A Qualitative Study of Urban Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of

Accountability in Their Practice

by

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ABSTRACT

Current federal and state education mandates were developed to make schools accountable for student performance with the rationale that schools, teachers, and students will improve through the administration of high-stakes tests. Public schools are mandated to adhere to three accountability systems: national, state, and local. Additional elements include the recent implementation of the Common Core standards and newly devised state accountability systems that are granted through waivers as an alternative to the accountability mandates in the No Child Left Behind Act NCLB of 2001. Teachers' voices have been noticeably absent from the accountability debates, but as studies show, as primary recipients of accountability sanctions, many teachers withdraw, "burn out," or leave the profession altogether.

The present study is based on the premise that teachers are vital to student achievement, and that their perspectives and understandings are therefore a resource for educational reform especially in light of the accountability mandates under NCLB. With that premise as a starting point, this dissertation examines practicing urban teachers' experiences of accountability in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. To fulfill these goals, this qualitative study used individual and focus group interviews and observations with veteran elementary school teachers in an urban Southwestern public school district, to ascertain practices they perceive to be effective. The study's significance lies in informing stakeholders, researchers, and policymakers of practicing teachers' input on accountability mandates in diverse urban schools.

i

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Controversial regulatory mandates at the national and state levels, particularly the

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and AZ LEARNS, 2000, were developed to make

schools accountable for the academic achievement of all students regardless of their

language and cultural background. Furthermore, local education agencies (LEAs) also

mandate accountability policies for their schools. In total, there are three accountability

systems that most public schools are required to adhere to: local, state, and federal. The

rationale for the mandates is that schools, teachers, and students will improve through the

administration of high-stakes tests. Consequently, not meeting the required mandates

causes schools to undergo sanctions such as school closure or take-over by government

or private agencies. Amrein and Berliner (2002) and Giroux (2012) surmise that this is

an avenue to privatizing public education. That current accountability mandates

constitute a problem in public education today is reflected in the fact that 42 states have

sought and obtained waivers to the federal mandates under the No Child Left Behind

(NCLB) Act of 2001. Clearly, this is an undeniable sign that policy changes urgently

need to be made.

This chapter begins with a problem statement followed by this study's research

questions and my personal and professional biography as the qualitative researcher.

Next, I provide an account of educational accountability literature and rhetoric at

national, state and local levels. Included is a brief overview of accountability in the

scholarly literature and public discourse, contributions and significance of the study; then assumptions; limitations; delimitations; and a chapter summary.

A key assumption of this study is that veteran teachers have expert knowledge regarding what works and what doesn't work when it comes to their students' academic needs to attain academic success in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. Since this study was conducted in an urban public school district with culture and language minorities, it assumes that veteran teachers have sufficient knowledge of how to effectively work with their diverse students in becoming successful as well as having enough "in-the-field" knowledge as a teacher to provide quality feedback to support the purposes of this study.

A second assumption is that veteran teachers have knowledge and experience in implementing current accountability policies set at the national, state, and local levels to enable them to provide quality feedback on those policies. It is also assumed that teachers come from various backgrounds and experiences, therefore resulting with differing experiences of accountability practices.

This study employs a phenomenological approach; therefore it assumes that teachers' life histories represent "a more widely shared pattern of life experience" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 98). As a result, interviewing veteran teachers supplies this study with professional knowledge that predates (yet informs) the implementation of NCLB. Since participants (teachers) were assured that the information in this study will remain confidential, it is further assumed that responses were honest and open. Definitions of key terms serve as an aid for complete comprehension and clarification of

some educational terms used in this study. Those definitions may be found in Appendix F.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Education in the United States presently and historically revolves around notions of accountability. Accountability as a policy motif was present in schools as early as the seventeenth century. For example, in 1647, students in public schools in the Massachusetts Bay Colony ordered teachers to teach their students to be able to read. The primary objective was for students to be able to read the Bible. Accountability was magnified by events such as Russia's launch of the first earth-orbiting satellite, Sputnik in the 1950s; the ensuing public policy discourse sought to convince Americans that we had fallen behind and that schools were to blame. President Ronald Regan's *A Nation At Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983) magnified issues of accountability by again, arguing that American schools were not doing a good job educating youth. From its initial appearance in education to the present, accountability has been defined through a variety of notions at the federal, state, district, community, and school levels.

NCLB is a bipartisan educational accountability mandate meant to serve the following purpose: "…the law boils down to a very simple goal: making sure all children across the country can read and do math and science at grade level so they can have the brightest possible future" (U.S. House of Representatives, 2007, p. 2). The goals of NCLB are idyllic, however, and the means to achieve those goals have proven ineffective and unrealistic in their expectation that 100 percent of students would score as "proficient" on high-stakes tests by 2014. On disaggregated test data, "Some schools can

3

have forty or more subgroups, yet there is no distinction between a school that failed to make AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) in thirty-five and another that fell short in just one" (Hess, 2006, p. 231). For example, in urban schools where more subgroups tend to exist in student populations than their suburban counterpart, NCLB does not acknowledge that urban schools have more subgroups that have to score proficient versus suburban schools that might have just one subgroup. Sirotnik (2004) states that evidence continues to mount about teacher and principal demoralization and attrition over frustration about the effects of mandated testing for high-stakes accountability (see also Goodnough, 2001; Jones, Jones, Hardin, Chapman, Yarbrough, & Davis, 1999; McNeil, 2000; Whitford & Jones, 2000; Winerip, 2003, p. 4). On the other hand, some argue that NCLB has been worth the effort because "…it has helped America's urban schools direct attention to students who, for far too long, were out of sight and out of mind" (Casserly, 2007, p. 65).

Although there may be many issues that play into the shortcomings of NCLB, I chose to examine accountability as the primary source of the many issues present in public education. Importantly, under the three extant accountability systems – federal, state, and local – teachers play a vital role in student success: "…Unless teachers believe in the plan, come to the terms of the identification of their school as in need of improvement, and feel they have the wherewithal to make change, it is doubtful that the plan will be enacted in teachers' classrooms" (D'Agostino & Stoker, 2002, p. 254). At present, accountability research rarely hones in on the interaction of multiple, simultaneous accountabilities (Firestone & Shipps, 2005, p. 8). To assist teachers with these multiple accountabilities, Smith and O'Day (1991) have argued for state and federal

4

policy to become more coherent, which may have also assisted in prompting the development and implementation of the Common Core standards. (Firestone & Riehl, 2005, p. 81).

Over a decade after the enactment of NCLB, schools continue to struggle to make AYP or to be labeled as an "excellent" or grade "A" school within a state's accountability system. In a study of urban teachers, one teacher, "Toni," states, "I would say that the Chicago public schools are not doing a very good job of educating African American kids" (Michie, 2005, p. 125). Another urban teacher, "Cynthia," shared, "As it is, our schools are definitely not doing a good job of serving students of color" (Michie, 2005, p. 83). Furthermore, Darling-Hammond (2007) stated:

> Most unhappily, some of the Act's most important and potentially productive components—such as the effort to ensure all students have highly qualified teachers and successful educational options and supports—are in danger of being extinguished by the shortcomings of a shortsighted, one-way accountability system that holds children and educators to test-based standards they cannot meet while it does not hold federal or state governments to standards that would ensure equal and adequate educational opportunity. (p. 5)

In September of 2009, President Barack Obama addressed schools nationwide on accountability in his *Back to School* speech (ABC News, 2009). In his speech, he placed the responsibility of accountability on students by emphasizing their role in their own success. Unfortunately, this did not appear to materialize into anything further because accountability policies continue to highlight high-stakes tests, school labels, and parent choice. There have been many unintended consequences of NCLB and one of them is the

fact that teachers are leaving the profession. The percentage of teachers in public schools who left the profession increased over 10 years from 1988-89 to 2008-09. In 1988-89, 132,300 or 5.6 percent left compared to 269,800 or 8.0 percent in 2008-9 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). In *Rescuing the Public Schools: What It Will Take to Leave No Child Behind*, Clinchy (2007) shared that educator Mary Romer stated: "the fact that we were able here in District Four to treat teachers as adult professionals and give them a chance to do what they've always believed should be done has helped prevent teacher burnout and kept many of the best teachers in our schools" (2007, p. 108). Perhaps more schools need to use District Four as a model to keep teachers in the classrooms and this premise underlies the intent of this study.

The purpose of this study is to examine practicing veteran elementary school teachers' experiences of accountability to determine teachers' perspectives on which accountability practices are effective or ineffective in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. Not only does the study identify accountability practices that veteran teachers use, it identifies practices worth acknowledging for further use in schools. With this overarching purpose in mind, four key questions guided this research:

1. How do veteran urban elementary school teachers working in linguistically and culturally diverse schools understand the notion of educational accountability?

2. What does accountability "look like" in these teachers' daily practice?

3. Based on teachers' knowledge and experience, what constitutes sound and appropriate accountability practices?

In light of findings in response to these questions, this study also explored the implications for policy and practice in linguistically and culturally diverse elementary schools.

The remainder of the chapter outlines in more detail the study's rationale in light of recent research on the topic of accountability and recent political developments that have influenced education policy. I then consider the study's significance and its limitations and delimitations, and provide a definition of key terms that will be used throughout this dissertation. An overview of the dissertation as a whole concludes the chapter.

Personal Influences and Biography

I am a third generation teacher. My grandmother and mother have been elementary school teachers a majority of their professional careers with a system that offers an education to Indian children by the federal government.

In a recent discussion with my grandmother, whose earlier teaching experience dates back to the 1950s at Camp Navajo in Belmont, Arizona, I discovered how much education and its policies have changed over the years. It was very intriguing to hear of her various experiences as a teacher. The motives behind educational policy throughout those years made me question the purpose of schooling. As I will explore later, some of those motives will be shared through scholarly literature and public rhetoric. Much of what I heard were qualities that have not changed, which saddened me because of the gains in research, technology and access to information our society made during the recent decades.

My grandmother recalled having taught riddles, sounds, and singing songs such as "Mary Had a Little Lamb." "They [students] really got interested in the songs," she recalled. She also taught writing (the alphabet and numbers, starting from 1 to 5 then progressing from there). Numbers were displayed on the board and they could count up to 20 or higher. Parents were welcomed to volunteer and she encouraged them to speak to the students in Navajo when a majority of the students spoke English resulting with them struggling to speak Navajo. The principals monitored teaching and wrote notes as feedback and she recalls getting good marks from the principals. Furthermore, students ate in the classrooms so they could also learn etiquette. "The students enjoyed that," she recollected with a smile. Teacher aides made fried bread with the students and practiced making flat dough, which they were able to cook if they wished. Laughing, as she remembered some of the various shapes of fried bread that her students made. In the spring, she took the kids out to cook on an outdoor fire. Parents were invited and helped with the cooking and guiding students.

Disbelief overwhelmed me as I listened to my grandmother's recollections because most present-day school leaders would not allow such learning activities to occur. Some of the concerns would be: students not engaged in a learning activity directly linked to a tested subject, parents coming in and out as they wish without background checks, time spent on non-tested subjects like cultural appreciation and learning of self-identities, and the absence of approved research-based pedagogy, to name a few.

With regard to teacher evaluation, my grandmother further recalled, "People would come out from Window Rock [the Navajo Nation capitol] to observe what they

8

[teachers] were doing. I always got good marks from them," again, with a grin. The subjects taught were "everything": math, reading, poetry, writing, PE, music in lieu of record playing, 15 or 10 minute recess, art, and spelling small words like one and two, etc. She recalled kindergarten behavior being somewhat wild at first, but was later managed after students acclimated to their classroom environment by following directions. Once in a while there was a bully and conflicts usually centered on toys. At the end of the school year, students had to take tests – simple tests, she said. They usually passed their tests, and if they didn't do well they were nonetheless promoted because of their age. But, she expressed, her students usually did well (on the tests). She also articulated that she was encouraged to teach Navajo as part of the bilingual program. "I wanted them to speak English [because they are supposed to learn English]." A lot of them couldn't speak English because their parents were not educated (meaning they did not attend elementary school or had little formal schooling) whereas the English-speaking students had educated parents. She did not use textbooks but used teacher editions as guides. By the spring her kindergarten students could read short sentences.

My grandmother recalled receiving comments from her colleagues that her students could read well. She had two groups, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. The kindergarten class was divided in half due to high enrollment so she had a morning group and an afternoon group. She spoke Navajo to her students but was later encouraged to speak English, especially to the students whose first language was Navajo. She claimed they learned quickly and picked up a lot of English from their English-speaking peers. She remembered teaching social skills, like not to fight, to share, and

how to ask for more food. "I don't know how it is now [kindergarten classrooms]. Sometime, I should go down [to the school where she taught] to see how it is now."

These are some of my grandmother's recollections of her teaching experience with language minority students. Some of the descriptions she shared may be found in a present-day classroom, such as singing nursery songs, learning the alphabet and numbers as well as seeing them displayed, testing, teacher evaluation via observations, and student interactions socially. Some of the differences may be learning a language other than English, receiving instruction in two different languages, learning etiquette, learning culture through cooking and community involvement, and not relying totally and completely on textbooks. This is a brief and simple account of my grandmother's experience with cultural and language minority students.

As a comparison over two decades later, my mother began her diverse career as an educator in 1978. In sequence, she taught self-contained 8th grade, 7th/8th grade language arts and math; was assistant principal, dean of instruction, principal; reading coach, and 6th/7th combined class. Similar to my grandmother, my mother's entire career is in BIE schools. Her general recollections of the major differences and similarities in the educational climate from the time that she entered education to the present are the following: In the 1980s, standardized tests were used to see if students were performing at grade level for promotion and retention reasons. "There was not much of an emphasis on how much growth the students made. They just took a test and it seemed that was it. Kids didn't know anything about their performance. Now, we have to tell the kids where they are at and where they need to be by the end of the school year." She claimed that accountability and responsibility are at higher levels now than previous to the enactment

of NCLB and the Common Core standards. "Some teachers are being held more accountable, and there's more responsibility on teachers. It's a lot of tedious work…having to write standards on the board every day, having detailed lesson plans that have standards…it's redundant. We say we are not teaching to the test, but we are."

She further claimed that teacher evaluations varied depending on the leadership and that it should be used to improve teaching. She witnessed some teachers being placed on Professional Improvement Plans (PIP), but from what she observed, there was no real consequence because administrators tended to shy away from giving bad marks to avoid teacher unions getting involved. Unfortunately, this resulted in "bad" teachers remaining in the system, "then you have the ones that work real hard and do their best every day. There's no real incentive for them…just brownie points." She continued to say that teachers are overwhelmed now. "They're expected to do so much in such little time with less resources and less support."

A major difference, my mother shared, "teaching used to be fun. It's not fun anymore. It was fun that you could go in and have a real good lesson with art, poetry, doing class projects, putting on a carnival as a project, doing plays, that kind of stuff…we can't do that anymore. Now we have to look at the standard, then do Response to Intervention (RTI), if a student isn't making it, do more RTI." She claims teachers now have to juggle too many plates. "Like before, you would see your kids as a whole. Now you see kids as, these are above grade level, at level, and below grade level. Then we gotta do Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3, then challenging stuff for these kids. Your instruction is on four different levels."

After a short pause, my mother says a quality teacher she knew for a long time is now seeking to go back to school to become a nurse because she is overwhelmed in her teaching position. She observes teachers appear to be on the decline. As a North Central Accreditation (NCA) evaluator, she observed many classes with substitute teachers for reasons either the position was not filled, teacher meetings, or teachers left the position. Furthermore, she claimed that students appear to have more physical and medical handicaps. "We didn't have ADHD and inhalers. Now we have to know everything on each student. If we don't, we get in trouble and teachers are afraid of getting sued for every little thing."

While schools are transitioning to Common Core standards, my mother's school recently adopted a new report card. "It doesn't have any letter grades, just the standards, so we check off the standards for each quarter." She asks, "How do you interpret those standards?"

One similarity according to my mother, parent involvement continues to be low. However, a major difference is the composition of the households. It is more common for students to have grandparents and stepparents raising them. "A lot of times, you don't know if there's a restraining order on a parent...a lot of those kinds of issues…but the joy of seeing your student twenty years down the road and thank you, which is what happened today. I saw a student from the '70s,'80s, and he looked real good. He looked happy, doing well, working at IHS (Indian Health Services). He said, "Thank you for telling us to keep studying and trying real hard. Thank you."

I entered the field of education in 2000, a year before the passing of NCLB in December 2001. I had just graduated with a bachelor's degree in Theater. That summer,

I moved back to my parents' home while I anxiously awaited opportunities in the performing arts field. Early that fall, with no opportunities in the performing arts in my midst, I found myself applying for a teaching position at the nearby elementary school. It began on an afternoon I visited my mother at her school which happened to be experiencing a teacher shortage at the time in that rural community school. During my visit, the principal heard of my recent college graduation and offered me a second grade teaching position since highly qualified teacher was not in effect at that time. I had an instant flashback of the many summers I spent helping my mother clean and organize her classroom by dusting shelves, organizing books, making bulletin boards, and making teaching materials. I also vividly recalled her piece of advice each time we ventured to her classroom to work. "Whatever you do, do not become a teacher," my mother would say. I never really understood fully why she would say such a thing. My puerile thoughts figured it was because she didn't like to make bulletin boards. But each time I heard her advice, my instant thoughts were, "Don't worry, I won't." Fast-forward about ten years later, I applied for the teacher position that the principal offered me. I pretty much stayed in education ever since. I like to think, the profession chose me and I feel that it is my purpose to actively contribute to the field of education.

It was mid-fall of 2000, and my first assignment was to teach second grade. I entered the classroom completely clueless, and little did I know what I was getting myself into. Apparently, I was the fourth teacher of that particular classroom of students for the school year, and it was only November! I walked into the classroom of 15 eight and nine year olds knowing absolutely nothing about lesson plans, academic standards, classroom management, student schedules, and the many other responsibilities large and

small involved in juggling the duties of a teacher. So I did what I was used to doing as a student, fresh out of college. I resorted to the textbooks. I had students open their reading and math books to pages that they wanted to go to since I didn't know what lessons had already been given by their previous teachers. As every rookie teacher seems to encounter, there was a behaviorally challenged boy who I suspect may have been the source of the teacher turnovers in that grade level. He took control of the classroom since he saw that I had no control in practically every matter. My struggles with this one boy had a domino effect in my interaction with everything else in the classroom. Before I knew it, I was pacing the hall not knowing what to do with out-of-control eight and nine year olds in my classroom. It was a chaotic mess. A veteran teacher down the hall noticed my pacing and heard the ruckus from my classroom. Once she entered the room, all was quiet and the kids' faces were taken over by shame. I was saved, for the moment. This scenario is an example of how policy before NCLB allowed an individual with no education credits to teach a typical elementary classroom.

About ten years later, the mandates of NCLB had been enacted for almost a decade and I was teaching at an urban school district. Within the ten years of teaching, I returned to graduate school to obtain an educational degree since NCLB mandated that teachers become highly qualified teachers (HQT). I obtained my standard elementary teaching certificate from the state as a highly qualified teacher in order to continue teaching in the state. From there on, I participated in district professional development opportunities to maintain my state certification requirements.

A typical day as a sixth grade teacher during this time of NCLB accountability mandates was the complete opposite of my rookie year; far from having little to no

14

direction as a teacher I now had my job practically scripted for me. To illustrate a typical day as a 6th grade teacher, I arrived to campus at 7 am in order to prepare for morning classes to perform the following: Review my lesson plans so that I may copy my objective, sub-objective, and language objectives on the board for the first subject of the morning to satisfy local accountability policies so that it is displayed for all to see. Posting objectives, putting them in kid-friendly terms, and reading them aloud with students so that students will know what they are supposed to learn is a research-based strategy that was encouraged throughout the school. I was also encouraged to remind the students of the objectives in the learning activities to encourage students to focus their learning. This approach was required for each subject throughout the day. Some other preparation activities included gathering direct instruction materials and other essential supplies, make copies as needed since teachers were encouraged to base instruction on adopted programs with textbooks that often came up short on supplementals for all students to use.

If it was a testing day, which occurred several times during the school year, my job was to collect and sign out testing materials and to administer tests. A typical morning after the morning bell meant unlocking the classroom door, greeting each student, and monitoring the morning routine, which consisted of students eating breakfast, getting settled, engaging in morning work, and collecting homework and taking attendance. Morning work allowed teachers to address misconceptions from the previous day as an extension of homework. Usually, direct instruction of the first subject of the day would follow, starting the chain of events for the rest of the school day.

Typically, as an accountability measure, teachers were observed by either a representative of the state department of education, principals, district administration, teacher coaches, and/or educational consultants. In essence, the purpose of the observations was to enforce teacher accountability at all levels. Observers typically carried a clipboard with a list containing research-based strategies in direct instruction and student engagement for English language learners (ELLs). Observations were typically ten to 15 minutes long, and within that timeframe teachers were expected to show evidence of each item on the checklist of items representing accountability. A teacher not making progress according to the checklists over a certain time period could be penalized by potentially losing his/her job as a teacher in lieu of a Professional Improvement Plan (PIP). At this phase of School Improvement for not making AYP, my school district consulted outside expertise to oversee instruction as a means to improve test scores.

Over 10 years as an elementary teacher, I experienced a major pendulum swing in accountability. When I entered the profession as a recent Theater graduate, the education system assumed that I was familiar with the responsibilities of a teacher and that I would perform the job to expectation. Although my initial experience in the classroom was a bit rocky, over time I learned the ropes and took advantage of some of the freedom in teaching I was allowed. In my early teaching experience, I was given a lot of flexibility to be creative in ways such as developing my own resources for teaching, managing behavior as I seemed fit and appropriate for each unique student, tailoring my instruction and intervention according to individual student performance, and basically having a malleable curriculum. This meant that different and unique learning events were

happening in each classroom since teachers with their unique talents and professional knowledge were the "captains of their ships," so to speak.

In today's classrooms, every teacher, student, and classroom appears to be the same in numerous ways, especially since teacher control decreased significantly due to NLCB policies. Teachers are teaching the same standards, curriculum, pacing guides, using the same resources, employing the same instructional strategies/delivery, interventions, and behavior management in classrooms. Not only do classrooms tend to look alike, teachers and students very much resemble one another through their similar engagement in learning activities, their behavior, the policies they must respond to, and school dress codes. Again, this is a major pendulum swing in my experience in the classroom. I especially was able to make this observation in my next professional elementary position.

My next position was the district Native American Teacher On Assignment (TOA). I provided support to teachers and Native American students primarily in reading since that was the district focus. Ideally, I would have preferred to provide support in all subject matter; however, the narrowing of the curriculum due to NCLB testing mandates restricted my support and focus to one subject. Fortunately, I was afforded the room to work with parents in accessing various resources to promote parental support in their children's academic success.

On one of my rounds of visiting classrooms to provide reading intervention to a kindergartener, I noticed a dated poster on the office wall of a veteran teacher of 20-plus years. The poster was titled, "Rules for Teachers – 1872" and it contained the following rules: 1) Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys. 2) Each teacher will bring a

bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the daily session. 3) Make your pens carefully.

You whittle nibs to the individual taste of the pupils. 4) Men teachers may take on

evening each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they go to church

regularly. 5) After ten hours in school, the teachers may spend the remaining time

reading the Bible or other good books. 6) Women teachers who marry or engage in

unseemly conduct will be dismissed. 7) Every teacher should lay aside from each pay a

goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years so that he will not

become a burden on society. 8) Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form,

frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop will give good reason to

suspect his worth, intention, integrity and honest(y). 9) The teacher who performs his

labor faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of twenty cents

per week in his pay, providing the Board of Education approves.

Upon reading the rules, I thought, "We sure have come a long way since then. I

wonder what the rules will be like a hundred years from now." The Rules of 1872 not

only address custodial duties for a teacher to perform, but conduct outside of the

classroom, retirement, and bonuses. This clearly demonstrates that education and

accountability is a living, breathing, and ever changing gigantic entity that has made

many transformations to reflect the gestalt of our local, national, and global society. We

have come a long way since 1872 and education in our society will never cease. How

education will look in the future will be determined more closely as we currently shape it

in reform.

As a teacher who has worked closely with other teachers, I experienced and

witnessed teachers being placed in difficult situations where the needs of all students

were not being met due to the "one-size-fits-all" approach that current accountability policies mandate. This caused teachers to have conflicting beliefs of accountability policies and their own perceptions of accountability based on the needs of his/her students, class, and instructional needs. In a CNN news report, U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan stated federal law requires states and districts to "implement the same set of interventions in every school that is not meeting AYP, regardless of the individual needs and circumstances of those schools" (2011). Currently, the profession of the teacher had been diminished so much that one has little to no choice in making vital and important decisions based on the unique needs of their students' education.

In response to this ongoing issue, the purpose of this dissertation is to examine veteran elementary school teachers' experiences of accountability practices that work and do not work in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. This study may identify practices that urban veteran teachers practice and may have some applications to similar schools. Furthermore, since this study in essence is giving a voice to teachers on accountability, the results of this study may fill some gaps in current educational research and discourse.

In this section, I described my stance and experience in education and accountability as the researcher. I am interested in accountability placed on teachers because, as Lortie (1975) noted, "Educators' special knowledge of pedagogy, subject matter, and students distinguished their professional duties from others in the education bureaucracy. Thus, researchers concluded that any accountability system must appropriately relate to the work of educators, not administrators" (p. 10). The work of a teacher cannot be defined by strict rules and policies because "…teaching is an inherently

ambiguous, unpredictable, and fluid craft. Teaching requires flexibility, give-and-take, and making exceptions, and it can present formidable and unusual challenges" (Ingersoll, 2003, pp.140-141). Also, "rules can never cover all the issues and contingencies that arise in work like teaching, where there is little consensus and much ambiguity surrounding means and ends" (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 142). Further, in *Rescuing the Public Schools*, Debbie Meier (2007) of Central Park East Elementary School put it best:

Teachers will not have a major impact on the way kids use their minds until they come to know how their students' minds work—student by student. They cannot help young people make sense of things if they do not have time to answer their questions. They cannot improve a student's writing if there isn't time to read it, reflect on it, and then meet occasionally with the student about his or her work. They cannot find ways to connect new ideas with old ones if they have no control over curriculum pacing. Nor can they influence the values and aspirations of young people if they cannot shape the tone and value system of their classroom and school. To do this they need the power to reorganize the school, the curriculum, the use of time and the allotment of resources at the school level. (p. 116)

My biography, inclusive of my mother's and grandmother's experience in education, has led me to believe that lessons may be learned from history just as they may be learned from the present. Collectively, teachers possess a vast amount of knowledge and experience that ought to be used as tools in reform. Lortie (1975), Ingersoll (2003), and Meier (2007) further validate the need to address accountability as we know it today.

A Brief Overview of Accountability in Public Discourse and the Scholarly Literature

The public discourse and literature covered in this section addresses teachers not having a voice in accountability policies and some problems that surface from it. Review of discourse is first presented, and then a brief review of scholarly literature follows.

Wilde (2002) stated that parents and teachers are not involved enough in the development of assessments and standards, thus being problematic because standards and testing in these early years of the twenty-first century are increasingly taking on roles that violate good educational principles (p. vii).

Russell (2006) also explained, "The implications of control oriented strategies must continue to be explored with an eye toward giving teachers greater flexibility to implement mandates in ways that allow them to feel efficacious" (p. 238). Wilde and Russell explained that teachers are clearly not the authors of accountability in public schools. Teachers' voices were taken away when the people of America became convinced, perhaps with governmental and political persuasion, that public education teachers are not doing their job.

Wilde (2002) further illustrated the involvement of other non-educators having more of a role in current accountability policies than teachers such as:

> …local, state and national politicians; the U.S. Department of Education and state departments of education; local school districts; textbook publishers; test publishers and developers (often the same companies who publish the textbooks); print, broadcast, and Internet media; and foundations and think tanks, to name only the prominent players. (p. viii)

21

To further exemplify this trend, in the state where the study was conducted, the recently elected Superintendent of Public Instruction campaigned on the platform that he "has the experience, values and right ideas to improve education in [the state]." In his *What John Stands For* section on his website, he included the following on accountability: "[He] authored and helped pass the "Truth in Advertising" bill, SB 1286, to improve accountability by requiring schools be rated with clear, letter-based grades (A, B, C, D or F) based on objective measures of performance" (Huppenthal, 2011, p. 1).

His remedy to improve accountability only goes so far to inform parents of how well their schools are performing, thus allowing parents the choice to enroll their students at schools that attain better letter grades. Meanwhile, I am observing schools closing at alarming rates, thus limiting teachers' teaching options.

As a native of the state where the study is conducted, and with an educational background in Mechanical Engineering and Business Administration, he claimed that, "Improving [the state's] schools has been my life's work. I've worked closely with teachers and parents on education issues for nearly two decades, so I'm very familiar with the challenges and opportunities [the state's] schools face" (Huppenthal, 2011, p.1). As demonstrated, politicians such as the state's Superintendent of Public Instruction attempt to address accountability in education in their political agendas. He claimed to write and promote policy based on professional research and dissertations, as well as talking to teachers and parents. Despite his efforts, schools in the state continue to have low assessment rankings compared to other states. Interestingly, the policy's primary measuring tool to measure accountability works against the goals of accountability.

Overview of Conceptual and Methodological Framework

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), there are three elements that serve as the foundation of a conceptual framework. Those elements are the experiences of the researcher, existing research, and a theoretical base. As an experienced teacher in culturally and linguistically diverse schools, it is has been my observation that teachers practice accountability expansively through their responses to formal performance expectations. I also believe teachers practice accountability altruistically, based on their observations of students' progress over time, and their intuitive notions, based on observation, of what their students need. The term altruism in this context means the "unselfish concern for the welfare of others; selflessness" (http://www.thefreedictionary. com/_dict.aspx?rd=1&word=altruistic, November 27, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the term "altruistic" is used to explore the ways in which teachers work selflessly for the welfare of their students. For example, this may be evident through teachers putting the needs of their students before their own needs as a teacher, including the pressures they face for accountability on high-stakes tests. Furthermore, it is important to note that "intuitive" and teacher-"enacted" practices are used interchangeably. Teacher "enacted" practice refers to individual practices based on teachers' academic preparation, experience over time, and intuitive assumptions about their students' learning. Therefore, I posit that teachers negotiate accountability systems with their intuitive notions of the needs of their students in order to reach academic goals. Those notions may also drive teachers' altruistic practices of putting students' needs before their own needs. "Intuitive/altruistic" practices are used to capture one or both meanings of the terms throughout this dissertation, This theory serves as the framework that recognizes

that accountability policies do not formally acknowledge or fully implement teachers' experience, knowledge, and input in an effort to meet accountability mandates

Teachers' practice is enormously complex, comprising individual pedagogical orientations and the larger social context in which teachers work. I do not believe that it is possible to capture it all. Instead, I seek to tap into the knowledge and experience of a select group of teachers with the goal of shedding light on teachers' multiple purposes and responses to accountability measures. To achieve this goal I privilege teachers' input, crediting the value of their practice-based knowledge where it is long overdue.

Some of the discourse and literature presented in the literature that informs this study serve as snapshots of teacher practices in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. Accountability practices outside the scope of the work that teachers perform are presented in the literature review for the purposes of background information and to illustrate how accountability exists in various notions and at different levels. It is also meant to inform readers of current accountability policies.

The study site was in an urban school district that housed diverse linguistically and culturally diverse student populations in the Southwest. There were three school sites and within that, six practicing teachers ranging from kindergarten through 8th grade who are currently teaching in urban-area schools were recruited as participants. Data collection started with individual in-depth interviews followed by observations of each teacher. Lastly, focus group interviews of three participants each concluded the data collection phase. These methods were designed to capture in-depth data, as well as a range of experience across multiple school settings. I utilized a modified version of Seidman's (2006) three-part interview protocol for the in-depth interview. The focus

24

group questions were both broad and to the point ("focused"), whereas the in-depth interview questions were more detailed and comprehensive in nature.

Contributions and Significance of the Study

This dissertation is intended to achieve several goals. First and foremost, the study is intended to contribute to the scholarly literature on current accountability mandates in education policy by examining these mandates through the experiences of practicing veteran teachers in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. Furthermore, the results of this research may inform education stakeholders and new teachers to make better informed decisions regarding accountability in urban public schools with high enrollments of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Importantly, not only will this study give a voice to teachers on accountability, it will fill the gaps on public debates and scholarly literature on improving public education. Since there are different definitions of educational accountability historically and presently, this study may potentially define accountability based on veteran urban teacher experiences in diverse urban public schools as well.

I chose to study experiences of veteran elementary school teachers in culturally and linguistically diverse urban schools for three reasons. As an elementary teacher of over ten years, I observed elementary schools providing the foundations of lifelong learning for their students. Therefore, addressing early school experiences of students are significant by examining current accountability policies that are detrimental as well as discerning effective practices in culturally and linguistically diverse schools. I firmly believe this action is crucial to help teachers improve their practice and to ensure student "success" – not simply on high-stakes tests, but in terms of lifelong learning goals.

Second, the current model of accountability utilizing high-stakes tests to measure student learning and teacher effectiveness has been and continues to be problematic, as evidenced through my own practice and through various literature. The root of the controversy stems around various issues but prominently around the appropriateness and accuracy of high-stakes tests as the primary source of stakeholders' decision-making on school funding, teacher pay, student mastery, curriculum, state standards, educational programs, parent choice, parent involvement, professional development, and teacher certification, to name a few. Third, my professional experience in elementary schools as a teacher, teacher leader, and teacher/administrator has led me to question the effectiveness of accountability policies that punishes teachers and schools for not meeting unrealistic expectations. In many cases, learning occurs and is still punished because it falls short of AYP that is set to gradually expect 100 percent student proficiency by 2014.

Unfortunately, NCLB has wounded the image of public education and the need to save its credibility is at an ultimate high. Discerning practical ways for teachers to be accountable may potentially inform districts to make informed decisions to maximize their resources and funds in supporting teachers in their practice. Additionally, the results of this study may reveal and steer professional development opportunities for teachers to be accountable in practical and effective ways. Furthermore, it may fill gaps in existing professional development that teachers are required to fulfill. Overall, examining teacher experiences on accountability mandates may empower teachers to contribute more effectively to informed decision-making in education reform.

Limitations and Delimitations

Participants included five veteran and one non-veteran urban mainstream and special education teachers from kindergarten through 8th grade. (The inclusion of the latter teacher is explained in chapter 3.) Chapter 6 revisits the limitations of the study as this may affect data interpretations. Data collection occurred during early Spring of 2013. Since the student population of urban school districts varies considerably across social contexts, this study may not be generalized to all urban school districts. Also, the dependability is subject to teachers' willingness and ability to participate, and experience with current accountability policy. Nonetheless, this study has transferability and implications for other, similarly situated school districts and educators.

There are also certain delimitations. Although accountability may be viewed as a system, this study focuses on the perceptions that teachers in kindergarten through 8th grade have on their roles within their current working environments. The intended focus was on mainstream teachers, however due to time constraints on recruitment, special area teachers in special education were recruited. Also, one non-veteran teacher was recruited while the remaining five had ten or more years of teaching experience. Other special area teachers such as speech services, and gifted and talented programs, may not be accurately represented or represented at all. Furthermore, the study will exclude high school teacher perceptions of accountability since this study is meant to focus on elementary teachers who are highly affected by current accountability policies. Furthermore, since the voice of teacher professionals is underrepresented in the development of current accountability mandates in education, this study excludes the perceptions of other stakeholders such as students, parents, administrators, and other community members that are vital in educational growth.

Chapter Summary and Dissertation Overview

The introduction of this chapter contains the problem statement and research questions for this study. The personal biography of the researcher as a third generation and a practicing teacher leads to a brief overview of accountability in public discourse and scholarly literature providing insight on some political influences on accountability. Importantly, this chapter reviews the contributions and significance of the study as well as the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

The second chapter of this dissertation begins with an illustration of some challenges for urban teachers. Next is a brief history of accountability in education followed by various definitions and perspectives of educational accountability. Much research contains recommendations of accountability alternatives especially during a time of transition to Common Core standards and alternative accountability systems developed by states in lieu of waivers to NCLB. Also, included is a brief overview of President Obama's Blueprint for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act (2010).

Chapter three of this dissertation encompasses the methodological framework for this qualitative research. In detail, it explains the selection of participants in regards to the setting, limitations and delimitations, data collection procedures, and the dissertation completion timeline.

Chapter four contains profiles of each participant. Each profile contains background and educational experiences, influential people in (each) participant's life, teaching path and career, teaching philosophy, and experiences with accountability.

Chapter five contains the results, findings, and analysis in relation to the literature review. The analysis includes teaching strategies and tests/assessments.

Chapter six contains conclusions, contributions, and recommendations for improving education policy and practice. The research questions are also answered using the study's findings. Also, limitations of the study are included as they relate to data interpretation.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Accountability in education has been a perennial topic of discussion among policymakers, educators, parents, community members, and even among student populations. This chapter examines scholarly literature and public discourse on educational accountability to illustrate the various perceptions of accountability in education amongst administrators, teachers, policy makers, researchers, and public entities. This chapter begins with a detailed account of the theoretical and conceptual framework. The remaining sections of this chapter contain descriptions of national accountability with the inclusion of a brief overview of the Blueprint for the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, state, and local accountability policies. It also illustrates conflicting definitions of accountability followed by a brief historical account of accountability in education. Furthermore, perceptions of controversies of utilizing high-stakes tests as the primary accountability measure and recommendations to "fix" accountability in education are reviewed.

As previously stated, Rossman and Rallis (2003), describe a conceptual framework as having three elements: the researcher's "experiences in practice," the existing body of research and scholarship on the topic, and a theoretical base. For this study, my professional experience as a teacher has led me to surmise that teachers perform in accordance with externally imposed accountability policies as well as altruistically and intuitively driven practices based on their long-term, in-depth observations of their learners. The scholarly literature expands on these notions of teacher practice by noting the absence of teacher input on accountability policies. Thus, I

theorize that teachers negotiate accountability systems with a combination of altruistic, intuitive and practice-based understandings of the needs of their students in order to reach their academic goals, while simultaneously responding to external accountability mandates. These notions fused together serve as the conceptual framework for this study.

The conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1. Note that the theory (teacher enacted practice) is built within existing accountability policies to illustrate the pressures these policies exert on teachers, simultaneously with the absence of significant teacher input into those policies.
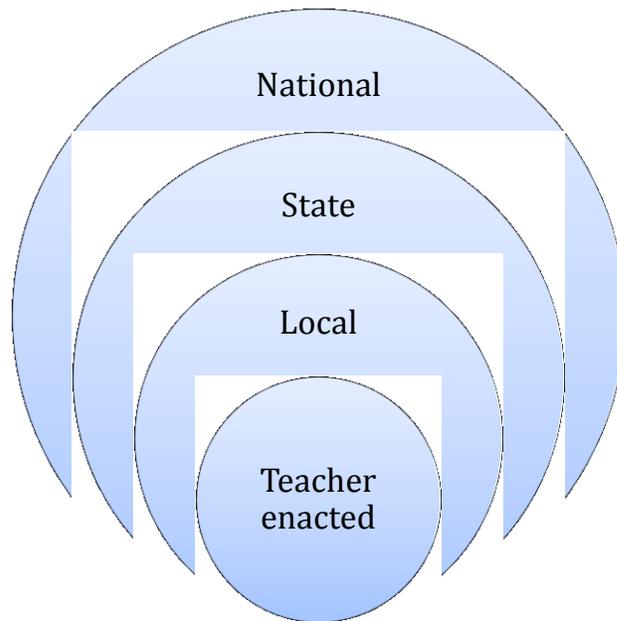
Figure 1. Practitioner-centered conceptual framework.

In Figure 1, the national concentric ring refers to NCLB and ESEA mandates. The state circle refers to AZ Learns, Common Core standards, teacher certification, and HQT mandates. The local circle refers to policies and practices enforced at the district and/or school level (e.g. Pay for Performance, Career Ladder, formative assessments, professional development, and teacher evaluations). The teacher "enacted" practice

refs to individual practices based on teachers' academic preparation, experience over time, and intuitive assumptions about their students' learning. These individual teacher practices, which may vary, constitute the core of the conceptual framework and the centerpiece of the data collection. Specifically, I seek to better understand teachers' experiences and practice with accountability mandates as they are nested within national, state, and local policies.

In contrast to the nested design shown in Figure 1, NCLB and its attendant state and local policies utilize a linear framework that can be represented by what Argyris and Schön (1974) call a theory of action. "All such theories of action have the same form," Argyris and Schön state; "in situation S, if you want to achieve consequence C, then do A." (p. 5). Figure 2, depicts this theory of action. NCLB's implicit use of an action theory model can be represented as teachers performing A – using external "evidence-based" instructional practices and high-stakes standardized assessments – in situation "S" – schools across the nation – in order to achieve consequence "C" – meeting the accountability mandate of 100 percent proficiency in reading and math by school year 2013-2014. According to Darling-Hammond (2007), the core assumption underlying this theory is that "low-quality schools will be motivated to change if they are identified and shamed, and that their students will be better served if given other educational options" (p. 7).

The theory of action underlying NCLB is linear, uniform, and lockstep, as illustrated in Figure 2.
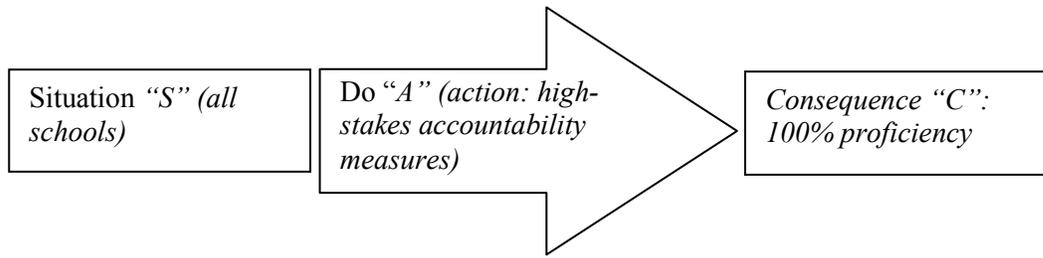
Figure 2. NCLB's theory of action.

In comparison to this theory of action as explained in the preceding paragraphs, my professional experience and review of the scholarly literature have led me to believe that teachers obtain specialized knowledge of their students uniquely through a variety of daily interactions. This specialized knowledge informs their practice and is intended to serve the needs of their students. In the era of high-stakes accountability, teachers continuously negotiate various accountability measures – federal, state, and local – mediating these with their own altruistic and individual enacted (intuitive) practice. Frink and Klimoski (2004) also support this claim as described later in this section.

Figure 3 illustrates the theory within my conceptual framework. It is more complicated than NCLB's use of theory of action in Figure 2 since it is contextualized to this study.

Figure 3 contextualizes teachers' practice in urban, culturally and linguistically diverse, high stakes schools. The unique situation of those schools has some determination of the work of teachers and that leads to the theory that teachers negotiate policies and intuitive/altruistic teacher enacted practices accordingly. The inquiries of this study examine those intuitive/altruistic teacher enacted practices that current accountability policies do not address.

33
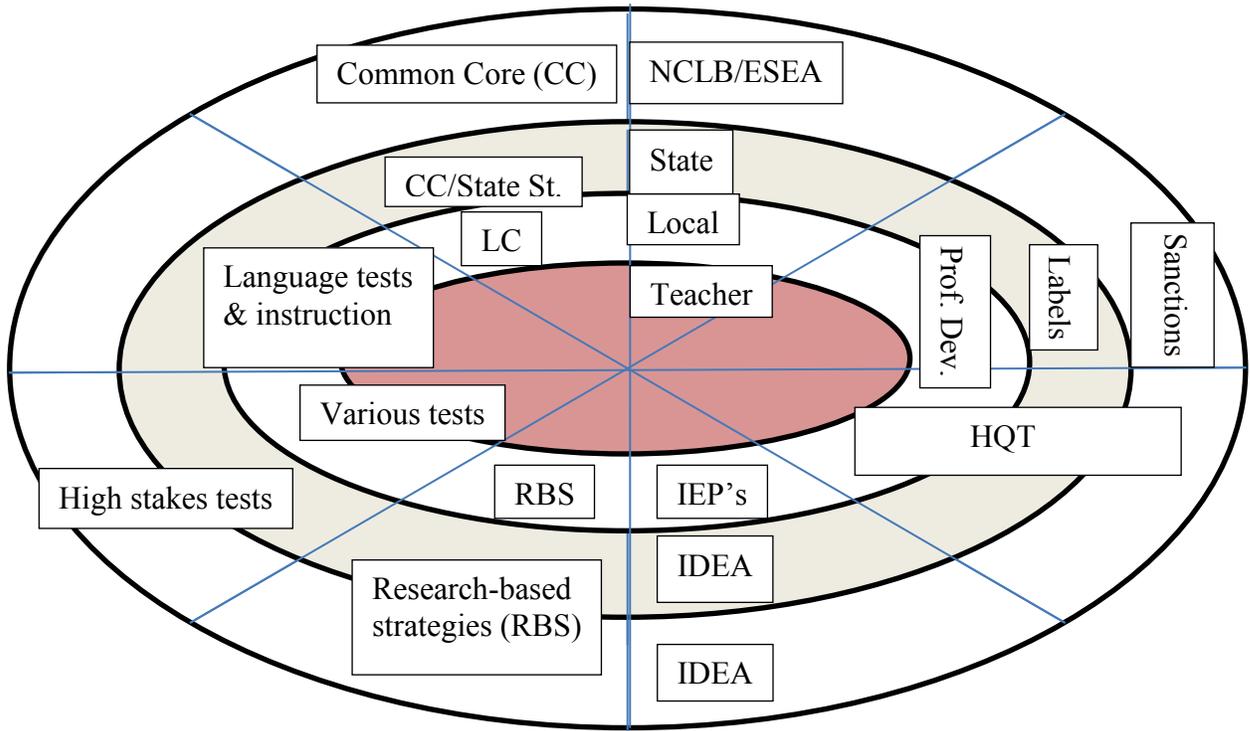
Figure 3. Conceptual and theoretical framework of the present study. CC = Common Core; LC = local curriculum; HQT = Highly Qualified Teacher; IEP = Individualized Education Plan; IDEA = Individuals with Disability Education Act; RBS = Research-based strategies.

Figure 3 contextualizes urban schools and the various accountability policies that teachers are responsible for enacting in their daily duties. It also contains the individual/teacher-enacted notions of accountability as part of teachers' daily practice intended to achieve desired outcomes. This study examines the intuitive/altruistic teacher-enacted practices at the center of in Figure 3. Note the larger center bubble containing "Teacher enacted" practices that serve as the foundation of the inquiry of the study. The literature portion of my conceptual framework follows in the remaining

sections of this chapter through a review of related literature of high stakes accountability in today's urban culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.

The next section is a description of the various mandated accountability policies presently in place at the national, state, and local levels. These descriptions provide more details for the illustrations above.

National, State, and Local Accountability Mandates

National accountability mandates. NCLB requires schools to meet AYP progressively each year in lieu of state standardized tests. The goal is for 100 percent of the student population to be proficient in reading and math by school year 2013-2014.

NCLB mandates teachers to be "highly qualified" to teach in public schools. The intent is for schools to have quality teachers as a means to improve student achievement. For a teacher to be highly qualified, one must adhere to the following: Pass a state teacher exam for state certification; secondary school teachers must pass an exam or have majored in the subject to be taught. In *Reauthorizing No Child Left Behind*, NCLB's flexibility "…resulted in the establishment of 52 different accountability systems, one for each state, each with different academic standards, levels of proficiency, and requirements for teachers" (Stecher & Vernez, 2010, p. xiv).

As schools failed to meet AYP and were placed in reform status, an option given to parents is the ability to seek Supplemental Educational Services (SES) or enrollment in a different school with higher accountability marks as school choice. Unfortunately, many parents have not exercised this option fully due to several reasons. A popular reason was not being fully educated on the purpose of the move and the status of the school. "Parents often chose not to participate because they were satisfied with their

child's school or performance or because of the inconvenience of the options offered to them" (Stecher & Vernez, 2010, p. xiv).

According to President Obama's *Blueprint for Reform* (U.S. Department of Education website, 2010), states will set standards to prepare students for college and careers. Rather than focusing on sanctions, the new accountability system will recognize and reward progress. States and local agencies will have the flexibility to create their own solutions. Rather than the "one-size-fits-all" intervention approach, rigorous and meaningful interventions will support low performing schools.

According to *Blueprint for Reform*, to support teachers, three areas of teaching will be emphasized. First and foremost, teachers will no longer be treated as "pawns," such as simply being told what to do versus utilizing teachers' expertise and knowledge for learning. Teachers and administrators will receive an increase in funds, teachers will be surveyed regularly for the improvement of education, and accountability will no longer fall squarely on teachers' shoulders. States, districts, and school leaders will share the responsibility of improving student outcomes. Furthermore, teacher evaluations will include student learning and other measures to allow teachers to improve. The second area highlights teacher rewards. Teachers will have professional advancement opportunities and compensation. Rather than labeling and sanctions, achievement gaps will be addressed through local support. Also, teacher voices will influence how to improve schools and to raise student achievement. The third area emphasizes providing teachers time and support. Teachers will have time to collaborate with colleagues and will be given professional development. Furthermore, teacher programs will be accountable in preparing their teachers. Next, administrators and teachers will have

matched effectiveness standards. Teachers will no longer be the primary persons responsible for accountability.

In 2011, the ESEA enacted the Common Core standards. These are a common set of standards in language arts and mathematics, linked to college and careers. Educational institutions nationwide have been undergoing training to fully implement these standards into everyday teaching and learning. This poses a significant demand on stakeholders and educators at all levels of transition. According to ASCD's current status of Common Core link, 46 states have adopted the Common Core standards and one state adopted Common Core only for English language arts (http://www.ascd.org/common-core-state-standards/common-core-state-standards-adoption-map.aspx, March 18, 2013)

National accountability in public schools across the nation exist through the mandates of NCLB, Common Core standards, and the President Obama's Reauthorization of ESEA.

State accountability mandates. These next few paragraphs describe accountability at the state level. These descriptions most appropriately apply to the southwestern state of which the study was conducted. Included are details of NCLB, Common Core and the state accountability system.

Accountability structures in states across the nation have been transformed under NCLB. After years of implementation, the effects of the national accountability system led to a majority of states requesting waivers of the NCLB mandates. A common effect was schools across the nation labeled schools as failing and therefore as a result, granted parents school choice to cross district boundaries to enroll their children at schools with higher accountability marks of performance. School and district labels were not new to

this particular state of study at this time of implementation. The state accountability system contained labels such as Excelling, Performing Plus, Performing, Underperforming, and Failing to meet academic standards for their districts and schools. Other unintended consequences of NCLB include, but are not limited to: increasing the student to teacher ratio in some schools, teachers voluntarily leaving the occupation and teachers left jobless. These effects filtered down to the state and local levels to many public school districts and their schools.

Some differences in accountability policies exist statewide, such as teacher certification. In the age of accountability, rigorous teacher certification requirements are common in order to establish and maintain the status of a highly qualified teacher as NCLB mandates.

In regard to NCLB's Highly Qualified teacher mandate, once teachers obtain the status of highly qualified, ongoing professional development credits are needed to maintain the HQT status in the state. There also have been teacher reward systems such as Career Ladder, but that has recently been eliminated.

As stated earlier, the Common Core standards are now in effect in states across the nation and teachers and other stakeholders are expected to make the transition to deliver similar outcomes in student tests. Each state varies since not all states are using Common Core, however, the schools using Common Core have access to the same curriculum. According to the state department of education's website, the Common Core standards include: The standards:

- Align with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable and consistent;

- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;

- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;

- Informed by other top performing countries to prepare all students to succeed in our global economy and society; and

- Are evidence-based. (http://www.azed.gov/azcommoncore/, June 19, 2013).

These new grades 3 through high school assessments will build a pathway to college and career readiness and will replace the current state mandated test to measure student's progress in the 2014-2015 school year. It will be an assessment of the state's Common Core Standards that were adopted by the State Board of Education in June 2010 (http://www.azed.gov/azcommoncore/, June 19, 2013).

A waiver of meeting 100 percent student proficiency by 2014 was granted to this particular state of study and Common Core standards have been partially or fully implemented. The state adopted the English language arts and math standards of Common Core along with 46 other states (http://www.azed.gov/azcommoncore/, June 19, 2013).

Local accountability mandates. The next tier of accountability is at the local level, referred to as Local Education Agencies. Most of these policies are developed and enforced through school boards and district and school administration. Like states, these policies vary from LEA to LEA. Much of these policies are more detailed versions of national and state accountability policies. In the urban context of this study, policies exist in the form of teacher strategies, program adoptions that are research based, strategies for English language learners, school schedules with required amount of minutes per subject, disciplinary procedures, student test results, and teacher observations.

The literature review begins with an examination of various concepts of accountability, such as what it is in current policies, how it has been defined, and a brief historical account of its existence in education.

Defining Accountability

The definitions of accountability I collected are organized in the table below. Although, there are many definitions of accountability in education, the definitions selected are closely linked to the purposes of this study.

Table 1

Some Definitions of Accountability

Author	Definition
Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus (1996, p. 12)	1. responsible; required to account for (one's conduct) (*accountable for one's actions*) 2. explicable, understandable.
No Child Left Behind Act (Paige, 2002, p. 12)	1) student academic achievement on statewide tests disaggregated by subgroup; 2) a comparison of students at basic, proficient and advanced levels of academic achievement (Levels will be determined by each state); 3) high school graduation rates (also, how many students drop out of school); 4) number and names of schools identified for improvement; 5) professional qualifications of teachers; and 6) percentage of students not tested."
Arizona LEARNS (K-8th)	Arizona law (ARS § 15-241) mandates that the AZ Department of Education shall compile an annual achievement profile for each public school. The profiles will be based on 1) Percent of students who pass AIMS (AZ's Instrument to Measure Standards) 2) AZ Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) 3) Performance on AZELLA (AZ English Language Learner Assessment)
Testing and Standards: A Brief Encyclopedia Wilde (2002), p.viii	Taxpayers have a right to know that their education dollars are being well spent. Example: Schools should be willing to and able to

	provide information about their programs and student learning to parents and to other citizens.
Firestone and Shipps, (2005, p. 83)	The felt obligation for student performance and demonstrations of equity, including the willingness to provide a justification of outcomes to external parties and/or oneself, and to absorb the tangible or intangible consequences.
Nichols and Berliner, (2008, p. 150)	Not just associate with the idea of counting something, like items on a test; it is also associated with the idea of "giving an account" providing verbal and written reports about some matter of importance.
Sabine (1973, p. 7)	The continuing assessment of the educational achievement of pupils in a school system; the relating of levels of achievement attained to the state and community's educational goals and expectations, to the parents, teachers, taxpayers and citizens of the community.
Reeves (2002, p.1)	The central purpose of accountability is the improvement of student achievement.

There are some conflicting notions of accountability that exist in education. Schlenker and Weingold (1989), cite Frink and Klimoski (2004), they indicated some notions of accountability are:

formal reporting relationships, performance evaluations, employment contracts, performance monitoring, reward systems (including compensation), disciplinary procedures, supervisory leadership training, personnel manuals, etc. There is also group norms, corporate cultural norms, loyalty to an individual's superior and colleagues, even an emphasis on and respect for the customer of one's outputs. What becomes quickly obvious is the potential complexity of the web of accountabilities in which an employee is embedded. To this myriad can be added the notion of self-accountability. (Schlenker & Weingold, 1989, p. 3)

Frink and Klimoski inform us that formal and informal accountabilities exist. Interestingly, teachers juggle these conflicting notions on a daily basis.

These are only a few examples of the numerous types of accountability that exist in education. Other concepts in the accountability debate include who is responsible for accountability and whom does the accountability target in the United States. The answers to these questions and debates may help steer the way to a common understanding and goals for which all stakeholders to work toward.

According to Ingersoll (2003), accountability has two areas of conflict: "Who determines accountability, the federal government or local entities thus relating to central or decentralized control. The next area of conflict is who should accountability measures cater to" (p. 85). He further stated that entities vary as some may advocate for equality while others for high quality education, thus perpetuating the accountability debate.

Furthermore, in the argument of accountability, Stephen Barro believed that teachers should be responsible for the educational outcomes of students. If teachers are held accountable, then teachers will perform accordingly and it will be evidenced through "higher academic achievement, improvement in pupil attitudes, and generally better educational results" (White, p. 124).

However, in contrast, Sabine (1973) stated:

An accountable instructional system is conceptually a fail-safe or zero-reject system. Its basic emphasis is upon the successful achievement of objectives. If the instructional system doesn't close the gap between the entry level of the learners and the desired end results, i.e., doesn't attain the objectives set for it— the system is redesigned and tested until it does. If the students do not learn, the

42

immediate query centers on the system, its personnel, methods, materials and the like. The students, parents, teachers or environment are not blamed. It is the systems job to teach; the goal is learning; every effort is made to vary process until the system functions as it was intended to function. (p. 11)

As demonstrated, it is evident that many conflicting concepts exist in the realm of accountability in education. Barro and Sabine argue opposite ends of the spectrum of who is responsible for accountability. Conflicts also originate in the various definitions of accountability, the beneficiaries, and what are the goals of accountability. This small selection is a mere scratch of the surface of the various conflicting concepts of educational accountability. The next section provides a brief history of accountability in education.

A Brief History of Accountability in Education

In 1647, students in public schools in the Massachusetts Bay Colony ordered teachers to teach their students to be able to read. The primary objective was for students to be able to read the Bible. "They were interested neither in schools nor teachers but in results—reading the Bible. The Satan Deluder Act of 1647 is an accountability act replete with behavioral objectives" (Sabine, p. 7).

In 1859-60, the Newcastle Royal Commission of Britain described accountability this way:

There is only one way of securing the results, which is to institute a searching examination by competent authority of every child in every school to which grants are to be paid, with the view of ascertaining whether these indispensable elements of knowledge are thoroughly acquired, and to make the prospects and

43

position of the teacher dependent, to a considerable extent, on the results of the examination. (White, 1977, p. 124)

A few years later, Reverend C.H. Bromby addressed English teachers in the following speech, depicting education in a way not much different than what we know it to be today.

Farewell then, those pictures of the future with which we have beguiled our fancy. Farewell mental activity, cheerful looks, bright attention, and other results of moral discipline in our schools; farewell a meeting of English teachers like this, men of thoughtfulness and high purpose, and holy faith. Other men must take your places. Mechanical pedagogues, who, to force the children to the standard of the three R's, must call back the rod and the ferrule, those instruments of torture which enlightened teachers had discarded. Other men, not you, will be wanted now. Men to teach words, not things; sounds, not realities… (White, 1977, p. 124)

Closer to the present day, two significant events occurred. The U.S.S.R. launched the first earth-orbiting satellite, Sputnik, on October 4, 1957, and the launching of President Ronald Regan's *A Nation At Risk* (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1983). This served as the catalyst for schools to become accountable. Furthermore, the disbursement of federal funds for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to the programs for Bilingual Education and Drop-Out Prevention further emphasized accountability.

All proposals submitted for those funds had to contain accountability provisions i.e., the agent, public or private entering into a contractual agreement with U.S.O.E. to carry out the provisions of the acts agreed to perform a service to the

44

agreed upon terms, within an established time period and with a stipulated use of resources and performance standards. (Sabine, p.7, 1973)

In the 1970s, the "back to the basics" movement caused learning to be narrowed to reading, writing, arithmetic; intensifying the curriculum, encouraging students to work harder for good grades, encouraging teachers to have more structure in class time and teaching patriotism and virtue as a result of fear of communism and socialism from the Cold War (Luke, 2012). The movement then ignited business and civic leaders to convince politicians to reform education (Sirotnik, 2004) since it was believed that improved education through business inspired designs would spark economic growth and worker productivity, decrease social instability, and improve chances of students becoming more financially successful (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) as stated in *Holding Accountability Accountable*.

In the 1980s, standards based reform began with the intention to embed policies in education in the areas of curriculum, assessment, teacher education, professional development, and what students should learn (Fuhrman, 2002). This type of reform emerged from policymakers' concern that the U.S. as a nation scored lower on international assessments than our international counterparts. Standards-based reform developed in the U.S. since our "international competitors (those who scored higher than we did on the First and Second International Mathematics and Science Studies and other international assessments, those whose economies outperformed ours in the 1980s) used similar approaches" (p. 1). The approaches used by our international counterparts had policies in standards, assessment and curriculum, and teacher obedience in complying

with the above. Thus, adding to the accountability momentum toward present day accountability mandates.

In 2000, the state legislature and governor adopted and contributed to Education 2000/Proposition 301. The purpose was to "set forth a six-tenths of a percent sales tax increase for purposes relating to education, including new accountability measures and additional funds for school districts and charter schools" (AZ Department of Education, 2003, p. 1).

A year after the state enacted the state accountability policies, George W. Bush's administration initiated the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). NCLB measures accountability by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of schools. AYP includes the measurement of students' test scores from 3rd-8th and 10th grade in reading/language arts, science, and mathematics. By school year 2013-14, all students in all schools will be on grade level from 3rd through 12th grade; having Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT); attendance rate; graduation rate.

The state enforced its accountability policies and NCLB. Both NCLB and the state accountability policies measure accountability quantitatively primarily through student test scores. Schools with test scores that meet growth requirements, referred to as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are rewarded and labeled as a successful school.

The state's accountability system labeled schools according to the level that a school has been accountable. A school may be labeled as Excelling, Highly Performing, Performing Plus, Performing, Underperforming, or Failing to Meet Academic Standards. Under Performing schools are penalized by allowing students within their district boundaries to attend other schools. In addition to NCLB and state accountability

policies, local educational agencies (LEAs) create and enforce their concepts of accountability as well within their districts. This system was changed to letter grades only for starting school year 2011-12.

The next section contains a critical analysis of literature on accountability. It reviews empirical literature that shows how high stakes accountability policies work in practice and the effects in urban public schools with linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Furthermore, there is a brief compilation of recommendations for future policies, especially in reference to urban schools. Last but not least, teacher perspectives on accountability end the review. To begin, a brief account of how community members, parents, students, and school leaders perceive NCLB begins this section.

Accountability in Scholarly Literature and in Policy and Practice

Community convictions of NCLB and its effects. Community members, parents and students had some strong convictions of failure in NCLB. According to *The Public Education Network's Open to the Public: How Communities, Parents and Students Assess the Impact of the No Child Left Behind Act--The Realities Left Behind (2004-2007)*, the public school system is unequal; policymakers are not responsible and accountable by not providing state educational agencies and local educational agencies to employ reform; high-stakes test are not reliable; instead, assessments should test other areas such as "fostering of citizenship, preparation in 'soft skills' valued by employers and colleges alike, and the development of all talents, from technical to artistic" (p. 2).

Parents and students further indicated that focus should be placed on professional development for teachers to effectively teach diverse students. Also, teachers should have opportunities to establish strong working relationship with teachers and students to

47

increase student achievement. It was also made clear that urban schools require

additional funding. Although, NCLB addresses parent involvement, they also felt that it

"pays considerable lip service to parent involvement; in reality, parents and communities

are almost shut out of the reform process" (p. 2). Furthermore, they felt that, "Not only

does NCLB ignore the role of communities, it seriously undermines the capacity of

communities to be part of the solution for low-performing schools. Parents and

community leaders in every hearing site (in 10 states) acknowledged that" (p. 2).

School leaders also had strong convictions in regard to NCLB. Associate

Superintendent for Instruction of Jefferson City Schools in Georgia stated:

> Never have educators had to be publicly accountable to so many audiences in so
>
> many ways. The uncertainty we feel is rooted in this conflict: On the one hand,
>
> we want to work toward shared national goals and be successful in the eyes of the
>
> public; on the other hand, we want to be true to what we know and believe about
>
> students, teachers, and learning. Ideally these two strands align closely with each
>
> other but in reality individual teachers have their own thoughts of what it means
>
> to be successful in the classroom and these ideas do not always mesh neatly with
>
> externally imposed standards. (Glickman & Gordon, 2007, p. 237)

Some educational leaders noted positive outcomes of NCLB. The principal of

Phoenix High School claimed, "In order to effectively meet our student population's

academic needs, we must build on 18 years of prior success by developing an accelerated

academic model that addresses both internal (curricular richness, earning a diploma, and

creating a viable post secondary plan) and external accountability concerns (NCLB

mandates, which include graduation rates and rising performance levels on state

graduation tests) (Glickman & Gordon, 2007, p. 298). She also stated, "NCLB will remain imperfect, yet, from my perspective, it has in a very short time generated tremendous momentum for improving the education of our nation's students" (p. 399).

Evidently, community members, school leaders, parents, and students have some strong convictions of the pros and cons of NCLB. This next section reviews scholarly literature of NCLB through the lens of the conceptual framework that incorporates the theory that teachers' expertise and knowledge as null and void in current policy is not effective, and perhaps, including teacher voices will steer education to a pathway of improvement.

Scholarly literature on accountability. Many urban school districts have high percentages of linguistic and cultural minority students. Unfortunately, they are assessed unfairly due to cultural bias namely. Furthermore, urban students have more challenges to overcome to become successful. According to Berliner, "It [NCLB] makes schools accountable for achievement without regard for factors over which schools have little control. Perhaps this is why NCLB has failed to show reductions in the specific achievement gaps on which it is focused" (2009, p. 21). Berliner referred to out of school factors (OSFs) that are challenges from poverty and contribute to the achievement gap. Such factors are: "(1) low birth-weight and non-genetic prenatal influences on children; (2) inadequate medical, dental, and vision care, often a result of inadequate or no medical insurance; (3) food insecurity; (4) environmental pollutants; (5) family relations and family stress; and (6) physical, sociological, and psychological problems that children often bring to school, ranging from neurological damage and attention disorders to excessive absenteeism, linguistic underdevelopment, and oppositional behavior; (7)

49

"Extended learning opportunities, such as preschool, after school, and summer school programs that can help to mitigate some of the harm caused by the first six factors" (Berliner, 2009, p. 3).

Although teachers cannot control the OSFs, those factors have to first be acknowledged, then addressed when it comes to being accountable to their students. Current accountability mandates are blind to these factors. Darling-Hammond (2007) stated that federal and state governments lack accountability to public schools by not providing standards that are equitable and adequate. She also identified inequities in funding amongst urban and rural schools in comparison to wealthy schools, thus contributing to widen the achievement gap. The Common Core standards do not cover all subject areas, therefore the other subjects are not necessarily accounted for in terms of state policy. The curriculum or inclusion or non-inclusion of other subjects remain as before. Furthermore, as the state and nation as a whole continue to experience further cutbacks for reasons such as the recent Sequestion, adequate funding remains an issue for schools across the nation.

NCLB divides student populations into subgroups and determines a separate Annual Measurable Objective, such as the English Language Learners and Special Education students. Darling-Hammond stated, "It seems not to have occurred to policymakers that ordering schools to show 100% proficiency for students in a subgroup that by definition scores below that level on state tests is ludicrous" (p. 5). Likewise, Darling-Hammond stated that it is impossible for 100% of this subgroup to ever reach proficiency partially due to how Limited English Proficient (LEP) students are defined.

Unfortunately, many urban schools that have a significant amount of LEPs are completely affected.

Stan Karp (2004), in *Many Children Left Behind,* claimed that teachers and students are the key to improvement, not standards and tests. "…teachers and students need a complicated mix of support, resources, motivation, pressure, leadership, and professional skills to succeed…" (p. 58). Research does not indicate that test-driven sanctions can provide these supports.

Psychologist Robert Sternberg claimed, "success requires a broad range of abilities, but schools often focus on only one and ignore others. Conventional tests do the same" (p. 14). Sternberg's Triarchic Abilities Test "…measures not only conventional abilities—memory and analytical abilities—but also two other types deemed important by Sternberg: creative abilities and practical abilities" (Sternberg, 1998, pp. 14-15). His test also revealed that minority students score high in creative aspects of learning while their white counterparts score high in analytical aspect of learning. Thus, contributing to widening the achievement gap. This clearly depicts how the educational accountability system has not been responsible in fostering other abilities through instruction and assessment.

Sirotnik (2004) further claimed that test-driven accountability makes some drastic assumptions about students and data. The first assumption is that students are simultaneously ready to be assessed in the same way on the same things. The second assumption is that other types of information that teachers may use to make good instructional decisions are not available to teachers. Alternative assessments that teachers

use as part of good teaching include journals, portfolios, classroom observations, tickets out the door, etc.

The following paragraphs further illustrate the paradox of assessments in measuring accountability. According to the late Paul Wellstone, a former senator and teacher from Minnesota, the current accountability system is "unfair and unworkable" (Berliner, 2008, p. 172). It was Wellstone's conviction that testing lost its purpose and instead, equates accountability throughout the nation with achievement and "success." Furthermore, Jonathan Kozol's (1991) mentioned, "we hold disadvantaged students accountable for our own failure to properly support them" (p.37). Berliner (2008) shared:

> according to the 1999 National Research Council, one assessment cannot measure a student's ability and therefore, should not be used as an instrument on which to make important decisions. In addition, the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (Harcourt-Brace, CTB McGraw-Hill, Riverside 1999, and ETS) confirm the claim of inappropriate use of single assessment scores." (p. 174)

This is only a portion of the problems resulting from assessments recounted by the late senator-teacher Wells in his opposition of current accountability mandates. As a former educator and legislator, he appeared to be a valid "shaper" of educational accountability, as Wilde (2002) would most likely state. Wilde also claimed that education is increasingly being politicized by politicians and media commentators by "demanding a greater role in the details of what public education should look like, looking to micromanage rather than relying on the professionals in the field" (Wilde, 2002, p. viii). If we continue to ignore teachers' voices in accountability, America's

urban children will continue to be marginalized and placed on the agendas of non-educators and politicians and others who may not be well versed in the needs of urban students. Teachers "have had little or no input into the accountability systems by which they are judged. Their work is often under the control of others, mostly politicians…" (Berliner, 2008, p. 145).

The empirical research of this section has shown the following about high stakes accountability policies in operation presently:

- The assessments are unfair due to cultural bias.

- Urban students have more challenges to overcome for success.

- OSFs need to be addressed since current mandates are 'blind to them.'

- The standards are inequitable and inadequate.

- There are inequities in funding.

- Teachers and students are key to improvement, not standards and tests.

- Teachers and students need support, resources, motivation, pressure, leadership, and professional skills for success (not test driven sanctions).

- Minorities score high in creative aspects of learning.

- Policies are unfair and unworkable.

- Testing has lost its purpose.

- One assessment cannot measure a student's ability and should not be used to make important decisions.

- Education is being politicized by politicians and media commentators.

Furthermore, research has also shown the following effects of current accountability policies in urban public schools with linguistically and culturally diverse students:

- Due to how LEP students are defined, it is impossible for 100% of this subgroup to reach proficiency.

- The achievement gap is widened through funding and tests.

- Tests assume students should be tested on the same things at the same time.

- Other types of assessment data are not available to teachers to make decisions.

- Tests equal accountability.

- The work of teachers is micromanaged.

- Teachers' work is controlled by non-educators.

This next section is a compilation of research testimonies collected for accountability policies. Similar to the tiered or zoom-in effect of the current national, state, and local accountability system, this compilation includes global skills needed for 21st century citizens, effective teacher practices for ELLs, and locally developed practices for teachers for increased parent support at a neighboring district with similar demographics. I chose to widen the scope to include international recommendations because of our society's increasing speed toward globalization and statements of some scholars in this review indicating differentiated instruction with the inclusion of technology skills needed for success. The conceptual framework that incorporates the theory of teachers' expertise and knowledge as null and void in current policy as not effective, and including teacher voices will steer education to a pathway of improvement grounds this review.

54

Scholarly recommendations for policy. In response to globalization, the

Partnership for 21st Century Skills developed a framework to support their belief that

every American child needs 21st century knowledge, skills, and expertise to succeed in

work and life in the 21st century (Zhao, p. 146). The knowledge contents (subjects) are:

English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, math, economics, science,

geography, history, government and civics global awareness, financial, economic,

business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy, health literacy…" (p. 146).

As for skills, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills recommended, "…creativity

and innovation skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, communication and

collaboration skills; information literacy, information and technology literacy; flexibility

and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity

and accountability, and leadership and responsibility (p. 146).

These are the recommended knowledge and skills that students need to acquire for

success in a 21st century society. According the state department of education's website,

the newly adopted Common Core standards, "… provide a consistent framework to

prepare students for success in college and/or the 21st century workplace"

(http://www.azed.gov/azcommoncore/). However, since Common Core include English

language arts and math only, there appears to be a large portion of subjects and perhaps

skills lacking according to the recommended framework prescribed by Partnership for

21st Century Skills. What's lacking is world languages, economics, financial, economic,

business and entrepreneurial literacy, and civic literacy.

In *Accountability for Results* by McCaw and Watkins (2008), a compilation of effective programs for English Language Learners, researchers indicate accountability is evident in teachers who:

- use (give) clear directions and examples (Cohen, 1975; Genesee, 1987; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Senesac, 2002);

- participate in systemic and ongoing quality professional development (Cohen, 1975; Genesee, 1987; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Senesac, 2002);

- communicate high expectations (Kirk, 2002);

- use assessment to drive instruction (Hurley & Blake, 2000);

- know how to evaluate the English-language learner (Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, & Sun-Irminger, 2006);

- have a high sense of efficacy in their own ability to teach, characterized by the use of two languages (60 percent English); give quality content instruction in the native language and comprehensible input in English; incorporate the students' home and community culture into the classroom (Cummins, 1991); and

- use a thematic curriculum reflecting the culture of the students (Kirk, 2002).

According to McCaw and Watkins, these are some effective practices for teachers and schools with ELL students. "Fortunately for public education, much of what is good for English-language learners is also good for all learners (at-risk or gifted)" (McCaw & Watkins, 2008, p. 64). From my standpoint, much of these practices are dependent on individual teacher practices such as give clear directions and examples, communicate

56

high expectations, using assessment data to drive instruction, and knowing how to evaluate ELLs. Participating in professional development, having a high efficacy in their ability to teach using two languages and only 60 percent of English use, and using a culturally relevant thematic curriculum tend to be driven by policy outside the control of teachers. Most districts and schools require participation in professional development due to a school's non-performing accountability status and/or to maintain teachers' highly qualified status. As for using two languages in a classroom, teachers with a state bilingual endorsement are the only teachers allowed through policy to teach using two languages to students identified as Limited English Proficient on state approved language test until they test out of the identification. Lastly, schools are required to use Common Core for English Language Arts and math. The curriculum containing subjects outside of Common Core, are most likely driven by local educational agencies such as school boards and district/school administration and are not determined by individual teachers.

An alternative approach at the local level recently developed by Community Education Director of a neighboring urban school district, is the Academic Parent-Teacher Team (APTT). It is a shared concept of accountability involving administrators, teachers, parents, and student. Teachers give "parents the 'know how' to be equal partners," creating "classroom families" that extend beyond parent conferences, resulting with minority students in urban schools benefiting "greatly when parents and teachers intentionally work collaboratively to create structures of support." Furthermore, "the learning and intellectual opportunities available to children away from school can have a strong influence on student achievement. The knowledge and capacity that parents have

to influence learning and skill development at home after school and on nonschool days are significant in students' ability to achieve" (Paredes, 2011, p. 1).

APTT defies traditional approaches and expectations of parents by expanding teachers' repertoire to create 'classroom families.' This is an example of how urban schools with linguistically and culturally diverse populations during the current age of high stakes accountability, creatively engage other stakeholders to share accountability. At the local level, resources available were put together to meet the unique needs and challenges to meet academic goals. This type of approach uses the community as a resource rather than undermining their capabilities as stated by *The Public Education Network's Open to the Public*, earlier in this review. Furthermore, it gives teachers and students the needed support, resources, motivation, pressure, leadership, and professional skills for success (not test driven sanctions) as stated by Stan Karp (2004).

The next section illustrates some perspectives of accountability among teachers. It identifies the extent that teachers' perspectives and experiences have been presented in scholarly literature on accountability policies. Recounted observations of urban elementary teachers' experience in the field by researcher, Gregory Michie (2005) sets the scene of some effects of current accountability policies in urban schools.

Teacher perspectives on accountability. In *See You When We Get There* by Gregory Michie (2005), urban teachers share their stories of accountability in urban schools. Cynthia, a sixth grade teacher shares, "she felt morally obligated to stand up and speak out when she believed something wasn't right, and as a teacher, she urged her students to do the same" (p. 68). As teachers of the American public, where democracy is not only highly valued but is the foundation of which this country has been defined in

58

history, teachers are placed in a position to model democracy for students, but yet, are unable to fully practice that capacity under current accountability mandates. This especially poses to be a problem in urban settings where inequities tend to take place.

Cynthia's conviction is to inform her students of the harsh realities that exist in their urban surrounding. She attributed much the inequities in urban settings to social systems and institutions. She informed her students of her conviction so they will take individual responsibility to navigate their own futures. Since urban schools tend to be multicultural, she tried to instill a sense of cultural pride by encouraging them to use their native languages to build confidence. Her efforts to integrate the harsh demands of her students' home environments originate from her goal to, "help my community succeed---somehow, some way. Whatever little I can do, I'm going to do it and I'm going to do it well" (p. 77).

Another urban teacher, Toni, works in a 97-year-old school building. Nonetheless, she doesn't let that become an obstacle for what she perceives to be good teaching. Similar to Cynthia, Toni used her students' environment as a strategy for her students to "make connections" (Michie, 2005, p. 124). Her Spanish students researched the impact of AIDS in Latin America and further linked it to their own backyards. Her reading students evaluated vital issues in their community to write letters to President Bush after reading other student letters to the President. Toni is an example of how urban teachers conform to the needs of their students on a daily moment-to-moment basis. Michie observes the following.

> Watching Toni now—low-key, subtle, patiently helping students think about their
> work—she almost seemed a different person from the showstopper I'd marveled

at in Spanish I. But that only served to confirm what I suspected already: that the jokes, the grandstanding, the look-at-me posturing—they weren't so much about ego as they were deliberate interventions she thought would help kids learn. When they were appropriate, Toni used them—and she had a ball doing so. But just like any good teacher, she had other tools in her kit. (p. 125)

Like many teachers, Toni drew on her creativity to meet the academic needs of her students mixed with structured approaches such as Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPR-S).[1] In Michie's words,

It allowed her to put her own unique stamp on lessons, and judging from what I'd seen (Michie), I could affirm that she took full advantage of the opportunity. I doubted there was another teacher using TPR-S anywhere in the world that morning who had woven both Ike Turner and Snoop Dogg into her storytelling. (p. 135)

Unfortunately, current high-stakes tests used to measure accountability in public schools cause an additional hurdle in urban schools. According to Toni, her students do not possess the necessary vocabulary to adequately perform on standardized tests due to cultural biases. Toni stated, "It all depends on which culture you're in, right? A kid who's been exposed to the vocabulary on the test is going to do better, because that's one less obstacle, one less hoop for them to jump through" (p. 140).

The stories of Toni and Cynthia demonstrate how current accountability mandates may not necessarily be applicable to urban schools. Thus emphasizing the need to

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[1] Proponents of TPR-S say it allows students to participate actively while the teacher continually provides "comprehensible input"—the foundation of Stephen Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis of language acquisition (Michie, p. 135).

"understand local definitions of accountability…especially in the most challenging contexts" (Firestone & Shipps, 2005, p. 98). Teachers know that the individual and unique needs of one student may not be applicable to the next student. Like students, individual districts down to individual teachers are unique. Therefore, prompting the need to turn some focus back on teachers in regard to developing an accountability framework that incorporates professional input of teachers. The following paragraphs share the results of a large-scale quantitative study of teachers on accountability.

The Gates Foundation (2010) conducted the largest national survey consisting of 40,490 teachers on accountability. According to the results, 22,100 (74%) are elementary teachers, 7,323 (9%) are middle school teachers, and 8,554 (1%) are high school teachers. First and foremost, it found, "…according to the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, 69% of teachers believed that their voices are not heard in the debate on education" (2010, p. 1).

The statements about accountability were collected in *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools* (2010*).*

> Teachers feel accountable in a variety of valuable ways, such as fostering student responsibility, and knowing that current assessments cannot measure student responsibility. Parents and teachers believe that students need to be responsible so that they will be successful in our society. Furthermore, "teachers hold themselves accountable as a profession for raising issues of the public good." (p. 18)

In addressing NCLB, teachers believe in setting high expectations and being accountable; however, they feel that accountability should not be measured solely on one assessment. Simultaneously, they believe in setting high expectations for their students.

Some teachers' thoughts on NCLB are: the system of tests, rankings, and sanctions was a bureaucratic interference with their ongoing efforts to boost achievement for individual students; the law neglected to focus attention and resources on the students with highest needs. In regard to disaggregated data, teachers have positive and negative feelings. Positively, the data indicated to teachers that not all students are having their needs met. Negatively, there are not enough individual data on students. Furthermore, teachers prefer data on the performance of individuals instead of disaggregated data. It was best put when a teacher asked, "How can I help a student unless I have multiple-year data on that student, not just the scores of one class compared to the scores of another class?" (Loucks, 2005, p. 6).

According to teacher participants in a three-state study, standards-based accountability allows teachers in one state to use standards for curriculum and planning lessons. It allows them to have a place to start teaching, stay focused, and bring consistency of instruction in schools (Hamilton, et al., 2007, p. 42). Overall, 2004-05 data indicate that teachers in all three states combined agreed that standards are useful for lesson planning. However, "about 20 percent of the elementary school math teachers and 20 to 30 percent of the science teachers in all three states thought the standards omitted important material in math or science. These teachers faced the dilemma of teaching the content though it was not included in the standards and would not be on the assessment or omitting the content though they believed it was important (Hamilton, et al., 2007, p. 43).

According to Hamilton et al., in examining teacher perspectives of curriculum and tests, "For the accountability system to function effectively, the standards should be clear, appropriate, and well understood, the tests should align with the standards, and the curriculum should align with both" (2007, p. 48). Further, the study showed that more than half the teachers indicated that students are not exposed to challenging curriculum and instruction as a result of the accountability system. Also, a majority of the teachers agreed that there is little opportunity for teachers to teach content that will not be tested. It is also worth noting from this study that three-quarters of teachers reported to have increased focus on student achievement due to AYP pressure.

Unfortunately, this study did not examine specific behaviors in teachers that resulted as an effect of AYP. As NCLB may have intended, some other effects in accountability are 40 percent of teachers in the three states combined report an increase in academic rigor of the curriculum changed for the better. (Hamilton et al., 2007, p. 54). However, teachers in one state expressed concern on the "pressure to move on regardless of whether students have mastered content (Hamilton et al., 2007, p. 55). Another concern teachers expressed was not being able to challenge higher-level students due to pacing expectations. It was also concluded that NCLB does not directly motivate students to improve their performance, therefore teachers and communities become responsible to address those needs.

As a result of state accountability systems, nearly half of the teachers shared that their teaching practices improved, while a few changed for the worse. It was also determined that teacher and student relationships changed, 14 to 34 percent for the better and 5 to 14 percent for the worse. The study also found that the state's accountability

system caused one-third of the teachers to report worse staff morale versus 10 to 20 percent reported better staff morale.

Teachers were also asked if the state's accountability system supported their own teaching approaches. Thirty percent of teachers in one state and 29 percent in another state agreed that their approaches aligned to the state's approach. Fifty two percent of teachers in the third state reported that their approaches aligned with the state. A significant amount of teachers were conflicted with the approaches the state encouraged them to adopt (in lieu of) due to NCLB requirements. Overall, approximately one-third of teachers in two states and a little over half the teachers in the third state perceive that the state's accountability system benefited their students (Hamilton, 2007).

The Gates Foundation survey of over 40,000 teachers in the United States in 2010 concluded the following for good teaching:

- Establish clear standards, common across states in order to help "students prepare for college, careers and life in the 21st Century" (p. 19) i.e., Common Core;
- Use multiple measures to evaluate student performance "including formative, ongoing assessments during class, performance on class assignments and class participation…to innovate and differentiate instruction in a variety of ways" (p. 27);
- Provide learning experiences that will "provide students with the skills they need for today's world. Differentiation plays a key role in this, as does the use of technology and non-textbook classroom materials" (p. 35);
- Accurately measure teacher performance and provide non-monetary rewards. However, it is crucial to have supportive leadership to retain teachers. "Teachers

say that the most accurate measures of their own performance are student engagement and student growth over the academic year" (p. 41);

- Bridge school and home to raise student achievement. "…Teachers know what works to raise student achievement and build a sustainable culture of learning in America's schools" (p. 49).

Similar to Hamilton et al.'s study, clear standards are imperative

According to the *Teacher Accountability Conference Post-Conference Report* by the Educator Accountability Program (2011), all stakeholders at the local level should be the shapers of their accountability system that will be fair and credible to teachers. The report suggested accountability contain the following as a starting point:

- fairness to teachers and administrators;

- measure student outputs rather than input;

- encourage teacher collaboration in professional development;

- incentives for teachers to effectively use new problem-solving pedagogy;

- district commitment to support this type of professional development;

- be comprehensible and credible to the public.

This list is meant to serve as the basic foundation of accountability so districts may add their unique accountability elements in order to better serve their local needs. This implies the demand for all stakeholders to have a greater role by having a voice in the development of their local accountability policies. The Educator Accountability Program acknowledged that districts differ from one another, therefore they expressed, "Our hope is that districts will add their own requirements to these, and that together we can lay the groundwork for meaningful educator accountability that improves the quality of

education" (p. 14). In regard to all stakeholders having a greater role, Gregory Michie's (2005) *See You When We Get There,* teacher Toni from Chicago put it best:

If we're not meeting the goals that have been set, then we have to blame somebody. And who's with the kids every day? The teachers, right? So if the students are not doing well on the test, it must be the teachers' fault. But do you think—well, as a parent, what am I doing to reinforce what goes on at school? As a politician, what am I doing to ensure that students have the resources they need in school? As a community member, what am I doing when I see little Johnny out on the street corner when I know he should be in school? So it's not one person—it's everybody. It's everybody's responsibility." (Michie, 2005, p. 141)

The extent that teachers' perceptions and experiences are represented in scholarly literature on accountability policies cover a wide range. Controversially, it includes the law (NCLB), assessments, standards/curriculum, and instruction. Literature on assessments cover disaggregated data, using various types of assessments instead of relying on one assessment, and measurement of student input versus output. Importantly, standards and curriculum literature covers the alignment of the standards to curriculum and assessments, bridging school and home, and omission of important math and science concepts.

In regard to teacher practices, literature covers the pressure to move on in instruction regardless of student mastery, improved and worsened practices as a result of NCLB policies, utilizing differentiated instruction and technology, and implementing problem solving pedagogy. Literature also covers teacher performance, teacher collaboration in professional development, and staff morale.

This broad range of literature extends out to the student and administration level. On the student level, literature includes attaining student achievement and the absence of student motivation in NCLB. Administration is addressed through providing supportive leadership, providing fairness to teachers and administrators, and establishing district commitment.

Because accountability affects federal, state, and local levels of education policies, the literature addresses state accountability and suggests it be comprehensible and audible to the public. A significant gap in our knowledge base about high stakes accountability is in the absence of qualitative research on the topic at hand. Much of what has been found are quantitative studies that have not afforded practicing teachers to conceptually develop and report their notions of accountability in culturally and linguistically diverse elementary urban schools. Furthermore, much of what has been found also uses concepts from NCLB to shape their research designs, thus depriving teachers the ability to form their unique response qualitatively. Although this study uses current accountability policies in a tiered manner as part of the framework, I leave room for teachers to qualitatively share their individualistic notions of accountability. This study fills a niche in that knowledge by inquiring about specific teacher behavior and practices that teachers use in this era of high stakes accountability.

Conclusion and Chapter Summary

As shown in the review of literature in this chapter, notions of accountability, when applied to practice, have many ambiguities. The Educator Accountability Program acknowledged that accountability "differs in definition from one state to another, from

one district to the next and from one teacher or administrator to his or her colleague"
(2011, p. 141).

This chapter contained a description with figures of the theoretical and conceptual framework followed by a detailed account of current national, state, and local accountability policies. Also included are selected definitions of accountability represented in a table followed by a brief history of accountability in education to serve as foundational knowledge on the topic at large. Also shared are the prevalent challenges in regard to being accountable in ways that may or may not conflict with accountability policies. A critical analysis of literature especially of high stakes accountability on policy and practice is included. Furthermore, recommendations on accountability policies stemming from NCLB from various organizations are linked to the results of the study in chapter five. Last but not least, teacher perspectives on accountability in existing studies provide an account of literature gaps and how this study will contribute to the realm of urban education. The reviewed teacher perspectives in this chapter are also linked to the results in chapter five.

Chapter Three contains the methodological framework to examine accountability experiences among teachers in diverse urban schools.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of the present study is to better understand how teachers experience

accountability, and the implications of teachers' experiences for education policy and

practice in culturally and linguistically diverse urban elementary schools. With this

overarching purpose in mind, three key questions guide this research:

1. How do veteran urban elementary school teachers working in linguistically

    and culturally diverse schools understand the notion of educational

    accountability?

2. What does accountability look like in these teachers' daily practices?

3. Based on teachers' knowledge and experience, what constitutes sound and

    appropriate accountability practices for linguistically and culturally diverse

    urban schools?

The answers to the above research questions will provide a better understanding

of teachers' roles in accountability as compared to current federal, state, and local

accountability policies. Furthermore, this investigation may surface accountability

practices worth acknowledging and implementing in linguistically and culturally diverse

schools, thus giving greater voice to teachers on the accountability policies for which

they are the responsible agents. Importantly, the study may reveal accountability policies

worth eliminating if they are substantiated as ineffective for teachers working in these

schools.

The qualitative methodology to be used to address these questions is discussed in

this chapter. I begin by providing an overview of the research design and the rationale

for the use of a qualitative approach. Information on the research context is provided

with regard to the setting and the selection of participants. The chapter also includes a

discussion of data collection and analysis procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

This study employs a qualitative research approach. Rossman and Rallis (2003)

indicated the ultimate purpose of qualitative research is to learn; these authors

specifically position the researcher as learner. Qualitative research gives researchers the

opportunity to become immersed in the study setting in order to collect in-depth data in a

holistic manner. As Rossman and Rallis (2003) stated:

> To inform the questions, the researcher collects data—the basic units or building
>
> blocks of information. Data are images, sounds, words, and numbers. When data
>
> are grouped into patterns, they become information. When information is put to
>
> use or applied, it becomes knowledge. (p. 4)

Qualitative research is performed in natural settings with the purpose of learning

about the social world within that setting, and to create new knowledge that may be used

for the purpose of improving some social circumstance (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Furthermore, a qualitative approach allows researchers to make knowledge claims based

primarily on constructivist perspectives such as the multiple meanings of individuals'

experiences. I am interested in examining the multiple meanings of teachers' experiences

of accountability mandates within their schools.

Within a qualitative design, this study takes a phenomenological approach.

Creswell (2003) defined phenomenological research as:

…a study in which the researcher identifies the "essence" of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by the participants in the study. Understanding the "lived experiences" marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). In this process, the researcher "brackets" his or her own experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study (Nieswiadomy, 1993). (p. 15).

Furthermore, Rossman and Rallis (2003) stated the purposes of phenomenological inquiry are: "description, interpretation, and critical self-reflection into the 'world as world'….Central are the notions of intentionality and caring. Throughout, the researcher engages in critical self-reflection about the topic and process" (p. 97).

As a strategy within the overall qualitative research design, this phenomenological study utilizes data collected from multiple sources – interviews, observations, and documents – from which I identify themes (Creswell, 2003). Since phenomenology focuses on participants' lived experiences, there is a "focus in depth on the meaning" of teachers' experiences of accountability, "assuming that through dialogue and reflection, the quintessential meaning of the experience will be revealed. Language is viewed as the primary symbol system through which meaning is both constructed and conveyed" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 97). In this study, language in individual and focus group interviews only construct meaning, but convey meaning. A phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study by reason that through language,

teachers shared their experiences of accountability through a series of intensive and iterative interviews.

It is important to note that qualitative research is naturalistic by its nature. Denzin (1994) stated, "qualitative research is conducted in the natural settings rather than controlled ones; it assumes that humans use what they see and hear and feel to make meaning of social phenomena, and it relies on a variety of data-gathering techniques" (p. 6-7). Moreover, Rogers (2002) affirmed that it is "research that represents human beings as whole persons living in dynamic, complex social arrangements" (p. 51). Therefore, this study utilized qualitative data gathering techniques (discussed in detail later in this chapter) to examine teachers as a whole person experiencing accountability in their natural settings.

The results illuminate teachers' experiences with and perspectives on accountability as reflected in their practice, with the ultimate goal of enabling stakeholders – teachers, education leaders, and policymakers – to make informed decisions about accountability processes and procedures in culturally and linguistically diverse schools.

Research Setting and Participants

Following Denzin's (1994) claim about "natural settings," the study was conducted at an urban elementary school district where teachers practice, in order to share their experiences of accountability. This allowed teachers to use what they see, hear, and feel to make meaning of accountability in their practices.

This study was conducted at an urban school district that met the following selection criteria. The pseudonym for this district is Southwest School District.

1) The urban school district serves diverse students in terms of ethnicity and primary language spoken.

2) Selected schools are Title I schools on the rationale that according to the United States Department of Education, Title I funds are designed to "meet the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation's highest-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance" (http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html, August 19, 2013).

3) The availability and participation of practicing urban K-8th grade teachers with over ten years of service in diverse schools.

4) Administrative support of the research.

According to National Center for Education Statistics (2010), Southwest School District has 24 schools in the district and 17,672 students. There are 967 teachers with a student/teacher ratio of 18.28. Furthermore, 4,950 students are ELLs and 1,834 are students with IEPs (Individual Education Plans). Within this district, two schools were originally selected. Due to teacher time constraints and potential feasibility issues of the study, and in light of accepted ethical protocols requiring voluntary participation, data were collected at schools with leadership that was supportive of the study. A modest monetary incentive was offered in exchange of participants' time. The amount of this incentive equates to approximately three hours of compensation in a typical extra-curricular school sponsored activity. Therefore, it is assumed that the participants volunteered to participate in this study willingly without any major influences on the

study sample. Furthermore, the selection of schools was based on the availability and

willingness of the participants to participate in order to address the needs of this study.

Therefore, the recruitment of one veteran teacher expanded the study sites to a third

school. Table 2 outlines the basic characteristics of all three schools. All three schools

are Title I schools with a combined student population of 2,117 eligible for free lunch and

105 eligible for reduced-price lunch of 2,578 students.

Table 2

Characteristics of Schools One, Two, and Three

Schools	AI/Ak	A/PI	Black	Hisp.	White	Two or More Races	Total Students	Total Teachers (FTE)
School One (6th-8th)	5	4	67	908	58	10	1,052	56.01
School Two (KG-5th)	8	0	30	796	21	14	869	40.46
School Three (KG-5th)	5	3	36	576	37	0	657	42.50

Note. AI/Ak = American Indian/Alaskan; A/PI = Asian/Pacific Islander; Hisp. =
Hispanic.

Within these schools, participants who met the following selection criteria were

recruited:

1) Teachers with 10-25 years of teaching experience at Southwest School

District.

2) Teachers with certification by the state identified as highly qualified.

The rationale for the above criteria was to explore the experiences of teachers with

teaching experience prior to and following the implementation of NCLB.

A total of six teachers participated in this study. All but one met the criteria listed above. Specifically, because there was a shortage of veteran teachers willing to participate in the study, and in order to meet the time constraints of teachers and the study, one non-veteran teacher was recruited. (Please refer to Table 5.) It is also interesting to note that four of the six participants started their teaching career in special education. The following tables contain pertinent information on the participants as it relates to this study (all teacher names are pseudonyms).

Table 3

Participant Characteristics at School One

Teacher	Years teaching	Years at School Site	Ethnicity	Gender	Language Proficiency
Frank	28	18	African American	male	English German
Jerry	34	21	Caucasian	male	English
Nicole	3	3	African American	female	English

Table 4

Participant Characteristics at School Two

Teacher	Years teaching	Years at School Site	Ethnicity	Gender	Language Proficiency
Velma	17	17	Caucasian	female	English
Alice	14	14	Caucasian	female	English

Table 5

Participant Characteristics at School Three

Teacher	Years teaching	Years at School Site	Ethnicity	Gender	Language Proficiency

Betty	10	10	Caucasian	female	English

Data Collection Methods

In order for participants to reconstruct their experiences with and perspectives on accountability mandates in their interviews, open-ended questions were used (Seidman, 2006). The purpose of this phenomenological approach was to build upon and explore participants' responses to the interview questions (Seidman, 2006). Open-ended questions link to the validity of the study by allowing teachers to recreate their settings to establish a foundation on which the inquiries are based.

Each teacher was interviewed individually in-depth at her or his home school in her/his classroom. Each observation occurred in participants' classrooms as well. Next, the participating teachers were divided into two groups of three for focus group interviews. The focus group interviews were at School One and School Three. In general, the first step was to conduct individual interviews. The second step was to conduct classroom observations, and the third step was to conduct focus group interviews (see Table 7; each data collection method is described more fully below). Overall, the focus group interviews prompted teachers to build upon the information gathered in the individual interviews and observations by identifying positive and detrimental practices amongst their diverse students. Due to teacher time constraints, each interview and focus group session did not exceed more than an hour and a half. Follow-up sessions with additional questions were conducted as needed.

In Berg's (2007) *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, a focus group "is an interview style designed for small groups of unrelated individuals, formed

by an investigator and led in a group discussion on some particular topic or topics" (Shutt cited, 2003, p. 144). Furthermore, Berge indicated that some of the purposes of the focus group may be to stimulate new ideas and creative concepts; diagnose the potential for problems with a new program, service, or product; generate impressions of products, programs, services, institutions, or other objects of interest; and interpret previously obtained qualitative results (p. 144, 145). This technique allows participants to "listen to others' opinions to clarify their own" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 193).

As indicated previously by Rossman and Rallis (2003), data in research "are images, sounds, words, and numbers" (p. 4). This study also included observations as a data gathering technique. Again, according to Rossman and Rallis (2003), the benefits of observations are to understand the context, see tacit patterns, see patterns people are unwilling to talk about, provide direct personal experience and knowledge, and to move beyond the selective perceptions of both researcher and participants. As shown in Table 8 in this section, teachers were asked to participate in the individual interviews and observations and all six teachers participated in the focus group interviews.

Table 6

Data Collection Steps

	1st Step	2nd Step	3rd Step
School One	Teacher Frank	Teacher Frank	Teacher Frank, Jerry, & Nicole
	- Individual Interview	- Observation	- Focus Group Interview
	Teacher Jerry	Teacher Jerry	
	- Individual Interview	- Observation	

	Teacher Nicole - Individual Interview	Teacher Nicole - Observation	
School Two and Three	Teacher Velma - Individual Interview Teacher Alice - Individual Interview Teacher Betty - Individual Interview	Teacher Velma - Observation Teacher Alice - Observation Teacher Betty - Observation	Teacher Velma, Alice, Betty, - Focus Group Interview

As the first data collection method, Seidman's (2006) three-part interview sequence in the individual in-depth interviews was used to capture the teachers' stories. Each individual interview sequence contained three parts. The first focused on life history to capture teachers' professional history. The second focus allowed teachers to illuminate the details of how they experienced increasing accountability mandates over time. This portion included concrete details of their experiences. The third focus allowed teachers to reflect on how their experiences of accountability relates to their teaching philosophy and professional practice. (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). (The protocol may be reviewed in Appendix C of this dissertation.) The six participants were grouped into two focus groups of three teachers each. Three teachers were interviewed at their home school (School One) including a follow-up focus group interview. The other three teachers including the teacher recruited at School Three were interviewed at School

Three. Two teachers from School Two traveled to School Three for their focus group interview. However, due to the end of the third quarter, Spring Break, state and district testing, and the end of the school year activities, a follow-up focus group interview was not possible for this group, so teachers individually answered the second half of the focus group questions and emailed their responses to me. Both focus group interviews occurred in February 2012.   The focus group at School One was in Frank's classroom, as well as the follow-up. We all sat at one table with the recording device placed in the center and gently moved closer to participants with low voice projection. Focus group questions were projected on my laptop to scroll down the list of questions throughout the interview. The focus group at School Three took place in classroom in the same fashion as the group at School One.

As the second data collection method, two observations were conducted in each participating teachers' classrooms. The observations consisted of "field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site" (Creswell, 2003, p. 185). (This protocol is in Appendix D.) Observations were comprised of a running record and shadowing of the teachers in their classrooms. This method depicted a "typical day" and revealed ways in which accountability is manifested in teachers' practice. Additionally, immediate reactions, unexpected occurrences, and overall impressions of the event that connect to or not to the study (Creswell, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Observations of teachers in their classrooms averaged two hours per visit. Each observation lasted 50 minutes to an hour and a half depending on the day and time constraints of each teacher. Overall, 15 hours and 20 minutes of observation were involved.

As the third data collection method, focus group interviews built upon the information from the individual interviews and observations. Following Krueger (1997), the focus groups operated "with a short series of discussions, sparked by questions asked by the moderator" (Berg, 2007, p. 157) using a semi-structured interview schedule. (The focus group protocol may be found in Appendix E.)

The individual and focus group interviews were audio recorded then transcribed by the researcher. Each interview was transcribed before coding, categorizing, and identifying themes. A Sony IC MP3 recorder was used to digitally record each interview. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and those names aided in organizing electronic and hardcopy interview files. Importantly, hard copies were kept in a lock and key file cabinet. A "clean-up of data" occurred as needed and interview transcripts were dated in addition to pseudonyms appearing on the files. Further, throughout the study, "hunches and analytic ideas" were recorded in a separate notebook. (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 280).

Data Analysis Strategies

Rossman and Rallis (2003) described the process of data analysis and interpretation in four steps. The first step is to become fully immersed in the data such as interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials collected. The second step is to systematically organize the material into salient themes and patterns. The third step is to attach meaning to the themes in order to tell a coherent story. The fourth step is the composition of the material in order for others to read what was learned (p. 270). These steps were followed.

With regard to the first step of data analysis, it is imperative for the researcher to be mindful of the consciousness playing a major role in the interpretation of interview data and that consciousness interacting with the words of the participants recorded as fully and accurately as possible (Seidman, 2006). In response to this claim, I became thoroughly familiar with the recordings to stay true to the participants' meaning as much as possible (Seidman, 2006).

To complete the second step of data analysis, profiles were created for each teacher using the in-depth interview data as a means to create narrative portraits of each participant. Transcribed interview transcripts were reviewed and in order to reduce the text; "passages that are interesting" in terms of the research questions were marked with brackets (Seidman, p. 117). Further, "What is of essential interest is embedded in each research topic and will arise from each transcript. Interviewers must affirm their own ability to recognize it" (Seidman, 2006, p. 118). The chunked passages in marked brackets were scanned for recurring key words or codes. Using a holistic strategy (Rossman and Rallis, p. 274), descriptions of connections were made among "the data in the actual context—a place, an event, a person's experience, a text" to craft a narrative portrait of each participant's experience with accountability. Broad categories were derived from the first-level analysis of data, and are "a word or phrase describing some segment of data that is explicit" (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p. 282). Decision rules helped guide the assignment to particular categories (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p. 273). This process resulted in an overall development and presentation of categories derived by scanning, coding, and sorting the raw data. Rossman and Rallis (2003) state a theme is "a phrase or sentence describing more subtle and tacit processes." After broad categories

81

were derived, subthemes surfaced from juxtaposing each category within transcribed interviews, to obtain a horizontal cross-view of the coded data. During this process, the focus was to "identify recurring ideas or language, patterns of beliefs and actions that signal something more subtle and complex than categories" (p. 284).

Each profile contains participants' life history information and experiences with accountability mandates. These profiles not only aided in the process of being immersed with the data as a preceding step, but was used in searching for themes across other data during the data analysis phase. Again, categories may be words or phrases describing some segment of explicit data while themes may be a phrase or sentence describing more subtle and tacit processes (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 282).

Overall, categories were derived within each teacher "case," as well as the focus groups. The analysis of in-depth interviews and focus group data were similar in the sense that I searched for categories since this is a phenomenological study with open-ended responses. "Broad categories [were] sought, with subthemes to elaborate the topography of meaning expressed by the participants" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 276). The data analysis employed meaning categorization as discussed by Rossman and Rallis (2003), a strategy of long interview passages being categorized by the researcher. Kvale (1996) explained categories may come from theory, vernacular, or from interviewees idioms and may be developed prior or during analysis. For example, in long passages of transcribed interview data, category "tests" were developed prior to analysis since the topic of inquiry involves tests. Furthermore, the category "love of learning" developed during analysis since participants attributed much of their work linking to their love to learn.

82

In the interpretation stage, the researcher attaches significance to what was found, makes sense of the findings, offers explanations, draws conclusions, extrapolates lessons, makes inferences, considers meanings and otherwise imposes order on the data, as explained by Patton (2002) and Rossman and Rallis (2003). Again, thematic analyses were conducted across the interviews, observations, and focus group interviews. For example, to make an interpretation in the narrative profile the following process was conducted. The location of where the category was derived within the individual interviews that utilized Seidman's (2006) three-part interview protocol is first indicated. Using teacher quotes, recurring themes within each category were extracted to support the theme. The recurring themes are also linked to the conceptual framework and scholarly literature reviewed in Chapter Two. These elements, fused together, laid the ground work for interpretations.

In Chapter Two, I reviewed scholarly literature on accountability mandates in urban schools. Therefore, I related that similar notion in analyzing how practicing teachers practice accountability in their urban classrooms as they rose in responses and observations. Furthermore, I identified notions not present in the literature review as they surfaced during this study. The intent of this approach was to develop "teacher-developed accountability policies" based on the data collected. Again, the constant comparative method was used to identify emerging themes or patterns across the individual teacher cases, and across the individual cases and the focus groups.

The fourth step in data analysis commenced at the completion of themes attached to meaning. The composition of those meanings was conveyed comprehensibly through the same process that the thematic analysis for the narratives followed. For example,

supporting recurring themes with direct teacher quotes and relating those themes

literature in chapter 2 while also aligning to the conceptual framework, interpretations

were made.

Research Ethics

This study was approved by Arizona State University's Institutional Review

Board (IRB). Therefore, required measures of protecting human participants were in

place. Participants received letters informing them of the study and requesting consent.

The letter stated that data and information collected will be kept confidential and

anonymous. The district, schools, and teacher names operate under pseudonyms.

Participants signed consent forms ensuring confidentiality. (Refer to Appendix B to

review the consent letter that was distributed to the participants.)

One lock and key file cabinet was used to store data and research documents.

Electronic data was only accessed by the researcher on a password protected computer.

Each file also contained an encrypted password to access on a computer.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a discussion of the research design, the rationale for that

design, and the specific methods used. This qualitative study used three types of data:

individual in-depth interview, observations, and focus group interview data. Chapter

Four contains narrative profiles of all the participants. There is also a comparative

thematic analysis of the narratives in the section following the narratives.

CHAPTER 4

Participant Profiles

This chapter contains participant profiles of a total of six teachers and a thematic

analysis of each participant's background information and experience with accountability

mandates. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and pseudonyms were created

for each participant, person and place referenced.

The purpose of the narrative profiles is to introduce readers to the lives of the

teachers within their individual contexts, provide a comparative analysis of the

participants, and to create a foundation for further analysis of the corpus of data. At the

end of the chapter, a cross-participant thematic analysis examines their experiences with

accountability mandates. The analyses are linked to the conceptual framework and

literature from Chapter Two when applicable to devise an interpretation of the narrative

data. The comparative analysis within and across the narrative profiles serve as the

foundation for further analysis of themes of the overall data in Chapter Five.

To create narrative profiles of each participant, a holistic strategy (Rossman and

Rallis, 2003) was used to describe connections among the data in the actual context—a

place, an event, a person's experience, a text (p. 274). Since this is a phenomenological

study which is "primarily open-ended, searching for the themes of meaning in

participant's lives, and typically rely on interview data, broad categories are sought, with

subthemes to elaborate the topography of meaning expressed by the participants" (p.

276). These broad categories were derived from the first-level analysis of data, and are

"a word or phrase describing some segment of data that is explicit" (p. 282). Decision

rules helped guide the assignment to particular categories (p. 273). This process resulted

in an overall development and presentation of categories derived by scanning, coding, and sorting the raw data. The categories are:

1) background and educational experiences

2) influential people in (each) participant's life

3) teaching path and career

4) teaching philosophy

5) experiences with accountability mandates

Using the broad categories above, narrative profiles were created "in the words of the participant…it allows us to present the participant in context, to clarify his or her intentions, and to convey a sense of process and time, all central components of qualitative analysis" (Rossman and Rallis, p. 119). To be "faithful to the words of the participants," passages were selected from the interviews "marked as important and put[ting] them together as a single transcript" (p. 121). As suggested by Seidman (2006), "I try to present material in a profile in the order in which it came in the interviews" to avoid transposing material that means something in one context to another that changes it meaning (p. 122). However, in the instance that material in one interview relates to material in another interview, I made the decision to "transpose that material, if doing so does not wrench it out of context and distort its meaning" (Seidman, 2006, p. 122).

Rossman and Rallis (2003) indicated that "subthemes to elaborate the topography of meaning expressed by the participants" (p. 276) are sought after broad categories are found. They further indicated that a theme is "a phrase or sentence describing more subtle and tacit processes" (p. 282). These subthemes surfaced from juxtaposing each category within transcribed interviews, to obtain a horizontal cross view of the coded

data. During this process, the focus is to "identify recurring ideas or language, patterns of beliefs and actions that signal something more subtle and complex than categories" (p.284). The task requires the researcher to be "[m]indful of the research questions but open to the serendipitous, the researcher follows his intuition that suggests a deeper way to understand and interpret the data" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 284). Subthemes provide a deeper view from which to develop interpretations and stories. Rossman and Rallis stated, "As the researcher interprets her analyses, she is putting together a story" (p. 287). Later in Chapter Five, the resulting analysis will provide a foundation for further analysis of the overall data set.

As just described, the subthemes found within the broad categories serve as a second-level analysis of data and are the following:

1) background and educational experiences

   a. not native to the Southwest

2) influential people in (each) participant's life

   a. emulating past influential teachers

   b. "I worked really hard," "school was not easy"

3) teaching path and career

   a. beginning teacher in special education

4) teaching philosophy

   a. teach for different learners

5) experiences with accountability mandates

   a. same tests/assessments, used differently

   b. shift in standards/curriculum

87

c. increased colleague collaboration

   d. negative emotions

Interpretations of participant narratives serve as a third-level analysis. The following sections are the narratives of each participant created around the broad categories. After the narrative section is a section containing the analysis of the participants' background information and experience with accountability mandates. This section states where the category originated within the individual interviews that utilized Seidman's (2006) three-part interview protocol. Also, the aforementioned recurring themes are presented with teacher quotes. The themes are also linked to the conceptual framework as appropriate and applicable literature examined in Chapter Two were extracted to aid the interpretation process. Interpretations were made, providing a foundation for further analysis of overall data in Chapter Five.

Narrative for Middle School Social Studies Teacher Frank

Frank's background and educational experiences. I was born in the northwestern part of the U.S. The legend goes I was born at home. I have six siblings. I have six sisters, one older than me, five younger than me. My mom was a stay at home mother; she dropped out and was orphaned at the age of three. We ended up living in the projects for pretty much my formative years. I'd say from 12 to 18, I went to schools that were fairly segregated economically and racially. They really pushed integration back in the late 50s, early '60s and we had a lot of racial issues. My childhood was pretty tumultuous because when I turned 18, within 30 days I joined the Air Force and I was gone, and I never looked back.

I was a fairly average student. I was a C-plus student in school. I started off at Elementary School A so I went to a public school in Northeast City A then I went to Northeast City B Elementary School up until the ninth grade then I went to vocational school then from vocational school I went to the United States Air Force then I went to local colleges in the Air Force. The Air Force has their own college where they give degrees and I studied at local colleges and they would [transfer credits to] that university system and that's where I got my Associates of Science in my particular field. And then I went to several universities and then I got my masters in public administration.

I landed in Southwest City, got a job as a substitute teacher for about six months and I came to School One and I substituted a special ed class. I guess they liked what they saw because they brought me on the next week, and a couple weeks later as a long-term sub and they hired me that summer and I've been here ever since for 17 years this coming summer.

I speak English, German, and I used to be able to speak Thai but I murdered Thai. But I read and write German and I speak English.   I think I'm more cosmopolitan because I am just as comfortable in Europe as I am here. I value my culture [African American] and its traditions but I don't embrace it the same way as other folks do. But I think the culture that really drives me the most is smart people. I think those people develop a different culture. The people I really try to emulate, are really, really, intelligent people and you can see on the board one of the guys' names is GK Chesterton. The man is absolutely brilliant, and I love reading books like that.

Influential people in Frank's life. It wasn't expected I [was] going to do much until I met Mr. Johnson [a former teacher]. His eyes lit up whenever he would look at

89

me. And he saw something I never saw in myself and I can't forget Ms. Carey [another former teacher]. She was my ninth grade language arts teacher. And she looked at me one day and she said, "That's it. Come in and see me after school." She put me in a car, a yellow Volkswagen Beetle and she drove down the hill to the projects and went to my house, [and] sat down on my couch. She said [to my mother], "Your son is smart." She says, "I can't watch him throw his life away. I can't watch him waste his education. He's smart, he can do better." And I sat there and the only thing I heard from her was, "This guy's smart." The next quarter, I made all Bs, I made the honor roll the first and only time in high school. Mr. Johnson made me get a sense that being Black is not a bad thing, you know (laughs) and this country made a promise to me and that I can be everything I can be. I really hope that one day, somebody will feel about me how I felt about Ms. Carey and Mr. Johnson. So I truly love where and I am.

My mom, I guess she was my philosophical mentor. She was the one who kept telling me, "Frank, you can do this, you can do whatever you want to do." But you know for me, because part of my background is in social psychology, I understand it's the community, environment that makes you.

I'm insatiable when it comes to school. If I'm not in school, I want to teach school, because you can never stop learning. For me, I played a huge role in my own life, I absolutely refuse to see a ceiling on me. I don't see anything as I can't do. I really, really don't. I think I can do all things. I'm a Christian too so I welcome Christ to stand with me. There isn't anything that can stop me, period.

Frank's path to teaching and career. I came to teaching because when I went in the service I was working as a mechanic. One day, somebody brought up the idea that they needed instructors in school. And because I was pretty good at it, somebody said, "Hey, why don't you go and apply for it." So I went there and the light came on. Teaching, this is terrific. Yeah, I could do it and teach it. So I got the basics of teaching in the military. It's the "I do, we do, you do" that's really popular now. I think it's here to stay. We were doing it in the military. We wrote lesson plans and course charts. Like here we call it plan of instruction. In the military we called it course charts. We knew every day, here's what we're doing. And we had instructors built in for assessment. And you know, reassessment, reeducation, we had, I mean the system was terrific, everybody would make it because the way we did it was in a way that you could grasp it.

My teaching career started highly technical [military]. Structured, boom, boom, boom, boom. Assess, boom, boom, boom, boom. It's really assembly line. Henry Ford would be very proud. The only thing you add to the mix is affect. Focus on that reassurance you know, and the fact that you're not a robot, I'm here to help them and that you will help them be successful then I became more academic and the job was social actions I ran a department called department of human relations. I'm a human relations specialist so I taught people how to get along. Then I investigated discrimination complaints and different things like that then I started working at a local college in electronics. But my teaching career, toward the end became more technical here [in Southwest School District].

Frank's teaching philosophy. First of all, I have to make it personal to the child. They need to make it personal in a way that they need to be taught. When I see kids who

are not doing well, I sit them down at a table. You find out, how does the kid learn? I have to change my strategy to work with the child. If he is left-brain, get him more stuff to write, read, those kinds of things. If he is right-brain, I say go draw this, make a cartoon book because that is how they learn. If they look up, that means they use both sides of their brain.

The second thing is mastery, I think mastery is critical. I like the way the Germans do it because my last two children were educated in the German school system. When they had a math test at the end of the semester, and in order to get promoted to the next semester, they would do problems on the board. Either you can do it or you can't. It's not a test, multiple choice, where they try to figure out the writing, it's either you can do the Pythagorean Theorem or not. So they give them a problem and they do it, done. If not, then you don't get it done. You gotta stay, and it's not a matter of, they talk about it, no. He's not going forward.

The third is, connect with something. I do programs, like We the People, Project Citizen, and Peace with some of the kids. Find something they could use in real life. But those are just the things that, it has to be personal, you have to reach mastery, and it needs to be something you know, tie it to the kids and that is something that takes more work.

Frank's experience with accountability mandates. In the military, we were accountable for every little thing. If I had people work for me, if my troops had problems at home and I didn't know about it, I got called in. And that's the sense of accountability I got from the military. I'm accountable for that, if they don't make it, I'm responsible for that. Move schools but as long as you're in my class, you're gonna get it done.

92

When they developed these education systems, one person puts on the wheel, one person puts the bolts on, somebody else puts on this, and so what happens is you have teachers who can't do math. Then you have some teachers, language arts teachers who can't do math or social studies, teachers who can't do reading, and the accountability has become fragmented and that's what's wrong with the accountability, you can't point to someone who, who, forgot to put the nut on. But if you let me build the car…first of all, I've got pride and ownership in it. And I might do a little something extra on it but I'm going to put a little time on it because my name is on it. We've assembly lined everybody to now that the kids are pretty much on their own, but everybody just seems to do their part and then it must be them [the students].

There is someone out there making a fortune on the miseducation of our children. Just the idea of coming up with the idea of how do we fix it, there are consultants and different firms that are coming up with all these ideas of PLC [Professional Learning Community], of Marzano [instructional strategies developed by Robert J. Marzano], all these people that are making a fortune of telling us how to do it. What did this teacher back in the red schoolhouse, how in the world did they make these geniuses? PLCs and all these other guys, without graphic organizers, how did they do it? Either they were absolute geniuses or yeah, they had to be absolute geniuses. If I thought there was some entity out there that is purposely trying to make our kids fail, I would say it is diabolical. Somebody does not want our children to succeed. Some entity, some self-giving, self-serving entity keeps the kids to fail because it just does not make sense. Actually, every four years, we change what we do. We were going on one process, a reading program, AR [Accelerated Reading] program. We gotta do these, we gotta do AR. Then

93

something else came along. There is somebody making a lot of money because our kids are not doing well.

We got a lot of artists out there that like to sing and dance, play, but we are a very technical society and artists, they are not going to get it done. We got to get people who come from other countries to take advantage of it, and they'll be the technocrats who take advantage of it with the brand new iPods and iPhones.

My high school back east, if you fail you're just done. Here, now we have to keep the statistics of here and other countries, in Germany and in Japan, they are doing so much better and here's where we place in the world. I mean, its fruit, but you know, it's fruit but it's not apples. And if you look at the society, the Japanese society, they are so structured. And the Japanese schools and society are so structured and the kids will go to school for 12 hours a day because that is how they are.

The biggest change I think is a shift. Like Ms. Carey, she told me that I was smart and that I needed to do this. Not that the school has to do a better job, I was going through the system and she told me I hold the key to learn, she told my mom he needs to do better because he is better than that. Accountability needs to go back to the student but in a way that is humane, and is adopted and that is making it so that the class size is manageable.

Narrative for Middle School Special Education Teacher Jerry

Jerry's background and educational experiences. I was born in Northern State City. And I was there through college until about '76. I grew up speaking English. I took a little French in high school and college and some Chinese. Mainly mom's side of the family was German so it was pretty much fairly traditional. We celebrated most of

94

the American holidays but the holidays were spent with mom's side of the family, which were all German so we grew up with German food. On Christmas holidays, the decorations were passed down from generation to generation. So some of the Christmas decorations I have now are close to a hundred years old.

I pretty much went to Catholic schools growing up, 'til about junior high. Then I switched to public schools both in Northern State City. I did two years of college at a private men's college in Northern State, and graduated from St. State University in Special Ed.

I loved school growing up. That was one thing our parents gave us the importance of learning and education. My teachers were very helpful as far as making sure I used what was given to me and to not waste away whatever talents I had such as learning the love of math and sciences. That was my first big love so I started out in college in pre-med and math. Unfortunately, high school wasn't strenuous enough to get me through that. But I always loved school. I started working at the Boys Clubs when I was in 8th, 9th grades, so I was working with kids.

Influential people in Jerry's life. Dad was college-educated. He had a couple undergraduate degrees and a couple graduate degrees. Mom went to college but the war came in 1942 and they met after the war. The first books I remember reading weren't children's books, for some reason I remember reading encyclopedias. And in fact a few years ago, I bought the entire set of the 1953 encyclopedias. They came out the year that I was born. So reading was very big, doing your best in school and I wasn't always necessarily getting the best grades. It was about doing the best you can and how much did you learn vs. how well did you always do on tests?

I was pretty much the goody two shoes kid on the block and so really, I never spent a lot of time with principals as far as not getting advice in junior high and high school. In high school, of course, you had your counselors, but most of the schools I went to were very well run. As far as I remember, in grade school, kids were there to learn. I know it's a different era but I always see the same thing in good schools today as when I was younger.

A lot of things my dad taught, I remember, in third grade he taught us the definition of an "intellectual." It was just someone who enjoyed using their mind, always enjoyed exploring things as far as different types of subject areas in education, whether it was just reading detective mysteries. The highlight of third grade was my first library card. So I'd spend Saturdays in the summers at the library. Even through junior high and high school, whether it was the school library or the public library, I loved to learn, I loved to learn new things. I try to remember everything I learned, it was always the tough part. But [I was] pretty much a self-starter. I went through a few different majors until I finally ended in education and then in special education.

Jerry's path to teaching and career. I had reached a point in my college career where I knew I sort of reached a plateau as far as math, sciences, and just working with the boys clubs of America from 8th grade and even in my college years when I was working in their camps. I also had a brother that was MI/MR Mildly Mentally Retarded as they called it back then. And I loved education, and I figured I had some great teachers, maybe I can become a great teacher too. I had some teachers along the way that said again, "Hey, we think you would make a great teacher, you should give it a try." So after my first couple years in the pre-med program, I started elementary ed. I did that for

about a year, it didn't quite feel right. And with a brother who receives special ed services and my father as brilliant as he was at that time, suffered from manic depression which they call bipolar today. So with those two experiences and events in my life, special ed just seemed like a great fit.

I started 1976 right out of college here in Southwest State A. It was in a small mining town, the only special ed they had was an accommodation school for kids that were mildly and severely handicapped. There were no resource programs at that time, because public law 49492 came about and so a lot of the kids that were labeled slow-learners were now learning-disabled. So right out of college, 14 of us student taught in Southwest State A city AB. Our last four months we student taught for about a year. Ten of us ended up settling here in Southwest State A and set up all their special ed programs from scratch. So I did that for the first four years, took a break for a year and ran an adult group home. And I got back into special ed in elementary. From there, I went to Southwest State B for a year. Then I came back to Southwest State A in '85 and got back working in south Southwest State City A in resource programs predominantly. From '85 to '92, I did 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades in south Southwest State City A. All their programs were self-contained so even though they were resource, they were the same group of kids all day in a full-size classroom because you had 30 special ed kids in a class. From there I came to Southwest School District in '92 and I have been here 21 years. I predominantly started out in resource toward my 4th/5th year. The teacher that ran our self-contained ED [Emotionally Disabled] program, needed a prep at the end of the day, and because no one was willing to take the class, the principal asked me if I was willing to take the class. I said "sure." I did that for a few years and she ended up going

to a new position out of the district. That following year, I was still in the program and helped out some of the teachers who didn't have preps. For whatever reasons, the teachers that were hired weren't quite ready and so after three months of school, the principal had asked me to take over and so for the next 15 years I did the self-contained ED program. That was last year, then this year, as good as I was, I needed a break again. That type of classroom can wear on you. So the 6th grade LFI [Learning For Independence] class was added to our school, and principals throughout the district were asked who was willing to add this program. We probably had the highest special education population in our district as far as 6th, 7th, and 8th and it seemed like the perfect fit. Since I started out with this type of class some 30 years ago, I added the program and I love it.

Jerry's teaching philosophy. I think the biggest thing I kept with me the whole time was something my parents passed on to me, the love of learning. If you can make learning fun for the kids, show them there is a need to learn, it will have them have a happier full life whether they're a ditch digger or the next president of the United States. Be the best that you can be at whatever you do. As you can tell I think just through the interview, humor is one of my biggest tools. I think if you can make somebody laugh, that's half the battle. Another big part of maybe my teaching philosophy is finding the hole in the kid's education and filling it. So if you can find out what they're willing to work for, you can get them going, make them more self-sufficient knowing that they can be more independent. Their education is just as important, their job just as it is my job.

Jerry's experience with accountability mandates. Well, going back to the beginning in '76, since we were basically setting up resource programs from scratch, and

were right out of college. The drive that my parents gave us, you just don't do the 9 to 5, 8 to 4 as a teacher. I always made sure lesson plans were in on time, paperwork was done, expectations I have of myself to some extent I passed on to the kids. I mean if I'm going to have to be here for 10, 12 hours, the least you can do is do is the best you can in the 4 to 6 hours that you are here.

I think I'm more organized just because of the longer time in education, seeing the need that if I'm not organized, the students of course won't be organized and everything gets higley pigley. I've tried not to be as hard on myself as I think I was in the beginning because you're just now starting out. You're overwhelmed, learning to be more open to going to other people for and using their expertise rather than depending on yourself. I remember a saying a while back, it's what you learn after you know it all that counts.

I've always been pretty much self-reflective, sometimes a bit OCD [obsessive-compulsive disorder] in my personality but I thought it's been a blessing because that'll definitely keep you organized. Learning from my mistakes over the years because once you stop learning yourself, you're not going to be able to pass that on to somebody else. That love of learning I had in grade school, high school and college, still follows me now, as far as wanting to continue to learn. If you can pass on that love for learning because not all the kids may have the skills that they need, they can self-educate themselves sooner or later.

I definitely improved my sense of humor. And that's a big plus for the type of kids that I work with because they think I am the funniest guy on the planet so that helps. At the same time, I don't stress over things as much as I might've in the past. Because

you learn to know your limits, you learn to push through your limits at times when it's needed.

Narrative for Middle School Non-Veteran Special Education Teacher Nicole

Nicole's background and educational experiences. I grew up in Southern State City A, a small town. My parents were married and they divorced when I was six. So I had a step-parent in my life. But for the most part I grew up with my mom and my grandmother helped raise me. I saw my dad mostly on the weekends only. And I have a brother and a sister and some step-siblings as well. I'm the oldest in my family of nine siblings.

I speak English. I can read and write Spanish. As far as my parents, they were pretty open-minded so even though we were, I guess, socio-economically disadvantaged they tried to give me as many opportunities as possible just to experience the world and to not be really structured in to one culture or tradition. Not that we traveled or anything – it's just what they made me watch on television, so I have a pretty well-balanced background – and also the college that I went to really opened my eyes to a lot of different cultures, cultural experiences and traditions. I'm just very open-minded.

In my undergrad, I went to a private single sex college, and I just finished my masters at Southwestern State University B.

Influential people in Nicole's life. I will say that in high school I was just expected to succeed. So my parents really didn't have that much of a role in my life. The person who really had a role in my life was my grandmother. She's illiterate, so looking at that I knew that I wanted to do a little bit more with my life and I knew I didn't want to be stuck in Southern State the rest of my life. So I was more influenced by my

college educators, because for the most part they were all female, African American, and they were affluent teachers. They spoke articulately and they did things I had never seen any other African American woman do. I knew that I wanted to be that type of woman and for people to see past my skin color, and just notice my intelligence. Because when they spoke, you forgot about color barriers, you forgot about culture, you forgot about all that stuff and you just listen to what they had to say. Even though I went to a historically Black college, we were told about everything in the world. We were told that you had to do this or be this because you are going to be looked at harder by everyone else simply because of race and I knew that in order for me to be successful in life overall I had to break the barriers no matter what. So I did get a little more influence from my college professors.

I was just expected to succeed. Neither one of my parents went to college. They had high school. My mom had me when she was 16 years old; my dad was 17, so they were really young parents. I was just expected to not make the same mistakes they made and just do better than they have ever done. So, my grandmother like I said, she had the most influence on me just because of her condition or situation or whatever. I just knew I didn't want to be that dependent on trusting anyone so I knew I had to do it. Even because my grandmother was illiterate, she always read to us. She'd pretend to read and it was the most entertaining thing. She could write her name but that's as far as it went and I knew I needed to do something more. I just wanted to help her.

I feel like I was very driven. When I look back now, I feel like I was driven more because of my parents' expectations were more than the one that I had myself though. Because I was expected to succeed, I would be punished if I made a low grade. I knew

that was just a given. And school just came easy for me so I don't feel I pushed myself as hard as I should have by the time I came to undergraduate school. I kind of became lax on everything so I could've done a lot more things than what I've done.

        Nicole's path to teaching and career. I never wanted to become a teacher. That was the last thing on Earth that I ever wanted to do with my life. My grandmother always told me, "You're gonna be a teacher, you're gonna be a teacher," and I was like, "No, I'm not. I'm not ever going to be a teacher." I think because she told me that I got a bit rebellious. My entire plan was to become a doctor because that's what my parents told me, "You're gonna become a doctor or a lawyer." So that's what I thought I should do and not doing that I felt like a failure for a very long time. And then I finally realized that I'm trying to live somebody else's dream and not my own. I became a real estate agent. I'm from Southeast State so, before I moved to Southwest State A, I became a real estate agent. I still am a licensed real estate agent in Southeast State. I found out I want to help people in a different type of way, and even though I was helping people in real estate accomplish their dreams, it was when they were older and they understood it. I wanted to go back to help people when they're younger and they don't understand and they need that guidance. Because no one really guided me to anything and I know a lot of children don't have a lot of proper role models or guidance. And that's how I came into teaching. I was a substitute teacher for a little while. At first I was like, "I don't know about all this." I ended up subbing in a special education classroom and I fell in love with it. The teacher just had her students well-behaved. They wanted to learn, they were really respectful. I was like, "If this is what it's like then yes, I could do this." And

102

I realized it's the teacher who has made the most impact. I was like I want to make that kind of difference in someone's life so that's kind of how I came into all of this.

I have only been teaching since 2010. I started in Southwest State so this is all the experience that I have. I started with Southwest School District. I will always thank them because I don't know what they saw, but they saw something in me that they wanted to give me a chance. So I'll always be grateful to them because I was very inexperienced and I didn't know much with no educational background. My major was in psychology and pre-medicine so for them to look past the lack of experience and to see the determination and dedication that I would give to the field — I just have to be thankful. I taught at School Four in my first year then I was unvoluntarily transferred to School One my second year because my special education numbers went down and they were high over here. Ever since I have been here, I say it is a blessing and I really enjoy it.

Nicole's teaching philosophy. Just to stop talking and start listening. Start letting the kids just learn and to learn with them— to not be afraid to take a risk, every once in a while you can get up off your seat. I follow Ron Clark [founder of Ron Clark Academy and award-winning teacher] a lot, he's one of my greatest teacher heroes. I just love what he does with his school. I feel like some of what he does may not be public school friendly, like the underlying message that school does not have to be so strict, students don't have to stay at their desk, and you don't have to talk all the time. Find a way to include multiple intelligences because all students can learn and they will learn if they are given the proper information in the right way. So that is my philosophy to just allow students to learn and not be afraid to take a risk.

Nicole's experience with accountability mandates. I was kind of brought into accountability as a teacher. I had no clue what teaching was really like. All I knew was that they [teachers] were off a lot, because I had children and I was like, "Why are they always off? What are they doing?" And then when I became entity and I was like, "Ahh, now I see the paperwork that you have to do, the dedication that you have to make, the education that you have to stay in." You are pretty much thrown into being accountable and really you can make excuses all you want but at the end of the day, it's really just you and what you decide to do.

When I first started teaching, I realized after like two hours of it, "I think I bit off more than I can chew is what I first thought." And then I had so many people that were willing to help, then it wasn't overbearing. When I had to switch schools, it was traumatic I guess. Because when you stay where you are, you get in a comfort zone. I had to meet new people and start all over.   So just everything I've endured I feel in my first three years, I've gone from, "I love this, this is so great," to "I don't know if this is for me, and how long am I going to stay." Then to "I love this and it's just me," so just the overall experience, it's time management and being organized and collaborating with other teachers who have taken that burden off of you.

In real estate, I had to go out there and ask other agents, "What are you doing to get clients?" But other agents weren't willing to tell what they did to get clients and I never understood that really because there are enough people willing to buy a house and if everyone was willing to work together — but in real estate everyone was so competitive. In a way, you see it in schools too where people don't share. To me I don't care what you take that I know because I know how I'm going to do it and our ways are

not the same so I've always been collaborative. I've always wanted to learn, and I love

going to school. Learning new things — it intrigues me. I'm interested in getting more

information and I've always been like that and I feel like the more you know, the more

you grow so I've always wanted to grow and do more.

Before I was like, "I don't have time, I just don't have time." Who is going to

help me with this? When are you going to give me a day out of the classroom? When

are you going to do this? When are you going to do that? How am I going to get to this

done? Now it is more trying to problem-solve instead of making more problems or

making excuses for problems that I had.

Narrative for 5th Grade Teacher Velma

Velma's background and educational experiences. I was born at Southern

State City B. I spent some of my childhood in Northern State City A, lived with the

Lakota and then moved to Southwest State City A. So I've lived here for 32 years but I

spent all of my summers in my hometown, where my family comes from, which is

Midwest City A. I speak English. I am a German from Russia and my parents speak

German. That is their native language. They're ELL English speakers and so my culture

and traditions are German traditions, and we're Germans from Russian but we're not

Russian, we were just Germans living in the Ukraine area who immigrated then to the

United States. Most of my education was here in Southwest State City A, partly in

Northern State City A for several years.

Influential people in Nicole's life. My teachers were a huge part of my

education. They were very influential and I always emulated my teachers so much that I

would play school at home and I used to do exactly what my teachers would do, so every

year my skills would advance as my teachers would get older. I was always very close, in fact, often times my teachers were also my personal friends or friends of the family. Especially living in a small community, my parents coming from Midwest State, they were very close with their teachers and it was always understood at home that we would get along with our teachers. The teacher was always right. In my family, it was God, and then teacher. And that's how it always was.

We actually were personal friends with our principal. He was a friend of the family and my parents always knew the administrators, just as a supporter of the community and they would show up at the events. Even today with my own children, I am close with their administrators not because we were in the office, or because that my children were in the office — that's just something we want to know, who is running the school and we want to support them. That's where we come from, is a supportive role.

Oh my parents were huge. Both my parents not speaking any English, learning English in school, from teachers who did not speak German — so learning was always very difficult for them. But they always told us we could do anything, we could be anything and college was never even an option. My father was one of – there were 13 in his family – and he was one of four that actually graduated, went to high school and graduated from high school, but they're all literate. They just didn't have that opportunity. My mother's family, all college graduates. She's the oldest of ten and all ten went to college and had finished school. So definitely education is paramount.

I was the third child and school didn't come easy to me compared to my older brother and sister. But I always worked really, really hard. I would study for as long as it took. I always made sure that I had everything turned in. I was kind of shy so I wouldn't

necessarily speak up. But having close relationships with my teachers always helped and even through high school. I dog sat for my high school teachers— just really, really close. So I would say I pushed that and then in college, because of circumstances being the third child in college, I was the one who had to take out student loans. I pushed through that. It took me 12 years to pay off my student loans but I did and it was very important.

Velma's path to teaching and career. Well, I thought I would be pursuing something else. I wasn't quite sure what, I thought maybe marine biology, but you have to really like science. I thought maybe because I had been in the hospital for a long time, over my freshman year, my sophomore year, and I thought maybe medicine. I was just kind of dabbling and my mother called me at school one day when I was in college and said, "I don't know what you're doing down there, but you need to go tell them that you're supposed to be a teacher." Then she said, "Velma, you always used to play school, you'd always just copy your teachers, you would round up the neighborhood kids and play school. I was always buying you little books that you could play school with and you were bringing things home from school, you need to be a teacher." "You know what mom, you're right," and I declared my major and from there that's it and I never thought back or regretted it; it's been 17 years.

Velma's teaching philosophy. I believe that all children can learn and I believe that they all learn differently so trying to get to their level is very important. I wished that I practiced more of the multiple intelligences or something like that because I do believe some kids really learn better with movement and action and other kids need to hear it— these kids need to see it so I try to incorporate as many of those things as

107

possible. I believe in structure and routines and for most of my students they really enjoy coming to school because it's the same thing every day. I greet them every morning and this morning, I was so frazzled and the kids were coming up to me, "Good morning Mrs. Velma," because I make them look me in the eye. And I didn't, and that totally threw them off so I believe in structure and routine. I believe in firmness yet kindness. I really try to connect with the students and I believe that children should be read to everyday so I do. And all of my students are meeting or exceeding in reading so that is one thing I don't back down. I believe we need to challenge each other and so we have structures to do that. "I would like to add to somebody's idea" or "I would like to challenge…" and we're getting pretty good at that. I believe children need to have an out when they're not able to come up with an answer so we have more structures for that. "I just don't have an answer," and they have questions they can ask. I believe that kids need action and movement, and while personally I don't like the fact that my PE is first thing in the morning. I believe for kids it's a good thing. They come in after being in PE for thirty minutes and they're ready to go. So if we've been sitting for a few minutes I believe it's important to get them up, get them moving, even if it's just to take a trip to the restroom but I try and do things like that and that is my philosophy (laughs).

Velma's experience with accountability mandates. Years ago we had criterion-referenced tests that we would administer and that just kind of was sent off somewhere and we would get results back and then as a team and we were to talk about it, "What do we need to do differently?" So it was more to change our practice. The data didn't necessarily follow the kids, I don't think the next year's teacher looked back to see how they did in 4th grade. So it was very much just maybe a checklist almost, just a "Yes, I

covered that" so kids should be able to do it. Another piece of accountability was, these

are the standards, when did you teach them and you only had to put the month. So, "I

sort of talked about this in April," I could write that, and that was fine. Then the state

mandated test came. Originally it was just third and fifth grade, so we were right in the

middle so there wasn't really any accountability directly in 4th grade. Then it went all the

grades and that's when I really started feeling for the first time that accountability and

pretty much at that point we were just looking at, "Oh, that teacher had a higher score

than me." (laughs) "Oh, that teacher had a lower score, uh huh." (laughs). It was more,

"you know what, you didn't do a good job at estimation, so next year, hit estimation."

"Ok, no problem."

Now, we started tracking student progress. As a teacher leader working with data,

I know that often we would sit in team meetings, we would sit in school-wide meetings,

we would sit in teacher meetings, individual one on one, "Let's look at the data. Let's

look at what we're seeing." Definitely then the accountability became more prevalent.

Especially obviously with the release of scores on websites, news media talking about it,

and parents having access to the data. Before I think it was just, "Okay, that's nice to

know." We would send the reports home, and the parents of kids who did very well

would see those graphs. And the parents whose kids didn't do so well, we didn't give

them anything to make it better. We didn't inform them about it.

Every year our Annual Measurable Objective our AMOs goes up and now we're

striving to meet that, "What do we need to do to cover that gap?" When it already feels

like we're teaching as hard as we can and we're definitely not in the district with a

majority of the students above grade level. So there was always that pressure of, "Great,

but you gotta do better." So what are we going to do to get better? Prior to that, unless I had a principal that was checking my lesson plans or in my classroom and we're actually sitting down with data, it really didn't mean as much. I could do all of my little fun projects, I could be out doing the things that I want to do, and as long as I said I was hitting the standard, it was ok.

I am a much better teacher. I really believe that because I have a professional, I have a moral obligation to make sure that these kids learn what they're supposed to learn this year— so that the following year, that teacher isn't playing catch up and doing a lot of remedial work. So I believe that the accountability measures that have been passed have been good ones. I believe that it does put us under a lot of pressure. We have this much time to teach this much and that does get very stressful. But I believe that the people in our district, the school, really strive to help and if I need things, the resources are there. I think because of the accountability, more money is put into the system and I am not hurting for resources. I have things available to me that were never available before.

But I believe that the accountability measures helped and are still helping to weed out those people that are maybe not in this for the right reason. They see this as a stepping stone to something else. They're not in their classrooms working with kids because they see that as a moral calling or a personal calling. I have been profoundly touched by accountability and I am very glad for it.

Now we have very specific pacing guides that are organized per quarter— these are the things that we need to teach. I was very much on my own. Teacher collaboration

was non-existent. It was, "Don't forget you need to turn in your field trip money. Don't forget you need to collect the lollipop money." That was teacher collaboration.

The books are resources, but our standards are the curriculum. We've un-wrapped the standard and we deconstructed the standard. "Now what can I use to bring that to the students? Oh I have this resource, I can use this." Before I used to—a teacher told me, "Whenever you make a copy, make two because you can just use the next copy next year. So you can just have all your copies made." We can't do that now because we're monitoring student progress. If the kids already know it, we're not even going in-depth, they're already there— we go on to the next level. I can't just be ready for next year, it has to change. It has to be based on the kids that I have currently, what they know and are able to do. So it definitely has changed.

My lesson plans just had to contain the elements of essential learning, Madeline Hunter's model. When I was observed—just that, that was happening, but as far as, were the kids learning? I wasn't accountable to that. If kids didn't progress, there was never any kind of dialogue. If kids for instance started in special education and were still receiving the same special education services, if there was no growth, it didn't seem like I was accountable to that.

Now I feel like accountability is the reason why we have completely reshaped our school culture. And the reason for that is because of all those reporting processes, really ensuring that every student learns, and has the year's growth. We have data notebooks, we have data sheets, I keep a Google assessment card on every single student and I can at anytime, anywhere access their data and know exactly where they are compared to themselves. I have parent teacher conferences next week. The bulk of my time will be

spent on student progress, on what they've been learning and what's coming up, what they will need to learn—so very much more intense look at making sure that I am doing what I need to do as teacher.

Narrative for 2nd Grade Teacher Alice

      Alice's background and educational experiences. I am from Northeast State City B. I speak English. I grew up in a small town in Northeast State, farming community. I went to school with the same kids from first grade all the way through high school. I think we had about 150 kids graduating. I like to say that I had the privilege of living the "Leave it to Beaver" life. My mom stayed home, my dad farmed. When we got home from school my mom was always there, cooked, it was nice. I was about 12 when my parents separated, but I was raised in a Christian home. I went to church all my life. Traditions – we always were together for holidays with grandparents and my cousins. For every holiday, we went to my grandmother's. I'm Dutch and Swedish. So we do have a lot of the Swedish traditions as far as the holidays go. And like most families, it all revolves around a nice wonderful home-cooked meal (laughs). When everybody gets together, it was good. We played outside. We didn't have the worries of big city life, because we're a very small community.

      I went to an elementary school in Northeast State University B, where I grew up. And there were about five elementary schools in a 20-mile radius and one high school. Then I went to college at a private Catholic university in Northeast State City C, which was 45 minutes away. And I got an associate's in allied health sciences. And so I was in the medical field for 20 years. And I've always wanted to be a teacher.

My husband was in the military and was stationed in Southwest State City ABC. And I went to North Southwestern University, finished up some lower divisions for my undergrad, and then for both of my master's degrees as well.

Influential people in Alice's life. I remember every single elementary school teacher. Mrs. Hancock, my second grade teacher, is why I became a teacher. Because she was so nice to me that I remember that's when I learned how to read because I didn't read in first grade at all. It was always a struggle. And I think they just played an important role. They were kind and loving and it was in a small community so you always saw them out and about. There's only a few of them I remember from high school. Mrs. Frasier was my English teacher and Ms. Clinton, I remember her because my father had her, and my older brother had her and they were naughty— and I was not (laughs). And a couple of them were relatives so of course I remembered them because I always had to be really good. But I just remember going to school and doing what I was told and doing what was expected and I never had any problems. I never got in trouble. I was always afraid to get in trouble. And I still see Mrs. Hancock when I go home in the summer because the teachers meet for lunch at a restaurant my cousin owns and so when I go home, I go to make sure I see her because she's amazing. And I always say I get all the talkers and I teach second grade because of her. Because when I was in second grade, I liked to talk a lot. I got my mouth taped shut (laughs). I remember getting sent out into the hallway one time because I wouldn't stop talking, but other than that, I pretty much did what I was supposed to do. And I did have one college teacher that really, really inspired me. She saw the love and the enthusiasm that I had for teaching because it was

something that I really wanted to do for a long time. And she really encouraged me and helped me with that.

My parents' expectation was that you go to school and you do your best and you behave yourself and the teachers were very highly regarded and if teachers said it was so, then it was absolutely so. And I liked school, but it wasn't easy for me. I struggled. I know I was always in the low reading group but I went to everything and I made sure I got there. When I was in high school, I got up and got there on my own. And I went to college, which was really not expected of me. So I feel like it was something that I really wanted and I paid for it myself. I think I value it a bit more, especially when I went back to school to get my teaching certificate I was just so excited. Anything less than straight A's was not optional. So I think I worked really hard.

Alice's path to teaching and career. I always wanted to be a teacher. At the end of school year with all the unused workbooks and stuff like that, I would play school all summer long. And my poor little brother, he had school all the time (laughs). I just loved it. But I spent twenty years in the medical field. I just wanted to be a teacher and I would support my kids. I think having my children made me a better teacher than if I started right out of college, just because I knew the struggles that my own child had had, and I didn't want any other child to experience that in public education. But I was having a hard time at work [medical services for people] with the justification of the haves and have nots. There's a great deal of politics in medicine and what did I do? I went from one to the other but I feel like I went from the end of life because I worked cardiology the last 12 years, to the beginning of life. I always tell my husband, "Just consider it an investment in the future of America."

114

I love to read, I love, love, love the excitement that I saw in my own children when we would read a story or talk about things or have experiences together. I see that in my students and it's amazing, especially when you do real life things like watching insects. For their enrichment, they're building geometric castles right now and they're so excited. Anything not paper and pencil is really thrilling for them and I try really hard but there is a necessity for them to show what they know. I just always wanted to be a teacher and I finally got my dreams.

I started out in Southwest State City ABC, working with high schools, special needs reading and writing. I was hired as a result of a, I would say a potential lawsuit. A mother who worked for an attorney and her son's IEP was not being met and she told the school, "You're not meeting his IEP and I'm going to sue you if you don't." My instructor had a tutoring business, and the school district and mother approached her. My instructor said, "I've got the perfect teacher for you" so I started out with just him working on reading and writing. He really needed an alternative education. He was a Marilyn Manson look alike and he had been sexually abused by someone in a trusted position and so it was really hard for him to trust and really hard for him to fit into the social life at high school. And I ended up with eight students and I did their reading and writing for them as part of an alternative education. So that was interesting. I did that for two years I didn't have my teaching certificate yet I guess it was just like they hired me and paid me to do this one job. And then I came to Southwest State City A and I was in second grade at School Five. Then I went to School Six and was in second grade there. Then I came here the year it opened and I did a first and second grade loop. The first year we were here, I had about 35 first graders, and I have through teaching continued my

115

education. I've done the Spalding program, I have two masters degrees, I have a certificate in ESL, Reading Specialist, Gifted, Educational Leadership—there's one more, oh Early Childhood. So I do the gifted cluster here and since the language leveling law, I was chosen to be the gifted teacher for the 2nd grade cluster. I have Proficient students [ELL level]. I have worked for the Southwest School District since 1999.

Alice's teaching philosophy. Every child deserves the opportunity to have my best. The best that I can provide them my title is teacher but I feel I am more of a facilitator. I put the things out there and they do what they can with it, then when you see, what their next step is, fostering that need. So there's a lot of individual small group instruction but I just think every child deserves the opportunity to learn, they're all unique individuals and it's my job to facilitate their learning.

Alice's experience with accountability mandates. When I first came to Southwest School District, we had a list of skills by grade level that you were supposed to, that you were expected to cover from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. And it was something that our Teacher On Assignment gave me when I first came to this school, and I would just keep that in the filing cabinet. I made a copy at the beginning of every year, I'm not sure if it was something that we do turn in. I remember that and writing the dates of what was on there. And when the district first started 6 Traits [a writing model for instruction and assessment], we scored those together. I think at the beginning, it was just the state mandated test. We took it, we went over the scores like at a retreat prior to the next year and I remember 1st grade not taking it. I remember not having data of the first graders coming in to look at to see what skills they needed.

I feel like our principal was, and our vice-principal at the time were very – oh, how do I want to say it – ahead of their time, as far as having us look at where our students were and where they needed to be. I know that I did assessments but it wasn't like looking at state standards. It was just you started at the beginning of the book and work to the end of the book, you know (laughs), and supplemented. I used a lot of CGI [Cognitively Guided Instruction] and our math curriculum was Addison-Wesley [a math program]. So this week, Monday, Wednesday, Friday I did Addison Wesley, and Tuesday, Thursday I did CGI. Then the next week then I would swap. But the CGI story problems [word problems], were always about whatever the content was. The district put out a study guide, like these are the things that are on the Stan 10 [Stanford 10]—this is what you should cover. I remember looking at that and I don't think there was the collaboration that we have now. I think the Stan 10, they just look at your scores. I think that was the biggest accountability. Prior to PLC, I know that when we came to this school we would get together and look at data, we monitored our Morrison-McCalls [spelling], and we did DRAs [Developmental Reading Assessment]. And we did have after school tutoring called Helping Hands. We didn't get paid for that. We just did it.

As PLC came to be developed in our district it helped us to work more collaboratively. I think before it was, room A, B, and C might've taught from the textbook or might have taught that same lesson but maybe not in the same order. And if they didn't like it, "Oh, I don't like Vertex graphs, I'm not going to teach it. I think it is expected that every child get that equitable education. We don't all teach it the same exact way in each classroom but we have a variety of needs presented to us in our different classrooms—but just knowing that content, that same exact content is made

117

available. As a grade level, we look at every child in second grade and look at those children that have the most need and we all share in that intervention. That never happened 15 years ago. You just said, "Oh, I have this kid that needs help." Now, "Where is the hard data? What are you using to guide you in that decision or guide you in what you're going to provide for that child?" Sometimes I feel like I've got a lot of individual education going on.

The Morrison-McCall and part of our Spalding program, we test that every month and monitor. I know that for sure is the same. And then the Stanford test, the standardized test is the same. I think now we have the Galileo [a formative assessment given locally every quarter] in our class, we still do the DREs but that came about since my first couple years teaching. We go over that as a team. We have our state standardized test on the web, word fluency, but I don't think we timed them. But I think just really analyzing errors and successes, like "This kid really has this, what am I going to do next? This handful of kids are missing it, we need to pull a lunch bunch." For me, it's just really looking at every aspect of the child and not just the Stanford test that they take at the end of the year.

But I do notice that you know, it's standardized, it's based on, it's a norm-referenced test and I have kept every year all the results of any assessment we have ever taken. I look at my Stan 9 [before it was Stanford 10] results and the bell curve from 1999 to my Stan 10 bell curve in 2012, that's last year, and it's still a bell curve. So you still have that majority in the middle and some that fall below and some that exceed. So I don't know if testing, testing, testing has made all that much difference. But I do understand that not everybody does what they're supposed to do when they're supposed

118

to do it and that's why they've really upped the anty so to speak as far as accountability. So I mean I kind of understand that but sometimes it's a pain because I know one year I said, "Ok, here's the school calendar, here's all the assessments that we're required to do." And it's sad when your assessment days outnumber your teaching days. But it is what it is, so you have to make the best of it.

Narrative for 2nd Grade Teacher Betty

Betty's background and educational experiences. I was born in Northeast State E. But from the age of three, I grew up in Southwest State City A. I speak English. My culture and traditions—growing up were with the Catholic faith and I'm Polish. My mom's back east so we would always go home to visit in Northeast State D. We would always celebrate the Catholic holidays. Now as a parent and no longer Catholic, our traditions are still Christian. But then we have other family traditions that we like to do like different dinners on Sundays, and special things on the holidays.

First through third grade, I was at Public Elementary School. I got to third grade, and I couldn't read one word and they still passed me to fourth because I was quiet and shy they just said, "Go on." So my mom pulled me and put me in a Christian school so I did third grade again and stayed there 'til 8th grade. I went to high school, community college, then the University of Southwestern State, then North Southwestern University.

Influential people in Betty's life. I would have to say my teachers did not have a very good role for me because I was the shy and quiet student who just stared out the window. I never raised my hand and asked for anything so I passed all the way through. So I really didn't learn how to read 'til high school.

Once high school hit and I couldn't read and write at all, and my counselor said my role should be, be married and having children—after that, I graduated and I went back into remedial classes in college and learned to read and write. Now I have a master's degree and four endorsements. So I was a self-taught person I would say.

Betty's path to teaching and career. I decided to be a teacher after I learned to read in junior college, especially because I wanted to help kids with learning disabilities to read and be successful. You hear it all the time, "If kids can't read by third or fourth grade, then that's it." And it can be changed after I got my bachelor's degree; my son was born with health problems and he's deaf, so I wanted to get my master's in deaf ed. But we moved back to Southwest State City A from Southwest State City AB so I got my masters in special ed instead.

This is my tenth year of teaching. My first year I was a special ed cross cat [cross categorical special education teacher who is certified to teach all disabilities] teacher so I taught from kindergarten to 6th grade the first year. The second year was 4th through 6th but I concentrated most on 6th. That was very rewarding because the 6th grade boys who were a complete behavior problem in their classroom would come to me and they started to learn to read. They learned how to write a basic paragraph and they were getting success from it. That was incredibly rewarding. Unfortunately they kept downsizing special ed so I moved to kindergarten. After that, I started teaching second grade for seven years and I always have had the low language [English proficiency] class.

Betty's teaching philosophy. To differentiate every standard, try to hit every learning style, make every student important, and grow. Don't just focus on the high

120

performing students and don't just focus on the low performing students. Hit every student the best you can.

Betty's experience with accountability mandates. Well, in special education you're very accountable because of the IEPs and you're differentiating with all their goals. With my training, I've always taken good records and notes. Our school is 100 percent on data, so every time we have common assessments, we're always looking at data for accountability for these kids.

I feel the accountability has changed because of different administrators. The first administrator was you know, more lax on accountability and our new one is fabulous and is on top off it—so this principal is awesome. She makes everybody accountable for everything. She's well organized. So that would be the switch.

Some similarities from before NCLB are the pacing guide from district and due dates of items that you need to have for accountability – such as DRA, the web version of the state mandated test, and your Galileo scores. When I first started, reading notes were turned in. Now it is implied that you do it but you don't have to turn it in. But I still turn them in, so there are different expectations per administrator.

It is a more intense workload. I mean it helps, we were a failing school and now we're the only A school in the district. So obviously the higher the expectation— accountability is striving so now we're an A school.

Participant Profile Summary

This section provided participant profiles of all six teachers (Frank, Jerry, Nicole, Velma, Alice and Betty). A first-level analysis of interview data created the broad categories for each participant: background and educational experiences, significant roles

in participant's life, teaching path and career, teaching philosophy, and experiences with accountability mandates. Second and third-level analyses are presented in the next section.

Thematic Analysis and Interpretation of Individual Participant Interviews

As recommended by Seidman (2006), the next step in analysis is to search "for connecting threads and patterns among the excerpts within those categories and for connections between the various categories that might be called themes" (p. 125). The second-level analysis of background and educational experiences, influential people in participant's life, teaching path and career, teaching philosophy, and experiences with accountability mandates surfaced themes for interpretation. Interpretations were made from what Rossman and Rallis (2003) refer to as story. The aim is "to tell a richly detailed story that represents these contexts, and connects participants, events, experiences, or discourses to larger issues, theories, or phenomena" (p. 289).

The process of deriving interpretations began with identifying the data source of the categories in Seidman's (2006) three-part interview protocol. Linking the categories and themes to the conceptual framework and applicable literature in chapter 2 aided in the third-level analysis, making possible the interpretation of data. Included in this analysis are participant quotes to support the themes that emerged.

According to Seidman (2006), "Researchers must ask themselves what they have learned from doing the interviews, studying the transcripts, marking and labeling them, crafting profiles, and organizing categories of excerpts" (p. 128). Seidman recommends the following questions to guide this process:

1) What connective threads are there among the experiences of the participants they interviewed?

2) How do they understand and explain these connections?

3) What do they understand now that they did not understand before they began the interviews?

4) What surprises have there been?

5) What confirmations of previous instincts?

6) How have their interviews been consistent with the literature?

7) How inconsistent?

8) How have they gone beyond? (pp. 128, 129).

Participants' Background and Educational Experiences

The first category "background and educational experiences" emerged from the first part of Seidman's three-part interview protocol. This series of questions in the first part were designed to elicit a "focused life history," placing participants' experience in context, including their professional history. One prevalent theme was evident in this category. All participants but one originally came from areas outside of the U.S. Southwest region where the study is conducted. They all speak English as their primary language, but three have some speaking, reading, and writing ability in German, Spanish, French, or Chinese. Furthermore, their culture and traditions all vary. All but one participant have elementary school experiences again, outside of the U.S. southwest region. This theme is labeled *not native to the Southwest*; it suggests that the teachers, at least initially, had limited experience with the types of linguistic and cultural diversity found among the students and communities served by Southwest urban schools.

Influential People in Each Participant's Life

The second category, "influential people in (each) participant's life" also emerged from the first part of Seidman's three-part interview protocol. Two themes surfaced during this analysis process. Although the participants identified different individuals playing key roles in their lives, it was clear that most of them had influential teachers whom they tried to emulate in their own teaching practice. Five of the six participants made statements that indicate this recurring theme, *emulating past influential teachers.* In reference to past teachers, Frank stated, "I really hope that one day, somebody will feel about me how I felt about Ms. Carey and Mr. Johnson." Jerry also stated, "I figured I had some great teachers, maybe I can become a great teacher too." Nicole shared, "So I was more influenced by my college educators...I knew that I wanted to be that type of woman and I want people to see past my skin color and just notice my intelligence." Velma stated, "My teachers were a huge part of my education. They were very influential and I always emulated my teachers so much that I would play school at home and I used to do exactly what my teachers would do…" Further, Alice stated, "Mrs. Hancock, my second grade teacher is why I became a teacher."

Conversely, however, Betty did not credit any teachers in her educational experience. Instead she claimed they did her a disservice by not addressing her dyslexia and passing her from grade to grade because she was the shy student in class with no behavior issues. In fact, she stated, "I decided to be a teacher after I learned to read in junior college especially because I wanted to help kids with learning disabilities…" This theme aligns with the conceptual framework through individual teacher enacted practices that may fall within or outside accountability policies.

An interpretation of this theme is that participants' experience with their own teachers – both positive and negative – impacted their learning experience in profound ways. In five of the six cases, this impact was so great that they tried to emulate their former teachers in their practice. Betty's experience, however, shows that negative experiences with former teachers can also lead educators to try to find a better way of teaching with their own students.

The second theme in the category, "influential people in participant's life" is labeled *I worked really hard, school was not easy*, indicating how the participants themselves played a role in their own education. All but one claimed school was not easy or that s/he was an average student. Frank stated, "I was a fairly average student, I was a C plus student in school…For me, I played a huge role in my own life, I absolutely refuse to see a ceiling on me." Jerry shared, "I try to remember everything I learned it was always the tough part. But [I was] pretty much a self-starter." Alice stated, "And I liked school, it wasn't easy for me. I struggled…So I think I worked really hard." Velma also shared, "…school didn't come easy to me compared to my older brother and sister. But I always worked really, really hard. I would study for as long as it took." There is also no denying that Nicole had a tough road: "I graduated (high school) and I went back into remedial classes in college and learned to read and write.." Uniquely, Nicole was the only individual who claimed, "…school just came easy for me so I don't feel I pushed myself as hard as I should have by the time I came to undergraduate (school) …"

The recurring theme *school was not easy, I worked hard* was coupled with the participants' love for learning. This theme does not directly align to teacher accountability or practices in the conceptual framework; however there may be some

125

implications for students so teachers can gauge how to influence students to work hard when school is not easy. This theme suggests that with hard work, students may play a major role in their own education by cultivating a love for learning, no matter their circumstance, just as the participants have clearly demonstrated.

Participants' Teaching Path and Career

The third category, "teaching path and career," also comes from the first part of Seidman's three-part interview protocol with the recurring theme of *beginning teacher in special education.* Four of the six participants started their teaching careers in special education. Jerry shared that he helped "start a program from scratch" and found that he loved special education. After Nicole realized she no longer wanted to be a real estate agent, she wanted to help others in more helpless circumstances. So she chose education and started as a substitute teacher in a special education classroom. Alice also shared in her interview that she started teaching as a substitute teacher for a special education student. Lastly, Betty's first year was as a "special ed cross cat teacher…"

An interpretation is there was/is a need for special education teachers in urban schools with linguistically and culturally diverse students. Also, after starting their teaching careers working in special education where with the neediest students in neediest communities are placed, this suggests that they strive to make a difference in their practice. This also means that the data participants shared may be influenced by their experiences as special education teachers; while this dissertation did not explore this possibility, it is an area for potential future research.

Participants' Teaching Philosophy

126

The fourth category, "teaching philosophy," emerged from the third part of Seidman's three-part interview protocol. This series of questions focused on eliciting reflections on meaning—how accountability experiences relate to teaching philosophy and professional practice. The prevalent recurring theme from participants' teaching philosophies is labeled, *teach for different learners*. This theme was prominent since each teacher indicated that students are different and therefore, learn differently. Frank stated he finds out, "…how does the kid learn?" Then he personalizes for the student. Jerry also shared he "find[s] the hole in the kid's education" then fills it. Nicole claimed "…all students can learn and they will learn if they are given the proper information in the right way." In Velma's list of beliefs and practices, she stated, "All children can learn, they learn differently, get to their level, multiple intelligences…" Alice also shared there is "…a lot of individual, small group instruction, but I just think every child deserves the opportunity to learn, they're all unique individuals and it's my job to facilitate their learning." Lastly, Betty said, "Differentiate every standard, hit every learning style, make every student important…"

This theme relates to the conceptual framework through individual teacher enacted practices that may fall within or outside national, state, or local accountability policies. These philosophies are meant to represent the core beliefs and values of their teaching profession, therefore it is related to their practices. The Gates Foundation survey of over 40,000 teachers in the United States in 2010 made two conclusions on differentiated instruction. The first is:

- Use multiple measures to evaluate student performance "including formative, ongoing assessments during class, performance on class assignments and class

127

participation…to innovate and differentiate instruction in a variety of ways" (p. 27);

- Provide learning experiences that will "provide students with the skills they need for today's world. Differentiation plays a key role in this, as does the use of technology and non-textbook classroom materials" (p. 35);

Because students are unique and have different learning styles as the participants have stated, and once teachers discover students' learning styles, then there is an implication that different teaching strategies (differentiated instruction) will require different but complementary assessments (informal and formative). Furthermore, the resources needed to support differentiated instruction extend beyond textbooks, paper, basic writing utensils, and books, which lead to the second conclusion of the Gates Foundation survey. Teacher support and resources are needed for teachers to differentiate instruction.

Participants' Experiences with Accountability Mandates

The last category, "experiences with accountability," emerged from the second part of Seidman's three-part interview protocol. These questions focused on the details of experience—concrete details of participants' experience of accountability mandates in time. Interestingly, five prevalent themes surfaced from this category.

The first prevalent theme is labeled *same tests/assessments, used differently*. Names of different formative and summative assessments were mentioned and it was clear that the same assessments are being used from early in their careers to the present, but that the assessments used have changed. For example, Velma shared that, "parents of kids who did very well would see those graphs and the parents whose kids didn't do so

128

well, we didn't give them anything to make it better, we didn't inform them about it."

Since accountability is measured through test scores, the state and local agencies publish

test scores to share with the public. She also shared, "Then [state mandated test] went all

grades and that's when I really started feeling for the first time that accountability…."

This change in tests/assessments, she claimed, reshaped the school culture. Alice stated,

as teachers, they are "really analyzing errors and successes" on Galileo, the state-

mandated test, fluency (reading), and timed word fluency (reading). She also compared

her 1999 Stan 9 and 2012 Stan 10 state assessment scores and discovered, "…it's still a

bell curve. So you still have that majority in the middle and some that fall below and

some that exceed so I don't know if testing, testing, testing has made all that much

difference…"

Alice's discovery relates to Darling-Hammond's claim, "It seems not to have

occurred to policymakers that ordering schools to show 100% proficiency for students in

a subgroup that by definition scores below that level on state tests is ludicrous" (p. 5).

Alice once counted the testing days in the school calendar. "…it's sad when your

assessment days outnumber your teaching days. But it is what it is, so you have to make

the best of it." Frank indicated that our students are not being compared apples to apples

on an international scale so to speak, "Now we're internationally competitive with

differing societies." *Same tests/assessments, used differently* aligns with the conceptual

framework since high stakes tests are used to measure accountability in schools across

the nation. In regard to assessment data, teachers have positive and negative feelings.

"Positively, the data indicated to teachers that not all students are having their needs met.

Negatively, there are not enough individual data on students" (Loucks, 2005, p. 6). For

129

example, how can teachers really help students "unless they have multiple-year data on that student, not just the scores of one class compared to the scores of another class?" (Loucks, 2005, p. 6).

The theme suggests that assessments are useful to teachers, but simultaneously teachers disagree with some aspects of the tests such as more time being spent on testing, relying on a single test measurement for growth, and international comparisons of different societies. It is evident that tests/assessments have their advantages and disadvantages. Differentiated instruction from the last theme had some testing implications. If tests/assessments continue to be used and improved in differentiated instruction for diverse and unique learners, it would be advantageous if a variety of test data followed students showing multiyear growth. Perhaps the accumulated multiyear test data will cut the need for excessive testing days found in the school calendar, therefore giving more instructional days.

The second theme that was clear in the category "participants' experiences with accountability mandates" is *shift in standards/curriculum*. It was evident that there has been a shift in the standards and curriculum in regard to the content, how it is taught, and how it is monitored. Middle school teacher Frank claims education is now modeled after an assembly line and is fragmented, which results with "…language arts teachers who can't do math or social studies, teachers who can't do reading…" Velma believes she is now a "better teacher" because she feels a professional and moral obligation that her students should know and be able to do the standards/curriculum to prevent remedial work for next year's teacher. This is related to Hamilton et al.'s (2007) study of teachers in three states that found as a result of state accountability systems, nearly half of the

teachers shared that their teaching practices improved, while a few changed for the worse. However, as a result of NCLB's accountability mandates, 40 percent of teachers in the three states combined report an increase in academic rigor of the curriculum changed for the better (Hamilton et al., 2007, p. 54). Alice's claim that teachers now have access to the same curriculum gives a sense of equitable education for all students. "…I think it is expected that every child get that equitable education, we don't all teach it the same exact way in each classroom…but knowing that same exact content is made available…" Darling-Hammond (2007) indicated in chapter 2, "federal and state governments lack accountability to public schools by not providing standards that are equitable and adequate." This theme aligns with the conceptual framework as an accountability measure that requires teachers to teach adopted standards.

A majority of the states in the U.S. have recently adopted the Common Core standards and have fully implemented these standards or are in transition. Prior to Common Core, accountability policies encouraged standards based teaching and learning that were developed at the state level. There is a lot of literature in regard to standards, Common Core, curriculum, and recommendations of skills and knowledge from various scholars or educational organizations. The conceptual framework narrows this focus to the teacher level. The purpose of the narrative profiles presented here is to lay a foundation for a comparative analysis of the participants' background and experiences with accountability mandates. From this analysis it is clear NCLB and its tiered accountability policies have significantly changed teacher practices, attitudes, and instruction to name a few. Given the shift, teachers have experienced some disadvantages as a result of accountability mandates. It is important to note these,

because it allows practicing teachers, administrators, and policy makers to make informed decisions. The informed decisions may include the concerns teachers had such as inequities and inadequacies. Are the adopted standards such as Common Core and curriculum equal and adequate for diverse and unique students, specifically linguistically and culturally diverse students? How can they best answer this question? Literature in chapter 2 contains a list of effective strategies for ELLs; however, does the list stop there? This theme suggests although there have been some significant gain with regard to curriculum and standards, more questions arise as we identify the ongoing needs of diverse and unique populations. Chapter Five and Six will continue this analysis and discussion.

A third recurring theme in the category "experiences with accountability mandates" is *increased colleaguial collaboration*. It was evident that most of the teachers acknowledge increased colleague collaboration when early experiences were either independent practices or only went so far as Velma described: "Don't forget you have to turn in your field trip money. Don't forget you have to collect the lollipop money." She also described collaboration as "Team, school-wide teacher, and individual meetings to analyze data." Jerry stated there was a "learning to be more open to going to other people for and using their expertise rather than depending on yourself…it's what you learn after you know it all that counts." Novice teacher Nicole credited "colleague collaboration to alleviate the burden" of her teacher duties." Alice indicated that as a result of PLCs, colleague collaboration occurred and she found that "room A, B, and C might've taught from the textbook or might have taught the same lesson but in a different

order, and if they didn't like it, 'I'm not going to teach it.'" Frank shared, "teachers were successful prior to PLCs, Marzano, and graphic organizers…"

This theme aligns with the conceptual framework as encouraged accountability measure at the national, state, and local level. The *Teacher Accountability Conference Post-Conference Report* by the Educator Accountability Program (2011), stated all stakeholders at the local level should be the shapers of their accountability system that is fair and credible to teachers. One suggested starting point in the report is to encourage teacher collaboration in professional development. This theme supports the saying more heads together is better than one, but in educational scholarly terms. But it goes further than that, based on the information provided by the participants. The dynamics of collaboration is another factor. For example, will the collaboration discuss lollipop money or will there be meaningful discussions and collaboration that is student-centered? It is also clear that most of the participants and teachers in past research see colleague collaboration in positive light.

Rather surprising was a fourth recurring theme, *negative emotions,* associated with the category "experiences with accountability mandates." While the participants described how they use tests/assessments differently, the shift in standards/curriculum, and increase collaboration, it is evident some negative emotions were attached to these experiences. For example, Jerry deals with his overwhelming work as a special education teacher by "…not be[ing] as hard on myself as I was in the beginning because you're just now starting out." He also shared, "you learn to know your limits, you learn to push through your limits at times when it's needed." Novice special education teacher Nicole described her early experience as "overbearing" and when she moved schools, it

was "traumatic." She also experienced a mix of emotions, "I've gone from, 'I love this, this is so great,' to 'I don't know if this is for me, and how long I'm going to stay,' to 'I love this and it's just me.'" Velma stated she is "…under a lot of pressure" and it is very stressful but personnel in the district and school help when resources are needed. Next, Alice stated, "…they've really upped the anty so to speak because not every teacher is being accountable… sometimes it's a pain…"

How teachers deal with the emotional dimensions of teaching has implications for their practice. Hamilton et al. (2007) stated, the state's accountability system caused one-third of the teachers to report worse staff morale versus 10 to 20 percent reported better staff morale. This suggests negative emotions are present with changes and transitions, but Jerry and Velma shed some hopeful outcomes with how they deal with the emotions and how support can curb negative emotions.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the processes and rationale of the three levels of analysis of interview data contained in the narrative profiles of all six participants. The first-level analysis included identifying broad categories across each participant. The second-level analysis included horizontally comparing each category across participant interview data to identify recurring themes. Joining these themes with literature from Chapter Two and the conceptual framework, initial interpretations were derived from a third-level analysis. This analysis and interpretation will serve as the foundation for further analysis of the individual interview, observation, and focus group interview data presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 5

Results, Findings, and Analysis

This chapter contains the findings and analysis of all three data sets: the three-part individual interviews, classroom observations, and focus group interviews. The first section of this chapter reviews the classroom observation and focus group data collection processes. The following section shares a supra-level thematic analysis across all data sets, keeping the conceptual framework and three research questions in mind. The presentation of themes is organized according to the larger themes and includes a discussion, relevant data from individual interviews, observations, and focus group interviews to support the analysis.

Findings and Analysis

   Classroom observation and focus group data collection processes. Classroom observations occurred throughout Spring of 2013 from January to April. Each participant was observed two times with the exception of one participant due to this particular teacher's time constraints. However, the duration of the single observation of this one participant equals the total observation time of the other participants. All observations occurred in the classrooms of the participants or in their co-teacher's classroom for special education push-in settings.

   Rossman and Rallis (2003) stated observations are fundamental to all qualitative inquiry. "It entails a systemic noting and recording of events, actions, and interactions" (pp. 194, 195). Body language, affect, and participant's words were noted as recommended (p. 194). Appendix D contains the observation protocol used to record all classroom observations. A running record of events was recorded also noting behaviors

of individuals observed with the understanding "that actions are purposeful and expressive of deeper values and beliefs" (p. 195). A second observation occurred in April just before the administration of the high-stakes assessment that measures accountability for schools across the state. Since predetermined categories or strict observational checklists were not used, "recurring patterns of events and relationships" were open to identification in the data analysis process (p.195).

Focus group interviews were conducted after the initial classroom observations. Two focus groups of three teachers each were conducted at schools one and two as shown on Tables 3 and 5 in chapter 3. Appendix E contains the focus group protocol. As recommended by Rossman and Rallis (2003), focused questions in an open environment were asked, "to encourage discussion and the expression of differing opinions and points of view" (p. 193). The assumption of this technique is that people's attitudes and beliefs are not formed in a vacuum, "People often need to listen to others' opinions and understandings to clarify their own" (p.193).

Supra-level thematic analysis. A thorough data analysis of each data set was conducted first by following the recommendations of Rossman and Rallis (2003) and Seidman (2006). Transcribed interview transcripts were first reviewed and in order to reduce the text, "passages that are interesting" were marked with brackets (Seidman, p. 117). Seidman also stated, "What is of essential interest is embedded in each research topic and will arise from each transcript. Interviewers must affirm their own ability to recognize it" (p. 118). With Seidman's statement in mind, the chunked passages marked in brackets were scanned for recurring key words or codes. Similar to the narrative profile analysis process, "decision rules help[ed] guide the assignment" to particular

136

codes and categories (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.274). Holistic strategies were used

again in order to "describe connections among the data in the actual context" of

participants' experiences (p.274). Words or phrases describing some segment of data that

is explicit was sought to develop categories (p.282). The main categories that surfaced

across all data sets (individual interviews, classroom observations, and focus group

interviews) are:

    1) "teaching strategies"

    2) "tests/assessments"

A recurring category in the individual and focus group interviews that was not

literally transferrable to the observations is the term, "accountability." Accountability in

the interviews was used broadly in reference to national, state, local, administrative,

teacher, parent and student accountability. It also overlapped into other categories, such

as curriculum/standards, teaching strategies, and tests/assessments. Since the meaning of

"accountability" in the interviews did not emerge from what was observed in the

classroom observations, I did not include this term as a category. "Teaching strategies"

and "tests/assessments" emerged to be most prevalent in all data sets. "Teaching

strategies" and "tests/assessments" are a form of accountability in existing policies,

therefore "teaching strategies" and "tests/assessments" more accurately replaces the

recurring term, "accountability" that contained multiple meanings within different

contexts. The two themes respectively align to the conceptual framework.

Next, themes were created using the "teaching strategies" and "tests/assessments"

categories. From the selected passages from the interviews that were marked as

important and put into a single transcript (Seidman, 2006, p. 121), each category in their

transcripts were compared horizontally to identify recurring themes. For example, the

transcripts containing the category "teaching strategies" were laid out side-by-side. After

reviewing the transcript arrangement for "recurring ideas, language, patterns of beliefs

and actions that signal something more subtle and complex than categories" (Rossman &

Rallis, 2003, p. 284), themes were identified. Importantly and as further recommended,

the research questions were kept in mind while being serendipitous and following

"intuition that suggests a deeper way to understand and interpret data" (p. 284). The

themes that emerged from this coding and comparison process are:

1) "teaching strategies"

    a. *guidance and feedback*

    b. *differentiated instruction*

2) "tests/assessments"

    a. *state assessments in negative light*

    b. *misalignment of local assessments*

To begin the analysis, relevant literature that addresses the category and theme,

was aligned with the conceptual framework. Using the theme, relevant literature of past

research and direct quotes from the participants that support the theme aided in making

possible interpretations.

Teaching Strategies

    Guidance and feedback. The first category, "teaching strategies," presented two

prevalent themes in all of the data sets. *Guidance and feedback* was the most prevalent

recurring theme throughout the data. In all data sets, guidance was evident in guiding

questions, physical guidance (in special education classrooms), guided practice, guiding

thinking such as reasoning (higher order thinking), vocabulary and grammar guidance (language development), reading guidance, and individual intervention and small group intervention.

The second part of the theme, *feedback* in the "teaching strategies" category, derives from the teachers giving feedback along with their guidance. The recurring feedback that emerged included praise and positive reinforcement. Sometimes, the feedback given led to additional guidance of some form until the student arrived at the teacher's desired outcome. Some examples of guidance and feedback are as follows:

In Alice's classroom, I observed the following while she was using the Spalding program she claims to teach with fidelity in her three-part individual interview.

On an easel at the front of the class, Alice writes the word "August." She

underlines "Au" and "gu" and students chorally recite the applicable Spalding

rule. Alice asks, "What is so special about the rule?" Students answer, "proper

noun." Alice writes "Struck" and the students say "rule 25, ck goes after a single

vowel," and they chorally say the vowel sound. The next word is "Get" and the

students say the sounds then write the word in their notebooks. Students then sit

with their hands folded while waiting for the teacher. Alice writes "Get" "ting"

for Getting, then she holds out hand signals. She gives individual feedback to a

girl in front to fix her work. The students say, "Rule 29" and Alice asks,

"Really?" She reminds the students of rule 29 and guides their thinking to the

next rule. Students recite the rule with her guidance. A girl says, "Rule 9" and

Alice says, "It is rule 9. Ooooow! Clear away the cobwebs." (field notes, Feb. 5,

2013)

139

This passage is an example of the teacher consistently providing feedback as needed for her second graders to read and write words using the Spalding program. It is evident that the students are required to know and chorally recite a variety of rules. Alice also provided guidance to students in reciting and remembering the rules as they needed.

During a classroom observation of Jerry's special education class, physical guidance was continuously observed when each student had the opportunity to make a banana split that was later linked to sequence questions. He called each student to the front of the classroom guiding them orally and physically to use all the required ingredients to make a banana split for consumption. After each student made a banana split, the students answered some sequencing questions as the teacher called on them. Some needed help decoding and pronouncing words as all the students followed along. The teacher was providing the needed guidance, monitoring the class, and using a webcam to display the questions and answers. All students were engaged and it was evident the teacher and students enjoyed the lesson. The teacher inserted jokes throughout the lesson and students responded with giggles. Here is a brief excerpt of the observation record.

> Teacher jokes with students and students laugh. "Let's continue with number 6, Mr. Eric. Ok, we're gonna have to change one of the answers. Did we use caramel?" Student decodes reading with teacher's help. Teacher says, "C?" Boy reads unclearly. The teacher guides the student to read the answer then he guides the girl in a wheelchair by explaining the steps to choose the correct answer. (field notes, Jan. 18, 2013)

This observation record shows the continued guidance needed for the special education class to answer sequence questions about the ingredients and the process to make a banana split. Again, most of that guidance during this time of answering sequence questions was in language development such as pronouncing words and decoding words. There was also some guidance for students to cognitively reach answers.

In Betty's classroom observation, Betty was consistently observed orally guiding ELL students in language development such as vocabulary and grammar, even while it wasn't the main objective of her teaching. For example, during a writing language arts lesson, the following was observed.

> Betty reads a book to her students then they write a letter to a character in the
> book. Before Betty begins the book while students are seated on a carpet at the
> back of the room, a boy asked, "Where did you got the cricket book?" Betty
> repeats, "Where did I got the cricket book?" Then she says, "Where did I get it?
> Where did I purchase it? I got it at a place that starts with a W and is a proper
> noun." Students say, "Walmart!" (field notes, April 12, 2013)

Betty's oral guidance in language development was observed throughout all of the activities that took place during the observation.

In a focus group interview, Velma's list of describing an ideal student included, "This student questions, shares, connects…The student isn't perfect; thus making himself/herself teachable." These qualities have some implications on the role of the teacher. Those implications are giving guidance and feedback to students who question and ask for feedback. When students share and connect, the implication for teachers is

possibly giving positive praise (as observed consistently in Velma's observation) to celebrate positive behavior, and when students make cognitive connections.

In a three-part individual interview, Jerry shared "…that part of teaching practice is to show the potential kids have in themselves. And it may not show up right away, but baby steps along the way and all of a sudden the light bulb comes on and they take off running." This implies students are guided in baby steps so to speak, as Jerry described. This relates to what Velma shared in her three-part individual interview. She stated her first model of teaching is to use an "anticipatory set, guided practice, independent practice, and [give] feedback on the progress along the way." This also connects to Alice repeatedly indicating that she sees herself as a facilitator in her three-part individual interview. The way she described her "facilitator" role is as follows: "I feel I am more of a facilitator. I put things out there and they do what they can with it, then where you see what their next step is, is fostering that need…"

All of these examples explicitly demonstrate or imply guidance and feedback in the participants' practices. This theme aligns to the conceptual framework since it directly relates to the practices of teachers, which is the focus of the study. These individual teacher-enacted practices may fall within or outside national, state, or local accountability policies as the conceptual framework figure illustrates in Figure 3 in chapter 2.

Accountability for Results by McCaw and Watkins (2008), for English language learners, indicated accountability is evident in teachers who "use (give) clear directions and examples" (Cohen, 1975; Genesee, 1987; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Senesac, 2002). This relates to the guidance and feedback that was prevalent in the observations and

interview data sets. A possible interpretation is teachers' active role of providing

consistent guidance and feedback that includes clear directions and examples is

paramount. This practice can also be described with the metaphor of "holding each

student's hand" while they make "baby steps" toward the desired learning objectives.

An implication of this interpretation is clear guidance and feedback occurring

consistently as needed based on the needs of students relates to the student-to-teacher

ratio of the classes. In order for a teacher to effectively provide consistent feedback and

guidance that includes using clear directions and examples, the student-to-teacher ratio

needs to be within each teacher's capabilities given the unique needs of the class. For

example, in the same grade level, class A may require more "hand holding" (in making

baby steps so to speak) consisting of consistent guidance and feedback, than class B due

to the unique needs of the students within each class.

Differentiated instruction. The second theme that emerged from the category

"teaching strategies" is *differentiated instruction*. It was consistently evident throughout

all data sets that participants used the term differentiated instruction or described their

teaching as "getting to the student's level," "multiple intelligences," individualizing for

different learners, teaching to "all learning styles," or providing various "learning

opportunities." Like the participant narrative profiles from the three-part interview in

chapter 4, *differentiated instruction* was most prevalent in the three-part individual

interviews, but was a recurring theme in the observations and focus group interviews as

well. As stated in chapter 4, the following statements were made by the participants in

the three-part individual interviews.

Frank stated he finds out, "…[H]ow does the kid learn?" Then he personalizes for the student. Jerry also shared he "find[s] the hole in the kid's education" then fills it. Nicole claimed, "…[A]ll students can learn and they will learn if they are given the proper information in the right way." In Velma's list of beliefs and practices, she stated, "All children can learn, they learn differently, get to their level, multiple intelligences…" Alice also shared there is "…a lot of individual, small group instruction, but I just think every child deserves the opportunity to learn, they're all unique individuals..." Lastly, Betty said, "Differentiate every standard, hit every learning style, make every student important…" This theme relates to the conceptual framework through individual teacher enacted practices that may fall within or outside national, state, or local accountability policies. These philosophies are meant to represent the core beliefs and values of their profession therefore it is related to their practices.

In the focus group interviews, the following was extracted to further illustrate the theme *differentiated instruction*. Velma stated:

I have students that are very, very low level and I have some that are profoundly gifted and trying to get to all levels, that is my daily struggle for sure and I know that that affects behavior in the classroom, when students are engaged and involved in their work, then that decreases behavior problems so trying to keep every student on task, engaged, learning while still encouraging higher level thinking doing all the things that are required with standards and then common core, that's my biggest struggle as well."

Velma's statements relate to teachers not being able to challenge higher-level students due to pacing expectations (Hamilton et al., 2007, p. 55). The next statement was also

144

shared in a focus group interview. It was concluded to define an excellent teacher as, "…one who sees each child as a unique individual with his/her needs and works toward meeting those needs. This teacher continues to seek new learning opportunities that supports learning in the classroom."

Differentiated instruction was observed for special education teacher Jerry's two classroom observations combined. As an additional note, this observation record also reflects the guidance and feedback that was consistently observed for the previous theme of this category. During my first visit, Jerry's class read the ingredients and directions for making a banana split. He called each student up one by one to make a banana split while helping each one physically as needed.

On my second visit, I first observed Jerry showing an animated video of Benjamin Franklin. Here is a summarized account of the observation. The teacher asks comprehension questions and provides clarifying explanations throughout the video. After the video, he started a computer hangman game of the human body that is displayed at the front of the class. The students alternate turns to pick randomly provided letters. The answer to the first game is "chest." They continue more games in the same fashion spelling body parts, "esophagus," "patella," and "uterus." At the end of hangman, the teacher models a new computer game of matching numbers to picture values that is projected on the whiteboard. He is using an ebeam which is an alternative version of the smart board. Students take turns drawing lines to match numbers to the picture values using a mouse to draw while sitting in their seats looking at the board. All students are engaged.

Jerry's special education lessons in the two observations illustrate "getting to the student's level", "multiple intelligences," individualizing for different learners, teaching to "all learning styles", or providing various "learning opportunities" as collectively described to be differentiated instruction by the participants of this study. The observations also relate to scholarly literature on differentiated instruction. Furthermore, a participant's description of direct instruction as "providing various learning opportunities" has some curriculum and standards implications as described later in this section. Similarly, research on direct instruction also has curriculum and standards implications as well.

The Gates Foundation survey of over 40,000 teachers in the United States in 2010 made two conclusions on differentiated instruction. The first is:

- Use multiple measures to evaluate student performance "including formative, ongoing assessments during class, performance on class assignments and class participation…to innovate and differentiate instruction in a variety of ways" (p. 27);

- Provide learning experiences that will "provide students with the skills they need for today's world. Differentiation plays a key role in this, as does the use of technology and non-textbook classroom materials" (p. 35).

In regard to the Gates Foundation's first conclusion on direct instruction to use multiple measures to evaluate student performance, *Accountability for Results* by McCaw and Watkins (2008) make a valid conclusion regarding this demographic. They indicated accountability is evident in teachers who know how to evaluate the English-language learner (Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, & Sun-Irminger, 2006) as one of their effective

146

programs. Therefore, not only should teachers use multiple measures to evaluate student performance, but they should know and be able to evaluate ELLs.

To further address the Gates Foundation's second conclusion, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills' framework expanded on the learning experiences that will provide students with the skills they need for today's world. The framework includes the knowledge contents (subjects) every American child needs. The knowledge, skills, and expertise to succeed in work and life in the 21st century (Zhao, p. 146) are: "English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, math, economics, science, geography, history, government and civics global awareness, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy, health literacy…" (p. 146). The skills needed to succeed in work and life in the 21st century are: "…creativity and innovation skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, communication and collaboration skills; information literacy, information and technology literacy; flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility (p. 146). This also relates to the Gates Foundation survey's conclusion to provide learning experiences that will "provide students with the skills they need for today's world (p. 35).

In Jerry's special education class, differentiated instruction was observed with the banana split making (as part of the Learning For Independence program) infused with reading comprehension questions and sequencing. It was also observed through the showing of a video about Benjamin Franklin and students playing a computerized spelling game of Hangman. Not only did Jerry's observations support the participants' collective descriptions of direct instruction, but they also support the Gates Foundation's

first and second conclusion. The instruction was innovative and differentiated to enable the use of multiple measures to evaluate student performance. Unfortunately, the observations conducted were limited in the sense that not all of these multiple measures of student evaluations were observed, if it is practiced by this particular teacher. What was observed in this respect was Jerry actively and consistently achieving student participation. It was also evident that he consistently and informally assessed his students throughout each lesson primarily through his observations and interactions with the students in order to gauge the type of guidance he will need to provide to each individual student.

As in Chapter Two, "21st Century Skills" and skills of "today's world" draws attention to the state's adoption of the Common Core standards that claim to, "… provide a consistent framework to prepare students for success in college and/or the 21st century workplace" (http://www.azed.gov/azcommoncore/). The Common Core standards include English language arts and math only, therefore world languages, economics, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, and civic literacy is lacking according to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. Interestingly, Jerry's observations of his special education classes included some of the content and skills that the Partnership for 21st Century Skills have in their framework, especially as observed in his Learning For Independence program.

Again, this theme aligns with the conceptual framework since it directly relates to the practices of teachers, which may include using differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is a practice that the participants incorporate in their teaching philosophies and as shown in the data, they also either incorporate or strive to incorporate

it in their practices. Differentiated instruction is research-based; therefore it is a strategy

that accountability policies address. Federal policies encourage research-based strategies,

and at the state and most local levels, it is encouraged as differentiated instruction.

An interpretation of this collective data is as teachers continue to use or strive for

direct instruction, as it is also supported by accountability policy and research, supports

should be in place from all angles in order for teachers to effectively and consistently use

it in their daily instruction. Furthermore, as Common Core is in effect in this particular

state, the local policy makers and leaders should not only continue to support direct

instruction but also provide a local curriculum that expands to include the 21st century

skills that Common Core lacks. This action alone at the local level may encourage other

policy makers and leaders to do the same within their districts. Also as previously

concluded by the Gates Foundation, using multiple measures of student evaluation will

also encourage direct instruction. Since *Accountability for Results* by McCaw and

Watkins (2008) states that teachers' participation in systemic and ongoing quality

professional development is an effective program for ELLs, this presents opportunities

for local leaders to address the identified gaps in Common Core and further support direct

instruction for professional growth (Cohen, 1975; Genesee, 1987; Lambert & Tucker,

1972; Senesac, 2002).

As Common Core is in its initial stage of implementation, Velma claimed, "when

students are engaged and involved in their work, then that decreases behavior problems

so trying to keep every student on task, engaged, learning while still encouraging higher

level thinking doing all the things that are required with standards and then common core,

that's my biggest struggle as well." This statement implies engaging instruction directly

149

relates to student behavior, namely in culturally, linguistically, and academically diverse classrooms as the data and literature describe. Although this was not a prevalent theme in all data sets, there were instances in the observations where student engagement was directly linked to behavior management. Velma's statement also sheds light on the support needed to achieve differentiated instruction as desired by all the participants. She shared that it is a struggle to achieve a certain level of differentiated instruction while doing all the things that are required with the standards and common core. Hamilton's (2007) statement also relates to Velma's challenge of providing instruction to challenge higher level students due to pacing guides.

Another interpretation may be teachers need additional support in regard to the standards and Common Core, especially while in transition and in the premature stages of implementation. It is also important to note in both of Jerry's observations, there were at least a minimum of two aides present at all times during the observation as he was able to carry out engaging differentiated instruction with his special education students. This is another aspect that local policymakers and leaders may act upon.

Tests/Assessments

State assessments in negative light. The second category, "tests/assessments" presented two prevalent themes. The first theme labeled *state assessments in negative light* contained a plethora of data in all data sets. It was clear at each classroom visit, testing was in the midst. During my first round of classroom observations, students had just completed the state English language proficiency assessment, or they were making up the test for missing the first administration. During my second round of observations, teachers were preparing their students for the state mandated assessment that would be

taken the next school day or two. Throughout the data collection process, there was a

mix of positive and negative feedback from the participants. However, after completing

the coding and analysis process, it was surprisingly evident that teachers expressed state

assessments more in negative light than positive, hence the label of the theme. The

following paragraphs contain some excerpts of the observation records taken in regard to

the state English language proficiency assessment, the state mandated assessment, and

Stanford 9/10. In order to shorten the observation without losing meaning, there is a mix

of summarized and actual observation passages to support this theme.

> On my first visit to Velma's classroom, the teacher and students enter the
>
> classroom. Students shuffle in the classroom to get organized and ready for their
>
> first activity. Two male students sit at a round table at the back of the classroom.
>
> The teacher says, "We still don't have our active board. Oh it's nice to see you.
>
> When was the last time I read to you?" The students are all seated at the front of
>
> the classroom surrounding the teacher. The teacher reads the title and discusses
>
> persuasion. She uses the word, "persuasive" in a sentence and explains the
>
> meaning. She says, "I'm sorry we didn't have our active board and I didn't get a
>
> break because of testing [the state English language proficiency] and don't have it
>
> all prepared for you. The teacher writes on the whiteboard, and states they will
>
> look for three techniques as she writes the persuasive techniques on the board.
>
> (field notes, Feb. 5, 2013)

Later in the observation, the teacher begins reading and links the three persuasive

techniques throughout the story. The following takes place while she reads.

151

All students in the reading circle are engaged in her story while the teacher reads

interactively. One of the boys at the back of the room raises his hand trying to get

the teacher's attention. She does not notice him. The boy turns back around and

continues his language test. The teacher is still reading and a few minutes later,

the boy at the back of the room turns away from his test facing the teacher as she

reads the book. The boy is listening to the story smiling, rather than taking his

test. About 15 minutes later, the testing boys approach the teacher and hand her

their tests. She checks them over and says, "Bubbles look good. Come with me."

And all the students exit the classroom. (field notes, Feb. 5, 2013)

The recorded events in Velma's observation portray the state English language

proficiency test as a hindrance to her preparation for her class. She clearly indicated how

she is not prepared as a result of the test, therefore affecting her instruction negatively by

not giving a lesson that meets her desired expectation that also includes the use of

technology.

This next section includes both actual observation records and summarized

events. It is also important to note that Betty's observation took place the school day

before the state mandated test which was on a Friday and the observation passages

presented capture *state assessments in negative light* in various ways.

The following was observed in Betty's 2nd grade Basic Language classroom.

There are 29 students sitting at individual desks grouped in 6 or 7. The teacher directly

informs me they are doing their Stanford 9 practice tests and that they will be learning

another time. She continues to tell me that she has more students since her last

observation. 29 are present and 2 are absent. She tells a boy near me to say "hi" to me,

then informs me he came straight from Mexico and has no schooling. Then she begins her class instruction.

> The teacher says, "No monkeys in your ears and pay attention." The students prepare to move forward with the practice tests. The teacher reads the reading prompt projected on the whiteboard and the students follow along in their practice books. (field notes, April 12, 2013)

She talks through the thought process and uses process of elimination to choose the correct test answer projected on the board. Most students are engaged and the boy from Mexico and his male neighbor chat with a mix of Spanish and English.

> The teacher says to the class, "I suggest you read it first then try each sentence to see which makes sense." The boy from Mexico asks the teacher aloud, "What page?" She does not hear him. The students read to themselves and the teacher reminds them they can read aloud on Stan 10. She walks to a semicircle shaped table and takes a sip of her large iced coffee cup from McDonald's and says, "I like how some of you are rereading." (field notes, April 12, 2013)

As the students work, the teacher approaches me again and informs me 29 students leveled at Basic is too much and that there is no cap. Therefore, if more students enroll, she could get more students in her class. She also said she would get support from the Language Acquisition Teacher after the state mandated assessment is administered. Also her aides have not been able to help because they are subbing elsewhere. "I don't know what to do with that," she says shrugging. She continues, "They are expected to read long passages starting Monday" and shrugs again looking at the students as they work independently on their practice tests. The teacher instructs students to transition so

153

she can read to them. About 15 minutes later, a teacher enters the classroom with a sheet

of paper in hand. She says aloud, "One child is speech and others have accommodations

only (probably in reference to testing on Monday, today is Friday)". The participant

responds, "Thank you," and continues reading. After the story time, she instructs the

students to write a letter in response to the book she just read. It is also important to note

that throughout the observation, the teacher does an activity for approximately 15

minutes then starts another activity with the students.

> She says from across the room, "Monday we have Stan 10 all week, then we have
>
> Galileo the week after that, then we have the state mandated test on the web the
>
> week after that, then we have DREs the following week, then after that is the last
>
> week of school. So I am frustrated because I don't get to do any teaching. She
>
> shakes her head again. I'm sure the government, the school district has a reason
>
> for that but I don't know what it is." She continues working with the four
>
> students at her table. (field notes, April 12, 2013)

About 20 minutes later, a teacher from the classroom next door enters and loudly

announces, "Ms. Betty, Juan has decided he does not want to get ready for next week's

testing so he is going to sit right here." He sits at a desk facing the wall by the door she

entered. Ms. Betty answers, "Oh, I hope he makes a better decision." About 15 minutes

later, the teacher announces it's time to clean up and begins preparing a game of rhyming

bingo for the whole class. She announces to the class, "I know it's been crazy with all

this testing, but it's important to follow directions" to correct some misbehaviors in the

class. She tells me again, "Next year in third grade they will be doing test prep all the

time. This past month, I have been going home…(shakes her head and does not complete

her sentence). We have to work with the 10 day kids but I want to work with the 10 who are the lowest, but…" she doesn't finish her sentence and goes back to bingo and says, "I think we have to stop" in reference to misbehavior again. She transitions the class to watch a brain pop video. Then she announces, "It is very important for you to listen, pay attention because almost everyone in this room is having difficulty with rhyming."

> After starting the video, the teacher sits next to me and says, "Imagine two more
> students," shakes her head and her eyes water up and gets pink. With her lips
> tight, she is shaking her head. The participant wipes her eyes and collects herself.
> (field notes, April 12, 2013)

It is evident this observation clearly portrays *state assessments in negative light* especially through the teacher's actions and words. It is important to note, the participant was not prompted in any way to comment throughout the observation as she did. My presence in observing classrooms was carried out in the same manner consistently throughout the data collection process and this participant felt the inclination to share more than was asked or expected. It is clear that Betty was not satisfied with several things, especially regarding testing. The next section contains a discussion on the things that directly relate to the theme as verbally expressed or observed in the above observation.

First and foremost, Betty shared that she was not receiving her usual support in her Basic Language class as a result of the state mandated test that was being administered the next school day. She stated her teacher aide and the LAS (Language Acquisition Specialist) teacher were assisting with testing. Therefore she had been functioning alone in a class of 32 with the lowest language level students in her grade.

She also indicated that her class does not have a cap on the amount of students she may receive so it is possible that she may receive additional students in her class. As a former sixth grade teacher of Basic Language proficiency students myself, it is not difficult to understand how overwhelming this may be.

Next, Betty shared that she was frustrated because she will not be able to spend much time on teaching because of the amount of tests that were scheduled to the end of school year. It is also interesting to note that as a veteran teacher, she has yet to understand the rationale for all the testing that she is required to administer and support.

It is also important to acknowledge the pressure Betty was under. Some of the pressures to note are preparing her students for the next grade level and to teach concepts that will be tested on the state mandated test. Understandably, Betty expressed that she was not satisfied with the requirement to focus on the 10 day students versus the 10 lowest performing students. The rationale behind this is to boost test scores. Furthermore, with a class full of Basic language level students, she understands the challenges her students will experience in the upcoming state mandated test. She claimed her students will be required to read long passages. It is also important to acknowledge that this type of standardized test is based on reading skills. Students are required to read directions, passages, word problems, and all the other reading elements that may appear in other tested areas. Simply functioning (through reading) on this type of test presents a hurdle for students with language and cultural backgrounds that do not match those of the test(s).

The pressure does not stop there for Betty. Another observation made to further address *state assessments in negative light* theme is the amount of test preparation her

156

students will have to endure next school year as third graders, just as she shared. As a second grade teacher, she is making it known that she has a role in preparing her students for third grade. The next school year marks an important change in policy for her second graders as they become third graders. Third graders will not advance to fourth grade if they cannot pass reading on the state mandated test. Her current second graders will be the first students to experience this new policy.

On a smaller but not insignificant note, Betty was handed a document with test accommodation information since she is the Special Education lead at her school. This indicates that she has an additional role in testing accommodations for the special education students at her school.

Betty's discouragement is understandable because she works with the lowest performing students in second grade and the school (special education students) during the highly stressful time that testing presents. She practically narrated her entire observation, indicating that she wanted me to know as much as possible about what she is experiencing. Perhaps, this is a method of not only asking for help but to draw attention to matters that are in dire need of being addressed.

Betty's observation also shows that she is simply "surviving" on the eve of the high stakes state mandated test. It was evident in her efforts to give test preparation lessons every 15 minutes. In most of those lessons, I did not observe in-depth lessons being delivered. Instead, I observed the teacher merely going through the actions without complete student engagement. I also did not observe a great deal of direct and differentiated instruction on the concepts being presented. Although some of that was due to the narration she was providing, but as a former sixth grade teacher of Basic

157

language students, I understand the pressure she is feeling and the alarmed need to cover as many concepts possible before testing.

Hamilton et al.'s (2007) study found that the state's accountability system caused one-third of the teachers to report worse staff morale versus 10 to 20 percent reported better staff morale. Betty's observation provides an illustration of the former.

The next few paragraphs contain individual and group interview quotes to further support *state assessments in negative light*. In the first focus group session, Frank made a statement in reference to tests.

It's becoming an Olympic sport you know? I think it's becoming irrelevant I guess, the work, as far as education itself. It's a matter of the score. You win, you just (all that is done) get the score out (to the public). We got so many kids and so many points and stuff (displayed as a sport).

This relates to the former senator and teacher from Minnesota, the late Paul Wellstone's conviction that the current accountability system lost its purpose through testing and instead, equates accountability throughout the nation with achievement and "success" (Berliner, 2008, p. 172).

In an individual interview, Alice stated:

It hasn't been an easy road by any means. Sometimes many of us feel like we're not being listened to. The one thing that I feel the rumblings in my school and across the district as I meet with teachers is the fact that the beginning of March we're being assessed on the whole year's standards so now we're looking at that and going, "OK, in one month, our children are going to be assessed on everything, so we've gotta try and figure out a way to get all of 3rd quarter and 4th

158

quarter's standards in by the beginning of March, we still have the rest of March

and all of April and May to teach." That's rushing and we have not even gotten

in-depth, they're forcing us to get the breadth and not the full understanding.

That's disheartening. I think some teachers will say, "Oh, the test is over," but we

still have Stan 10 in April. We haven't even touched double digit addition,

subtraction and you know that's a difficult concept.

This section from Alice's three-part individual interview illustrates how she is concerned

about the pressure to rush teaching by finding a way to squeeze all of 3rd and 4th quarter's

standards within a month before local assessments and the state standardized assessment.

She is also concerned about being forced to teach for breadth and not depth.

In the beginning of her quote, she stated she feels she and her teacher colleagues

are not being listened to regarding this important aspect of teaching, learning, and

assessments. Her statement relates to Berliner's (2008) finding, teachers "have had little

or no input into the accountability systems by which they are judged. Their work is often

under the control of others, mostly politicians…" (p. 145). Similarly, Wilde also claimed

that education is increasingly being politicized by politicians and media commentators by

"demanding a greater role in the details of what public education should look like,

looking to micromanage rather than relying on the professionals in the field" (Wilde,

2002, p. viii). A third source also confirms this. The Gates Foundation's (2010) largest

national survey consisting of 40,490 teachers on accountability found, "…according to

the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, 69% of teachers believe that their voices

are not heard in the debate on education" (p. 1).

159

Next, in the three-part individual interview, special education teacher Nicole also reinforces Alice's concern about teaching for breadth and not depth.

> Right now, teaching to the test, high-stakes test, I understand, very important, I get it. But they won't be able to pass it or understand it or develop deeper meaning to it if they don't practice and realize what it is all about. Why you have one thing and another thing and that's two. But they need to understand the background behind why when you add two things together, it is the same as something else.

This relates to points made by Hamilton et al. (2007, p. 54) in examining teacher perspectives of curriculum and tests. Their study showed that a majority of the teachers agree that there is little opportunity for teachers to teach content that will not be tested. In this case, Alice showed that there is little opportunity for she and her teacher colleagues to teach content that will be tested. Hamilton et al., also showed that teachers in one state (from a three-state study) expressed concern on the "pressure to move on regardless of whether students have mastered content (2007, p. 55).

Nicole's special education colleague, Jerry acknowledges a disadvantage in using testing to measure growth. "Some students get an A and learn little, some get a C and learn more than A student. They chose to learn more even though the output wasn't there in test scores, it doesn't always measure growth and how much is retained." This is also shortcoming in current state-mandated tests.

This theme, *state assessments in negative light*, contains a plethora of information across all data sets as well in the scholarly literature. This theme illuminates the federal and state requirement that states develop and enforce a state standardized assessment to

160

measure accountability. This is illuminated in the state section of "high-stakes assessment" to measure accountability on the conceptual and theoretical framework graphic in Figure 3 (Chapter Two). "High stakes assessment" transfers through the state and to the teacher level in the figure and shows that teachers are required to perform these tests. There were many factors that emerged to illustrate the theme so this next section is a narrative of the items that summarize the data and research directly related to the theme to aid in interpretation.

Data and research summary for state assessments in negative light. In regard to the state English language proficiency test, Velma's observation showed that the state English language proficiency test caused her to not be fully prepared for class instruction. It also showed two students taking the test under inappropriate conditions in respect to the environment because it caused distractions to the testers. As stated before, this is an important accommodation that school leaders should make to maximize teacher and student performance.

The next few paragraphs address the state-mandated test. Betty's observation showcased the state test negatively in several ways. She expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of testing, lack of support due to her aides and the LAS teacher helping with the state mandated test, and the requirement of her to focus on the 10 day kids versus the 10 lowest performing kids. She also stated that she does not understand the rationale behind all the testing that she is required to perform.

Once again, school leaders have the power to address these negative testing elements. They may determine the specifics of locally administered tests, and provide alternative support measures to teachers so that instruction is not compromised, and to

develop an instructional model that will provide all students regardless of their attendance the opportunity to receive a quality education. This falls outside the range of control of teachers; therefore it is their voice that will make this known to key stakeholders in order to address these matters.

Another negative element of the state-mandated test is the test's appropriateness for ELLs such as Betty's Basic language level second grade students. Betty stated she is concerned that her students will be required to read long passages on the high-stakes test in addition to other hurdles. Jerry also shared that student growth is not always reflected in tests. He shared that his special education students make growth, but is not shown as significant growth on tests. The need for the reform of state-mandated tests stems from the needs of both ELLs and special education students.

The state-mandated test is determined at the state level; however, with administrative support of teachers like Betty, it may be addressed collectively to state officials to reform the current state tests so that it is suitable for students. The state policy of third graders not passing to fourth grade if they fail reading on the state mandated test, is out of the control of teachers and local educational agencies as it is a new law being carried out in its first school year. It will be important to track student progress and their test results on reading over time for further research with this demographic experiencing this new law. This relates to Betty's statement when she shared that her students will experience a lot more test preparation as third graders.

This new law has many implications. An implication is more test preparation may mean less time for instruction. Furthermore, there will be some other implications on the compensation of time and subjects taught, such as Common Core and other

untested subjects. Will this lead to less instructional time on those other subjects and how will that affect students as they advance to fourth grade? Advancing to fourth grade indicates that students are proficient readers according to the state mandated test results, but for the scope of this study, how will this affect ELLs like Betty's student from Mexico with no prior schooling? The performance of these ELL students will have a domino effect on the entire school and staff if students are unsuccessful on the reading test. Again, since this is a new law, the local school leaders and teachers are mandated to enforce it as well.

More closely to the teacher's level of control, the observation showed a teacher colleague placing two of her students in Betty's class because they allegedly were not wanting to practice for the state-mandated test. Betty clearly showed that the boys cannot read and the work given to them is not appropriate for their level. If this is the case, then the neighboring teacher may need some professional guidance in how to better serve students with low reading abilities. Betty did not hesitate to accept the boys into her class. However, her time spent with them took her away from her current class who clearly need instruction on rhyming and the other content areas that she rushed to cover every fifteen minutes. Again, this may give other stakeholders an illustration of a decrease in teacher morale, as Betty has boldly shown. This also shows that teachers need additional support for students such as the two neighboring boys who were not practicing their tests and the boy from Mexico in her own class. If the students' reasons for disengagement are linked to reading skills, culture, language, academic interest, teacher effectiveness, etc., then this matter should be addressed to the school leaders so that two classes will not be affected as observed.

Data and research confirms that schooling has lost much of its purpose as a result of accountability measured through high-stakes tests. It also shows that teachers do not have a voice and input on accountability. Much of what has been presented here shows that these policies are primarily in the control of the state and local leaders. If teachers are further denied a voice, then the above state testing elements will stay in negative light.

State assessments in negative light analysis. As is clearly shown in this data, the participants and their students are negatively impacted in numerous ways, by state-mandated high-stakes tests – a finding also supported by the scholarly literature. The participants are most negatively affected in their ability to give quality instruction due to the testing atmosphere. As a result of the testing climate, normal supports such as technological teaching aides as well as instructional aides and specialists were not in place for quality instruction to occur. The data also show that instruction is affected by testing pressures to cover all tested content areas, therefore compromising quality instruction during the third and fourth quarter since that was when the data was collected.

An interpretation of these data consistent with past research is that the current accountability system has lost its purpose through testing and instead equates accountability throughout the nation with achievement and "success." (Berliner, 2008, p. 172). If instruction is being compromised in the fashion the prominent data in this study has shown, the current accountability system that measures accountability through tests is invalid because of the many conflicts the participants illustrated mainly through instruction being compromised.

In *A Teachers' Union Perspective on Accountability Issues* (Loucks, 2010*), it is stated that teachers had positive and negative feelings toward disaggregated data that state assessments provide. Positively, the data indicated to teachers that not all students are having their needs met. Negatively, there are not enough individual data on students. Teachers prefer data on the performance of individuals instead of disaggregated data. It was best put when a teacher asked, "How can I help a student unless I have multiple-year data on that student, not just the scores of one class compared to the scores of another class?" (p. 204). This indicates that state tests are not providing teachers individual data needed to plan instruction. Therefore, instruction is again affected by possibly misinforming teachers' planning and instruction.

This theme also sheds light on teachers' performance being linked to their students' test scores. If all teachers are forced to perform in ways that may conflict with giving quality instruction and with their performance evaluation rubric as a result of high-stakes tests, then the current accountability system unfairly and inaccurately measures teacher performance because it is forcing teachers to conform to certain practices such as teaching for breadth and not depth as the data has show— rather than in ways that teachers would truly perform without external pressure. Similar to students, teachers are assessed under the conditions of external pressures. Therefore, high-stakes tests (the state-mandated test and Stanford 9/10), in the current accountability equation needs to be reformed in respect to how it is used to measure student and teacher performance. It also needs to be reformed so that it will not impede or in any way negatively affect instruction. In *Savage Inequalities,* Jonathan Kozol (1991) stated, "we hold disadvantaged students accountable for our own failure to properly support them" (p. 37).

This conclusion can also be extended to teachers in disadvantaged schools and communities.

In regard to the third state assessment, although the state English language proficiency test data were not as prominent, the manner in which the two boys were tested equates invalid test scores due to their testing environment. This has implications of the boys' classroom placement that will be based on their test scores on the language test. Will those boys be placed in the appropriate language level classroom when their scores become available for placement decisions? Student placement in leveled classrooms, have some implications on the resources linked to their level and placement. Some of those implications include teachers, teacher aides, teaching resources, student and teacher schedules, and tests. If an ELL does not score as proficient in the English language test, then further testing is required until he/she scores proficient. Only until the student scores proficient, will he/she finally be placed in a regular grade level classroom. Importantly, these students may not receive instruction that best meets their academic needs because of their possible misplacement. This is not to be interpreted as the teacher's (Velma's) fault, but rather the system's failure. This type of testing issue may be further addressed at the administrative level for it is in their power to make proper testing arrangements to best support student and teacher performance on a wider scale. However, it is through the teacher experiences and voices that issues such as these may be known, hence the purpose of this study.

Misalignment of local assessments. The second prevalent theme in the "tests/assessments" category is *misalignment of local assessments*. Again, most of the local assessment in negative light versus positive light emerged from this theme. This

was also surprising. The following paragraphs include merged accounts of local assessments across all data sets.

In the three-part individual interviews, Frank stated, "District should not be writing expectations of their version of what they think [the state mandated test] is going to look like," because it confuses students. Alice also stated:

> If you're going to put an assessment in front of the children, it should be correct, for one, because we find errors quite often. And that it should be real life. It shouldn't be tricking them. It should be on what they're going to apply and I know problem solving sometimes especially for second language learners is really difficult and I'm not saying don't give them problem solving but I sometimes think they set us up for failure. And I think that part of that is what we experienced in the past—here is our pacing guide, and they want us to follow the pacing guide then now, here comes the blueprint that doesn't match the pacing guide and then here comes the test, and it's like, "Where did this come from?"

Alice's quote relates to Hamilton et al.'s claim, in examining teacher perspectives of curriculum and tests: "For the accountability system to function effectively, the standards should be clear, appropriate, and well understood, the tests should align with the standards, and the curriculum should align with both" (2007, p. 48). Although "curriculum" emerged in some of the data sets, it was not as prominent as the other themes that emerged. The topic of "alignment" in these passages indicates misalignment in the curriculum and local tests that supposedly correlate to the state-mandated assessments. This misalignment is further illustrated in my second observation in Alice's classroom, described below.

167

In the first 50 minutes students are making a thermometer. At the end of the lesson, the teacher transitions to test prep. She begins the practice session by announcing to the class, "Remember on Galileo (local test) we can underline but on Stan 10 (state mandated test) we cannot underline, so we are going to practice. We can still underline but we will have to use an eraser. Why did I say "an?" A student responds, "Because eraser begins with a vowel!" Alice reads the first sample question that requires the students to make an inference. She helps the students to the correct answer and the students bubble in quietly. She explains "So you have to look for key details." Then she reads the next sample question and reads the answers. "You can't see it very well, but you can see the little pink…(eraser trail she is making with her pencil)" A student says, "Oh yeah." Alice continues, "When you see it, then you can bubble it in. When I am done, I can erase my mark so the scanner doesn't pick that up. We're not supposed to have any other marks in our books on this one." She says to a little girl, "No, don't write in your book, we're not supposed to write in our book." She helps the girl erase. Then she reads the testing guidelines. "You're going to read, reread, the Butterfly of Thailand then answer questions 1-3. This is about resources. You may begin reading." Various voices are heard reading and she aks a boy, "What did I say? Remember, do you use your pencil to underline? Use your eraser, thank you." She circulates the tables looking at each booklet. "Honey, you're supposed to be reading the story and not be doing anything with your red pencil." Then she physically guides the student back on track. She returns to the front of the class with her head down while the class is quiet, engaged, and

168

sweeping and blowing eraser marks. "Ok, are you finished? Thumbs up if you're finished. Are you able to tell me why you chose your answer? This is not a timed test, it is just like Galileo. Those of you who need further accommodation, I will give you a cut out that you will hold up and I will reread it to you. I am not allowed to read it twice. Honey, you are not allowed to color in your booklet. If you are caught coloring in your booklet next week you will have detention for a whole week." "Oooooooow!" the students replied. "Mrs. Alice will not take it lightly so do not color in your booklet." She reviews the answers and says, "If you did not bubble that in, you may do that now." (field notes, Feb. 5, 2013)

Alice's observation illustrates the confusion students experience in what is allowed and what is not allowed on both local and state tests. It is understandable to see students have an additional hurdle in test taking in this respect. Not only are there many odds against this particular demographic as past research states, but LEAs may do more damage than good in this respect. It is also important to note that this is also an additional hurdle already present for second language learners and special education students.

Another relevant negative testing aspect is addressed by psychologist Robert Sternberg. He claimed, "Success requires a broad range of abilities, but schools often focus on only one and ignore others. Conventional tests do the same" (1998, p. 14). The data supports schools focusing on a narrowed spectrum of abilities while ignoring untested abilities, therefore robbing students the opportunity for success as Sternberg states. Time is also spent on test taking preparation and not instruction as the data also shows. This brings some understanding to Betty's statement she expressed in her focus group, "Unfortunately, test scores drive instruction." Interestingly, while many educators

169

and researchers support test scores driving instruction as positive, this study shows the cons. Furthermore, Betty's statement and the results of this study conflict with using assessment to drive instruction (Hurley & Blake, 2000) as an effective program for ELLs (McCaw &Watkins, 2008).

Velma was the only teacher whose stance conflicted with the alignment of the local and state assessment as shared by Frank and Alice. "We have quarterly benchmarks that we use, and that's very, very important and it's highly correlated to the success on [the state mandated test]. So it's like 96%. If the kids do well on the Galileo benchmark, it's a 96% correlation that they will do that well or better on the [state mandated test]." Again, according to Alice's assessment correlation percentage, this also supports a misalignment since the tests are not aligned 100%.

The preceding data strongly show participants experiencing various problems in the LEA's effort to track and promote student growth through locally administered tests as a means for students to score well on high-stakes tests. This theme aligns to the conceptual framework by illuminating the testing policies enforced at the local level. Respectively, it also draws light to the work that these local policies impose on teacher practices as a part of accountability mandates. The data portrays Galileo as an additional obstacle for teachers and students. According to the data, teachers and students are better served by eliminating the current local assessment to reduce students' confusion in test-taking and most importantly, provide more in-depth and quality instructional time. It was also made clear that the data tests provided to teachers have shortcomings by not proving enough needed information on their students. Therefore, tests that better inform teachers, and more accurately and fairly assess all students, need to be developed. This test or

170

these tests (hypothetically referred to) should not interfere with the school year's pacing guide and should be 100% correlated to the standards and other tests.

Chapter Summary

This section contains a synthesis of all the themes (guidance and feedback, differentiated instruction, state assessments in negative light, and misalignment of local assessments), how they interrelate, and what they tell us about these teachers' experiences with accountability, namely in culturally, linguistically, and academically diverse classrooms.

Examples of guidance and feedback in the data were provided to explicitly demonstrate or imply guidance and feedback in the participants' practices. It was concluded that teachers' active role of providing guidance and feedback that includes clear directions and examples, based on the needs of the students is paramount. The data also suggest that, in order for teachers to effectively provide consistent guidance and feedback that includes using clear directions and examples, the student-to-teacher ratio needs to be within each teacher's capabilities given the unique needs of the class.

Examples of differentiated instruction, were provided to support teachers' philosophies that include differentiated instruction and to show that they either strove for it or attained it during the testing season. It was evident during the testing season that teachers' instruction was compromised negatively for various reasons. It was concluded that teachers need support, perhaps personnel support to achieve a level of instruction that includes all learners during this time. Furthermore, differentiated instruction relates to assessments through students performing various learning activities that provide opportunities for students to be assessed in different ways. Differentiated instruction may

171

also be supported through professional development that encourages ongoing teacher participation since literature indicates that is an effective practice for teachers of ELLs.

Data were provided to show that participants perceive and experience state assessments in negative light. There was a plethora of data and literature to support this. It was concluded that teachers do not receive enough individual student data to plan instruction that best suits their students. It was evident that teachers are forced to perform in ways that may conflict with giving instruction and with their performance evaluation rubric as a result of the high-stakes test. It was also concluded that the current accountability system unfairly and inaccurately measures teacher performance partly because it forces teachers to teach for breadth and not depth. With regard to the state mandated English proficiency test, a teacher and the testing students were not fully supported with a testing environment free of distractions.

The data also demonstrated the various challenges that teachers experience with local assessments that do not align to pacing guides and the high-stakes test. This also proved to present challenges for students, primarily through the minor differences of the local and state tests, therefore causing confusion.

It is evident that the work of these teachers is not easy for many reasons, including the many practices that they are required to perform. It is also evident that by current policy it is assumed that teachers are capable of leading all of their students to 100% proficiency on state and local tests, given all the hurdles in their midst. It is also assumed that all students will learn and score very well on their tests. Importantly, it is also assumed that teachers have all the resources and personnel support to meet all of the mandated accountability policies placed on them. Although, some teachers shared that

172

they are not in need of resources because either they have everything they need or they buy what is needed, perhaps they need to magnify their lens so that they can more closely see and request for the resources needed to provide guidance and feedback, and differentiated instruction effectively. Going through the motions under the pressure they were observed to be under, does not show that they are effective in their practice. Perhaps teachers have learned not to ask for resources or support because accountability policies have been in place for over a decade. Also, perhaps they have been muted and dictated to for so long that they forgot that they are the experts of their students. Also, because their knowledge and expertise of their own class is not backed by research, their own voice does not matter. The data strongly suggest that teachers' input is valuable and critical to making important decisions.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions, Contributions, and Recommendations for Improving Education Policy

and Practice

This chapter discusses the results and implications of the study in terms of the discrepancy between accountability policies and practices veteran teachers perceive as effective. Identifying gaps in the findings and in the literature review feeds into the recommendations for further research. The chapter is organized in the following sequence. Research questions one, two, and three are answered using the findings of all data sets. Each research question contains an account of what was learned from the study results and findings. The findings are also linked to the literature review, the problems noted in scholarly literature, and the ways in which this study contributes to the literature. The next section is contributions of the study to research and scholarship on educational accountability. The next section includes the recommendations for improving education policy and practice, followed by limitations of the study. The final section is closing thoughts and relates back to my biography in Chapter One.

How Do Veteran Urban Elementary School Teachers Working in Linguistically and

Culturally Diverse Schools Understand the Notion of Accountability?

The data suggest that participants were not clear on what accountability is in terms of federal, state, and local policies. A few exhibited some knowledge and others expressed they were not completely informed of all the details and experienced trouble trying to articulate their full understanding. The narrative profiles of all six participants indicate that they understand that accountability (as it is known in policy) is associated with tests, test scores, school/district labels, and international rankings. They also

understand that it changed teacher practices, attitudes, and instruction. The narrative profiles also showed that test scores are published and available to the public and reshaped school culture as a result of accountability.

In the overall data, participants described accountability in a variety of ways. It was described in relation to tests, standards/curriculum, colleague collaboration, instructional strategies, teacher knowledge as a result of accountability, and the need for accountability. In relation to tests, the phrase "analyzing errors and successes on state and local assessments" was used. In relation to standards/curriculum, "less time for teaching," "students should know and be able to do the standards/curriculum to prevent remedial work," and "access to the same curriculum for a sense of equitable education" were used. In relation to colleaguial collaboration, collaboration (that includes team, school-wide, and individual meetings) to analyze data, and "use the expertise of others" were used. "Using Marzano" and "graphic organizers," were described as accountability in relation to teaching strategies. Also, "a fragmented assembly line" resulting with teachers that are not knowledgeable of all subjects was used to describe the current state of education as a result of accountability. Lastly, "accountability is here because not everyone was being accountable." It was evident that teachers' understandings of accountability derive from federal, state, and local accountability policies as it translates to their work and perceptions.

According to *A Teachers' Union Perspective on NCLB Accountability Issues* (2005*),* some teachers' thoughts on NCLB include a wide range of views. Those views are the system of tests, including the rankings and sanctions linked to the system. Teachers viewed the testing system as a bureaucratic interference in efforts to improve

175

achievement for individual students. Furthermore, it indicated that the law did not focus attention and resources on the students with highest needs. In regard to disaggregated data, teachers have positive and negative feelings. Positively, the data indicated to teachers that not all students are having their needs met. Negatively, there is not enough individual data on students. Furthermore, "[a] great deal of teacher frustration appears to center on the testing of students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency" (Loucks, 2005, p. 204).

The teachers' union data of finding "high-stakes tests as an interference to their efforts to boost achievement for individual students" (Loucks, 2005, p. 204) is supported by the results of this study. In terms of resources, the participants did not express that they are in need of resources, most likely because they feel that everything they need is in their classrooms and those are their daily teaching tools. However, the findings indicate that not all the teachers have all the necessary resources that will help them boost individual achievement. Furthermore, the personnel support is not fully met for all the teachers as well. Jerry, for example, had two teacher assistants, aiding his ability to engage all his students, but other teachers sometimes floundered due to lack of necessary personnel support.

Similar to the teachers' union of positive and negative views of tests, the study found analyzing errors and successes on test scores as a positive. However, teachers spending time on test preparation takes away from their teaching, was a prevalent negative.

What Does Accountability Look Like in These Teachers' Daily Practices?

Using the study's results and findings, I learned that teachers are providing individual, small group, and whole group interventions as needed. The study also shows that teachers exhibit many practices associated with testing. It was also concluded in Chapter Four that teachers were profoundly affected by previous teachers that they try to emulate those teachers in their practice. Conclusively, this question was best answered using the observation records.

The interventions observed are broken down into smaller units of guidance and feedback, similar to the category, "teaching strategies." Guidance is provided in various forms: guided questions, physical guidance (in special education classrooms), guided practice, guiding thinking such as reasoning (higher order thinking), vocabulary and grammar guidance (language development), and reading guidance (decoding and pronunciation). Feedback was found as teachers giving their feedback followed by their guidance practices. Feedback included positive praise and positive reinforcement. Sometimes, the feedback given led to additional guidance of some form until the student arrived at the teacher's desired outcome.

As a part of the guidance and feedback practices that teachers were observed to provide, teachers also motivated students through consistent feedback of positive praise and positive reinforcement. It was also concluded in the Hamilton et al. study that NCLB does not directly motivate students to improve their performance, therefore teachers and communities become responsible to address those needs.

The data show that instruction that occurs at or around testing time, indicates teachers were striving for a certain level of instruction. Due to his or her own sense to be

accountable, that level includes differentiated instruction with challenging lessons to the high performing students. However, they are unable to achieve their desired teaching expectations due to either their usual supports taken away from them for school-wide testing purposes, or because they lack support in general. Negatively, this caused teachers to teach without being fully prepared. However, they strived to make the most of the resources and support readily available to them in their classrooms. This aligns to Hamilton et al.'s (2007), claim that more than half the teachers indicate that students are not exposed to challenging curriculum and instruction as a result of the accountability system.

Teachers know that accountability involves high-stakes testing; therefore, the observations show teachers are preparing for and administering these tests. This means teachers' practices include spending more time on tests and test preparation in a rushed manner. Therefore, they are spending less time on teaching. For example, they are practicing marking or not making visible marks on test books, practicing the process of elimination of answers, and mechanically completing test question after test question on various subjects and skills.

Both interview and observation data, showed that teachers are teaching for breadth and not depth. This teaching for breadth approach was especially evident in the observed and shared sense of urgency that tests "are around the corner" so to speak. It was also shared that the locally enforced pacing guides that map out the state standards for the entire school year, caused some of the teaching for breadth approach. This teaching approach, does not provide teachers the opportunity to fully teach all the necessary standards and skills before testing, therefore it is already known by teachers

178

that students will not pass with flying colors so to speak. Teachers also expressed not being able to challenge higher-level students due to pacing expectations. Again, this aligns to Hamilton et al. (2007); teachers in one state expressed concern on the "pressure to move on regardless of whether students have mastered content (p. 55).

Research-based strategies are prescribed in accountability policies. Differentiated instruction is a research-based strategy and is desired for all of the participants of this study. It was evident that most of them were able to differentiate their instruction in the observations, however it was not consistently evident throughout the observations. It was a prevalent theme in all the data sets, but was not observed at all times.

It was also clear that teachers expressed that they wanted to individualize instruction, but they did not demonstrate this consistently in the observations. For example, in the special education settings, it was evident that the low performing students were receiving one-to-one instruction, however, across the mainstream classes, this was not observed. Furthermore, it was not observed that high performing students were receiving challenging instruction.

The observations also show that in the context of high-stakes accountability, teachers are performing unsupported in a variety of ways. Since data was collected in the 3rd and 4th quarters of the school year, these practices found during this testing season may not reflect practices performed throughout the entire school year. However, two separate observations spaced three months apart reflect this.

The study's findings also show that teachers are concerned about the alignment of tests and pacing guides. Research supports this claim. According to Hamilton et al., in examining teacher perspectives of curriculum and tests, "For the accountability system to

179

function effectively, the standards should be clear, appropriate, and well understood, the tests should align with the standards, and the curriculum should align with both" (2007, p. 48). All three data sets showed teachers not being able to teach all the content that will be tested. Therefore, content that will not be tested is not on the teaching radar of teachers, due to high-stakes tests. Again, Hamilton et al. (2007), claimed a majority of the teachers agree that there is little opportunity for teachers to teach content that will not be tested.

It was evident that all of the teachers illuminate a positive spirit in his/her practice, but it was also noted that they were concerned about testing seen through consequences that would be given to students making additional marks that are not allowed on test materials. It was also noted that one teacher was visibly upset about the conditions that she was forced to work under, but was still carrying out test preparations.

The data also showed that teachers collaborate with their colleagues, most likely through PLCs (Professional Learning Communities), as shared in the interview data. The nature of the collaboration was mostly supported as discussing intervention strategies and analyzing test scores. It was shared that through colleague support, the "overwhelming" work became more manageable. Implementing accountability policies over time and recently, Common Core, has caused some negative emotions in teachers as data in Chapter Four has shown. However, participants have shared that these emotions may be curbed if managed.

The literature in this study addresses the curriculum and standards as including 21st century skills. According to the literature in Chapter Two, most standards and curriculum may be lacking through the absence of soft skills for the workforce, and

creative and practical abilities. In this regard, academic rigor in the curriculum remains

absent because of Common Core's math, reading, and language arts focus. According to

literature in Chapter Two, additional knowledge and skills for the 21st century should

include world languages, economics, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial

literacy, and civic literacy. Conclusively, according to all three data sets and literature,

teachers are not providing an education to prepare students for the 21st century, especially

with the focus on Common Core. It is also evident that the current accountability model

does not afford teachers much opportunity to provide an education in areas that will not

be tested. With the exception of the Learning For Independence program that Jerry uses

for his special education students, teachers do not have the time to teach untested content

areas.

Overall, teachers provide guidance and feedback as needed, further motivating

students to perform. They also make the most of the resources and support they have,

strive for differentiated instruction due to their own educational philosophies even when

pacing guides and testing pressures create hurdles for them to provide quality instruction.

Through external pressures, they are providing a test-driven education to their students,

and that does not necessarily include 21st century preparation.

**Based on Teachers' Knowledge and Experience, What Constitutes Sound and
Appropriate Accountability Practices for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse
Urban Schools?**

Using the study results and findings, I learned that teachers' knowledge and

experience showed a range of practices in positive light for this demographic. The data

used to answer this research question were found in the study's results and findings from the three-part individual interviews, focus group questions, and the observations.

According to the narrative profiles of all six participants, the study's results and findings indicate that the following are sound and appropriate accountability practices for teachers: making a home visit to bridge home and school as an intervention, inspire students, foster a love for learning, encourage hard work, understand student needs to get to their level, differentiate instruction, provide individual and small group instruction, provide every student the opportunity to learn, collaborate with colleagues regarding test data and strategies that work, ask for help when needed, make the best of the circumstances, and curb negative emotions.

The following data were found in the three-part individual interviews, focus group, and the observations. On the instructional level, teachers should provide consistent guidance and feedback to students as needed individually or in small or whole group arrangements, that includes clear directions and examples. They should also provide engaging lessons, seek new learning opportunities, and use technology as a teaching tool. Furthermore, it is crucial that they teach for depth and not breadth, not rush through content, and be sure to teach all students and not just students who will boost test scores.

If it can be helped, teachers should use tests that are aligned to the standards/curriculum, pacing guide, and use tests that are aligned to other tests that measure accountability. Also importantly, if teachers are encouraged to use test results to drive instruction, then the test should accurately measure student abilities. It is also recommended that teachers use a variety of assessments to measure other areas such as

182

performance, participation, and other skills in an environment conducive to testing. Importantly, teachers should be encouraged to test less so teachers will be able to provide quality instruction.

Lastly, teachers should continue to collaborate and support one another as they currently do in policy-driven PLCs. It is important that teachers be heard not just amongst themselves but to other stakeholders. The findings indicated that teachers have not been heard and are forced to perform in ways that goes against their judgment or understandings of the rationale behind the work that they are externally pressured to perform. The following section reviews how the results and findings contributes or fills gaps in the knowledge base. It also identifies what remains to be investigated.

Contributions of the Study to Research and Scholarship on Educational Accountability

According to McCaw and Watkins (2008), the following list contains some effective practices for teachers and schools with ELL students. They state, "Fortunately for public education, much of what is good for English-language learners is also good for all learners (at-risk or gifted)" (2008, p. 64).

- use (give) clear directions and examples (Cohen, 1975; Genesee, 1987; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Senesac, 2002);

- participate in systemic and ongoing quality professional development (Cohen, 1975; Genesee, 1987; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Senesac, 2002);

- communicate high expectations (Kirk, 2002);

- use assessment to drive instruction (Hurley & Blake, 2000);

183

- know how to evaluate the English-language learner (Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, & Sun-Irminger, 2006);

- have a high sense of efficacy in their own ability to teach, characterized by the use of two languages (60 percent English); give quality content instruction in the native language and comprehensible input in English; incorporate the students' home and community culture into the classroom (Cummins, 1991); and

- use a thematic curriculum reflecting the culture of the students (Kirk, 2002).

The practices in this list contain both practices that are dependent on their state or school's practices and individual teacher practices. Participating in professional development, having a high efficacy in their ability to teach using two languages and only 60 percent of English use, and using a culturally relevant thematic curriculum tend to be driven by policy outside the control of teachers. The individual teacher practices that are within their control level are to give clear directions and examples, communicate high expectations, use assessment data to drive instruction, and know how to evaluate ELLs.

The following paragraphs further explain state and school practices in this compiled list for ELLs. As a sanction, districts and schools are required to administer professional development to their teachers as a result of a non-performing accountability status; and/or to maintain teachers' highly qualified status. As for using two languages in a classroom, teachers with a state bilingual endorsement are the only teachers allowed through state policy to teach using two languages. The bilingual instruction can only be

given to students identified as Limited English Proficient on a state approved language test until they test out of the identification as their English proficiency increases.

Lastly, schools are required to use Common Core for English language arts and math. The curriculum containing subjects outside of Common Core, is most likely driven by local educational agencies such as school boards and district/school administration and are not determined by individual teachers. Therefore, it will take the entire school and possibly the community to achieve all or most of these recommendations.

Again, teachers' control level is in the realm of being able to give clear directions and examples, communicate high expectations, use assessment data to drive instruction, and know how to evaluate ELLs. Guidance and feedback may be seen as smaller units of practice that teachers provide in order for students to make large steps of achievement. In other words, it may equate to the same guidance and feedback a parent might provide to his/her child when teaching him/her to ride a bike. Assuming the child's bike did not have training wheels, the parent most likely will not put the child on the bike and let the child go. There are tiny steps of guidance and feedback that the parent will have to provide to get the child from point A of sitting on the bike to point B, where the child is riding the bike completely on his/her own. This study contributes to literature on effective instructional practices (as small units of guidance and feedback) to enable students to make leaps in their academic achievement.

Another finding on the teacher level but is outside of the compiled list by McCaw and Watkins (2008) is differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is not new to literature, nor is it new to schools. It recognizes that students are not all the same and do not fit in a one-size fits all instructional category. It is encouraged in current

185

accountability policies, however, as the data in this study has shown, although teachers believe in differentiate instruction and strive for it, there were some hurdles that prevented them from successfully attaining it. Considering different language levels, special education and gifted students in classrooms where the student to teacher ratio is 33 to 1 as this study has shown, there will be challenges. Therefore, this study may fill the gap that additional support is need for teachers to consistently and effectively deliver differentiated instruction in this context. A support may be additional teachers such as the teacher aides that Jerry had in his classroom since he was observed to have successfully achieved differentiated instruction that used various approaches for his special education students. This does not suggest that additional teachers are the sole answer. However, additional research may further investigate the diverse needs of teachers within these diverse schools to successfully and effectively deliver differentiated instruction.

Furthermore, across all data sets, the study supports teachers using assessment data to drive instruction. However, it is important to note that a single participant does not embrace this conviction as an effective practice as the others do. It was Betty's statement that challenges the popular conviction that assessments should drive instruction (that is when the assessments are assumed to be accurate).

Betty's feedback and observation challenges McCaw and Watkins' (2008) recommendation to use assessment to drive instruction as an effective program for ELLs (Hurley & Blake, 2000) in a number of ways. Betty expressed in her focus group, "Unfortunately, test scores drive instruction." Betty has a valid point that is not only supported in her negative experience with testing as shown in her observation, but also in

186

what the other data has indicated in this theme and the previous theme. The compiled list of related data in the themes, *state assessments in negative light* and *misalignment of local assessments* may discredit using assessments to drive instruction.

This section contains data from the study and literature to support Betty's statement. First and foremost, the English language proficiency testing environment the two boys were observed to be taking in Velma's classroom showed that they were consistently distracted during their make-up test session. As a result of the distraction that the environment caused, the accuracy of scores may have been affected. Further affecting their language level classroom placement and the instruction they will receive. Placement of students also links to the teacher(s) and teacher aide(s) if any, they will receive. There are also implications on the classroom resources that will be available to them, such as books, teaching strategies that are encouraged for their language level, schedules, and funding that the school will receive. These are just a few things that will be affected as a result of the English language test scores. Importantly, the students may potentially be misplaced due to the distracting testing environment they were tested in. If students are proficient in English and test results indicate they are not, then students may wrongfully be placed in an ELL classroom and required to take more English language tests until they score as proficient. This is an example of how the test results will affect the student, teachers, and the rest of the school due to an inaccurate test result.

Secondly, teachers were observed and stated in interviews that they are pressured to teach for breadth not depth. Unfortunately, this takes away from students' opportunity to master subjects especially when instruction is compromised by tests and its external pressures as the data of study has shown. Teaching for breadth and not depth occurs

through the pacing guides that teachers are required to follow. Pacing guides dictate what will be taught and when it will be taught. Often times, teachers find it difficult to stay on target everyday as there are daily unforeseeable occurrences that may cause delays in instruction. The more teachers fall behind for various reasons, the more they will have to rush to catch-up, further compromising quality instruction. This presents a pernicious conundrum in which teachers can, in effect, predict the test results, based on the lack of quality instructional time on the concepts covered, due to the felt need to prepare students more narrowly for the test. Interestingly, rushing to either stay on target with the pacing guide, or to catch-up, leads teachers to barely cover the content and then find out through the test results that students did not master what they were pressured to rush through. This is another way that tests and its results may not positively serve teachers and students.

Third, teachers do not have enough instructional time to teach all the 3rd and 4th quarter standards for testing in the 3rd and 4th quarters. This particular district conducted a series of local and state assessments during the 3rd and 4th quarters. They are a combination of formative and summative assessments. The formative assessment results reflect the concepts that were taught for that particular school quarter. Summative assessment results reflect the concepts that students should master in the entire school year. Both of these assessments are given while students are in the process of learning the concepts that will be covered. This also means concepts that have not been taught will also be tested. When the test results are available, often times teachers do not get to use or see the results because it is late in the school year or the school year has ended. In regard to the summative assessment like the state mandated test, the results may only

188

reflect concepts that students were taught up to the testing period versus what should have been taught up to the end of the school year.

Fourth, as Betty indicated, testing and its preparation occurs over a span of weeks that lead to the end of the school year, leaving little time for instruction. Similar to the testing during the 3rd and 4th quarter, time is spent preparing students in concepts not mastered, as Betty demonstrated in her observation or test taking strategies like Alice demonstrated in her observation. Another test preparation could be "covering" concepts not taught, as Alice shared when she stated she and her colleagues realized how soon testing was amongst them and that they had not taught long addition yet. These demonstrated and shared testing preparations that the teachers experience constitute a downfall in their practice because teachers are not able to give quality instruction.

Fifth, as shown by Jerry's special education students who are unfairly assessed, the tests do not always measure these students' growth. In other words, the growth that his students make is not formally recognized through testing policies such as the AMOs (Annual Measurable Objectives) and AYP (Annual Yearly Progress). Jerry indicated that his students made growth. Unfortunately, the growth his students made, are not measured through the current accountability system. This relates to Velma's claim in her individual interview stating that teachers do everything they can, but do not meet the AMOs. This causes them to ask themselves, "What else are we to do?" This is another downfall caused by testing. Teachers are already working very hard, but end up finding out that they need to work even harder when they get their test results back.

Sixth, as *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools* (2010*)* claims, teachers lack sufficient individual data on students. Hence the question, "How

can I help a student unless I have multiple-year data on that student, not just the scores of one class compared to the scores of another class?" (Loucks, 2005, p. 6). If teachers are not provided sufficient individual student data, then how can they accurately plan their instruction (using limited) data as policy requires them to do?

Seventh, as Alice claimed, local tests are sometimes incorrect, "tricky," and not aligned with other assessments and the pacing guide. Alice indicated that she had reviewed local assessments and found that the test contained errors and "tricky" questions. If a test is inaccurate and tricky, it can be argued that test scores are not an accurate reflection of students' mastered concepts. Alice also found that the tests do not fully align to their pacing guide, which is also locally distributed. If the pacing guide that dictates what teachers teach and local tests do not completely align, then that leaves room for error when students take their tests. Assessments and pacing guides in local policies such as those Alice referred to create additional hurdles for teachers and students. Ironically, the goal is for teachers to teach to the test, but the misalignment causes them not to in this respect. In relation to Betty's statement, the test results in this case would not accurately inform teachers' instruction.

Eighth, Alice's observation showed students confused by what is allowed and not allowed on the local and state tests, thus impacting performance and test results through minor errors such as test scanners detecting additional markings in test booklets as Alice has illustrated in her observation. It is clear that students such as Alice's second graders can easily become confused by minor issues such as making marks in test booklets when it is not allowed. This shows that students are also being tested on keeping their booklets clean. If a student fails to keep his/her booklet clean then their test scores are negatively

190

affected, thus also presenting another inaccurate measure of the concepts students have mastered.

Ninth, the data here indicate that LEAs should not be writing tests that contain what they anticipate to be on the high-stakes tests. Frank made this statement in his individual interview. Alice's observation showed students confused by the local and state tests. Also, Velma shared in an individual interview that the local test has an approximately 96% correlation (versus 100% correlation) to the state test.

The accumulated data and literature lead to an interpretation of the *state assessments in negative light* as not providing teachers enough individual data needed to plan instruction. Therefore, instruction is again affected by possibly misinforming teachers' planning and instruction as a result of the shortcomings current test data provided to teachers.

Betty's loaded statement, "Unfortunately, tests drive our instruction," is contrary to the popular "test-driven instruction" that research supports as an effective practice. The data here has shown that there are many other factors that are associated with tests to indicate that test-driven instruction is not as simple as it may sound, as shown in the results and findings. Betty's case also sheds light on research of tests and instruction in general.

This study also contributes to the knowledge of developing appropriate tests for both teachers and students. Considering existing research and the findings of this study, a new testing system that better suits culturally and linguistically diverse students should contain the following accumulated elements, because McCaw and Watkins (2008) stated,

191

"Fortunately for public education, much of what is good for English-language learners is also good for all learners (at-risk or gifted)" (p. 64).

First and foremost, as most research and teachers agree, tests should not measure a narrow spectrum of abilities. Rather than the current standardized high-stakes tests, tests should support teachers in conducting ongoing assessments during class, measure performance on class assignments, and consider class participation (Gates Foundation, 2010). Furthermore, considering the unique strengths and interests of our diverse society, namely in urban schools, tests should also include practical and creative abilities. As Sternberg (1998) has stated, minority students tend to be strongest in those abilities.

Importantly, it is necessary to change how LEP/ELLs are defined in relation to the tests, therefore making it possible for this demographic to be 100% proficient. If accountability policies are mandating 100% proficiency on tests, then policies should make it possible for all students to meet this mandate. Policies should also place realistic demands on students and teachers, especially with regard to the special education and ELL students. This aligns to research indicating that teachers should know how to evaluate ELLs in *Accountability for Results* by McCaw and Watkins (2008), (cited (Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, & Sun-Irminger, 2006).

Interestingly, this study prompted additional questions to be explored. Are the adopted standards such as Common Core and curriculum equal and adequate for linguistically and culturally diverse students? How can this question best be answered? Literature in Chapter Two contains effective strategies for ELLs; however, does the list stop there? Although there have been significant gains in curriculum and standards, more questions arise as we identify the ongoing needs of diverse and unique populations. As

stated in Chapter One, education is a large entity serving masses of varying and diverse demographics across the nation. Common Core is a large stepping stone in the direction of attempting to create equal opportunities, and to provide a basic foundation of learning to all students in a challenging manner. But more needs to be done especially with accountability's fascination to focus of high-stakes tests. Because as the data has shown here, tests are doing more damage than good to teachers, possibly at the expense of students' education. Perhaps, the urgent testing issues are a job for all stakeholders to tackle.

In some of the study's interviews, participants indicated that other stakeholders with regard to accountability mandates include policy makers (federal, state, and local), parents, local businesses, post-secondary schools, and students. As stakeholders, further research should include their input on developing appropriate measurements of accountability, using a similar research design that this study used. Literature supports that, "Not only does NCLB ignore the role of communities, it seriously undermines the capacity of communities to be part of the solution for low-performing schools. Parents and community leaders in every hearing site (in 10 states) acknowledged that," stated by *The Public Education Network's Open to the Public: How Communities, Parents and Students Assess the Impact of the No Child Left Behind Act--The Realities Left Behind* (2007, p. 2). An example of getting additional stakeholders involved was shared by urban educator Paredes (2011) in Chapter Two. Paredes developed the Academic Parent-Teacher Team (APTT) at her school district.   APTT is a shared concept of accountability involving administrators, teachers, parents, and students that addresses the local needs of

the district to lessen the achievement gap. Perhaps, it is this type of community action that will best serve diverse students and educational communities.

The findings from this study also showed that the current high-stakes testing aspect of the accountability model is broken and poorly constructed for teachers. Reaching out to all stakeholders may help identify other local inequities in schools, as shown by *See You When We Get There* by Gregory Michie (2005). An example of an inequity shared in the statement made by an urban teacher is, "It all depends on which culture you're in, right? A kid who's been exposed to the vocabulary on the test is going to do better, because that's one less obstacle, one less hoop for them to jump through" (p. 140). Urban schools tend to contain a mix of cultures in their communities, therefore, engaging all stakeholders in diverse settings may provide some additional clues on how to make puzzles pieces more easily fit together so to speak.

Stan Karp (2004), in *Many Children Left Behind,* also supported reaching out to other stakeholders in his statement that teachers and students are the key to improvement, not standards and tests. While teachers and students are key to improvement, they "…need a complicated mix of support, resources, motivation, pressure, leadership, and professional skills to succeed…" (p. 58). He further claimed that research does not show that test-driven sanctions can provide these supports.   This leads to a final question worth exploring. If teachers are simply surviving during the testing season as the study has shown, are there other times in the school year that they are just surviving due to accountability policies? These types of questions suggest a single and important recommendation for future research. Future research should include a similar study but on a larger scale in terms of participants and data collection time. The participants should

194

have equal representations of special education, mainstream, and ELL teachers for comparison in order to identify similar and different experiences and perceptions of accountability. This will better pinpoint the unique needs of those respective teachers to better serve the needs of diverse students. Collecting data primarily in the form of observations over the entire school year will give researchers a better understanding of how teachers of all students practice accountability and how policies affect their practice.

Recommendations for Improving Education Policy and Practice

Research question three more thoroughly answers this question at the beginning of this chapter. This section highlights the main recommendations for improving educational policy and practice. The conceptual and theoretical framework is briefly described showing control at each agency level, It is organized starting at the origin, from national to the teacher level. Again, only the main recommendations are highlighted in this section.

The conceptual and theoretical framework of this study is depicted in Figure 3 in Chapter Two. It contextualizes teachers' practice in urban, culturally and linguistically diverse, high stakes schools by outlining accountability polices stemming from national policies through state, and local policies. Policies from these three levels carry on to the work of teachers, therefore determining teachers' practices in the unique situation of those schools. The inquiries of this study examined the altruistic and teacher-enacted practices that current accountability policies do not address.

National policies include Common Core (as the new set of national standards), NCLB/ESEA policies still in place, federal sanctions for schools not making AYP, teachers' highly qualified status, IDEA (special education policies), instructional

195

strategies that need to be research-based, and high stakes tests. State level policies for schools within the state that this study was conducted, reflect the aforementioned national policies but also include English language policies. The state also has their own set of labels or grades rating districts and schools as a sanction. On the local level, all the aforementioned policies at the national and state level apply, but there may be variations by each district. For this particular district, there are additional local assessments that are administered. Also, in addition to Common Core, the curriculum may contain additional subjects that may vary by district. Lastly, all three levels of the aforementioned policies converge on the teacher level, dictating their practices.

Although the focus of the study targeted the teacher level, there were some policy implications on the national, state, and local levels. The more prevalent implication was regarding tests/assessments, as this section will show.

State assessments in negative light presented the following implications. Instruction is compromised during the third and fourth quarter when tests are being administered. If all teachers are forced to perform in ways that may conflict with giving quality instruction and with their performance evaluation rubric as a result of high-stakes tests, then the current accountability system unfairly and inaccurately measures teacher performance because it is forcing teachers to conform to certain practices such as teaching for breadth and not depth, rather than in ways that teachers would truly perform without external pressure.

Similar to students, teachers are assessed under the conditions of external pressures. Therefore, high-stakes tests (state-mandated and Stanford 9/10), in the current accountability equation needs to be reformed in respect to how it is used to measure

196

student and teacher performance. It also needs to be reformed so that it will not impede

or in any way negatively affect instruction. Furthermore, testing environments should

suit student testing needs in order to more accurately measure performance because it

affects classroom placement, instruction, and resources to be used for that student.

In regard to the many interpretations of *state assessments in negative light* and

misalignment of state tests, a new testing system with new tests for culturally and

linguistically diverse students should contain the following: should not measure a narrow

spectrum of abilities but should include practical and creative abilities (Sternberg 1998);

redefine how LEP/ELLs are defined in relation to the tests; 100% proficiency

expectations should be possible and not an unrealistic goal due to the testing system, and

the test(s) should encourage and support teachers in conducting ongoing assessments

during class, performance on class assignments and class participation.

Another recommendation for policy and practice addresses the already

controversial Common Core standards that stems from national policy. Again, Chapter

Five thoroughly supports the need for the curriculum to be supplemented at the local

level. This state fully adopted the Common Core standards, however, what about those

other essential knowledge content areas and skills for the 21st century? Since Common

Core provides a basic foundation of learning, it is up to the LEAs to address the

recommended 21st century content areas and skills stated in chapter 5.

On the local level, the theme *misalignment of local assessments* portray Galileo as

an additional obstacle for teachers and students. According to the data, teachers and

students are better suited by eliminating the current local assessment to reduce students'

confusion in test-taking and most importantly, provide more in-depth instructional time.

If local tests are to be used, tests should inform teachers and more accurately and fairly assess all students. This test or these tests should not interfere with the school year's pacing guide and should be completely aligned to standards and other tests, especially the ones that are built to track growth and measure accountability. For differentiated instruction, it would be advantageous if a variety of test data followed students showing multiyear growth. Perhaps the accumulated multiyear test data will cut the need for excessive testing days found in the school calendar, therefore giving teachers more instructional days.

Again on the local level, the *guidance and feedback* theme showed the following. Teachers' active role of providing consistent guidance and feedback that includes clear directions, relates to the student to teacher ratio of classes. Therefore, teacher aides should be assigned as needed to classes with students requiring the most guidance and feedback.

The *differentiated instruction* theme presented the following interpretations. In order for teachers to innovate and differentiate instruction in a variety of ways, they need multiple measures to evaluate their diverse students. Teachers should be supported using other assessments such as conducting ongoing assessments during class, assessing performance on class assignments, and class participation. Teachers also need support in evaluating English language learners. Teacher aides may be needed in classrooms in order for teachers to effectively create and carry out differentiated instruction.

Guidance and feedback and *differentiated instruction* are related in the sense that teachers need support in lieu of teacher aides to be able to provide consistent guidance and feedback while they carry out differentiated instruction.

198

It is also important to share that with the mix of positive and negative perceptions of accountability expressed by participants across data sets, the positives were often contradicted with negatives. This implies teachers attempt to see accountability policies in positive light but cannot help to also express their negative experiences as well. It is also important to emphasize that teachers are used to working without additional personnel support and with limited resources that they do not feel that they need additional support or resources when the findings show that they do. This is a reflection of teachers' long-term altruistic practices. This negatively impacts them to perceive their support and resources as adequate. Accordingly, school leadership should look more closely at the resources and personnel support that may better serve teachers' practices. Furthermore, it is also important to note that teachers equate accountability with responsibility. As a result, they feel they are responsible for their work. The responsibility placed on teachers should be within practical means for them to fully be accountable, just as expressed in public discourse in Chapter Two. The data showed that teachers believe there should be accountability in their work, however some aspects of the current accountability model does not agree with their work such as testing, pacing guides, and alignment issues. It is these aspects of accountability that teachers feel most strongly about and should therefore be addressed by school leadership and policy makers. Doing so, may positively change teachers' morale levels regarding their work as it is defined through policies, potentially enhancing teacher retention in urban schools.

One of my research questions asked, "Based on teachers' knowledge and experience, what constitutes sound and appropriate accountability practices for linguistically and culturally diverse urban schools?" Along with that question surfaced

some detrimental practices as shown in the results and findings. Many of those things

include the practices observed and the practices compromised as a result of testing.

Again, some of those are test preparation skills that confuse students and teachers, using

tests that are not aligned to the curriculum/standards, and using tests that do not fully

align to tests that are meant to measure accountability. Local policies should consider the

harm it is causing to avoid continuing this detrimental practice.

The elevated sense of accountability in schools across the nation has been at its

peak. Perhaps it is time to more actively engage parents to have a larger stake and role in

their children's education. Within the conceptual and theoretical framework figure, it

should include a parent and student level to more accurately define their roles within

these contexts. Although there is literature on parent and student perspectives on

accountability, further investigation should be directed toward their own roles in the same

approach this study has taken. That is, ask students and parents, what current policies

work and does not work for them. How do they see their role and how does that relate to

success?

It is evident that teachers have many concerns about current accountability

mandates at all levels (federal, state, and local), namely in the areas of instruction and

testing. This chapter examined their concerns and experiences with federal, state, and

local accountability mandates. Each theme directly aligns to the conceptual framework.

The data clearly indicated that reform is needed primarily in testing and how it affects

teachers' practices. The data also showed teachers have been portrayed as lacking credit

to be the captains of their ship so to speak and that they do not have much opportunity to

give quality instruction due to the current accountability demands. In summary, the data

supports a statement Alice made in her three-part individual interview in regard to testing and pacing guides, "… sometimes I think they set us up for failure."

Limitations of the Study

It is important to note the limitations of the study as it may directly relate to the interpretation of the findings. As indicated in Chapter Three, five participants are veteran teachers and one is a novice teacher. The primary purpose of the recruitment of veteran teachers is to elicit input prior to NCLB. Again, one teacher was not able to provide input in this respect. As a result, the sample size was limited to five participants in this regard.

As for special education, students of the two special education teachers take a different version of the state mandated test possibly differing teachers' perceptions and experiences of the state testing aspect of accountability. Furthermore, the veteran teacher who is also the special education teacher of the Learning For Independence students may perceive and experience accountability policies differently than the other teachers due to differences in the curriculum.

Next, one participant is a teacher of self-contained ELL students; therefore this participant's perceptions and experiences of accountability may differ from teachers of mainstream classes.

In regard to testing, one veteran teacher is a middle school teacher who teaches a subject that is not tested on the state or local tests. Thus, this veteran teacher's input on the testing aspect may vary from teachers who teach tested subject areas on one or both of the tests. Lastly, the two veteran teachers who teach second grade may have different perceptions and experiences of the state test because second graders take a different state

test than the other grade levels. Also, it is important to note that the scores of second graders do not affect school or district labels, therefore in that respect, their views and experiences may differ than those whose test scores affect labels.

Given the diverse teachers and their students in this study, it is important to understand that typical urban schools in the Southwestern region of the United States contain similar demographics in students and teachers. With this understanding, the myriad of teacher input may also be a reflection of other schools in the same region with the same demographics. Again, this study has turned the focus on teachers' perceptions and experiences of accountability in linguistically and culturally diverse schools; therefore this study captures the diverse input and experiences that may exist amongst these types of schools.

Closing Thoughts

My journey as a third generation teacher and now researcher has been an interesting one. It was my strong interest to investigate the experiences of other teachers in this dark and sometimes rewarding age of accountability. As the participants of my study, I too wrestled with the meaning of accountability and where it will lead us. Hearing stories of the "Good ole teaching days," made me ponder the changes and ask, why isn't teaching fun anymore? Why are so many good teachers leaving the profession? Why are they leaving just a year or two away from retirement? What can be done to save the profession? What can be done to save the students in disadvantaged communities as a result of teachers leaving? And what can be done to save education before more teachers leave?

In this study I reaffirmed what I already knew but also learned more about how I can improve my own practice. Most of all, I was inspired by these teachers staying in the profession, striving for excellence in their own practices when the odds are against them, and not just being driven by their own love for learning, but their love for their students, the communities, and the future. Knowing that there are more teachers out there with these qualities and knowing that there are researchers such as myself asking many questions, I feel confident that the combined voices can make strides in making improvements collectively and individually. One by one, little by little, barriers breaking, gaps lessening, growth not just measured by a test celebrated, and achievements are made. It is time for teachers to be treated as professionals of their craft and to be heard. It is through their voices that problems in the educational system may be identified and solved, versus losing a decade at the expense of students, their education, and our future to political discourse. With that, there is hope with much work to be done!

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204

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APPENDIX A

SCHOOL DISTRICT CONSENT LETTER

I, Dr. _____, Superintendent of _____ School District, hereby grant permission for Rhiannon Gishey, under the supervision of Dr. Teresa McCarty, to enter the _____ School District, located at _____, for purposes of conducting research for her doctoral dissertation. I give permission for Dr. McCarty and/or Ms. Gishey to contact schools in the district in order to obtain information on teacher perspectives of accountability in urban schools. I give permission for Dr. McCarty and/or Ms. Gishey to access teachers with over ten years of teaching in this district as subjects for her study. I give permission for Dr. McCarty and/or Ms. Gishey to conduct individual interviews, observations of teachers in their classrooms, and focus group interviews as she works to better understand teacher perspectives of accountability in urban schools.

I have been told that Dr. McCarty and Ms. Gishey will maintain strict confidentiality throughout the study, using pseudonyms for the district, schools, principals, and teachers involved. The results will be included as part of Ms. Gishey's doctoral dissertation and, again, confidentiality of the district, schools, principals, and teachers will be maintained.

Signed,

_____   _____ Dr.
_____, Superintendent   Date

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

Dear _____ :

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Teresa McCarty in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore teachers' perspectives and experiences of educational accountability in culturally and linguistically diverse schools.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve engaging in at least one to three interviews, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes, and one observation visit in your classroom. Through these interviews and observation, I will attempt to understand veteran teacher perceptions about current accountability policies (federal, state, and local); identify elements of accountability teachers deem important that current policies do not address; and further identify the implications for improving education policy and practice for diverse public schools. Each interview will be audio taped and remain **absolutely confidential**. You will be given a copy of the interview in written form once it has been transcribed for your review, to ensure that you are comfortable with its inclusion in this study. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview(s) at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

As a participant in this study, you will assist school administrators, policy makers, parents, teachers, and district personnel by informing them of how accountability may be improved according to teacher perspectives. All stakeholders need to be aware of all policies that affect students. There are no foreseeable risks to your participation.

In order to ensure that confidentiality is maintained during data collection, analysis and reporting, all participants will be given pseudonyms. Participants' real names will only be known to the interviewer and no other person(s). The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used. Your responses will all be both anonymous and confidential.

The interview **will not** be recorded without your permission. If you give permission for this interview to be taped, you have the right to ask for the recording to be stopped. All audio tapes, transcripts, notes, and related material will be locked in a safe place inaccessible to any person other than the primary and secondary researchers in this research project. Following data analysis, all data will be destroyed. Data will be kept for no longer than one calendar year.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: (480) 560-3607. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Research Compliance Office, at (480) 965-6788.

Sincerely,

Rhiannon Gishey
Doctoral Student, Educational Leadership, Administration & Supervision
Arizona State University

APPENDIX C

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Accountability Defined by Practicing Veteran Urban Elementary Teachers
Rhiannon Gishey, Co-Investigator
Arizona State University

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INFORMATION FOR INTERVIEWERS: This protocol is a modification of I.E. Seidman's (2006) 3-part interview series, with the 3 parts condensed into a single 60- to 90-minute interview for participants. Questions are designed to maximize a free flow of participants' experiences related to teacher perspectives and experiences of accountability in culturally and linguistically diverse schools.

Participant Category	Part I: Focused Life History – Placing Participants' Experience in Context – Professional History	Part II: Details of Experience – Concrete Details of Participants' Experience of Accountability Mandates in time	Part III: Reflections on Meaning – How Accountability experiences relate to teaching philosophy and professional practice

Teachers	Please tell me as much as you can about your background—
	
	 Where born and grew up?
	 What language(s) speak?
	 Describe your culture/ traditions
	 Where did you go to school?
	  What role did your teachers play in your education? principals? Parents?
	 What role did you play in your own education?
	 Significant successes/achievements?
	  Where does credit fall in that/those success/es?
	 Major failure in your schooling?
	 Failure attributed to what?
	 Explain how you came to teaching
	  Describe your teaching career up to the present
		Explain your understanding of accountability —
		
		 How would you define accountability?
		 Describe your early experiences of being accountable as a teacher
		 Tell me how those experiences have changed to the present
		 Share some similarities in those changes
		 Share some differences in those changes
		 Describe national accountability in education
		  Describe state accountability
		  Describe district or local accountability
		 Who are the stakeholders in accountability?
		 What is their role? Any changes? Similarities?
		 What is your role? Any changes? Similarities?
			Given what you have said about current accountability, what does it mean to you as a teacher?----
			
			 What is your personal teaching philosophy?
			 What are your thoughts about accountability?
			 How does your practice produce successful students?
			 How does your practice hinder students from success?
			 What effective practices would you share to other teachers?
			 What practices would you not encourage other teachers to do? What has been the greatest rewards to you as a teacher?
			 How do you feel supported as a teacher? Not supported?
			  How do you feel you grew as a professional over the span of your career?
			 What is most

			"promising" about accountability?
			Do you have the resources you need to feel successful in your practice?
			What resources do you need to be accountable?
			How do you think your colleagues perceive accountability?
			Do you plan to retire as a teacher?
			Other comments about

APPENDIX D

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Practicing Veteran Urban Teachers
Classroom Observation Protocol

Spring 2013

Observer: _____   Location/Scene: _____

Date: _____   Participants: _____

Activity: _____   Language(s): _____

Other Contextual Notes: _____

Visual Map:

Running Record:

Time	Observation	Observer Comments

APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

A Qualitative Study of Urban Elementary School
Teachers' Perceptions of Accountability in their Practice
A Dissertation Study by Rhiannon Gishey
Arizona State University, Spring 2013

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
First and foremost, thank you for your time to talk to me today. My name is Rhiannon
Gishey and I am conducting a dissertation study in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for a doctoral degree from the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State
University. I am conducting a study on accountability perceptions and experiences of
practicing veteran urban teachers in culturally and linguistically diverse schools.
During this session, I will be asking a series of questions about your experiences and
thoughts about various accountability systems and practices and how you believe it has
impacted you. I am mostly interested in hearing all of your different perspectives and
experiences. I ask that everyone will have an opportunity to answer each question and it
would be helpful not to have side conversations to ensure we hear every comment.
Your name or other identifying information will not be associated with your comments
today. Further, I ask that you not repeat to anyone outside of this session what is shared
in our conversation today to ensure confidentiality for all. Please feel comfortable in
sharing your honest opinions. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose to
withdraw from the focus group at any time without penalty. Simply inform me that you
would like to quit.
This session will be recorded today as a measure for accuracy in your responses. If at
any time you feel uncomfortable answering with the recorder on, I can turn off the
recorder. With your permission, I will turn on the recorder. Is that okay with you? Great.

Please take a few minutes to introduce yourself. Begin by sharing your name.
1. Tell me about your school? Its culture?
2. Are there some daily challenges you encounter in your practice?
3. What is your biggest challenge?
4. What do you wish for all your students?
5. Describe how you feel as a teacher in this age of accountability.
6. How would you define accountability in your context?
7. Are there some daily successes you encounter?
8. What are your biggest successes?
9. Where do you think education is headed?
10. What activities/events are offered by your school that aligns with your perception
    of accountability?
11. What activities/events offered at your school does not align with your perception
    of accountability?
12. Describe your ideal day in your classroom.
13. What aspirations do you have for your students?
14. What makes an excellent school?
15. What makes an excellent teacher?

16. If you could add or subtract subjects to the curriculum, standards, or Common Core, what would you add or subtract?
17. What makes an excellent student?
18. What makes excellent parental involvement?
19. In this age of globalization, advancing technology, and environmental issues, how do you think education should respond?
20. Given your experience, what would you like to share with accountability policy makers?
21. Is there anything else you would like to share about accountability?

APPENDIX F

DEFINTION OF KEY TERMS

Definitions of Key Terms

Accountability System. An accountability system is a method of establishing academic standards and measuring student academic achievement by those standards (education.com, 2011). For example, under NCLB, each state sets academic standards for what every child should know and learn. Student academic achievement is measured for every child every year. The results of those annual tests are reported to the public. The state identifies those schools requiring improvement (Paige, p. 28).

Achievement gap. The difference between how well low-income and minority children perform on tests as compared with their peers. For example, for many years, low-income and minority children have been falling behind their white peers in terms of academic achievement (Paige, p. 28).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). An individual state's measure of yearly progress toward achieving state academic standards. For example, adequate Yearly Progress is the minimum level of improvement that school districts and schools must achieve each year (Paige, 2002, p. 28).

Annual Measurable Objective (AMO). A goal that a state sets each year to define a minimum percentage of students who must meet or exceed standards on its academic assessments. For example, each state's AMO's are applied consistently throughout the state for all public schools, districts, and subgroups of students. All students must be proficient in reading/language arts and mathematics by 2013-14 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Assessment. Assessment is another word for "test." For example, under No Child Left Behind, tests are aligned with academic standards. Since 1994, all schools have been required to administer tests in each of three grade spans: grades 3-5, grades 6-9, and grades 10-12. Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, tests must be administered every year in grades 3 through 8 in math and reading. Beginning in the 2007-08 school year, science achievement must also be tested in each of the three grade spans (Paige, p. 28).

AZELLA. The Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA) is a standards-based assessment that meets both state and federal requirements to measure students' English language proficiency. AZELLA is used for both placement and reassessment purposes. Students who have been identified as second language learners on the Home Language Survey take the AZELLA placement test, and the students' proficiency scores determine appropriate placement for instruction. Students who have been placed into an English language learner program will also take the AZELLA reassessment once per year until they achieve proficiency. Students who have scored proficient on the AZELLA are then monitored for two years to help ensure success after their move into a mainstream classroom. (http://www.azed.gov/standards-development-assessment/arizona-english-language-learner-assessment-azella/, June 20, 2013).

Bilingual Education. Instruction conducted through both the student's native language and English as a second language regardless of program model (Krashen, 1999) in Accountability for Results (McCaw & Watkins, 2008, p. 61).

Common Core Standards. Aligned with college and work expectations; focused and coherent; include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills; build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards; internationally

224

benchmarked so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; based on evidence and research; state-led—coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and Council of Chief State School Office (CCSSO) (Common Core State Standards Initiative website, 2012).

Criterion-referenced test. Each examinee's performance is compared to a pre-defined set of criteria or standard. For example, the goal with these tests is to determine whether or not the candidate has the demonstrated mastery of a certain skill or set of skills (Alta, 2011).

Disaggregated Data. "Disaggregate" means to separate a whole into its parts. For example, in education, this term means that test results are sorted into groups of students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic minority groups, have disabilities or have limited English fluency. This practice allows parents and teachers to see more than just the average score for their child's school. Instead, parents and teachers can see how each student group is performing (Paige, p. 29).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA).   Passed as Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provides funding to the neediest students and schools. It was reauthorized eight times since 1965. For example the most recent reauthorization of the ESEA was the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

English Learner (EL)/English Language Learner (ELL). An individual who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; or who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; or who is an American Indian or Alaska Native and who comes from an environment where

a language other than English had a significant impact on his or her level of English language proficiency; and who, by reason thereof, has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language. (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

External Accountability. Professional accountability (i.e., citizen pressure, legal mandates, regulations, goals/incentives, competition, and practice, consensus) (Firestone & Shipps, 2005, p. 83).

Highly Qualified Teacher.   To be highly qualified, teachers must have: 1) a bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) prove that they know each subject they teach. States must report what percent of all classes have highly qualified teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

High-Stakes Tests. High-stakes tests are tests from which results are used to make significant educational decisions about schools, teachers, administrators, and students. High-stakes testing policies have consequences for schools, for teachers, and for students. For schools, twenty-five states offer financial rewards to successful or improved schools, and in twenty-five states, state government has the power to close, reconstitute, or take over low performing schools (Amrein & Berliner, 2002).

Holistic Accountability. A system that embodies structure, collaboration, implementation, and communication. Information on student achievement are inclusive of professional teaching practices, educational standards, curriculum, sorting strategies, leadership techniques, and resource allocation (Reeves, D. R., 2002).

Internal Accountability. Moral accountability (i.e., beliefs) (Firestone & Shipps, 2005, p. 83).

Limited English Proficient (LEP). The term "limited English proficient", when used with respect to an individual, means an individual (A) who is aged 3 through 21; (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school; (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; (ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and (D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual (i) the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments described in section 1111(b)(3); (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society (U.S. Department of Education, 2011)

Local Education Agency (LEA). An LEA is a public board of education, or other public authority within a state, that maintains administrative control of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district or other political subdivision of a state (Paige, p. 30).

National Center for Education Statistics. Part of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, NCES is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Norm-referenced test (NRT). A test that compares an examinee's performance to that of other examinees. Standardized examinations such as the SAT are norm-referenced tests. The goal is to rank the set of examinees so that decisions about their opportunity for success (e.g. college entrance) can be made (Alta, 2011).

Public School Choice. If a school is identified for school improvement, corrective action or restructuring, a district must provide all students in the school the option to transfer to another public school or public charter school (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Response To Intervention (RTI). Response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and reduce behavior problems. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities (National Center on Response To Intervention, 2012).

Standards-based Accountability. The amalgamation of three ideas intended to improve student achievement through academic standards, standardized assessments, and accountability for student outcomes (Hamilton, L. S., Stecher, B. M., Marsh, J. A., McCombs, J. S., Robyn, A., Russell, J. L., Naftel, S., & Barney, H., 2007). Also known as "the new accountability" (Fuhrman, 1999).

State Education Agency (SEA). An SEA is the agency primarily responsible for the state supervision of public elementary and secondary schools (Paige, p. 30).

Supplemental Education Services (SES). SES are academic services which are in addition to instruction provided during the school day. Services are designed to increase the academic achievement of students in schools in the second year of improvement, or in corrective action, or restructuring. These services may include tutoring, remediation or other supplemental academic services (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Title I. Title I refers to programs aimed at America's most disadvantaged students. Title I Part A provides assistance to improve the teaching and learning of children in high-poverty schools to enable those children to meet challenging state academic content and performance standards. Title I reaches about 12.5 million students enrolled in both public and private schools (Paige, p. 31).

Title III. The Title III program is designed to improve the education of limited English Proficient (LEP) children and youths by helping them learn English and meet challenging state academic content and student achievement standards. The program provides enhanced instructional opportunities for immigrant children and youths. Funds are distributed to states based on a formula that takes into account the number of LEP students in each state (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).