local school officials concerns the use of SPMs in the teacher evaluation system. The purpose of this study was to explore how decision makers in Sinclair Public Schools navigated the freedoms ESSA and Kansas policy makers granted regarding the inclusion of SPMs in the teacher evaluation process. In support of this purpose, Sinclair Public School administrator and teacher perceptions were examined to determine their views on increased local control, their approaches to local decision making regarding the use of SPMs, and how the exercise of greater control over the SPM policy affected their professional lives. In this chapter, the findings of this study are examined through the lens of implementation theory as a framework in order to draw conclusions about these perceptions of increased local control.

Conclusions

Implementation analysts determined the procedures used when initiating a policy can have significant influence on the success of that policy (Patton, 2015). Additionally, as
demonstrated in Kansas’ SPM policy changes, implementing change in schools can be especially troublesome (Labaree, 2012). Kansas education officials provided limited guidance for SPM use when originally mandating their incorporation into teacher evaluation. This lack of direction created a situation in which Kansas school districts such as the Sinclair Public School District, haphazardly implemented SPMs into their teacher evaluation systems. The implementation process in Sinclair resulted in an inconsistent application of SPMs and a laissez-faire attitude of the district administrators and teachers toward their use.

**The Implementation Process Influenced SPM Use**

Early implementation analysts discovered when policies were not implemented with fidelity, disappointing outcomes were often a result (McLaughlin, 1987; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). According to LaRocque (1986), the extent to which a policy’s intent was achieved depended upon the implementation techniques and any changes that actually occurred in the schools. Sinclair originally implemented SPMs to meet the requirements handed to them from Kansas education officials. As part of that process, most districts had to select a new evaluation instrument. Sinclair chose the KEEP system, which included SPMs. However, study participants did not demonstrate any notable buy-in for the process of using SPMs. Therefore, the adoption of SPMs functioned as merely a mandate to comply with and an artifact of the KEEP instrument the district had elected to use. The district did not promote the use of SPMs nor attempt to use the data they provided as a formative technique to improve teacher effectiveness. None of the study participants related SPM use to professional development that might potentially assist them in improving their teaching capacities. The examples recounted by participants demonstrated the extent to which SPMs were not implemented purposefully to improve teacher effectiveness in Sinclair.
According to Spillane et al. (2002), the success of incorporating a policy depends upon an educator’s interpretation and response to it. Study participants overwhelmingly interpreted the use of SPMs as non-threatening and non-important. Both principals and teachers clearly stated they never believed a teacher’s job was or should be dependent upon their student’s progress. Neither teachers nor principals were certain how much progress the students or class needed to demonstrate for the teacher to be rated as proficient. Additionally, the student growth percentage increases believed to be needed differed greatly among the participants. For example, most were unaware exactly how SPMs influenced their final summative evaluation rating. Several participants noted there was no need to focus on SPMs in particular as more traditional aspects of teacher evaluation played a more significant role. If the teachers were concerned about the use of SPMs affecting their evaluation ratings, and therefore negatively affecting their professional lives, they would have likely been more knowledgeable regarding SPMs.

Although the Sinclair district SPM changes can be described as formal structural changes as they were incorporated into policy (Labaree, 2012), they were implemented with such a conspicuous absence of structure that inconsistencies in practice were virtually inevitable. Numerous examples of the erratic practices came forward during the individual interview sessions. Differences were noted in the methods participants used to select their performance measures, the types of assessments given as SPMs, and the number of SPMs required in the evaluation system. Because the participants approached the use of SPMs with indifference, and because of the varying practices of SPM use, the next level of Labaree’s (2012) implementation theory, the teaching practice level, was unattainable. Many implementation efforts fail because of their inability to penetrate the formal structure of the district and enter individual classrooms to alter teaching practice (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; Labaree, 2012). As the findings
suggest, without the changes being incorporated into teaching practice, the goal of SPM use leading to increased teacher effectiveness and therefore improved student learning in Sinclair seemed improbable.

**Sinclair Educators Appreciated Increased Local Control**

For the past several years, state and local education officials have sought relief from the restrictive federal mandates enacted under NCLB. Even with the attempted reprieve from some of NCLB’s requirements through the federal waiver system, the friction and frustrations that mounted regarding the flawed NCLB law opened a window of opportunity for ESSA to redress the policy errors of the past. Congress reauthorized NCLB in December 2015 with ESSA, which transferred significant power and autonomy for educational decisions back to state and local school districts (Ferguson, 2016; Shoffner, 2016). The study participants expressed much appreciation for having this additional control, even though none connected the increase to the new law. District educators seemed oblivious to state and federal educational policy environments and their influence on conditions in the Sinclair district. Instead, participants attributed the many changes and improvement efforts solely to the new superintendent’s desire to improve teaching and learning, not to outside educational policy actors. This blinkered view does not bode well for constructing a more coherent system of schools within states and across the nation. Individual districts should have some connection to the national conversation on educational improvement reforms and not act as independent contractors operating in a vacuum. Moreover, it may negate the role of educational research in contributing to improved school and educator effectiveness. The superintendent should remain informed about current educational research as it may provide knowledge and guidance regarding potential local control decisions that affect his district, schools, and educators.
All study participants believed the district had not kept pace with curricular and student learning programs, deemed the recent changes were needed, and expressed overall positive viewpoints of the changes. They described this increase in local control as “monumental,” “totally a good thing” and that they had been given “a tremendous amount of power.” The study participants believed the ability to tailor their practices and programs to better fit their students was advantageous. These advantages included an increased flexibility to do what they deemed best for their students, and an ability to expand the opportunities to individualize instruction. Furthermore, they believed having flexibility in the use of SPMs was desirable because teachers no longer needed to focus their instruction on preparing their students for the state assessment, which many believed was not an accurate measure of their students’ learning.

Participants also appreciated the ability to participate in decision-making processes which now may carry greater significance due to local actors’ ability to shape Sinclair’s practices and policies because of the increased authority. Sinclair teachers participated in building-level committees that provided them a voice with building and district leaders. The superintendent also met with teachers periodically to gain their insights into district initiatives. Both the superintendent and teachers appreciated this exchange of ideas and information.

Study participants noted the district now had a better-defined mission and vision, which were absent in the past. This allowed the staff of the Sinclair schools to have a positive outlook regarding the direction of the district. Study participants expressed their colleagues also believed the district was headed in a positive direction. Therefore, even though the change process had brought about challenges, they considered the positive aspects of the initiatives to have outweighed the difficulties.
Teachers and principals in Sinclair agreed a certain level of accountability was necessary, and enjoyed they could now have a greater voice in determining what that accountability level should be. No longer were they tied to the beliefs of federal or state policy makers. Instead, they could decide how to apply SPMs to their evaluations, and how the results could be used in a more formative nature that could assist them in their efforts to provide better instruction to their students. They expressed relief that SPMS were no longer going to be used as a significant factor in personnel decisions, and evaluators could now take many other aspects of their teaching practices into account. They believed possessing the authority to reduce the pressure of how their students performed on state assessments would benefit all educators in Sinclair.

Additionally, several participants noted each teacher had students of varying ability, who came from a multitude of backgrounds with different levels of support at home. Participants supported the notion that these various aspects, of which they had little control, should be taken into consideration for each teacher, and it was not appropriate for teachers to be judged exclusively on how their students performed on certain assessments. These factors all contributed to the study’s conclusion that the professional lives of educators in Sinclair were enhanced by the expansion of local control over the policies and practices that affect their everyday work with students.

These positive viewpoints may have resulted from a lack of negative ramifications from the increased authority. Because SPMs were not a priority and played such a small role in the teacher evaluation system, teachers did not receive any negative consequences if their students performed poorly on assessments. Some participants were unsure just how much their SPM results were actually included in their final ratings. The district thus far had not used SPM results to sanction teachers, negatively judge them, or place them on plans of improvement.
Therefore, the lack of negative effects may have influenced their favorable views of expanded local power.

**Local Control Should be Used Cautiously**

Research confirms making changes to current policies and practices is difficult in schools, and participant responses reflected difficulties observed throughout the change process in Sinclair. If the organization’s personnel are overworked or if there are insufficient financial and time resources, it becomes less likely the policy will have a positive outcome (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). In practical terms, competing priorities can also present a professional challenge and significantly influence local actors’ willingness to initiate necessary changes (McLaughlin, 1987). The Sinclair study participants noted several such challenges that included the implementation process influences noted earlier, the number of recent changes made, the strain on both time and financial resources, and communication difficulties that proved taxing. Therefore, when exercising local control, decision makers should proceed with caution.

Study participants found the number of recent changes made in the district especially noteworthy. Although principals expressed appreciation for the way their teachers had pressed forward through all the changes, many teacher and principal participants discussed being overwhelmed at times. The number of recent changes, estimated by one principal to total 14 new initiatives, was deemed necessary by study participants to assist the district in providing better learning opportunities for its students. However, the potential positive effects of the initiatives may have been reduced due to spreading the district’s personnel too thin and not allowing the individual changes to be focused upon and integrated completely. Because district leaders had complete control over the timeline for implementing these new practices, results may have been even greater if the changes were incorporated into practice more gradually. This may have also
assisted in reducing the participant's worries of not having adequate financial and time resources for the added responsibilities as those resources would have also been distributed over a longer time period.

When instigating new programs, communication within the organization is vital in assisting implementers process, understand, and incorporate the changes. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) found implementation processes, in order to be effective, must be clearly understood by participants. All involved must clearly understand the meaning, philosophy, and objectives of the new policy or practice. They must be clear on not only what they are to do, but also the reasons behind the changes. Some participants noted that communication challenges both within the organization and outward with the community made the change process more difficult. Although some participants understood many of the purposes for several of the changes, the rationales behind other change initiatives were less clear. Therefore, an increased focus on strategic messages to staff, similar to what the superintendent did for the community at large, would enhance teachers’ and administrators’ knowledge of the purposes of the many changes.

Implications for Policy and Practice

For many years, state and local education decision makers voiced their concerns regarding the restrictive mandates associated with NCLB. District educators now have an opportunity to greatly enhance and customize their educational policies and practices due to the increased local control granted through policy devolution under ESSA. In the past, local educators had to find ways to circumvent the mandates they found unsuitable for their particular context (Faber, 1990). However, they now have an opportunity to rethink these policies, such as the use of SPMs in teacher evaluation, and make overt adjustments appropriate to their unique
situation. Having and exercising the responsibility for enacting policies and practices to improve teaching and learning is a formidable task. Because the implementation methods used can have a substantial influence on the degree of success of new programs (Patton, 2015), they are of utmost importance.

As demonstrated in the Sinclair Public Schools, implementing change can prove both beneficial and challenging. The implementation processes used can affect whether new initiatives are deemed worthwhile and ultimately successful. By examining how administrators and teachers in Sinclair experienced policy devolution resulting in increased local control and the changes that ensued, the results of this study can assist educators in navigating similar processes in their districts.

**Strategically Plan Implementing Changes**

Educators can benefit from much forethought when determining the processes used to implement new initiatives. During the planning stages, care must be taken to determine who should be brought into the planning conversations. It could prove beneficial to include a variety of stakeholders, especially those at the “street level” who will be most affected by the changes. As Lipsky (1969) determined, reform efforts should be concentrated on organizational structures and behaviors at the lowest level of the organization because in the final analysis, policy implementation is shaped by the actors who actually implement it. The Superintendent’s Council in Sinclair could be an appropriate committee to bring in for such conversations.

An additional consideration should be to plan out a suitable number of changes to implement simultaneously. It is important to not overwhelm those responsible for carrying out the changes. Mapping out a multi-year plan may assist in ensuring the most impactful change
efforts are fully integrated before undertaking additional efforts. This may also lead to greater success for all initiatives.

A strategic communications plan should also be contemplated. By determining the multiple messages needed, the appropriate audiences for them, and the means to communicate them, greater understanding of the purposes for the new policies and practices may result. It is important for the superintendent to have frequent, direct communication with the staffs of all schools. Even though teacher participants in Sinclair believed they enjoyed unobstructed input to the superintendent, many times their messages were filtered through the building principals. Having a more direct line of communication with the superintendent could be advantageous to all involved especially in a school district of manageable size such as Sinclair. Because building principals can have a major influence on the execution of reform movements, they should be relied upon to lead the process in their schools (Gawlik, 2015; Spillane & Kenney, 2012; Young & Lewis, 2015). When necessary and advantageous, the superintendent could rely on the Sinclair principals to strategically communicate certain aspects of the change efforts. They may have a greater trust established, have more time for individual conversations, and occupy positions that allow them to tailor policy messages to fit the culture of the building. Principals often become the local policymakers who adjust the reform efforts to the particular contexts of their buildings, and should be giving the freedom to use discretion and make adjustments to the policy (Schechter & Shaked, 2017; Spillane & Kenney, 2012).

**Coordinate the Use of SPMs District-wide**

Much variation was seen across the Sinclair district regarding the use of SPMs. The district should systematically unify the practices so everyone clearly understands the various aspects of their use. A committee comprised of district administrators, building administrators,
and teachers could be formed to determine the parameters to be used with these measures. These actors could come to consensus on the number and types of SPMs to be included in the evaluation, the percentage of growth necessary for each evaluation rating category, and how SPMs will be figured into the final, summative rating. Once determined, these agreed-upon parameters should be clearly communicated to all staff members so there is less possibility for misunderstanding. These parameters should also be discussed during pre-evaluation conferences between principals and the teachers slated to be evaluated that school year.

An additional item this committee could determine is how best to use SPM results. Currently in Sinclair, these results do not appear to be used in any manner. When used correctly, data from SPMs can lead to increased conversations about teaching and learning and important feedback regarding student learning (Braun, 2005; Corcoran, 2010). Information gleaned from SPMs could be used formatively to determine teacher goals, professional development needed to improve individual teacher instructional capacities, building-wide gaps that exist within the curricular programs, and when teachers may benefit from more formal assistance in the form of plans of improvement. Study participants agreed that a multitude of student data existed in the district but suggested that the district may be missing an opportunity to apply it for improvement purposes.

**Increase Local Knowledge of Freedoms Gained from ESSA’s Policy Devolution**

Although the Sinclair school district has made many changes to their policies and practices during the past 2 years, none of the participants equated the changes with ESSA’s passage by Congress in 2015. Within the structural configuration of school districts, the superintendent typically has the most opportunity to be informed of major federal and state policy changes. Sinclair’s superintendent could make it a priority to stay abreast of these
changes. Because KSDE has not made it a priority to inform the educators of Kansas about many of these laws, the superintendent may need to explore other means for finding this important information. Once the superintendent learns of this information, it is paramount to share it with the staff in the district so all are aware of the policy changes that affect them.

Study participants’ knowledge of changes in the use of SPMs in teacher evaluation changes was limited to understanding state assessments were no longer mandated as an SPM. However, many opportunities exist for additional changes. The superintendent and other participants had several ideas about how teacher evaluation could be improved. Many of those ideas could be enacted, as long as the district fulfilled the statutory requirement of teacher evaluation. It may prove beneficial for these ideas to be communicated to the administration and discussed to determine whether any are worthy of further consideration by the district decision makers including the local teacher’s union.

**Implications for Additional Research**

Further research into implementing facets of increased local control beyond the use of SPMs in teacher evaluation that was brought about with the passage of ESSA may shed additional light into the opportunities and challenges that accompany such authority. Particular attention could be focused on studying policy changes that could greatly affect teachers and student learning. Research that compares successful local control policy implementation efforts against less successful initiatives could provide school district leaders with further information to consider when undertaking changes in policies and practices for their districts.

This chapter included the conclusions and implications drawn from individual interviews of the superintendent, six building principals, and six teachers working in the Sinclair Public Schools. The experiences of these participants may provide valuable information to other school
district leaders who are considering the implementation of new policies or practices. The increase in local control can be beneficial to districts if it allows them to tailor educational policies and practices to be congruent with their unique circumstance. However, caution must be used when exercising this authority because the lives of professional lives of educators may be affected.
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Appendix A:

Individual Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is Mike Bonner and I represent Wichita State University as a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program. I appreciate your willingness to participate in my dissertation research. This study titled, Implementing Change: The Devolution of Teacher Evaluation Policy Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, will examine how the district is navigating the student performance measure policy implementation process as it shifted from No Child Left Behind to the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Kansas school districts were required to use student performance measures (SPMs) beginning in 2015-2015 as part of a federal waiver to excuse the state from NCLB mandates. The SPMs were to be used as part of the summative rating and be used as a significant factor in personnel decisions by 2017-2018. In January of 2015, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced NCLB. As the new education law, ESSA gave Kansas and other states more freedom to decide what education policies and practices to adopt. In turn, Kansas officials granted Sinclair and all other school districts more opportunity to customize their educational policies. One such policy was the use of SPMs.

You have been selected because as a classroom teacher, building principal, or district administrator in Sinclair Public Schools, you have unique knowledge which will contribute to the research. Please keep in mind I am interested in your perceptions about your experiences in Sinclair.

Before we begin, I would like to share a few procedures for our conversations. To ensure confidentiality, no names will be used when we report the results of the session. With your permission, I would like to audio-record our session to make accurate analysis directly from your comments. The digital recording of our conversation will be transcribed. After the initial transcription, names will be replaced with pseudonyms and subsequent analysis will result in text without identifiers. For additional confidentiality, the recording and transcription will be kept in a secure location for the duration of, and after the conclusion of, the study. This session will last approximately 45-60 minutes.

Interview Questions:

1. Please state your name.
2. How many total years have you been a teacher, building principal, or district administrator; and how many years have you been in the district?
3. Can you share how Sinclair, or your previous school district, included SPMs in the teacher evaluation system?
4. What are your thoughts about Sinclair now having more local control about setting its own education policies and practices?
5. ESSA no longer requires the use of SPMs in the teacher evaluation process. How has Sinclair responded to this change? (IF CHANGES MADE OR IN PROCESS)
6. How were teachers, building principals, and district administrators involved in changing the teacher evaluation process here in Sinclair?
7. What are your perceptions of the weight given to the thoughts and ideas of the teachers during that process?
8. How were any changes communicated throughout the district?
9. What are your perceptions of these changes?
10. Are there any aspects of the changes you wish were different?
11. Are there any changes you would make to how they have been implemented thus far?

OR IF NO CHANGES

12. Even though Sinclair now has the local control to do so, why do you believe the district hasn’t tackled changes to the use of SPMs in teacher evaluation?
13. Now that Sinclair can set the policy for SPMs, can you describe any changes you would make to SPM use?
14. Can you tell me how you would implement these changes?
15. Is there anything else you’d like to tell me regarding changes in the use of SPMs in teacher evaluation or the increase in local control?
Appendix B:

Individual Interview Consent Form

**Purpose:** You are invited to participate in a research study titled Implementing Change: The Devolution of Teacher Evaluation Policy Under the Every Student Succeeds Act. The study will examine the perceptions of Sinclair Public Schools’ district administrators, building principals, and classroom teachers regarding methods used by the district when navigating the student performance measure policy implementation process as it shifted from No Child Left Behind to the Every Student Succeeds Act.

**Participant Selection:** You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your position as a classroom teacher who was evaluated in 2016-2017, a building principal, or a district administrator in Sinclair Public Schools. You possess unique knowledge that will provide valuable information and perspective to the study. Approximately 10 to 14 building administrators, district administrators, and classroom teachers from your district will be invited to join the study.

**Explanation of Procedures:** As a participant, you will be asked to be involved in a one on one interview conducted by me. The interviews will consist of 8-12 open-ended questions. Examples of questions that could be asked in the interview:

1. Can you share how Sinclair, or your previous school district, included SPMs in the teacher evaluation system?
2. What are your thoughts about Sinclair now having more local control about setting its own education policies and practices?
3. Now that Sinclair can set the policy for SPMs, can you describe any changes you would make to SPM use?

The individual interviews will last approximately 45-60 minutes and will take place at your work site. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview so an accurate transcript can be created which will facilitate data analysis and assist me in reporting accurate findings.

**Discomfort/Risks:** Although the risks of participation are minimal, participants may experience some social discomfort associated with sharing their experiences and perspectives.
with me during interviews. Participants may feel uncomfortable participating because they will be asked to describe their thoughts on district implementation processes, district policies, and replies may include perceptions of the district decision makers most responsible for adopting policies, coordinating their implementation, and ensuring they are being followed.

Your participation is voluntary. During data collection, you are encouraged to be open in your responses. If you feel uncomfortable with a specific question, you may choose not to respond. The participants’ identities, responses, locations, and other study data will remain confidential. Additionally, all participants will be able to drop out of the study at any time without reprisal from WSU or the district.

**Benefits:** This research will contribute to the field of knowledge regarding education policy devolution including increased local control of educational decision making. This will contribute to understanding how local education decision makers adapt to changes in policy from the federal or state levels. Potential benefits include improved implementation methods districts could use in future initiatives including improve communication techniques. The results could encourage districts to alter the use of SPMs in teacher evaluation which could prove beneficial to teachers, administrators, and districts.

**Confidentiality:** Every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, in order to make sure the study is done properly and safely there may be circumstances where this information must be released. By signing this form, you are giving the research team permission to share information about you with the following groups:

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Wichita State University Institutional Review Board;

Recordings and transcriptions of the interviews will be stored in a secure, online, password-protected program. At the conclusion of the study, transcripts, and recordings will be stored in a single password protected file and maintained for three to five years at WSU by my dissertation committee chair. Transcripts and recordings will not be labeled with identifiable information.

I may publish the results of this study. If I do, your name will not be used in any publication or presentation about the study.

**Refusal/Withdrawal:** Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University, Sinclair Public Schools and/or myself. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

**Contact:** If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me, Mike Bonner, at (316) 250-8234 (cell phone) or email at mklbonner@gmail.com or my advisor Dr. Eric Freeman, (316) 978-6392 (office phone) or email at eric.freeman@wichita.edu. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject you can contact the Office of Research...
You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that:

- You have read (or someone has read to you) the information provided above,
- You are aware that this is a research study,
- You have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction, and
- You have voluntarily decided to participate.

You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

________________________________________
Printed Name of Subject

________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Subject                           Date

________________________________________
Printed Name of Witness

________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Witness                           Date