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School District Governance and Classroom Reading Instructional Practices

by

Rokhsareh Kohansal

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

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Professor Christopher Ansell

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School District Governance and Classroom Reading Instructional Practices

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by

Rokhsareh Kohansal

Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor P. David Pearson, Co-Chair
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Government has tried to hold local schools accountable for uneven performance. This may lead local school districts to centralize the control of curriculum and teaching practices. Yet little is known empirically about the extent to which districts have come to centrally manage, or whether districts buffer accountability pressures (neoinstitutional theory) to protect professional control of the technical core of the organization. This study drew from the concepts and predictions of neoinstitutional theory to examine whether and how reading instructional practices were tightly or loosely coupled in a centralized versus a decentralized school district. By employing the organizational-theory concepts of bridging and buffering, I identified the levels of the district or school at which buffering or bridging could be observed, and the specified which policy or curricular tools were employed by district officials or school principals to bridge or buffer the instructional practices from institutional pressures.

Dedication

For M.R.K Mofrad

Without your never-ending love, support, and sacrifice, this would never have happened.

And for Zeinab Nora and Alireza

Without your love and patience, I would not be who I am.

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Introduction

Understanding how reading instruction is controlled, including how this may vary depending on a school district's degree of centralization, is the core issue that motivates this study. This prompts specific empirical questions, including a) how reading instruction is practiced in centralized and decentralized school districts, and b) what policies and organizational tools are employed by school districts to change or maintain what is taught and how, when it comes to reading instruction in classrooms.

We know that in any organization the working environment profoundly affects people's actions and behaviors. How an organization governs and executes its daily operations, including policy planning and implementation, determines the ways that people in the organization behave and act. The governance of a school district is structured, due to some local conditions, in a certain form to provide educational services to its community. Some school districts are governed through centralized approaches while others adopt decentralized methods. The governance of the districts that contributes to the policy environments in which classrooms and schools are nested, undoubtedly affects the implementation of instructional reforms.

I became interested in learning about the influence of school district governance on classroom instructional practices during my involvement in a reading instruction project in an urban school district that had been taken over by the State of California. In such close exposure to the situation, I became aware of the important role of the district's governing approach in influencing classroom instructional practices. Close observation of the effects of a district governance change on teaching and instruction at the classroom level in a short period of time motivated me to think about district governing approaches and their effects on classroom instruction. I embarked on an academic adventure to learn about schools' organizations and organizational behavior theories that helped me understand how organizations' technical and institutional environments interact.

Scholars of education have debated the merits of centralized versus decentralized governing approaches of the districts. Review of the literature revealed that some scholars believe that when districts are highly centralized, instruction becomes unnecessarily narrow and standardized (Resnick & Glennan, 2002). By contrast, others believe when districts provide a decentralized approach it breeds excessive diversity and instructional inefficiency (Corcoran et al., 2001). Finally, I learned one important fact on which scholars agree: School districts can and do influence instructional practices in the classroom (Spillane, 1996; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Coburn, 2004). This set the stage for me to construct my study that is presented throughout this dissertation.

General Context of the Study

Many studies have been conducted to understand how education systems are responding to the instructional reforms and new policies. In contemporary times this includes the variable ways in which district leaders respond to government pressure for accountability. At the classroom level, the findings of recent studies on instructional policies implementation illustrate that: (a) within the context of standardization and accountability teachers struggle to balance their students' actual needs and what they are demanded to teach (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Kersten & Pardo, 2007), (b) there are degrees of instructional policy implementation in various classrooms (Stodolsky & Grossman, 1999; Stein & D'Amico, 2002; Coburn, 2004), and (c) in implementing instructional policies teachers engage in cognitive processes to make sense of

instructional messages (Spillane, 1996; Coburn, 2004). However, these studies do not address issues such as the potential impact of districts' organizational and governing approaches on classroom reading instructional practices. These studies also do not address the reasons behind variations in the implementation of the same instructional policies in different school districts and schools.

Current trends in education systems of the United States are intertwined with the phenomena of standardization and accountability. Recent studies on instructional reforms indicate that standardization and accountability pressures move the school systems toward centralization (Fuller, 2008; Rowan, 2006). A widely-debated question among organizational scholars is whether the recent standardization and accountability pressures through centralized district governance reach classrooms to tightly couple the technical core and the institutional environment expectations (Spillane & Burch, 2006; Rowan, 2006).

Theoretical Perspective

This research was conducted within the frames of neoinstitutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1987). By employing the frameworks of the neo-institutional theory I examined, whether and how reading instructional practices may be tightly or loosely coupled from the institutional environment rules and expectations in centralized and decentralized school districts. Meyer and Rowan's (1977, 1978) formulation of decoupling depends on a model of the environment that consists of two parts: the technical environment, which puts demands on organizations for efficiency, and the institutional environment that puts demands for conformity to institutional rules and taken-for-granted understandings of which the work is about. Meyer and Rowan (1978) argued that the decoupling allowed educational organizations to be responsive to both kinds of pressures, i.e. school districts and schools could respond to the institutional environment symbolically while classrooms continued to be responsive to the technical environment (Rowan & Miskel, 1999). Yet, there is evidence that the institutional and technical environments are not separate but mutually interactive (Powell, 1991; Scott et al., 2000; Scott, 2001).

Many scholars believe that formal organizational structures and organizational activities are often loosely coupled (March & Olsen, 1976; Weick, 1976; Meyer & Rowan, 1991; Scott, 2003) i.e. organizations buffer their technical core from demands expressed by the institutional environment. Many systems contain elements that are only weakly connected to others and that are capable of fairly autonomous actions (Glassman, 1973; Weick, 1976). According to Spillane and Burch (2006), the dependence between organizations and their institutional environments produces organizational structures, policies, and practices that often are loosely coupled with policy makers' intentions.

According to Roberts (2004) a tightly coupled system is one where any changes in the organization's environment or design, or the fit between them, will result in compromised performance. In this framework, the technical core is aligned with the demands of institutional environment, and the technical core is responsive and attuned to the well-defined institutional environment. In this perspective the technical core is closely linked to the institutionalized definitions of academic achievement and efficiency.

This research further intended to identify the levels at which buffering or bridging happen. To understand and identify the organizational levels that buffering or bridging happens, I built on Honig and Hatch (2004) conceptualization of "bridging and buffering". Bridging and buffering (Honig & Hatch, 2004), rooted in institutional theory, explains how organizations

respond to external regulation and control. In this framework, districts and schools are understood as organizations in which members collectively negotiate external policies with their own internal goals and strategies. By bridging I simply mean accommodating policy demands through initiatives and structures directly aimed at meeting policy goals. Bridging activities involve organizations' selective engagement of environmental demands to inform and enhance implementation of their goals and strategies. Buffering, on the other hand, represents resistance to policy goals by focusing on local objectives and priorities. Honig and Hatch (2004) stated that buffering is not the blind dismissal of external demands but strategically deciding to engage external demands in limited ways. According to Honig and Hatch (2004), schools shape "the terms of compliance" along the continuum between bridging and buffering, a process that can include selective and symbolic implementation.

By employing the frameworks of the neoinstitutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1987), I examined whether and how reading instructional practices may be tightly or loosely coupled from rules pressed by the institutional environment (e.g., NCLB and state-led accountability regimes) and expectations in centralized and decentralized school districts. This research further intended to identify the levels at which buffering or bridging happen in organizations. To understand and identify the organizational levels that buffering or bridging might happen, I built on Honig and Hatch (2004) conceptualization of bridging and buffering, which is discussed extensively in Chapters 2 and 4 of this work. Bridging and buffering concepts helped me to better understand how and by whom, the policy tools are used to bridge and/or buffer the technical core from the institutional expectations.

Study Design

This study addresses the following questions: 1) How is reading instruction practiced in centralized and decentralized school districts? 2) What are the policies and levers the school districts utilize to change or maintain the reading instructional practices? 3) How do the nature and use of the districts' policies and levers tightly couple, loosely couple, or decouple the technical core (reading instruction) from the institutional environment?

To achieve the objectives of this study, the research was conducted at the level of classroom within two school districts in Northern California, with two governing traditions of centralized and decentralized. To select districts with different organizational approaches, I performed a preliminary investigation by interviewing people who were knowledgeable about the governance of the individual districts. In selecting the districts and the schools within the two districts, I also considered their demographic similarities. Two elementary schools from each district and four classrooms (two first and two fourth grades) from each school were selected based on the principals' suggestions. Teacher experience (teachers with more than four years teaching experience) was considered as one important factor for selecting the classrooms. All four participating schools were Title I, Reading First schools.

This research combines qualitative and quantitative methods and uses the following data collection tools: (a) a survey that administered to all teachers in each school, (b) an interview protocol was used to interview sixteen teachers, four instructional specialists, four school principals and four district curriculum and instruction administrators, and (c) an observation protocol was used to observe instruction in the classrooms of the participating teachers.

The survey and interview questions were developed to provide information about the ways teachers planned their reading instructional practices and to identify the forces they

considered in their planning and practicing their reading instruction. An observation protocol was used to provide a view of how each teacher actually performed instruction in her classroom. The survey was designed using construct map, an item response modeling (Wilson, 2005), to provide a big picture of reading instructional practices in four participating schools.

All the data were processed and analyzed carefully and several important findings were produced that are summarized in the following section.

Research Terminology

Centralization and Decentralization

The concepts of centralization and decentralization in the context of this study are defined in a spectrum that represents the organizational approaches of the two school districts. Based on my preliminary investigation, the centralized school district has a highly centralized approach in implementing reading curriculum and instruction. A centralized school district is bureaucratized and formalized, decisions are made at the top of hierarchy, members lack autonomy at the school or classroom levels, and tight control of activities is practiced. Schools in such districts are subject to institutionalized rules and norms, and are organized around a set of bureaucratically established classifications, which already define legitimate form of instruction. A centralized district develops a common set of expected classroom reading instruction competencies. This means that a centralized district directly controls reading instruction at the policy as well as the implementation levels. Thus, a centralized district directly supervises all aspects of the instruction including reading materials, contents, strategies, professional development, and assessments via various mechanisms.

The extreme right of the spectrum is decentralization, where a decentralized school district is characterized by heightened mutual adjustment based on feedback, high professional discretion, exercise of autonomy, interdependence and communication amongst members, and loose coordination practices. Such a school district has a decentralized approach in coordinating reading curriculum and instruction. In a decentralized school district, although the district supervises reading instruction at the policy level, there are possibilities and opportunities for the schools or teachers to adapt at the implementation level. In such a situation reading materials, professional development, and assessments are all coordinated and provided by the district while the schools or the teachers could only modify their instructional materials and strategies. Schools in a decentralized district are less bounded by regulatory controls and are subject to locally defined demands for reading instruction.

Instruction

Reading instruction is naturally an important part of this study given its aim to investigate reading instructional practices in the two centralized and decentralized school districts. Following Cohen and Ball (1999), in this research I define instruction as a set of organized and structured "interactions between teachers and students around educational materials" (Cohen & Ball, 1999, p. 3).

Control and Coordination

Control in this research is defined based on Rowan's definition of control. Rowan (1990) argues that the control strategy involves the development of an elaborated system of input, behavior, and output controls designed to regulate classroom teaching and standardize student opportunities for learning, where the expected result is an increase in student achievement. In other words, control is a systematic effort by management to compare performance to predetermined standards, plans, or objectives in order to determine whether performance is in line with these standards (Mockler, 1970). By coordination I mean use of specific levers to negotiate, communicate, and facilitate classroom instructional practices smoothly and efficiently to improve the technical core while illustrating conformity to the institutional expectations.

The Findings

The core findings presented here stem from my multiple methods of observing organizational practices. To preview my findings, I will detail in this thesis the following core empirical findings:

a. Reading instruction was practiced differently in centralized and decentralized school districts. The two districts adopted different curricular structures and schools and classrooms showed different degrees of fidelity in implementing the mandated curriculum and other instructional programs. This study identified different degrees of instructional decision-making flexibilities in the schools of the two districts. This study also revealed that there were differences between the two districts in their instructional focus and emphasis.

b. Both districts employed similar tools either to control or coordinate reading instructional practices. Centralized district levers of control tightly coupled classroom instruction to the institutional expectations while in the decentralized district the levers were employed to coordinate instruction.

c. Principals played important roles as they bridged and buffered with regard to mediating external accountability demands. The findings indicate that principals were the agents of buffering and bridging and their collaborations with the instructional specialists of the schools determined whether they buffered, bridged, or shaped "the terms of compliance".

d. The findings suggest that principals own knowledge of literacy and instructional practices was a determining factor in explaining his/her efforts to bridge or buffer the classroom's technical core from the institutional environment. The research findings revealed that when the principal had sufficient literacy and instruction knowledge, the school ceremoniously conformed to the institutional environment while tried to buffer its technical core from the institutional expectations, whereas when the principal lacked sufficient literacy and instructional knowledge the school bridged its technical core to the institutional expectations to gain legitimacy to survive.

Organization of the Study

This thesis is organized within the following chapters to describe and analyze these findings. Chapter 1 deals with the literature review and theoretical framework by tracing the interest in school districts' history and organizations, role of school district in instruction, school district organization and governance, reading instruction policies, and instructional leadership.

Chapter 2 presents the methods of data collection and analysis employed in this study. Chapter 3 sets the stage for the analysis of the findings by describing and comparing reading instructional practices in the classrooms of the two school districts. In this chapter data about instructional tools such as curriculum, assessments, inspections, instructional programs and resources between the two cases of the districts are provided. Chapter 4 examines the organizational mechanisms used by the school districts in controlling or coordinating classroom reading instructional practices. In this chapter all the concrete instructional tools that were used in both school districts either to control or coordinate are described and compared between the two school district cases. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and discusses its implications for districts, schools, and classrooms in the contexts of the two centralized and decentralized school districts.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter summarizes prior work that provides the theoretical frames and empirical evidence on how government and local districts variably organize instructional processes inside classrooms. I pay particular attention to the centralization (or decentralized coordination) of district leaders may condition the organization of instruction. I discuss prominent empirical literature that has analyzed the role of the school districts in influencing instructional policy in the United States: (a) the role of school districts in shaping instruction, organization and governance, and (b) the mechanisms districts use to monitor and improve classroom instruction, reading instruction policy, and instructional leadership. Woven within these themes, I discuss the theories and lenses the scholars have used to date to analyze the organization of school systems. Neoinstitutional theory, a theoretical perspective that I use throughout this study, is the overarching framework that guides the flow of the review of literature in this chapter.

History of School District Organization in the United States

Local school districts are the fundamental governance agencies, by tradition and in practice, within the entire hierarchy from federal to state to local enactments of policy. Despite the recent growth of state and federal power, local districts still make a great range of decisions, including how to fund and organize educational programs (Travers & Westbury, 1989). Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century schooling in the United States operated within a local context. States usually provided a general support to the school districts with rules specifying attendance requirements for pupils, the length of the school year, and minimum qualifications for teachers. However, most educational decisions were still made within local communities, first at the school and then increasingly at the district level. Funding provisions were also predominantly local, based mostly on property taxes. The local environment of schools often entailed complexity that was neither structured nor organized (Murphy, 1974). Research revealed that local schools and districts retained considerable latitude in coping with state and federal policies (McLaughlin, 1987).

Beginning the late nineteenth century and proceeding up to the present, urban school reformers have sought to integrate many schools into a few districts, each with a single, sovereign board representing the entire community and managing the schools through a bureaucratic district office. Average school enrollment increased steadily and substantially from 1940 to 1980, while the average number of school districts per state declined eightfold during the same period (Meyer et al., 1987). The history of this movement has been characterized as possessing a driving ideology to create and impose on all schools "the one best system" (Tyack, 1974). This type of centralization has been associated with some bureaucratization of the system: superintendents and their administrative staffs expand over time, and there is increased formalization of administrative roles both at school and district levels (Tyack, 1974). Yet, some of the complexity of the local environment continues to be managed informally.

According to Rowan (1990) two waves of inconsistent and potentially incompatible district reform initiatives were implemented in the 1980s. In a first wave of reform, many large urban districts and several state legislatures responded to the problem of low achievement in schools by increasing bureaucratic controls over curriculum and teaching. However, in reaction to this approach reformers argue that that bureaucratic controls over schools are incompatible with the professional autonomy of teachers and potentially damaging to teacher morale (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1985; Rosenholtz, 1987). Furthermore reformers argued that the benefits

provided by school districts through effective guidance and support to schools have proven limited and, further, that the bureaucratic form of administrative management has restricted effective decentralized leadership (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hill & Celio, 1998; Hill, Pierce & Guthrie, 1997). Thus, the second wave of school reform advocated a decrease in bureaucratic controls in education and the creation of working conditions in schools that enhance the commitment and expertise of teachers.

The current state of educational reforms in the United States can be thought of as the third wave, which started with the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Supporters of the NCLB claimed that one of the strong positive points of the bill would be the increased accountability required of districts, schools, and teachers. According to the legislation, schools are required to pass annual tests supposedly to judge how much improvement the students have made over the fiscal year. These yearly-standardized tests are the main evidence used to decide whether districts and schools are living up to the standards they are required to meet. If these improvements are not met, the districts and schools face decreased funding and other punishments that contribute to the increased accountability. Since 2001, the standards and accountability movement of the United States education system has increased institutional pressures on the school districts to promote bureaucratic control over the school activities in an attempt to produce expected student outcomes.

Since the late 1980s state authorities began focusing on the quality of education and formulating "accountability systems" (Bowers, 1989). In order to address the federal and state accountability and standardized pressures, school districts had to become more involved in the curriculum and instructional aspects of schools. They were required to increase their internal capacities to address the implementation of the new mandates at the schools (Meyer et al., 1987) and revise their accountability system to better measure student performance on content standards (Guth et al., 1999).

The fact that the districts have become more involved in classroom instruction has recently turned the attention of researchers to investigate the role of the school districts in shaping instruction. Current literature informs us about the history of local school districts' authoritative changes over the past thirty years, yet it neglects the impact these changes might have had on classroom instruction. In this research, I intend to contribute to the literature by better understanding the processes through which local school districts transmit environmental and institutional pressures to the schools and classrooms. The purpose of this research is to investigate whether the governance of the school districts could determine the processes through which they influence classroom instruction. It is, hence, necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the role of the districts in instruction.

How School Districts Variably Coordinate Instruction Inside Classrooms

The successful implementation of instructional policies depends on the broader policy environment in which classrooms are nested. A number of investigations concluded that teachers' instructional practices are profoundly influenced by the institutional constraints that they attempt to satisfy, the formal and informal sources of assistance on which they draw, and the materials and resources they use in their classroom practice (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Brown, Stein, & Forman, 1996; Nelson, 1999; Stein & Brown, 1997; Cobb et al., 2003). Many scholars believe that school districts can and do influence these conditions in the classrooms (Spillane, 1996; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Hightower et al., 2002). Spillane (1996) argued that if teachers work in policy environments where they have few opportunities and few incentives to

learn about revising their practice, they are less likely to enact the reforms. Scholars believe that school districts frame or form the instructional policy environments that the teachers work in (Spillane, 1996; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Coburn, 2004).

Recent literature on school improvement has stressed the important role that districts can play in improving instruction by providing vision, focus, support, and policy coordination and by building commitment at the school level (Bodilly, 1998; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Spillane, 1996). Williams et al. (2005) found that some California elementary schools serving largely low-income students score higher on the state's academic performance index (API) than other schools with very similar students, prompting them to conclude that district leadership, accountability, and support appear to influence student achievement.

The history of urban school districts indicates that while they do make important decisions about numerous instructional guidance instruments including staff development, curriculum guides, curricular materials, teacher supervision, and student assessment (Little, 1993), they have routinely experienced difficulty carrying out their tasks and persisting with a reform long enough to see results. Some critics have even argued that districts are inherently incapable of stimulating and sustaining meaningful instructional reforms because of their political and bureaucratic character (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hill & Celio, 1998).

The implementation of instructional policy at the classroom level depends on how school districts communicate these policies down to the classrooms. According to Coburn et al. (2009) features of school districts has been identified by scholars as one important factor in implementation of reading policies. RAND's study of the role of districts in fostering instructional improvement indicated that district progress at achieving instructional improvement (2005) largely rest on the degree to which strategies were aligned and mutually supportive, enabled multiple stakeholders to engage in reform, balanced standardization and flexibility, and used local accountability policies to provide incentives for meaningful change.

The role of the school districts in implementing instructional policies has been studied and analyzed through different perspectives. Some scholars acknowledge that school districts are policymakers as they attempt to align state instructional policies to provide stronger and more coherent guidance for classroom teachers in support of ambitious learning outcomes (Spillane, 1996). School districts contribute to instructional policy making in at least three ways:

> First, local districts matter in that their instructional policy-making efforts have the potential to undermine state policymakers' efforts to streamline the instructional guidance system by concentrating instructional policy making at the state level (and at the school building) . . . Second, school districts' policy-making initiatives matter in that they influence state policymakers' efforts to broadcast their messages for instructional reform to school practitioners . . . Third, districts matter in that they influence state-level efforts to increase the coherence of the instructional signals that are sent to school practitioners from within the school systems. (Spillane, 1996, p. 83)

Spillane (1996), in a study conducted in two school districts to investigate local educational authorities actions with regards to implementing state instructional policies, found that the district "administrators were not simply implementing or carrying out the state's policy directives; rather, district administrators took proactive policy-making stance, defining policy problems and developing their own instructional policies" (p. 65). According to Coburn et al. (2009), some "studies suggest that school districts influence teachers' implementation directly by creating instructional expectations in the form of standards and providing opportunities for teachers to learn new approaches, but also indirectly by creating normative environments and

definitions of high quality teaching" (P. 577).

A second perspective suggests that the school districts can play the role of the capacity builder. According to this perspective, districts build capacity to make the implementation of the instructional policies possible in schools. According to RAND's study (2005) capacity has three dimensions: human capital (level of staffing, the knowledge, skills, and will of staff), physical capital (time, materials), and social capital (trust, normative culture). Several studies have shown that various dimensions of district capacity can greatly affect district instructional reform efforts (Burch & Spillane, 2004; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Elmore & Burney, 1999; Firestone, 1989; McLaughlin, 1992) and are important in generating local support for successful implementation of state and federal policy (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988). One study (Meyer et al., 1987), examined the funding environments of public school districts to see whether the organized complexity of these environments predicts administrative elaboration in both positions and funding, concluding that federal funding generates unusually high levels of administrative expenditures and staffing size, in comparison to state and local funding. According to this study, districts respond to the instructional policies by changing their structure in order to transfer the policies to schools. In other words, in order for the local, state, and federal instructional policies to be enacted, school districts build their internal capacities to execute and implement the policies at the school level. "Reading First" policy is an example illustrating districts' actions in building their capacities to be able to implement it in the classrooms. More specifically, some studies chronicle that school districts influence implementation of the reading policies by the level and quality of capacity-building activities that they provide to support instructional change (Dutro et al., 2002; McGill-Franzen et al., 2002).

A third perspective highlights school district central office administrators as key mediators of policy implementation and outcomes (Burch & Spillane, 2004; Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, 2002; Honig, 2003; Spillane, 1996). In this perspective, school districts mediate between schools and state authorities, interpret state standards and policies as they develop their own, and manage instructional reforms. District policies structure and channel schools' interactions with external agents and ideas (Goertz, 2001).

School districts, be they policy makers, capacity builders, or policy mediators, are important organizations connecting the schools to the larger institutional environment. The nature and locality of school districts have long allowed for protecting their technical core, i.e. classroom instruction, by decoupling it from the institutional environment pressures. The increased focus of federal and state policies on classroom instruction due to the national awareness of schools' failure in preparing students for the future of this country led local school districts to a loss of independence in policy and decision making. Over the years, increased awareness about poor student achievements has forced the federal and state policies to increasingly restrict school districts by attaching many strings to the methods they can use to solve their problems and/or meet policy mandates. In addition, federal and state policies continue coming to the districts along with money and resources to support the implementation of policies. In this situation, school districts become more dependent to various levels of government;, therefore districts are only able to buffer their classrooms from the institutional environment expectations to a limited degree, allowing federal and state policies reach to directly into classrooms over time. Increased pressures on districts and schools through standardization and accountability systems have further forced classrooms to embrace even more institutional pressures and expectations. Meanwhile, some school districts use many levers to tightly couple classroom reading instruction to the institutional expectations, while others tend to buffer their

technical core from environmental pressures.

In summary, the literature on the role of school districts suggests that they play an important role in instruction through policy making, capacity building, and mediating the federal and state policies, yet it does not provide conclusive evidence about the influences districts governing conditions might have on the execution of their three mentioned roles. It is not known whether the various roles districts play in instruction may be related to their governing approaches. For example, it remains unclear whether decentralized or centralized governance of the school districts contributes to the role they play and the practices they enact.

From the literature, we know that the governing systems of organizations determine the mechanisms through which they control the policy implementation processes (Scott, 2003). We do not, however, know whether and how different control mechanisms are used under different governing structure. Through this research I intend to contribute empirically to the literature by understanding the instructional differences the school districts might have considering their governing approaches through identifying their instructional control mechanisms. The underlying hypothesis of this research is that the governing structures of school districts can and will impact classroom instruction by using different instructional control levers—the very topic of the next section. To clearly explain how, why, and through what organizational mechanisms the districts variably tried to coordinate instruction inside classrooms I turn to organizations literature.

School Systems Organization and Governance

School Systems and Institutional Environment

Institutional theory seeks to understand the persistence of structures, norms, and patterns of social relationships in organizations by highlighting the ways in which they are linked to organizations' broader social and cultural environment. Institutional scholars generally reason that because an organization depends for survival on the support of external constituents, it must conform to accepted social norms (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1987). Institutionalized expectations are expressed in a broad class of elements that include rules, blueprints for action, standard operating procedures, impersonal prescriptions, rationalizing techniques, formalization, and documentation (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1987). Institutional theory suggests that the expectations regarding appropriate organizational forms and behavior that are expressed in the wider social environment promote the development of an organization's formal structure. Institutional theory indicates that practices and policies adopted by schools and governing agencies reflect the rules and structures in wider society (Metz, 1990; Meyer & Rowan, 1978; Meyer & Scott, 1983; Ogawa, 1992).

In this conception, similarities in school structures, roles, and organization are shaped by cultural rules, shared norms, and taken-for-granted understandings about such things as the nature of subject matter, students' and teachers' roles, and what it means to be a school (Metz 1990; Meyer & Rowan 1977; Meyer, Scott, Deal 1981). Most institutional theorists have located the source or origin of these common cultural conceptions about schooling in the institutional environment outside the school. They have explored how norms and cultural conceptions are constructed and reconstructed over time as they are carried by individual and collective actors and are embedded within policy and governance structures (Scott, 2001; Scott, Mendel, Pollack, 1996).

Theoretical developments in institutional theory have raised questions about the way in

which the decoupling argument shapes views of the environment's influence on organizations' core technology. The decoupling argument has been at the core of institutional theory for more than thirty years. In this perspective an organization, particularly a government or professional organization, gains legitimacy by conforming to external expectations of acceptable practice while separating its internal technical activities from externally directed symbolic displays. An organization thus may ceremonially adopt elements of formal organizational structure, such as standardized practices, to demonstrate the rationality of its operations to external constituents, rather than to control organizational members (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Meyer and Rowan (1977; 1978) argue that schools decouple structural or procedural changes in school organization from classroom instruction to buffer the technical core from scrutiny or to allow schools simultaneously to meet multiple and conflicting demands from the multilayered environment (Meyer et al. 1981). In other word, institutional organizations, such as districts or schools, turn their back on their technical core in order to concentrate on conformity to their institutional environment. It is more crucial for a school, in order to survive, to conform to institutional rules—including community understandings—defining teacher categories and credentials, pupil selection and definition, proper topics of instruction, and appropriate facilities. It is less essential that a school district for example to make sure that teaching and learning activities are efficiently coordinated or even that they are in close conformity with institutional rules (Meyer et al, 1981).

Meyer and Rowan's (1977, 1978) formulation of decoupling depends on a model of the environment that consists of two parts: the technical environment, which places demands on organizations for efficiency, and the institutional environment, which places demands for conformity to institutional rules and taken-for-granted understandings.

Loose coupling is another construct frequently used in institutional analyses of educational reforms (Weick, 1976; Driscoll, 1995; Rowan & Miskel, 1999; Coburn, 2004). In the 1970s and early 1980s, institutional analyses of organizations tended to be built around Parson's (1960) ideas about the inevitability of loose coupling between the technical and institutional levels of management in organizations. Parson's view was that actions taken to align organizations with societal norms and values frequently conflicted with technical activities designed to foster organizational goal attainment, leading to what he termed as a "qualitative break" across the technical and institutional levels of organizational management. Many scholars believe that formal organizational structures or the institutional expectations and organizational activities or the technical core are often loosely coupled (March & Olsen 1976, Weick 1976, Meyer & Rowan, 1991). In this context if problems develop in one part of the system, they can be sealed off from the rest of the system (Scott, 2003). Meyer and Rowan (1977) argued that in a loosely coupled system,

> structural elements are only loosely linked to each other and to activities, rules are often violated, decisions are often unimplemented, or if implemented have uncertain consequences, technologies are of problematic efficiency, and evaluation and inspection systems are subverted or rendered so vague as to provide little coordination. (P. 343)

Loose coupling encourages researchers to consider simultaneously the interdependence and indeterminacy in the pattern of interactions among organizational elements (Orton & Weick, 1990). Loose coupling is frequently used in institutional analyses of educational reforms. Operating in a societal sector characterized by fragmented and multilayered governance, U.S. schools were seen as striving to conform to many different and potentially inconsistent rules and regulations (Weick, 1976; Spillane & Burch, 2006).

It is emphasized by scholars that recent standards-based accountability movement caused a considerable shift in the technical and institutional demands on districts (Myer & Rowan, 2006). If the institutional environment influences the technical environment and the classroom occupies the technical core of educational organizations, then it seems possible that the institutional environment could shape the classroom in both direct and indirect ways. Coburn (2004) argued that this point raises the possibility that schools are subject to institutional pressures regarding not only organizational structure but also conceptions of appropriate pedagogy. Some studies of public schools provided evidence that norms of appropriate instruction from the institutional environment do reach within organizational structure to influence teaching and learning and that teachers respond to these pressures in multiple ways (Spillane, 1997; Coburn, 2004). This idea takes us to the concept of tight coupling.

According to Roberts (2004) a tightly coupled system is one where any changes in the organization's environment or design, or the fit between them, will result in compromised performance. In view of recent standardization and accountability movement in the United States education system, it is debated whether institutional environment pressures and demands have influenced the technical core (Rowan, 2006). In this framework, the technical core is aligned with the demands of institutional environment, and the technical core is responsive and attuned to the well-defined institutional environment expectations. This approach in education system suggests tight coordination and control of classroom instructional practices in order to conform to institutional expectations. In this perspective the technical core is closely linked to the institutionalized definitions of academic achievement and standards. The technical core is subject to institutionalized rules and norms, and is organized around a set of classifications that defines legitimate and effective forms of technical activities. Therefore efficiency in this perspective is measured by the ability of the technical core to respond and conform to institutional definition of efficiency.

Recent studies on organizational-environmental relationships emphasize that under some circumstances organizations can and do play more active roles in using external demands to advance their own goals and strategies (Oliver, 1991). Activities of such organizations in education range from those that invite or increase interaction (bridging) to those that limit it (buffering). This framework rooted in institutional theory, explains how schools respond to external regulation and control. In this framework, districts and schools are understood as organizations in which members collectively negotiate external policies with their own internal goals and strategies. This framework provides a way to link school actors' understanding of their responses to external policies with the characteristics they prefer.

According to Belasen (2007), bridging is a proactive approach by which organizations adapt to the external environment. Bridging entails accommodating policy demands through initiatives and structures directly aimed at meeting policy goals (Honig & Hatch, 2004). Bridging activities involve organizations' selective engagement of environmental demands to inform and enhance implementation of their goals and strategies. Policy researchers long have understood that such engagement of policy demands can provide opportunities for schools to attract additional essential resources, including funding, access to professional networks, and knowledge, to negotiate with stakeholders, and to innovate for improved performance (Newmann et al., 2001). For example, school leaders have reported that participation in state and federal programs sometimes provided them with a language and a set of activities for realizing previously elusive goals and strategies and, in some cases, amending their goals and strategies to reflect this new knowledge (Elmore, 1996; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Spillane & Zeuli,

1999).

According to Honig and Hatch (2004) organizations bridge to their external demands in several ways. On the high end, they pull the environment in—by incorporating members of external organizations into their own organizational structures. By "capturing" those exerting external pressures, organizations blur boundaries between "organization" and environment", heighten interactions between the two, and increase opportunities to use external demands to advance internal goals and strategies (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Selznick, 1949). Organizations also bridge to external demands by working to shape the terms of compliance with external demands. Specifically organizations lobby policymakers and others to influence the design of policies, programs, and other external demands (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

On the other end of the spectrum, organizations may advance their goals and strategies by buffering themselves from external demands. According to Lynn (2007), "buffering is the regulation and/or insulation of organizational processes, functions, entities, or individuals from the effects of environmental uncertainty or scarcity" (P. 38). Buffering, in general, represents resistance to policy goals by focusing on local objectives and priorities. Honig and Hatch (2004) stated that buffering is not the blind dismissal of external demands but strategically deciding to engage external demands in limited ways. Periods of buffering can help organizations keep particular ideas and ignore negative feedback from their environments that can derail their decision-making (March, 1994). An organization may buffer itself from external demands by deciding simply to limit or suspend organizational-environmental interactions. Organizational actors may launch organizations outside particular regulatory systems in an effort to curtail organizational-environmental ties (Suchman, 1995). Ignoring negative feedback from external sources is an important buffering strategy (March, 1994).

Alternatively, organizations advance their goals and strategies by limiting environmental linkages without completely suspending them. According to Honig and Hatch (2004, P. 23), along the continuum between bridging and buffering, schools shape "the terms of compliance," a process that can include selective and symbolic implementation. Honig and Hatch (2004) found two related activities associated with this hybrid, bridging-buffering strategy; a) symbolic adoption and b) adding peripheral structures. Researchers have observed that organizations across sectors may adopt external demands symbolically but not allow those demands to influence core organizational activities (Westphal et al., 1997). For example, an organization might align its stated goals and strategies to reflect external demands but intentionally leave its day-to-day work largely unchanged—what some have called a peripheral or first-order change rather than a core or second-order change (Cuban & Tyack, 1995; Spillane & Zeuli, 1999). Some have observed that classroom teachers may incorporate new reform strategies into their discourse about their teaching practice and other activities without necessarily integrating those strategies into their actual practice (Spillane, 2000; Spillane & Zeuli, 1999; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Organizations become early adopters of external demands when they can demonstrate that their ongoing operations already meet or exceed external demands; in this way, these organizations too adopt external demands without changing their ongoing operations (Elmore, 1996). Organizations also may add structures on to their organizational peripheries both to interact with and to avoid external agents in the short term and to make decisions about whether and how to engage other parts of the organization in such interactions over the long term. Elmore and McLaughlin (1988) have reported that states and school districts designated new offices to implement Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, a major federal program for

low-income students. These offices provided unambiguous demonstrations of compliance with external demands in the short term and, over time, helped negotiate how the rest of their organizations would respond. Currently, schools assign reading specialists or coaches, testing coordinators, and others to serve such purposes.

School District Governance

Throughout the past century the idea of decentralization of school systems has been discussed and argued by many scholars. In most of these studies bureaucratization and formalization of the school districts are the indicators of their centralization. Scholars have argued that districts are inherently incapable of stimulating and sustaining meaningful reforms in teaching and learning because of their political and bureaucratic character (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hill et al., 1997). These scholars have argued that the benefits offered by school districts through effective guidance and support to schools have indeed proven limited and, furthermore, that the bureaucratic form of administrative management has restricted effective decentralized leadership (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hill & Celio, 1998; Hill, Pierce & Guthrie, 1997).

In recognizing school districts different governing approaches, Resnick and Glennan (2002) argued that an urban school district, focused on instruction and learning rather than on bureaucratic administration, could meet the goals that the educators share for urban school districts. On the contrary, some researchers believe that the weak guidance provided by decentralized school districts does not promote learning. In an empirical study Corcoran et al. (2001) described a policy environment in which many large urban districts are attempting to carry out their functions in environments characterized by decentralized decision making, high-stakes accountability, and increasing competition among providers of comprehensive school reform designs and other "research-based" instructional improvement strategies. Their empirical findings prompted them to conclude that the decentralization of decision-making combined with weak district guidance appeared to be undermining the use of knowledge rather than promoting it.

Meyer (2009) believes centralization and decentralization are ambiguous terms, noting that, "decentralization research and policy suffered significantly from a lack of conceptual and analytical precision" (Meyer, 2009, p. 458). Meyer (2009) found a similar ambiguity in observing that the U.S. system of education is described in the literature as "highly centralized" as well as "highly decentralized" and argues that the integrated view of centralization and decentralization and its implications has not been always fully embraced by education researchers and policy makers.

In this study I have used the concepts of centralization and decentralization to describe the governance of two school districts. The literature on organizations associates the concept of centralization to formalization and complexity in organizations. Generally, centralization describes how power of decision-making is distributed among social positions (Hage & Aiken, 1967). Organization scholars have different views on centralization; some believe that the degree of centralization in an organization is defined as the degree of participation in decision making (Morse & Reimer, 1956), and other group of scholars who are more concerned with the span of control, believe that the degree of centralization in an organization is defined as the degree of reliance on the hierarchy of authority (Hall, 1968; Blau et al, 1971; Scott, 2003). Hence, the differences between centralized and decentralized organizations concerns whether tasks are subdivided and hierarchically coordinated or left in larger clusters and delegated to more highly skilled workers or teams (Scott, 2003).

School District and Instructional Control Mechanisms

According to Henri Fayol (1949) control of an undertaking consists of seeing that everything is being carried out in accordance with the plan that has been adopted, the orders that have been given, and the principles that have been laid down. Mockler (1970) defined management control as a systematic effort by management to compare performance to predetermined standards, plans, or objectives in order to determine whether performance is in line with these standards and presumably in order to take any remedial action required to see that organizational resources are being used in the most effective and efficient way possible in achieving organization objectives.

According to Scott (2003), to ensure the quality of production and the implementation of the policies, organizations acquire and establish control mechanisms. Scott (1994) provides an informative analysis of institutions that assists with understanding power and control. Scott (1987) distinguishes between regulative, normative and cognitive aspects of institutions. The regulative effect is based on coercion and direct control. Conformity is based on actors having internalized values, social obligation, formal laws, or quasi-moral norms. The cognitive effect is based on mimetic processes where actors comply with deeply ingrained cultural scripts, assumption and solutions. These are the "taken for granted" that no one challenges. Conformity is based on membership and participation in a culture. Scott (1994:82) informs us that the neoinstitutionalism places more emphasis on the role of cognitive factors in controlling the organization while institutional theory, on normative elements.

From a management viewpoint, one obvious mechanism that aims to guide a large organization such as school systems is rationalized bureaucracy[1] (Scott, 2003). But, the complex behavior of the school districts makes the work of the organizational behavior theorists somewhat difficult. According to Murphy et al. (1988), one of the interesting aspects of the school districts is the extent to which there is a balance or "dynamic tension" between opposing organizational elements. Four of the more significant of these "dynamic tensions" are: rationality without bureaucracy, structured district control with school autonomy, systems perspective with people orientation, and strong leadership with an active administrative team. Although school districts present themselves as rationalized bureaucracies, at the practical and ground level, it is argued that teaching is inherently fluid and non-tangible work; it requires less control, more flexibility and making exceptions (Lortie, 1969; Bidwell, 1965). Therefore the issue of instructional control in such an organization becomes a complex one. As a result of the conflicting perspectives in educational policy and research, there is an ongoing debate over the degree to which teachers and instruction should be controlled.

In A Nation at Risk (1983) then Secretary of Education Terrell Bell argued that one of the most important reasons for low standards in schools is low-quality teachers and teaching. This view asserts that successful reform must guide schools "back to basics", promote educational excellence, emphasize a standard core curriculum, upgrade requirements for students, and focus on raising the performance and accountability of teachers. This view implied that schools and teachers suffer from a lack of control, coordination, and standards. Those with liberal view, however, resist increasing academic standards for students as a lever of control. This view asserts that imposing standards from the top-down does not work well, they believe; instead of looking

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[1] Rational perspective on organizations focuses on the normative structure of the organization, stressing goals and the formalization of rules and roles.

for ways to impose more control on teaching, it is necessary to explore options for empowering those directly involve in teaching.

There are various models of control in organizations such as school systems. According to Ingersoll (2003) policies, inspections, and performance evaluations are all among the most important and widely used mechanisms of employee control and accountability. Bureaucratic mode of control emphasizes control through impersonal systems of employee selection, standardized training, formal assignment, standardized operating procedures, routines, and written records. Adding to this list of control mechanisms, Perrow (1986) argued that there are less-direct and less-visible forms of organizational controls that are built into the structure and culture of the organization, such as hierarchical structure that delimits the areas in which members have responsibility and power, and behavior that is circumscribed by taken-for-granted norms, expectations, and precedents. Ingersoll (2003) argues that the regulation of administrative prerogative in schools is an impediment to organizational control. Teachers' instructional practices, including their lesson plans, course texts, curriculum guides, student performance, student promotion, and grading standards could be controlled through the mentioned mechanisms.

Some scholars have attempted to categorize the school districts strategies in coordinating and controlling their activities. Rowan (1990) presented two models of school organization, i.e. "control" and "commitment" strategies. Rowan argued that the control strategy involves the development of an elaborated system of input, behavior, and output controls designed to regulate classroom teaching and standardize student opportunities for learning, and the expected result is an increase in student achievement. The commitment strategy, by contrast, rejects bureaucratic controls as a mode of school improvement and instead seeks to develop innovative working arrangements that support teachers' decision-making and increase teachers' engagement in the tasks of teaching (Ingersoll, 2003). The assumption behind this approach is that collaborative and participative management practices will unleash the energy and expertise of committed teachers and thereby lead to improved student learning.

The current literature on the governance or organization of the school districts and their control mechanisms is very limited. One major gap in our current knowledge is related to the potential influence of the districts' governance on classroom instruction. This gap might have resulted from the assumption amongst the researchers that the governance of the districts does not affect classroom instruction; i.e. it has been assumed that the classroom instruction remains decoupled from the institutional environment expectations. The present research questioned this assumption and investigated the influences that the governance or organization features of districts might have on classroom instruction by investigating whether classroom reading instruction remains decoupled under different governing approaches and control mechanisms.

Because reading instruction is the subject focus of this investigation, the next section provides an overview of reading instructional policies that have shaped reading instruction in the classrooms of the public schools over the past decades.

Reading Instruction Policy

Reading instruction is naturally an important part of this study given its aim to investigate the impact of school districts' governance on classroom instruction. Instruction is the interactions among teachers and students around educational materials and "instructional capacity—the capacity to produce worthwhile and substantial learning—is a function of the interaction among these elements, not the sole province of any single one, such as teachers' knowledge and skill, or

curriculum" (Cohen & Ball, 1999, p. 3).

Reading is the most contested subject in the world of instructional policies. At the primary level, reading instruction has been the most important subject targeted by educational policies and programs in the United States. The fundamental importance of reading in students' education, not to mention the students' low performance in reading, has attracted the attention of federal and state educational policy makers over the last two decades. For years, many studies have been conducted to investigate the cognitive processes of reading and to create effective reading instructional strategies. Today, reading researchers and scholars have gained sufficient and evolutionary information about reading processes and instruction (Pearson et al., 2007; Sarroub & Pearson, 1998).

Educators have learned a great deal from research about what it takes to help children in the elementary grades succeed in reading to their fullest potential. The research suggests that teachers must focus and reflect equally on the content and the pedagogy of their reading instruction, and must continuously make good instructional choices to meet individual students' needs based on these reflections in conjunction with ongoing pupil assessment data (Pearson et al., 2007; Taylor, 2008). The content of excellent reading instruction includes dimensions of effective instruction supported by reading research that are related to the abilities students must develop to become competent readers. These dimensions include instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NICHD, 2000). Research supports a balanced approach to reading instruction that involves direct teaching of reading skills and strategies as well as providing students with opportunities to apply skills and strategies to engaging texts through reading, writing, and discussing (National Reading Panel, 2000).

The problem with documents like the NRP is that they define effective reading instruction in political vacuum. Reading instruction happens in larger institutional and technical environments. Considering current policy trends of standardization and accountability pressures in the U.S. education system, there are many obstacles in implementing effective reading instructional practices in classrooms. To understand the processes of change in reading instruction policy, it is necessary to quickly review the history of reading policies in the U.S.

Until the mid 1960s, Lyndon Johnston's "Great Society", the passage of Head Start, and the passage of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), there was little state or federal involvement in education policy. Title I marked the federal government' first attempt to influence local practice, what McLaughlin (1992) called "the first generation" of education policy. Title I distributed money to local districts, based on the level of poverty, to fund compensatory education programs—mostly in reading—that would supplement the regular classroom reading instruction of disadvantaged children. These policies were designed to more equitably redistributed educational opportunities, such as the opportunity to learn to read and attended preschool, and to compensate for the lack of resources in low-income school communities. Title I funds were earmarked for particular categories of services, such as supplemental reading instruction, and oversight initially focused on ensuring that federal dollars were actually spent on services within these categories (McLaughlin, 1992). Early evaluation of Title I showed marginal gains, if any, for participating children and demonstrated that policy alone, without local "will" and organizational capabilities, cannot bring about the intended change (McLaughlin, 1992; Timar, 1994), in this case, sustained reading achievement for disadvantaged children. Under Reagan administration Title I aid was reduced and barely maintained under the assumption that state deregulation would lower the cost of oversight (McGill-Frazen, 2000).

The period of time 1980 to 2000 is marked by unprecedented education policy activity by the states (McLaughlin, 1992). The federal presence in education policymaking decreased during the 1980s, becoming more symbolic than substantive, as is suggested by the emergence of national commissions (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; U.S. Department of Education, 1984). These commissions urged policymakers to establish accountability and excellence within the educational system. States responded with higher standards for curriculum and materials, more rigorous certification requirements for teachers, and new testing programs.

Throughout 1990s, the United States school systems witnessed the evolving of the standards movement. States enacted new state standards in various content areas including reading language arts. The state standards were linked with state assessments to monitor progress and professional training to improve teacher capacity. It worth mentioning that at the same time it allowed for local schools and districts the flexibility in deciding how to meet those standards (Cross et al., 2004). Low reading scores on the 1992 and 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress made the policy makers and the states to focus especially on early reading instruction. States provided funds to support professional development for teachers and resources to focus on phonics and phonemic awareness. By 1999, more than 30 states passes bills to promote use of phonics-based materials and professional development for teachers in instructional approaches to phonics and phonemic awareness (Pearson, 2004).

The governors took the lead in coordinating the state efforts; their work led to the Education Summit in 1989, the establishment of the National Education Goals by the Bush Administration, and the bipartisan support of the Goals 2000 Educate America Act in 1994 (McGill-Franzen, 2000). The National Education Goals Panel then provided a framework for evaluating federal and state reading programs as well as redefining expectations for learning and achievement.

In 1997, Congress approved the creation of a National Reading Panel (NRP) to initiate a national, comprehensive, research-based effort on alternative instructional approaches to reading instruction and to guide the development of public policy on literacy instruction (Ramirez, 2001). Before it began its analysis of the research, the NRP reviewed the findings of a National Research Council (NRC) report, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), which had designated three topic areas central to learning to read: alphabetics (phonemic awareness, phonics instruction), fluency, and comprehension (vocabulary, text comprehension, comprehension strategies instruction).

To improve reading instructional practices and methods based on scientifically-based reading research in 1998, federal government became involved in actions focusing on reading instruction by passing the Reading Excellence Act (P.L. 105-277) (Edmondson, 2005).

By the end of 20th century, federal, states, and districts shifted to a test-based accountability strategy to improve reading instruction. Followed by this policy, schools were awarded for their high performance or subject to sanctions and closures (Haney, 2000). In April 2000, the NRP published its findings and recommendations in each of the topic and subtopic areas, in the form of the Report of the National Reading Panel: Report of the Subgroups. It is from this NRP report that the Reading First legislation within Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was formulated. Reading First mandates that schools be held accountable for ensuring that all students read by third grade. It reinforces this mandate through funding of "scientific, research-based reading programs," which are defined as programs that include the essential components of reading instruction. Section 1208 (3) of Title I states, "The term

'essential components of reading instruction' means explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency (including oral reading skills), and reading comprehension strategies."

Since the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind law (P.L. 107-110) of 2002, high stakes accountability policy spread rapidly to states and districts across the U.S. The NCLB tied the federal Title I funds to the development of an accountability system with assessments in reading and math for students in grades 3-8. This situation was supported by two federal initiatives to improve reading instruction: Reading Excellence Act and later on, Reading First. Reading First was a competitive state grant intended to assist low-income and low-performing schools in raising student reading achievement (USED, Reading First Implementation Evaluation, 2008). Reading First provides fund to the states that develop plans for increasing teachers' use of scientifically-based instructional approaches using scientifically-based curricular and assessment tools. Reading First specifically focused on the five elements of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. This fund also emphasized on diagnosis of early reading difficulties using valid and reliable assessments (Games et al., 2008).

Reading First has experienced some problems (Dillon, 2006), but there are also arguments that it is having positive effects on early literacy achievement (Spellings, 2007). Thus, the two reading policies have aimed to put an end to the debate about what works in reading instruction and set into place a national reading policy.

Instructional policies bring about changes to the districts, schools, and classrooms. In order to implement the new instructional policies, schools as organizations learn to change. According to Honig (2003), many scholars have observed that organizational learning may result in either first-order or second-order change (or single-loop, double-loop learning). First-order change refers to alterations in day-to-day organizational structures and procedures. Second-order changes alter the underlying premises, beliefs, values, and logics that guide day-to-day decisions (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Depending on the nature of the instructional policies they require schools to go through first or second order changes. Therefore the new instructional policies could cause fundamental and interruptive or slow and smooth changes at schools.

The literature on reading policies provides us with a clear idea about the causes and processes of the reading policies that have been implemented to date. The issue that has been investigated by this series of literature is the impact of institutional environment on policy implementations. We know that school districts and schools have undergone various periods of new reading policies and implementations, but it remains unclear whether all the school districts have implemented the reading policies in the same way, extent, and intensity. It is not known whether the impact of policies have been undermined or strengthened by the mechanisms that the districts use to control for the implementation of the reading policies at the classrooms. The implementation of reading policies in classrooms requires the efforts of school instructional leaders. The goals of this investigation point to the importance of the instructional leadership role in the implementation of instructional policies. Thus, I turn now to the literature discussing the role of instructional leadership in instructional policy implementation.

Instructional Leadership

It has been argued amongst some researchers that the regulation of administrative prerogative in schools is an impediment to organizational control (Ingersoll, 2003). According to Coburn (2005) principals influence the instruction by shaping teachers' access to some policy

messages and not others. Principals are the ones who attend district meetings, receive state and district directives, and participate in networking events associated with reform efforts, learning about new materials, approaches, and ideas associated with changing policy. According to Coburn (2005) as principals interact with these policy messages, they make key decisions that shape which messages they bring in, which messages they emphasize with the staff, and which they filter out (Diamond, 2007; Diamond & Spillane, 2004). In other words, research on the of policy implementation has begun to illuminate how principals, as instructional leaders, engage with policy messages and act persuasively to motivate change in schools (Coburn, 2006).

According to the existing literature, school leadership is the second most important factor in student learning after classroom teaching (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Marzano et al., 2005; Waters et al., 2003). Research on principals' content knowledge demonstrates that content knowledge is important and can influence the work of a principal. Principals' content knowledge influences how they observe classroom instruction, work with teachers, and structure teacher professional development (Coburn, 2005; Nelson & Sassi, 2005; Nelson et al., 2001; Overholt, 2008; Stein & Nelson, 2003; Szabocsik, 2008).

Principals also influence instructional practices indirectly by drawing on teachers' knowledge about how teachers learn to create conditions that are more or less conducive for engaging with policy messages in consequential ways (Coburn, 2005; Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge 2007). Furthermore, it is argued that school leaders mediate districts' policies (Coburn & Russell, 2008). School leaders' conceptions of policy are more or less influential depending on the degree to which they are able to skillfully marshal resources to support such conceptions (Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge, 2007). There is evidence that it is very difficult to move forward if school leaders and teachers construct different or conflicting interpretations of the appropriate response to policy (Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge, 2007; Spillane et al., 2002).

Reading and literacy coaches are instructional leader as well; they work in elementary schools to provide "hands on, in-classroom assistance with the transfer of skills and strategies to the classroom" (Joyce & Showers, 1980, p. 380). And, in the face of relentless pressure to improve the reading achievement of poor and minority students, states and districts have adopted coaching as a policy lever. Federal policy initiatives, such as Reading First, and several large urban districts e.g., New York and Chicago, have relied on coaches to boost teachers' knowledge and skills related to reform (Deussen et al., 2007; Haager, et al., 2008). Reading coaches, positioned to link the state and district policy levels with schools and classrooms, are key actors in implementing the policies as they are involved in translating policy's broad ideas into concrete actions, including changes in instructional practice (Spillane, et al., 2002; Coburn, 2004). The available literature expresses the undeniable role of the school principals and instructional leaders in assisting school districts in controlling the implementation of the instructional policies.

Researchers have noted that school leaders play a buffering role for teachers, shielding them from outside pressures (Firestone, 1985; Goldring & Rallis, 2000). Coburn (2005) suggested that although school leaders do buffer some policy messages, they bring in and intensify others as they contract with professional development providers, purchase curriculum materials that emphasized one approach rather than another, or intensify pressures by focusing attention on them or integrating them into other school activities. In this way, school leaders mediate state policy through bridging and buffering such that teachers in different schools may encounter the same policy in ways that differ substantially in content, focus, and intensity.

The presented literature provides an overview of reading instruction, school districts organizations, role of school district in classroom instructional practices, and the ways in which

teacher instructional practices could be controlled. Literature suggests that school districts have important role in classroom instruction. Yet, we do not know whether the governance and organization of school districts are factors influencing classroom reading instructional practices. We do not know whether the organization, policies, and approaches of districts promote different instructional practices. It remains unclear how teachers perceive and implement the policies in centralized or decentralized school districts and whether school instructional leadership plays different roles in different school districts. It remains equally unclear whether the degree of centralization of districts could be a key factor in making the classroom instruction decoupled, loosely coupled or tightly coupled to their institutional environment. Hence, there is need for the current study i.e. an in-depth investigation to examine classroom reading instructional practices in two school districts, to figure out the instructional differences under two different governing approaches.

This research was conducted and analyzed within the frames of institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1987). I used the institutional theory concepts of "decoupling", "loose coupling", and "tight coupling" to identify the ways in which the approaches of the centralized and decentralized school districts lead the classroom reading instructional practices (technical core) to decouple, loosely couple, or tightly couple to their institutional environment expectations (Driscoll, 1995; Rowan & Miskel, 1999; Weick, 1976). In other words, I used the frames of decoupling, loose coupling and tight coupling to describe the instructional variability in the classrooms of two school districts. In addition, to understand how loose coupling, decoupling, and tight coupling occurs and to explain the possible variability between the school districts and amongst the schools within the two districts I built on Honig and Hatch's (2004) conceptualization of "bridging and buffering". Bridging and buffering are the lenses that could explain loose, tight, or decoupling and helped me to understand how and by whom the policy tools were used to bridge and/or buffer reading instruction from the institutional environment.

The question that this research is grappling with asks whether the governance of the school districts, centralized versus decentralized, could promote decoupling, loose coupling, or tight coupling of the classroom reading instruction to the institutional environment. In this context, two school districts were studied on the basis of their governing and organizational constructs i.e. centralization or decentralization.

This study relies on the definition of centralization that is more concerned with the issue of control in organization i.e. the degree of reliance on the hierarchy of authority in decision-making. The concepts of centralization and decentralization in the context of this study are defined in a spectrum that represents the organizational approaches of the two school districts. This means the reading instruction is directly coordinated and controlled by the district at the policy as well as the implementation level. In the centralized school district instructional decisions are made at the top of hierarchy, members lack autonomy at the school or classroom levels, and tight control of activities is practiced.

The decentralized school district is characterized by aspects like heightened mutual adjustment based on feedback, high professional discretion, exercise of autonomy, interdependence and communication amongst members, and loose coordination practices. Although, the district supervises reading instruction at the policy level there are possibilities and opportunities for the schools and teachers to adapt at the implementation level. In a decentralized school district there is less reliance on the hierarchy of authority to make instructional decisions. In this situation reading materials, professional development, and assessments are coordinated

and provided by the district while the schools or the teachers could modify their instructional materials and strategies. Schools in this district are less bounded by regulatory controls and are subject to locally defined demands for reading instruction.

In this study I associated the decentralization of the school districts to instructional decoupling and loose coupling. I assumed that in a decentralized school district classroom reading instructional practices are decoupled or loosely coupled from the institutional expectations including standardization and accountability pressures. On the other hand, I associated centralization of the school district to instructional tight coupling. I assumed that in a centralized school district classroom reading instructional practices are tightly coupled to the institutional expectations through formal and intense control mechanisms. These ideas shaped my hypotheses that reading instruction is practiced differently in centralized and decentralized school districts and that school districts that fall into different ends of the centralization continuum use different control mechanisms to ensure instructional policy implementations.

This research intended to investigate whether the governing approaches of the school districts is a determining factor in allowing or limiting the interactions between the institutional and technical environments. To investigate the processes of possible decoupling, loose coupling, and tight coupling of classroom reading instructional practices in centralized and decentralized school districts and also to identify the elements initiating decoupling, loose coupling, and tight coupling, employing the "bridging and buffering" frames seemed necessary to explain the possible interaction variations of institutional and technical environments in centralized and decentralized school districts. Bridging and buffering (Honig & Hatch, 2004) frame is useful in understanding the actual processes of instructional decoupling, loose coupling or tight coupling by identifying the mechanisms through which they happen. This frame allows the researchers to identify the role of agency in organizations decoupling, loose coupling, and tight coupling.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter provides detailed information about the research methods used in collecting, processing, and analyzing data for this research focused on addressing my two main questions: (1) How differently is reading instruction organized inside classrooms in centralized verses decentralized school districts? (2) How differently do the centralized and decentralized school districts control or coordinate classroom reading instructional practices? To proceed with this study, I constructed my research within the frame, and drew from the conceptual tools of, neoinstitutional theory. To situate my study within specific locales, I examined classroom reading instructional practices in two Northern Californian urban school districts. The reason for choosing schools from two distinct school districts was to identify whether centralized or decentralized approaches of the school districts could influence reading instructional practices at the classroom level. Another objective of this research was to investigate how classroom reading instructional practices are controlled in the two districts. This research also aimed at exploring whether districts' centralized or decentralized approaches make classroom reading instructional practices decoupled, loosely coupled, or coupled to their institutional environments.

This research did not intend to identify either centralization or decentralization as better way of governing school districts with regards to their reading instructional practices. The key contribution of this thesis is to identify and distinguish mechanisms used by two centralized and decentralized districts to coordinate and/or control classroom reading instructional practices, distinguish the levels of organizational buffering, and identify agency in bridging and buffering.

Research Design

As a first step in this investigation, I studied the existing literature to better inform my research about the variables of the study. It also served me to realize the gap present in the literature about the impact of school district governance on classroom instruction. Use of related literature helped me justify my selection of methods and theory and placed my study in the context of an ongoing investigation. I used the neoinstitutional theory to investigate how decoupled, loosely coupled or coupled classroom reading instructional practices were under centralized or decentralized governance of two school districts.

Upon forming my research questions, I decided to use both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data. Qualitative method is the core methodology of data collection for this research because my research questions concern issues, which were explainable more effectively through qualitative data. Qualitative inquiry is well suited to the nature of the research questions that this study intended to address because it relies on watching people in their own territory and interacting with them on their own terms. Qualitative research goes beyond the idea of simply quantifying what participants do in practice, or the frequency of their interactions. Rather, this approach searches for deeper meanings about what is actually happening in the research setting. Also, this method is valuable in giving participants a voice in defining their own practice as they see it.

I decided to collect quantitative data through surveys because I believe it could provide a big picture of the situations in the two districts. I also believe that by providing visual quantitative data through graphs and tables the findings would be more organized and accessible to the general audience of this study.

The first practical steps in planning this research involved designing the interview, observation, and survey protocols, writing letters of invitation for participation to the districts

and schools, and writing letters to the teachers and other participants for their consent to be interviewed and observed. All the research materials and applications were then submitted to the University of California Berkeley Committee for Protection of Human Subject (CPHS) and granted exemption. The next step was to contact the school districts to invite them to participate that fortunately I received their approvals. Then I contacted principals to acquire their schools' participation before contacting the teachers (see Appendices). The above processes of networking and communication took several months for completion before I could enter the schools for collecting data.

Research Setting

To address the objectives of this study, I conducted this research at the level of classroom within two school districts in Northern California, with two governing traditions of centralized and decentralized. To select districts with different organizational approaches I performed a preliminary research by interviewing professionals and educators knowledgeable about the governance of the individual school districts. As a result of my preliminary investigation, I selected two urban school districts in Northern California; Eastside School District had a centralized approach, and Westside School District had a decentralized approach in governing schools' reading instruction. Eastside School District directly controlled reading instruction at policy as well as implementation levels, whereas Westside School District did not directly govern reading instruction, either at policy or at implementation levels. Throughout my interactions with the schools and the district administrators, my understanding of the two districts as centralized and decentralized was reinforced repeatedly and emphatically.

In selecting the districts and the schools within the two districts I also considered their demographic similarities. Two elementary schools from each district and four classrooms (two first and two fourth grades) from each school were selected based on their principals' suggestions. Teacher experience (more than four years of teaching) was considered as one important factor for selecting the classrooms. I focused on first and fourth grade classrooms because reading instruction has been the most contested area in instructional policy at these two grade levels. All four participating schools had long history being Title I, Reading First schools. To better familiarize the reader with the settings, I provide detailed descriptions about the two districts and the schools within them in the following.

The Decentralized School District

Westside School District is located in a large city in Northern California. This district encompasses more than 100 public schools with more than 600 employees in more than 13 departments at the central office, in addition to the administrators, staff, and faculty at the school sites. This school district adopted a multi-year strategic plan to address equity, student achievement and accountability in order to bridge the gap between high achieving and low achieving students (the district Website). In the beginning I selected eight schools within this district based on their demographic similarities. After spending considerable time on networking to contact the principals and conversing with the principal of each school, I succeeded to acquire their participation (I went through similar processes in the other district as well). To further familiarize the reader with the two participating schools, I provide general descriptions in the following.

Maple Elementary. Maple Elementary is located in a low-income and minority neighborhood of the city. This is a large two-story school that serves 500, K-5 students. The student population was largely formed of Hispanics and African-Americans. Other minorities like Asians were also seen in the hallways. The building was well maintained, looked clean, and felt lively with students' handwritings and drawings on the walls of the hallways. It had a large outdoors with two playgrounds. The school had a multi-purpose room, a library, and a media room. In addition to reading coach, this school had an instructional specialist in charge of assisting and guiding the teachers through their instructional planning and activities. The principal of this school was in his 40s with Hispanic background and extensive experience in education, specifically literacy. His welcoming and comforting behavior toward everyone in the school made him a respected and likable principal amongst the staff and students. He was always on the run to do his job and seemed organized and efficient in his planning. The number of experienced teachers of this school surpassed the inexperienced ones. Many of the teachers witnessed the implementation of many instructional policies in their school over the past decade, the last major change being a Title I and Reading First School.

Brown Elementary. Brown Elementary is similar to Maple Elementary in its physical stature and demographic makeup. It is located in a low-income and minority neighborhood of the city. This is a large two-story school that serves about 350, K-5 students. The student population was largely Hispanic and African-American. Other minorities were also seen in the hallways. The building was at the last stage of renovation when I visited and collected data. The teachers were just recently moved to their new classrooms and many of them had not unpacked their boxes. Brown Elementary had large outdoor area with one playground. The school had a library and a computer lab. The principal was an African American female in her mid 50s. In addition to a literacy coach, Brown Elementary had an instructional specialist who was in charge of assisting and guiding the teachers through their instructional planning and activities. These two specialists and the principal formed the instructional leadership team of the school. The numbers of inexperienced teachers and the experienced ones were comparable. When I started collecting data, many of the teachers already received their pink slips and the morale of the teaching team at this school was low. This school was a Title I, Reading First school with low test scores.

The Centralized School District

Eastside School District is located in a large city in Northern California. This school district fields more than 70 public schools and employs more than 300 personnel in more than 12 departments at the central office in addition to the schools' administrators, staff, and faculty. My understanding of this district being centralized was reaffirmed repeatedly throughout my interactions with the schools and the district staff. It is worth mentioning that right before I began collecting data, the district dealt with some union issues and teacher strike in the whole district. Due to unsatisfactory agreement with the district in the end, the morale of the teachers was low. I selected two schools within this district. In the beginning I selected eight schools based on their demographic similarities and API scores. After a long time spending on networking to contact the principals and conversing with them, I was able to acquire the participation of Elm Elementary and Green Elementary schools. To familiarize the reader with the two participating schools, general descriptions about them are outlined below.

Elm Elementary. Elm Elementary school is a school located in a large city in Northern California, serving a low-income and minority neighborhood. It serves about 680, K-5 students.

The student population was largely Hispanic. The actual building of this school was small but there were temporary classrooms (mobile cabins) located in the school's large yard. The school had a large outdoors with two playgrounds. The school had an open structure without hallways; the classroom doors opened directly to the schoolyard. This structure, of course, means no student artwork hanged on the walls. The principal of this school was a White male in his late 30s. He was very open about participating in my project and helped me to get in touch with the district, other school principals, and the teachers of his school. He had a welcoming character and his behavior toward everyone in the school made him a respected principal amongst the staff and students. In addition to a reading coach, this school had an instructional specialist as part of the school's instructional leadership team, who was in charge of assisting and guiding the teachers through their instructional planning and activities. The number of experienced teachers of this school surpassed the inexperienced ones. Many of the teachers witnessed the implementation of many instructional policies in their school over the past decade. The last major change that the teachers experienced was when the school was enlisted as Title I, Reading First School.

    Green Elementary. Green Elementary is similar to Elm Elementary in its physical stature and demographic makeup. It educates some 750, K-5 largely Hispanic students. The actual building of this school was small but there existed temporary classrooms located in the school's large yard. This school had a large out-door and one playground. The school had an open structure without hallways as the classrooms directly opened to the schoolyard. The principal of this school was a White female in her early 60s with doctorate degree in education. She was also quite open to my project and helped me to get in touch with the teachers. The school had a literacy coach and an instructional specialist; together, they were in charge of assisting and guiding the teachers through their instructional planning and activities. The number of experienced teachers of this school surpassed the inexperienced ones. This school was a Title I, Reading First School and had a very low API.

Data Collection

    My research design involved a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods in collecting and analyzing the data. To conduct this research, I used several data collection tools: (a) a survey was given to all teachers in four participating schools, (b) two sets of interview protocols were used to interview sixteen teachers, four reading specialists, four school principals and four key district curriculum and instruction professionals, (c) an observational protocol was used to observe in the classrooms of the participating teachers. I also collected observation field notes taken in professional development sessions and teachers weekly collaborative meetings from the four participating schools. Through navigating the two school districts' Web sites, I was able to collect some useful information as well.

Interview

    I conducted interviews with classroom teachers, instructional specialists, principals and district instruction administrators. The interview questions were developed to provide information about the ways teachers planned their reading instructional practices and to identify the challenges they faced in their planning and practicing reading instruction. In designing the interview questions, I intended to make them as clear, specific and to the point as possible. Familiarity with administrators and teachers' time constraints prevented me from assigning too

many questions. Therefore, I developed two sets of fifteen interview questions, one for interviewing the district professionals and principals and the other set for interviewing teachers and instructional specialists.

I conducted pilot interviews to test the protocols to ensure they addressed the key question of my research.. Thanks to connections to teachers in a neutral district, I had the chance to interview some teachers where I asked the teachers to provide their comments about interview questions, their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the length and format of the interviews. After receiving feedback from the teachers and incorporating their comments and suggestions, I developed the final version, confident that the questions reflected upon the various instructional approaches, decision-making, and control mechanisms the centralized or decentralized school districts employed to implement reading instruction. Questions were primarily aimed at helping the teachers to describe how they plan and practice their reading instructions. For example, the teachers were asked to describe their methods of teaching and the degrees to which they have authority in planning their reading instructional practices. They also were asked about the people, tools, and policies that influenced their planning and practices (see Appendix B).

In all, I conducted 28 interviews with 16 classroom teachers, four instructional specialists, four principals, and four district instruction administrators. All teachers were credentialed with a mean of 10.5 years experience. The administrators were credentialed with a mean of nine years experience. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to one and a half hours in duration. I collected 28 hours of interviews. I transcribed and coded all the interviews and categorized them according to the variables of this research for further analysis.

Observations

I collected observation data from classrooms, staff meetings, professional development sessions, and teachers' grade level weekly meetings. The protocol I adopted to observe classroom reading instruction was carefully developed for the Center for Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) to study reading instruction (Taylor & Pearson, 2002). I used the observation protocol to provide a picture of how each teacher actually conducted instruction in her classroom (use of contents, materials, and strategies). In addition to this observation protocol, I took careful and detailed field notes from all the observation sessions.

To ensure my understanding of reading instructional practices from the schools I attended eighteen hours of professional development trainings and grade level teacher collaboration meetings at the participating schools. I carefully studied the materials that were exchanged in these meetings and navigated the districts' websites for ten hours. Over the course of four months, I completed more than 85 hours of observations from classroom instructional activities, professional development sessions, staff meetings, and teachers' grade level weekly meetings. I coded all the observation data and field notes and categorized them based on the variables of this study for further analysis.

Teacher Survey

The survey was designed using the "four-building blocks" approach (Wilson, 2005). One of the design requirements for this instrument was being easily and quickly administrable to groups of elementary teachers. Hence, an appropriate format for the instrument was a fixed response format.

As in most attitudinal questionnaires, I adopted the Likert scale questions in the design of the interview items. I created the items based on my construct map. My intention was to define sets of constructs that I am interested to measure, such as teachers' extent of instructional decision making, frequency of districts' inspections, and use of specific instructional materials. My survey instrument items reflected the general teachers' perceptions about reading instruction planning and decision-making. In designing the items I intended to make them as clear, specific and to the point as possible. Some of the constructs I was interested in were also measured in Ingersoll (2003) book, titled "Who Controls Teachers' Work?" Also, informants provided various suggestions while designing items.

While constructing the items, some of my items were intended to measure latent variables such as agreement of teachers and their understanding, while the other set of items were designed to get information about frequency of specific behavior in the class. I was interested in frequencies and descriptive statistics for the items and item categories. Another possible approach to the sets of items designed in this way could be using Item Response Theory methods. The absence of sufficient data did not allow me to use the item response theory approach appropriate in this case, particularly Multidimensional Item Response Theory.

Knowing the time constraints of teachers prevented me from assigning too many items. Therefore, I developed nine partial credit questions. Initially I tried out the items I developed informally on 2-3 subjects. I asked them to take the instrument and comment what they think. Based on the feedback, items were edited and about 5% of them removed from the survey. The concepts provided in the outcome space of the survey specifically reflect the situation in the classrooms of these two school districts. The outcome spaces for fixed-response items were simply the fixed responses to the items. While the outcome spaces follow the same increasing direction of the construct map but were designed aiming at specific issues. The fixed responses to all items were scored as 0, 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

I tested my survey instrument to examine if it measured what it was intended to measure. To do so, I tested the validity of my instrument by performing an analysis of the relationship between my instrument's content and the construct I was measuring (instrument content). In addition, I also tested the validity of my instrument by conducting exit interviews (response processes), asking about each item in turn. Fortunate to have access to teachers in a neutral district I conducted exit interview with five teachers. Teachers' responses to my questions about the survey items and overall coverage of the questionnaire were quite positive. The exit interviews strongly suggested that the survey items had well targeted the issues at hand and responded well to the construct map showing that the instrument was measuring the concept it was supposed to measure. I also ensured myself about the validity of this survey by asking another group of elementary teachers in the same neutral school district to test the survey and provide their comments about survey items strengths and weaknesses as well as its readability and design. After receiving feedback from the teachers and incorporating their comments and suggestions, I developed the final version of the survey.

Due to the administrative constraints, such as available administration time, the survey had to be shortened in the final version. Since measuring the speed of response is not relevant in this survey, the intention was to have sufficient time for all respondents to consider all items. Also, maximum effort was given to have the intended content domain covered in the survey. Special accommodations were provided if one needed. The items in the survey were grouped depending on the construct and item type. Items were carefully analyzed for technical correctness and fit within the specified content domain. Also items were reviewed for fairness.

After collecting the interview data and gaining better ideas about the environment of the districts and the schools, I further made some minor changes to the survey questions to better reflect the conditions presented in the two school districts (see Appendix D).

With the help of the principals I had the full participation of 80 teachers in four schools to fill in the surveys and return them to me in a timely manner. To analyze the survey data, the survey items were first tabulated into a spreadsheet (Microsoft Excel). For the comparisons of teachers on each item, the scale used for the item was coded 0-3. However, later on in the analysis they were again recoded back to their nominal values for most of the analysis. For the analysis, I used the software package JMP 8. Most of the analyses are based on the response proportions and comparing the frequencies from other groups. After the scoring was completed, the mean score of the responses to each item from the teachers within a school district were compared to the mean score for the corresponding responses of the teachers from another school district using t-test. Also, schools within school district were compared to each other on the teacher responses to the survey items. For each category of each item frequencies were produced and comparisons of descriptive statistics were done across schools within the school district and between school districts.

Data Analysis

As soon as my fieldwork was underway I began to transcribe the interviews, and did several steps to process and analyze the data I collected. As a first step, I tried to know my data (interviews, observations, and surveys) as deeply as I could. I read and re-read the texts and I listened to the tape recordings several times. I wrote down any impressions I had as I went through the data. These impressions became useful later on in my analysis.

The second step was to focus on the questions and topics. In this approach I focused the analysis to look at how all individuals responded to each question or topic. I organized the data by key questions and topics to look across all respondents and their responses in order to identify consistencies and differences. I put all the data together according to each question and topic. Because I was interested to explore possible correlations between topics I then focused on two district cases and organized the data from the two cases and analyzed them as two whole cases.

The third step was to categorize and code the data. I identified themes or patterns— ideas, concepts, behaviors, interactions, incidents, or terminologies used-- and organized them into coherent categories that summarized and brought meaning to the text. This involved reading and re-reading the text and identifying coherent categories. I assigned abbreviated codes of a few letters, words or symbols and placed them next to the themes and ideas I found. This helped me organize the data into categories. Then I provided a descriptive label for each category I created.

The fourth step was to identify patterns and connections within and between categories. As I organized the data into categories by case, I began to see patterns and connections both within and across the categories. Assessing the relative importance of different themes or highlighting subtle variations was important to my analysis.

The fifth step was data interpretation. I used my research themes, theoretical framework, and connections to explain my findings. In this step I attached meaning and significance to the analysis. I used the coded interviews and observations to identify patterns, interpret and juxtapose the data, and cross analyze the data with literature and theoretical framework to test my hypotheses. The quantitative findings of the surveys were incorporated into the qualitative findings to finalize the analysis. This was where I started to develop a list of key points or important findings I discovered as a result of categorizing and sorting the data. I framed the

findings in the neoinstitutional theoretical perspective to examine the research hypotheses by comparing and cross-examining the results of all the data.

Chapter 3: Reading Instruction in Two School Districts

This chapter addresses the primary research questions of whether and how instruction is organized differently in a largely centralized versus a decentralized school district. Throughout this chapter, each school district is treated as a separate case. Within each case, the two participating schools' reading instructional approaches are compared and contrasted to determine whether practices generalize across schools within the district. The data are organized and reported by key categories related to components of reading programs, such as curriculum, instructional goals and planning, instructional programs, instructional support and resources. The lens of the neoinstitutional theory served as the filter for analyzing the data.

Case Study I: The Centralized School District

Eastside School District is located in a large city in Northern California. This school district fields more than 70 public schools and employs more than 400 personnel in twelve plus departments at the central office in addition to the school administrations, staff, and faculty. Eastside School District was recommended to me as one with a reputation as intentionally centralized in its philosophy and administrative structure. More importantly, it fits the definition provided in the introduction of this work. And throughout my interactions with the schools and the district staff, my understanding of Eastside School District as a centralized district was reinforced repeatedly and emphatically. Sara, the Green Elementary principal stated: "It's centralized. Here we have a very top-down system. I don't know why but we do." (EGP, 01.19.10) The Department of Curriculum and Instruction is the only department directly involved with school instruction, yet it has little instructional capacity or capability to lead schools' instructional practices. According to Steve, the principal at Elm Elementary:

> This is a district where there is such limited capacity from the district office. I mean, the literacy department right now, is down to two people…to be frank, I haven't found that people in the curriculum and instruction department know all that much about curriculum and instruction. (EEP, 02.24.10)

The district could not provide substantial instructional support to the affiliated schools. Schools had their own literacy specialists who provided instructional help and expertise to the teachers at the school level. According to the district website, this district "is a large and complicated organization that has simple purpose: improving student learning so that all students graduate ready to attend college, or technical and trade schools." The district website did not provide any information related to the district's strategic plan or individual school's academic plans. As described in the methodology chapter (Chapter 2), I selected two schools within this district, Elm Elementary and Green Elementary.

The Schools

Elm Elementary is a school located in a large city in Northern California, serving a low-income and minority neighborhood. It serves about 680, K-5 students. The student population was largely Hispanic. The actual building of this school was small but there were temporary classrooms (mobile cabins) located in the school's large yard. The school had a large outdoor yard and one playground. The school had an open structure without hallways; the classroom

doors opened directly to the schoolyard. This structure, of course, means no student artwork hung on the walls. The principal of this school was a White male in his late 30s. He was very open about participating in my project and helped me to get in touch with the district, other school principal, and the teachers of his school. He had a welcoming character and his behavior toward everyone in the school made him a respected principal amongst the staff and students. He seemed organized and efficient in his planning. In addition to a reading coach, this school had an instructional specialist in charge of assisting and guiding the teachers through their instructional planning and activities. The number of experienced teachers of this school surpassed the inexperienced ones. Many of the teachers witnessed the implementation of many instructional policies in their school over the past decade. The last major change that the teachers experienced was when their school was enlisted as Title I, Reading First School.

The teachers of this school generally had good relationships with the school administrator, the instructional specialist and the literacy coach. The general culture and environment of the school, according to my interviews and observations, can be characterized as cooperative and respectful. The principal's leadership style, confident character, administrative ability to lead, experience in teaching and instruction, and professional background as a literacy specialist created a sense of confidence amongst the teachers. Because of the union issues and teacher strike in the whole district and not reaching a satisfying agreement with the district in the end, at the time I began my research, the morale among the teachers was low.

Green Elementary, also located in a large city in Northern California, serves a low-income and minority community. It educates some 750, K-5 largely Hispanic students. The actual building of this school was small but there existed temporary classrooms located in the school's large yard. Similar to Elm Elementary, this school had a large outdoor yard and one playground. The school had an open structure without hallways as the classrooms directly open to the school yard. The principal of this school was a White female in her early 60s. She was also quite open to my project and helped me to get in touch with the teachers. The school had a literacy coach and an instructional specialist; together, they were in charge of assisting and guiding teachers through their instructional planning and activities. The instructional specialist was required to provide professional expertise through general, group, and individual professional development to the teachers. The number of experienced teachers of this school surpassed the inexperienced ones. Like Elm Elementary, the union issues and teacher strikes affected the morale of the teachers negatively. This school was a Title I, Reading First School with very low API.

Although in the same school district and exhibiting the same demographic characteristics, Elm Elementary and Green Elementary had somewhat different approaches to instruction. To describe reading instruction in these two schools I begin with curriculum and then move on to other factors that shape instruction.

Reading Curriculum

This school district adopted Open Court Reading (OCR) for grades K-5 as the mandated curriculum in 2003. Before adopting OCR, the district formed a committee that was consisted of some teachers and administrators to pilot a curriculum and make a decision based on a voting system. Aida, the instructional specialist at Elm Elementary explained:

The curriculum is chosen by a committee of teachers and administrators and other people that review different curricula that are offered by the state and then they have a final

panel and we pilot it and then they have a final vote and then they choose a reading
series. (EEI, 03.02.10)

Nora, a district instructional specialist, reflected on the adoption of the reading
curriculum and stated, "they're based on the standards set up by the state. We would not be able
to adopt any language arts series unless it was approved by the state. The program has to be
California content standards-based." (EI1, 03.26.10) She also touched upon reading curriculum
decision-making processes at the district level and stated:

About ten years ago we piloted it, we had an adoption. And so teachers were given their
choice between 3 or 4 different publishers, works for language arts and open court
reading was chosen. I was part of the team of teachers. The decision was made by
teachers and administrators. (EI1, 03.26.10)

The data revealed not much school maneuvering around the mandated curriculum by
supplementing it with ancillary materials at the school or classroom level. Although OCR was
the adopted reading curriculum, the extent of its usage at the classroom level slightly differed
between the schools and classrooms. In this district, instructional goals circled around the state
standards and OCR implementation. The district outlined a literacy plan and schools were
required to follow this standard-based plan. In the two schools, OCR was extensively used, with
or without fidelity.
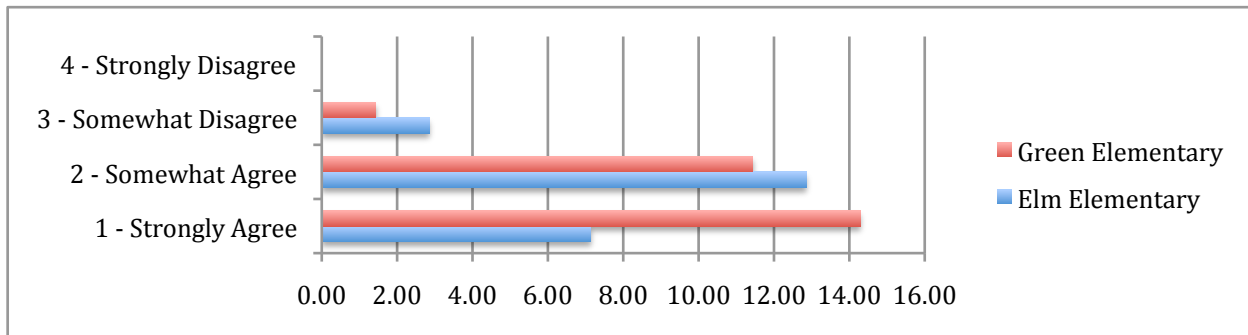
Figure 3.1. Extent of teachers' use of OCR in instruction

To provide readers with a big picture of the extent of OCR use in the two schools, I
present some survey findings before illustrating the details of my findings. The survey data
connote, 52.6% of Green Elementary and 31.3% of Elm Elementary teachers extensively used
OCR in their instructional activities (Figure 3.1). The same data also demonstrate that 15.8% of
Green Elementary and 61% of Elm Elementary teachers used additional instructional materials to
supplement OCR (Figure 3.2). The survey data indicate that 100% of Green Elementary teachers
and 66.7% of Elm Elementary teachers believed that the implementation of the mandated reading
curriculum in classrooms was highly controlled by the district (Figure 3.3).
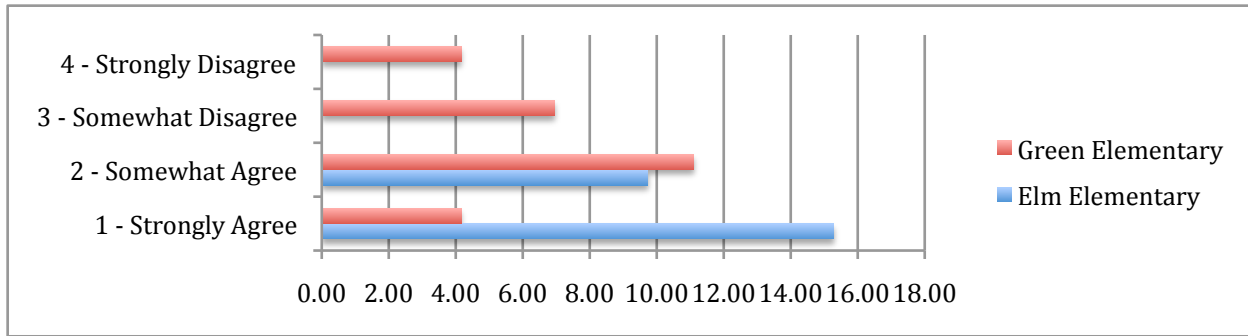
Figure 3.2. Extent of teachers' use of additional or supplemental materials for instruction
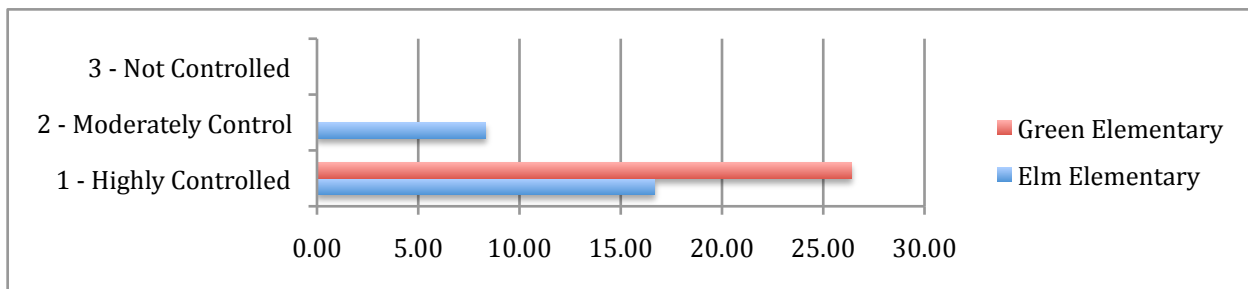
Figure 3.3. Teachers' perception about district control over the implementation of OCR

Elm Elementary. At Elm Elementary, OCR was considered a tool. This idea was expressed by the principal and perceived as such by all the teachers. The principal believed that teachers were encouraged to use the curriculum championed by the district as an instructional tool that could be modified and enriched by other supplemental resources and materials, he said, "in this district we use Open Court as our tool to meet the standards. And then the way that has been implemented, might be, in my understanding, varied across the district depending on the school." (EEP, 02.24.10) He then continued "I've always emphasized that it's our tool to help the students learn to read and write…It's really about how we'll be using that to help the students meet the reading standards for their grade level." He also added "we're not doing Open Court with fidelity. I think we are meeting the expectations that you teach the standards and you use it as a tool, but definitely not using the program with fidelity." Aida, the Elm Elementary instructional specialist, reflected on the use of the OCR and argued:

> We've had to move away from the curriculum. It's a tool for us to reach the standards but it's only one of the tools. It can be modified, changed, enhanced as long as it's all about supporting the children being able to reach that standard and what they need in order to get that. (EEI, 03.02.10)

The survey data show that 82% of the Elm Elementary teachers believed that the district somewhat controlled use of the supplementing materials in their school. Only 16.7% of the teachers believed the district had no control on their use of the supplementing materials.

The Elm Elementary principal contemplated on whether or not teachers supplemented the curriculum with other materials in their classrooms and argued that teachers used supplemental materials when they were challenged by insufficiency of the OCR, he said:

We've also have said that if there is a particular standard that needs to be taught or concept that needs to be taught and the text from the program isn't the best match, then you can find supplemental material to read with them. But they are reading the selections from the story as well, but it's not just limited to the selections. I think there is much more of an acknowledgement now that you might need to use other selections than are just in Open Court. (EEP, 02.24.10)

The survey data demonstrate that while the district controlled use of the supplemental materials, 61.1% of Elm Elementary teachers believed having a great deal of control over the use of the district's promoted supplementing materials in their classrooms (See Figure 3.5).

Elm Elementary principal also touched upon the insufficiency of OCR and shared his thoughts about the use of adopted curriculum, he asserted:

I really believe and I know that research says that kids need to be reading independently if they're going to be successful. And they need to be reading books at their level that they're interested in. And that's just not going to be reading Open Court texts, and so you need to bring in those materials and get those kids excited about it. (EEP, 02.24.10)

Aida, the instructional specialist at Elm Elementary also commented: "The curriculum cannot contain everything for you. You always have to think about what your kids need. In Elm Elementary, that's our mantra." (EEI, 03.02.10) This mentality advocated by the principal and the instructional specialist prioritized teacher professionalism over the reading curriculum by considering OCR as a tool, which in turn affected teachers' willingness to implement it.

In Elm Elementary first grade teachers used the curriculum with fidelity because either they believed in its effectiveness or they lacked experience teaching first grade. Carina, a first grade teacher, used the curriculum fully without supplementing, she said, "I do use it all the time on a daily basis. I think it is useful, especially in first grade. It progresses throughout each unit and each level gets a tiny bit harder and I like that it focuses heavily on phonemic awareness." (EET1.1, 03.11.10) Another first grade teacher was Julie who was a highly experienced upper grades teacher, but that year for the first time she taught first grade. According to her, lack of experience teaching first grade made her rely extensively on OCR, she argued:

First grade Open Court is really good for me because I didn't know how they learn in the very beginning, because I've never done this before [teaching first grade]. Because this is my first year [teaching first grade] I'm going blind. I have no idea what's coming. This year, I'm looking at the script. Next year, I can weave it all in but not this year. (EET1.2, 03.02.10)

Carina, a first grade teacher, reflected on the flexibility in using the curriculum as a tool, without realizing how or by whom the flexibility was provided, she stated:

I think in the beginning when it first came out with Open Court, it was 'do it to the page by the page, don't veer from it at all' and now there's more flexibility given. Now we're using it as a tool." (EET1.1, 03.11.10)

She then continued, "we have been able to use it, use all the important components of it, the way it's suited best for our population of students." (EET1.1, 03.11.10) This teacher recognized a change in terms of flexibility in using the OCR and tended to believe that the district provided flexibility by considering OCR as a tool. But according to the data, the fact was that the district did not provide such flexibility; rather the flexibility was the result of the principal's attempt to buffer his school's technical core from the institutional expectations. In order to buffer, the principal tried to shape "the terms of compliance" with the district to selectively and or symbolically implement the mandated reading curriculum. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), organizations lobby to influence the design of policies, programs, and other external demands. In this case the principal intentionally used the word "tool" when he referred to OCR instead of mandated curriculum to influence the design of the reading program in his school. The principal was successful in transferring this idea to his teachers. All the teachers I interviewed in this school referred to OCR as a tool while teachers and staff of other schools in this district never used such a term to describe the mandated reading curriculum.

Aida, the instructional specialist at Elm Elementary, commented on the strength of OCR and said:

> The strength is that it does very good for new teachers. It actually lays out how to do reading instruction all the way from phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and writing. It has everything in the kitchen sink there. The advantage is for new teachers, it really helped out and if you just follow that, you're going to do a half way decent job as a teacher. (EEI, 03.02.10)

There was this belief amongst the teachers that OCR did not provide the necessary skills for the students who were not at the grade level. A first grade teacher, Carina, pointed to the shortcomings of OCR and stated:

> In 1st grade, it's very laid out. There's some sections in 1st grade where there's not much maneuvering but you can do some…as it gets closer to the end of the year, I do believe it has a lot of things that are made for students who are already at grade level. (EET1.1, 03.11.10)

Jack, a fourth grade teacher, whose majority of students were English Language Learners (ELL), believed that the curriculum did not serve his students well, he stated:

> Sometimes, we're talking about levels, some of those lessons are so high up there language-wise. And sometimes they give you a selection that has very little. So it is not as comprehensive…if you want to start a new unit, it says here are two selections that you can use and that will hit every single kid in your classroom! I don't think it's geared towards some of our kids. (EET4.2, 03.26.10)

All the teachers of this school stated that their administrator provided them flexibility in using the mandated curriculum. Lauren, a fourth grade teacher, did not use OCR regularly. My observations in her classroom revealed that she was creative in her lesson planning and added to her instruction the materials she collected from the best practices over the past years, Lauren stated:

Mainly what I use in Open Court is the text and the stories, the other things, like, about strategies and things like that I use my own knowledge from my teaching program and professional development, and then I create things or get ideas from other colleagues. (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

Lauren also touched upon flexibility in supplementing the OCR and said, "We've had some freedom with Open Court. I guess the message we've been getting is that the standards come first and use the curriculum for that purpose. So, that's what we do." (EET4.1, 03.17.10) Jack, another fourth grade teacher, used OCR regularly. He stated, "It's Open Court. Anyway, I am following it." (EET4.2, 03.26.10)

The survey data also indicate that 61.1% of Elm Elementary teachers believed having a great deal of control over the use of supplementing reading materials in their instruction (See Figure 3.5). The survey data also indicate that 55.6% of Elm Elementary teachers fully and 44.4% moderately complied with the district expectations in implementing the mandated reading curriculum (See Figure 3.6). My recollection of the data persuaded me to believe that the principal and instructional specialist's mentality and perspective on OCR as a tool softened the district's stiff tone in the implementation of the OCR by the teachers.

Green Elementary. The curriculum story was somewhat different in Green Elementary. The feeling amongst the Green Elementary teachers was mixed about the mandated reading curriculum. The fourth grade teachers believed OCR did not address the needs of their students but they were mandated to implement it. The first grade teachers reflected mixed feelings. One of the first grade teachers said she used the OCR with fidelity because she felt she has no other choices; the other teacher used it because she believed in its effectiveness. Mary, a first grade teacher, shared her thoughts about the use of OCR and stated:

We're really religious about the Open Court. There were people who we call them the Open Court police that would come by to make sure that we were doing it. I think that it's pretty well agreed upon that this is the curriculum and that this is what we would teach and this is how we would teach it. (EGT1.1, 02.08.10)

When I asked Mary about the use of supplemental materials for instruction, she replied, "supplementing the Open Court is frowned upon, so I don't." (EGT1.1, 02.08.10) My observations in her classroom confirmed her statements. In all my visits to her classroom I noticed OCR Teacher Guide opened on her desk and that she followed the prescriptions carefully. I never saw her use other supplementary materials. Although she implemented the OCR with fidelity, she took the liberty to express her concerns about the effectiveness of the reading curriculum by stating:

The district has an intention of having this as the curriculum. This curriculum does a disservice to this population. If I should look at where I should be for the little books the level of language it wants them to be at right now, they're not there. These are English Language Learners and so it's not rich enough in my experience with these kids. On the other hand, I think that there's a piece of Open Court that has to stay just for consistency across the board. (EGT1.1, 02.08.10)

Another first grade teacher, Alison, implemented the curriculum with fidelity because she believed in it. This teacher had four years of teaching experience in this district at the same school and the same grade level. My interview with this teacher revealed that she had no experience working with any other reading curricula. She reflected on the use of OCR in her instruction and stated:

> I use Open Court. I'm not allowed to use anything else. What I do is take creative license with Open Court and I develop stronger games and things like that that just develop the ideas of Open Court and yeah, I'm satisfied with that. I just develop it a little strongly. (EGT1.2, 02.09.10)

When I asked this teacher about flexibility in her instruction she replied, "I don't have much flexibility. I would say I stretch Open Court as far as it can go but stepping outside of Open Court, no. I don't because it's pretty complete." (EGT1.2, 02.09.10) The reason this teacher believed OCR is complete was due to her sufficient knowledge about OCR but not about other reading curricula. When I asked her ideas about HMR, she replied, "What is that?" My observations in her classroom demonstrated her extensive use of OCR, page by page all the way. My observations also indicate that all the materials used in her instruction were OCR related.

The fourth grade teachers perceived the implementation of OCR differently. The two fourth grade teachers believed the curriculum had many weaknesses but they were forced to implement it because the principal monitored it in their classrooms. Both teachers resisted the idea of relying entirely on OCR for fourth grade reading instruction. Robert, who seemed very disappointed by the district and the principal approach, used only parts of the curriculum in his instruction, he said:

> The only thing I use from the Open Court is the actual stories and the spelling words. I don't use it for anything else. I supplement everything: vocabulary, reading strategies, compare and contrasting, opinion and fact. I have my own stuff that I have accumulated. (EGT4.1, 02.24.10)

This teacher was largely disappointed with the principal's approach enforcing use of the curriculum and stated:

> I kind of do it so I don't get in trouble. I mean, if I had my way, I wouldn't do Open Court at all but if I get caught not using the Open Court stories, then that wouldn't be good. I would get in trouble. (EGT4.1, 02.24.10)

Another fourth grade teacher, John, also resisted OCR and was critical of the way principal enforced use of the curriculum, this teacher stated:

> I've never been a real big fan of Open Court from the beginning. A lot of the teachers are the same. I follow Open Court; I would say 50-60% of it. I don't feel I have time to follow the whole thing. I don't cover everything from the Open Court because I don't see them as important. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

In contrast to the interviews, my observations in the fourth grade classrooms revealed considerable use of OCR, although I occasionally noticed use of some other reading materials. The survey data show that in planning their reading lessons 94% of Green Elementary teachers (52% strongly and 42% somewhat) referred to and considered OCR in their classrooms (Figure 3.4).
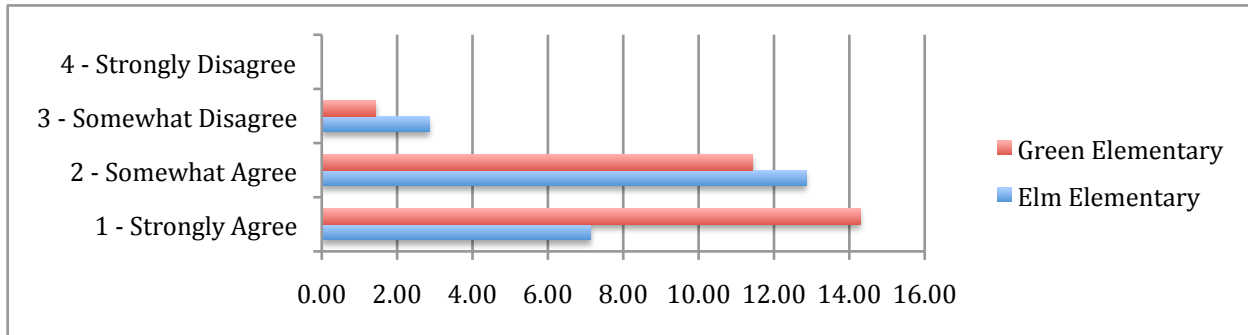
Figure 3.4. Extent of considering OCR by teachers in planning instruction

The survey data also indicate that 72% of Green Elementary teachers had no control over the use of supplementing reading materials in their instruction (Figure 3.5).
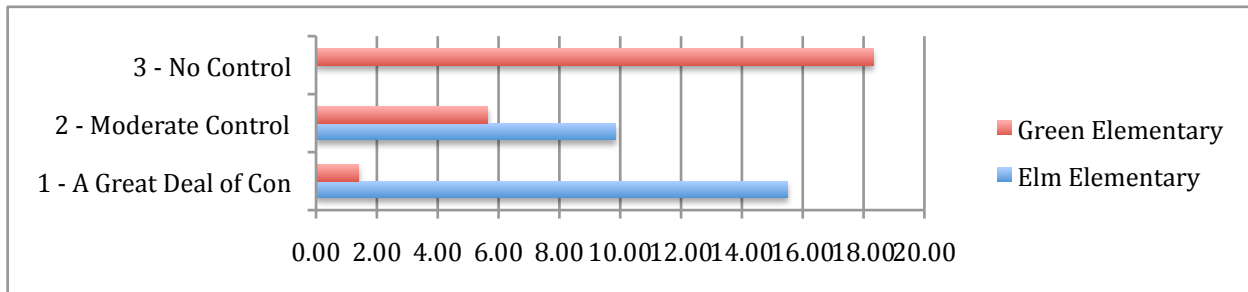
Figure 3.5. Extent of teacher control over the use of supplementing materials in instruction

The Green Elementary principal believed that OCR is a solid curriculum. She was disappointed that the teachers in her school did not implement it with fidelity, she stated: "What puzzles me is why they resist a program that is proven to be effective!" At Green Elementary, the principal's approach was aligned with the district policy and enforced the use of OCR in classrooms. To ensure the implementation of OCR she monitored classrooms either herself or through the instructional specialist. She expressed her concerns about some teachers who did not implement OCR by fidelity:

> I know they don't [implement OCR]. They haven't bought into the program. They don't believe whole-heartedly in Open Court. Open Court is a real involved program and they feel that there are components missing so they try to supplement and they don't stick to workshop, which is individual time. I walk into their classes and they're not doing what they are supposed to be doing. (EGP, 01.19.10)

She commented on the implementation of OCR with fidelity in relation to teaching experience:

> Maybe 40%, 50% [of teachers] do it consistently. Do it to fidelity. Do everyday what they are supposed to be doing. The new teachers rely on the scripted because OCR is scripted but they also have to have training. And the other ones are just don't. Most of them [those teachers who resist the Open Court] are experienced teachers who got years behind them. (EGP, 01.19.10)

Terry, the instructional specialist, also argued that teaching experience played role in the implementation of OCR with fidelity:

> Some of the teachers especially first and second grade teachers are using it pretty faithfully...there's more resistance from experienced teachers…I think that new teachers are more willing to do it because it is like a guide to them, the teacher's addition is a guide and it tells what should be taught when and how and with all the support they need. (EGI, 01.25.10)

Because she felt that OCR is rigorous, Terry strongly believed that teachers must implement it with fidelity:

> The district went with Open Court. And it turns out it was much more rigorous than what recommended. We must follow the OCR program and it is pretty well laid out what the expectations are. It is expected that everyone use the program faithfully and implement it that way. (EGI, 01.25.10)

The survey data indicate that 84% of Green Elementary teachers implemented the OCR with full compliance while 15.8% moderately complied with the implementation of the mandated reading curriculum (Figure 3.6).
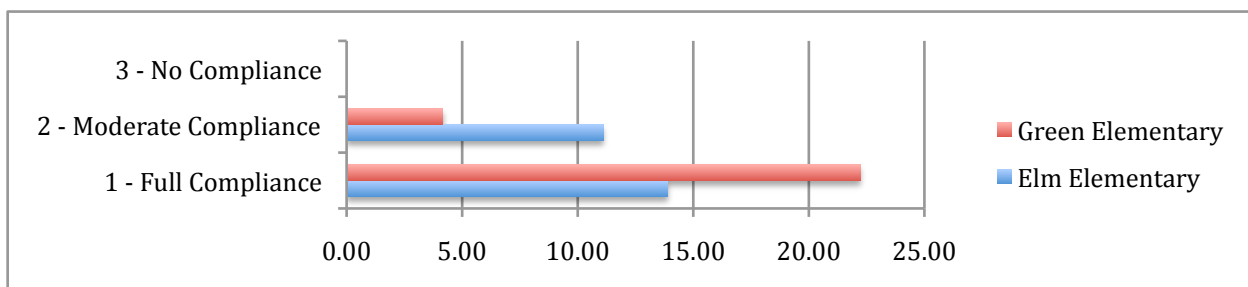
Figure 3.6. Degree of teacher compliance in using OCR

The numbers illustrate district's considerable success in controlling classroom reading instruction through mandated curriculum. This success, to a great extent, was due to principal's attempts to enforce the implementation of the OCR. Looking through the lens of neoinstitutional theory, the principal intended to couple school's technical core to the institutional expectations. Through bridging, the principal enforced the district policy demands directly to meet the policy goals, which coupled school's technical core to the institutional expectation.

Generally, the observations and survey data verify interview data. My observations elucidate that teachers at Elm Elementary used the OCR while the principal provided limited opportunities for the teachers to supplement it with other materials when they saw fit. I observed a forceful use of the OCR at Green Elementary, although I also rarely observed teachers who supplemented the mandated curriculum. The survey data also verify the interview and observation findings. In response to the item that asked about teachers' extent of control over the reading curriculum, 38.9% of Elm Elementary teachers responded that they had a great deal of control over the use of curriculum in their instruction while 83.3% of Green Elementary teachers had no control over the use of the curriculum in their classrooms (Figure 3.7).
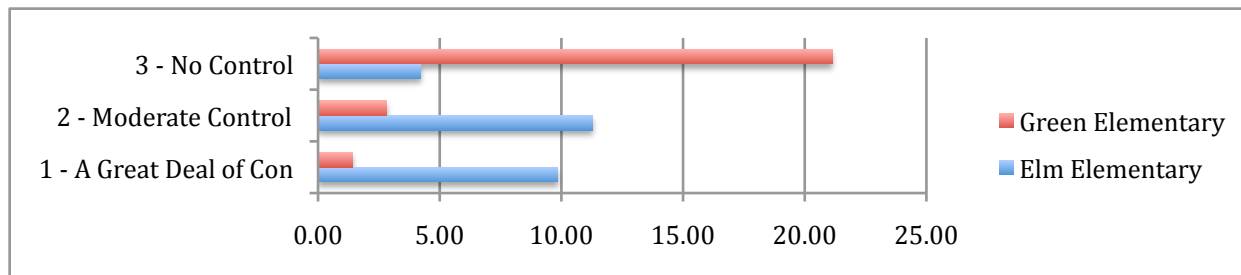
Figure 3.7. Teacher control over the use of OCR

The survey data indicate that 70.3% of Eastside School District teachers fully and 29.7% moderately complied with the district mandated curriculum (Appendix A, Figure 1.). Overall the tests and contingency analysis of the survey data show significant differences in the teachers' control over the OCR reading curriculum in the two schools.

Instructional Goals and Planning

Curious about the goals of instruction and planning in this district, I was eager to learn whether this district's literacy vision was clearly defined. By examining key documents, I concluded that Eastside School District had a clear literacy vision. According to the principals and teachers, the literacy goals were set by the district and made clear for the teachers, through professional development trainings and the principals. The district's vision implied raising students' test scores within the standards framework using the mandated curriculum with fidelity. Terry, the instructional specialist in Green Elementary stated, "I think the district messages are very clear and consistent." (EGI, 01.25.10) The survey data show that 70% of the teachers strongly agreed that the standards and assessments guided their instruction (Appendix A, Figure 2.).

In this district there was one literacy plan for all the schools, and the individual schools had no say in planning it. Yet, there was a peculiar situation that the teachers were challenged by: While the district literacy vision was clearly defined, there were mandated literacy programs and models that teachers and instructional specialists must implemented without having a good understanding of the policies. The situation implied that in this district the general literacy vision was clearly defined, the implementation processes were planned, enforced, and controlled by the district while implementers did not fully understand the policies. Without acknowledging that the policies might not be clear for the implementers even though the district literacy vision was clear, Sara, the Green Elementary principal identified teachers' behavior in filtering the messages to resist change, as the problem in implementing the district policies; she argued:

I think the message is consistent. It's the urgency that we try to convey to teachers that we can't wait but how it's received ... some of them [teachers] have a filter; they're not willing to receive it. There's resistance. They've done it for many years and they're not wanting to change. (EGP, 01.19.10)

On the other hand, Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary admitted that she did not have a good idea about the programs she was supposed to enforce and implement in her school. She stated:

It [the program] wasn't really explained very well to anyone, maybe to principals but I never got it. It is ensuring that kids get differentiated instruction in math and reading and English language arts. I don't think that it was explained very well to anyone, that was my feeling; the communication isn't very good. (EGI, 01.25.10)

John, a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary also expressed the same concern and said:

I asked the principal if you guys have a model that you are following that we can look at and see what other schools are doing. No, they don't. We don't know how this program works so they force us to do this and they don't yet have a model for us to follow. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

This situation illustrates that implementers' belief or understanding of the policy was not important while successful outcome was expected through planned and controlled implementation processes. The specific characteristics of the district approach i.e. clear vision and controlled implementation, signal organizational coupling between the technical core and the institutional expectations and pressures. The district clarity of literacy vision and controlled implementation processes left less opportunities for buffering at the school level. It is worth mentioning that this situation was more evident in Green Elementary than in Elm Elementary. In Elm Elementary, the principal and the literacy specialist took the initiative to redesign the district literacy programs and policies for the teachers. In Elm Elementary the principal acted as a policy filter or justifier to define the programs for the teachers to make sense of the policies and programs. This catalyst was missing in Green Elementary. The Green Elementary principal only bridged school's instruction to the district's and institutional expectations without filtering or interpreting the programs for the teachers.

Elm Elementary. In Elm Elementary, literacy planning occurred within the frames of the district vision, but that it was modified through the principal's leadership. Well trained in literacy, he was able to direct teachers' attention and school's reading instructional practices around student critical thinking. The principal advocated the principle that the reading curriculum was only a tool to achieve goals such as developing students' critical thinking. By using this strategy, the principal shaped the instructional priorities of his school to infuse critical thinking as an instructional priority. Lauren, a fourth grade teacher, reflected on literacy focus in her school that implicitly illustrates school principal's intention in promoting critical thinking as the instructional theme of the school; she stated, "we want them [students] to be proficient in reading and writing. We want them to think about the things they read, like, in critical ways." (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

The district's lack of instructional capacity and this principal's knowledge about it, coupled with his literacy knowledge, permitted him to introduce his own vision of literacy to the teachers. He explained, "there's two things—nobody is there [Eastside School District, Department of Curriculum and Instruction] now, and even when there were people there, I wasn't confident that they knew how to meet our needs." (EEP, 02.24.10) While the principal believed that the district did not have instructional capacity, his literacy knowledge enabled him to take initiative to provide direction for his school. His knowledge of school's institutional environment allowed him to shape the terms of compliance with the district through filtering and interpreting district policies and programs. The principal also reflected on his school's instructional objectives by stating, "at our school, we end up needing to provide the direction ourselves. And so I feel like a lot of it has come from where we as a school have decided and what I've decided we want to focus on." (EEP, 02.24.10)

The instructional goals of this school were based on the standards. Steve, the Elm Elementary principal, stated, "at the district level it's the standards, and at the school level, the same thing, but I think, that at our school, we've decided—we're looking at the needs of our kids." (EEP, 02.24.10) The observation data indicate that academic needs of students in this school were determined through the district benchmark and state assessments. Lauren, a fourth grade teacher explained the process:

> Instead of how we pace certain things in the first trimester, well, the benchmarks assess those things. So at the end of each trimester those things that should have been taught are assessed to know what they should have mastered. Those are from the district and then we teachers look at the data and see where are they weak, what we need to teach, or who's close and just kind of push. (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

While instructional planning in Elm Elementary was focused on OCR, the standards, and assessments, Steve also encouraged grade level meetings and planning:

> There's a lot of support for grade level planning. I release teachers, hire in subs to release them to do planning and then they have their team meetings and then I'll time card them to do planning around ELD after school, specific to reading. (EEP, 02.24.10)

Within the district literacy plan and the school literacy objectives, teachers in this school had similar instructional goals and planning. In response to my curiosity about the goals of instruction teachers stated that the goals of instruction is to meet the standards, preparing the students for assessments, and teaching OCR. Aida, the instructional specialist at this school, argued the same idea about the instructional objectives, shared by all the teachers in this school; she stated, "I don't think objectives would be the right word. It would be the reading standards which are chosen by the state per grade level and each school has to meet those standards using the chosen curriculum." (EEI, 03.02.10) The survey data indicate that 70% of Elm Elementary teachers strongly (29.4%) and somewhat (41.2%) believed that their school instructional objectives and expectations were subject to the agreement of the teachers and the principal (See Figure 3.8). The survey data also reveal that 72% of Elm Elementary teacher somewhat believed that they were ultimate instructional decision-makers in their classrooms (See Figure 3.9).

These pieces of survey data does not match the observations data that indicate most of the teachers' grade level meetings were focused on OCR, the standards, and assessments instead of

making independent instructional decisions. My understanding of the discrepancy between the survey and observation data is that due to school principal success in creating a collaborative teaching culture among the teachers, the collaborative environment made teachers to feel involved in school's decision-makings. Aida, the Elm Elementary instructional specialist described the general culture of the school with regards to instructional planning and claimed:

> It's very collaborative so you don't see a lot of top-down management just because the district says that. No, we always sit down and talk and we have planning sessions and yes, he [principal] has a last say and will give a guiding direction. He has pushed for certain directions like developing higher critical thinking skills. I push for certain directions and we work as a team for that and we get the teacher input. (EEI, 03.02.10)

By comparing the data, I realized that although teachers felt involved in the processes of instructional decision making, their involvement was overshadowed by the standards, assessments, and OCR that were the taken for granted rules in the district.

Green Elementary. At Green Elementary, the goal of instruction was to satisfy the district literacy goals within the frames of OCR and the state standards. Instructional planning in this school therefore was to meet these goals. Green Elementary instructional goals were focused on satisfying institutional mandates and the standards by using OCR. The school did not have a literacy plan or a specific instructional theme. Teachers of the school believed that meeting the standards was the major goal of instruction in their school as measured by student assessments. The principal and teachers of this school were open and honest enough to say that assessments drove their instructional planning and they taught to the test to satisfy the instructional goals of the district. To reflect on the issue, Sara, the principal of this school said:

> Because they [district] are required to give the benchmark three times-four times a year we give them and of course CST that drives instruction. We take a look at how the kids did on that and then the unit test they are required to so that as well. (EGP, 01.19.10)

Alison, a first grade teacher who taught OCR with fidelity, addressed my question about instructional goals in her class by stating, "My instructional goals have to do with the state standards mainly. We have standards we strive for in our daily instruction and those are the goals really that drive first grade." (EGT1.2, 02.09.10) Other first grade teachers also expressed the same view on this topic. On the other hand, Robert, a fourth grade teacher, who resisted the idea of the standards as the goal of instruction, stated, "people say, you have to concentrate on the standards, standards, standards. I'm not that kind of person. For me, it's basically being able to derive meaning from the text and connecting it to their life or somebody else's life." (EGT4.1, 02.24.10)

Regarding instructional planning, John, a fourth grade teacher, was concerned that because of numerous mandated activities imposed by the district and the school he did not have time to plan anymore, he said:

> I'm really struggling for planning and this is because of the new 'I Can Do' model. In addition, I used to do our planning during recess. Our yard duty schedule, instead of every three or four week it is now every other week so that's another thing. And we're

starting ten minutes early so no planning. I'm struggling for planning time. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

My observations were consistent with the data from the interviews. In Green Elementary, I observed that teachers regularly had their students practice on the test sheets from previous years and learn how to take the tests, while it was not the case in Elm Elementary. I also noticed that in Green Elementary, except for one teacher, others posted the standards on walls of their classrooms; this was true in Elm Elementary as well. Two issues that teachers discussed repeatedly in their grade level meetings were the standards and assessments in both schools.

The qualitative data is supported by the findings of the survey quantitative results. The survey data indicate that 69.4% of this district's teachers strongly believed that student assessment and state standards guided their instructional planning (Appendix A, Figure 2.). In Green Elementary, 100% of teachers either strongly (63.2%) or somewhat (36.8%) agreed that student assessment and state standards guided their instructional planning. In Elm Elementary, 76.5% of teachers agreed and 23.5% of teachers strongly and somewhat disagreed that student assessment and state standards guided their instructional planning (See Figure 3.13).

The survey data also indicate that 68.4% of Green Elementary teachers strongly disagreed that their school instructional objectives and expectations were subject to the agreement of the teachers and the principal (Figure 3.8).
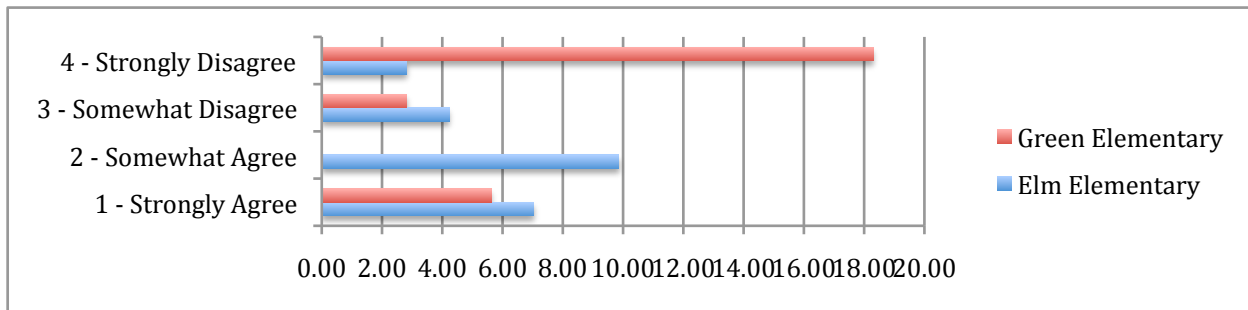
Figure 3.8. Extent of teachers and principal collaboration in determining instructional objectives

The survey data also reveal that 68.4% of Green Elementary teachers strongly and 26.3% somewhat disagreed that they were ultimate instructional decision-makers in their classrooms (Figure 3.9).
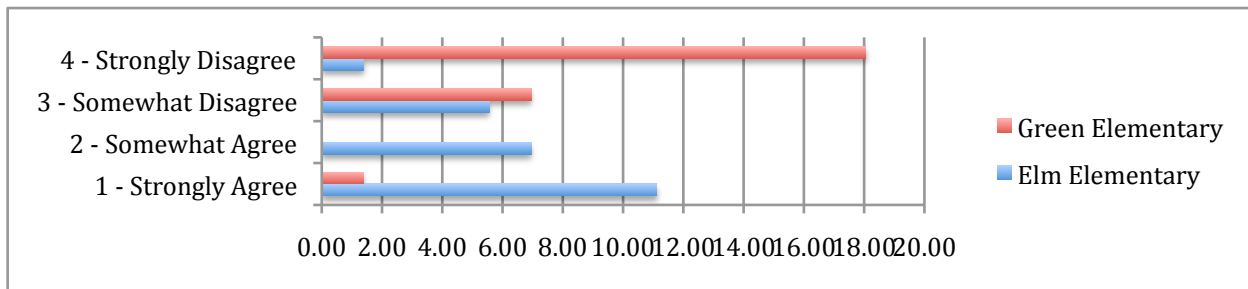
Figure 3.9. Extent of teacher instructional decision-making

Looking through the neoinstitutional theory lens, the differences between the two schools

can be explained by organizational bridging and buffering. The differences between the two schools most likely resulted from the Elm Elementary principal's intentions to buffer and the Green Elementary principal's attempt to bridge schools' instructional practices to the institutional expectations.

Instructional Programs

Open Court Reading was the adopted reading program of this school district, and the data indicate that all teachers either used it thoroughly or implemented it partially. In this school district teachers ought to implement other instructional programs mandated by the district as well. Those teachers who implemented OCR with fidelity also used its supplemental materials and programs. It rarely happened that a few teachers implemented only parts of OCR, but when they did, they had to incorporate other programs and materials.

According to Nora, a district literacy specialist, the weakness of OCR is that it is designed for instruction in whole group instead of small groups, she stated, "it's really important to group the kids according to ability and the way Open Court is set up, it's whole class teaching. I think that's a challenge because you can't differentiate enough." (EI1, 03.26.10) Joan, a district administrator stressed on the weaknesses of OCR program and stated:

> The weakest area in Open Court is definitely writing, and the other concern is that much of the material included in the series is not culturally relevant. English learners at the beginning proficiency levels are challenged by the program and it requires differentiation and pre-teaching which teachers may not always be able to provide. (EI2, 03.24.10)

These shortcomings set the stage for the district to bring in other programs to supplement the mandated reading curriculum. According to Aida, the instructional specialist at Elm Elementary, the district had a list of programs that schools can implement, she said, "There is a district policy on what programs you can supplement." (EEI, 03.02.10) All the instructional programs enforced by the district ought to be implemented within the frames of the standards. Mary, a first grade teacher, stated, "the standards are basically strategies." (EGT1.1, 02.08.10) And Sara, the Green Elementary principal, also stated, "the strategies that are used are within the framework of the reading curriculum." (EGP, 01.19.10)

The overarching program enforced by the district was Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Steve the Elm Elementary principal stated, "the district as a whole has shifted to emphasizing the standards and the district has a focus right now of culturally relevant pedagogy." (EEP, 02.24.10) Under the umbrella of the Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, the teachers were to implement programs such as 'I Can' model and "Response to Interventions" (RTI). Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary described the RTI programs by stating:

> The district is finally doing the RTI model, which is tier one, tier two, and tier three instruction. Tier one being classroom, tear two is pull out—intervention, and tear three is more intensive. We're using the DIBELS and there's training for it. (EGI, 01.25.10)

Aida, then explained the process of RTI implementation:

> When we notice through assessments that the child is not achieving, we have a program called 'Response to Intervention'. So the first thing that we do is we look at the

classroom instruction and we look at the teacher and what kind of groupings does she have for that student and we start talking about what does that student need. So, the first thing we try to do is get the group size smaller. If size even wasn't working then we start pulling out to acquire space with a tutor. (EEI, 03.02.10)

Another instructional program enforced by the district was the 'I Can' model. Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary, described the 'I Can' model and its implementation process by stating:

One area that is the most sophisticated for teachers I think is differentiating their instructions and has happened at this school because we are a PI5 school, something thing called the 'I Can' model that has been imposed on us. It's based on 'Success for All'. It is starting with the third grade, they all have to follow the same schedule and they have to differentiate for ELD and for math and reading and literature. So that means that the kids need to switch classes so they get differentiated instructions so for example in third grade I take the below basic and far below basic students and proficient students are with one teacher, etc. (EGI, 01.25.10)

Implementation of the district mandated instructional programs somewhat were different in the two schools.

Elm Elementary. At Elm Elementary, implementation of the district instructional programs was enforced to a less extent, while at Green Elementary implementation was carried out with little flexibility. Both schools implemented the "Response to Intervention" program, which the teachers saw benefits in. Even so, the 'I Can' model was implemented differently in the two schools.

According to Honig and Hatch (2004), "along the continuum between bridging and buffering, schools shape the terms of compliance, a process that can include selective and symbolic implementation. One of the activities associated with this hybrid, bridging-buffering strategy, is a symbolic adoption" (p. 23). The data from my three sources indicate that some of the district instructional programs were implemented in Elm Elementary by shaping "the terms of compliance" through symbolic adoption of some of the programs. The principal of this school provided flexibilities to enable teachers to adjust the district programs to their needs or to implement the district instructional programs symbolically. Aida, the Elm Elementary instructional specialist, commented on the implementation of the 'I Can' model at her school and stated:

'I Can' model is a structure model of homogeneously grouping students at a grade level for literacy instruction. We're not doing that because we're doing our own intervention with the tutors pulling out the students. So we've already modified the 'I Can' model to the needs of our school, the personnel that we have. (EEI, 03.02.10)

Evidently, Elm Elementary symbolically adopted the 'I Can' model but in fact it restructured the program to fit its needs and situation. This decision provided small windows of opportunities for teachers like Lauren who did not want to limit themselves within the district instructional programs. Lauren, a fourth grade teacher, who incorporated her own preferred materials in instruction also stated:

What I use in Open Court is the text and the stories, the strategies, I use my own knowledge from my teaching program and professional development, and then I create things or get ideas from other colleagues like 'Think Aloud'. I also read and use materials that provide strategic instruction such as 'Mosaic of Thought'. (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

She also added, "I use a different program entirely. It's 'Words Their Way,' and that's in our resource room, and the literacy specialist has recommend that to use it for spelling or phonics instruction." (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

Green Elementary. While the Elm Elementary principal did not even mention the program in his interview, the principal of Green Elementary vigorously enforced the implementation of the 'I Can' model in her school. The enforced implementation of the 'I Can' model at some points caused some confrontations between teachers and the principal. According to Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary, "the principal is very ambitious. She wanted the whole school to be doing the 'I Can' model so that's what's happening." (EGI, 01.25.10) Some teachers, according to Terry, did not want to implement the 'I Can' model accordingly as its implementation required consistency of schedule amongst the same grade level, she said:

For a week people were teaching the program and then they didn't. I mentioned it to the principal and she went in and scolded someone. We go to a classroom and they're not following their schedule while it is really important that everyone is teaching the same thing at the same time and same pace. (EGI, 01.25.10)

All the teachers expressed concerns about their lack of knowledge about the program. They all stated that they needed more information, training and modeling to prepare them for implementation of the program. They were concerned that they were required to implement a program that they were not knowledgeable about. Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary, expressed her concern about the program not well explained to the faculty, she stated:

I'm not really quite sure what that's all about, you know, and so I think the idea, this is what I'm understanding. It wasn't really explained very well to anyone maybe to principals but I never got it that it is ensuring that kids get differentiated instruction in math and reading and English language arts. It's been that way for a long time. (EGI, 01.25.10)

John, a fourth grade teacher, whose comment reflects the idea presented by other teachers, also commented on the issue of teachers' lack of knowledge about the program and stated:

I asked the principal the last meeting we had what model is there you know if you guys have a model that you are following that we can look at and see what's working, what other schools are doing. No, they don't. We don't know how this program works so they force us to do this and they don't yet have a model for us to follow. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

John, also reflected on the difficulties he faced implementing the differentiated instruction. He argued that teachers were not provided with sufficient information about the whole program, he stated:

> We have less time now with this new differentiated instruction model, which is basically a requirement. It's a requirement that we have to have differentiated instruction this year but they provided no model for us to follow. There seems to be a lot in the program for one person to do. So that's why students are falling through the cracks. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

Robert, another fourth grade teacher, believed that the district's mandated instructional programs left them no choice but to follow as the whole school's schedule was affected by such programs, he stated:

> 'I Can' is our model; we have no choice. It's a way to pull off the state experts from coming in. It [differentiated instruction] is very ridged, very strict in your schedule. The flexibility has become less and less. I'm really struggling for planning time this year because of the new 'I Can' model. (EGT4.1, 02.24.10)

The feeling, shared by all teachers at this school, was that their instructional schedules were so tightly organized and planned by the school in order to implement the mandated programs that they had no time to think about other instructional activities or materials. It is worth mentioning that the idea of teacher collaboration to do the differentiation instruction was a lever to enforce implementation of the district programs. Teachers were required to switch students with other teachers throughout the day; this process necessitated consistency amongst the classrooms. According to Ingersoll (2003), bureaucratic mode of control emphasizes control through impersonal systems such as standardized operating procedures, routines, and written records. The district used the organization's structures and routines to control the implementation of the mandated programs.

This scenario indicates tight coupling between school instructional programs and the district expectations through routines and standardized operating procedures. The school left no space for the teachers to do anything but what they were required to do.
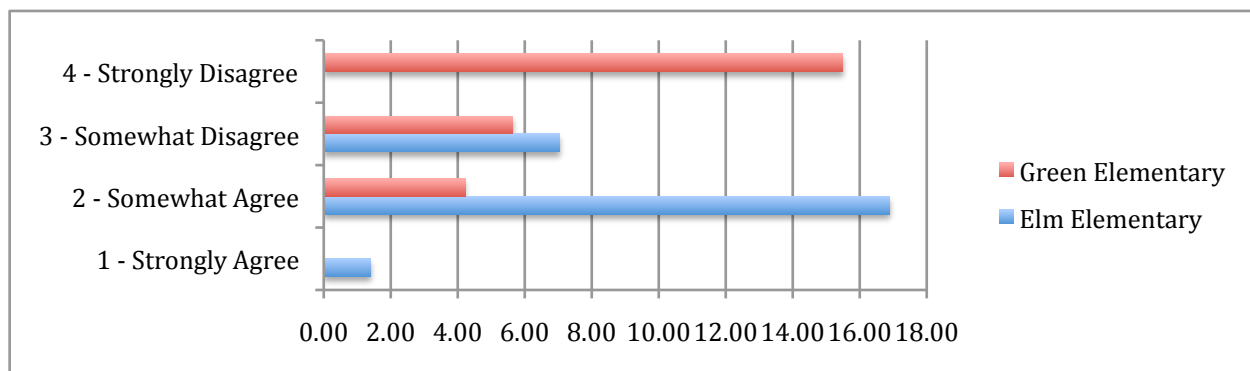
Figure 3.10. Extent of district instructional flexibility in teachers' view

The survey data indicate that 83% of Green Elementary teachers strongly and somewhat agreed that the district's instructional approach was not flexible; this view was shared by 27% of Elm Elementary teachers (Figure 3.10). The teachers of the two schools responded differently to my survey item on the district's instructional flexibility, suggesting that school administrations had considerable role in making the instructional coupling, tight or loose.

Instructional Resources and Support

Teachers are able to carry out their instructional responsibilities if they have considerable resources and support available to them from the district as well as the school. The data indicate that this district did not provide sufficient professional development to support teachers. In the past, teachers received professional development focusing on the standards and OCR. According to Joan, a district instruction administrator, "at the elementary level all teachers have received extensive training in the standards and using the OCR materials." (EI2, 03.24.10) According to the data, during the year in which I conducted the study, the district did not provide any professional development. Steve, the Elm Elementary principal stated, "No PD [professional development] district wide anymore, because we used to have some and it was mainly on the mandated program implementation and learning how to use the program." (EEP, 02.24.10) He then reflected on lack of instructional capacity at the district level in supporting classroom instruction:

> I don't really look to the district to give much guidance on instruction. I haven't found that people in the Curriculum and Instruction Department know all that much about curriculum and instruction. There's two things—nobody is there [at the district] now, and even when there were people there, I wasn't confident that they knew how to meet our needs. (EEP, 02.24.10)

Steve also commented on teachers' lack of professional knowledge and training:

> One [instructional] challenge is the program they [teachers]'re coming from. And then other challenge is not getting much district level support around teaching reading. There is just limited time to provide the nuts and bolts for professional development and it's not coming from anywhere else. (EEP, 02.24.10)

Aida, the instructional specialist at Elm Elementary, described the district professional development and stated, "we have not had a whole district wide training because of the costs and we have no money. The district doesn't have a lot of money. They have some paid trainings that the teachers can go to." (EEI, 03.02.10) Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary also said, "we don't have that much professional development." (EGI, 01.25.10) And John, a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary stated:

> I haven't had any for several years actually. The professional development that was provided for reading was only provided early in the adoption of the OCR and then they have some follow up professional development. That hasn't been in action in several years, as far as reading is concerned. I don't recall anything. Our district is struggling with budget issues so they have really fallen off. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

Mary, a first grade teacher at Green Elementary, also commented, "it [PD] used to be, I think it's past tense, I mean money's pretty tight right now so if I want professional development, I'd pay for it. So I'm paying to go to the Bay Area's writer project." (EGT1.1, 02.08.10) Robert, a fourth grade teacher, also said, "they [the district] say they focus on language arts in this district but there's nothing really to back it up." (EGT4.1, 02.24.10) The survey data illustrate that 62% of the teachers in this district received support from the central office only to implement OCR and related programs in their classroom (Appendix A, Figure 3.).

Aida, the Elm Elementary instructional specialist, commented on the quality of the district's professional development:

> Most of the professional development don't always go over well from the district because the level of expertise of the presenters or just where our teachers are at, they are at a much higher level than where the district at large is. Generally, the district PDs are not quite as receptive. (EEI, 03.02.10)

Lauren, a fourth grade teacher, also commented on the quality of the district professional development by stating:

> We supposed to have professional development. I don't want to, because I haven't had good experiences with the professional development from the district. One year I went and it was just a waste of time. So I don't look forward to those." (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

Jack, another fourth grade teacher also said, "district PD is to tell you how to proceed through the curriculum, it's not how to really implement it in a way that your kids understand." (EET4.2, 03.26.10)

According to the survey data 77% of the teachers at the two schools believed that the district did not provide quality professional development to improve instructional strategies (Appendix A, Figure 4.). According to the data, due to lack of instructional capacity, the district failed to provide appreciable professional training for the schools. This lack of instructional capacity was due to financial difficulties as well as lack of professional instructional support staff at the district level. Regarding the centralized character of Eastside School District, lack of instructional capacity was a contributing factor to the district's intentions to tightly couple classroom instructional practices to the institutional expectations.

Here, I argue that because the district could not provide sufficient professional trainings for the teachers, it feared implementation of non-monolithic instructions at the classroom level. The district's lack of instructional capacity disarmed the district to lead the schools instructionally, therefore it controlled instruction through the use of other control levers such as mandated instructional programs (see next chapter for extensive discussion on this matter). The interview quote from my conversation with Carina, a first grade teacher, indicates the doubts the teachers had about the district's instructional capabilities, she said:

> It concerns me that I don't feel the district is working as hard to get all the schools at a certain learning level, it's puzzling a little. I feel like they need to spend more time maybe researching what's been working, what hasn't been working. (EET1.1, 03.11.10)

Elm Elementary. While the district was not able to provide effective professional development, the schools were expected to take initiatives in planning their own professional trainings. Although not sufficient, Elm Elementary was able to provide professional development and instructional support to the teachers. Instructional support at Elm Elementary was provided in the forms of staff meetings that turned into professional development sessions, hiring private consultants, teacher grade level meetings, and through the instructional specialist. According to Elm Elementary principal, the school tried to provide different venues of professional development for teachers, he said:

> Professional development happens in a few ways. So we have two monthly meetings, we have a staff meeting that instead of going over administrative stuff, I end up making it professional development and then the other staff meeting is usually run ELD—so both staff meetings are facilitated—like, I take the lead on the equity and the instructional specialist takes lead on the ELD but we both have teams. (EEP, 02.24.10)

According to data, Elm Elementary teachers were somewhat involved in the planning of their site professional development. The principal, the instructional specialist, and teacher representatives from each grade level formed the instructional leadership team; Aida, the Elm Elementary instructional specialist pointed out:

> We have an instructional leadership team that the principal and I are on it. He directs one but it also is made of one representative from each grade level and we discuss the areas where we want to go in. We run them all down, we get feedback, we start exploring that area and they go try it out and then they go present a professional development and those teachers present maybe about 10-15 minutes with some basic, practical examples of what it looks like in the classroom and then they go back to their teams in the PD and we talk together in the grade levels and try to start discussion concerns and doing actual lesson plans in planning time. (EEI, 03.02.10)

Commenting on the form and processes of the professional development in Elm Elementary, Carina, a first grade teacher, confirmed Aida's statements:

> We make our own professional developments. They're not given and assigned by the district but they're things we feel we need to work on in this school in order to keep moving our kids up. So it's not so much that I need support from the district. I know I have the support in my school. (EET1.1, 03.11.10)
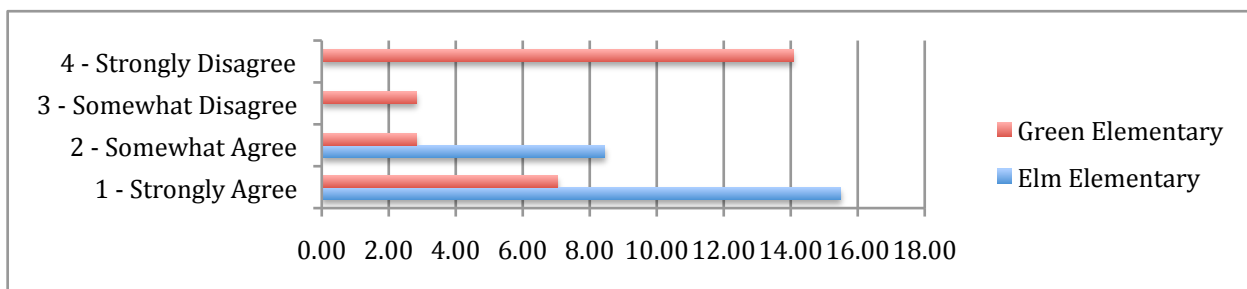
Figure 3.11. Extent of school instructional support

According to the survey data, 64.7% of Elm Elementary teachers believed receiving instructional support from their school (Figure 3.11). The data demonstrate that even though the teachers did not receive support from the district, the school had limited capacity to provide teachers with instructional support.

In order to provide professional help to teachers, the Elm Elementary principal was able to hire private consultants, he said:

> At our school we have a lot of professional development. In reading, when I first started, we did a lot of work on reading comprehension strategies and I actually brought in a consultant from—it was from the group from where the authors of the "Strategies that Work" and from "The Mosaic of Thought", I know it grew out of David Pearson's research. So we had a consultant work with us. So that was the first few years I was principal and then we've had a number of couches and now, unfortunately, because of the budget, we're only down to one coach, who has continuously led a lot of professional development. Yet particularly focused on fluency. (EEP, 02.24.10)

Lauren, a fourth grade teacher, commented on the presence of outside organization consultant by stating:

> There was a woman who came in from an outside organization and modeled in our classrooms. The principal had her come in a few times and us teachers would come in and watch her model. With the kids, she modeled thinking aloud, about the stories. I liked how she worked with the kids and thinking aloud with them and then giving them a chance to use the same strategy. I think this model came out of a book that I read, titled: 'Mosaic of Thought'. We also had somebody from the 'Bay Area Writing Project' who would model lessons and help us develop lessons and she left a binder filled with resources of different writing projects. (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

Hiring private consultants by the principal demonstrates this principal's attempts to increase school's instructional capacity to address students' academic needs. This activity only means that the principal tried to buffer to loosely couple his school's instructional activities from the district expectations, although due to institutional pressures he was only able to shape the terms of compliance with the district.

One of the venues of providing professional support to the teachers was through teachers' collaborative grade level meetings (TCM). The Elm Elementary principal described the function of these meetings and said:

> On Wednesdays they get released early so they have grade level meetings. I think [TCM] has changed over the years for the better. We have a very collaborative culture here and there is an expectation that grade levels are working together on meeting the standards. (EEP, 02.24.10)

Data reflect mixed feelings about the effectiveness of these meetings. Lauren, a fourth grade teacher, explained the processes of the grade level meetings by saying:

We set our own agenda using the chart that we have to turn in to the principal. So we're supposed to have some outcomes we want and there's a checklist, when are we talking about reading, math, when are we talking about assessment. Usually we talk about instructional strategies. It's very helpful. I get to check in with my colleagues and I definitely get good ideas. (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

Jack, another fourth grade teacher, had a different perception about these meetings, he said:

For me in anything that I do, a lot of it has to do with the chemistry within the group, personalities within the group. I don't see that chemistry with the people in my grade level. I could agree to disagree, a lot." (EET4.2, 03.26.10)

I attended some of these meetings for observation. The observation data indicate that grade level teachers attended the meetings for two hours, once a week. The observations of these meetings for first and fourth grades revealed discrepancies with the interview data. My observation data indicate that the teacher leader basically attempted moving the meetings' discussions toward the district expected instructional model by focusing on OCR, mandated programs, the standards, and assessments. She constantly focused teachers' attention on what was expected from them, to what page, and by what date. I did not detect any traces of constructive discussions around instructional activities. The meetings seemed to act as a report session on what was done and should be done.

As Lauren mentioned, each grade level group had a checklist of predetermined agenda that they reported back to the principal. The checklist included a table indicating the subject areas, focus of discussions, and decisions made for each subject. The observation data also indicate that the allocated time for the meetings was not used efficiently. A considerable period of the meetings' time was used to chat about things other than instruction. The survey data, on the other hand, specify that 88.9% of the teachers in this school strongly (55.6%) and somewhat (33.3%) believed that teacher collaboration meeting was a strong part of their school's teaching culture (See Figure 3.14).

At Elm Elementary, lower grade teachers received instructional support from the support personnel. Aida, the instructional specialist at Elm Elementary stated:

We have support personnel that go in and help with the small group instruction time. We have five tutors that give small instructional support for kindergarten through third grade and then I have two kindergarten teachers during the afternoon prep give bilingual, small group instruction, instructional support, and first and second grade. So there's a pretty big intervention team that I help and the principal help coordinate here for K through three. (EEI, 03.02.10)

The situation was different for upper grade level teachers who did not benefit from the support of the instructional support staff in their classrooms, Jack said, "very little help we have, we don't have any aids or anything like that like some of the other schools I know of." (EET4.2, 03.26.10)

The district provided schools such as Elm Elementary with some phonics related reading resources and materials that were kept in the school's resource room. Teachers used these

materials in their instruction. Aida reflected on the school's instructional resources by stating, "there are some of the supplemental materials that the district has given us that are good and we're trying them and we also look at other materials, whatever will help the children to succeed." (EEI, 03.02.10) She admitted that the school had no sufficient instructional resources to support the upper grades, she said, "We don't have a lot of resources in place for upper grades. We've just not been able to increase the personnel to go to upper grades." (EEI, 03.02.10)

According to Jack, a fourth grade teacher, teachers were supporting each other when it came to the instructional materials and resources, he stated:

> Teachers who are in school who have probably gone through the same things and they don't feel like what they're using are adequate. So they find things and—we all keep things. So when someone says, Oh, anybody has something on this? Someone would say, yes I do! (EET4.2, 03.26.10)

The Elm Elementary principal intended to increase school's instructional resources to help teachers as well as the students, he stated:

> In all classrooms you go in, you should see a classroom library. We've focused on fluency--we have some of the 'Reader's Theater' materials where the kids get to read aloud and read plays. And then in the upper grades we actually just got some augmentations we're going to try to get in more books that are more popular, relevant, literature that they read now. So I know that one teacher does 'The Watsons Go to Burmingham', she has a class-set of that. Even books like 'Diary of the Wimpy Kid' is a popular book now and kids have checked it out from the library and they're excited about it. So we want to get more of those. Captain Underpants even, things like that to get them excited. (EEP, 02.24.10)

He continued explaining the needs of the students in his school by stating "we have a fair number of students that aren't successful at reading so we've been trying to find answers for that. And so we've been getting materials by going to resources like the Florida Reading Center for Response to Intervention." (EEP, 02.24.10)

As discussed previously, Response to Intervention was a district program. But this interview quote illustrates that the principal intended to incorporate more program related materials into the district program by being an active participant in professional development and training the teachers. The overall picture is well illustrated by the survey data showing that 83% of Elm Elementary teachers believed that instructional supporting materials were highly or moderately controlled by the district (See Figure 3.15).

Green Elementary. Like Elm Elementary, Green Elementary did not receive professional development from the district. John, a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary stated:

> I haven't had any for several years actually. The professional development that was provided for reading was only provided early in the adoption of OCR and then they have some follow up professional development. That hasn't been in action in several years as far as reading is concern. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

He then continued, "since last year we did have one that was basically focused on how to get your students ready for the California State Writing test." Robert, another fourth grade teacher, also said, "with language arts, since I started teaching, I don't remember a good, solid language arts professional development or support that I've gotten." (EGT4.1, 02.24.10) The Green Elementary principal admitted that the school district did not provide the teachers with professional development; she said, "when the program was adopted there was a lot training that came with it and over the years we haven't really have the money to train them as much." According to the survey data, 84% of the Green Elementary teachers believed that they received support from the district only to implement OCR (Figure 3.12).
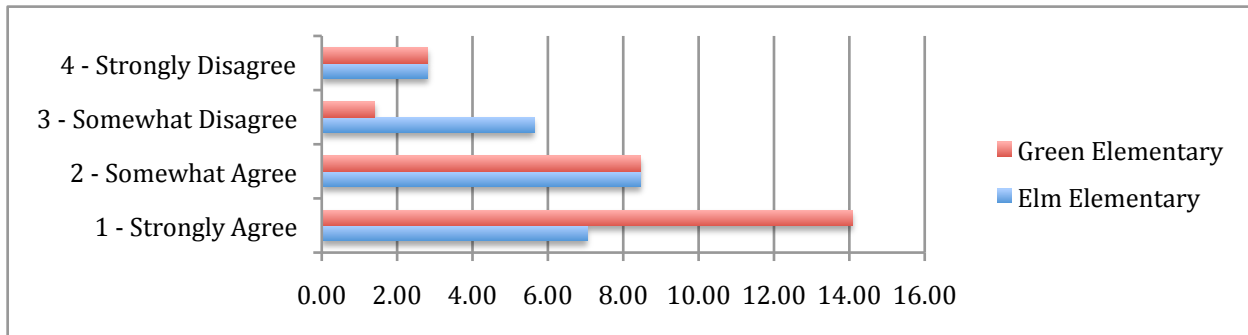
Figure 3.12. Extent of district professional support in implementing OCR

At Green Elementary, there were two sources of instructional help for teachers, one through the role of instructional specialist and coach and the other one via weekly grade level meetings. According to the principal, her school had only enough money to hire a literacy specialist, she said:

> Budget cuts have forced us to not be able to hire outside consultants and we kind of grow our own. As a Title I school we have money that we can hire our own so we hired a literacy specialist and an intervention staff to be our gurus. (EGP, 01.19.10)

She also described the number of professional development in her school and stated:

> We don't have a lot of PDs. Terry, our literacy coach and our intervention person who really push reading instruction and model lessons and are there for contestation. Terry will go in and demonstrate lesson on for example phonemic awareness and then she will help teachers. She will observe and then she will provide feedback. So she's a real strong force there. (EGP, 01.19.10)

On the other hand, Terry, the instructional specialist, explained school's lack of professional development in terms of leadership and resources, "the principal thinks that it was not such a good idea to have too much professional development, to add things to people's plates and also often time a union meeting was scheduled for a time a professional development was scheduled." (EGI, 01.25.10)

According to the data, the principal, the instructional specialist, and teachers met once a while to plan based on the assessment outcomes. Terry, the instructional specialist explained:

Our main way of doing professional development is data chats where we get together. We look at the data and determine what was working and what wasn't working and make a plan for what steps to take and then we meet again after the next benchmark assessment. (EGI, 01.25.10)

The principal also said, "we have data chats where Terry sits in and I sit in and we take a look at the data and talk about what are the strengths and what are the weakness of the students and how can we address the specific weaknesses." The role of principal in these professional development meetings that focused on the assessments was to ensure that teachers and the literacy specialist were working to change the results. This principal, despite her long experience in this position, did not have sufficient literacy content knowledge. According to Robert, a fourth grade teacher, "she is disconnected from the reality of reading instruction." (EGT4.1, 02.24.10)

As illustrated through these statements the school planed its literacy approach using the district benchmark assessment data. The instructional specialist who was in charge of providing professional development for the teachers surprisingly considered these chat meetings as professional development while the purpose of these meetings was not training teachers but was to collectively plan for next steps of implementing the district literacy programs. This process indicates that the instructional specialist and the principal intended to keep the teachers focused on the assessments to encourage teachers to teach to the test in order to increase test scores and to tightly couple the instruction to the district expectations for survival. The teachers whom I interviewed all admitted that they taught to the test. The observations from all the meetings I attended strongly suggest that teachers planed their instruction based on the assessments, they basically planed and taught to the test. The survey data also indicate 100% of Green Elementary teachers taught to the state standardized tests (Figure 3.13).
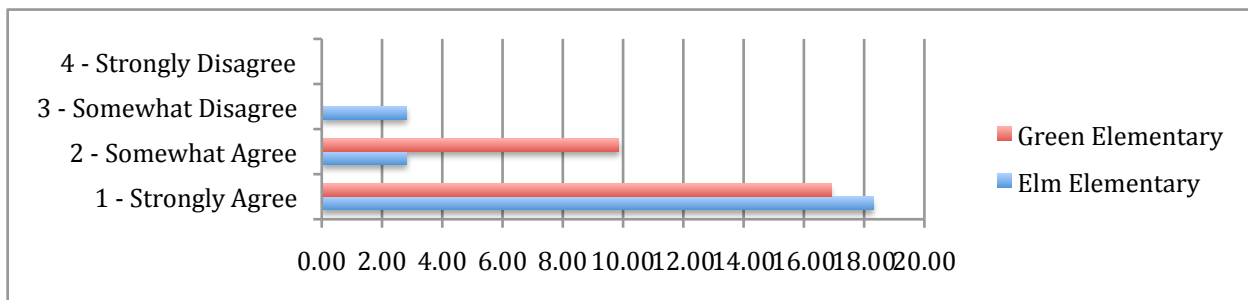
Figure 3.13. Extent of use of assessment data to plan instruction

Green Elementary teachers had the chance to meet with their grade level colleagues once a week. The Green Elementary principal said:

We will hire subs for half a day for a grade level and they will sit there and discuss students for half a day talk about what could they be doing, what can we be doing and I mean what support do we need. I mean Terry can come up with support like office suggestions. (EGP, 01.19.10)

The principal commented on the effectiveness of the grade level meetings by stating, "you can go into class A and class B and they're doing the same thing. They're all doing the same thing because they plan well together. We have others that don't use their Wednesdays

wisely and they don't collaborate." Terry, the instructional specialist said, "they are given from 1:15 to 3:00 every Wednesday to meet and they are supposed to use data to determine their next steps and things like that. I'm not sure that's happening but they do meet." (EGI, 01.25.10) Mary, a first grade teacher also said, "it's a time for us as professionals and colleagues to talk about the assessments that are coming up, how you are doing, problems with kids. We can collaborate that way." (EGT1.1, 02.08.10)

As illustrated, even in their grade level meetings teachers were required to use data to determine their next instructional steps while nothing was mentioned about how they should improve their instruction through best practices and strategies. The whole purpose of all the professional development meetings in this school was focusing on the assessment data to raise student scores not on improving teaching to address the actual needs of the students. Again, what I detected from the processes of instruction and professional development in this school is coupling of the instruction to the institutional expectations through bridging acts of the principal.

Alison, a first grade teacher at Green Elementary, described her view of the grade level meetings, she said, "we stick with each other, the grade level people. We all talk. We meet every Wednesday and talk about the issues and how to resolve them." (EGT1.2, 02.09.10) There were also teachers who questioned the effectiveness of these meetings, John, a fourth grade teacher said:

> They can be helpful if they're done properly and the teachers actually collaborate well. I don't feel our grade level collaborates very well. So I'm not sure if it's really all worth it. Because of the differentiated instruction we talk about the students that we all share and where to place them. So that can be helpful but I think we can do better. We've had a lot of grade level meetings taken over by district issues, which can be very disruptive. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

I attended some of their grade level meetings where I noticed the presence of neither the instructional specialist nor the principal. The role of the teacher leader in the first grade meetings was to ensure that the other teachers were at the page they were supposed to be on OCR. They discussed a couple of strategies and one of the teachers who seemed to be inexperienced, was lost in understanding the bureaucracies of testing and report cards formats. The fourth grade meetings were very relaxed and more focused on math. They talked very briefly about the upcoming writing test.
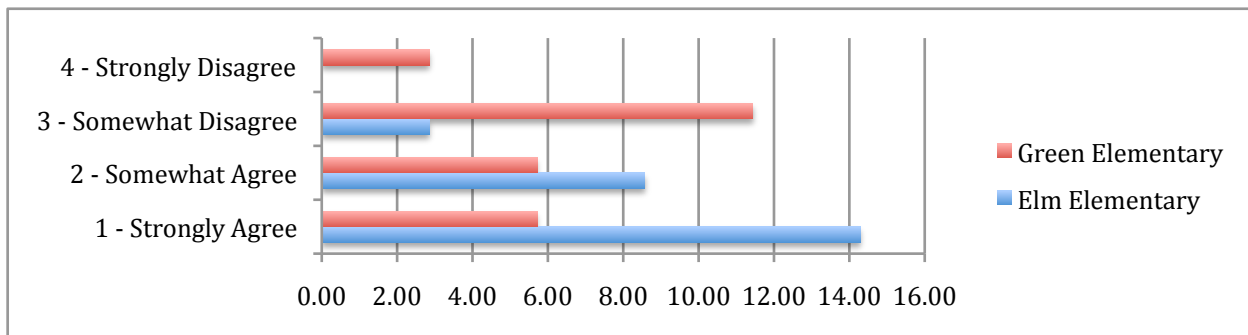
Figure 3.14. District use of teachers' collaborative meeting as a control tool

Overall and according to the data, the point of these weekly grade level meetings was to ensure that teachers were moving through the curriculum to have the students ready for the assessments. According to survey data, 22.2% of Green Elementary teachers strongly agreed and 44.4% somewhat disagreed that the goal of teacher collaboration in their school was to improve teaching strategies (Figure 3.14).

Another venue to support the teachers was through the work of the instructional specialist. The data indicate that while first grade teachers were satisfied with the support they received from the instructional specialist, all the fourth grade teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the instructional support they were provided with. They did not receive support because the instructional specialist focused her work on the lower grades. This left the upper grades with no instructional support. Mary, a first grade teacher stated, "we have literacy coaches here that if we have questions on how to do this program or how to flow it, they're resources here that are available." (EGT1.1, 02.08.10) And Alison, another first grade teacher said, "our reading expert, she is the most amazing reading specialist we've ever had. She is simply wonderful. I've learned many techniques, many new techniques." (EGT1.2, 02.09.10) Robert, a fourth grade teacher, reflected differently on the role of the instructional specialist by stating:

> We have people, their positions are called literacy coach. Most of them that I've worked with, they're neither literacy experts nor coaches. They're not people I look to for mentoring or anything like that. Well, actually the other thing is that the literacy people only work with the lower grades anyways. (EGT4.1, 02.24.10)

The instructional specialist in this school played the role of bridging. According to Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary, she worked in the district office for many years as a literacy specialist and then was assigned to this school as an instructional specialist when the Reading First money ran out, she explained:

> Reading First schools got a lot of extra money for leading coaches and training for principals. The Sacramento County of Education provided the trainings. The Reading First office, which was consisted of three instructional specialists including myself would come and help. We would go through classrooms and give our feedbacks on how we felt it was implemented and how to implement it better. Well we don't do it anymore. Reading first money ran out two years ago, which is why I'm here. (EGI, 01.25.10)

The principal also reflected on the role of instructional specialist and stated:

> Budget cuts have forced us to not be able to hire outside consultants and we kind of grow our own. It's just like we have this as a Title I school we have money that we can hire our own so we hired our literacy specialist and coach to be our gurus. (EGP, 01.19.10)

From the neoinstitutional theory point of view, in order to bridge some organizations pull the environment in by absorbing members of external organizations into their own organizational structures. This is what exactly happened to Green Elementary School. When the Reading First money ran out, the principal acted strategically and pulled the environment in by hiring Terry as the instructional specialist of school in order to capture the external pressures and increase the interactions between school and the institutional environment to increase school's opportunities

to advance its internal goals and strategies. Teachers perceived the position of the instructional specialist as a district person who came to their school to ensure OCR implementation.

John, a fourth grade teacher, whose idea and action mirrored that of another fourth grade teachers, did not use the help of the literacy specialist because he associated her job with the implementation of OCR, he said, "she's supposed to be able to provide support for teachers. She always seems available but I've never asked her to come in and modeled anything because I've never been a real big fan of OCR from the beginning." (EGT4.2, 02.18.10) Teachers who did not believe in OCR and did not implement it with fidelity tried to avoid the evaluations and reports. Avoiding help of the instructional specialist indicates the fact that teachers associated her job responsibilities to the district instructional demands or, as Honig and Hatch (2004) put it, to bridge the instruction to the external demands.

Green Elementary generally struggled with lack of sufficient supporting instructional materials and resources. Most of the materials and resources available at the site were supplements of OCR while other supporting resources were not visible in the classrooms. My observations in the classrooms indicate lack of variety of reading instructional materials in classrooms. While at the school, I was told informally that the presence of other instructional materials in the classrooms was frowned upon by the school administrator. I too noted of the classrooms' shelves filled with OCR workbooks and related supporting materials but not other resources. According to the survey data, 94% of Green Elementary teachers believed that use of supporting instructional materials were highly or moderately controlled by the district. In Elm Elementary 27.8% of teachers believed that use of supporting instructional materials were highly controlled by the district (Figure 3.15).
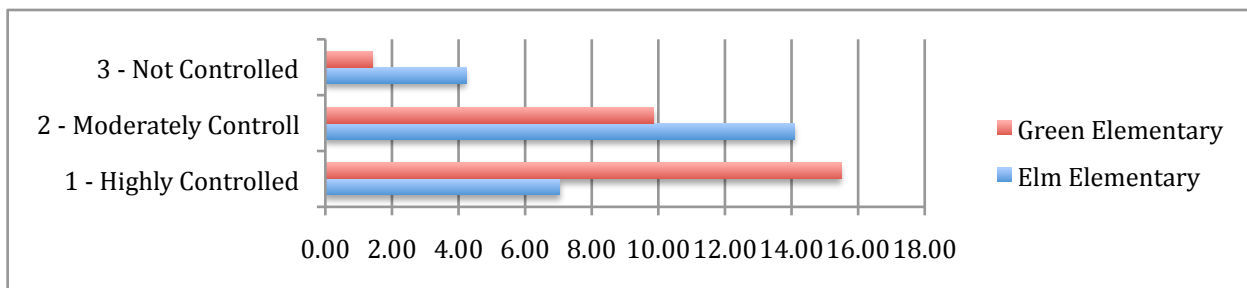
Figure 3.15. Extent of district control over the use of supporting instructional materials

The interview, observation, and survey data illustrated that although in the same school district and exhibiting the same demographic characteristics, Elm Elementary and Green Elementary had slightly different perceptions about the district mandates and expectations. Both, Elm Elementary and Green Elementary implemented district expectations but school leadership approaches affected the way the district mandates were understood by the teachers and implemented in the classrooms. The Elm Elementary principal tried to loosely couple his school's instruction from the district through shaping the terms of compliance with the district while the Green Elementary principal preferred to couple her school's technical core to the district through different channels of bridging.

Case Study II: The Decentralized School District

Westside School District is located in a large city in Northern California. This district encompasses more than 100 public schools with more than 600 employees in more than thirteen departments at the central office in addition to the administrators, staff, and faculty at the school sites. This school district has adopted a multi-year strategic plan that addresses equity, student achievement and accountability in order to bridge the gap between high achieving and low achieving students (the district website). Westside School District was recommended to me as one with a reputation as intentionally decentralized in its philosophy and administrative structure. More importantly, it fit the definition provided in the introduction chapter of this work. And throughout my interactions with the schools and the district staff, my understanding of Westside School District as a decentralized district was reinforced repeatedly and emphatically. The two district officials, teachers, and staff in the two schools of this district all implied that the district has a decentralized governing approach. The Maple Elementary principal represented this belief quite transparently:

> Since I was an assistant principal, it was every school on its own. For the schools that are not Reading First schools, they could essentially teach whatever they want. They have the HMR texts but don't all use them. There's nothing that the district really do, it's just all site based. (WMP, 02.03.10)

There are two specific departments at the district that are directly involved with school level instruction, one is Leadership, Equity, Achievement and Design Department and the other one is Academics and Professional Development Department (according to the district website). Each school is required to have an 'Academic Plan' for student achievement, which is publicly accessible through the district website. This district has also developed a strategic plan that makes several resources available through a website to the staff including the leadership resources, budgetary information, and balanced scorecard development support for the school sites as well as the central office departments.

The Schools

As described in Chapter 2, I selected two schools within this district, Maple Elementary and Brown Elementary. Maple Elementary is located in a low-income and minority neighborhood of the city. It was a large two-story school that served some five hundred K-5 students. The student population was largely formed of Hispanics and African-Americans. Other minorities like Asians were also seen in the hallways. The building was well maintained, looked clean, and felt lively with students' handwritings and drawings on the walls of the hallways. It had a large outdoors with two playgrounds. The school had a multi-purpose room, a library, and a media room. In addition to reading coach, this school had an instructional specialist in charge of assisting and guiding the teachers through their instructional planning and activities. The principal of this school was in his 40s with Hispanic background and extensive experience in education, specifically literacy. His welcoming and comforting behavior toward everyone in the school made him a respected and likable principal amongst the staff and students. He was always on the run to do his job and seemed organized and efficient in his planning. The number of experienced teachers of this school surpassed the inexperienced ones. Many of the teachers witnessed the implementation of many instructional policies in their school over the past decade,

last major change being a Title I and Reading First school. During my interactions with the teachers, either observing or interviewing them, they seemed confident and in charge of their classrooms activities. The teachers generally appeared to have good relationships with the school administrator, the literacy specialist, and coaches. The general culture and environment of the school according to the interviews and my observations was cooperative, calm, and respectful. My observations indicate that the principal's leadership style, likeable character, administrative ability to lead, experience in teaching and instruction, and professional background as a literacy specialist at the same school created a sense of confidence amongst the teachers.

Brown Elementary was similar to Maple Elementary in its physical stature and demographic makeup. It was located in a low-income and minority neighborhood of the city. This was a large two-story school that served some three hundred K-5 students. The student population was largely Hispanic and African-American. Other minorities were also seen in the hallways. The building was at the last stage of renovation when I visited and collected data. The teachers were just recently moved to their new classrooms and many of them had not unpacked their boxes. Brown Elementary had large outdoor area with one playground. The school had library and a computer lab. The principal was an African American female in her mid 50s. She looked friendly but repeatedly refused to talk with me by saying that she had no time. In addition to literacy coach, Brown Elementary had an instructional specialist who was in charge of assisting and guiding the teachers through their instructional planning and activities. These two specialists and the principal formed the instructional leadership team of the school. The principal placed the responsibility of the instructional leadership on these two, of course under her supervision. The two specialists provided professional expertise through general, group, and individual support to the teachers. They attended the grade level teacher meetings at the school every week. The numbers of inexperienced teachers and the experienced ones were comparable. Many of the teachers already received their pink slips and the moral of the teaching team at this school was low. This school was a Title I, Reading First school with low test scores.

Although in the same school district and exhibiting the same demographic characteristics, Brown Elementary and Maple Elementary had substantially different approaches to instruction, as might be expected in a decentralized district. The extent of use of the adopted curriculum and reading instructional practices in this school district differed from one school to the next.

Reading Curriculum

This school district adopted Houghton Mifflin Reading (HMR) for grades K-5 as the mandated curriculum in 2003. Compared to the Open Court Reading (OCR), the characteristics of the HMR makes it more suitable for a decentralized school district, as this curriculum compared to the OCR is less prescribed, providing some slight freedom for teachers to adapt it to their students' needs. Although the HMR is the adopted reading curriculum, the extent of its usage differs between the schools and the classrooms. Use of the HMR is formally mandated in the district but fidelity to use the curriculum varies amongst the schools. I only studied two schools of this district, but the district literacy specialist who cooperates with many schools indicated that some other schools within the district do not use the HMR; instead they have designed their own reading curricula by picking and choosing through the resources in accordance with their own teaching strategies. Amy, a district instructional administrator who visits schools regularly, reflected on the use of the HMR in this school district:

Even when you have a full adoption in this district, it's been my experience that there are school sites where they are consciously going away from HMR because it wasn't meeting their students' needs. So they're consciously making different choices as a community, as a school, with district support. And then there are schools that are staying with the HMR, although even those schools and teachers are moving away from it. So, it's very individualized. (WI1, 03.23.10)

She stressed teachers' fidelity to the standards and continued: "The teachers don't necessarily use the state adopted curriculum but they definitely follow the standards." Joe, a fourth grade teacher at Brown Elementary reflected on the district's flexible approach in using the HMR and stated: "district personnel came in to talk to us about Focused Approach and that was a good reminder of how it's more effective to use the HMR but not just the HMR, just approach reading and learning in general." (WBT4.1, 04.24.10) The survey data illustrate that 71% of the teachers did not fully comply with the implementation of the HMR, of whom 20% indicated that they did not comply with the HMR at all (Appendix A, Figure 5.).

Maple Elementary. In Maple Elementary, the use of the adopted curriculum was not mandatory. The teachers mentioned that they do not feel obligated in using the HMR. The principal did not demand use of the HMR reading instead he purchased books and other resources in order for the teachers to supplement the curriculum. The principal reflected on the use of the HMR in his school by saying:

We had hired anthologies from HMR and yet people, individual teachers in certain grade levels have already pulled away from using those. For example in 5th grade, they've been using novels and they started last year so rather than just reading a chapter in a text that was their anthology, they actually got whole novels because they actually wanted students to read novels. (WMP, 02.03.10)

Sophie, the instructional specialist at this school, also stated: "Core curriculum, it just wasn't a lot of literature and so I think teachers are starting to look at their classroom libraries now and they're starting to infuse more literature into their classrooms." (WMI, 01.26.10)

When I asked the teachers about the adopted curriculum, they unanimously responded that they only use a specific part of the HMR because they believe the curriculum has many weaknesses. Amy, a district instruction administrator, expressed her concerns about the weaknesses of the HMR that were shared by all the teachers I interviewed, she stated:

HMR hasn't had that much success with our underserved populations. That's not a focus point because it proved not to be effective. There were missing pieces from the HMR curriculum. One of those missing pieces is Writing Workshop, and the other missing piece is addressing students' needs who are not reading at the grade level. (WI1, 03.23.10)

The teachers who do not use the HMR as their main reading program have their own reasons that all point to the weaknesses of the curriculum. Pilar, a first grade teacher stated:

My biggest problem with HM was that there wasn't enough practice built in it and that's what these guys need, they need a lot of practice in what they're doing. Another problem

is the speed at which you go. Sometimes I think it's just overload for the kids and it didn't give them time to read. My biggest complaint was that I was teaching something new every day and the children were never having time to practice it. (WMT1.2, 01.13.10)

Angela, a fourth grade teacher, reflected on the weaknesses of the reading curriculum, she said, "It wasn't really working and it's got a really poor writing program and it's very worksheet based and it wasn't making these big changes." (WMT4.1, 02.03.10) My observations in the classrooms of these three teachers validate their point in not using the HMR as the main reading instruction material.

On the use of HMR at the classroom level, Rosa, a first grade teacher, stated, "we don't have to use the Houghton Mifflin anymore but I still use the anthology…and I use whatever phonics piece we're studying in grammar but I don't really use the other stories or their ideas too much." (WMT1.1, 01.13.10) In her classroom I observed that she does not use the curriculum entirely while she used her own created materials more often. Angela, a fourth grade teacher, who represents the idea of the other fourth grade teacher stated:

I don't feel like I have to do it, no. My administrator is happy if I don't do it. I began the year still reading from the anthology…but as the year's gone on, I've pushed away more and more and more and I've realized we haven't read the anthology for over a month now because we've been reading this novel. (WMT4.1, 02.03.10)

My observations in the classrooms of these four teachers validate their points in not using the HMR as the main reading program. In accordance with the interviews, the survey data indicate that 100% of the teachers believe having control of the reading curriculum in their classrooms. The data show that 77.8% of the Maple Elementary teachers believe that they have a great deal of control and 22.2% believe they have moderate control over reading curriculum in their classrooms (See Figure 3.16).

Brown Elementary. In Brown Elementary the story is somewhat different. Although not pressured by the district to use the HMR program, the teachers have been given fewer degrees of freedom from the principal to exercise flexibility in supplementing the curriculum. Karen, a fourth grade teacher, stated: "I know that depending on the schools, they have more flexibility, they don't have to do it. I think our school is supposed to be following it more rigorously." (WBT4.2, 05.07.10) Although the data indicate some sort of site pressures on teachers in using the curriculum, according to Victoria, the instructional specialist at this school, surprisingly young teachers tend to be more willing and interested in learning about new instructional materials to supplement the curriculum with, she stated:

I feel like that more experienced teachers are more prone to do the same thing every year so if it's HMR, it's HMR. And the new teachers in general seem much more open to trying different things or actually implementing the strategies they've learned at PDs. (WBI, 05.09.10)

Victoria's idea about the relationship between teacher experience and motivation in using other curricular, was shared by Sophie, the instructional specialist at Maple Elementary[2], Sophie said:

> We have a pretty young staff that are all very open and willing to try new things and they're asking. They're asking for it because they're getting a message, like, okay, HM doesn't have to be the only. Yeah, and so they're saying, okay, if not, tell me what else. So, the un-experienced are hungry for it and there's, in like every school, there's a few veteran teachers that don't want to change and are going to continue to do what they've been doing, whether it works or not. (WMI, 01.26.10)

According to the data I collected, all the Brown Elementary teachers use HMR and occasionally supplement it with other reading materials. Victoria, the instructional specialist at this school argued that the use of HMR depends on the individual teachers, she said:

> Use of the curriculum really depends on the teacher, honestly. I think everyone, to some extent, is using both HMR and Guided Reading but what it actually looks like in the classrooms is really different. I know a lot of teachers just supplement, they might use HM as a guide or as a frame or as a pacing guide but then they supplement, they definitely supplement, with standards they're teaching or they integrate Social Studies. And then some teachers blatantly told me they don't like HMR. (WBI, 05.09.10)

Joe, a fourth grade teacher, reflected on the use of curriculum and said, "I'll put a percentage on my entire instruction from November until now, probably I use less than eight percent supplementing materials." (WBT4.1, 04.24.10) Another fourth grade teacher, Karen, also said, "Near the end of the year I usually do that like I stop doing the (HMR) and I start doing the reflections, the History, and the Social Studies because it's just more interesting." (WBT4.2, 05.07.10) Visiting the classrooms of these two teachers, I also noticed extensive use of the HMR in their instructions.

In Brown Elementary, the principal monitored the use of the curriculum regularly. Jessica, a first grade teacher, reflected on the monitoring and the superficiality of HMR implementation in her classroom by stating:

> I can pull my own books and my own literatures as much as possible but I always make sure the HMR is readily available and visible in case people wanted to see it. I make a ton of stuff to supplement the curriculum." (WBT1.1, 04.24.10)

Kristy, another first grade teacher, mentioned use of only the anthology of the HMR. She said, "I'm mandated to use it but I just use the stories. I don't even look at the instructional portion, I just use the stories." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10) My observations in the classroom of these

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[2] The data indicate that in decentralized district the inexperienced teachers are more prone to trying new supplementing materials while in the centralized district the experienced teachers are more resistant to the mandated curriculum and are interested to use other supplementing materials. While through the data the distinction is obvious, addressing the reason behind this distinction is out of the scope of this study.

two teachers prove the points the teachers made in their interviews. They both supplemented HMR extensively with other materials and resources, either by collecting or creating them.

The Brown Elementary teachers felt obligated to show that they used the HMR curriculum because they felt that it would be too difficult to make the case (to the principal) for deviating from HMR. For example, Karen, a fourth grade teacher, who shared with her colleague the need to supplement HMR said:

I think that there's definitely a lot of teachers at this school that do a lot of different things aside from HMR. And they have a lot of experience and they've picked up different programs from these outside sources and I see them doing them and I really like them. (WBT4.2, 05.07.10)

She then continued:

They say you can think outside the box, however if you do that, I've just experienced this, you really have to justify why you're doing it, you're really scrutinized, you have to prove the effectiveness of all this stuff. I would like to be more creative in my classroom but a couple of things stop me from doing that, one is timing and the second thing is just I have to justify it, making sure it would be OK. (WBT4.2, 05.07.10)

The survey data reinforce the views of Jessica and Karen; 29.4% of Brown Elementary teachers believed that they had no control and 41.2% believed that they had only moderate control over reading curriculum in their classrooms (See Figure 3.16). The survey data also illustrate that 47% of the Brown Elementary teachers fully complied with the HMR implementation in their classrooms. These numbers mirrors the interview and observation findings.

Reflecting on the weaknesses of the reading curriculum, Victoria believed that "the reading curriculum is hard to understand and does not help teachers to develop useful skills." (WBI, 05.09.10) Jessica, a first grade teacher also reflected on the weaknesses of the HMR and said:

I think it provides a good backbone but for our learners at our school we need some more materials. I feel like I have to dig through it more to find the different spelling components, the grammar components, the literature components, you just have to do more work. (WBT1.1, 04.24.10)

Overall, the observations data verify that in Maple Elementary teachers did not feel obligated to implement the HMR curriculum while Brown Elementary teachers felt more obliged to implement the HMR. I observed more use of the HMR at Brown Elementary, sometimes with fidelity or sometimes superficially. The survey data verify the interview and observation findings. In response to my question about their extent of control over the HMR in classrooms, 77.8% of Maple Elementary and 29.4% of Brown Elementary teachers responded that they had a great deal of control of the curriculum in their instruction (Figure 3.16).
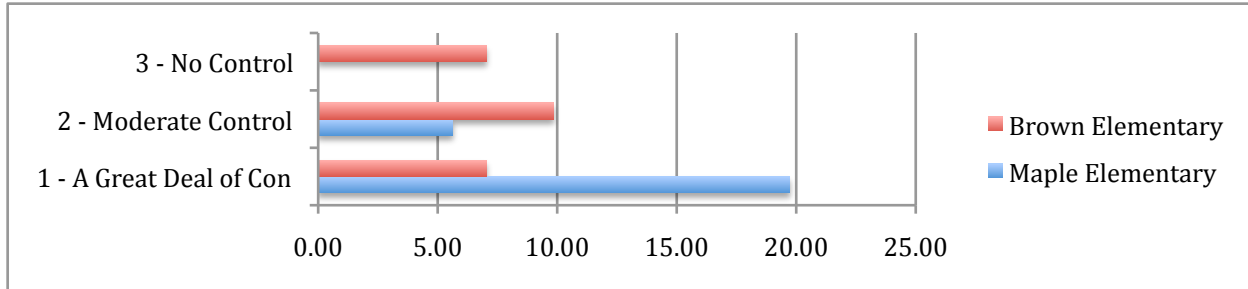
Figure 3.16. Extent of teacher control over reading curriculum in classroom

The analysis of the survey data shows significant differences in the teachers control over the HMR reading curriculum in the two schools (Appendix A, Figure 5). The survey data indicate that 28.6% of teachers in both schools fully and 51.4% moderately complied with the mandated reading curriculum (Appendix A, Figure 1.).

As presented through the data, although the district did not enforce the implementation of the HMR, the two schools adopted somewhat different approaches in implementing the HMR as the main reading resource. The schools' approach differences reside in the way the principals react to the intensity of implementing the HMR. The Maple Elementary principal, who had many years of literacy coaching and was knowledgeable about the weaknesses of the curriculum, encouraged the teachers to buy and use new reading materials and resources. The Brown Elementary principal lacked such expertise and had no deep understanding of the reading curriculum. When the teachers attempted to justify the use of other materials, it became a direct challenge to her, often resulting in a return challenge on her part. The superficiality of the HMR implementation in some classrooms in her school indicated the principal's attempt to bridge the instruction to the district formal rituals, perhaps as a way of retaining her authority and position, while the district itself admitted that the use of HMR was not sufficient to address the needs of the students it serves.

Instructional Goals and Planning

Two of the important topics I was interested to learn about through this study are instructional goals and planning. At the district level in Westside School District, the data indicate ambiguity in literacy vision. This issue was raised by the district instructional specialists, as well as the school literacy coaches and specialists. In reflecting on the matter of district ambiguity of literacy vision, Amy, a district instruction administrator, believes that teachers are not clear about the district vision on reading instruction, she said:

> I think they [district] clearly have defined certain areas of instruction. Reading instruction, I don't think they've clearly defined. If you go to a teacher in one school, and ask what is the vision for teaching literacy here, they would have no idea. They would not know because I see that confusion in all the teachers who come through my professional development and they're from all over the city. (WI1, 03.23.10)

Sophie, the instructional specialist at Maple Elementary also stated, "there's lots of different terms thrown out there and I don't think there's a clear sense of what's what." (WMI, 01.26.10) Pilar, a first grade teacher, also said:

Sometimes I feel like they put new names on old things. They take stuff you've done before and repackage it and give it a fancy name and make you think it's something different and then you go 'Oh wait! I was already doing that!' Sometimes they're not clear on expressing what things are when they hand them out. So a lot of times, programs will get bantered about and you don't know what they are because nobody's fully explained them. (WMT1.2, 01.13.10)

To clarify the confusion, the teachers indicated that they prefer discussing the district programs or policies with their colleagues. Pilar stated:

You're more relaxed asking at your grade level and asking your colleagues 'exactly what is this, what do you mean by that?' I think mostly people ask their colleagues; find out from their colleagues and then if a colleague has started a program and really likes it then you find more interest in it. (WMT1.2, 01.13.10)

This statement illustrates that while the policies sent to the schools might be ambiguous, the schools realized the opportunity to interpret them based on their needs, interests, traditions, and capacities. Ambiguity of literacy vision seemed to be one of the characteristics of this decentralized school district. According to the institutional theory, ambiguity is one of the strategies organizations use to keep their technical core decoupled from the institutional expectations and pressures. This district's ambiguous vision signals decoupling, thus licensing more flexibility for the schools to define their own literacy vision and design their own literacy plans.

It follows then that each school in Westside School District, should independently design its own strategic literacy plan. According to Amy, a district instruction administrator, in designing their literacy plans some schools with strong literacy background were successful while schools with weak literacy knowledge and background had difficulty in defining and designing their literacy plans. Maple Elementary, according to the principal, designed its own literacy plan with the collaborations of its teachers and instructional leadership team. Mark stated:

What we're working on is a literacy plan in terms of what our literacy instruction looks like. It's actually been a collaboration of all our teachers. We've categorized those literacy instruction strategy elements and we're actually working on a plan. Our leadership team looked at all the charts and we had people do in trios, talk about what would it look like, what would this literacy instruction plan look like. So teachers got in groups in leadership team and they created this plan. (WMP, 02.03.10)

Maple Elementary. In Maple Elementary, the district's ambiguous vision created an opportunity for buffering by the principal, who had sufficient literacy content knowledge to decouple the technical core from the institutional expectations. To achieve its literacy plan, Maple Elementary used the Fountas and Pinnell[3] assessment tool (Heinemann Publishing Website) to gather student data in helping the teachers and administrators understand their

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[3] Provides screening to place the students at the appropriate instructional level for Guided Reading through small grouping.

academic shortcomings. The statement of the literacy specialist at Maple Elementary, mirrors Mark's thoughts about the processes of designing school's literacy plan, she explained:

> We're using Fountas and Pinnell assessment to gauge students' instructional level and we've determined that the needs of the kids, we didn't have that data before and so with that data, we realize our instruction has to change, our instruction cannot be whole group, it has to be focused in small groups so there's been a big push to Guided Reading just because it allows the students to meet the teacher in groups so the teacher can push up their levels. (WMI, 01.26.10)

She also said:

> In this school, we are in the process of developing our reading curriculum. We've been a Reading First school for the last seven years so we're starting to just map out essential learning goals for each grade level and building curriculum. So, we're in the process of developing. (WMI, 01.26.10)

When I attended their third site-based professional development day, I noticed the faculty, the specialists, and the administrator work very closely and attentively through many activities to improve their literacy planning by problem analysis and discussing possible solutions.

To reflect on the literacy goals for his school, the Maple Elementary principal stated:

> We want students to be reading at grade level but we want students to be able to make sense of texts. We want them to be engaged and to be able to make connections and analyze them and also understand different types of texts, different genres. (WMP, 02.03.10)

Sophie the instructional specialist at Maple Elementary also stated: "each school engage in a process of selecting some high leverage goals for themselves. Ours have been around language scaffolds, participation protocols as well as our writing portfolio." (WMI, 01.26.10)

The big theme of the literacy plan at Maple Elementary was engagement, which was reflected in the principal and the teacher interviews multiple times. Within the school literacy plan framework, each individual teacher has her own instructional goals and plans. In response to my curiosity about the goals of instruction teachers stated that the goal of instruction is to meet the needs of the students through engagement within the frames of the standards. Pilar, a first grade teacher stated, "My instructional goals are: they get out of first grade with a solid foundation in reading, I want them to solidly know their sounds and have solid decoding skills. And then, also comprehension and understanding." (WMT1.2, 01.13.10) Student needs and learning within the standards is the determining factor for this teacher in her planning, she said:

> If what I'm teaching seems to be coming across, if they seem to be learning it, we're going at a good pace, I'll keep moving forward and adding more information but if we get really stuck on something one day, I'll go back and repeat it that day. I consider where the children are and what they need to learn. But basically we use the state standards as the framework. (WMT1.2, 01.13.10)

Although this teacher had to deal with many behavioral issues in her class, my observations indicate that she really took her time to ensure the processes of student learning while reading to them or teaching a theme.

Angela, a fourth grade teacher, expressed her thoughts about the goals of instruction in her class and stated that her main goal is to engage the students in reading, she said:

> Trying to create engaged readers is one of my goals, having them enjoy reading, teaching them different genres and different styles of writing so that they can also find that within their reading and identify what they're interests are. Teach them to be analytical readers, to be reflective. (WMT4.1, 02.03.10)

While I observed her instruction several times, I noticed that in order to engage the students in the process of reading, every morning she brought in a mobile library shelf from the school library carrying various books and helped the students to pick up the books they were interested to read. She plans everything from the scratch. The backward planning that she mentions is the evidence that she studies her students' needs and makes decisions based on that, she said:

> When it comes to reading and reading comprehension if you have as many second language learners as we have, I think, how am I going to make this successful to them, and we really got better when it comes to backward planning: looking at what you want them to be able to do, what skill do you want them to have and then what are the exercises to give them competency in that skill. (WMT4.1, 02.03.10)

Gloria, another fourth grade teacher also pointed to the same processes in her planning. The survey data reinforce the findings from the interviews; 94% of Maple Elementary teachers either strongly (72.2%) or somewhat (22.2%) believe that they are involved in the instructional planning and decision-making in their school (See Figure 3.17).

Brown Elementary. Brown Elementary struggled with planning. Interviewed teachers believed that the principal of the school had very limited literacy content knowledge for the elementary school. Kristy, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary believed that the principal did not have sufficient literacy content knowledge, which made her to rely on the literacy specialist and the school reading coach to take care of the school literacy matters, Kristy said: "I feel like the principal is not that familiar with teaching lower grades because she was an upper grade teacher." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10) Kristy continued:

> I'm not sure what they [literacy specialist] are actually supposed to do but it just seems like 'the fill in person', so she gets tasks with running the principal's errands all the time or keeping up with scheduling of school activities. She's really good about trying to support teachers however she can, but it doesn't seem like the job is clearly defined. I mean she goes above and beyond as far as I'm concerned but it doesn't seem like that job title fits with what she actually does. She's just picking up all the pieces all the time. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

The data indicate that the general culture of the school did not permit the school to create a comprehensive literacy plan. One of the issues that teachers reflected upon was lack of trust between the school principal and the teachers. The issue of lack of trust eliminated effective collaboration between teachers and the principal in generating a successful literacy plan. Kristy, a first grade teacher stated:

It's just that there's a culture of not trust, there's no trust in my school, like our principal doesn't trust us so it's like, 'at this time, they must be doing this because I don't trust them to plan their own'. It very much feels that way. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

Victoria, the instructional specialist of the school, reflected on the other issues that made it challenging for this school to plan its own literacy plan, she said:

There's not a lot of freedom, or creativity is not necessarily encouraged and I also feel like teachers don't feel like they're respected as professionals, and it's hard to foster a genuine dialogue about collaboration or working together…but the focus is so much on assessment and achievement and looking at data that I feel like that's really cycled. (WBI, 05.09.10)

In response to my question about instructional planning, Kristy, a first grade teacher admitted that they ought to follow a predetermined planning agenda. Kristy stated:

Basically I know every few weeks that I have a themed test to turn in and so that's what I kind of use as my guide. I would get a note in my box saying, 'theme 5 is due in 2 and a half weeks' and so I generally stick to it. There's no time to fall behind. There are three units in a theme-I do one unit a week. So I'm doing a theme every 3 weeks. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

The survey results reinforce the interview and observation findings indicating that 59% of Brown Elementary teachers either somewhat (41%) or strongly (18%) disagreed that they were involved in the instructional planning and decision-making in their school (Figure 3.17)
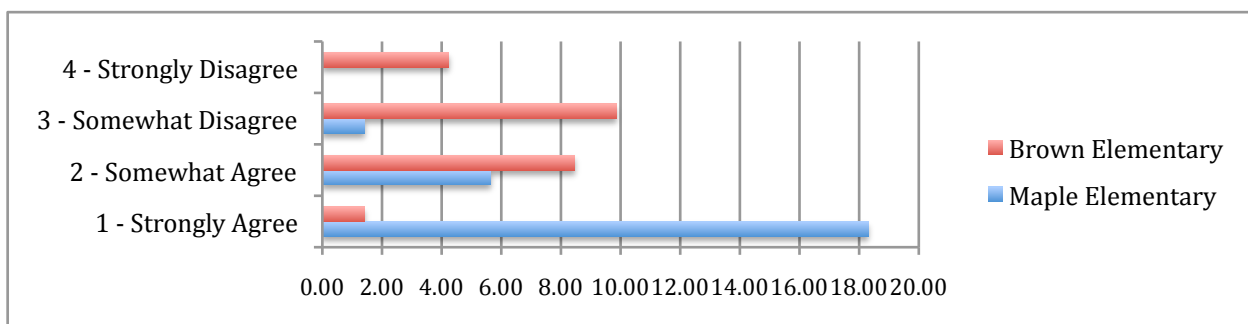
Figure 3.17. Extent of teacher involvement in school instructional planning and decision-making

In Brown Elementary goals of instruction were to meet the standards, assessments, and the principal's enforced expectations. Jessica, a first grade teacher, reflected on this matter and said, "The goals…quite honestly we teach to the test. I have them already for the rest of the

year and that guides my instruction because test scores are a priority." (WBT1.1, 04.24.10) Joe, a fourth grade teacher, stressed meeting the standards as the goal of instruction and responded, "obviously meeting the standards is the goal. You want to hold the standards as kind of a bar you want all students to achieve but…that's too general to find success." (WBT4.1, 04.24.10)

Brown Elementary had no specific theme in its instructional planning. The principal was the instructional decision-maker and the teachers, to a very limited degree, had their own small world of planning. Because the school had no instructional capacity to construct its own literacy plan, the principal required the teachers to fill out a daily lesson plan form based on the general expectations to submit to her office. According to Victoria, the school instructional specialist, through these forms, the principal liked to see "use of HM, doing Guided Reading, and daily schedules" (WBI, 05.09.10) in teachers' planning.

Overall, my observation data support the interview results. In Maple Elementary, I observed that teachers tried to promote student engagement via various activities and by grouping the students for Guided Reading in their classrooms. I never saw the standards posted on the walls of the classrooms. My observations from the grade level meetings indicate teachers' focus on the best practices and Guided Reading. I rarely noticed anything related to the standards and assessments being discussed, rather I heard more names of the individual students being mentioned in search for how to handle their learning difficulties or how a lesson could or could not draw students' attention and engagement. In Brown Elementary my observations recorded no specific theme in the literacy planning. Each teacher was struggling with satisfying the principal's expectations, which were more procedural than substantive. During my presence at several grade level meetings, culture of mistrust between the teachers and the principal was evident in their behavior. These grade level meetings were mostly filled with discussions about state standards, assessments, and implementing the Guided Reading. They rarely talked about their classrooms' instructional planning and students' needs.

The qualitative findings are supported by the findings of the survey. The survey data at the district level indicate that only 20% of the teachers strongly believed that student assessment and state standards guided their instructional planning. The survey data also indicate that 37% of teachers somewhat agreed and 43% disagreed that assessments and standards guided their instructional planning (Appendix A, Figure 2). At the school level, data show that at Maple Elementary 60% of teachers strongly or somewhat disagreed and 40% somewhat agreed that student assessment and state standards guided their instructional planning. In Brown Elementary the data indicate that 70% of teachers strongly and somewhat agreed and 28% disagreed that student assessments and state standards effectively guided their instructional planning (Figure 3.18).
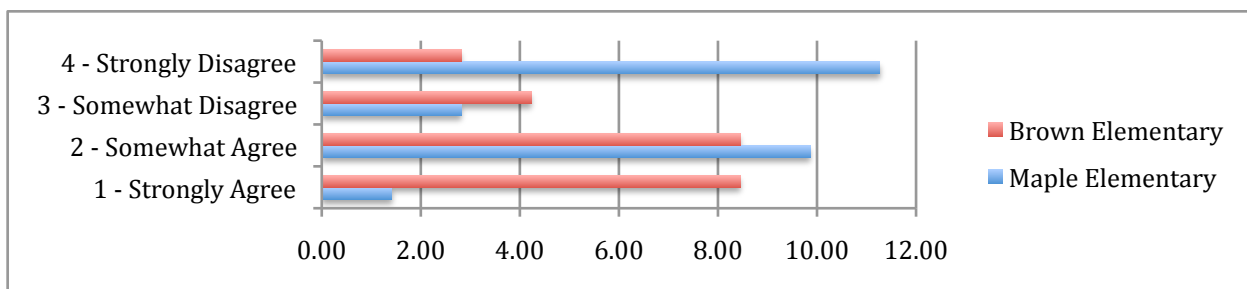
Figure 3.18. Extent of use of assessment data and the standards in guiding instruction

The survey findings also show that 56% of Brown Elementary teachers believed that instructional decision and planning in their school were not made through the collaboration of faculty and the school leadership while 100% of Maple Elementary teachers believed that instructional decisions in their school were made through the collaboration of faculty and the school leadership (Figure 3.19).

Looking through the lens of the neoinstitutional theory, the differences between the two schools are the natural results of organizational bridging and buffering. The principal of Brown Elementary tried to couple her school's instruction to the institutional expectations through bridging. In contrast, Maple Elementary principal tried to buffer his school's technical core from the institutional expectations in order to implement his school's literacy vision.
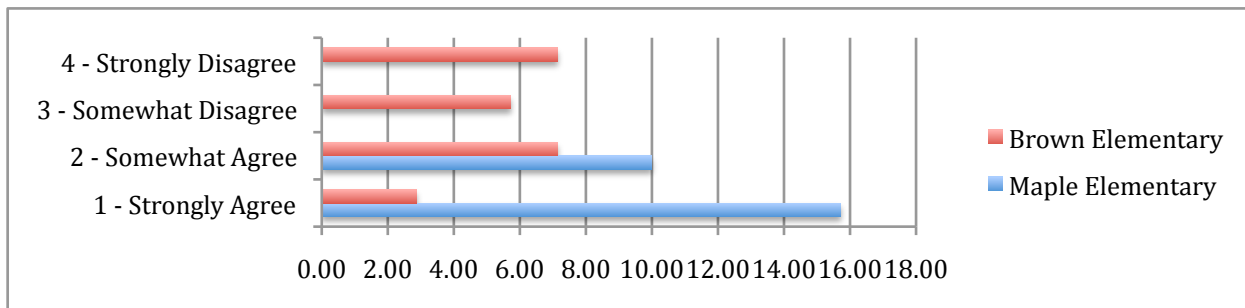
Figure 3.19. Extent of school level instructional decision-making

Instructional Programs

Not using the entire HMR or incorporating its strategies in classroom instruction only meant that teachers used other instructional programs and strategies that were either promoted by the district and school, or their own preferred strategies and programs. There were some strategies and programs promoted by the district. Balanced Literacy was an overarching instructional framework promoted by the district. The district had formed a group of five literacy specialists who helped schools in training the teachers on the programs and strategies related to this larger approach. Amy, a district instruction administrator stated:

> There is a lot of focus right now, a lot of visits to schools that have more of a balanced literacy approach. Balanced literacy from the Ohio Literacy Initiative and Collaborative is beyond strategies; it is a framework. It supports the culturally relevant literacy model and reading workshop, writing workshop, and Guided Reading. (WI1, 03.23.10)

One of the programs that was widely promoted under the Balanced Literacy umbrella was Guided Reading, which is an instructional framework to small group students based on their academic abilities. The district tried to implement the Guided Reading by promoting it through voluntary training and professional development. Amy, a district instruction administrator, explained the promotion of the Guided Reading by the district by stating:

> We do need to get very far away from anthology teaching, one size fits all, whole class instruction around literacy. The other piece promoted by the district is Guided Reading. It's a voluntary attendance and is not just strict mandate. The focus for the Guided

Reading is around the reading process, and building comprehension strategies and meeting various students' needs as well as assessment. So it helps teachers assess students' independent reading levels and then instructional reading levels, and then how to monitor students using running record and other assessment tools. (WI1, 03.23.10)

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy was another approach promoted by the district. Amy stated:

I think it's very positive that our district is moving towards culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive literature. Another area that teachers have received a lot of professional development in is AEMP (Academic English Mastery Project), looking at standard English learners and literacy teaching that meets those students' needs. (WI1, 03.23.10)

In this school district, Universal Access program was also implemented to provide differentiated instruction. Kristy, a first grade teacher stated, "We've leveled our kids so our lower kids go to one classroom and our higher kids come to another classroom so that they're getting more differentiated instruction." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

Maple Elementary. Maple Elementary encouraged Guided Reading as an instructional strategy that promotes instruction in small groups. The teachers were exposed to the Guided Reading through professional development and the site instructional specialists. To implement this program the teachers used the Fountas and Pinnell assessment tool to evaluate and group students in their classrooms. The principal recognized the needs of the students in being engaged and believed that in order to address this need, instruction must be done in small groups, he stated:

Our instruction cannot be whole group. It has to be focused in small groups so there's been a big push to Guided Reading just because it allows the students to meet the teacher in groups so the teacher can push up their levels. We've been focusing on assessments— not state assessments—in other words, we need to design them, understand them, and use them well. We bought a few Fountas and Pinnell assessments, many people started using them and we have a few other ones who don't but mainly that's been the driving force here. (WMP, 02.03.10)

According to the teachers, the principal did not enforce the implementation of the Guided Reading, instead he tried to buy-in teachers to do the Guided Reading, willingly. This program was promoted through professional training sessions at the school site. According to the data there were teachers who implemented the program as well as those who did not feel ready to implement it in their classrooms. Rosa, one of the first grade teachers who was enthusiastic about Guided Reading stated:

I like the Guided Reading and Fountas and Pinnell that we got trained on from the district, I like that they provided me a lot of ideas for center activities for my students to do while I'm pulling the guided reading groups and I implemented them. (WMT1.1, 01.13.10)

Pilar, another first grade teacher who expressed her satisfaction using the Guided Reading in her class; also stated:

By doing the small groups of three or four, you can really see who is reading because you can pull them out and work with them in such a small group and really intensely go over the sounds and the letters. I think it really helped the children because there's some kids that get lost in the big group. (WMT1.2, 01.13.10)

Gloria, a fourth grade teacher, represented the other group of teachers who felt not ready to implement the Guided Reading program, she stated:

It's not enforced right now and they're actually really trying to encourage us toward Guided Reading. I'm just not set up to do that. I would love to change my reading program to use that but I just don't have what I need to do it right now." (WMT4.2, 02.03.10)

The survey data indicate that Maple Elementary teachers implemented the Guided Reading. In response to a question about grouping students for Guided Reading, 89% of teachers implied that they grouped their students everyday while 11% grouped them a few times a week (See Figure 3.20).

Aside from the Guided Reading, at the classroom level, the teachers used their own preferred strategies. For example first grade teachers used GLAD[4] strategies while fourth grade teachers tended to use group discussion strategies in engaging the students in instruction. Pilar, a first grade teacher, commented on the use of GLAD by stating:

I do, usually section on some GLAD strategies. Right now, our grade level is using animals under our GLAD theme like right now we're studying different mammals and I use the GLAD as sort of my ELD time where we build up our language development skills. (WMT1.2, 01.13.10)

Angela, a fourth grade teacher, also said, "We have one teacher who's done a lot of work in GLAD strategies with vocabulary development so she's trained some teachers here and they've gotten more interested and done more GLAD training." (WMT4.1, 02.03.10) She then continued:

I've been pulling together a lot of expository texts for them to read at a variety of different levels and they're completely drawn to that. I'm working with them on developing good self selecting skills for choosing their own reading and trying to find the right levels but also trying to find areas of interest. (WMT4.1, 02.03.10)

About her instruction she further explained:

One of my colleagues and I did a big planning to let our writing genre be our overarching theme for 8 weeks and then we chose just a couple of comprehension strategies that

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[4] The Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) is an instructional model with strategies to promote effective interactions among students and between teachers and students.

would go with that genre of writing and support any readings that we were doing. (WMT4.1, 02.03.10)

My observations in her class also indicate use of variety of resources in teaching. She incorporated pieces of several programs in her teaching, creating an individualized reading program for her class.

Brown Elementary. Brown Elementary also implemented the district promoted instructional programs such as Guided Reading but the implementation processes were different from the one at Maple Elementary. Brown Elementary teachers perceived the Guided Reading implementation as a district mandate. The Brown Elementary principal enforced use of the Guided Reading as one consistent strategy for all grades. Karen, a fourth grade teacher, reflected on the principal's push for implementing the Guided Reading and said, "she definitely wants us to be doing Guided Reading everyday and she's very strict on that." (WBT4.2, 05.07.10) And Kristy, a first grade teacher also said, "At our school, this is what you're supposed to be doing at this time during the day, you must be doing Guided Reading." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10) According to the teachers, in addition to the principal, the literacy coach of the school also pushed for the implementation of the Guided Reading. Kristy, a first grade teacher stated:

> He [the literacy coach] gets on this one-track mind that we are a Guided Reading school and this is what we do and this is the core part of our Balanced Literacy program. His unwillingness to see that the current way is not working bothers me. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

Joe, a fourth grade teacher, explained the decision making process that led to the implementation of a highly particular approach to Guided Reading:

> In the beginning of introducing guided reading we had a meeting with the district people. When the district people came, I really found out that they were making decisions that were being handed off to the administrator who was then passing it onto us. There was actually a gentleman who was at the meeting that was very specific about what he thought should be done and based on what he said thought should be done, our principal decided this is what's going to be done. There's no mistake about that it was Guided Reading done in this way that was going to be used. (WBT4.1, 04.24.10)

From the interviews with Joe and several of his colleagues, we know that teachers at this school were not involved in the decision-making about Guided Reading. After it was introduced by the district personnel, the principal during the meeting, and without private consultation with the teachers individually or collectively, made the decision to implement this particular approach to Guided Reading in the school. In this school, the principal then served as the bridge between the technical environment as conceptualized by the district and the technical core that got implanted in the school. While the district provided the options of making the decision to implement the program, the principal was convinced right at the meeting that the program should be implemented in her school. According to Honig and Hatch (2004), one of the ways that organizations bridge to their external demands is to pull the environment in. In this situation the principal tried to bridge to the external expectations by incorporating members of the external organization, i.e. the district people into the organizational structure of her school in making the decision. This situation illustrates a scenario in which the principal bridged school's technical

core to the district demands by deciding simply to increase the organizational-environmental or school-district interactions. In this situation, by capturing the exerting external pressures, the principal blurred the boundaries between her school and the environment, and heightened interactions between the school and the district to increase opportunities to use external demands to advance internal instructional goals and strategies.

Overall, the process of Guided Reading implementation in Brown Elementary was not a smooth journey. In Brown Elementary teachers used HMR assessments to level the students for Guided Reading. Victoria, the instructional specialist at this school, commented on this matter and stated:

> We're supposed to get the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment but it never came. An actual district content person suggested in a meeting that a more effective and more comprehensive assessment was the Fountas and Pinnell, so the principal put in a new order but it never came. (WBI, 05.09.10)

Again in this statement the apparent fact is that a district person introduced a new assessment tool and the principal made the decision about adopting a new assessment tool for the school. The influence of the district involvement in instructional decision-making was evident in most of the instructional activities at this school.

According to the data, the acts of the teachers who resisted Guided Reading were frowned upon by the principal. To avoid principal's scolding and blaming, some teachers basically implemented it either because they saw benefits in it or they simply had to do it, and some only superficially enacted the strategy, or as Kristy, a first grade teacher said, "put up a show for a few minutes for the principal when she visits." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10) My observations in the four classrooms reveal that first grade teachers were more resistant to the implementation of Guided Reading in their classrooms because of extensive student behavioral issues they were dealing with. I discerned more whole-group or individual activities in the first grade classrooms, as the first grade class size was relatively small (about twelve students per class). The first grade teachers were ready to enact the Guided Reading program only when and if the principal decided to show up. The fourth grade teachers were more prone to do the Guided Reading because they actually believed Guided Reading was beneficial to their instruction.

The survey data illustrate that 20% of Brown Elementary teachers did not small group the students for Guided Reading while 80% did (Figure 3.20). Cross analyzing the interview, observation, and survey data revealed that there is the possibility that some portions of the 80% teachers who did the grouping were only implemented it superficially.
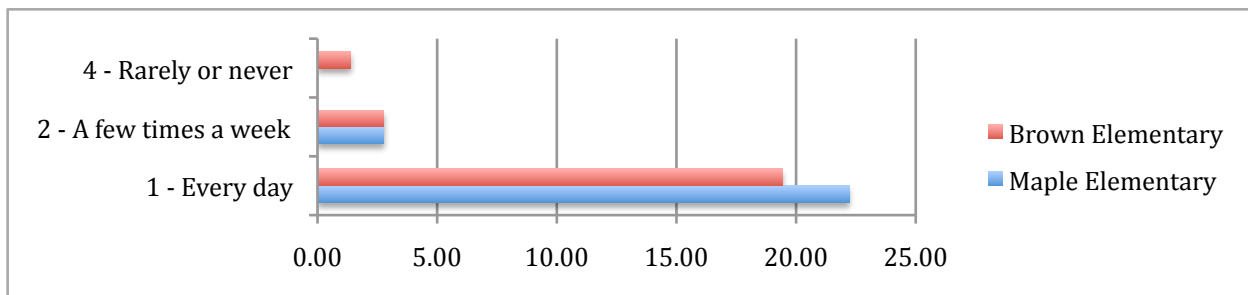
Figure 3.20. Extent of student grouping for instruction

As explained previously, in using other programs and strategies, teachers had to provide convincing justifications. Karen, a fourth grade teacher stated:

Here they say we are balanced literacy so we do both phonics and whole literature and they say we can bring in other stuff. They say that but if they come in and see you doing something else, they're like how is this tied to the standards? They say you can think outside the box however, if you do, I've just experienced, you really have to justify why you're doing it, you're really scrutinized, you have to prove all this stuff, which kind of hurts your sense of professionalism. (WBT4.2, 05.07.10)

Joe, a fourth grade teacher also said, "I do have a little bit flexibility in being able to do certain things but I always have learned that you have to justify what you do when the question does come up." (WBT4.1, 04.24.10)

The statements made by the teachers demonstrate lack of flexibility that was felt by the teachers in making instructional decisions for their classrooms. This situation illustrates the scenario in which the principal bridged school's technical core to the institutional environment i.e. the school district demands to ensure connectivity between the technical core and the institutional expectations.

The above findings were confirmed by the survey results. The survey findings suggest that 93% of Maple Elementary teachers believed in receiving support from their administrator to implement any appropriate reading instructional programs in their classrooms. A similar view was shared by 45% of the teachers at Brown Elementary while 55% of them believed they did not receive any support from the principal to implement appropriate reading programs in classrooms to meet their students' needs (Figure 3.21).

The survey also reveals the extent of instructional flexibility in the two schools. The survey data display that 23.5% of Brown Elementary teachers believed having instructional flexibility in their classroom while 29.4% did not share this feeling. It is worth mentioning that 47.1% of Brown Elementary teachers believed in having moderate flexibility in their instructional activities. By contrast, 72.2% of Maple Elementary teachers believed having a great deal of flexibility and 27.8% believed having moderate flexibility in planning reading instruction for their classrooms (Figure 3.22).
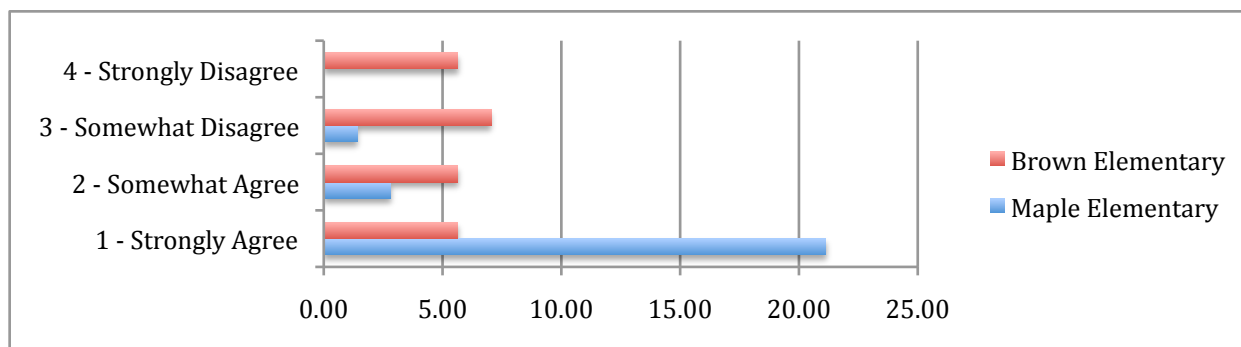
Figure 3.21. Extent of instructional support teachers received from school principal
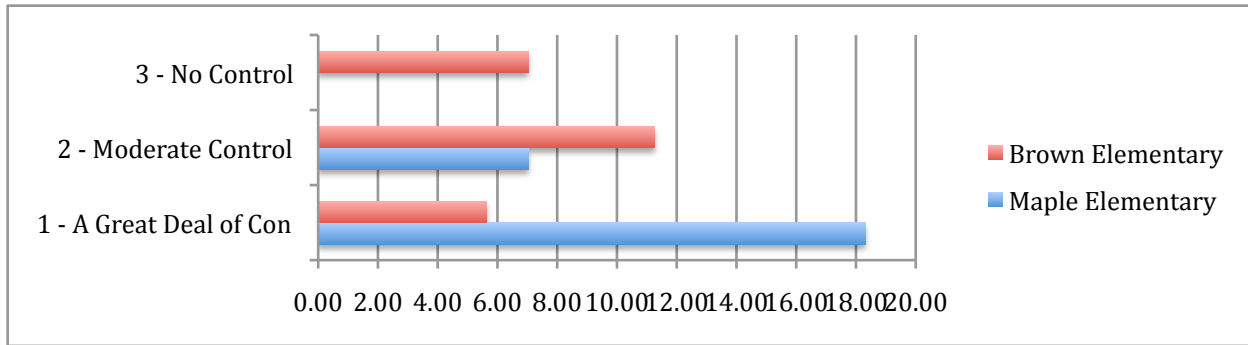
Figure 3.22. Extent of teacher flexibility and control in planning reading instruction

Instructional Support and Resources

Instructional support in this school district was provided in the forms of professional development sessions, school instructional leadership team (including the principals, literacy coaches, and literacy specialists), and teachers' grade level meetings. According to the data, the district had limited but sufficient instructional capacity to provide professional instructional assistance to the schools. According to Roger, a district administrator, the district "has a curriculum and instruction department that's putting out a wide variety of professional development opportunities schools and teachers may or may not participate in so there's a pretty broad spectrum of practices in the classroom." (WI2, 05.16.11)

At the district level there were five literacy specialists that supported the elementary schools in reading instruction. In addition to the schools' professional help through instructional specialists and literacy coaches, according to Amy, a district instruction administrator, the district Department of Academics and Professional Development hired professional staff to provide extra support to the schools; she said:

> There's like five of us [literacy instructional specialists] for seventy five schools—if schools request site based professional development in any literacy component then we support them with that. So, we go and we'll support a site or at grade level meetings. We'll model lessons and co-teach lessons. (WI1, 03.23.10)

According to Amy, a district instruction administrator, these five literacy specialists had two primary roles, "one role is to provide professional development to all teachers in the district and then to give more intensive support at specific site as is requested." (WI1, 03.23.10) Sophie, Maple Elementary literacy specialist also stated, "the district has provided lots of support in terms of content resource people for literacy so I've sought them out and they've come on site and modeled things and done professional development for us." (WMI, 01.26.10) Amy disclosed that the district provided two types of professional development to the teachers:

> One strand is around writing workshop and the components around writing workshop and the materials needed to teach writing. The second strand is when schools request site based professional development in any literacy component then we support them with that. So, we go and we'll support a site or at grade level meetings and planning, we'll model lessons and co-teach lessons. The way those PDs are formed and run is fully voluntary and based on site request. (WI1, 03.23.10)

Recognizing the shortcomings of the HMR in writing, the district's Department of Curriculum and Instruction attempted to offer writing resources and writing professional development programs for teachers. Amy, a district instruction administrator, specified:

> With the leadership of our supervisor we started putting together a resource for teachers and professional development around writing workshop. And combined it with the standards and genre study and looked at all the work of the big researchers in writing workshop, and put together very strong resource for teachers, kindergarten through fifth grade as well as provide professional development. (WI1, 03.23.10)

When I asked Amy about the amount of professional development that teachers receive per year she declared, "If teachers attend all the professional development in these areas, then they can be receiving up to 48 hours plus of professional development." (WI1, 03.23.10) In promoting Guided Reading, the school district attempted to provide the teachers with voluntarily Guided Reading training sessions, Amy stated, "at the same time that we developed writing professional help to the teachers, we started developing PD around Guided Reading so that the students who were not reading at grade level the teachers would have some strategies with working with those students." (WI1, 03.23.10)

Rosa, a first grade teacher, contemplated on the district trainings and stated:

> I guess that Guided Reading training that I went to through the district was really helpful for me. They provided me a lot of ideas for center activities for my students to do while I'm pulling the Guided Reading groups. Also the GLAD professional development training that I went to for five days of theory and then 5 days of watching someone in a classroom was very helpful. (WMT1.1, 01.13.10)

The survey results verify the fact that the district was able to instructionally support the teachers. The survey data indicate that 70% of the participating schools' teachers believed that the district provided them with sufficient professional development and training while 27% believed otherwise (Figure 3.23).
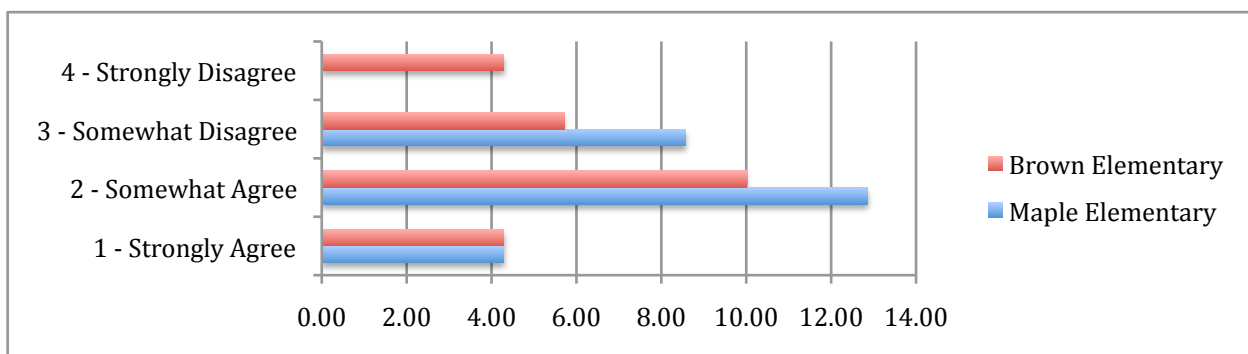
Figure 3.23. Extent of district professional and instructional support to classrooms
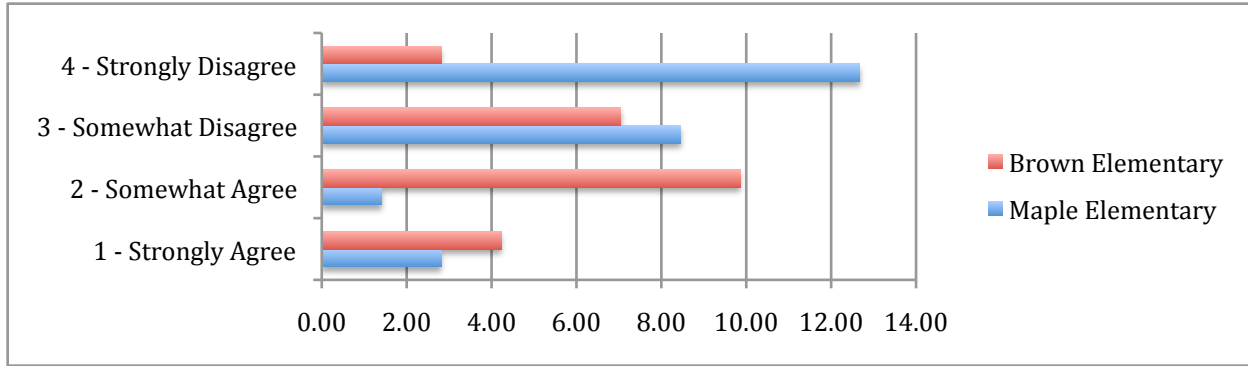
Figure 3.24. Extent of district instructional support focused on mandated curriculum

The survey data demonstrate that 16% of Maple Elementary teachers believed district instructional support was focused on the HMR implementation while 41% of Brown Elementary teachers believed the support they received from the district was focused on the reading curriculum implementation (Figure 3.24).

Implementing any professional development model comes with some challenges. The one person who reflected on the shortcomings was Amy, a district instruction administrator. Amy highlighted the shortcomings of district's professional development by stating:

> I think the challenge is that we've provided Guided Reading professional development but we haven't had capacity to coach teachers. So once they go through the professional development they go back into their classrooms, they're implementing it based on the twenty-four hour professional development they've received. While that implementation may or may not look the way it's supposed to—may or may not be as effective as it's supposed to be. And there aren't the coaches to support that implementation. So, that—I think that's one of the biggest problems with our model of professional development in the district currently. (WI1, 03.23.10)

Pilar, a first grade teacher, expressed her thoughts about the professional development she received by declaring, "the district have had different professional development workshops that I've been able to pull some things from. I've been able to pull things from my colleagues and things I've seen when I've gone out and observed classes." (WMT1.2, 01.13.10) She also reflected on the professional developments she preferred to attend, by emphasizing, "you basically look for the professional development that meets your needs. Like we have a high ELD population so the GLAD training I went to because we're trying to build the academic vocabulary so I wanted to add that in." (WMT1.2, 01.13.10) This statement magnifies the opportunities the teachers were provided with to be selective in attending the professional development sessions they preferred. This opportunity was probably available to the teachers when instructional activities of the school were buffered from the institutional expectations. Westside School District's decentralized approach provided the schools the opportunity to buffer their instruction from the external demands in order to give teachers the privilege of being selective in their training.

Maple Elementary. To provide instructional support to the teachers and classrooms Maple Elementary had sources such as on site instructional specialists, site-based professional development as well as the district professional development. There was also another source of

support, the weekly grade level teacher meetings, known as teacher collaborative meetings (TCM).

In this district, schools had authority in planning their own professional development with the help of the district upon their request. Mark, Maple Elementary principal stated, "The district has a professional development calendar where you can go and sign up for different offerings. We're going directly to the district people and saying 'this is what we want, can you come to our school on this date'." (WMP, 02.03.10) He then reflected upon the site based professional development for teachers and continued:

> Every school is now on its own which is good and bad. I know that some schools are struggling to figure out what the focus is. For us here, it's been positive because I believe we have strong teachers here and with a really strong critical background in literacy and we're using that strength to build our curriculum in terms of what we expect our teachers to be doing. (WMP, 02.03.10)

According to Mark, the Maple Elementary principal, schools could have three or four days of professional development in a school year. In January 2010 the school had a professional development day at the site that I had a chance to observe. As I was engaged in this professional day, I realized that all the planning and trainings were done through the school principal, instructional specialists, and faculty collaborations. Mark, the Maple Elementary principal, specified, "We created that agenda. We did our own thing here. We designed the agenda ourselves here based on the needs of the school." (WMP, 02.03.10) To make the teachers understand the Guided Reading purposes and strategies, on the day of professional development the school requested the help of a district literacy specialist to discuss and model the Guided Reading. Mark, the Maple Elementary principal stated, "There's been some Guided Reading training at the district level but we've asked for a different level of service, we've asked for individualized attention." (WMP, 02.03.10)

The rest of this professional day session was led by the principal and the literacy and instructional specialists focusing on strategies to encourage student engagement in the processes of learning. Although the principal of this school intended to buffer school instructional activities from the external environment expectation, in order to provide opportunities for his school to attract additional essential resources, including access to professional networks and knowledge, he selectively brought in district's professional resources.

Rosa, a first grade teacher discussed school's professional development:

> In my school, professional development is either our staff meetings or at the end of the month, we're having one Friday where the kids are not coming to school. I know it's going to entail some kind of reading of some educational material and from there, we're going to do some activity to try to make our teaching better. (WMT1.1, 01.13.10)

Angela, a fourth grade teacher, reflected on site-based character of the school professional development:

> We really work hard on mapping a cohesive professional development plan. A big focus we have is using the resources we have at this school doing some peer instruction. We have one teacher who's done a lot of work in GLAD strategies with vocabulary

development so she's trained some teachers here and they've gotten more interested and done more GLAD training. So, it tends to be very on site driven and then trying to stay as cohesive as possible. (WMT4.1, 02.03.10)

Maple Elementary supported teachers with professional help in several ways. Sophie, the instructional specialist at this school documented this variety:

We spent two days before school started in professional development and we paid teachers to come early and the agenda was set, basically by the administration and the leadership here with some coaching support we get from an outside organization. In addition the district is providing a PD day this Friday. Other things that we've done have been on our own. We've taken teachers to observe other schools. We've provided release days for teachers to look up their data. (WMI, 01.26.10)

As disclosed by Sophie, in addition to access to the district professional support, the school created wider professional network with external organizations to provide further instructional support for the teachers. This elucidates that, by buffering itself from the institutional expectations, the school gained the opportunity to be selective in acquiring district professional help and also to engage itself with outside professional organizations to provide instructional support for the teachers. The space created between the institutional expectations and the school instructional activities through buffering allowed the school to gain wider access to the technical environment for support.

The other vignette of providing instructional support to teachers was through schools' instructional specialists. Instructional specialists were required to provide site-based professional development for teachers. Sophie's comment reveals her acceptance of her responsibilities as an instructional specialist:

The district has been giving us [instructional specialists] professional development with the idea that we come back to our school sites and then we provide that professional development. So, it's more through my position, I would say, that the instructional messages are delivered to the teachers. I'll come in and observe and give feedback in teachers' classrooms. I've just been more of a support with the reading curriculum and resources. (WMI, 01.26.10)

The instructional specialists were in charge of helping teachers by modeling or to meet them one-on-one or group meetings to resolve instructional issues teachers were grappling with. Rosa, a first grade teacher said, "one of my literacy specialists, she… I really like her style of teaching, projects and hands on creative activities. She's come in and done some teaching, which has been really helpful." (WMT1.1, 01.13.10)

Teachers also received daily instructional supports through reading specialists or aids who pushed-in the classrooms instead of pulling-out those students in need of individual attention. This opportunity provided teacher the chance to selectively group their students for instruction while all the students were presented in the class. Sophie, the literacy specialist at Maple Elementary revealed:

We're very lucky because we have a number of literacy specialists on staff. They're five literacy support teachers who are really instrumental in working with the teachers and putting programs together. They push into the classrooms and so teachers are able to work in small groups. The literacy specialist takes a group, the teacher takes a group, and kids are working independently. (WMI, 01.26.10)

Pilar, a first grade teacher, expressed her appreciations having literacy specialists in her class helping with group instruction; she stated:

Basically we're fortunate enough to have a literacy specialist here, and that's the time we break into small groups and do our small group reading. I have the full credential literacy specialist 4 times a week and I have the teacher aide that comes in twice a week. (WMT1.2, 01.13.10)

Pilar continued, "I think it really helped the children because there are kids that get lost in that big group. It helped for my kids immensely." (WMT1.2, 01.13.10) Every time I observed her class during reading instruction, I noticed the presence of two instructional aids in her class helping her with instruction in small groups.

Another system of providing instructional support to the teachers was coordinated through teachers' weekly grade level meetings known as teacher collaborative meetings (TCM). Grade level teachers met once a week for two hours to discuss instruction. Mark, the Maple Elementary principal stated, "We have release time for teachers. Each grade, K-5, have one to two hours during the school time a week to plan. It's an expectation that you plan together and learn together." (WMP, 02.03.10) Sophie, the literacy specialist also added:

I think within grade levels, the collaboration is pretty strong. Of course, there are those teachers that stand out as kind of the driving force behind that grade level which is a good thing and there's grade levels don't have a strong leadership and that grade level kind of struggles more without that leadership. (WMI, 01.26.10)

Pilar, a first grade teacher stated, "at our first grade level meetings, we decide what our kids need, how they're working, how we're going to present it to them and we share a lot of ideas between ourselves." (WMT1.2, 01.13.10) Then she expressed her feelings about TCM and revealed:

You're more relaxed asking at your grade level and asking your colleagues 'exactly what is this? What do you mean by that?' I think it's harder in a larger group to ask sometimes. So it depends on your comfort zone with people who you're going to ask because sometimes people will assume you already know something when you don't and you don't want to be the one person among fifty raising your hand like, "what is that? (WMT1.2, 01.13.10)

Rosa, a first grade teacher, also shared her thoughts about TCM and said, "When I have questions I go to my grade level team to figure out what I can do and that's where I go because I think there are experts in 1st grade to teach reading. We brainstorm together and that's really effective." (WMT1.1, 01.13.10) Angela, a fourth grade teacher, also commented on the TCM by

stating, "We do a lot of grade level planning and meeting as our professional development in our release time and that's hugely helpful." (WMT4.1, 02.03.10)

My observations verified teachers' statements that the school was able to provide professional support in and out of the classroom. I attended the Maple Elementary professional development day, grade level teacher meetings, and classroom activities through which I was convinced that the school had the capacity to provide adequate instructional support to the teachers. The survey results also confirm that 89% of Maple Elementary teachers believed their school provided them sufficient sources of instructional support while only 12% believed otherwise (See Figure 3.21).

Instructional resources were not a concern at Maple Elementary. The principal was active in writing grants to bring money to his school, which naturally situate the school in a better position financially to purchase instructional tools and technologies or other instructional materials requested by the teachers. This school also received instructional resources such as books and resources from the district. As Sophie, the literacy specialist at Maple Elementary said, they "have a leveled book library and so the teachers pull resources from there." (WMI, 01.26.10) Mark, the Maple Elementary principal declared, "We have an Equity Center Professional Learning Community on site with materials which was created by teachers. Many of the teachers are excited about meeting and excited about talking about improving instruction." (WMP, 02.03.10)

In reflecting upon the availability of instructional resources to the teachers and students Mark said:

> In third grade, rather than reading the anthology, they're actually buying, we bought books for them. Particularly, authors, the students select the books that they want to read so it's sort of a mix of what teachers want and what, we have our literacy specialists and our instructional reform facilitator purchasing books. Right now, we're actually looking at purchasing more leveled readers that are expository, that I'm hoping them to be more content based, more science based and perhaps social studies. (WMP, 02.03.10)

And Sophie, the literacy specialist, also expressed enthusiasm for their resources: "we have a leveled book library and so the teachers pull resources from there." (WMI, 01.26.10) Pilar, a first grade teacher corroborated the views of Mark and Sophie:

> Having enough reading materials, we've been fortunate that we do have varied reading materials and we're going to get some more funding so… having the leveled readers in the classroom this year has really helped those kids be able to build on their reading skills. (WMT1.2, 01.13.10)

Rosa, a first grade teacher, echoed the same sense of satisfaction with what was readily available to her:

> I look for a lot of expository texts in the books. When I did go to the Guided Reading training, the district provided us with a whole box of expository textbooks, through all the levels and I use them in the classroom everyday that we're doing Guided Reading and then we have a huge book room that I use. (WMT1.1, 01.13.10)

Brown Elementary. Like Maple Elementary, Brown Elementary teachers had access to two types of professional development, one through the district and the other one through the site-based professional development. According to data, all the teachers expressed their positive views about the district's optional promoted professional development. Kristy, a first grade teacher, commented on the district's voluntary professional development and stated:

There's lots of professional development that's outside of the school day provided by the district. This year, I've gone through a lot of professional development. I've gone to the district AEMP training every month, which is a one-day workshop on culturally relevant practices. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

Karen, a fourth grade teacher, also stated "I have gotten two or three trainings on Guided Readings which were really helpful. They actually had us go to another school and have us practice on other children so that was really helpful." (WBT4.2, 05.07.10) Joe, a fourth grade teacher, explained how the district instructional specialist helped him in his classroom, he said, "I was able to meet with a few district people one on one here in my own classroom twice to just see what kind of support I needed. That's part of what helped me refine my idea of what I was supposed to be doing." (WBT4.1, 04.24.10)

This view changed when I asked the teachers about their site professional development. The fact that was repeated throughout the data collection and analysis was lack of teachers' involvement in planning and decision making in Brown Elementary. According to the data teachers were not involved in planning their site professional development, instead the principal made the decisions and teachers only were expected to participate. Karen, a fourth grade teacher said, "I think that professional development is from the district. I think the principal kind of picks. They have to provide us with certain professional developments so I think they just look, pick, and choose." (WBT4.2, 05.07.10) The comment of this teacher illustrates lack of knowledge the teachers had about how site professional development was planned in Brown Elementary. The principal, who made all the instructional decisions, did not involve the teachers in any planning processes; instead by bridging school's instructional activities to the district and the institutional environment, she intended to respond to external expectations. Kristy, a first grade teacher, expressed her frustrations about the professional help she received from her school by stating, "I don't feel supported." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

Brown Elementary lacked cohesive professional development planning for the teachers at site. Jessica, a first grade teacher in Brown Elementary reflected on the issue of school professional support and said:

It's [PD] kind of all over the place. It's a little unorganized and then they don't ask us about it anymore so then I'm not going to do it because I don't really know, I don't have some serious training on it so I just have one random idea about what this strategy is. I get it that they're trying to give us strategies and tools but I just think it would be nice to have a cohesive and coherent thing that we know where it was going. (WBT1.1, 04.24.10)

Along the same lines Karen, a fourth grade teacher, stated, "I don't really know what I'm supposed to do, what powers I have or who do I contact. For me, what I figured out is that I talk to the literacy specialists and they try to help me out." (WBT4.2, 05.07.10) Joe, a fourth grade teacher, revealed his thoughts about the role of school leadership in providing instructional support to the teachers, he said:

If an administrator is present, I think it sends a message, but you can't just be visible and then be absent in terms of support and I think that's where maybe there's a disconnect. Certain demands are being made on us and I think this may be a symptom of the school: lack of communication and I don't know where that comes from but I definitely see it manifest in frustrations that people feel about how they do things and not being clear. (WBT4.1, 04.24.10)

As Joe described, the principal was present only to enforce the institutional expectations instead of instructionally support the teachers. Joe viewed this situation as a symptom of miscommunication. But, analyzing the school leadership characteristics more carefully through this research, I believe the situation was created by principal's lack of content and instructional knowledge. As I discussed and argued in the section related to instructional goals and planning, this school district had ambiguous literacy vision. Lack of district literacy vision could be seen as positive and negative. It could be positive if the school leadership is visionary and has strengths in literacy to create and design his/her school's literacy goals based on the needs of students and the culture of the school. It could be negative if the leadership lacks vision and literacy knowledge because it creates uncertainty at the level that consistency and cohesiveness is one of the most urgent matters. School leadership's lack of clear literacy vision impacts the planning and therefore the design of the site professional development. In my view, the frustrations that teachers felt about their site professional development, according to the teachers, was rooted in school leadership's lack of literacy vision and knowledge. Brown Elementary principal basically was an administrator who only managed school's rituals. In order to fulfill her responsibility as an instructional leader and to fill the gap of her instructional knowledge she bridged school's instructional activities to the district and therefore institutional expectations.

In Brown Elementary, the instructional support was provided through instructional positions such as instructional specialist and literacy coach. The specialists provided instructional help to the teachers as well as providing administrative assistance to the principal. All the Brown Elementary teachers expressed their concerns about instructional specialists' involvement with school's administrative tasks, which reduced the time they had available to provide instructional help to the teachers. Kristy, a first grade teacher, commented on this matter and reflected on the responsibilities of the instructional specialist in her school by stating:

I'm not sure what they're actually supposed to do but it just seems like the fill in person so she gets tasks with running the principal's errands all the time or keeping up with scheduling of school activities. She's really good about trying to support teachers however she can, but it doesn't seem like the job is clearly defined. I mean she goes above and beyond as far as I'm concerned but it doesn't seem like that job title fits with what she actually does. She's just picking up all the pieces all the time. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

The other source of instructional support in Brown Elementary was through teachers' weekly grade level meetings known amongst the school staff as professional learning community meetings (PLC). Some teachers questioned the purpose and effectiveness of these meetings. Generally, all the teachers believed that the grade level meetings did not provide them with the

instructional support they needed. Kristy, a first grade teacher, commented on the quality of their grade level meetings by expressing:

> At our school we have weekly grade level meetings with the teachers, literacy specialist, and our literacy coach. But it seems like he's just a pawn of the principal. He kind of just regurgitates whatever it is the principal's saying without really thinking it though. So, I don't respect that he's not willing to question authority for the sake of kids. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

Karen, a fourth grade teacher, reflected on the quality and purpose of PLC meetings and said, "We never plan [in PLC meetings]. It's like we're reporting what we're doing and then they sort of give a mini lesson on how you should teach. And then that's it." (WBT4.2, 05.07.10) Joe, a fourth grade teacher, talked about the goals and effectiveness of the PLC meetings as a channel of professional development and stated:

> The goal has always been sharing best practices and possibly coordinating certain assignments that you're working on and seeing how students perform across a grade level. Another one of the goals of PLC meetings was to kind of get everybody make decisions together and to talk about certain things logistically, which we don't. That wasn't definitely the most effective use of our time. (WBT4.1, 04.24.10)

I attended some of the PLC meetings where I noticed the presence of the literacy specialist and the coach and the grade level teachers while for a short period of time the principal joined without providing any help. The relationship between the teachers and the principal was not definitely friendly and stayed at the level of boss and employee.

Compared to Maple Elementary, Brown Elementary teachers did not benefit from the presence of instructional aids in their classrooms because the school had financial difficulties hiring instructional aids to support the teachers.

In Brown Elementary instructional resources were available to the teachers only through the district. Jessica, a first grade teacher, reflected on this issue by stating:

> We have lots of books for Guided Reading, I've been to workshops provided by the district in Guided Reading earlier in the school year and again I'm constantly talking with my colleagues what can we do differently but then again it's still a work in progress. (WBT1.1, 04.24.10)

Jessica also stated:

> They've [district] provided training for how to teach students of different culture and races and so I've gone to workshops on that and I have binders with resources and the district gave me a big box of literature that really support their culture so I try to incorporate that as much as possible and relate. (WBT1.1, 04.24.10)

Some teachers like Kristy, inherited books and resources from the teachers who were retired. Because of those extra materials, Kristy felt she had "sufficient resources in my classroom in terms of books and materials. I'm just reading books that I have in my classroom

library." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10) On the other hand, Jessica, a first grade teacher, reflected on the school's deficient resources, suggesting that, "Unfortunately sometimes we just don't have other materials and you use things that beneficial but not the most beneficial for kids. To have the needed material I'll either buy it, make it, or beg it off a partner teacher." (WBT1.1, 04.24.10) In dealing with resource deficiencies teachers tried to be resourceful. Victoria, the instructional specialist at Brown Elementary acknowledges that, "the teachers are resourceful so they seek outside resources to actually get ideas as well as actual materials. They've been able to get things for their classes, like that ELMO projector." (WBI, 05.09.10)

Overall, and specifically in comparison to Maple Elementary, Brown Elementary did not provide the same wealth of instructional resources. The teachers received *Culturally Relevant* resources and materials from the district, but the school on its own had little capacity to purchase technologies and other resources that teachers requested. The survey data revealed that 94.4% of Maple Elementary teachers strongly believed that the school leadership provided them with opportunities to use instructional resources and materials they saw essential in their classrooms. This number was 41.2% in Brown Elementary (Figure 3.25).
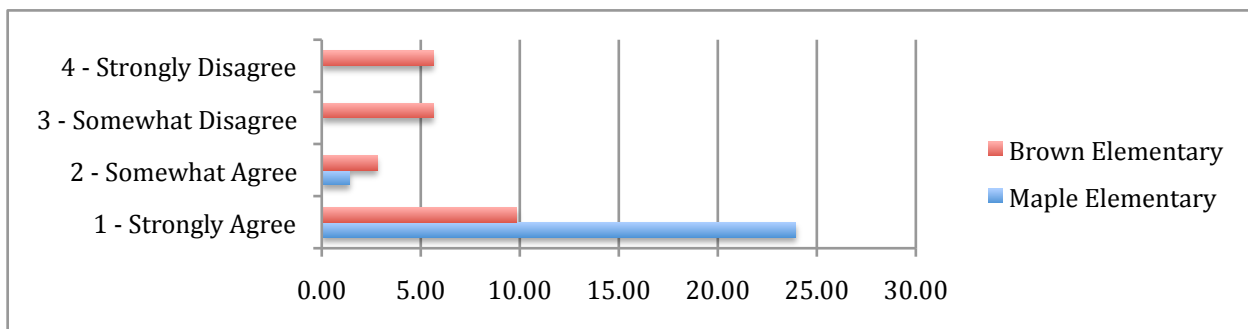
Figure 3.25. Extent of school leadership support in using various instructional materials

The survey data also demonstrate that 89% of Maple Elementary teachers believed instructional support in their school promoted useful teaching skills to meet the student needs. At Brown Elementary, 51% of teachers believed in the quality of their site-based trainings and support while 49% believed they did not receive useful trainings and support by their school (Figure 3.26).

The interview, observation, and survey data illustrated that although in the same school district and exhibiting the same demographic characteristics, Brown Elementary and Maple Elementary had substantially different approaches to reading instruction. Variation in instructional practices in schools is an expected behavior in a decentralized district and in the cases of Brown Elementary and Maple Elementary it was profoundly due to school leadership approaches. The Maple Elementary principal loosely coupled his school's instruction from the district through buffering while the Brown Elementary principal preferred to couple her school's technical core to the district through different channels of bridging.
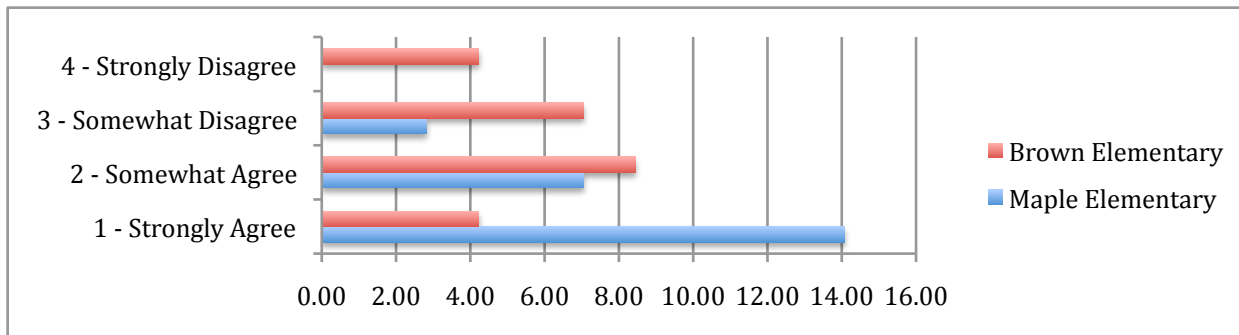
Figure 3.26. Quality of site-based teacher training in teachers' view

Summary

To address the first research question, this chapter compared and contrasted reading instructional practices in two centralized and decentralized school districts. The findings of this study illustrate a complicated picture of how reading instruction was played out in classrooms of these two districts. It is complicated because I realized that not only the districts had different instructional approaches, but also the schools within them had somewhat different instructional visions and approaches.

The findings of this chapter indicate that Eastside School District enforced a certain mandated reading curriculum that is usually applicable to whole class instruction, recognized the test scores as the goal of reading instruction, encouraged use of synthetic texts, provided limited teacher trainings around mandated curriculum and programs, and enforced implementation of programs that did not always instructionally well-matched the mandated curriculum structure.

The picture was different in Westside School District. Westside School District did not enforce the use of a certain reading curriculum but encouraged reading instruction through programs that require small grouping, respected the diverse needs of the student population, encouraged use of expository texts, and provided voluntarily teacher trainings that promoted best practices and instructional strategies applicable to any reading curriculum.

The findings of this chapter suggest that depending on their governance, instructional approaches of the school districts differed. Westside School District provided opportunities for schools to buffer. The vacuumed space allowed by the district provided schools opportunity to define their own literacy goals and construct their literacy plan. Although in this situation Westside School District allowed buffering, there were school leaders who tend to bridge and couple schools' instructional activities to the institutional expectations because of their incompetency in literacy and instruction knowledge. On the other hand, Eastside School District with centralized governance desired coupling and therefore compelled bridging.

Districts' instructional capacity and lack of there of complicated this situation in Eastside School District. Eastside School District's lack of instructional capacity created opportunity for the principals with sufficient literacy and instructional knowledge to shape the terms of compliance with the district while a principal who lacked sufficient literacy and instructional knowledge bridged despite district's lack of instructional capacity. The data indicate that when a principal was aware of the district lack of instructional capacity and had sufficient literacy knowledge, then he became capable to politically manipulate the situation to shape the terms of compliance with the district. This situation was different when the principal had no sufficient literacy knowledge to figure out the district's instructional capabilities. This is when the principal

did nothing but following the predetermined instructional patterns the district enforced. Therefore, school leadership literacy knowledge found to be a determinant factor in why schools decouple, loosely couple, or couple reading instruction to districts' expectations.

Teachers of Westside School District were involved in instructional decision-making processes. The exception was for those teachers whose principal bridged school instructional activities to the district. Teachers of Eastside School District were not involved in the instructional decision-making processes, even though teachers whose principal shaped the terms of compliance with the district were less pressured. The data reveal that more the principal buffered the more the school was independent from the institutional connections, therefore teachers became more involved in the instructional decision-making processes. On the other hand, the more the principal bridged the more school became dependent and conforming to the institutional expectations, therefore teachers were less involved in the processes of instructional decision making.

To understand why reading instructional approaches were played out differently in the school districts with centralized and decentralized governance, it is essential to shed light on how the district coordinated classroom instructional practices. The next chapter focuses on the levers Eastside School District and Westside School District used to control reading instruction in the classrooms. Identifying the tools the centralized and decentralized districts used in maintaining reading instruction could illustrate the profound role the governance of school districts might have on the classroom reading instructional practices.

Chapter 4: The Coordination or Control of Reading Instruction in Two School Districts

This chapter addresses my second research question, exploring how instructional practices were controlled or coordinated in my contrasting school districts. Throughout this chapter, the two districts are treated as two separate cases. In this chapter I highlight specific organizational tools invoked by district leaders to control or coordinate classroom reading instructional practices. The analyses of findings led me to the conclusion that the two districts used the very same levers—curriculum, standards, assessments, and instructional program—to shape reading instructional practice, but they employed those levers in different ways. In the centralized district, the levers were instruments of control, whereas in the decentralized district they were tools of coordination.

Control, as described in the literature review and methodology chapters of this work (see Chapters 1 and 2), is defined as a systematic effort by management to compare performance to predetermined standards, plans, or objectives in order to determine whether performance is in line with these standards (Mockler, 1970). By coordination I mean use of specific levers to negotiate, communicate, and facilitate classroom instructional practices smoothly and efficiently to improve the technical core while illustrating conformity to the institutional expectations. Basically, the most important macro finding of this chapter indicates that the centralized school district controlled, whereas the decentralized school district coordinated, the classroom reading instructional practices, while using similar means and tools. This argument becomes complex when at micro level the schools within the districts are examined. Using the lens of neoinstitutional theory, I examine each of these levers within the centralized and then the decentralized district, after which I discuss cross-case similarities and differences in findings.

Case Study I: The Centralized School District

As discussed in Chapter 3, Eastside School District suffered from lack of instructional capacity. The data indicate that, while the district grappled with lack of instructional capacity, it strived to ensure consistency across classrooms by controlling instructional activities by employing all the possible levers. Although the teachers of the two schools reflected different attitudes about instruction in their schools, the observation, survey, and interview data reveal use of the same instructional control levers in both schools. The differences between the two schools' perceptions about instruction demonstrate differences in teachers' attitudes constructed through principals' leadership characteristics, approach, and political knowledge.

State Standards

The state standards, as reminded unanimously by the district personnel, administrators and teachers, were the objectives of the instruction; they were the institutional expectations. Recognizing state standards as the instructional objectives is aligned with the district's clarity of literacy vision I discussed previously (see Chapter 3). Clarity of the district's literacy vision was due to the district's wholehearted fidelity to the state standards as the main framework and goals of instruction in guiding all instructional activities. When I asked Aida and Terry, the instructional specialists of the Elm and Green elementary schools, about the objectives of instruction in their schools they both said that the objectives are standards, Aida, whose comment mirrors Terry's, said:

I don't think *objectives* would be the right word. It would be the reading standards, which are chosen by the state per grade level and each school has to meet those standards using the chosen curriculum to meet those standards. We want to make sure that they're meeting their reading standards. (EGI, 01.25.10)

Lauren, a fourth grade teacher at Elm Elementary also stated, "instead of *planning* you could say standards because the standards guide the instruction." (EET4.1, 03.17.10) Alison, a first grade teacher at Green Elementary, reflected on the question similarly, she said:

My overall instructional goals have to do with the state standards. The standards are basically *strategies*. We have standards we strive for in our daily instruction and those are the goals really that drive first grade. I go by the standard and that mirrors into my curriculum and the curriculum is corporate right. It's the district's curriculum. (EGT1.2, 02.09.10)

Within the above three interview quotes, one participant said the standards are the *objectives*, the second one considered the standards as *planning*, while the third participant addressed the standards as *strategies*. The state standards guide everything from objectives to planning to strategies. This illustrates how deeply the state standards are institutionalized and rooted in the schools of this district. According to Steve, Elm Elementary principal, "the district as a whole has shifted to emphasizing the standards", he said, "Teachers are focusing on the standards as a team and plan together." (EEP, 02.24.10) Nora, a district instruction administrator also stated, "The standards are very clear in the pacing guides and in the report cards. The standards are the foundation and every teacher knows about the standard. They know what they're supposed to teach." (EI1, 03.26.10) Steve, Elm Elementary principal commented on the state standards as an instructional control lever by expressing:

I think there is a sense at the school that there is an obligation to have a responsibility to be teaching those standards because [teachers would think] it's going to be happening at other second grade classrooms, I better do it. And so, I think that's a good thing. Teachers have their own style, but you want to make sure that as a school and as a grade you're moving in the same direction and I think we've done that. (EEP, 02.24.10)

Steve's comment points to a couple of important facts. Continuity, in the form of the state standards bridges grade levels that forces responsibility and accountability on teachers to follow the standards for the sake of system-wide instructional consistency. It is within the forces of the continuity that undoubtedly some students are left behind, as John a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary stated:

A lot of students read way below grade level, fifty or sixty words a minute; they're supposed to be up over one hundred, just the reading itself. There's just seems to be a lot for teachers to do. So that's why students are falling through the cracks; absolutely, I can see it. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary with a different perspective on continuity and consistency, discussed how the standards align teachers' instructional activities, she said:

> If you have the standard that everybody is doing the same thing at the same time then you have your weaker teachers and your middle teachers following the program providing the students with equity and instruction and I think that is important. (EGI, 01.25.10)

Reflecting on the influence of the state standards on instructional activities, Steve, the Elm Elementary principal, argued that standards have narrowed their instructional focus. Steve said, "we're really focused on academic excellence, that means we're teaching the standards. Overall, the standards have their issues, but it's good to be focused on the standards and have that guide instruction." (EEP, 02.24.10) Steve's comment reflects the fact that the state standards are a strong lever of control in guiding instruction. Joan, a district administrator, described the positive and negative aspects of the state standards in this district and stated:

> The adoption of state standards has been a positive force for clarifying what students are expected to know and be able to do at any given level of their education. Of course, as in many other districts, the structure of determining success and failure can and has lead in some instances to sacrificing balance in the curriculum and some degree of 'teaching to the test'. (EI2, 03.24.10)

According to the data, one of the district requirements was that the state standards must be posted on the walls in all the classrooms. John, a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary said, "from what we are told from our principal that the district looking for to see if your standards are posted on the wall. Got to make sure you have those up." (EGT4.2, 02.18.10) Regarding the enforcement of posting the standards in the classrooms, Steve, Green Elementary principal stated, "one of the things the district look for in the classroom is that the standards for each lessons are posted, observable, and recognizable in the teaching." (EEP, 02.24.10) Lauren, a fourth grade teacher also reflected:

> They want to see standards posted. They want to see it because you're supposed to have your objectives posted. The message we've been getting from the district through Steve is that the standards come first and however use the curriculum for that purpose. So that's what we do. We are supposed to be planning with standards in mind first. (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

Robert, another fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary, who was quite dismayed by the state standards said:

> They make us put these sound spelling cards and standards up on our walls, which I don't see the value for it. I have to figure out what they're having difficulty with, people say, 'you have to concentrate on the standards, standards, standards. I'm not that kind of person. I don't completely disregard the standards but I refuse to be one of those people that all they do is to prepare students for the CSTs. That's all they do, all year along! (EGT4.1, 02.24.10)

My observations in the classrooms of the two schools indicate heavy reliance on the state standards as the objectives that guide teachers planning and instructional strategies. In all classrooms the state standards were posted, some with more and some with less details. In all the teachers' grade level meetings that I observed, state standards guided all decision-makings and were the point of reference in teachers' discussions of planning. The survey data confirm the observation findings and reveal that 69.4% of teachers in this district strongly and 25% somewhat agreed that state standards guided their teaching (Appendix A, Figure 2). The survey data also indicate that 63.2% of Green Elementary teachers strongly and 36.8% somewhat agreed that standards guided their instruction. At Elm Elementary also 76.5% of teachers strongly and 12% somewhat agreed that the state standards guided their instruction (Figure 4.1). According to data there was no significant difference between the two schools with regards to standards as a control lever, indicating consistent results across the two schools.

As reflected in the interview, observation, and survey data the state standards were the main control lever that the district uses to ensure consistency across classroom instructional activities. Posting standards on the walls of the classrooms as a strategy used by the district reveals the district's intention of using norms, rituals, and the taken-for-granted rules as a strong tool of instructional control. According to Scott's discussion of power and control (1987), where he distinguishes between regulative, normative and cognitive aspects of institutions, the regulative effect is based on coercion and direct control and conformity is based on actors having internalized values, social obligation, formal laws, or quasi-moral norms. The cognitive effect is based on mimetic processes in which actors comply with deeply ingrained cultural scripts, assumption and solutions. These are the "taken for granted" that no one challenges and conformity is based on membership and participation in a culture. In this district situation, the state standards, when introduced in the beginning, based on regulative effect, were enforced and teachers had to learn to comply with them as the new organizational values. Now, after years of compliance with the state standards the cognitive effect is in place and teachers seem to be complying with the state standards as the taken-for-granted rules that are deeply institutionalized in education systems. The more deeply the state standards are being institutionalized the stronger of a lever they become in controlling classroom instruction.
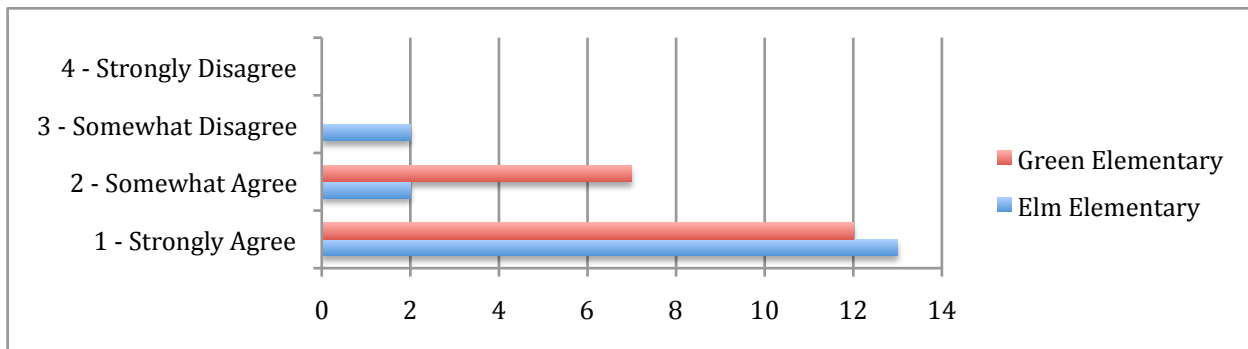

Figure. 4.1 Influence of the state standards in guiding instruction

To organize teachers' activities in achieving the objectives of instruction—or the state standards—the district used two main control levers to ensure that the state standards were being

addressed at the time of instruction. The other two main control levers were the adoption of a standard-based reading curriculum and the assessments discussed in the following.

Reading Curriculum

As discussed in Chapter 3, the two schools within this centralized district had different perceptions about the mandated reading curriculum. At Green Elementary OCR was considered a mandate, as one of the teachers said, "we're very religious about Open Court" (Mary, EGT1.1, 02.08.10)) while at Elm Elementary it was perceived as a tool that could be used differently in each classroom. Although the two schools had different perceptions about OCR, the data reveal that it was mandated and implemented in both schools because OCR was developed based on the state standards and use of it was intertwined with the state standards and assessments. As discussed previously (see Chapter 3), OCR "is very laid out and there's not much maneuvering around it" (Carina, EET1.1, 03.11.10). The prescriptive character of OCR made it a reliable control tool for the district ensuring implementation of the instructional expectations or the standards. The district recognized that by adopting a standard-based curriculum, and simultaneously using the state assessments, classroom instructional control become tighter and more reliable. Nora, a district instruction administrator, commented on the alignment of the reading curriculum and the state standards by stating, "we would not be able to adopt any language arts series unless it was approved by the state. And the state looks at it for a number of things. The program has to be California standards-based, contents standards-based." (EI1, 03.26.10)

Discussing the fact that OCR was standards-based, mandated, and to be implemented, Elm's principal commented:

> I think this district would qualify for that in that it's an Open Court curriculum, you're going to use it, you're going to focus on the standards, and we're expecting it in the classroom evidence of that use, from the program materials to how the teachers are delivering instruction. Again, stated a lot more heavily than a few years ago. Steve (EEP, 02.24.10)

Along the same lines, Aida, the instructional specialist at Elm Elementary, also commented on the ease of use of OCR in addressing the standards by stating:

> Teachers have to learn how to plan outside the curriculum, they have to plan towards a standard and so that means they have to break it down into simpler steps. That kind of planning is pretty cognitive. That's the only drawback the descriptive programs brought in was that it got teachers away from having to do that hard kind of cognitive planning. (EEI, 03.02.10)

To reflect on his school's conformity to the institutional expectations while using OCR with some fidelity, Elm's principal stated:

> The main focus is on the standards, we use Open Court as our tool to meet the standards. Here it has been program triggered. Especially in the district it has been about learning the program as the assumption being then that the teachers will teach kids to read…I think we are meeting the expectations that you teach the standards and you use OCR as a

tool, but definitely not using the program with fidelity. It's about how we'll be using that and what else we know to help the students meet the reading standards for their grade level. (EEP, 02.24.10)

Aida, the instructional specialist at Elm Elementary also commented, "we're all following the OCR and pretty much everyone is on board with it, everybody is on board with looking at data to see which students are struggling." (EEI, 03.02.10)

At Green Elementary, OCR was used as a control lever. The implementation of OCR was intensely enforced at Green Elementary as compared to Elm Elementary (see Chapter 3). Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary, mentioned the intensity of OCR implementation in her school by stating, "we must follow the OCR program and it is pretty well laid out what the expectations are so there's it." (EGI, 01.25.10) She then continued, "everyone is following the Open Court or supposedly everyone is following the Open Court, it's right in the teacher's addition". (EGI, 01.25.10) Mary, a first grade teacher, also reflected, "it's pretty well agreed upon that this is the curriculum and that this is what we would teach and this is how we would teach it." (EGT1.1, 02.08.10) Robert, a fourth grade teacher, explained his reaction to the enforcement of OCR in his school and stated, "I kind of do it so I don't get in trouble. I mean, if I had my way, I wouldn't do Open Court at all but if I get caught not using the Open Court stories, then that wouldn't be good. I would get in trouble." (EGT4.1, 02.24.10)

Sara, the Green Elementary principal, commented on the nature of OCR, "primary teachers seems to get a lot more of how to teach reading and that's what our Open Court does. It breaks it down into steps what you should and should not be doing." (EGP, 01.19.10) She then continued wondering, "What puzzles me is why teachers resist a program that is proven to be effective!" (EGP, 01.19.10) Sara's comments verify that the OCR guided teachers to teach reading.

My observations in the classrooms of the two schools indicate heavy use of OCR in instruction although some teachers resisted it as an effective reading curriculum. The survey data indicate that 70% of this district's teachers fully complied with the district expectations in following the adopted reading curriculum (Appendix A, Figure 1). The survey also reveals that 84% of Green Elementary teachers fully and 15.8% moderately complied while 55.6% of Elm Elementary teachers fully and 44.4% moderately complied with the district expectations to implement the adopted reading curriculum (Figure 4.2).
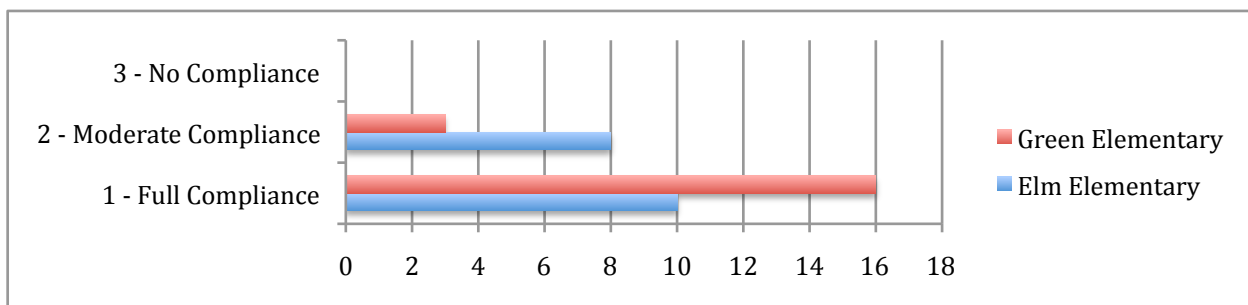
Figure. 4.2 Extent of teachers' compliance in implementing the mandated curriculum

The survey data also illustrate that 27% of teachers in this district believed that the district was very successful, 59.6% believed the district was somewhat successful and 13.5% believed the district was unsuccessful in using the reading curriculum to control their instruction

(Appendix A, Figure 6). The survey data indicate that at Green Elementary 36.8% of teachers believed that the district was very successful, 42% believed it was somewhat successful, and 21% believed it was unsuccessful in using the reading curriculum to control their instruction (Figure 4.3). The survey data also reveal that at Elm Elementary 16.7% of teachers believed that the district was very successful, 77.8% believed it was somewhat successful, and 7% believed it was unsuccessful in using the reading curriculum to control their instruction (Figure 4.3).
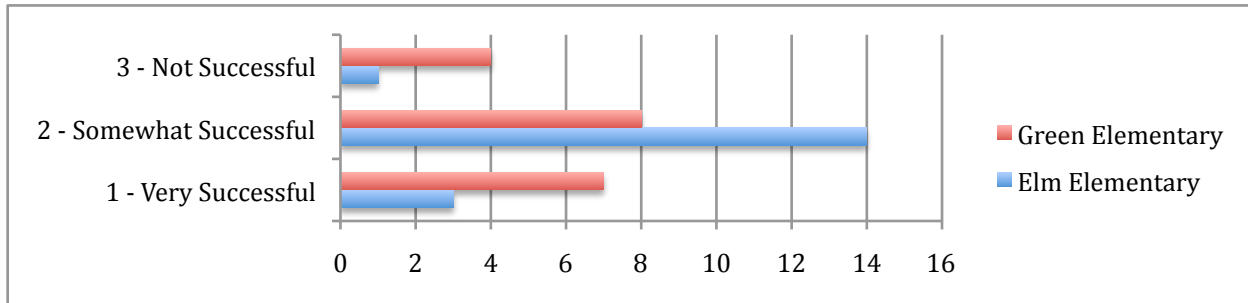
Figure 4.3. Extent of district success in using mandated curriculum as an instructional control tool

The survey data illustrate that 100% of Green Elementary teachers believed that reading curriculum was highly controlled by the district, while 66.7% of Elm Elementary teachers believed it was highly controlled and 33.3% believe it was moderately controlled by the district (Figure 4.4).
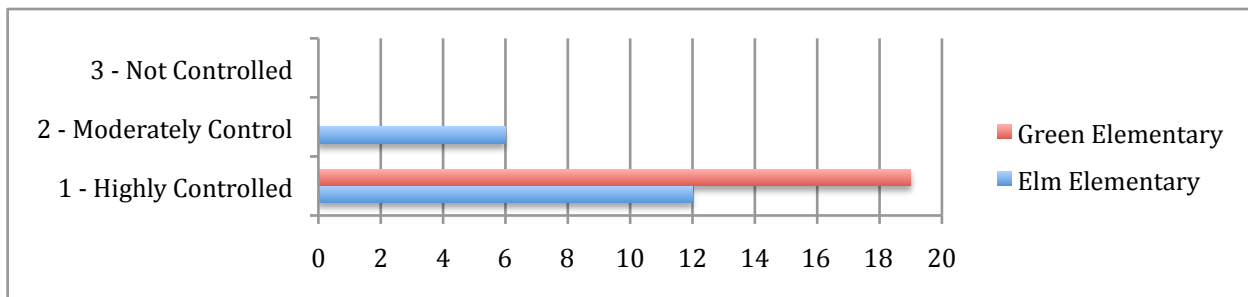
Figure 4.4. District control over reading curriculum

The survey data indicate that 50% of Eastside School District teachers believed have no control over reading curriculum (Appendix A, Figure 7). These data all indicate how strong of a lever the adopted reading curriculum was in this district to control classroom instruction.

The district adopted OCR as a scripted curriculum to have better control of what, when, and how reading must be taught in classrooms. The comments of the teachers and administrators in both schools indicate that the district used the scripted reading curriculum as an instructional control lever in classrooms. Although, at Elm Elementary the curriculum was considered as a "tool", the data reveal that it was used as strong as it was used at Green Elementary to control classroom instruction. According to Scott's (1994) analysis of power and control in organizations, at Green Elementary regulative effect was in process to control instruction while at Elm Elementary cognitive effect was in place where based on mimetic processes teachers complied with OCR as a cultural script that was the "taken for granted" that no one challenged.

The principals' leadership approaches were profound regardless of whether regulative or the cognitive effects were processed to control.

Instructional resources. One of the surveillance systems that the district employed to monitor the implementation of OCR was use of instructional material and resource ordering data. Schools occasionally ordered new workbooks, OCR related student materials, and assessment materials provided through the district. Lauren, a fourth grade teacher at Elm Elementary, explained:

> There's the Williams Case, where the kids are all supposed to have adequate textbooks and materials. The district is supposed to walk through within the next month or so with a checklist of these equitable practices, which are supposed to be shown. (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

Nora, a district instruction administrator stated, "teachers decide which workbooks were ordered. They are allowed two workbooks per year, the consumable workbooks, so you have people ordering workbooks and you see that they are being used." (EI1, 03.26.10) Jack, a fourth grade teacher at Elm Elementary commented, "I'm using textbooks, because I don't have the money to be buying textbooks for everybody a different curriculum." (EET4.2, 03.26.10)

The data suggests that financial independency could provide schools opportunity to cut their technical core loose from the districts. In most cases, financial dependency leave schools no other options but to couple their technical core to the districts expectations for survival. The data demonstrate that Green Elementary did not have financial capacity, therefore entirely relied on the district to provide all the necessary instructional materials. My observations in the classrooms of this school indicate prevalent use of OCR materials and very limited number of supplemental materials. My observations in the classrooms of Elm Elementary indicate that although resources were limited, relative to Green Elementary, more supplemental materials were available in the library, on the shelves of the classrooms, and on the teachers and students' desks. Elm Elementary teachers had a resource room with a wide range of supplemental materials. Ironically, even though the district resources were more sparse, Elm Elementary was in a better financial situation and able to allocate money to purchase some supplemental materials. Steve, the Elm Elementary principal stated:

> We have the classroom libraries, we ordered… so in the lower grades we have a lot of easy reading sets and then we have some of the 'Reader's Theater' materials where the kids get to read aloud and read plays. And then in the upper grades we actually just got some augmentations we're going to try to get in more books that are more popular, relevant, literature that they read now. (EEP, 02.24.10)

The survey results are consistent with interview and observation findings about resources. The survey data reveal that 33.3% of teachers in this district believed that they had a great deal of control and 30.6% believed having moderate control and 36.1% believed having no control over the use of supplemental materials in their teaching (Appendix A, Figure 8). The survey data also reveal that 72.2% of Green Elementary teachers believed that they had no control and 22.2% believed having moderate control over the use of supplemental materials in their teaching (Figure 4.5). At Elm Elementary, 61% of teachers believed that they had moderate control and

38.9% believed having no control over the use of supplemental materials in their teaching (Figure 4.5).
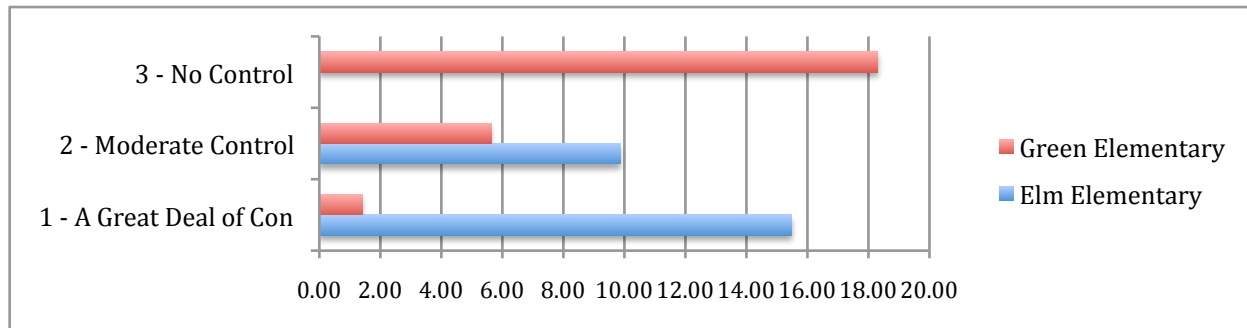
Figure 4.5. Extent of teacher control over use of supplementing instructional materials

The evidence from both surveys and interviews demonstrate that financial needs made the schools dependent on the district for their essential instructional materials. According to the findings of this study, resource dependency was a channel through which the district monitored implementation of the state standards and the mandated curriculum. By monitoring material ordering data the district gathered information about the extent of schools' conformity to the instructional expectations. Resource dependency is a control lever that limits schools' possible attempts to extend their instructional capacities or to loosen their technical activities from the expectations.

Assessments

Assessment was another strong control lever that the district used to ensure instructional consistency to achieve compliance with the standards. Schools were required to do the benchmark assessments several times in an academic year in addition to the California Standard Test (CST). Sara, the Green Elementary principal, described the format of the assessments by stating:

> The district has developed benchmarks that are similar to CST and they provide well practice for our students to take the CSTs. There are unit tests that they get, weekly tests and observations but they come with the program. They are embedded in the program. They are required to give the benchmark three times-four times a year and of course CSTs that drives instruction. (EGP, 01.19.10)

Nora, a district instruction administrator described the assessments the same way, she said, "we have benchmarks that are designed specifically for our district and we have the CSTs. The benchmarks give you a practice for CST." (EI1, 03.26.10) Carina, a first grade teacher said, "the district has us do Dibbles testing four times a year." (EET1.1, 03.11.10) The data indicate that the state and benchmark assessments were used to ensure teachers taught within the framework of state standards and according to the mandated curriculum. Schools were distinguished based on their students' performances on these tests. Steve, the Elm Elementary principal stated:

The district is mostly looking at results, so we do meetings where I share our scores on the district benchmark exams, and we talk about different strategies we're doing to address our challenges. So that would be more of how there's any monitoring of what we're doing, by looking at our results and hearing me talk about it. (EEP, 02.24.10)

Alison, a first grade teacher at Green Elementary, reflected on the alignment between the OCR and assessments by stating, "we're doing these benchmarks assessments and they're fairly aligned in some parts of where we are in our curriculum in teaching. And that's the intention." (EGT1.2, 02.09.10) Steve described how the assessments and standards are complementing each other, he stated, "the assessments are benchmark assessments and they're just looking at the standards." (EEP, 02.24.10) Explaining his thoughts about the assessments, Steve stated:

The assessment has been a mixed bag. It's been helpful in that it gives us feedback on how the students are doing, can serve as a guide for what we need to plan, but we've definitely been on assessment overload. And being a program improvement school, we needed to end up having to do more assessments and they haven't always felt purposeful. I think it's definitely felt at this school and at the district level and that pressure has been able to be used, sometimes positively but sometimes it's been frustrating. (EEP, 02.24.10)

Nora, a district instruction administrator, also commented on the alignment between the standards and assessments, she said, "the benchmark assessments are matching the standards and the reason we give those is to help the students is to check to see which standards they know and which they don't know." (EI1, 03.26.10)

According to Joan, a district instruction administrator, "district benchmark assessments, CSTs, and teacher observation are the methods used to evaluate the performance of the students." (EI2, 03.24.10) Aida, the Elm Elementary instructional specialist, reflected on the district's use of assessments as one of the apparent levers of instructional control by stating:

They [the district] look at the results of the trimester assessments or we have an assessment system using what we call, it's a program called 'DIBELS' and it's an assessment system and they're looking at that. So your score have to be entered in. That's one way they know if you're using the program or not. (EEI, 03.02.10)

Nora, a district instruction administrator, commented on the venues the district imposed its control on instruction, she said, "the district communicates the assessments results through monthly principal meetings on the second Tuesday of every month. At those meetings, the principals are given information to bring back to their faculties." (EI1, 03.26.10)

According to all the teachers, assessments drove the instruction in this district. Nora, a district instruction administrator said, "all assessments should guide instruction." (EI1, 03.26.10) Aida, the instructional specialist at Elm Elementary said, "in our school everyone is on board with the Open Court curriculum and everybody is on board with looking at assessment data for instruction". (EEI, 03.02.10) Lauren, a fourth grade teacher at Elm Elementary also said:

The benchmarks assess those certain things that should be taught in each trimester. So at the end of each trimester those things that should have been taught are assessed. Those

are from the district and then we teachers look at the data and see where are they weak, what we need to teach, or who's close and just kind of push. (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

Sara, the Green Elementary principal also stated, "the assessment data is supposed to drive the instruction". (EGP, 01.19.10) John, a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary, reflected on the use of the assessments as guide to instruction and said, "sometimes we find ourselves teaching to a test because it's coming up and we're going to get evaluated on this. There seems to be too much with crowded classrooms, it's overwhelming." (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary, commented on influences the assessment data has on their professional training by stating:

Our main way of doing professional development is data chats where we get together. We look at the assessment data and determine what was working and what wasn't working and make a plan for what steps to take and then we meet again after the next benchmark assessment. (EGI, 01.25.10)

The data reveal that some teachers taught test taking skills to their students. Carina, a first grade teacher described the way she prepared her students to take the tests, she said "I'm using something right now for comprehension, teaching them certain testing strategies. I don't tell them it's testing strategies but it's kind of finding out how to answer questions, how to work with things around them." (EET1.1, 03.11.10) Robert, a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary also said, "I refuse to be one of those people that all they do is prepare them for the CSTs. That's all they do, all year along." (EGT4.1, 02.24.10)

Lauren, a fourth grade teacher at Elm Elementary, commented on the effectiveness of the assessments in improving students' learning by stating:

The word and vocabulary are okay but I think that the reading comprehension and writing assessment is way too difficult. Just the format even, navigating the test is just too difficult for them, it doesn't really assess what they know, I think it should be simpler and direct. I don't like the benchmark assessments I don't think they're effective. I think it assesses their test taking abilities and that clouds what they're actually supposed to be assessing. (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

Nora, a district instruction administrator, described the expectations of the district by stating, "teachers should be held more accountable than principals for the results of the benchmarks for how their students are doing on their grade level content standards." (EI1, 03.26.10)

Observation data from the classrooms and teachers' weekly meeting in both schools reveal the fact that standardized assessments guided instructional activities in the classrooms. Teachers organized their lesson plans based on the dates of upcoming assessments, provided students the assessment materials from the previous years, and taught them how to take the tests, becoming familiar with the assessment questions. The survey data indicate that 36% of this district teachers believed that they had no control and 50% believed they had moderate control over assessing students (Appendix A, Figure 9). The survey data reveal that 69.4% of teachers strongly and 25% somewhat agreed that state assessments guided their instruction (Appendix A, Figure 2). The survey data reveal that 68.4% of Green Elementary teachers believed that

assessments were highly and 31.6% believed they were moderately controlled by the district. At Elm Elementary, 83.3% of teachers believed that assessments were highly and 16.7% believed they were moderately controlled by the district (Figure 4.6).
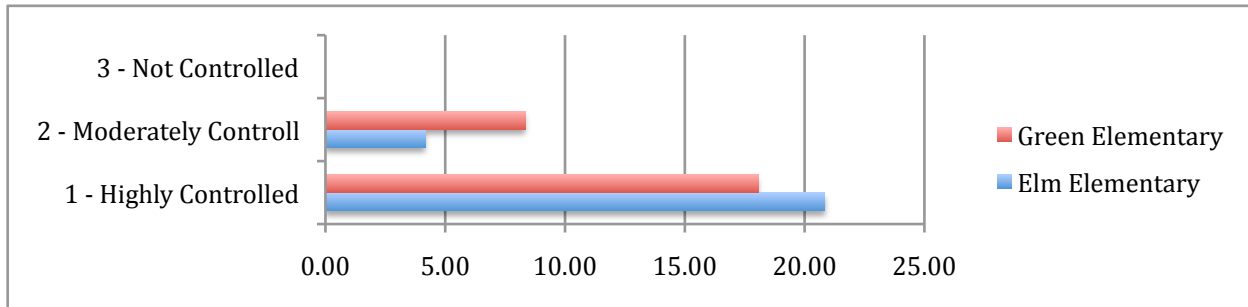
Figure 4.6. Extent of district control over assessments

The survey data also illustrate that 55.6% of Green Elementary teachers believed that they had no control and 38.9% believed they had moderate control over assessing students while 61% of Elm Elementary teachers believed having moderate control, 22.2% a great deal of control, and 16.7% had no control over assessments (Figure 4.7).
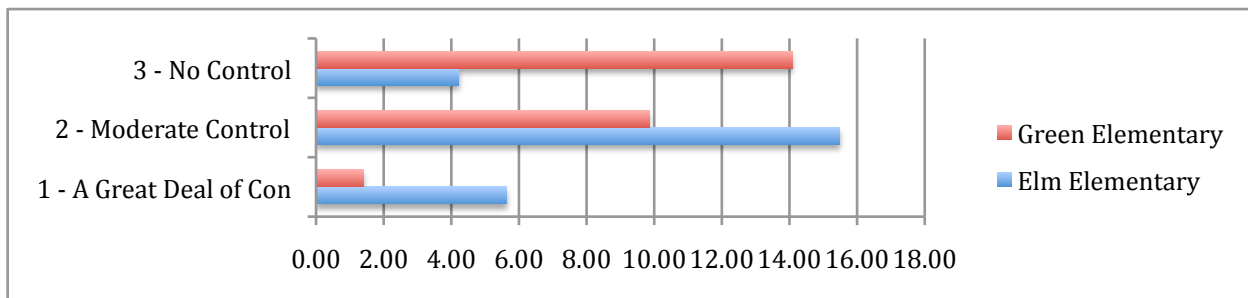
Figure 4.7. Extent of teacher control over assessments

The data gathered from the two schools indicate heavy use of assessment results in guiding classroom instruction. Periodic student assessments that were aligned with the progress of the reading curriculum throughout the year demonstrate the usage of the assessments along with the reading curriculum as main levers used in this district effectively to control classroom instructional activities.

Instructional Programs

In Eastside School District the implementation of selected instructional programs were enforced to control classroom instructional activities. The two participating schools in this district however due to their different instructional leaderships, had different approaches in implementing the enforced instructional programs: Elm Elementary considered the programs flexible and Green Elementary perceived them firm.

Aida, the instructional specialist at Elm Elementary, commented on the district's instructional programs by stating, "there is a district policy on what programs you can supplement and they've given us a list of that. Some schools adhere to that strictly, some schools

do not; they might bring in something else but there is some leeway" (EEI, 03.02.10), while Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary stated, "our principal is very ambitious. She wants the whole school to be doing the programs as they are, so that's what's happening." (EGI, 01.25.10)

As discussed extensively in Chapter 3, the main programs that the schools implemented were 'Response to Intervention' (RTI), 'Culturally Responsive Practices', and the 'I Can' model. Each of these instructional models was expected to respond to the needs of the struggling students. For example RTI model individualized the instruction and promotes small grouping in classrooms by pulling out students or "pushing in" (Aida, EEI, 03.02.10) while 'I Can' model differentiated and divide students based on their learning abilities (test scores) in large groups in different classrooms. Differentiated instruction required teachers to switch students at a specific time of the day. Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary, described the 'I Can' model program by stating:

> An area that is the most sophisticated for teachers is differentiating their instructions and has happened at this school because we are a PI school, something thing called the 'I Can' model has been imposed on us. So that means that the kids need to switch classes so they get differentiated instructions. (EGI, 01.25.10)

Differentiated instruction required teachers to coordinate and plan together for the sake of consistency because it required grade level teachers to switch students for forty minutes everyday. Terry reflected on this process by stating, "another thing that has been imposed by this 'I Can' model which I feel is really important that everyone is teaching the same thing at the same time and same pace." (EGI, 01.25.10) She then continued:

> 'I Can' is based on 'Success for All' or something and it is starting with the third grade, they have to have a schedule and they all have to follow the same schedule and they have to differentiate for ELD, math, and reading and literature. (EGI, 01.25.10)

Instructional programs such as 'I Can' model were the district's instructional tools to control classroom activities. John, a Green Elementary fourth grade teacher, described how the differentiation instruction works in his school:

> For forty minutes a day, we have to split the students up according to their levels, their reading levels, and then teach something that is going to help them at their level gain the next level of and eventually proficiency in reading. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

Mary, a first grade teacher at Green Elementary, described the way differentiated instruction worked in her schedule:

> We are doing the differentiated instruction differently this year. The workshop is done in the afternoon but not with my kids so I'm getting a mix of other kids from different classrooms who are struggling with language where the workshop was typically for my kids, is now being constructed and organized for these kids. (EGT1.1, 02.08.10)

John, a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary, who admitted struggling with instruction time, commented on the way these instructional programs were imposed on teachers:

'I Can' model was presented to us the first day of school. This is our model; we have no choice. It's a way to pull off the state experts from coming in and doing, whatever they are going to do. Differentiated instruction is very ridged, very strict in your schedule. The flexibility has become less and less this year. And because of this schedule my planning time has become less and less. I'm really struggling for planning time this year and this is because of the new 'I Can' model. I mean we have less time now with this new differentiated instruction model. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

The situation seemed less intense at Elm Elementary and differentiated instruction was not implemented because according to Aida:

'I Can' model is a structure model of homogeneously grouping students at a grade level for literacy instruction. We're not doing differentiated instruction because we're doing our own intervention with these tutors pulling out. So we've already modified the 'I Can' model to the needs of our school, the personnel that we have. (EEI, 03.02.10)

My observations in the classrooms of the two schools validate the interview data. My observations reveal a high degree of compliance in the implementation of the mandated programs at Green Elementary, but the enforcement in all classrooms led to a chaotic and time-consuming result because of frequent student switching prompted by the pull-out logic of the programs. At Elm Elementary, however, the environment was calm and the reading specialists and coaches "pushed in" to the classroom to provide support to the needy students.

The survey data reveal that 62% of Green Elementary teachers did not receive while 100% of Elm Elementary teachers received support from their schools to implement the reading programs that met their students' needs (Figure 4.8).
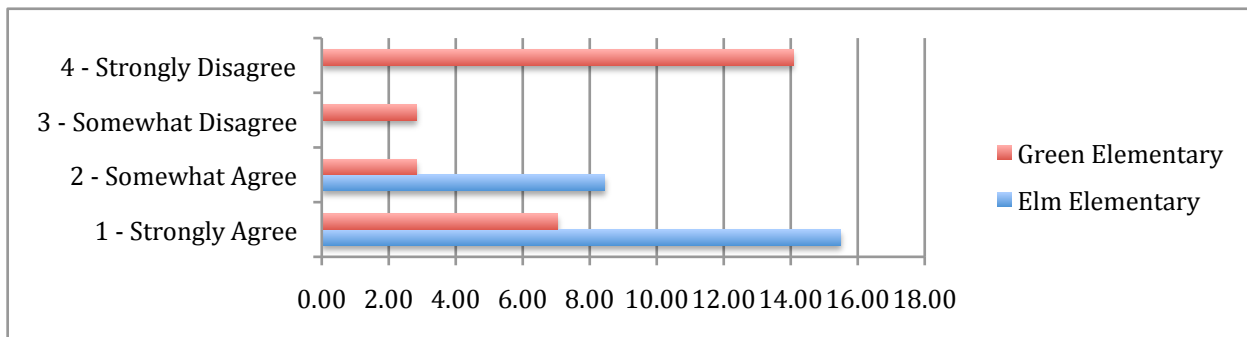
Figure 4.8. Extent of school instructional support in using various instructional materials

This situation illustrates a scenario in which at Elm Elementary the instructional leadership was successful in shaping the terms of compliance with the district by modifying the instructional programs to fit the school's ongoing routines and structure. At Green Elementary, the instructional leadership changed the routines and structure of the school to fit the programs as they were intended to be implemented. Instructional programs such as 'I Can' model at Elm Elementary resulted in a second-order change, which means Elm Elementary was able to alter

the underlying premises, beliefs, values, and logics that guided day-to-day decisions, while at Green Elementary such a program resulted in first-order change which means Green Elementary altered its day-to-day structures and procedures for the sake of the program implementation.

      Routines. Eastside School District enforced implementation of some specific instructional programs that due to their natures affected schools' routines, which I identified as a strong tool of controlling classroom instructional practices. At Green Elementary, requiring teachers to do the differentiated instruction at the same time and with the same pace made the school and the teachers to restructure their routines respectively. This trend at Green Elementary helped me to identify routines as one of the control levers the schools and the district imposed on teachers for the sake of implementing the district's instructional programs. Here, I argue that routines not only are mechanisms of change in the organizations but they also are used as a lever of control in a centralized school district.

      Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary explained the routines, she stated, "everyone has to do PE at the same time; everyone has to do ELD at the same time and I think it's because of the differentiation instruction." (EGI, 01.25.10) To explain the effects of the new adopted instructional programs that caused change of routines in her school Terry continued:

> I'm not saying that I agree with it but this is what our mandate is. The person who is in charge of curriculum and instruction found this 'I Can' model. The teachers have to have a schedule and they all have to follow the same schedule and they have to differentiate for ELD and for math and reading and literature. Our principal was very ambitious. She wanted to the whole school to be doing the 'I Can' model so that's what's happening. (EGI, 01.25.10)

To confirm Terry's point and his struggle with instruction time, John, a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary commented:

> We have less time now with this new differentiated instruction model, which is basically not a model but a requirement. It's a requirement that we had to have differentiated instruction this year but they provided no model for us to follow. Differentiated instruction is very ridged, very strict in your schedule…plus, we instituted a, the new breakfast program that require us to walk our students to breakfast everyday, that takes time. I used to do my planning during recess. Our yard duty schedule, instead of every three or four week it is now every other week so that's another thing. And we're starting ten minutes early so no planning before school starts is even more difficult. I'm struggling for planning time. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

According to the data, pacing guides could be considered as another component of routines that were employed by the district to directly control instruction. The pacing guide required teachers to have similar instructional routines everyday based on the curriculum they used, in this case OCR. Pacing guide was a lever used by the district to ensure all teachers in a given grade were on the same page the same day. Joan, a district instruction administrator said, "The reading series is adopted by our district. Teachers are expected to move through the curriculum as indicated by the Reading, Language Arts (RLA) pacing guide." (EI2, 03.24.10) The importance of following the pacing guides was rooted in their standard-based nature and design. The district used pacing guide to ensure the implementation of the state standards. Nora,

a district instruction administrator reflected on the district's expectations about pacing guides by explaining:

> What the teachers have to do is to make sure that they follow the pacing guides because there are pacing guides put out. They should make sure they're teaching what they're supposed to be teaching, once again everything is standards based but the order the way the standards are taught differs from series to series so they should look carefully at the standards that are being taught per unit. The standards are very clear in the pacing guides. (EI1, 03.26.10)

To describe the use of the pacing guide in his school, Jack, a fourth grade teacher at Elm Elementary, stated:

> We have a pacing guide for Language Arts. As a whole we have to be in this unit for that particular day or month, you have to be doing this concept by this particular day before one of the other big test come up. (EET4.2, 03.26.10)

In teachers' weekly meetings, pacing guide worked as a guideline in planning. Sara, the Green Elementary principal, commented:

> There's a pacing guide. The teachers are supposed to follow a pacing guide determined by the district. They receive one every year, one for math, one for science, one for reading language arts. And they work at grade level meetings and they go stick to that pacing guide supposedly. (EGP, 01.19.10)

Alison, a first grade teacher at Elm Elementary, described the way she dealt with pacing guide in her instruction, she stated:

> I look at the pacing guide and I know that in one week I have from here to here. It tells me the pace that I'm setting up the books and let me know where I'm going to be in each one of the programs. We talk it about it at the beginning of the year and we talk about it at every grade level meeting and yeah, we do. I look at the pacing guide from Monday to Friday, I look through each page, I touch each page, I look at the sidebars for the teacher, hints, I look at the assessments at the end of the week. You can't do it all. (EGT1.2, 02.09.10)

Robert, a fourth grade teacher at Elm Elementary explained how the pacing guide left some children behind, he stated, "you don't have time to pull everybody up. There's a pacing guide, everyone's struggling to keep up with it but we have to move on. I can't stop and spend a majority of my time with two or three students." (EGT4.1, 02.24.10)

These comments contradict my own observation findings. By observing classroom instructions and teachers' weekly meetings at Green Elementary, I found that teachers actually used both OCR and the pacing guide attentively. This was prevalent in first grade classrooms more than the fourth grade classrooms. I talked with teachers who were known as resisting teachers such as Robert who stated, "basically the pacing guide for Open Court is one story a week so I pretty much follow that. It doesn't make sense but I do it because I'll get dinged by the

principal." (EGT4.1, 02.24.10) Robert' comment indicates that although he theoretically resisted the mandated curriculum and the pacing guide, realistically and functionally he implemented them in his instruction. The data reveal that at Elm Elementary the same was true.

The observation findings indicate that both schools learned to think within the frames of the OCR and the pacing guide. Basically, both OCR and the pacing guide were internalized or institutionalized in the two schools. Because pacing guide reflected the district's predetermined routines and schedules, each of the two schools implemented it with different perspectives. The survey data reveal that 100% of teachers in this district believed that the district used pacing guide as lever of instructional control (Appendix A, Figure 12). In this district 76% of teachers believed that the district was successful using the pacing guide to control classroom instruction (Appendix A, Figure 13). The survey data show that 73.3% of Green Elementary and 27.8% of Elm Elementary teachers believed that time and pace of instruction was highly controlled by the district (Figure 4.9).

According to the survey data, 68.4% of Green Elementary teachers and 83.4% of Elm Elementary teachers believed that the district was successful in controlling their instruction through pacing guide (Figure 4.10). The numbers illustrate that Elm Elementary teachers complied with the district expectations following the pacing guide more than Green Elementary teachers, although pressure on teachers to follow the mandated curriculum was more intense at Green Elementary.
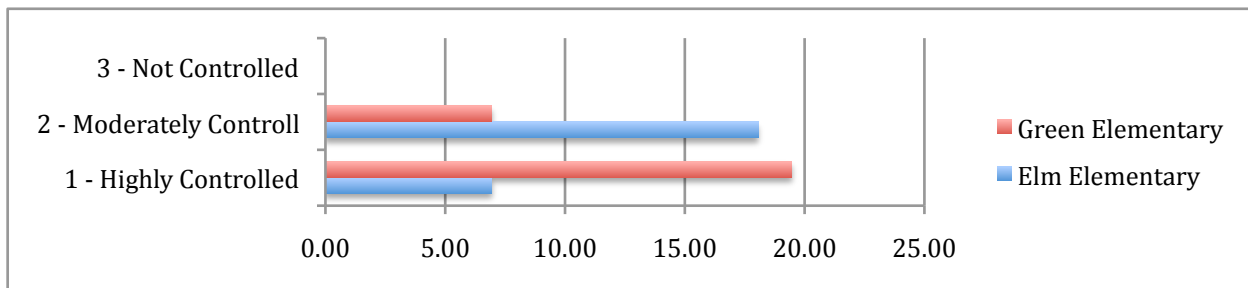
Figure 4.9. District control over time and pace of instruction
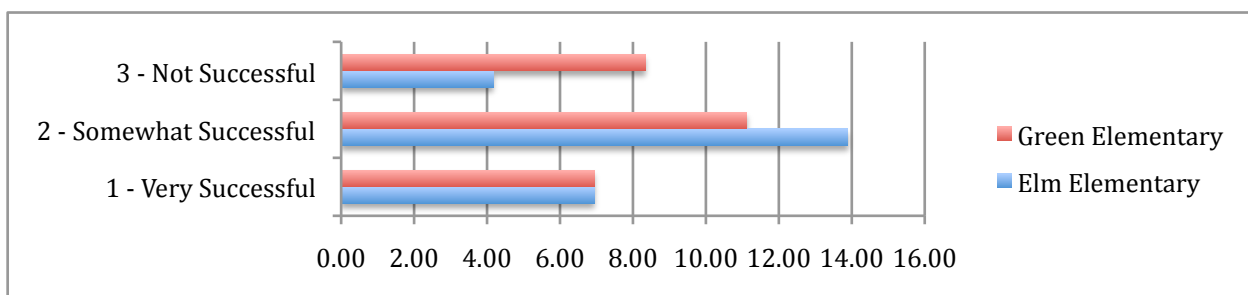
Figure 4.10. Extent of district success in controlling instruction using pacing guides

As I argued previously, Green Elementary implemented the instructional programs and its related components by changing its routines while at Elm Elementary the instructional programs were modified to fit in school's schedules and routines. The data reveal that teachers who did not keep up with pacing guide were identified when receiving instructional support,

being monitored, or participating in their collaborative grade level meetings, which are discussed in the following section.

Instructional Support and Resources

As discussed in Chapter 3, Eastside School District did not provide sufficient professional development for teachers due to lack of instructional capacity. Those professional development activities that the district did provide were specifically focused on the mandates. Steve, the Elm Elementary principal stated, "no PD district wide anymore. We used to have some and it was mainly on program implementation and learning how to use the program." (EEP, 02.24.10) Alison, a first grade teacher at Green Elementary commented, "Most of the professional development that I get has to do with the actual programs that we teach." (EGT1.2, 02.09.10) And John, a Green Elementary fourth grade teacher also said, "last year we did have one that was basically focused on how to get your students ready for the California State Test." (EGT4.2, 02.18.10) To deal with professional training, schools that have more internal instructional capacity developed their own site professional development through monthly staff meetings and mostly through teacher collaboration weekly meetings that happened within the framework of the district's expectations, focusing on the standards, OCR, pacing guides, and assessments.

Teacher collaboration was a systematic professional effort in this school district that was known as weekly grade level meetings. According to Nora, a district instruction administrator, "it's mandated by the district. They want collaboration and they want teachers to share good ideas and support one another." (EI1, 03.26.10) Teachers at Green Elementary knew that teacher collaboration meeting was another district mandate, which intrigued teachers' resistance especially in higher grades. Sara, the Green Elementary principal, commented on those teachers who did not collaborate, she said, "we have teachers that don't use their Wednesdays wisely and they don't collaborate." (EGP, 01.19.10) John, a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary also commented, "they can be helpful if they're done properly and the teachers actually collaborate well. I don't feel our grade level collaborates very well. So I'm not sure if it's really all worth it." (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

While the Elm Elementary principal and the instructional specialist knew that teacher collaboration meeting was in fact a district-mandate, the data reveal that teachers were kept in the dark by the school administrator about this fact. Nonetheless, the school principal promoted the collaboration meetings as a site decision-making activity while he tried to buffer teachers from the institutional expectations in order to avoid teachers' reactions to resist another mandate. Carina, a first grade teacher at Elm Elementary, described her understanding about the collaborative meetings that was shared by all Elm Elementary teachers:

> Even though we don't have professional development for Open Court anymore, we still talk about what can we do to get the students to a higher academic level. So we make our own grade level professional developments. They're not given and assigned by the district but they're things we feel we need to work on in this school in order to keep moving our kids up. (EET1.1, 03.11.10)

In both schools teachers of each grade level met weekly for two hours to discuss and share their instructional planning, strategies, and concerns. Principals were in charge of making sure that these collaborative grade level meetings happened regularly. Nora, a district instruction

administrator commented on the role of the principals and the way these grade level meetings were expected to work, she explained:

> I think that biggest things that principals were asked to do was to encourage grade level meetings and also vertical meetings and really talk specifically about what you want to do as a grade level around a particular unit or stories. So, when teachers had grade level meetings, half of the time, they would spend time talking about language arts, what they would do with Open Court and then half the time, they would talk about math. (EI1, 03.26.10)

The Elm Elementary principal, described the way he facilitated these meetings, he said, "I release teachers, hire in subs to release them to do planning and then they have their team meetings." He then reflected on the main objective of the grade level meetings by stating, "teachers have their own style, but you want to make sure that as a school and as a grade you're moving in the same direction and I think we've done that". (EEP, 02.24.10)

The data reveal that one of the main objectives of these meetings was to establish instructional consistency amongst the grade level classrooms. Sara, the Green Elementary principal, commented on the outcomes of the collaborative meetings and said: "I try to promote collaboration to share data. You can go into class A and class B and they're doing the same thing. They're all doing the same thing because they plan so well together." (EGP, 01.19.10) Alison, a first grade teacher at Green Elementary also said, "it's time for us as professionals and colleagues to talk about the assessments that are coming up, how we are doing, problems." (EGT1.2, 02.09.10) And Carina, a first grade teacher at Elm Elementary stated, "in our meetings we deal with problems, when the scores come in, talking about why it is the way it is." (EET1.1, 03.11.10) The comment clearly indicates that the purpose of the weekly meeting was to align the activities of grade level teachers to progress through instructional expectations. School principals were important agents in guiding these meetings toward the district's expected outcomes.

Lauren, a fourth grade teacher at Elm Elementary, described principal's involvement in the processes of the grade level collaboration meetings, she said, "we set our own agenda using the chart we have to turn in to our principal. So we're supposed to have some outcomes and there's a checklist, like when are we talking about reading, math, when are we talking about assessment." (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

Steve, the Elm Elementary principal reflected on what he expects from these meetings, he said, "teacher collaboration has changed over the years for the better. Where the pressure has been helpful, is that we have a very collaborative culture here and there's an expectation that grade levels are working together on meeting the standards." (EEP, 02.24.10) Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary also explained the expectations, she stated, "teachers are given from 1:15 to 3:00 every Wednesday to meet and have grade level meetings and they are supposed to use data to determine their next steps and things like that." (EGI, 01.25.10) And Sara, the Green Elementary principal stated, "teachers work at grade level meetings and they got to stick to that pacing guide supposedly." (EGP, 01.19.10)

These interviews clearly indicate that the district uses the grade level collaboration meetings as a lever of control to ensure mandates implementation and to establish consistency across grade levels in all schools. The combination of these collaborative meetings and pacing guides created a strong control mechanism at the classroom level as day-to-day and weekly surveillance systems.

My observations at Green Elementary confirmed that upper grade level teachers did not collaborate effectively, although they met every Wednesday. The conversations I recorded from the upper grade level meetings indicate that teachers chatted about a lot of other issues but did not establish instructional collaboration amongst themselves. I noted in my observations that "these upper grade level meetings remind me of emotional support group sessions, not instructional collaboration ones!" At Elm Elementary, however, a systematic process (through the chart provided by the principal) was in place to discuss instruction within the framework of the standards, pacing guide, and district expectations. My notes indicate that the main issue discussed in these meetings was progressing through OCR using the pacing guide to meet the assessment dates.
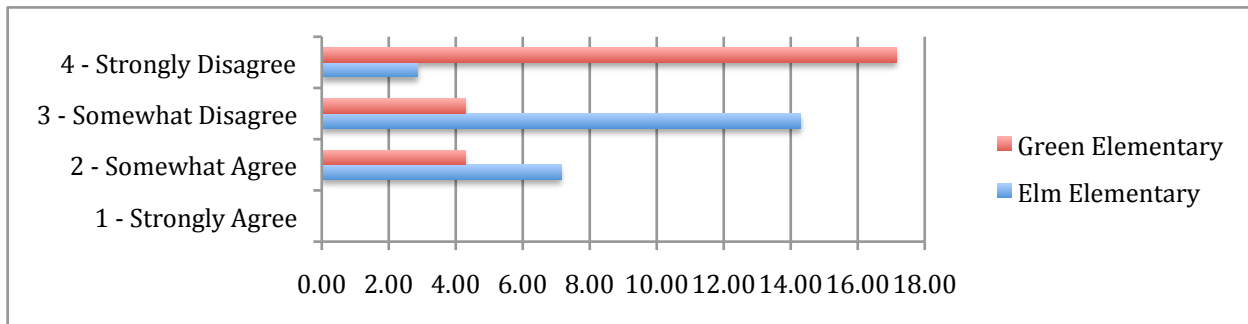
Figure 4.11. Sufficiency of professional development provided by the district

Findings of the survey confirm the observation and interview data. The survey data indicate that 83.4% of Green Elementary teachers and 70% of Elm Elementary teachers disagreed that the district provided sufficient professional support to them (Figure 4.11).

The survey data indicate that 79% of Green Elementary teachers disagreed and 100% of Elm Elementary teachers agreed that their schools provided helpful professional development for them (Figure 4.12).

The survey data reveal that 86% of teachers in this district believed that the goal of teacher collaboration weekly meetings was to ensure alignment of their instruction with the OCR and the implementation of the standards (Appendix A, Figure 14). The survey data also show that 66% of Green Elementary teachers did not believe that the goal of teacher collaboration weekly meetings was to improve their instruction while 88.9% of Elm Elementary teachers believed the goal was to improve their instructional strategies (Figure 4.13).
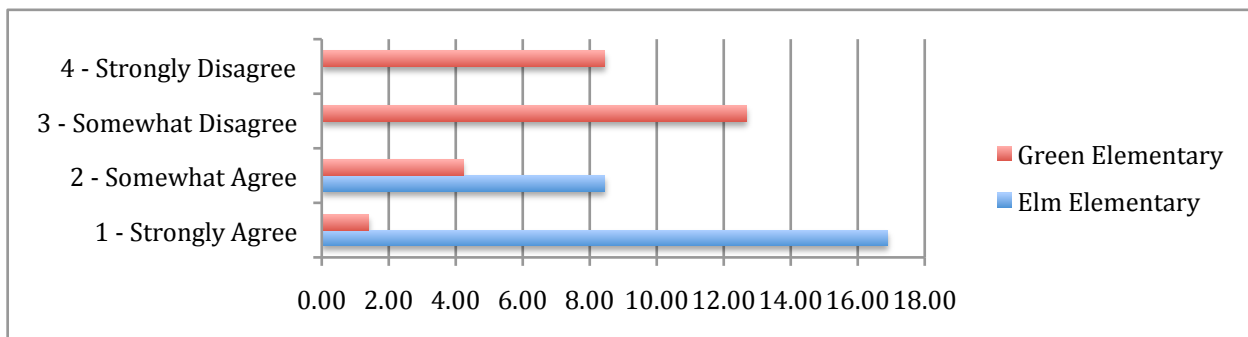
Figure 4.12. Extent of professional development provided by school
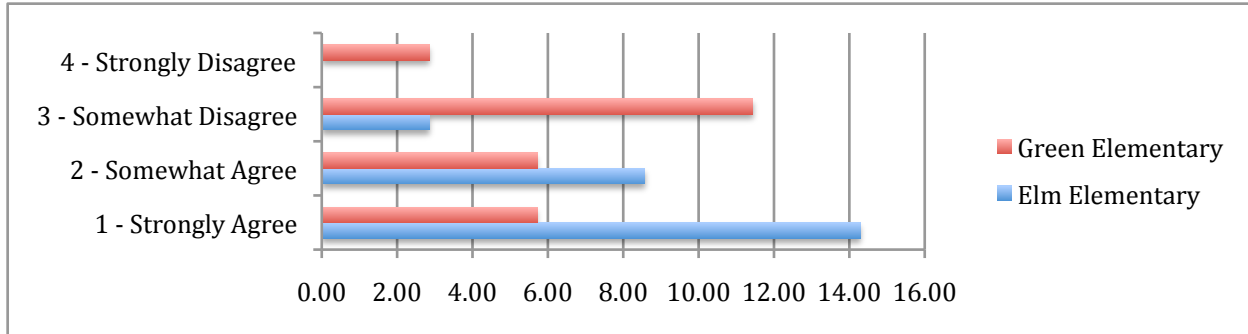
Figure 4.13. Teachers' perception about the goal of teacher collaboration meetings
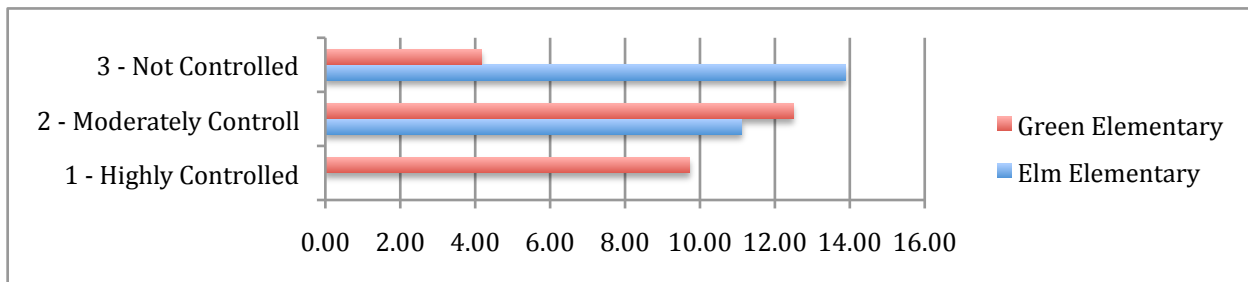
Figure 4.14. Extent of district control over teacher collaboration meetings

The data reveal that 84.2% of Green Elementary teachers believed that their weekly collaboration meetings were controlled by the district while 55.6% of Elm Elementary teachers believed that their weekly collaboration meetings were not controlled by the district (Figure 4.14).

Monitoring

District monitoring. Monitoring through walkthroughs has always been a channel for the districts to claim their rights in meddling with classroom instruction (Ingersoll, 2003). Nora, a district instruction administrator, who believed walkthroughs were one of the district's main control mechanisms, described the reason behind the district walkthrough monitoring, by stating, "there're a lot of visits from the central office people around the school and you can see the books being used and are not on shelves." (EI1, 03.26.10) In this district, once every couple of years walkthrough happens under different names, most recently, as 'equity walk'. For the Program Improvement and Title I schools the story remained the same; they were to show evidence of compliance when visited by the district. The data reveal that compared to the previous years the schools had less visits from the district, instead according to the Elm Elementary teachers and administrator the district relies mostly on the test results to monitor the implementation of the standards. Steve's, (the Elm Elementary principal) comment reflect this shared thought amongst teachers:

> Now, it's mostly looking at results, so we do meetings where I share our scores on the district benchmark exams. So that would be more of how there's any monitoring of what we're doing, by looking at our results. They're doing an equity walk through right now. (EEP, 02.24.10)

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Aida, the Elm Elementary instructional specialist also asserted:

They used to do that over Open Court when we first got it when people were very resistant about using this kind of program and they came by a couple of times but in the last few years they have not. They're really looking at the CST scores and how well schools are doing and they will come down and look at you if you're not moving, if you're not steadily increasing, so we've been fortunate; we haven't had a lot of people have to come back here because we're steadily growing. (EEI, 03.02.10)

Carina, a first grade teacher at Elm Elementary, also commented, "there was a lot of walkthroughs happening before. This year, I haven't had a lot. I've probably had one or two walkthroughs from people in the district." (EET1.1, 03.11.10) Jack, a fourth grade teacher, also said, "I've seen people come to visit maybe twice, three times." (EET4.2, 03.26.10)

According to the data for each district visit, several people show up in the classrooms. Alison, a first grade teacher at Green Elementary also said, "I've had walkthroughs that were sometimes 4-5 people. I don't really pay attention but I know there's several people." (EGT1.2, 02.09.10) John a fourth grade teacher described one of the most recent district visits to his classroom, he expressed:

I just had one visit last week as a matter of fact. Several people came in. I guess the regional superintendent and those in charge of curriculum and principals from other schools. They are required to spend five hours a month look, walking through classrooms in the district and so to meet that requirement they go to different schools. (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

Sara, the Green Elementary principal, who is sometimes part of the district walkthrough team, commented on her own walkthroughs and stated:

We do walkthroughs. I do walkthroughs five hours a week. Every principal in our district is required to do five hours of observations a week. We also have people from the district that come through. Some teachers are very open to it and others don't like it at all. They think it's a situation of 'I've gotcha'. They sometimes resent people from downtown coming through. (EGP, 01.19.10)

According to the data, there was a list of criteria that the district looked for when visiting the classrooms. Carina, a first grade teacher at Elm Elementary, stated, "they were looking to see that we're using the program, we're doing what we should be doing but are we taking them a step above? Are we making sure we challenge the students? They look at standards being posted." (EET1.1, 03.11.10) And Jack, a fourth grade teacher at Elm Elementary, added to this list and said, "they look at the books and obviously all of the books we have are district mandated. They come in and make sure that we're using the right things." (EET4.2, 03.26.10) Alison, a Green Elementary first grade teacher, also said, "they tell us what they're looking for before they start. They're looking for if we have our standards posted, they look to see if we have a time schedule, they look to see if we have rules or guidelines to guide the children." (EGT1.2, 02.09.10)

John, a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary, also said, "…from what we are told from our principal that they are looking for, see if your standards are posted on the wall, see if your rules and consequences are posted on the wall, little technicalities like this that's all we're told; got to make sure you have those up." (EGT4.2, 02.18.10) Robert, another Green Elementary fourth grade teacher said, "It's really kind of funny because the only thing they watch for is that schedule and writing the standards on the boards." (EGT4.1, 02.24.10) Lauren, a fourth grade teacher, described the list of criteria that the district walkthrough is looking for, she said they look for:

> Things like, positive environment, critical thinking, engagement, is the school clean? Free of graffiti? Is there a message of academic excellence? They want to see standards posted. They want to see it because you're supposed to have your objectives posted. (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

Lauren continued by describing how before the walkthroughs the principal advised teachers to prepare themselves for visits, she stated, "I remember him [the principal] saying that these kids should have the books on their desks or in their desks in case somebody came. We're supposed to have certain materials to show that they're being used." (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

The survey data indicate that in this district 14.3% of teachers strongly agreed and 40% somewhat agreed that they were evaluated based on their fidelity to implementing the mandated reading curriculum (Appendix A, Figure 10). The survey also demonstrates that 52.8% of teachers believed that the district was somewhat successful and 38.9% believed it was unsuccessful in controlling instruction by walkthroughs (Appendix A, Figure 11). At the school level, the survey data indicate that 55.6% of teachers at Green Elementary believed that the district was somewhat successful and 33.3% believed the district was unsuccessful in controlling instruction by walkthroughs. At Elm Elementary 44.4% of teachers believed the district was unsuccessful and 50% believed the district was somewhat successful in controlling instruction by walkthroughs (Figure 4.15).

Interestingly, the data also reveal that 60% of Green Elementary teachers believed that the district performed regular classroom walkthrough inspections to ensure the implementation of the mandated curriculum while 69% of Elm Elementary teachers believed that the district did not perform regular classroom walkthroughs (Figure 4.16).
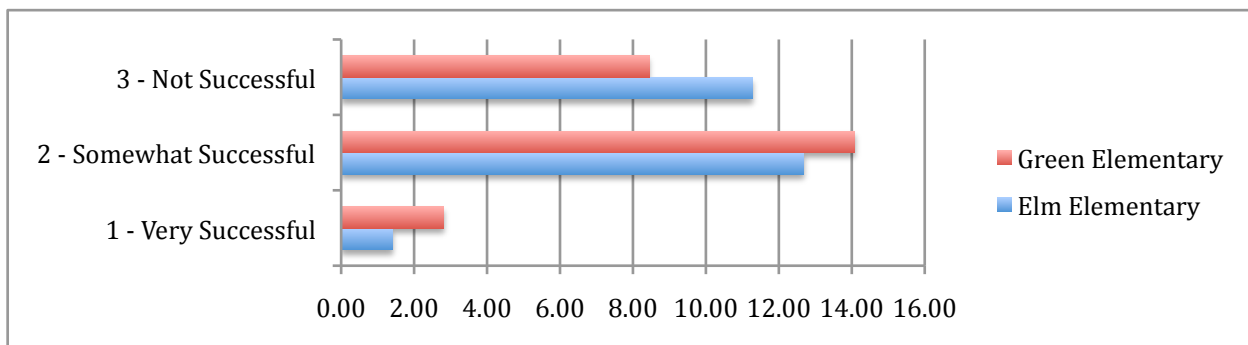
Figure 4.15. Success of district in using walkthroughs to control instruction
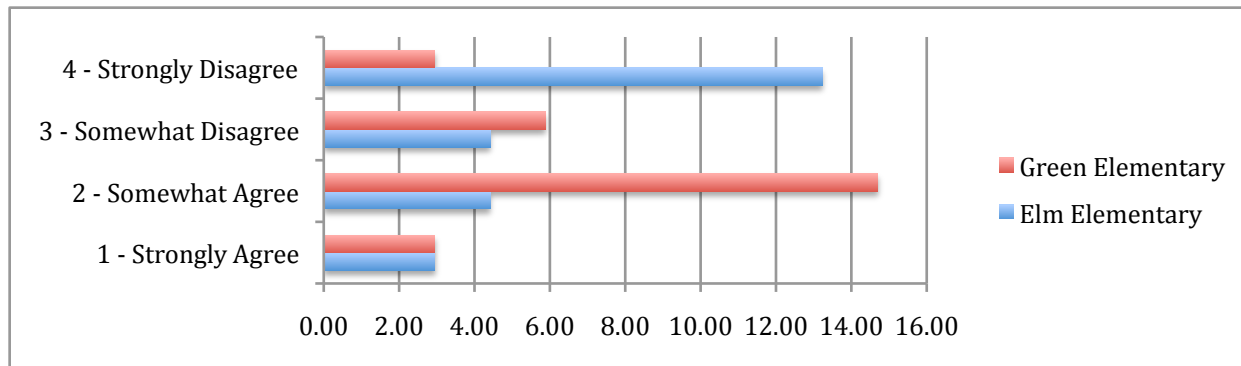
Figure 4.16. Extent of district walkthrough inspections

The data illustrate that district walkthrough and monitoring was another channel of controlling classroom instructional activities, although not a profound medium. For the teachers, knowing that their work was observed by the district and the fact that the walkthrough criteria was enlisted and provided to them through principals beforehand, made them prepare for these visits by complying with some established rules such as posting the schedules and standards and having the mandated curriculum materials observable to the visitors. Although the district's five-minute walkthroughs could not hope to capture the details of instruction in each classroom, as a control mechanism it enforced implementation of rituals and taken-for-granted rules that implicitly affected teacher's compliance with the institutional expectations.

School monitoring. At the school level, principals or instructional specialists observed and monitored classroom instructional activities in both schools. Steve, the Elm Elementary principal stated, "I visit the classrooms. I would say not as much as evaluation as support/monitoring to see what they're doing and how they're doing it." (EEP, 02.24.10) He then continued by describing his expectations when visiting the classrooms:

When I visit, oftentimes, if it's just a quick visit. I've been working with teachers in cycles and I visit for twice a week for three or four weeks and we'll focus on a particular area of need or where a teacher wants to be challenged and then I give back feedback afterwards in conversation. (EEP, 02.24.10)

Carina, a first grade teacher at Elm Elementary, described principal's visit to her classroom, she disclosed:

I think time-wise, he's limited now on his time but he's doing formal/informal visits to stop by and check on how they're doing, talk to the students and see if he or she knows what's going on, which is good to do. So, I think all of our doors… I don't know if I'm just speaking for myself, are open for him to come in and do that. (EET1.1, 03.11.10)

Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary, described her own walkthroughs, she said, "I plan an hour and a half every day for observations. I try but that doesn't happen always. But I try to see teachers and following up is the hard part, time afterwards to talk about it." (EGI, 01.25.10) Terry then continued by describing the consequences the walkthroughs have for the teachers, she said, "we just had that discussion and for a week people were teaching the

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program and then they didn't and I mentioned it to the principal and she went in and scolded someone." (EGI, 01.25.10)

Sara, the Green Elementary principal, described her expectations walking through the classrooms:

> First thing I look is I look at the agenda. And what they are supposed to be doing and are they doing it. I look for is the standard posted. I take a look at what's going on in instruction. I see it as reading accountability when I come in; I'm hoping to see what is on your agenda. If it's reading language arts, I'm hoping to see reading language arts rather than having a science video or whatever. (EGP, 01.19.10)

And Robert, a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary, described the principal's visit to the classrooms that was shared amongst the teachers, he stated, "it's really kind of funny because the only thing she watch for is schedule and writing the standards on the boards." (EGT4.1, 02.24.10)

The above comments illustrate the influence the principal's instructional knowledge could have on the perspectives teachers may have about the principal's walkthroughs and observations. Elm Elementary principal and the teachers' comments position the principal's walkthroughs as instructionally supportive. As illustrated in Green Elementary principal and teachers' comments, it was more of a procedural enforcement of required routines: she acted as an agent of bridging and enforced the same criteria that the district searched for in monitoring and observing classrooms. The difference between monitoring in the two schools was due to the extents of principals' knowledge about literacy and instruction. At Elm Elementary, because the principal was knowledgeable about instruction, his visits to the classrooms were perceived as professional support while at Green Elementary, the teachers perceived principal walkthroughs as monitoring and controlling. The data indicate that the more the principal was instructionally knowledgeable, the more he buffered and the less his monitoring was regarded sheer control for control's sake. Moreover, the less the principal's content knowledge, the more she bridged and the more her monitoring was to control classroom instructional activities for conformity to the expectations.

School and Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership of the schools (principals and instructional specialists/literacy coaches) plays significant roles in constructing professional development and providing instructional support for teachers at the sites. The important role of the instructional leadership in the implementation of instructional programs makes it a valuable control mechanism for the district.

In this district, principals and instructional specialists formed the instructional leadership teams of the schools. "Most sites conduct 'academic conferences' which are led by instructional leaders including principal and instruction specialist and literacy coach in some cases" (Joan, EI2, 03.24.10). The findings indicate that instructional leaders were the people who guided instructional activities at the school level through buffering or bridging their schools' technical core to the institutional expectations.

Principals. As discussed in Chapter 3, principals play an important role in determining schools' instructional approaches. The findings of this work reveal that principals' content and instructional knowledge was a key determinant factor in their leadership approach to whether

bridge or shape the terms of compliance in the case of Eastside School District. The district used the principals as a control lever to oversee and monitor implementation of the mandates at the school level. Some principals did their responsibilities as institutionally expected, i.e. by bridging, and some were able to do their responsibilities with more agencies yet being politically correct.

According to Nora, a district instruction administrator, "principals are key in making sure things are happening at schools." (EI1, 03.26.10) Terry, the Green Elementary instructional specialist, also stated, "it's up to the reading coach and the principal to make sure things are happening." (EGI, 01.25.10) Aida, the Elm Elementary instructional specialist said, "the principals are responsible to implement district policies and it's a form of accountability. Principals have meetings about the school-wide data results, so that's the level of accountability." (EEI, 03.02.10)

Nora, a district instruction administrator, also commented on the role of the principals as control levers by emphasizing:

> Principals are supposed to be the messengers, so they would go back to faculties and tell them, like teachers training teachers. I think that biggest things that principals are asked to do is to encourage grade level meetings and also vertical meetings and really talk specifically about what you want to do as a grade level around a particular unit or stories. It's my belief that it is the administrators that are going through classrooms regularly and the district do say something to the principal if they see something not happening for instance. (EI1, 03.26.10)

Nora then continued by arguing that, "a good principal need to get rid of the teachers who are not teaching the standards. It's really important for the principal to be very knowledgeable about what's going on in the classroom." (EI1, 03.26.10)

According to Aida, instructional specialist at Elm Elementary, principals are directly responsible for instructional activities in their schools and report back to the district, she said, "My principal meets at a monthly principals' meeting in addition to meeting with the district intervention personnel. So there are meetings probably twice a month for him on average with the district." (EEI, 03.02.10)

Teachers and specialists in the two schools described their schools' leadership differently. Aida, the instructional specialist at Elm Elementary described instructional leadership of her school:

> You don't see a lot of top-down management just because the district says that. We always sit down and talk and we have planning sessions and yes, he has a last say and will give a guiding direction. He has pushed for certain directions like developing higher critical thinking skills. I push for certain directions and we work as a team for that and we get the teacher input. (EEI, 03.02.10)

Julie, a first grade teacher at Elm Elementary, described her principal by stating, "I love it because I can ask him anything and he has all kinds of good ideas and he's really good about critiquing and telling you what you did that was good. He's collaborative and supporting." (EET1.2, 03.02.10) And Carina, a first grade teacher at Elm Elementary said:

I think our principal knows what he wants to get out of this school and he knows what level he wants everybody to be at in terms of the teaching and in terms of the students learning. So, I know he tries to give us as much support as he can and I would say he's a good balance of authoritative and supportive. (EET1.1, 03.11.10)

Terry, the instructional specialist at Green Elementary commented on the approach of her principal by saying, "our principal is very ambitious. She wanted the whole school to be doing for example the 'I Can' model so that's what's happening." (EGI, 01.25.10) And Robert, a fourth grade teacher reflected on how he viewed the principal, he stated, "if the principal wants to come in here and tell me how to teach better, fine but don't come in and tell me that all you care about is writing some numbers on the board. Don't treat me like an idiot." (EGT4.1, 02.24.10) Mary, a first grade teacher at Elm Elementary described her principal as "firm and authoritative" (EGT1.1, 02.08.10) and John, a fourth grade teacher at Elm Elementary said, "I implement the programs because I'll get dinged by the principal if I don't. I don't know where it started where teachers could be treated like children and not like professionals, I don't know!" (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

The principal at Elm Elementary according to the data is perceived as an effective instructional leader. Aida, the Elm Elementary instructional specialist stated, "we have an instructional leadership team that the principal, I, and some teachers are on it and he directs that." (EEI, 03.02.10) Lauren, a fourth grade teacher, commented on how the principal was cognitively involved in the instruction and led the processes with expertise, she claimed:

We are supposed to be planning with standards in mind first. But he knows that one size doesn't fit all. He always puts forth the message that we want our kids to be good critical thinkers. So in my reading instruction I keep that in mind. So I think that's how the principal affects my teaching. I keep in mind to push for deeper thinking. (EET4.1, 03.17.10)

Jack, a fourth grade teacher at Elm Elementary also said, "our principal has given us the idea of using the Open Court as a tool not as a Bible. He has given us the opportunity to be open to new ideas and methods." (EET4.2, 03.26.10)

At Green Elementary, the principal relies on the instructional specialists to lead reading instruction, the principal stated, "it would be our literacy coach and intervention person who really push reading instruction and model lessons and are there for contestation and I think that's it, and then our district curriculum department that really push the reading as well." This quote clearly illustrates that she perceived herself out of the instructional leadership loop.

According to the data, one principal was active politically to shape the terms of compliance with the district due to his political as well as instructional and literacy knowledge. The other principal was passive and avoided conflicts due to her lack of sufficient political and instructional knowledge. This recipe of school leadership determined the path each school took to reach its instructional objectives. The roles the principals played as a lever of control for the district affected the overall attitude of the teachers to conform with or without resisting. In the case of Elm Elementary, the data indicate that the principal was able to convince and solicit teachers' support by instilling the ideas such as 'OCR just a tool' and teacher collaboration meetings as a site initiative in teachers' minds. The Elm Elementary principal had the capacity to modify the new mandated instructional programs to fit his school's routines. The Green

Elementary principal, on the other hand, did not attempt to solicit teachers' support and focused all her efforts on bridging the school's technical core to the institutional expectations. She introduced all the mandates to the teachers as orders that had to be followed and changed the structure and routines of the school to adopt the new mandated programs. Both principals served as a control lever to enact the district's agenda, but they carried out that role in very different ways.

According to Ingersoll (2003), the bureaucratic mode of control emphasizes control through impersonal systems of employee selection, standardized training, formal assignment, standardized operating procedures, routines, and written records. On the other hand, Scott (1994) informs us that the neoinstitutionalism places more emphasis on the role of cognitive factors in controlling the organization. In the case of Eastside School District, both school principals were control levers but the ways these control levers operated within their schools were different. The Elm Elementary principal controlled reading instruction cognitively by actively leading instructional activities, whereas Green Elementary principal controlled instruction bureaucratically, i.e. without being personally and actively involved in instructional activities. Because the Elm Elementary principal was cognitively involved in instruction, he had the opportunity to twist or modify the instructional programs and policies to shape the terms of compliance with the district as well as the teachers. In contrast, because Green Elementary principal was not actively involved in instructional activities, she lacked agency to buffer school's technical core from the institutional expectations, therefore she only bridged.

Instructional specialists. The data indicate that alongside the principals, instructional specialists and/or literacy coaches were also schools' instructional leaders. According to Joan, a district instruction administrator, "some sites have instructional specialists who are administrators that assist the principal in overseeing implementation." (EI2, 03.24.10) They usually work closely with the principal, district and teachers. Eastside School District provided literacy coaches or instructional specialists to lead the instructional business of the schools alongside the principals and were control levers ensuring the implementation of the district programs. Aida, the Elm Elementary instructional specialist, explained the hierarchy of the instructional leadership team, she stated, "there's a certain chain of command down here: the principals and then the instructional specialists, like me, are responsible to make sure that we are adhering to the district policies." (EEI, 03.02.10)

In this district, instructional specialists were listed by the district and hired by the principals. According to Steve, the Elm Elementary principal, the instructional specialists were typically hired by the district and assigned to the schools. Principal had a say in selecting the instructional specialists for their schools from a list provided by the district. The Elm Elementary principal described how the instructional specialists were hired and paid in this district, he clarified:

> Candidates got on a district eligibility list and then the principal could chose from that list. If principals wanted to hire their own person, they could get submit the name to get them on the eligibility list. Over the years, funding for literacy coaches has evolved. When we were Reading First they were paid from those funds. Then PI funds would pay for them. Now sites have to pay for them using Title I and LEP [Limited English Proficient] money. (EEP, 02.24.10)

Principals usually hire those instructional specialists who share the same instructional ideologies and approaches with them. For example, Green Elementary principal hired Terry who according to her, "push reading instruction and model lessons and is there for contestation." She then continued, "Terry will go in and demonstrate lesson on for example phonemic awareness and then she will help teachers. She will observe and then she will provide feedbacks. So she's a real strong force there." (EGP, 01.19.10)

The Green Elementary principal who was not actively involved in leading instruction in her school needed to improve her instructional forces by hiring literacy coaches to assist in enforcing the implementation of the district mandates. Green Elementary principal let the instructional specialist takeover the instructional activities but held tight to her authority in making decisions. Terry, the Green Elementary instructional specialist stated, "I'm on the same salary scale and the same union as the teachers, so I really have no authority. The only way I do it is implementing what the principal asks." (EGI, 01.25.10)

My observations also indicate that the instructional specialist did not perceive herself as being part of the school's instructional leadership team because she did not have much authority in the instructional decision making by the principal. Terry's quote from earlier is strong evidence of the principal's authoritative character: "our principal is very ambitious. She wanted the whole school to be doing for example the 'I Can' model so that's what's happening." (EGI, 01.25.10)

At Elm Elementary, Aida, the instructional specialist, formed the instructional leadership team with the principal and some teachers. According to Aida, Elm Elementary "has an instructional leadership team that the principal and I are on it. He directs that one but it's made of one representative from each grade level and we discuss the areas where we want to go in." (EEI, 03.02.10) The head of the instructional leadership team i.e. the principal provided opportunities for the instructional specialist to act as an instructional leader by involving her in decision making. The Elm Elementary principal described his school's instructional leadership team and how he perceived his and the instructional specialist's role as leaders of the team, he explained:

> I think definitely our literacy coach and I like to think myself as well as the instructional leaders. I think we're both coming from backgrounds that isn't just the program is going to be what the teachers teach, but you need to understand how kids learn to read. And, I think we tried to develop the shared readings, so *Strategies at Work* we gave as a textbook for everyone to have and articles on reading research we shared. (EEP, 02.24.10)

It might be worth mentioning that Steve referred to all the activities and decisions made in the IL team using the pronouns 'we' and 'our', I rarely found him using the pronoun 'I'. Aida explained her situation within the instructional leadership team:

> We always sit down and talk and we have planning sessions and yes, he has a last say and will give a guiding direction. He has pushed for certain directions like developing higher critical thinking skills. I push for certain directions and we work as a team for that and we get the teacher input. (EEI, 03.02.10)

The district expected the instructional specialists to fulfill some responsibilities speaking to the fact that they were district's ambassadors at the schools. In describing her relationship with the district, Aida's comment mirrored Terry's thoughts:

> I'm meeting once every month about the equity thing so I do get with my district people then we talk about intervention for the (RTI/RTR) and other programs, we talk about the equity thing and helping to reach all students and what teachers need to do to engage all students of different cultural backgrounds. So I meet with them, there are regular meetings once a month for me on average with the district. (EEI, 03.02.10)

Nora, a district instruction administrator, described district's expectations from the instructional specialists:

> As instructional leaders of the schools, they are expected to go to district meetings monthly and they are expected to listen. They are supposed to listen to information, take notes, and bring the information back to their faculty. They are given time during the faculty meeting to present. In addition to that, the leadership would meet and lead some of the faculty meetings and set the agenda with the principal on what would be done. (EI1, 03.26.10)

Taken together the data from these interviews illustrate how the instructional specialists were used as a district control lever at schools. They attended monthly meetings at the district where they shared their schools' data and learned what were expected from them and transferred the information they received from the district to the teachers. Using neoinstitutional theory in analyzing the data, it is evident that the main job of instructional specialists was to bridge schools' instructional activities to the institutional expectations mandated by the district. Like principals, instructional specialists had the discretion to bridge or buffer. Relationship of principals and instructional specialists determined extents of bridging and buffering.

My observations from their staff meetings indicate that at Green Elementary the relationship between the principal and the literacy specialist was a boss and employee relationship, while at Elm Elementary this relationship could be defined as collegial. The Elm Elementary principal mentioned in his interview that "we're both [principal and instructional specialist] coming from backgrounds that isn't just the program is going to be what the teachers teach, but you need to understand how kids learn to read." Shared instructional ideologies and professional backgrounds created trust between the two leaders to act in synchrony. Because the principal and the instructional specialist of Elm Elementary were working closely in leading school's instructional activities they consistently shaped the terms of compliance with the district. On the other hand, at Green Elementary the boss-employee relationship and hierarchical decision-making model in addition to lack of similar instructional backgrounds weakened shared instructional understandings and ideologies between the two. Because the Green Elementary principal acted only as an administrator and was inactive in leading actual instructional activities her role became overseeing and monitoring the work of the instructional specialist to implement the mandates. Therefore, bridging was the only option for Green Elementary principal as well as the instructional specialist.

Teachers' perceptions about the role and effectiveness of instructional specialists were different in the two schools. At Elm Elementary, the instructional specialist was perceived as an influential instructional leader. Carina, a first grade teacher at Elm Elementary said:

> I think she's [literacy specialist] a very important part of this school and she has made a lot of changes and helped us work as a team in order to really think deeply about our students. She's being pulled in so many directions but she's still working really close with the teachers and she still checks in once in a while to see how we're doing and what do we need help with. I think it's a very important role that she has in this school. (EET1.1, 03.11.10)

And Jack, a fourth grade teacher at Elm Elementary revealed:

> She's just everywhere. She has to do everything and yet she takes the time, if you ask her, she figures it out. She would come, sit down and observe and later on said 'I notice that you guys did this or what was the objective to it or I notice that you didn't do this'. And I'm not one to take criticism badly. (EET4.2, 03.26.10)

At Green Elementary, upper grade teachers repeatedly questioned effectiveness of the instructional specialist. Robert, a fourth grade teacher stated:

> We have literacy coaches and most of them that I've worked with are neither literacy experts nor coaches. They're not people I look to for mentoring or anything like that. The other things is that the literacy people, the intervention people, they only work with the lower grades anyways. (EGT4.1, 02.24.10)

And John, a fourth grade teacher at Green Elementary stated, "I've never asked her to come in and modeled anything because I've never been a real big fan of open court from the beginning so, a lot of the teachers are the same." (EGT4.2, 02.18.10)

The survey results support the interview and observation findings. The survey data illustrate that 91% of the teachers in this district believed that the principals were levers of instructional control used by the district (Appendix A, Figure 15). The story became more interesting when I analyzed the school level survey data. At the school level, the survey data reveal that 89.4% of Green Elementary teachers strongly (52.6%) and somewhat (36.8%) disagreed and 92% of Elm Elementary teachers strongly (82.4%) and somewhat (10%) agreed that their school leadership was flexible enough to provide them opportunities to plan their instruction to address the needs of their students (Figure 4.17).

The data also illustrate that 65% of Green Elementary teachers disagreed and 100% of Elm Elementary teachers agreed that they received support and encouragement from the principals to implement programs that met their students' needs (See Figure 4.10).

Instructional leadership of the schools was an important control lever for the district to use to ensure the implementations of the state mandates. The data indicate that approaches of the two instructional leadership teams were different. At Elm Elementary it was coherent and was based on the shared efforts of the principal and instructional specialist; at Green Elementary it was formal and ran hierarchically. My understanding of the situation in both schools conveys that regardless of whether the instructional specialist was leading alongside the principal or

behind him, they both were district levers of control at schools. The difference between the two levers was that one instructional specialist had the opportunity to buffer school's instructional activities through shaping the terms of compliance and the other instructional specialist had no such opportunity. Therefore in the case of Green Elementary, due to the situation the instructional specialist worked to bridge but at Elm Elementary the instructional specialist worked to some degrees to help the principal to buffer through negotiations. The functionality of levers in this case reveals instructional tight coupling at Green Elementary and looser instructional coupling at Elm Elementary.
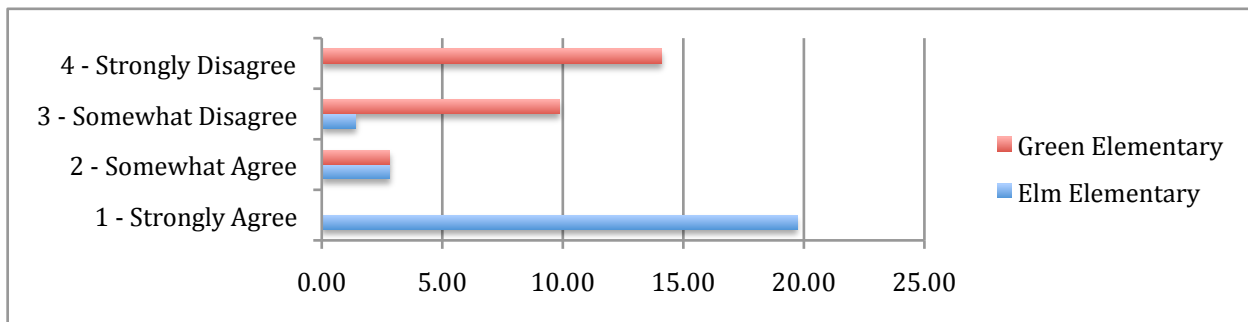
Figure 4.17. Extent of school support in using various instructional materials

Case Study II: The Decentralized School District

Organizations use various coordinating and/or controlling tools to ensure their survival and productivity at the implementation fields. School districts are no exception. The data collected in this research indicate that Westside School District utilized the same levers as Eastside School District used to coordinate classroom instructional activities. As discussed previously (see Chapter 3), Westside School District provided instructional flexibility to the schools to design their own literacy and instructional plans. Roger, a district administrator, explained schools' instructional autonomy by stating, "The school site has a lot of autonomy so if they went and moved forward with an initiative, if they have the funding or the resources, it's pretty much been permitted." (WI2, 05.16.11) While giving flexibility to schools, the district coordinated and oversaw classroom instructional activities through use of various mechanisms for the purpose of consistency and conforming to the institutional expectations.

Despite being in the same school district and having the same demographic characteristics, the two participating schools coordinated or controlled reading instruction differently at the school level. Due to different approaches in school leadership, the teachers of the two schools reflected rather differently on instructional control or coordination in their schools. The differences between the two schools illustrate differences in teachers' attitudes that were constructed through principals' different leadership approaches, characteristics, and polity. The observation and interview data illustrate use of the same levers in the two schools either to control or coordinate, which highlights the nature of the district's decentralized approach.

As with Eastside School District, for Westside School District, I'll review the various policy levers and the ways in which their influence, or the lack of influence, played out at the school and classroom level.

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State Standards

One major lever of control or coordination in any district undoubtedly is the state standards. In Westside School District, standards were used as the main coordinating lever. The state standards, as stated unanimously by the district personnel, administrators and teachers, were the objectives of the instruction or as Pilar, a first grade teacher at Maple Elementary described, "are what drives the instruction." (WMT1.2, 01.13.10) Rosa, another first grade teacher stated, "I'm planning with the standards in mind" (WMT1.1, 01.13.10), and Angela, a fourth grade teacher said, "you have to go with the standards." (WMT4.1, 02.03.10) Amy, a district instruction administrator, commented on the importance of the state standards as an instructional guide for teachers:

> Teachers definitely follow the standards but they don't necessarily use the state adopted curriculum. One thing that has come out positively over the last ten years is strong awareness of grade level standards and being sure that you are teaching to the standards and that you have standard based instruction. We have standard based report cards right now. Although some of them need to be revised, I think the standards are very important foundation for teachers. (WI1, 03.23.10)

While the data confirm that the teachers of both schools followed standards, they also revealed different perspectives about the nature of the standards. At Maple Elementary, teachers believed that the state standards were flexible enough to "play with" while at Brown Elementary the teachers stated that the standards were not flexible at all. Rosa, a first grade teacher at Maple Elementary stated, "state standards are not that clear. You can definitely play with them. I think you just take them and plug them into whatever you want to teach" (WMT1.1, 01.13.10), and Gloria, a Maple Elementary fourth grade teacher said, "I think there's a lot of flexibility as long as you're covering the base of the standards and differentiating for your students, I think you can do whatever you want pretty much." (WMT4.2, 02.03.10) On the other hand, Brown Elementary teachers revealed another perspective about the nature of the state standards. Kristy, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary, thought that the, "…state standards are not flexible at all. I have to teach those standards. Our principal wants these standards to be hit and we need to think of ways to implement the standards." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

Observation data indicate that at Brown Elementary teachers posted the standards on the walls, while at Maple Elementary posting was not mandatory. Victoria, the instructional specialist at Brown Elementary stated:

> One thing that is sort of expected is this thing called 'a focus wall' and it kind of picks an instructional focus and then shows student work. It's a very specific setup thing. I think most teachers definitely have put standards up on the walls. But probably, the newer teachers, honestly, I've seen more of the younger teachers with the standards up on the wall. (WCI, 05.09.10)

While most Brown Elementary teachers posted the state standards on the walls, there were teachers who resisted posting *all* the standards up on the walls. Kristy, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary, who did not post the entire standards on the wall of her classroom reflected on the standards posting and said, "we're required to have a theme wall where we have on what we're working on for language arts but I don't have all the standards for language arts

put up. I do have the standards for math put up." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10) My observations in this school confirm that all classrooms I visited had the state standards up on walls, more or less.

At Maple Elementary teachers did not have the state standards up on the walls. Pilar, a first grade teacher at Maple Elementary reflected her thoughts about posting the state standards that was shared by all the Maple Elementary teachers, she said "We don't have people coming around to check, making sure you have certain things on the wall, so, we don't." (WMT1.2, 01.13.10) My observations at Maple Elementary confirm that teachers did not have the state standards posted on the walls of their classrooms.

Posting standards up on the wall was one thing and implementing them another. Not posting standards at Maple Elementary did not mean that teachers avoided implementing them. The data indicate that although teachers were not required to post the standards up on the wall they knew the standards fully. Rosa, a first grade teacher at Maple Elementary, mentioned an interesting fact that illustrates how the state standards have become institutionalized in the organizations of the school systems, she said:

> A lot of standards is in the HMR, the whole phonics piece is what I kind of go off of but we also generally know the standards more or less by heart by now, and so that's what I know I need to teach. So, I'm planning with the standards in mind. (WMT1.1, 01.13.10)

As the data will show, school leadership approach seemed to be the operative explanation for the different perspectives about the standards in the two schools. The data indicate that at Maple Elementary, the principal's involvement and deep awareness of school's instructional activities provided an environment in which teachers moved forward with the standards in mind even if the standards were not posted on the walls. In contrast, at Brown Elementary, the principal was not fully aware or sufficiently knowledgeable about instructional activities and approaches, therefore in order to survive she preferred to disseminate her school's conformation to institutional rules and expectations through rituals and artifacts, in this case posting the standards on the walls of classrooms. The Brown Elementary principal basically used posting the standards as a control mechanism in her school to ensure all teachers conform to the institutional expectations.

Victoria, the instructional specialist at Brown Elementary stated, "the principal did say at one point that everything should have a standard, a clearly identified learning goal and standard." (WCI, 05.09.10) All teachers in this school were required to provide the principal with a filled-out report form to show how their activities were planned to meet the standards. Joe, a fourth grade teacher, stated: "we were asked to, based on our data analysis, give focal standards to the principal". (WBT4.1, 04.24.10) And Karen, a fourth grade teacher at Brown Elementary also said, "our principal wants these standards to be hit and we need to think of ways to implement the standards." (WBT4.2, 05.07.10) Jessica, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary, described how the standards were used as a control mechanism by the principal, she commented:

> Here the principal say we are balanced literacy so we do both phonics and whole literature and we can bring in other stuff. She says it but if she comes in and sees you're doing something else, she's like 'how is this tied to the standards?' and it's really picky so I feel like what they're saying doesn't really match up. (WBT1.1, 04.24.10)

The interview data indicate that while the district was not directly involved in monitoring the implementation of the state standards, the Maple Elementary principal used the state standards to coordinate instruction through his instructional leadership and the decisions he made for his school. At Brown Elementary, the principal used the standards as organizational rituals to symbolically convey her school's compliance with the institutional expectations in order to survive. The take away point from this section is that although Westside School District oversaw schools' instructional activities, it basically left the responsibility of addressing the standards to the schools. Based on their leaderships' styles and instructional and political knowledge, school principals either controlled or coordinated instruction.

Reading Curriculum

As discussed in Chapter 3, schools within this district were not mandated to use HMR; instead they could supplement or use another sets of materials if they chose to do so. Thus the district did not use the reading curriculum as a lever to control instruction. According to Amy, a district instruction administrator, the district was not concerned with the implementation of HMR, she claimed:

> There is a definite agreement centrally that the curriculum of HM—which is our adopted curriculum—is not meeting the needs of all students. There is definitely a full agreement to that. So that's not a focus point because it proved not to be effective. (WI1, 03.23.10)

Joe, a fourth grade teacher at Brown Elementary, also commented on the district's perspective on the use of HMR:

> I don't know if anyone else has talked to you about 'Focused Approach' but that was something that one week, district personnel came in to talk to about that and that was a good reminder of how it's more effective to use the HM but not just the HM, just approach reading and learning in general. (WBT4.1, 04.24.10)

Amy, a district instruction administrator, commented on the teachers' approach to HMR by describing district's teaching culture, she stated:

> I think there are two different types of cultures right now. You have the culture of teachers who think that a program will teach a child how to read, so they're relying on the program. And then you have the culture of teachers who are easily empowered to be the ones who are thinking and creating and observing and manipulating—whether it's the program or other materials to teach students how to read. (WI1, 03.23.10)

My observations in the two schools reveals that teachers either implemented the program with fidelity or tried to manipulate or supplement it, but the data also revealed that the teaching environments of the schools, shaped by the school leadership, promoted either of the two approaches to the reading curriculum. This situation is reflected in Amy's comment about HMR implementation in different schools, she said:

> There are school sites where they are consciously going away from HMR because it wasn't meeting their students' needs. So they're consciously making different choices as

a community, as a school, with district support. And then there are schools that are staying with the HMR, although even those schools and teachers are moving away from it. So, it's very individualized. (WI1, 03.23.10)

Due to their different leadership approaches, the schools provided two perspectives on the use of curriculum as a control or coordinating lever. Mark, the Maple Elementary principal, commented on the use of the curriculum as a coordinating lever by the district by saying, "there has been no district push at all. In fact, I think some schools are doing that too but there's been no one at all to say 'this is what we need to do'." (WMP, 02.03.10) Sophie, Maple Elementary instructional specialist, also said, "the adopted curriculum is HMR but we're looking at ways we can use HMR for grade levels. Teachers are starting to look at their classroom libraries now and they're starting to infuse more literature into their classrooms." (WMI, 01.26.10) Rosa, a first grade teacher at Maple Elementary, stated, "we don't have to use the HMR but I still use the anthology." (WMT1.1, 01.13.10) And Angela, a fourth grade teacher at Maple Elementary, commented, "I don't feel like I have to do it. My administrator is happy if I don't and so we've been using it for some spelling, some skills but I've gotten pretty far away from it these days." (WMT4.1, 02.03.10)

Even though, according to the district staff, principals, and teachers, the district did not enforce use of HMR, the principal of Brown Elementary was concerned with the implementation of the adopted curriculum. For her, implementation of the HMR was a control lever to align teachers' practices at the classroom level. Kristy, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary, stated, "I'm mandated to use it but I just use the stories and also I know my principal doesn't make sense. She mandates HM." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10) Jessica, a first grade teacher, also said, "some schools have more flexibility, they don't have to do. I think in our school, we're supposed to be following it more rigorously." (WBT1.1, 04.24.10) Jessica, then continued, "I can pull my own books and my own literatures as much as possible but I always make sure the HMR is readily available and visible in case people wanted to see it." (WBT1.1, 04.24.10)

Victoria, the instructional specialist at Brown Elementary, commented on the use of curriculum as a lever of control in her school by stating, "everyone's using it to some extent. You need something that all the kids have and they have materials for, so all the teachers are using it to some degree." (WCI, 05.09.10)

The observation and interview data reveal that schools had different perspectives toward implementing the HMR. Although the district did not mandate use of the HMR, the school leaderships took different approaches. At Maple Elementary, the HMR was neither used as a control nor coordinating tool. In contrast, at Brown Elementary HMR was used by the school leadership to control classroom instructional activities.

The survey data indicate that 28.6% of this district's teachers fully and 51.4% moderately complied with the district expectations in following the adopted reading curriculum (Appendix A, Figure 1). The survey data indicate that 85.3% of Westside School District teachers believed having a great deal of control over reading curriculum (Appendix A, Figure 7). At the school level, the survey also reveals that 47% of Brown Elementary teachers fully and 35.3% moderately complied while 12% of Maple Elementary teachers fully and 66.7% moderately complied with the district expectations to implement the adopted reading curriculum (Figure 4.18).

The survey data illustrate that in this district 62.9% of teachers believed that the district was somewhat successful and 34.3% believed the district was unsuccessful in using the reading

curriculum to control their instruction (Appendix A, Figure 6). The survey data also reveal that at Brown Elementary 5% of teachers believed that the district was very successful, 70.6% believed the district was somewhat successful, and 23.5% believed the district was unsuccessful in using the reading curriculum to control their instruction (Figure 4.19). The survey data also indicate that at Maple Elementary 55.6% of teachers believed that the district was somewhat successful and 44.4% believed the district was unsuccessful in using the reading curriculum to control their instruction (Figure 4.19).
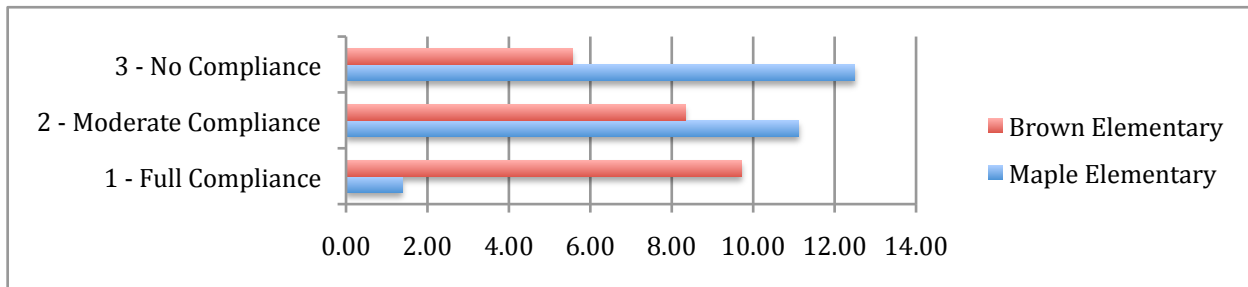
Figure 4.18. Degree of teacher compliance in using HMR
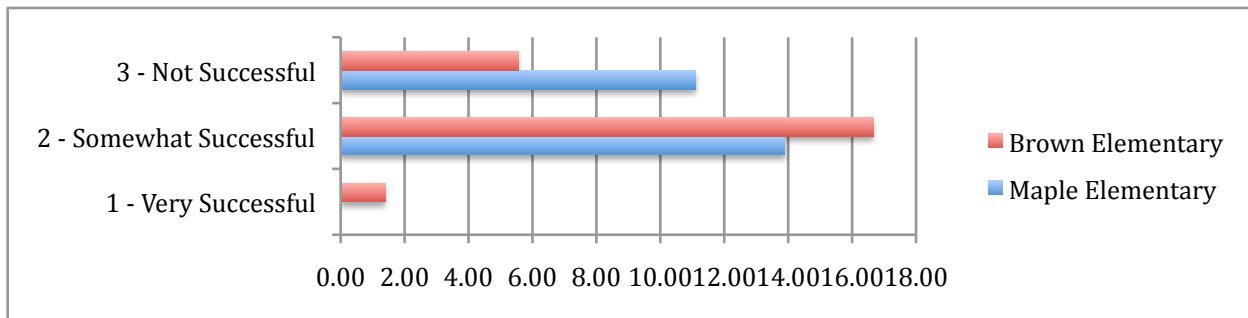
Figure 4.19. Extent of district success in using mandated curriculum as an instructional control tool

The survey data show that 64.7% of the Brown Elementary teachers believed that reading curriculum was highly and 29.4% believed it was moderately controlled by the district while 5% of the Maple Elementary teachers believed it was highly controlled, 50% believed it was moderately controlled, and 44.4% believed it was not controlled by the district (Figure 4.20).
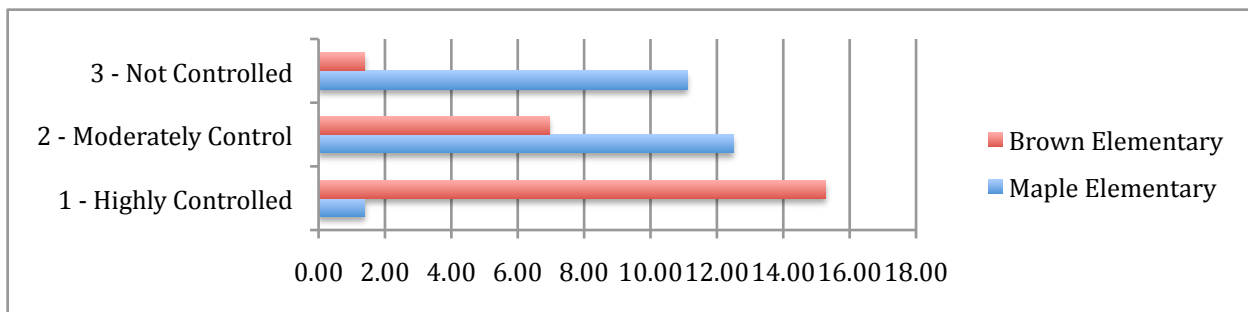
Figure 4.20. Extent of district control over the use reading curriculum

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The analysis of the data suggest that the Brown Elementary principal tried to bridge classroom instructional activities to the institutional expectations by using the reading curriculum as a control tool to convey conformity. The Maple Elementary principal, in contrast, did not use the curriculum as an instructional coordinating or controlling tool because he preferred the flexibility that the district provided to keep his instructional activities buffered from the institutional expectations. Again, the profound reason for the differences between the two principals' approaches was, as in Eastside School District, the principals' literacy and instructional knowledge.

Assessments

The data indicate that in this district there were two sets of assessments, one was the state assessments that happened three times a year and the other one was the site assessments that individual schools acquired to help plan and evaluate their instructional activities. Roger, a district administrator, described the district's reading assessment:

> There's the directed reading assessment in which a lot of schools do, so you have at least three early literacy assessments that have been promoted by the district out there that totally depended on whether a school has decided to do it or not and so not much systematic coordination around those things. (WI2, 05.16.11)

Although each school could have its own system of assessment, the state assessments remained as profound in this district as in any other school district. The state assessments were institutional tools to control classroom instruction statewide. Amy, a district instruction administrator, reflected on the seriousness of the state assessments:

> I think schools feel extremely accountable to their test scores. I think there's a lot of pressure on schools and teachers around test scores and not that level of accountability that it's not only coming from a district level but it's coming from the state. A bunch of our schools were just put on the state list. (WI1, 03.23.10)

In this district, in addition to the state assessments and the benchmark assessment called 'equity', the use of Fountas and Pinnell assessments was promoted to help the teachers level their students for Guided Reading and small group instruction. Schools made decisions in using this assessment tool. Amy, a district instruction administrator, explained the district's assessment policies:

> There are some centralized assessments, but not quite as before. I think there is a strong awareness of the need for assessment. And I would say in every school, there is some assessment tool being used. Whether it's the HMR thematic skills test or other assessments. There are schools that are using some other assessments that have been recently developed and I can't recall the names of them right now and there are schools using their funds to make benchmark assessments systems. So there is some level of assessment happening at every school for sure. And I would say the assessments are occurring three to four times a year, but frequently enough. (WI1, 03.23.10)

In the two schools, assessments were used as instructional control or coordinating levers. At Maple Elementary, the principal, instructional specialist, reading specialists, and teachers made decisions about adopting new assessments. Maple Elementary did not rely on the centralized state assessments to guide its instruction, Mark stated, "I think there should be centralized assessments, in other words, a large range of assessments and promotions of those assessments, not just standardized testing because that doesn't measure students' real aptitude." (WMP, 02.03.10) Maple Elementary used its site instructional assessments to coordinate reading instructional activities to evaluate students' needs. Mark, the Maple Elementary principal, explained his school's assessment strategies:

> We've been focusing on assessments, in other words, need to design them, understand them, and use them well. We bought a few Fountas and Pinnell to gauge students' instructional level and to determined the needs of the kids, we didn't have that data before and so with that data, we realize our instruction has to change. Many people started using them, that's been the driving force here. The focus has been on building our assessments and on Guided Reading. (WMP, 02.03.10)

Sophie, the instructional specialist at Maple Elementary, also stated, "right now there's quite a bit of autonomy for schools. I feel like there's a sense that if we do have something in place in terms of an assessment system, that's up to us." (WMI, 01.26.10) Sophie continued by describing the kind of assessments teachers used in her school by commenting, "in the past, we were doing SCOE and that was part of the Reading First initiative and so now they've just kind of reverted to what HMR has, a summative benchmark assessment four times a year." (WMI, 01.26.10)

On the other hand, at Brown Elementary, the state assessments remained powerful, while it attempted to acquire site assessment tools as well. Because Brown Elementary principal mandated use of the HMR, its assessments were considered as Brown Elementary assessment tool. According to Victoria, the instructional specialist at Brown Elementary, "assessments, content wise, definitely guides what the instructional focus is. We actually literally sit down and look at what's called the CST blueprint, that are the focal standards. It's also a guide in terms of test taking skills and strategies." (WCI, 05.09.10) Victoria then continued by explaining how her school dealt with the assessments:

> For first grade, we use the HMR themed skilled test. For second grade, we use the HMR summative and then for third, fourth, and fifth, we use the 'equity' test. They're suppose be quarterly. In addition, there's other in class assessments that are given but this year, the very last assessment was not required so the teachers are doing their own running records or assessments. (WCI, 05.09.10)

Karen, a fourth grade teacher at Brown Elementary, also said:

> This year, we have a test called the 'equity', it's a district test; it's new. It's supposed to be worded similar to the CST. It's multiple choice and they get that like 4 times a year maybe 5. It's just a district benchmark of how the schools are doing in the district. (WBT4.2, 05.07.10)

Kristy, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary, described how the assessments were used as an instructional control lever in her school, she explained:

> We're also supposed to do these themed tests. Every couple of weeks, we have themed tests that they're these huge test booklets and the kids hate doing them but we have to do them because we have all these data release meetings all the time. So, inevitably, I always have some portion of this test that I have to do with kids in small groups, the comprehension part. So, as my back up, if the principal's going to walk in and I'm not doing Guided Reading, it's like because I have to be doing this testing right now. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

Joe, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary also described the use of assessments as an instructional control lever, he stated:

> Based on our analysis of certain test results, district benchmarks, or state tests, we determine what standards we're going to be focusing on and in what ways we're going to address them down to timelines, down to activities, and groupings, as detailed as we can get. So by a certain time, students are supposed to have done certain things to address that specific standard to increase their score on the next assessment. (WBT4.1, 04.24.10)

Jessica, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary, also stated, "quite honestly we teach to the test. That guides my instruction because test scores are a priority. That really drives what we're learning. And it takes me two to three days a week to do my assessment." (WBT1.1, 04.24.10)

Similar to Maple Elementary, the Fountas and Pinnell assessment tool was suggested to Brown Elementary by a district specialist. Victoria, the instructional specialist at Brown Elementary described:

> We're supposed to get the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment but it never came. It was included in a much larger order and it was suggested that we use it at this school by an actual district content person who came and we had this big meeting about the forefront intervention and in that, it was discussed that a more effective and more comprehensive assessment was the Fountas and Pinnell so we put in a new order but it never came. (WCI, 05.09.10)

The survey data indicate that 40% of teachers believed that they had a great deal of control and 54.3% believed having moderate control over assessing their students (Appendix A, Figure 9). The survey data also reveal that 20% of teachers strongly agreed, 37% somewhat agreed, and 43% disagreed that state assessments guided their instruction (Appendix A, Figure 2). At the school level, the survey data reveal that 76.5% of Brown Elementary teachers believed that assessments were highly controlled and 23.5% believed that assessments were moderately controlled by the district. At Maple Elementary, 27.8% believed that assessments were highly controlled and 66.7% believed they were moderately controlled by the district (Figure 4.21).
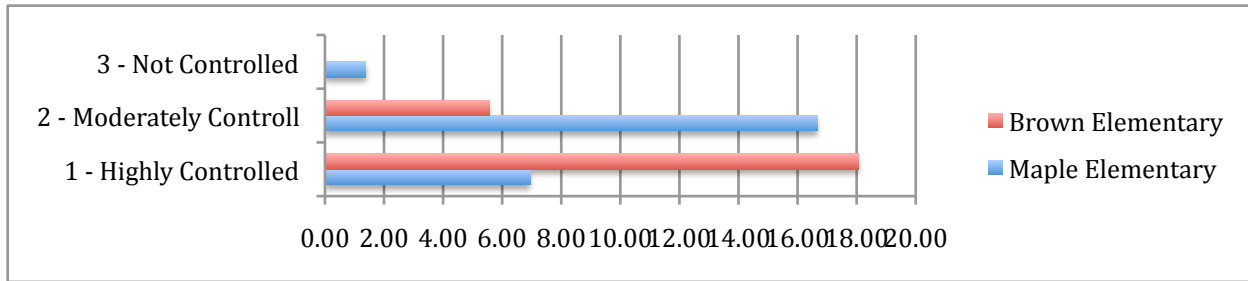
Figure 4.21. Extent of district control over assessments

The survey data also illustrate that 35.3% of Brown Elementary teachers believed that they had a great deal of control and 52.9% believed they had moderate control over assessing their students and 44.4% of Maple Elementary teachers had a great deal of control and 55.6% had moderate control over assessing their students (Figure 4.22). The survey data show that 20% of Westside School District teachers strongly agreed that the standards and assessments guided their instruction while in Eastside School District 70% of the teachers expressed the same idea (Appendix A, Figure 2).
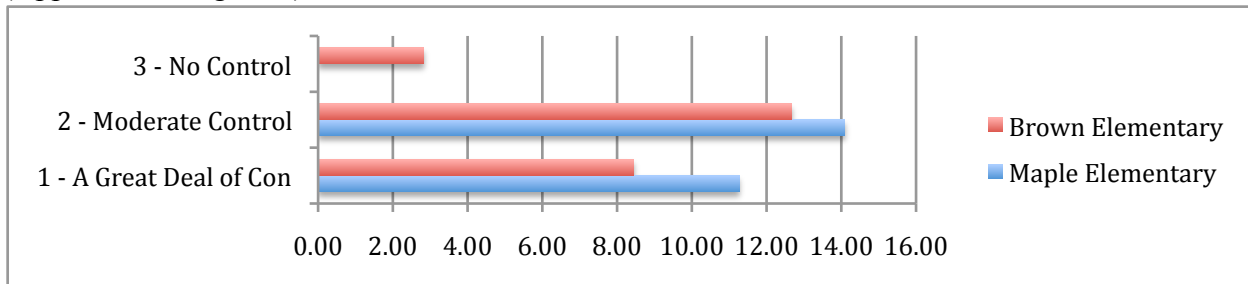
Figure 4.22. Extent of teacher control over assessments

The data reveal that the state standardized assessments were coordinating levers for the district to disseminate its conformation to the institutional expectations. At the school level, the leadership approaches of principals, which were directly influenced by their instructional and literacy knowledge, determined whether the assessments were used as a controlling or coordinating mechanisms in their schools.

Instructional Programs

Schools in this district were flexible enough to decide about implementing the instructional programs they saw fit to their needs. In addition to HMR as the reading curriculum, Guided Reading was encouraged in this district. Although schools were encouraged by the district to use Guided Reading, they had the option to opt out of it. Both schools in this district promoted Guided Reading as an instructional approach.

At Maple Elementary, the principal and the instructional leadership team tried to encourage teacher buy in to implement the program as they realized it well matched the variety of students' needs. Mark, the Maple Elementary principal, reflected on the Guided Reading implementation in his school compared to other schools and said, "people see the gaps in their students so that's driven this focus on Guided Reading. There has been no district push at all. In fact, I think some schools are doing that too but there's been no one at all to say 'this is what we

need to do'." (WMP, 02.03.10) Sophie, the instructional specialist at Maple Elementary, explained the process of the community involvement in selecting instructional programs objectives in her school, she said, "each school engages in a process of selecting some high leverage goals for themselves. Ours have been around language scaffolds, participation protocols as well as our writing portfolio. The whole school community determines the objectives by engaging parents, teachers, leadership." (WMI, 01.26.10) Pilar, a first grade teacher at Maple Elementary, also explained how teachers perceived Guided Reading in her school:

> A lot of the teachers here are now doing the Guided Reading because their kids are practicing reading at the level they're at so the teachers here are now taking the Guided Reading workshop. Our district offers a variety of workshops for teachers. They aren't really mandated, so we're being allowed as a school site to choose the ones we feel meet our needs but they do offer a variety and the ones that we don't need. (WMT1.2, 01.13.10)

At Brown Elementary, the principal mandated the use of the Guided Reading approach without offering teachers a voice in accepting, rejecting, or tweaking the strategies for its implementation. She considered Guided Reading as a mandated program to control the instructional activities at the classrooms. Jessica, a first grade teacher, stated, "she [principal] definitely wants us to be doing Guided Reading everyday and she's very strict on that". (WBT1.1, 04.24.10) Victoria, the instructional specialist at Brown Elementary, said "the idea of doing Guided Reading as a specific strategy came from higher up. Everyone is supposed to be doing it daily." (WCI, 05.09.10) Joe, a fourth grade teacher who had experience with Guided Reading prior coming to this school said:

> I found it's been a little restricted since I've been using a specific Guided Reading model. The Guided Reading that I had been doing prior to coming here was a little more loose. It gave me the freedom to bring in more resources, but currently I'm not allowed to bring in resources. Around December, I was really asked to focus on those specific books. When I started, it was just a different concept of what I had in mind when Guided Reading. It is kind of dictated. (WBT4.1, 04.24.10)

Implementing instructional programs such as Guided Reading was taken differently in the two schools. At Maple Elementary, the principal and the instructional leadership team introduced it as an effective program and teachers decided whether they were ready to implement it or not, as Gloria a fourth grade teacher said, "I'm just not set up to do Guided Reading. I would love to change my reading program to use that but I don't have what I need to do it right now." (WMT4.2, 02.03.10) At Brown Elementary, Guided Reading was another mandate and every teacher was required, or at least strongly expected, to implement it; as Kristy, a first grade teacher said, "at our school, this is what you're supposed to be doing at this time during the day, you must be doing Guided Reading". (WBT1.2, 04.24.10) The data indicate that the same instructional program was used differently in the two schools: at Brown Elementary it was used as a control and at Maple Elementary as a coordinating lever.

The survey data reveal that 53% of Brown Elementary teachers did not receive while 92% of Maple Elementary teachers received support from their schools to implement reading programs that met their students' needs (Figure 4.23).
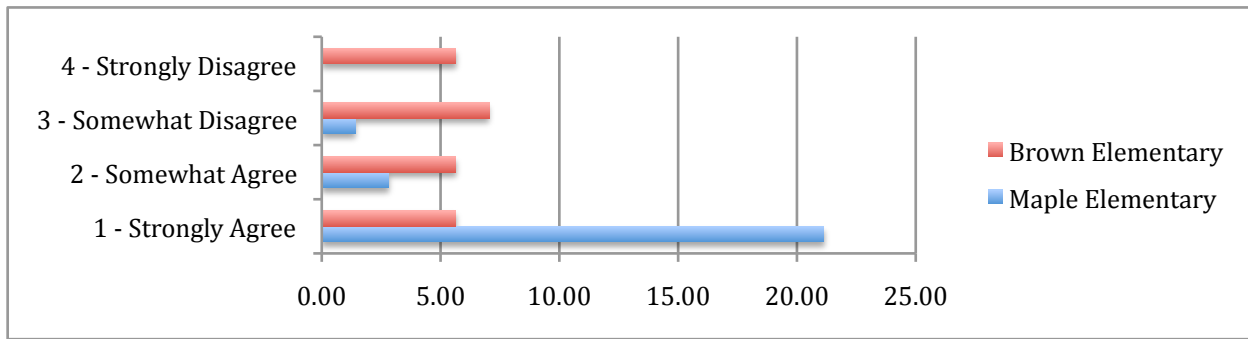
Figure 4.23. Extent of school instructional support in using various instructional materials

The differences in teachers' perspectives about Guided Reading as an instructional program in the two schools illustrate the role of the principals as the instructional leaders and their agency in initiating bridging or buffering their schools' technical core to those of the institutional expectations. The Maple Elementary principal was focused on the technical activities of his school and tried to buffer and the Brown Elementary principal focused on the institutional expectations and had the tendency to bridge. In the case of Maple Elementary the instructional programs were used as coordinating lever while they were used as controlling levers at Brown Elementary. Analysis of data through the lens of neo institutional theory indicates associations or correlations between controlling and bridging, on the one hand, and coordinating and buffering on the other hand.

Instructional Support and Resources

The data indicate that relative to Eastside School District, this district provided sufficient instructional support and resources to the schools. Roger, a district administrator, who had a great deal of administrative experience in both districts compared the two districts and stated:

[Westside] District has a lot more resources than [Eastside] District. I mean, really all [Eastside] District has done is fluency and the Dibbles and things like more authentic reading doesn't happen in [Eastside] District and I don't think anybody's looking for any sort of innovation there. (WI2, 05.16.11)

He then described the way his department at the district instructionally supported schools and stated, "Our department is working to supervise schools. So, we identify the needs of schools, in collaboration with the schools, and work to help them meet their goals." (WI2, 05.16.11)

In this district professional development workshops were provided to the teachers on voluntary basis. Amy, a district instruction administrator, said, "unless you have a principal on top of it and forcing teachers to go, it's a voluntary attendance." (WI1, 03.23.10) Kristy, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary, also said, "the district provides PDs and based on your school site goals, they tell you which ones you need to go." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10) This district did not use instructional support and resources as a tool to control classroom instruction because the sites were responsible to develop their own professional development trainings. Therefore, as expected in a decentralized district, at the school level I detected a variety of approaches. At the

sites, two types of professional development and trainings were provided: one was through schools' professional development workshops and the other one was grade level weekly meetings or teacher collaboration meetings. The instructional specialists and coaches were another source of help for teachers.

At Maple Elementary, the instructional leadership team and the teachers planned and designed school's professional development workshops and asked for professional help from the district when needed. Mark, the principal, said, "we create our PD agenda. We do our own thing here. We design the agenda ourselves here based on the needs of the school." (WMP, 02.03.10) Sophie, the instructional specialist, commented on the district professional support, she said "the district has provided lots of support in terms of content resource people for literacy so I've sought them out and they've come on site and modeled things and done professional developments for us." (WMI, 01.26.10)

As discussed in Chapter 3, Brown Elementary relied heavily on the district professional support because it lacked capacity to plan cohesive professional development and training for the teachers at the site. Jessica, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary, commented on her school professional support and said:

> It's [PD] kind of all over the place. It's a little unorganized and then they don't ask us about it anymore so then I'm not going to do it because I don't really know, I don't have some serious training on it so I just have one random idea about what this strategy is. I get it that they're trying to give us strategies and tools but I just think it would be nice to have a cohesive and coherent thing that we know where it was going. (WBT1.1, 04.24.10)

Along the same lines Karen, a fourth grade teacher, stated "I don't really know what I'm supposed to do, what powers I have or who do I contact. For me, what I figured out is that I talk to the literacy specialists and they try to help me out." (WBT4.2, 05.07.10) Kristy, a first grade teacher, also said "our school's PDs are the ones that are during the school day or right after school at your school site where your whole staff has to come. The goal is to increase your tests scores and implementing the curriculum." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10) The data indicate that Brown Elementary had some difficulties in designing and planning cohesive professional development and training sessions for the teachers, and therefore relied on the district for professional support.

It was expected in this district that grade level teachers at each school met weekly to plan. At Maple Elementary grade level meetings were used to coordinate instructional activities in a certain grade level. Pilar, a first grade teacher, stated "when we have our meetings, we decide what our kids need, how they're working, how we're going to present it to them and we share a lot of ideas between ourselves." (WMT1.2, 01.13.10) Rosa, another first grade teacher, also said, "I get a lot from my colleague. We're always collaborating and talking about what works and what doesn't work". (WMT1.1, 01.13.10)

At Brown Elementary, grade level meetings were overshadowed by the institutional expectations to raise students' test scores. Jessica, a first grade teacher, said "our grade level meetings are like we're reporting what we're doing and then they [literacy coach] sort of give a mini lesson on how you should teach. And then that's it." (WBT1.1, 04.24.10) Use of teachers' grade level meetings as a control lever at Brown Elementary is well illustrated in Karen's comment, she stated:

When I go to my grade level meetings and they [instructional specialist and literacy coach] ask how my class is doing…when I said I'm doing it this way then they get worried, I don't know, they look like they are worried and that's when they come in for a week and watch me, like what I'm doing so it kind of discourages me like I'm just not going to do that. (WBT4.2, 05.07.10)

Victoria, the instructional specialist at Brown Elementary, described the overall culture of collaboration in her school and commented:

I think because we're a school in reform and specifically our school culture is this way. There's not a lot of freedom or creativity is not necessarily encouraged and I also feel like teachers don't feel like they're respected as professionals and it's hard to foster a genuine dialogue about collaboration or working together. (WCI, 05.09.10)

Observation data indicate that grade level meetings at Maple Elementary were used as a source of professional development and coordination. I noted that in meetings teachers were involved in developing and improving their strategies to address students' needs. In addition to the teachers, the instructional specialist also attended the meetings. They tried to collaborate with each other to move their students in the same direction by developing a consistent planning. My observations at Brown Elementary revealed that the weekly meetings were used as a report and monitoring session to ensure that all the grade level teachers did what they were supposed to do. I barely noticed active conversations with regards to literacy strategies and instructional activities by the teachers, the instructional specialist, the literacy coach and the principal who joined the meetings only for five minutes. The teachers reported and then were asked questions by the literacy coach to ensure that they taught specific lessons for the upcoming assessments. The meetings did not seem collaborative; rather I sensed a feeling of hierarchical demands in the environment.

The survey data indicate that 63% of this district teachers agreed that the district provided sufficient professional support to them (Appendix A, Figure 4). The survey also reveals that 59% of Brown Elementary teachers and 67% of Maple Elementary teachers agreed that the district provided sufficient professional support to them (Figure 4.24).

The survey data indicate that 52% of Brown Elementary teachers and 89% of Maple Elementary teachers agreed that their schools provided helpful professional development (Figure 4.25).

The survey data reveal that 34.3% of teachers in this district strongly and 28.6% somewhat believed that the goal of teacher collaboration weekly meetings was to ensure alignment of their instruction with the HMR and the standards implementation (Appendix A, Figure 14). At the school level, interestingly the survey data show that 29.4% of Brown Elementary teachers strongly believed that the goal of teacher collaboration weekly meetings was to improve their instruction while 94% of Maple Elementary teachers strongly believed the goal was to improve their instructional strategies (Figure 4.26).

The data also show that 79% of Brown Elementary teachers believed that their weekly collaboration meetings was controlled by the district while 72.2% of Maple Elementary teachers believed their weekly collaboration meetings were moderately controlled and 27.8% believed that they were not controlled by the district (Figure 4.27).
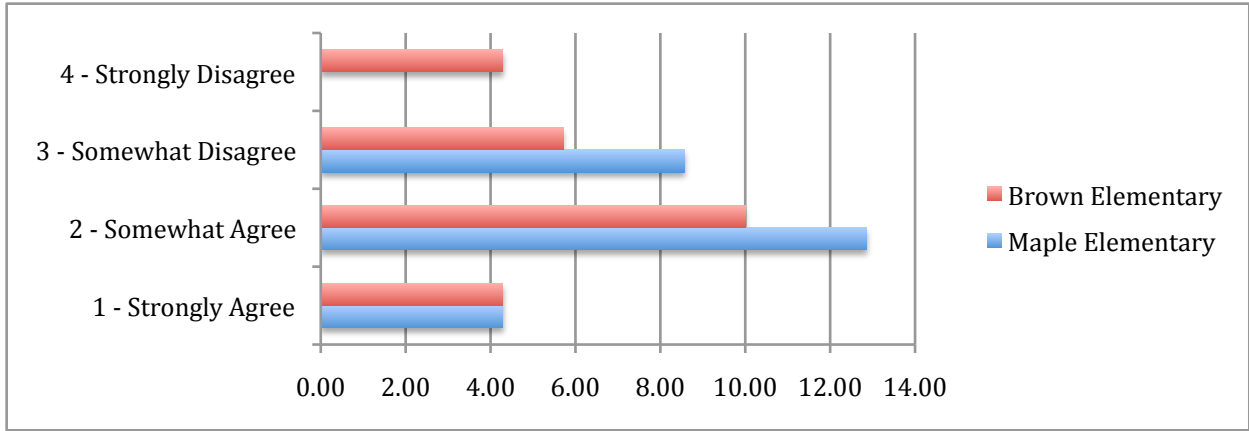
Figure 4.24. Sufficiency of professional development provided by the district
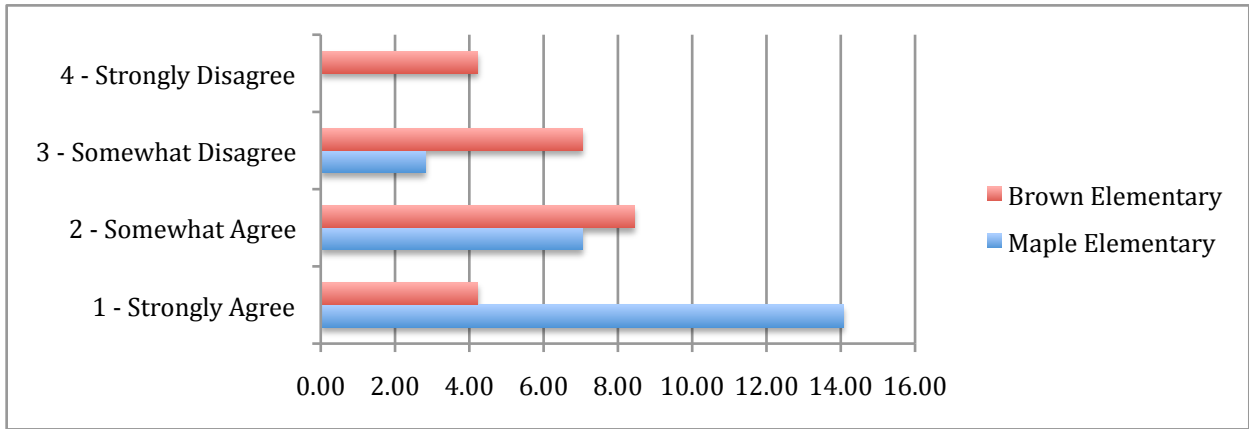
Figure 4.25. Extent of professional development provided by district
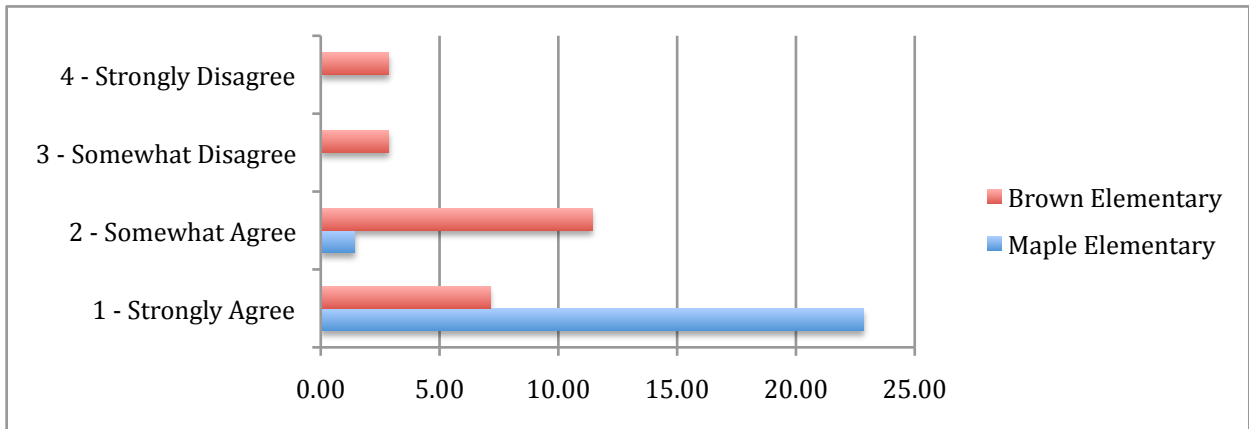
Figure 4.26. Teacher perception about the goal of teacher collaboration weekly meetings
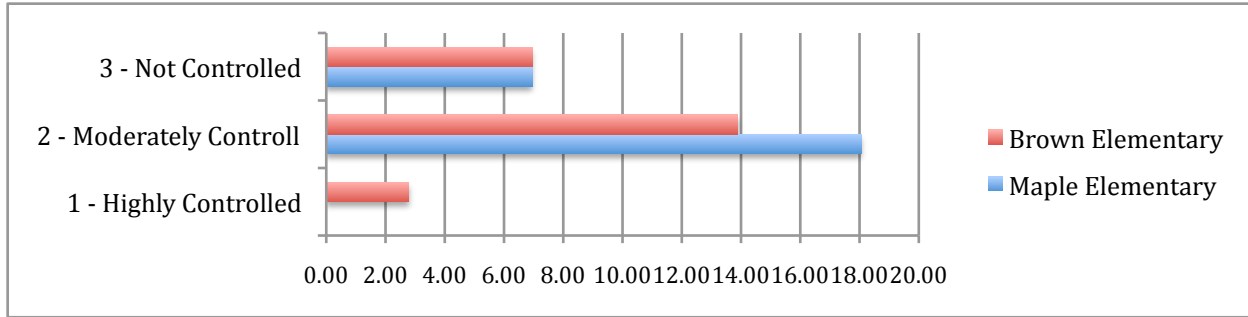
Figure 4.27. Extent of district control over teacher collaboration meetings

The data illustrate how the teachers' collaboration meetings were used as an on going control lever by Brown Elementary leadership. The overall situation at Brown Elementary suggests that in order to cover her instructional leadership weaknesses the principal tried to control classroom instructional activities through district's professional support venues. One venue was professional development and trainings that the districts led in her school, the second venue was school's instructional specialist and literacy coach who helped the principal to create instructional consistency across the classrooms within the district's instructional frames, and the third venue was teachers' weekly collaboration meetings. This situation revealed that while instructional support was not used as a control lever at Maple Elementary, it was used extensively to control classroom instructional activities at Brown Elementary.

Monitoring

District monitoring. According to data, Westside School District featured different levels of monitoring and walkthroughs. The data reveal that depending on schools' scores and PI (Program Improvement) level, the district determined how extensively schools were to be monitored. Although both schools were Title I and Reading First schools at the time of collecting data, the findings indicate that Maple Elementary did not receive as many walkthroughs as Brown Elementary did over an academic year. Pilar, a first grade teacher at Maple Elementary provided the reason for this difference between the two schools, she stated, "we used to have many walkthrough inspections because we were a low performance school where the district would walk through. As our scores improved they don't do that anymore. Now, I'd say there's minimal contact from the district." (WMT1.2, 01.13.10)

Amy, a district instruction administrator, also said "there are still walkthroughs, but it's not as stringent." (WI1, 03.23.10) Pilar, a first grade teacher at Maple Elementary, said, "they [inspections] were more intimidating in the past than they are now. They would walkthrough and tell us what was right and what was wrong. There is still people coming through your classrooms." (WMT1.2, 01.13.10) Angela, a fourth grade teacher at Maple Elementary, said, "they haven't come out here. I haven't seen anybody from the district all year" (WMT4.1, 02.03.10), and Pilar, a first grade teacher, said "we don't have people coming around to check, making sure you have certain things on the wall." (WMT1.2, 01.13.10) According to the Maple Elementary principal, the district did not come to his school to walk through the classrooms but they typically come to observe instruction in one class only to realize principal's vision for his school, he explained:

There will be, next week, my supervisor will be coming with another member of the central office and they don't want to do walkthroughs. They want to go to one class and see one thing so I'm going to take them to a first or third grade classroom, and I'm going to mention, 'this is my vision for this school. This is what I want all classes to look like'. (WMP, 02.03.10)

In contrast, Brown Elementary received many visits from the district due to its low scores and status as a PI school. In this regard, Jessica a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary stated:

I've received several visits, especially recently because we're on Program Improvement and…they're looking at making some big changes. We're not sure what the changes are, we haven't been informed but people have been around a lot. Unexpectedly, they just pop in." (WBT1.1, 04.24.10)

And Kristy, another first grade teacher, stated:

People come in from the district all the time. I'm rarely introduced to them. The principal just brings them in but never introduces them, she doesn't even talk to us, she shows some things in your classroom, and then leaves." (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

The findings indicate that the district did not communicate directly with the teachers when doing the walkthroughs. Victoria, the instructional specialist at Brown Elementary, also explained:

The last few times of the district [walkthrough], she came with a group of assistant superintendents and I think one was an intern. But they actually did not directly talk to anyone except the principal. They didn't talk to me, they didn't talk to any of the teachers or any of the students but they did go and observe almost every classroom, at least briefly. (WCI, 05.09.10)

Victoria and Kristy's statements demonstrate lack of adequate communication between teachers and principal on the one hand and district and teachers on the other hand. Kristy's comment about the principal bringing in the visitors but not allowing interactions between them and the teachers illustrates principal's intention to block the district-teacher communication. Lack of trust between the school administrator and teachers, and lack of communication between the district and teachers is well disseminated by these interview data.

The data reveal that district's lack of direct communication with teachers made the principal the point of contact and therefore her personal interpretations of the district's expectations and policies influenced the teachers' understanding of the expectations. When I asked Victoria, Brown Elementary instructional specialist, about the criteria the visitors look for in classrooms, she answered:

From the feedback they gave, I would say they were looking for classroom- student engagement and for rigor because they said all classrooms were lacking both and they probably wanted to just observe what kind of instruction was going on. But both times, they had very negative feedback. Their feedback was like there was too much teacher

talk, or it was too much teacher directed in some classrooms, like the arrangement of the desks in some classrooms. They said that there should be more student interaction amongst themselves. And they said that there was a lack of academic rigor. (WCI, 05.09.10)

In contrast, Joe a fourth grade teacher said: "I think that they look for, at least at our site, they were looking for schedules and lessons being posted." (WBT4.1, 04.24.10) Comparing and analyzing Victoria and Joe's comments about the district visits suggest a couple of points. Joe's comment indicates that teachers were not well informed about district's expectations for visit. Joe's statement reveals that he was convinced that posting schedules and lesson plans were sufficient to satisfy district's expectations while according to Victoria the district looked for instructional activities and strategies used by the teachers. It obviously illustrates lack of effective communications between the faculty and the school leadership. The data indicate that Brown Elementary principal was concerned only with satisfying the institutional expectations to show conformity. The Brown Elementary principal's lack of sufficient instructional knowledge attributed to her behavior in covering up instructional shortcomings of her school by cutting off communications between the district and the teachers. Victoria, the Brown Elementary instructional specialist, pointed to a very interesting fact about principal's understanding of instruction and the district inspections, she stated:

> Sometimes she [principal] does informal walkthroughs where she's looking for something very specific. I can think of two examples: one was when she wanted to see if everyone had their *lesson plans* posted and another one was when she wanted to see if everyone's *daily schedules* were posted. (WCI, 05.09.10)

The data suggest that because the principal was convinced that conformity to rituals was important to the district and for her school to survive, she repeatedly inspected the classrooms to ensure that the daily schedules and the lesson plans were posted properly. Lesson plans and daily schedules are parts of routines and rituals of schools, they are indicators of what should be happening in a general sense. One explanation is that the principal was so concerned about these artifacts that she lost the sight of her goal of evaluating her school's technical core or instructional activities for improvement. She transferred her understandings of the district expectations, i.e. daily schedules and lesson plans to the teachers and teachers believed that all they needed to do was to make sure the lesson plans and daily schedules were posted, in other words she made sense of the expectations and transferred her understandings of district's policies and expectations to the teachers. The Brown Elementary principal, who was in a delicate situation to ensure the survival of her school and own position, conveyed her school's conformity through rituals and routines. Kristy a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary explained principal's situation:

> You can tell she's very nervous when she brings them in because her job is on the line because we're one of the schools that's supposed to be closed so she tries to point out a few things that they might like but she's very on edge. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

The survey data indicate that in this district 48.6% of teachers strongly agreed and 20% somewhat disagreed that they were evaluated based on their fidelity to implementation of the

reading curriculum (Appendix A, Figure 10). The survey also demonstrates that 77% of teachers believed that the district was unsuccessful in controlling instruction by walkthroughs (Appendix A, Figure 11). The survey data indicate that at the school level, 64.7% of Brown Elementary teachers and 88.9% of Maple Elementary teachers believed that the district was unsuccessful in controlling instruction by walkthroughs (Figure 4.28).
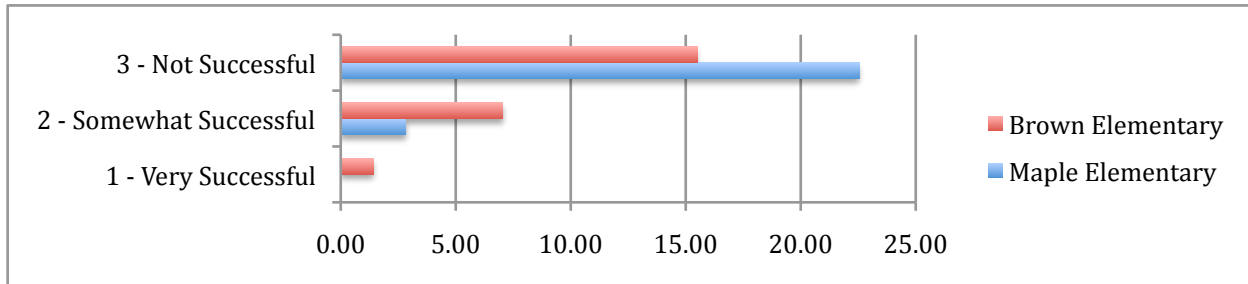
Figure 4.28. Success of district in using walkthroughs to control instruction

The survey data indicate that 20% of Brown Elementary teachers and 83.3% of Maple Elementary teachers strongly disagreed that the district performed regular classroom inspections to control classroom instruction (Figure 4.29).
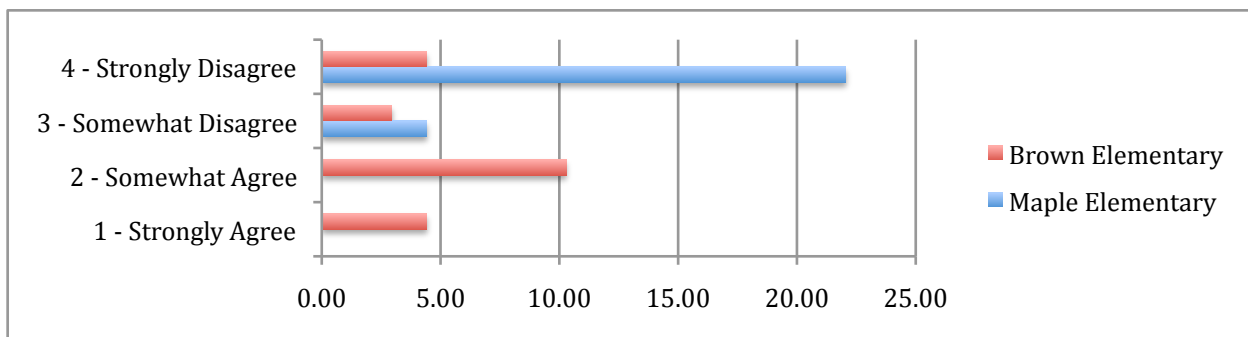
Figure 4.29. District use of classroom inspection to control instruction

The data reveal that the district used walkthrough inspections not to check for rituals of conformity but they monitored classrooms' quality of instructional activities. It seems that these sorts of inspections were not to control but were used as feedback to better coordinate classroom instructional activities.

School monitoring. Regardless of whether or not schools were inspected by the district, school principals were required to inspect classroom instructional activities. The findings show that both principals inspected classroom instruction. The two principals used monitoring classroom instructional activities as a control or coordinating lever. At Maple Elementary, all the teachers stated that they didn't receive district inspection; instead they were monitored and evaluated by their principal. Rosa, a first grade teacher at Maple Elementary said, "I don't really see anybody coming in besides my principal." (WMT1.1, 01.13.10)

The findings of this research show that Maple Elementary principal used the monitoring visits to coordinate instruction. Gloria, a fourth grade teacher at Maple Elementary explained her feelings about being evaluated by the principal, which was shared by all the interviewed teachers

at Maple Elementary, she said, "our principal comes in but just kind of checking in, not really sit down and taking notes. I feel like we're all pretty much trusted. I don't feel like I'm being policed or anything like that." (WMT4.2, 02.03.10)

The Brown Elementary principal, on the other hand, used inspections as a lever of control. Victoria, the instructional specialist at Brown Elementary explained how the principal evaluations and monitoring unfolded, she revealed:

> There're different kinds of evaluations. There are the formal evaluations that the principal does every semester. Then there are the evaluations that happen, as I mentioned before, when the principal kind of wants to focus on something or we decide to focus on something and go into the classroom looking for something specific. And then sometimes she does informal walkthroughs where she's looking for something very specific. (WCI, 05.09.10)

The number of principal's visits to the classrooms was considerable at Brown Elementary. Joe, a fourth grade teacher stated:

> She's only, honestly, been in my room a total of about 5 times since November but at the same time, I've had administrators that you don't see them five times in a whole year come into your room. She's come in a couple times and did informal observations and then a couple times have been the formal. (WBT4.1, 04.24.10)

It is worth mentioning that I interviewed Joe in April, meaning that the principal had visited his class five times within three months since November. The number of classroom visits by the principal is an evidence for her determination to ensure the implementation of the expectations in the classrooms.

The data reveal that Brown Elementary teachers dealt with principal monitoring differently. Some did as it was expected from them and some superficially did temporarily reorganized only for the purpose of her visits. Kristy, a first grade teacher commented:

> The principal has observed me and when she comes to observe me, she wants to see Guided Reading, so the day before I get the kids all pumped up, 'the principal's coming to see you tomorrow, if everybody stays in their seats, we're going to get extra…' some novelty factory and then I pull groups. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

Principals' visits to the classrooms could cause teacher anxiety and discomfort or motivation and confidence. The data reveal that the reason for teachers' uncomfortable feeling at Brown Elementary was due to the fact that the visits were to evaluate them and control their instruction. In contrast, Maple Elementary principal visited to coordinate with and assist teachers with their instructional needs, making teachers feel supported and trusted. The findings illustrate that principal's visits at Maple Elementary proved to be for coordination and at Brown Elementary the visits were to control. Extent of principals' literacy and instructional knowledge again proved to be an important factor in how their visits were perceived by the teachers. Maple Elementary principal's sufficient knowledge of instruction and the productive, technical feedback he provided the teachers helped to legitimize his visits while Brown Elementary principal's insufficient instructional knowledge made her visits being perceived by the teachers

as evaluative and to control the general flow of the classroom instruction by focusing on Guided Reading, lesson plans, and daily schedules postings.

School and Instructional Leadership

Principals. Principals perceived their responsibilities as the instructional leaders of the schools differently. The data disseminate that a principal's instructional vision constructs whole school's activities including decision-making, instructional focus and strategies, and pedagogical mindset of the faculties. Amy, a district instruction administrator, explained:

> There are definitely some schools where, I think because of the leadership and who the principal is—you know they have the power that they're hiring and they wanted people aligned with their vision. If their vision is one of that like 'we're going to teach kids, we're not going to teach programs', then that's who they have predominately at their sites. (WI1, 03.23.10)

The Maple Elementary and Brown Elementary principals had different leadership characteristics and approaches. Roger, a district administrator, explained schools' instructional autonomy and principals' role in shaping this autonomy:

> The school site has a lot of autonomy so if they went and moved forward with an initiative, if they have the funding or the resources, it's pretty much been permitted. And I think there's some schools where there's been tighter control based on their performance like Reading First in some of the schools, then it depends on where the principal wants to take things. (WI2, 05.16.11)

The Maple Elementary principal perceived his role as active and autonomous, he said, "if I'm the principal, that they hired me to be the principal, then I'm going to run this school. I'm going to move this school in a way that I best can. It may not go with district priorities." He then continued, "if you want to call the district, I mean I see the district as us. All of us are part of the district." His statement illustrate that the district was in the background of the decision-makings and he and his instructional leadership determined the instructional processes in his school. Mark continued, "we have leveraged our relationships so when I say we, I mean me and our assistant principal, our [instructional specialists], and teachers on special assignments." (WMP, 02.03.10) Mark then explained, "What I created is a template of things. I sent it out to leadership team. The template is just a guide and what the teachers then in grade level teams will be using." (WMP, 02.03.10) Maple Elementary principal involved teachers and specialists in his decision-makings because he believed, "as long as the teachers have really clear objectives for what they want in literacy, I have no problem with that. I believe teachers have to own this." (WMP, 02.03.10) Angela, a fourth grade teacher at Maple Elementary said:

> [Our principal] doesn't really lay down that you have to do A, B, and C. He is in general keeping an eye on our grade levels and making sure there's cohesion within our grade levels and that there's a consistent vision and goals and guidelines that really align to the state standards. (WMT4.1, 02.03.10)

And Rosa, a first grade teacher at Maple Elementary stated, "He's great and very flexible. He's very understanding and supportive and I feel very successful." (WMT1.1, 01.13.10)

The Maple Elementary principal had a clear instructional vision of where to guide his school, he claimed:

I'm looking for engagement. I want to see students learning. I want to see them happy. I want to see them working in an authentic work. I don't want to see worksheets. I'll see worksheets in a small group, that's fine. I do not want to see a whole group. And I've made that very clear multiple times. (WMP, 02.03.10)

The findings illustrate that the Maple Elementary principal was actively involved in instructional activities and guided teachers. Gloria, a fourth grade teacher stated:

Last year, he [principal] was all about engagement and just nonstop notes all about making sure they're engaged and so I think that got me to focus more on getting them to interact with each other while we're reading and talk to each other so it's not just I stop and get an answer from one student but to leave more time for them to talk about things with each other and work with each other more so that they're all more involved. (WMT4.2, 02.03.10)

The Maple Elementary principal described his challenges in leading his school:

The challenges some people have is that we've been an underperforming school for so long people feel like they're waiting for the district to 'tell the school what it needs to do'. And so when we go a different road people might feel, 'well, what if district tells us not to do that'. So there's a bit of hesitancy because of what has happened and so keeping the teachers under the impression that we're doing this because of data, because of needs is the challenge, that people see that they and we have more input than they actually think, that I'm willing to fight for what we believe here and I'm willing to discuss that to, with whomever I need to at any district office level. (WMP, 02.03.10)

The data reveal that the Maple Elementary principal buffered his school's instructional activities from the institutional expectations. Angela, a fourth grade teacher described his principal's role as a buffering agent by stating:

I feel like things come down from the district and our principal is our conduit between the district and the site. And then there're those conduits. There's the union, there's the UBC to the union and then there's our principal to the district and for me that works okay because I have good communication with my principal and I feel like he's a good voice for what concerns me at our site. (WMT4.1, 02.03.10)

The data suggest that the Brown Elementary principal had a different perspective about her responsibilities. Victoria, the instructional specialist at Brown Elementary, explained the overall culture of teaching and instructional leadership in her school by stating:

Some teachers have managed to collaborate but I think it's integral to student progress that teachers don't feel isolated, that each classroom isn't an island but they're working together and they're encouraged to share their ideas and to try things but in our school the focus is so much on assessment and achievement and looking at data that I feel like that's really cycled. It comes from the top, it comes all the way from the district too but it's also reinforced here heavily. (WCI, 05.09.10)

Victoria then continued by describing her principal's role as a bridging agent, she disclosed:

Principal leadership has a heavy effect on program implementation because I think at every school the principal really sets the tone for his school and this school's no exception. I think our principal takes her cues from the district. I don't think a lot of the stuff is generated here on site. I think a lot of it is coming top-down. (WCI, 05.09.10)

Joe a fourth grade teacher at Brown Elementary confirmed this thought by stating:

Once I found out we're going to have people from the district office. Well, when the district people came, I really found out—and I think this may be a symptom of the district as a whole—the district personnel were making decisions that were being handed off to the administrator who was then passing it onto us and there was actually a gentleman who was at the meeting that was very specific about what he thought should be done and based on what he said thought should be done, our principal decided this is what's going to be done. (WBT4.1, 04.24.10)

As mentioned by Victoria and Joe, the Brown Elementary principal's instructional decisions were heavily influenced by the district due to school's low student performance scores. This situation positioned the principal as a control lever acting on behalf of the district rather than coordinating site-based initiatives. This sense of "separateness" caused teachers to react accordingly. Kristy a first grade teacher elucidated:

I feel like I know how to play the game. I know what she's looking for so when she comes in, I put on the dog and pony show and so that I can do what I want the rest of the time. It would be much better if she trusts me and my kids, considering they're not getting support at home. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

Jessica, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary, described how effectively the principal was involved in guiding and leading instructional activities by stating:

I rarely see our principal. She sometimes comes into our grade level meetings and listens to what we are saying, asks us questions about what we're doing and she says things like…repeating… 'you need to be hitting the standards'." (WBT1.1, 04.24.10)
Kristy, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary, also reflected the same thought:
She'll come up to us and say in staff meeting, 'they want to make sure that you guys are still staying focused', like she talks down to us and 'there's not enough engagement

going on in the classroom' and things that are really kind of vague and not very helpful and just about what you're doing wrong.(WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

The Brown Elementary principal's leadership style was criticized by many teachers like Kristy, who offered this analysis:

It's just that there's a culture of not trust- there's no trust in my school, like our principal doesn't trust us so like 'at this time, they must be doing this because I don't trust you to plan your own.' It very much feels that way. She's very unorganized. I got a call yesterday afternoon saying I'm being observed on Tuesday and she wants to see a Guided Reading lesson on Tuesday morning and she tells me on Friday afternoon. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

Jessica a first grade teacher said:

She doesn't really like anything, it's usually kids' behavior or that I didn't point to some spelling cards, it's usually all negative, no matter what I'm doing or no matter what the kids are doing. She is not collaborative, definitely authoritative. (WBT1.1, 04.24.10)

Karen, a fourth grade teacher also reflected on the principal's leadership style, she stated:

We follow the guidelines of the administrator here. I'm a rule follower so I do exactly what I'm told even though I don't believe it's the best things here. I don't feel supported to try something new or to offer, bring suggestions or research to the leadership and say, 'could we look at this?' I do not feel like that's available here. (WBT4.2, 05.07.10)

Joe, another fourth grade teacher, focused on principal-teacher communication dimension of the principal's leadership style and said:

If an administrator is present, I think it sends a message, but you can't just be visible and then be absent in terms of support and I think that's where maybe there's a disconnect. Certain demands are being made on us and I think there is lack of communication and I don't know where that comes from but I definitely see it manifest in frustrations that people feel about how they do things and not being clear. (WBT4.1, 04.24.10)

The survey data illustrate that 14.7% of the teachers in this district strongly and 47% moderately believed that the principals were levers of instructional control used by the district (Appendix A, Figure 15). At the school level, the survey data also reveal that 41% of Brown Elementary teachers and 94.4% of Elm Elementary teachers strongly agreed that their school leadership was flexible enough to provide them opportunities to plan their instruction to the needs of their students (Figure 4.30).

The survey indicates that 23.5% of Brown Elementary teachers and 83.3% of Maple Elementary teachers strongly agreed that they received support and encouragement from their principals in their instructions (See Figure 4.23).
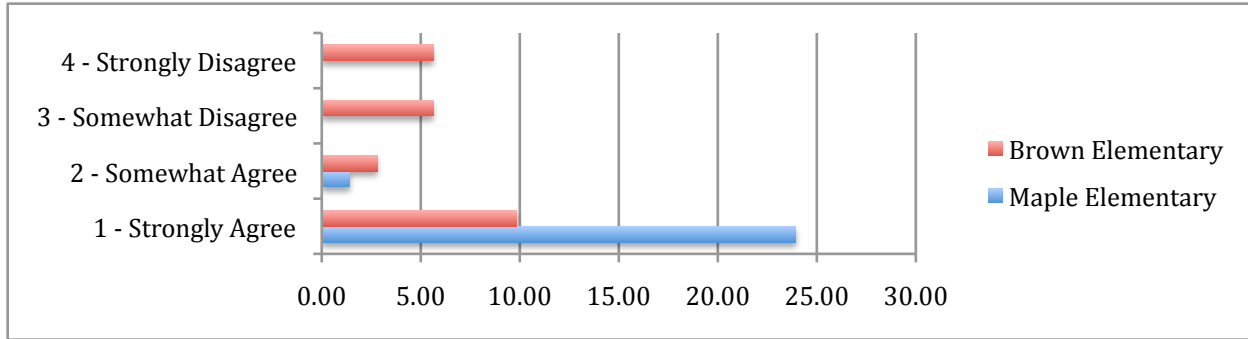
Figure 4.30. Extent of school support in using various instructional materials

Instructional specialists. Instructional specialists are considered part of the instructional leadership of the schools. They are also control or coordinating levers based on the roles they play under the principals of the schools. Instructional specialists are listed by the district and hired by the principals. School principals have the opportunity to hire people who are close to them ideologically. Amy, a district instruction administrator, explained:

There are definitely some schools where I think because of the leadership and who the principal is—principals have the power that they're hiring and they wanted people aligned with their vision. If their vision is one of—we're going to teach kids, we're not going to teach programs, then that's who you're going to have predominately at your site. (WI1, 03.23.10)

At Maple Elementary, the instructional specialist acted as a coordinating lever. Sophie, the instructional specialist at Maple Elementary, explained her role:

I've been more of a support with the reading curriculum and resources. My hope is to get into more classrooms and start observing but I'm just kind of building relationships right now and not wanting to make anyone feel threatened. I push where I see that there's potential for growth and in places where it's more difficult I often defer to the administration for that. So, I find places where I can make some movements, and that's my strategy. (WMI, 01.26.10)

Angela, a Maple Elementary fourth grade teacher, commented on how the role of instructional specialist was perceived by teachers, she said:

It's been a funny role. It has become sort of the pre-principal role, which has been tough because we end up not keeping an instructional specialist for very long. They end up becoming administrators. The role of instructional specialist has been a problem because of the continuity. We've had some fine instructional specialists but they're here for a year or two. Our principal was our instructional specialist and now he's our principal. And that for us was great because we needed a principal who knew our school really well, knew our issues. (WMT4.1, 02.03.10)

At Brown Elementary, instructional specialist was the employee of the principal. The principal used the instructional specialist as a lever to push her agenda. Kristy, a first grade teacher at Brown Elementary commented:

> I'm not sure what they're actually supposed to do but it just seems like the fill in person so our instructional specialist gets tasks with running the principal's errands all the time or keeping up with scheduling of school activities or- and she's really good about trying to support teachers however she can but it doesn't seem like the job is clearly defined. I mean she goes above and beyond as far as I'm concerned but it doesn't seem like that job title fits with what she actually does. She's just picking up all the pieces all the time. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

The Brown Elementary instructional specialist ideologically differed from the principal, but she followed the principal's path. She sometimes took the initiative to guide teachers in different directions than those advocated by the principal. Karen, a fourth grade teacher, described the way the instructional specialist supported her while her instructional approach was not the one of the principal, she stated "I've had some instructional specialist support and when I was doing a new strategy she said 'you should really keep doing it, you kids are really enjoying it', like don't worry if someone doesn't really agree. It's your choice." (WBT4.2, 05.07.10)

Aside from the instructional specialist, Brown Elementary had a literacy coach who ideologically was close to the principal. Kristy, a first grade teacher, described literacy coach's responsibilities:

> It seems to me that our literacy coach primarily works with the upper grade and he sits in on the grade leveled meetings. But it seems like the literacy coach is just a pawn of the principal. It is his attitude and his approach. I feel like he's checked out kind of tunnel vision. He kind of just regurgitates whatever it is the principal's saying without really thinking it though. I don't respect that he's not willing to question authority for the sake of kids. (WBT1.2, 04.24.10)

This comment obviously illustrates the role the literacy coach or the instructional specialist played as control levers used by the principal. The findings indicate that to couple school instructional activities to the district expectations, Brown Elementary principal used the literacy coach and the instructional specialist to control classroom instructional activities to ensure alignments of classroom instructional activities or the technical core and the institutional expectations.

Summary

To address the second research question, this chapter focused on comparing and contrasting the mechanisms the two centralized and decentralized districts adopted to control or coordinate classroom instructional activities. The findings of this study illustrate a complex picture of how reading instruction was controlled or coordinated in these two districts.

The findings of this chapter suggest a fairly clear set of conclusions about the control of reading instruction across these four schools in two very different districts. The findings revealed that Eastside School District controlled, whereas Westside School District coordinated, classroom instruction. The data illustrated that the two districts employed the same tools but used

them differently; one used them to control and the other one used to coordinate. Even so, significant differences were observed between the two schools in each district. In Eastside School District the same instructional control levers were used in both schools but in different ways and to different ends. The between-school differences emanated from different leadership approaches about how to prepare or convince the teachers to perceive the control mechanisms. In Westside School District, the two participating schools controlled or coordinated classroom instruction, depending on their corresponding leadership approach, regardless of the districts' governing approach.

The findings revealed that at the district level, the state standards and assessments were the two prominent mechanisms used in both school districts to control or coordinate classroom instruction. At the school level, the school leadership and instructional specialists were the two prominent levers used in both school districts to control or coordinate classroom instruction. As Ingersoll (2003) argues, the regulation of administrative prerogative played an important role in classroom instructional control or coordinating. In Eastside School District, bureaucratic mode of control through impersonal systems of employee selection, standardized training, formal assignment, standardized operating procedures, routines, and written records were used. In addition, resource dependency proved to be an effective mechanism to control classroom reading instruction in a centralized district.

This research identified correlations between controlling and principal bridging, on the one hand, and coordinating and principal buffering, on the other hand. A loosely coupled system coordinates its technical core for efficiency through the same mechanisms that a coupled system uses to control its technical core for conformity.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

I have endeavored throughout this study to present, in rich details, a portrayal of classroom reading instruction in two Northern Californian school districts with centralized and decentralized governing approaches. Central questions such as how classroom reading instruction were practiced, and how and via what mechanisms the districts and the schools within them controlled or coordinated classroom reading instruction were addressed and analyzed within the frames of the neoinstitutional theory. The lens of neoinstitutional theory helped me to examine whether and how reading instructional practices were tightly or loosely coupled from the institutional environment rules and expectations in the two, centralized and decentralized, school districts. The theory also helped me to identify the levels at which buffering or bridging happened in the two districts. In this study, I was interested in uncovering how reading instruction was practiced and controlled in the two centralized and decentralized school districts' classrooms. I achieved this goal by focusing on four schools in two districts through interviewing, observing and surveying teachers, instructional specialists, principals, and districts' instructional administrators.

I am keenly aware of the limitations of the sample size available to me, thus I have been cautious in not drawing generalizations from this study. Yet, the findings offer important insights with lessons to be learned about the role of school districts' governing approaches and the profound roles principals can play in shaping reading instructional practices at the classroom level. In the following, I first present a summary of the findings. Then I present my discussion of the findings and finally, in the conclusion section, I offer some tentative implications of this study for guiding school governance with regards to reading instruction.

Summary of Findings

District Level

At the district level, some important findings were achieved through this research regarding reading instructional differences and control or coordination of classroom reading instructional practices.

Reading instruction. The findings indicated that reading instruction was practiced differently in the two school districts. The data revealed the adoption of Open Court Reading in Eastside School District and Houghton Mifflin Reading in Westside School District. Eastside School District enforced a certain mandated reading curriculum that is usually applicable to whole class instruction, whereas Westside School District did not enforce the use of the mandated reading curriculum, instead encouraged reading instruction through programs that usually require small grouping to respect the diverse needs of its student population. In Eastside School District the instructional interactions were mostly teacher to student and conducted in a whole class format whereas in Westside School District the interactions were held in small groups and were more active and participatory between teachers and students.

The focus of instruction on the elements of reading was different in the two school districts. The findings indicated that teachers in Eastside School District focused their instruction on phonics, fluency, and vocabulary and were encouraged to use synthetic texts in reading instruction while teachers in Westside School District focused on vocabulary, comprehension, and writing and were encouraged to use expository texts.

In Westside School District, instructional programs were *promoted*, i.e. allowing teachers implement the programs they preferred. In Eastside School District, the programs were strictly *mandated*. Eastside School District recognized student test scores as the main objective of reading instruction. In this district teachers mainly considered the state standards and the adopted curriculum in their instructional practices, recognized test scores as the main objective of reading instruction, and openly stated that they taught to the test to legitimize their instructional approaches. In this process the cognitive aspect of the institution (Scott, 1987) was clearly illustrated as teachers conformed and complied with deeply ingrained cultural scripts, assumption and solutions or basically the state standards and assessments in this district. Over time, teachers built a series of mental filters that they used to make sense of the world surrounding them. The instructional choices they made were influenced by their creation of a frame i.e. the state standardized assessments that were the "taken for granted" that no one challenged. In Westside School District, on the contrary, teachers considered their students' academic needs and the state standards in their practices. Eastside School District limited teachers' involvement in instructional decision-making and provided limited teacher trainings around the mandated curriculum and the programs whereas Westside School District encouraged teacher involvement in instructional decision-making, and provided voluntarily teacher trainings that promoted best practices and instructional strategies applicable to any reading curriculum.

Control versus coordination. The findings revealed that the two districts used identical levers—curriculum, standards, assessments, and instructional program—to shape reading instructional practices, but they employed those levers in different ways. In Eastside School District, the levers were instruments of control, whereas in Westside School District they were tools of coordination. At the district level, the state standards and assessments were the two prominent mechanisms used by both school districts to control or coordinate classroom instruction. Eastside School District used the instructional tools, such as curriculum, instructional programs, instructional resources and support, and inspections to control while Westside School District used them to coordinate classroom instructional activities. In Eastside School District, instructional routines proved to be one effective tool to control classroom reading instruction. In Eastside School District, levers of control tightly coupled classroom instruction to the institutional expectations. In Westside School District, instructional tools of coordination provided opportunity for loose coupling of classroom instruction to the institutional expectations.

The findings, although strong at the district level, were moderated at the school level due to variation in school leadership approaches.

School Level

At the school level, some other important findings about reading instructional differences, control or coordination of classroom reading instructional practices, and principals' role as instructional leaders surfaced, as discussed in the following.

Reading instruction. The findings revealed that in Westside School District, Maple Elementary used all the elements of instruction including curriculum, instructional materials and strategies for the purpose of student engagement, while Brown Elementary decided to follow the district's advice on what to teach and how to teach. Brown Elementary had no specific themes or objectives built into its instruction. It focused on HMR as the reading curriculum and enforced Guided Reading as the only strategy.

In Eastside School District, the differences between the instructional practices of the two schools were less varied. Both schools followed the district mandates; Elm Elementary

recognized critical thinking as the instructional theme and took more initiatives and authority in implementing the mandates while Green Elementary followed the mandates with full fidelity with no instructional vision or focus.

Control versus coordination. This research revealed significant differences between the two schools in each district in controlling instruction. The school leadership and instructional specialists were the two prominent levers used to control or coordinate classroom instruction in both school districts. In Westside School District, the two schools controlled or coordinated classroom instruction, depending on their corresponding leadership approach. The Brown Elementary principal controlled her school's instructional activities and the Maple Elementary principal coordinated instruction in his school.

In Eastside School District the same instructional control levers were used in both schools but in different ways and to different ends. Because the district controlled classroom instruction through use of various instructional tools, the school principals' leadership approaches made teachers felt differently about classroom instructional control. The between-school differences emanated from different leadership approaches about how to prepare or convince the teachers to perceive the control mechanisms. In Green Elementary, teachers felt that instruction was extensively controlled while Elm Elementary teachers felt less controlled in their classrooms. These findings were repeatedly produced through multiple research methods such as surveys, observations and interviews.

Principal's content knowledge. The findings also revealed that school principals' literacy and instructional knowledge was a prominent factor in determining whether they bridged or buffered. The data revealed that those principals who had sufficient literacy and instructional knowledge and experiences tended to buffer their schools' technical core from the institutional environment. On the other hand, those principals who lacked sufficient literacy and instructional knowledge bridged their schools' technical core to remain coupled to the institutional expectations. The findings indicated that in Eastside School District, the Green Elementary principal bridged while the Elm Elementary principal tried to buffer. Elm Elementary principal who was aware of the district's lack of instructional capacity and had sufficient literacy and instructional knowledge, manipulated the situation to shape the terms of compliance with the district. While Elm Elementary principal was eager to show conformity, I realized that by covering up some of his school's instructional activities from the district he tried to buffer. The findings revealed that although this principal tried to buffer, with all the limitations and control mechanisms in place, he was only able to shape the terms of compliance with the district.

In Westside School District, the Maple Elementary principal who had extensive sufficient literacy and instructional knowledge and experiences buffered his school's technical core from the institutional expectations while the Brown Elementary principal with insufficient instructional knowledge bridged her school's instruction to the institutional environment.

It is also worth mentioning that the survey findings revealed an interesting pattern (see Appendix A, Figures 1-15). They illustrated that there were more similarities between Elm Elementary (Eastside School District) and Maple Elementary (Westside School District) on the one hand and between Green Elementary (Eastside School District) and Brown Elementary (Westside School District) on the other hand. I found these similarities interesting as the principals of Green Elementary and Brown Elementary both bridged while the principal of Maple Elementary buffered and principal of Elm Elementary with the intentions of buffering was able to shape the terms of compliance. The findings revealed that although centralization of a

district brings more instructional consistency between schools, the role of a principal as an active instructional leader could negatively impact this consistency.

Discussion

The interpretation of the findings revealed that differences between the two districts' instructional practices stemmed from districts' governing approaches that directly influenced a series of variables such as teachers' authority in making instructional decision-making, adoption of a specific reading curriculum, schools' teaching culture, principals' instructional knowledge, and finally monitoring systems to control classroom instruction.

The centralized school district approach did not recognize schools' instructional decision-making role, desired coupling and therefore compelled bridging. Since in Eastside School District the technical core was coupled to the institutional expectation, through use of various control tools, teacher's agency in making instructional decisions was very limited or circumscribed. Westside School District strongly promoted site-based decision-making and encouraged teacher involvement in instructional decision-making. This district desired loose coupling, therefore yielded buffering.

After taking into account the districts' governing approaches as a salient fact influencing instruction, role of principals revealed to be profound in causing differences between the two districts' instructional practices. Principals' mindsets, instructional knowledge, and willingness to buffer or bridge, set the tone of instructional practices within the two school districts. Analysis of the data revealed that in Westside School District, schools' instructional practices were loosely coupled to the institutional expectations, when principals buffered and allowed teachers to be actively involved in making instructional decision-making. As the data illustrated, by recognizing schools as influential instructional decision-making units, Westside School District yielded buffering opportunities for the schools. The vacuum allowed by the district provided schools opportunities to define their literacy goals and to construct their literacy plans. In this district, the Maple Elementary principal was able to keep his school's technical core buffered from the institutional pressures and loosely coupled it to the institutional expectations. Although in this situation the district yielded buffering, the data portrayed the Brown Elementary principal who tended to bridge and couple her schools' instructional activities to the institutional expectations.

This research revealed principals' agency as a determining factor in influencing classroom instructional practices through buffering and/or bridging. The principals served as the bridging and buffering agents who paved the ways for organizational coupling and/or loose coupling. Moreover, principals' literacy and instructional knowledge, as well as their political knowledge, were the determinant factors in instructional coupling or loose coupling. In both districts, those principals who had years of experience teaching reading or coaching literacy and instruction tended to buffer their schools' technical core from the district and the institutional expectations. On the other hand, principals who did not have such experiences bridged their schools' technical core to the districts as well as the institutional environment to fill in the gap of their literacy and instruction knowledge by relying extensively on the districts' mandates, guidelines, and requirements.

This study revealed that mutual understanding about literacy and instruction between principals and schools' instructional specialists was an important ingredient for successful buffering and loose coupling. Having similar literacy and instructional mindsets initiated cooperation between the two figures that increased school's instructional independence and

confidence. Such situation enables a school's instructional leadership team to be more efficient and creative in establishing strong instructional environment. The findings revealed that mutual understanding about literacy and instruction between the Maple Elementary principal and instructional specialist in Westside School District and between the Elm Elementary principal and instructional specialist in Eastside School District generated confidence amongst the teaching staff. This mutual understanding between principals and instructional specialists was missing in Green Elementary and Brown Elementary.

This research revealed that at the school level principals played a role in crafting their schools' teaching culture. Two principals created flexible instructional environments for teachers, either by promoting collective instructional decision-making or by manipulating the environment for teachers to feel less pressured and more involved in instructional decision-makings. As discussed in the literature review (see Chapter 1), there are less direct and less visible forms of organizational control that are built into the structure and culture of an organization, delimiting the areas in which members have responsibility and power, and behavior that is circumscribed by taken-for-granted norms, expectations, and precedents (Perrow, 1986). The findings confirmed that the Elm Elementary principal encouraged teachers to buy into implementing the district's mandates, policies, and expectations. His leadership skills and instructional knowledge helped him to control the environment of his school in a way that teachers felt involved in their school's instructional decision-makings and less pressured, although the findings showed that the principal was careful to move along the district's mandates. The situation was different in Green Elementary, where the principal was not able to establish effective relationship with teachers and did not have sufficient instructional and literacy knowledge. There, she bridged her school to the institutional expectations. This principal did nothing but to follow the district's predetermined instructional programs.

A similar pattern was detected in the decentralized district. In Westside School District, the Maple Elementary principal buffered while the Brown Elementary principal bridged. The findings suggested that the more the principal buffered, the less his school was coupled to the institutional expectations, and hence, the more the teachers became involved in instructional decision-makings. The Maple Elementary principal who had years of instructional experiences managed his school's instructional activities through a site-based decision-making mode and buffered his school's technical core from the district. The Brown Elementary principal, who according to the teachers was distant from actual instruction, only showed conformity to the district's expectations by coupling her school's technical core to the district. She relied on the district guidance to make her school's instructional decisions. This research revealed that the more the principal bridged, the more she conformed to the institutional expectations by depending on the district, and hence, the less the teachers became involved in instructional decision-makings. In Westside School District although opportunities for buffering was provided by the district, the Brown Elementary principal used direct and visible forms of control and bridged her school's technical core to the district and chose to follow the district's instructional guidelines and mandates.

The interpretation of the findings implies that in Eastside School District, bureaucratic mode of control (Ingersoll, 2003) through standardized training, formal assignment, standardized operating procedures, and routines was employed to *control* instruction. The findings suggested, by contrast, that Westside School District *coordinated* its instruction through the same mechanisms that Eastside School District employed to control it. In Westside School District, the cognitive effect (Scott, 2004) through site-based management were involved in coordinating

instructional activities. This district used the coordination strategy as opposed to the control strategy (Rowan, 1990) and strived to develop working arrangements such as site-based decision-making that support teachers to increase their engagement in the tasks of teaching.

The findings revealed that schools were bounded by mandates through instructional control tools in Eastside School District while schools had flexibilities in making site-based instructional decisions in Westside School District. The analysis of findings indicated that due to schools' leadership mindsets and approaches, schools reacted to the institutional expectations differently. In both districts, schools instructionally operated somewhat differently while they conformed to the institutional expectations.

Implications

One of the most challenging areas in educational reforms is instructional reform. There are many elements involved in how instructional reforms are implemented in various classrooms around the country. School districts, as local governing authorities, can (and do) influence instructional practices in the classroom (Spillane, 1996; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Coburn, 2004). This study contributes to the research literature by investigating the link between school district governance and classroom reading instructional practices. The current research literature lack understanding about whether there is a correlation between districts' governing approaches and classroom instructional practices.

Here, I illuminated classroom instructional practices in two districts—one centralized and one decentralized. Through multiple sources of data, I illustrated that the centralized school district used various instructional control tools to ensure coupling while the decentralized district used the same instructional tools to coordinate and yielded schools to be loosely coupled to the institutional environment. Those school principals who had extensive instructional knowledge buffered in order to stay loosely coupled to the institutional environment. The two school principals with insufficient instructional knowledge, in order to show conformity, bridged to remain coupled to the institutional expectations.

In the literature, few studies have attended to the governance of school districts, and none of them focused on the relationship between school districts' governance and classroom instructional practices. This study illustrates i) a correlation between district governance and classroom instructional practices, ii) a correlation between centralization and instructional control on one hand and decentralization and instructional coordination on the other hand, iii) a correlation between principal literacy and instructional knowledge and his role as bridging or buffering agent, and iv) a correlation between district centralization and organizational coupling on one hand and decentralization and loose coupling on the other hand.

This study contributes by focusing on districts as influential forces that affect classroom reading instructional practices due to their governing approaches. The way a district is governed influences whether students benefit from classroom instruction. This research portrays the cases of two districts that through their governing approaches influenced instruction at the classroom level. Portrayal of this relationship is valuable to policy makers. They can expect better results from instructional reforms if they take into consideration the governing approaches of individual school districts in designing and implementing instructional reforms.

This study also focuses on the impact of principals' literacy and instructional knowledge on organizational coupling and loose coupling. Prior research has shown that principals lead schools in different ways in different subjects (Burch & Spillane, 2003, 2005; Stein & D'Amico, 2000). Research on principals' content knowledge demonstrates that content knowledge is

important and can influence the work of a principal. Principals' content knowledge influences how they observe classroom instruction, work with teachers, and structure teacher professional development (Coburn, 2005; Nelson & Sassi, 2005; Nelson et al., 2001; Overholt, 2008; Stein & Nelson, 2003; Szabocsik, 2008). However, previous investigations lack understanding about principal's role as the agent of bridging and buffering in relation to his content knowledge. This research shows how principals' literacy and instructional knowledge influences design of schools' instruction and objectives. This study illustrates how principals' literacy and instructional knowledge contributes to their leadership role in bridging and buffering and establishing organizational coupling and loose coupling.

Implications for Practice

This study also contributes to the day-to-day work of policy makers, districts, and principals to improve classroom reading instructional practices. This study provides a vision of how and why reading instructional practices are different in two distinct school districts. Existing research had concluded that districts can and do influence classroom instruction (Spillane, 1996; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Coburn, 2004), but they don't get down to the level of moderating those influences by the governing approaches operating within the district. The current study demonstrates that it is important to identify whether and how school districts' governing approaches contribute to different classroom instructional practices. This study provides a description of reading instructional practices in two centralized and decentralized school districts and describes the ways through which the districts controlled or coordinated classroom reading instruction.

This research led to the realization that districts' governance, centralized versus decentralized, is a profound determining factor in shaping classroom instructional practices. By realizing that teachers are not always to blame for instructional shortcomings and understanding that instructional issues could stem from within the districts, school districts could use the backward mapping to identify their organizational weaknesses that explicitly or implicitly affect classroom instruction. Realizing that organizational environments are complexly interconnected could help the districts to study their organizational behavior to address issues related to classroom instruction.

This study also shows that the same tools can be used in different ways—to either control or coordinate instruction. It suggests a relationship between districts' centralized and decentralized governing approaches and instructional control or coordination. A centralized district desires bridging and coupling that require various control mechanisms to ensure implementers' fidelity throughout the processes. A decentralized school district yields buffering and loose coupling and therefore coordinates instructional practices to support individual school's instructional needs. Realizing that the same instructional tools were used differently to reach probably the same goals in the two districts, helps us understand how implementers respond differently to the tools available to them. How the tools are used, through control or coordination, influences whether teachers comply with fidelity or not. Providing teachers with collective instructional decision-making opportunities requires coordination while control of instruction limits teacher authority and creativity in tailoring her instruction to the needs of her students.

This research implies correlation between centralization of one school district and instructional coupling on the one hand and decentralization of another school district and loose coupling on the other hand. Through use of multiple instructional control levers, classroom

instruction in the centralized school district remained coupled to the institutional environment. In decentralized school district, instruction was coordinated and schools' technical core was loosely coupled to the institutional expectations. Using multiple instructional levers, local school boards and district superintendents have a choice to calibrate and adjust whether and how to centralize or decentralize instruction.

From this study, we learned that school principals' leadership skills and instructional knowledge profoundly influence the overall school culture and instructional mission. While centralized or decentralized governance of the districts influenced the overall skeleton of classroom reading instruction, however, the leadership approach and instructional knowledge of principals shaped the enactment of culture and mission at the school level, yielding different mixes of trust, respect, and collaboration. At the school level, principals had opportunities to provide instructional flexibility for teachers or modify situations at their schools, causing teachers to feel less pressured and a little more in control of their pedagogy.

This study creates a framework for understanding how principals' literacy and instructional knowledge through their agency in bridging and buffering contributes to organizational coupling and loose coupling. This research implies that principals are the agents of bridging and buffering, and their decisions and actions influence classroom instructional practices. This research identified two of the most prominent reasons behind principals' intentions to bridge and/or buffer their schools' instruction from the institutional expectations to be their extent of literacy and instructional knowledge, as well as their political knowledge about the districts' policies and operations.

According to the existing literature, school leadership is the second most important factor in student learning after classroom teaching (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Marzano et al., 2005; Waters et al., 2003); this research demonstrates that school leadership is an important factor in student learning even after the strong influences of district governance and teacher prerogative have been accounted for. A common account of the failure of school change identifies teachers as agents who could, can, and do close their classroom doors to buffer their instruction from the institutional demands. Under today's standardization and accountability pressures, this study concludes that principals are the eminent factor to bridge or buffer schools' technical core from the external expectations. This outcome might be due to increased institutional pressures through standardization and accountability that organizational level of buffering and bridging has shifted from classroom to the upper level of educational hierarchical system i.e. school leadership. This might also be due to the fact that the responsibilities of principals have expanded to include school instructional leadership.

An important implication for districts is that it should take into consideration subject-specific leadership content knowledge when recruiting and hiring principals. Principal training is often overlooked when districts implement instructional reforms. Others who have studied leadership content knowledge in reading also suggest specific content focused professional development for principals (Coburn, 2005; Overholt, 2008; Szabocsik, 2008). Overholt (2008) and Szabocsik (2008) found that principal content knowledge can be developed through professional development. Districts and non-system actors should consider instructional knowledge and pedagogical expertise for principals when designing professional development (Coburn, 2005). This study suggests that in order to lead instruction at the school level, principals need support in developing their literacy and instructional knowledge. Often, the instructional reforms focus on changing teachers' instructional practices and overlook the school leadership skills and content knowledge that is important to the success of a reform. Principals

need ongoing trainings to improve their knowledge of instruction in subject matters in order to improve instruction throughout classrooms.

The complications identified and outlined in the present study suggest important challenges for all players—policy makers, districts, schools, and practitioners—to consider. They also highlight important opportunities for educators and researchers to further this study by exploring these issues in other school settings. Additional research that encompasses a larger sample size of districts and schools could further our understanding of how various school systems organizational elements interact to shape instruction at the classroom level. Meanwhile, the findings and implications presented herein warrant closer consideration by district leaders. Having set the stage for studying role of school district governance in classroom instruction, this research suggests that new studies should investigate what type of governance, i.e. centralized or decentralized, is more effective in improving classroom instruction.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Figures
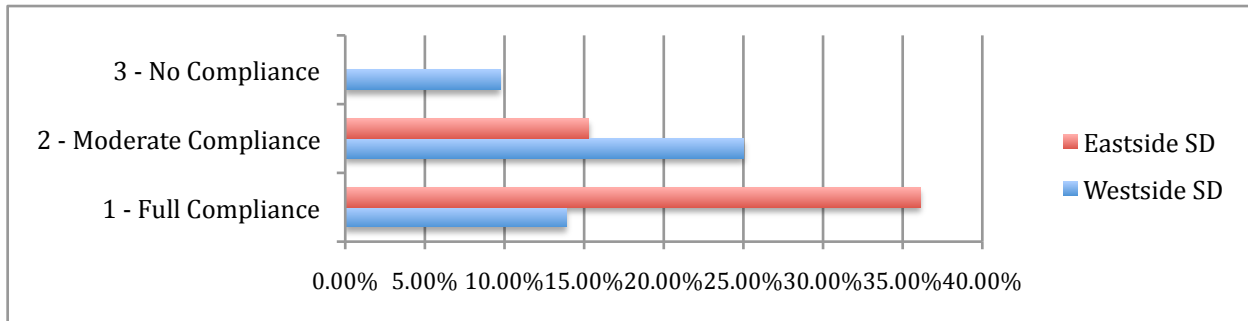
Figure 1. Extent of teacher compliance with the district mandated curriculum
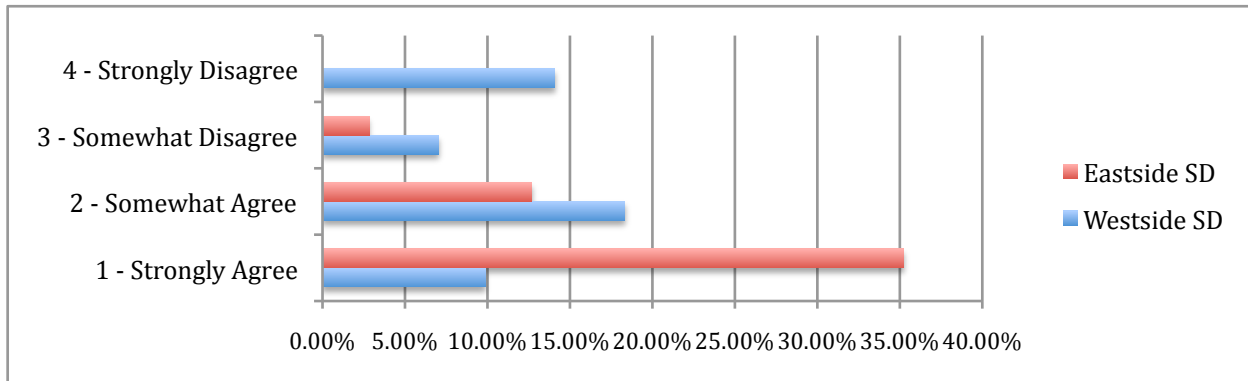
Figure 2. Use of state standards and assessments as guides to instruction
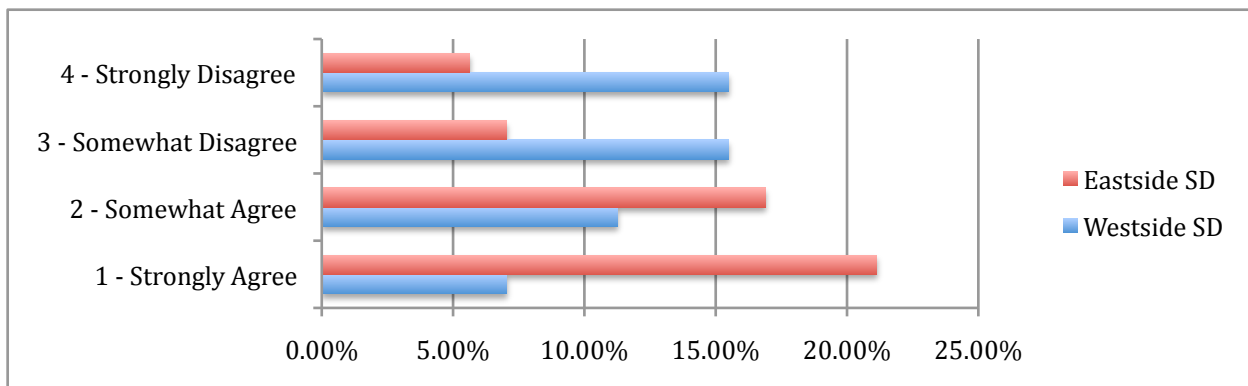
Figure 3. Extent of district professional support in implementing the mandated curriculum
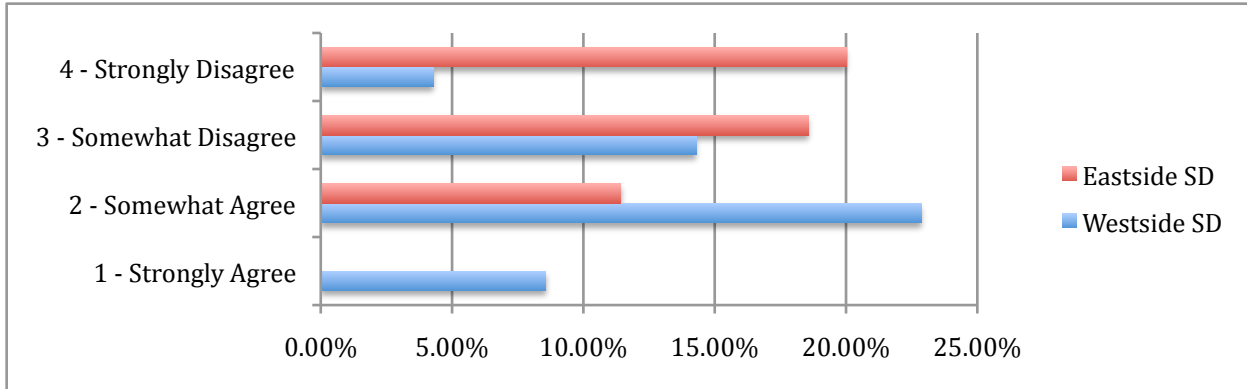
Figure 4. Teachers' view about the district's quality of professional support in improving instruction
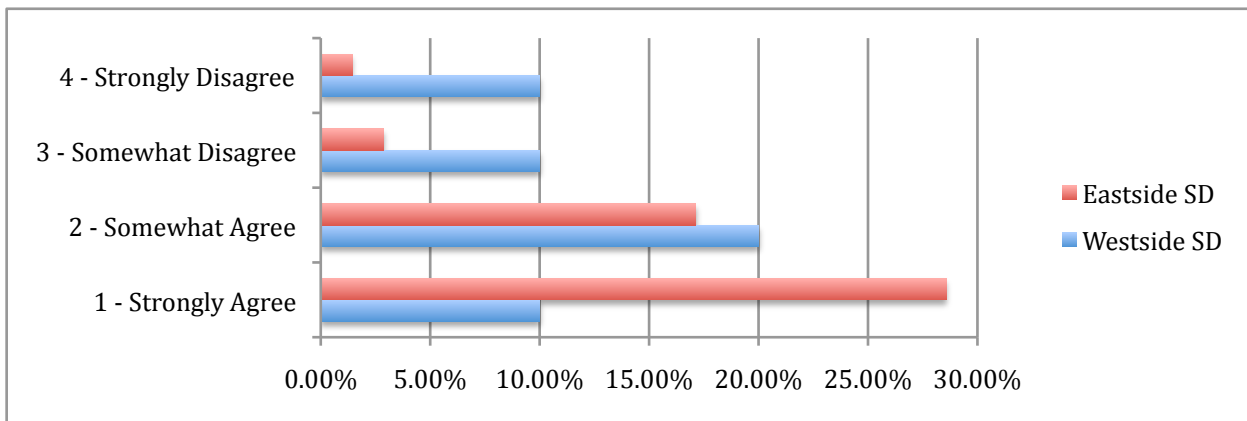
Figure 5. Teacher compliance in implementing the mandated reading curriculum
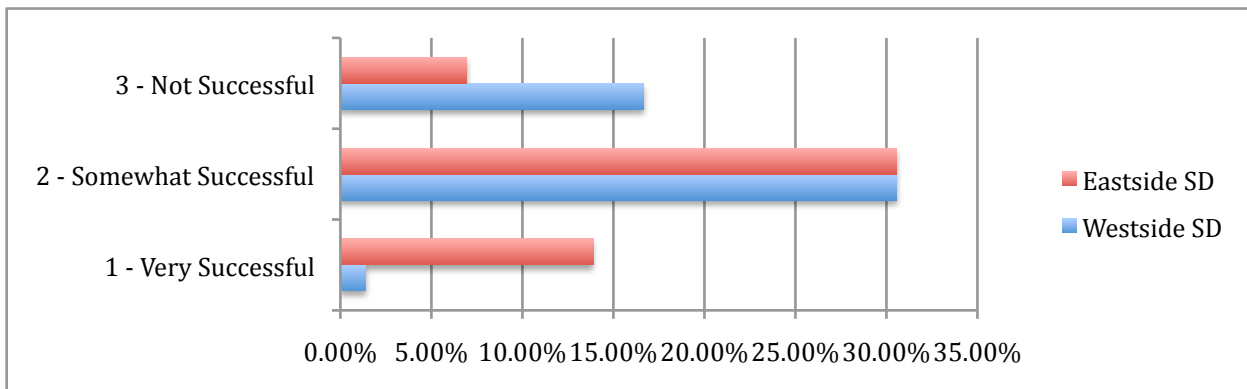
Figure 6. Extent of district success in using the mandated reading curriculum to control instruction
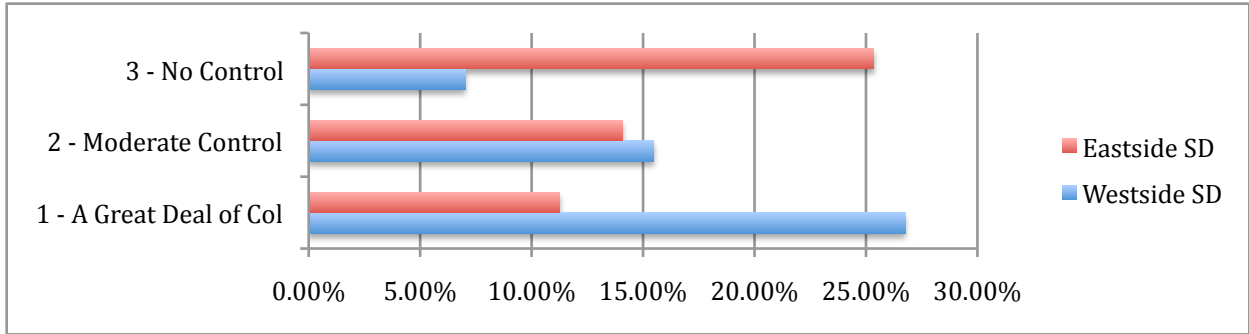
Figure 7. Extent of teacher control over reading curriculum
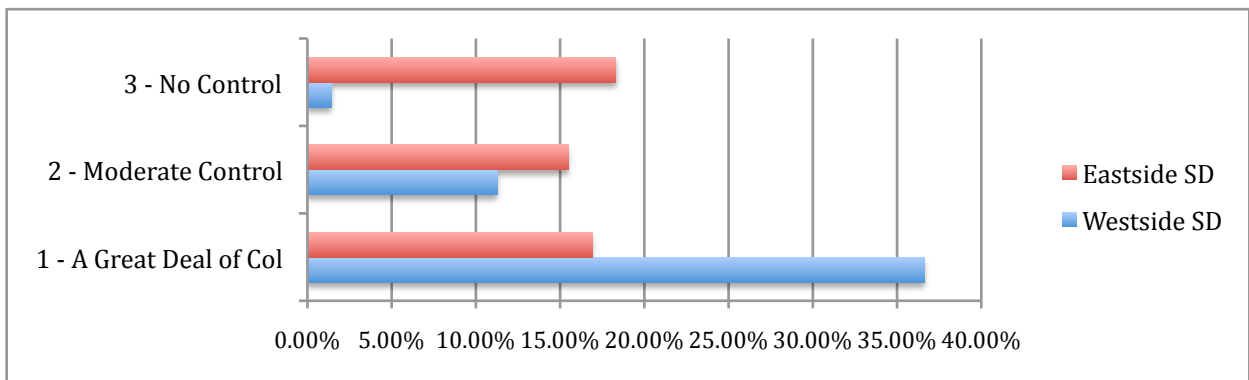
Figure 8. Extent of teacher control over supplementing the mandated reading curriculum
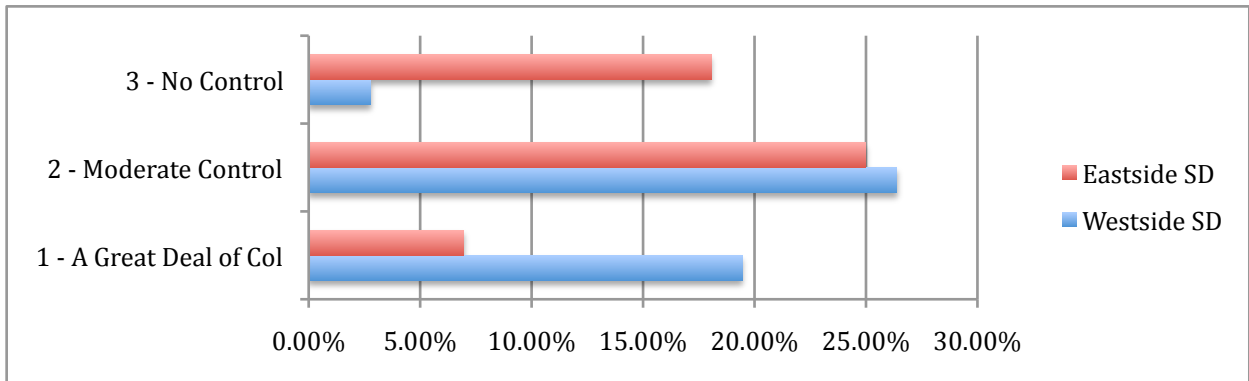
Figure 9. Extent of teacher control over student assessments
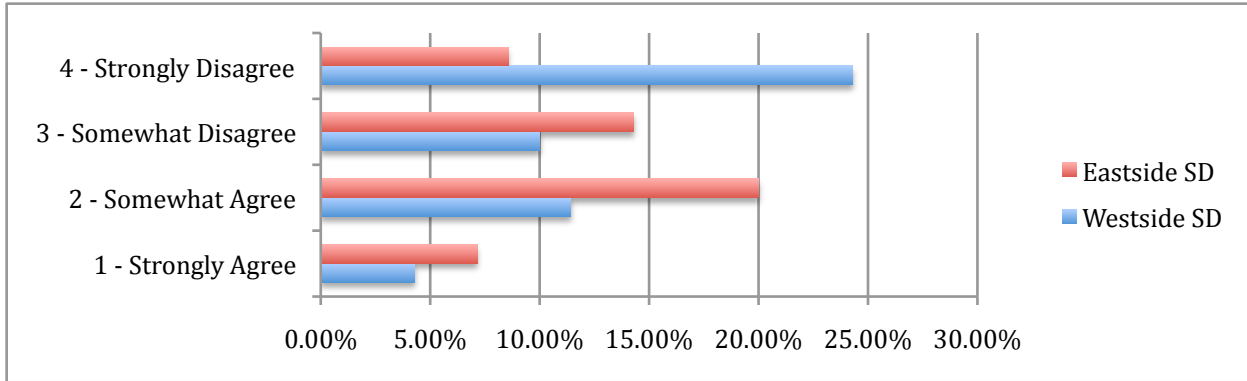
Figure 10. Evaluating teachers based on their fidelity in implementing the mandated reading curriculum
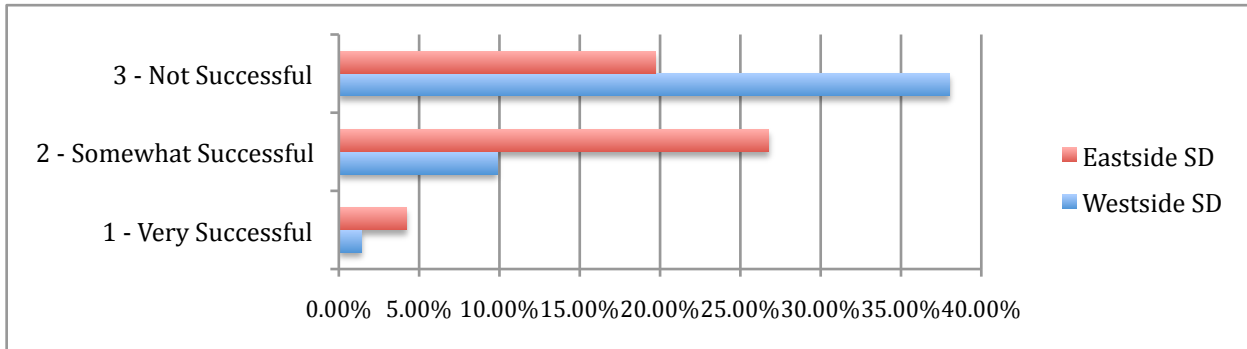
Figure 11. Extent of district success in controlling instruction by walkthroughs
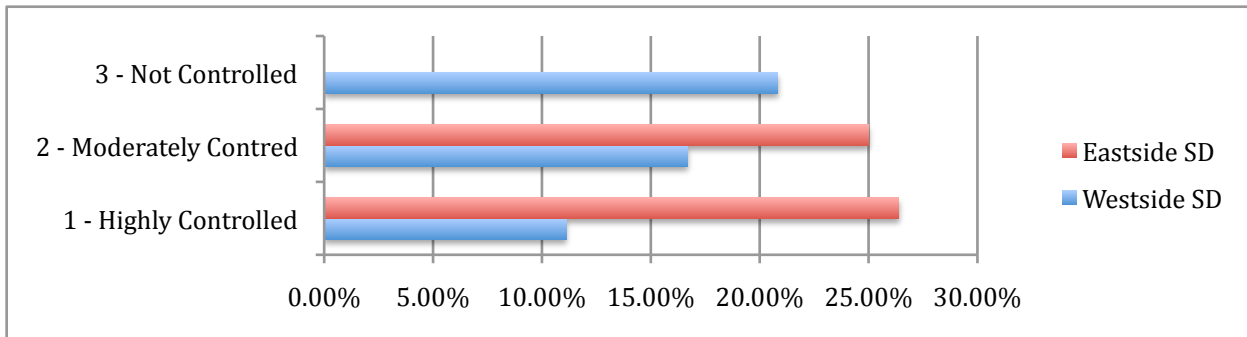
Figure 12. District's use of pacing guide as a strong instructional control lever
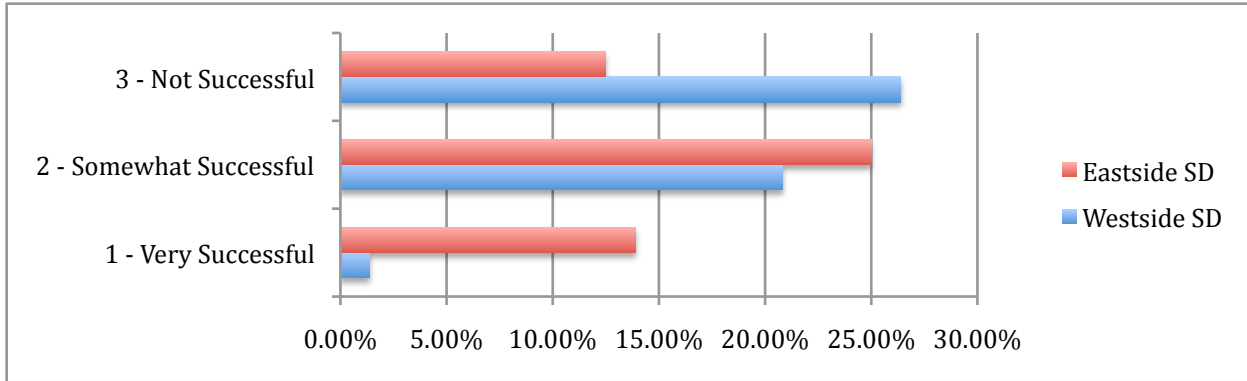
Figure 13. District success in using pacing guide to control instruction
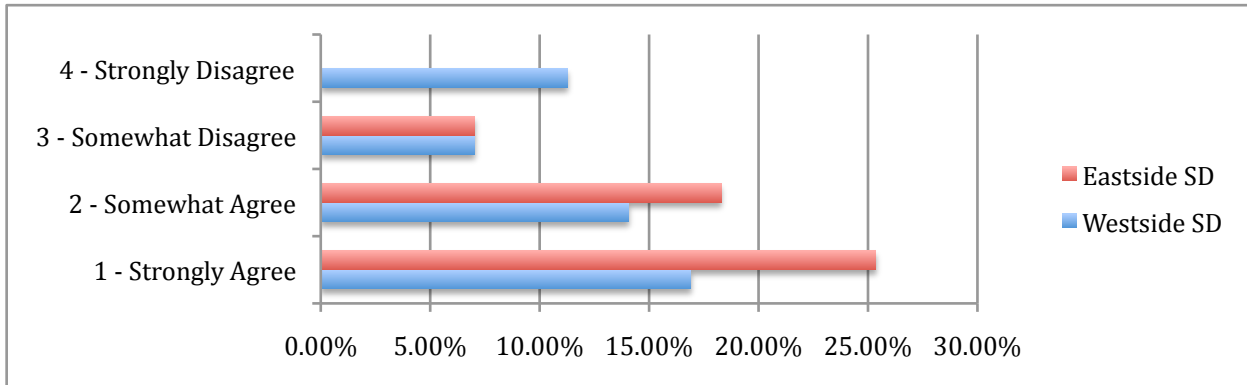
Figure 14. Use of teacher collaboration meetings as a control tool to ensure their fidelity in implementing the mandated curriculum
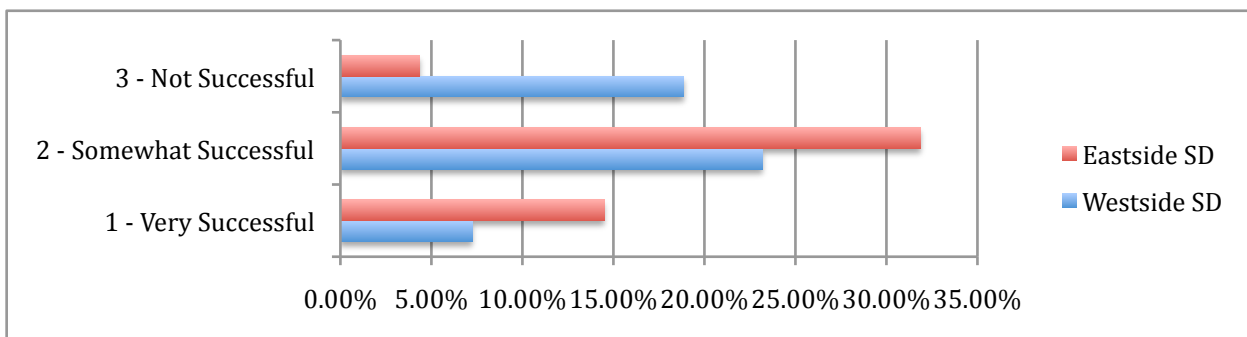
Figure 15. District success in using principals as a lever of instructional control

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview questions for teachers:

1. What are your instructional goals for the students in your classroom?
2. Do you use a reading textbook series (i.e., a basal reader)? If so, how is its selection of determined?
3. What would a typical reading class or lesson look like in your classroom?
4. How do you handle different ability and/or achievement levels of students in your classroom?
5. What are some of the considerations you make when planning your reading lessons?
6. What are the channels through which the district communicates with you in implementing a reading policy?
7. How does the district gain teachers' support in implementing a reading policy?
8. How involved do you see the district in your reading instruction? How direct or indirect this involvement is?
9. How do you describe the objectives of the professional development in your district?
10. Do you have any required guidelines to consider in your teaching planning? How specific/clear or vague are those guidelines?
11. What kinds of instructional supports do the district provides you with? In return, what are you expected to do? What supports would you like to get?
12. Does the district supervise your classroom reading instruction? If yes, how do you describe this supervision?
13. How much flexibility do you have in implementing the district's reading program?
14. What are the mechanisms through which the district ensures that the district-wide reading program or standards are implemented?
15. Tell me about the people (in your school, in the district, in professional experiences, even in books) who have influenced your reading instruction approach?
16. To what degree do you and your colleagues follow the methods championed and/or required by your school district/school reading program?
17. If you sense a conflict between what the district asks you to do and what you think is a better approach for your students, how do you resolve the conflict?
18. How do the district's financial practices (e.g., purchasing and contracts) influence your instruction?
19. How do you describe your involvement in your reading practice's decision-making?
20. How do you determine if a reading program will work in your classroom? What features do you look for?
21. Can you describe the influences professional development sessions might have had on your teaching?
22. What current trends in reading instruction in your school district please you? Puzzle you? Concern you?

Interview questions for principals/district administrators:

1. How and by whom is overall reading curriculum designed?
2. What are the goals for the students in your school/district?
3. How and by whom are objectives of the reading program determined?

4. How and by whom are the selections students read decided upon?
5. How and by whom are daily reading assignments determined?
6. How is the selection of textbook series determined?
7. What are the mechanisms that the district uses to ensure that the district-wide reading program or standards are implemented?
8. How would you describe overall classroom management plan/style in this school/district?
9. How do you describe general reading instruction practices in this school/district?
10. How do you handle different ability and/or achievement levels of students in your school/district?
11. Tell me about the people who influence reading instruction in this school/district?
12. To what degree do you think teachers follow closely the methods championed and/or required by the school/district reading program?
13. How does the school/district determine if a reading program will work? What features do they look for?
14. Can you describe the influences professional development sessions might have had on teaching in your school?
15. Do you think the messages teachers receive about reading instruction and professional development, are consistent or conflicting? Explain.
16. How are the criteria and methods used to evaluate the performance of students determined? What method is used in your district/school?
17. What criteria are used as the basis for evaluating teachers? Who evaluates teachers?
18. How do you think teachers perceive walk-in inspections? Do you think they affect teaching?
19. Describe your thoughts about the role of standards, assessments, and accountability in your school district.
20. What current trends in reading instruction in your school district please you? Puzzle you? Concern you?
21. What challenges do you think teachers face in learning to teach reading? What supports do they get?
22. What do you see as the strengths of reading program in your school/district? The weaknesses?
23. Please describe the culture of teaching behavior in your school/district? What are the commonalities across teachers? What are the areas of difference among teachers?
24. How many units in the district are involved in the reading instruction policy planning and implementation?

Appendix C: Observation Protocol

Level		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Level		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 – Who	**Code**									**5 – Material**	**Code**								
										Textbook									
Classroom Teacher	c									Narrative	n								
Specialist Teacher	s									Informational	i								
Aide	a									Big books	nb/ib								
No one	n									Student Writing	w								
N/A	9									Board/chart	b								
										Worksheet	s								
										Audio-tape	a								
										Computer/overhead	co								
2 – Grouping	**Code**									Other/NA	o/9								
Whole Class/Large Group	w																		
Small Group	s									**6 – Teacher Interaction**	**Code**								
Pairs	p									Telling	t								
Individual	i									Modeling	m								
Other/NA	o/9									Recitation	r								
										Coaching/scaffolding	c								
3 – Major Focus	**Code**									Listening/watching	l								
Reading	r									Reading aloud	ra								
Composition/Writing	w									Assessment	a								
Other Language	l									Other/NA	o/9								
Other/NA	o/9									Conversation/discussion	rd								
4 – Activity	**Code**									**7 – Expected Pupil Response**	**Code**								
Reading connected text	r									Reading	r								
Listening to text	l									Reading turn-taking	r-tt								
Vocabulary	v									Orally responding	or								
Meaning of text, lower										Oral turn-taking	or-t								
m1 for talk	m1									Listening	l								
m2 for writing	m2									Writing	w								
Meaning of text, higher										Manipulating	m								
m3 for talk	m3									Other/NA	o/9								
m4 for writing	m4																		
Comprehension Skill	c									**(A)** # of Students on Ta									
Comp. Strategy	cs																		
Responsive engagement	r																		
Writing	w									**(B)** Total # of Stud									
Word ID	wi																		
Sight Words	sw									**(C)** Total Time on T % (A/B = C%)									
Phonics																			
p1 = letter sound	p1																		
p2 = letter by letter	p2																		
p3 = onset/rime	p3									**School:**									
p4 = multisyllabic	p4																		
Word Rec. Strategies	wr									**Teacher:**		**Grade:**								
Phonemic Awareness	pa																		
Letter ID	li									**Date:**		**Observation #:**								
Spelling	s																		
Other/NA	o/9																		

Level 1 – Who in the classroom is providing instruction/working with students?
Code as many as apply, and for each person listed, also code levels 2 and 3. Code each person only once. Code the teacher on whom you want the most detailed information last. We find that we can only code levels 4-7 for 1 person during 1 observation.

Who	Code	Definition
Classroom teacher	c	Classroom teacher
Reading specialist	s	Reading teacher, Title 1 teacher, reading resource teacher, special education teacher, speech and language teacher, ESL teacher, bilingual teacher, etc.
Aide	a	Paraprofessional or instructional aide
No one	n	No one is in the room, or no one is directly working with the children (e.g., the children are working in their seats independently and no one is circulating.)
Not applicable	9	No instruction is occurring

Level 2 – What instructional groupings do you see?
If grouping patterns for an adult change during 5 minutes, code all that apply.

Grouping	Code	Definition
Whole class/Large group	w	All of the children in the class (except for 1 or 2 individuals working with someone else), or a group of more than 10 children. If there are 10 or less in the room, code this as a small group.
Small Group	s	Children are working in 2 or more groups. If there are more than 10 children in a group, call this large group.
Pairs	p	Children are working in pairs
Individual	i	Children are working independently
Other	o	Some other grouping practice is in place
Not applicable	9	None of the above seem to apply; no instruction is taking place

Level 3 - What major academic area is being covered?
If more than one area is covered by one adult, code all that apply. (e.g., Classroom teacher moves from reading to spelling during 5 minute segment.)

Major focus	Code	Definition
Reading	r	Reading, word recognition, reading comprehension, writing in response to reading (where this is the major purpose for the writing), literature study, reading vocabulary

Composition/Writing	w	Writing for the purpose of expressing or communicating ideas (but not writing in which major purpose is to respond to reading); learning how to write; writer's workshop, creative writing, report writing
Other Language	l	Aspect of language arts other than the above; grammar, mechanics, oral expression, etc.
Other	o	Focus is academic but not in literacy
Not applicable	9	None of the above seem to apply, focus is not academic

Level 4 – What is the specific literacy activity or activity of the classroom teacher?
Literacy Activity (What is the specific literacy activity or activity of the classroom teacher?)
Code levels 6 and 7 at the same time for each literacy event observed during the 5-minute observation. Code each literacy activity or event that has one of the specific foci below. For example, students are reading silently (r) and then switch to talking about lower-level meaning of text (m1); students stop to talk about the meaning of a word (v); they go back to talking about lower-level meaning of text. Each event or activity should be coded as having one particular focus. Code each literacy activity or event only ONCE as opposed to multiple times during a 5-minute segment. Hence, for the above, "r", "m1", and "v" would be coded.

Activity	Code	Definition	Example
Reading connected text	r	Students are engaged in reading text. This includes silent reading, choral reading (even if not all students are participating), simultaneous oral reading, oral turn-taking reading, repeated oral readings, and singing printed text.	…Students choose a book from the class library and have independent book time on the rug… … Teacher- We're going to read it again and we're trying to read it fluently, with expression, stopping at the dash. Teacher and students read the poem again…
Listening to connected text	l	Students are engaged in listening to text. If teacher is reading to students, code as 1, even if the students are to be following along silently.	… Teacher reads a narrative trade book, *Something from Nothing*, while students listen on the rug…
*Vocabulary	v	Students are engaged in discussing/working on word meaning(s). No codes in this cell, but it introduces the two subsequent cells, which MUST be coded every time a vocabulary activity is observed.	
Vocabulary When did it		**Here code WHEN the vocabulary activity occurred in**	• *Pre*:

Activity	Code	Definition	Example
occur?	v1 v2 v3 v4	**relationship to the reading of the text** 　•　　*pre reading*: Typical pre-reading vocabulary activity, often in connection with the development or invocation of prior knowledge. 　•　　*point of contact*: Teacher deals with an unknown word *AS IT COM|ES UP* during shared or guided reading. Either defines the word or encourages students to figure out its meaning 　•　　*post reading*: After reading, often a Beck-like expansion activity. 　•　　*text independent*: vocabulary discussion NOT related to a specific text; more in the tradition of oral language development	Teacher puts key concepts on the board and asks students to talk about what they already know about the words. OR what they think the selection might be about based on these words. 　•　　*PoC*: The word *irresistible* arises during guided reading and the teacher offers a student friendly definition or asks students to tell what it means. 　•　　*Post*: Teacher asks students which of these things would be *irresistible*
Vocabulary What teaching approach was used?	vd vc vr	• definitional: students and teacher focus on a dictionary or group constructed definition • contextual: emphasis on using the context of use to infer or refine word meaning • relational: emphasis on the how any given word relates to other words or	• teacher asks students to define new words; can occur before, during, or after reading • teacher asks students to infer (or shows how she derived) the meaning of a word in context • teacher encourages students to tell how saunter is alike and different from promenade, trudge, tiptoe, and plod as expressions of ways of perambulating.

Activity	Code	Definition	Example
Meaning of text, comprehension – lower level	m1 m2	Students are engaged in *talk (m1)* or *writing (m2)* about the meaning of text which is at a lower level of text interpretation. That is, students are asked to identify meaning that is explicitly stated in the text. The writing may be a journal entry about the text requiring a lower level of text interpretation or may be a fill-in-the-blank worksheet that is on explicit text meaning.	(m1)…Teacher asks students which part they liked. Student – When the fish was angry… (m1)…Teacher – Who was Dr. De Soto's assistant? Student – His wife… (m2)… Teacher has students turn to the Time for Kids page that has activities that relate to the articles, and she guides them in completing the activities (unscrambling terms, cloze exercise, etc)…

Activity	Code	Definition	Example
Meaning of text –higher level	m3 m4	Students are involved in talk (m3) or writing (m4) about the meaning or text which is engaging them in higher level thinking. This is talk or writing about the text that requires a higher level of text interpretation or goes beyond the text: generalization, application, evaluation, or aesthetic response. A child must go beyond a yes or no answer (e.g. in the case of an opinion or aesthetic response).	(m3)…Teacher shows cover of book (Magic Fish). Teacher-What do you think this book will be about? Student-A fish. Teacher-Why do you think it will be about a fish?... (m4)…Teacher is noticing some questions that students have recorded. Teacher- I'm noticing that some of you have written some good "I wonder" questions… (m4)…Students are completing a Cause-and-Effect sheet on the anthology selection…
Comprehension: Skill emphasis	K	The teacher and/or students are engaged in naming, defining, or pointing out a comprehension activity. (Comprehension activities may include the full range of processes that are labeled as skills and strategies, such as main idea/details, cause-effect, fact-opinion, summarizing, predicting, and the like) This differs from m1-m4 in that the specific comprehension activity is identified in an explicit manner (not simply practiced, as when a teacher asks students to make predictions or point out the opinions in a text, without identifying the comprehension activity). But it stops short of any modeling and/or guided practice in telling what, how, when, where or why to engage in	…Teacher shows an Asking Questions poster. Teacher- We talked about how good readers are always asking questions— before they read, while they're reading, after they read. I noticed some of you doing that today as we were reading *The Skeleton on the Bus*. I'm going to have you write down some of your questions as I read…

			the practice.	
Comprehension: Strategy emphasis		S	The teacher and/or students are engaged in reviewing how, when, or why one might engage in a comprehension activity. (Comprehension activities may include identifying the main idea and important details, determining cause and effect, distinguishing fact from opinion or reality from fantasy, identifying the author's purpose or bias, sequencing, classifying, comparing, making predictions or connections, drawing conclusions or inferring, clarifying, summarizing, asking questions, or visualizing.) This differs from csk in that there is mention of *how* one engages in the activity (e.g. how to identify the important details), *why* one might choose to engage in the activity (e.g. "We might visualize, or make pictures in our mind of what's happening, to make sure we have a clear idea of what's happening in the story."), or *when* one would find this activity most useful (e.g. "Distinguishing fact from opinion is especially important as you read about history, because everyone who writes about historical events has a particular perspective. So, as you read about your mission, it will be important to notice when people are writing their opinions about this part of California history, and when they are writing facts about the mission.)	Teacher – Authors use certain words that can help us figure out the order in which something happens. Words like First, next, after that, and finally (points to chart of sequence words) help the reader determine sequence. Teacher asks ss to scan the article for sequence words from the chart.

Teacher – Sometimes, when we make predictions we pay closer attention to what's happening in the story because we want to find out if our prediction was correct—it makes it more fun.

Teacher – As you read the articles about logging in the northwest, be sure to pay close attention to who wrote the article. Remember, when you are reading about a controversial topic, it is important to identify the author's purpose, to think about why he or she wrote this article, and how he or she may want to influence your thinking. |

Strategy	S	Use the second letter to identify which of the key strategies is emphasized (may be more than one) • SC clarification • SV visualization • SS summarization/ • SP prediction • SQ questioning • SE evidence based reasoning • SO other strategy	
		Use these codes to specify the nature of the instruction offered SM: Mentioning; just naming the strategy without teaching it. SA: Student Application Sticky-notes, partner-sharing, small groups	SM: Teacher says stop and clarify as you read SA: Teacher encourages students to look for opportunities to use the strategy as they read or discuss a particular text, either on their own or with others.
Responsive Engagement	R	Use the R code whenever aspects of Responsive Engagement are observed. Use the second letter to identify the specific RE feature emphasized • RT: Theme emphasis • RI: Issue • RP: Personal connections • RIN: Form/function • RJQ: Juicy question • REX: Explicit instruction (demonstrations of how, when, where, or why to engage in a particular aspect of RE) • PO: Other	RT: a teacher and students engage in a discussion about the theme of a story RI: …discussion of an expository text RP: A teacher asks students "how they would have solved Tommy's problem" or "whether they have ever had a similar problem" RIN: Teacher and students engage in a discussion of how an author used adjectives to color readers' views of a character. RJQ: Teacher asks a "juicy" (open) question or asks students to develop their own juicy questions. REX: Teacher

			demonstrates how he or she used text clues and background knowledge to come up with a theme

Level 5 – What materials are the classroom teacher and students with her using for this event? Code for each specific literacy activity or event coded. If more than one type of material is used for a specific level 4 activity, code all that apply (e.g., children switch from listening to teacher talk about the meaning of a word to writing word meaning on sheet of paper.)

Material	Code	Definition	Example
Textbook	tn ti	School textbook (e.g. basal reader, leveled books, social studies book). Distinguish between narrative and informational text.	…4 students are studying a social studies text called Map Essentials and completing a geography worksheet…
Narrative	n	Narrative text (e.g. narrative picture book, biography, history, novel, poem, other trade book)	…Teacher reads aloud from *Because of Winn Dixie*… …Teacher calls on student to read the title of the poem (Pumpkin Pals)…
Informational	i	Informational book, reference book (encyclopedia, etc.), newspapers, magazines	…4 students are at the listening center reading a nonfiction text called *The Rainforest* and completing a Listening center log (summary, what did you learn)…
Big books	nb ib	Narrative big books (nb) and Informational big books (ib)	…Teacher tracks text with pointer as she and the students read aloud from big book version of *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*
Student writing	w	Student writing (more than words or disconnected sentences) is being used (finished or in progress)	…Teacher is at her desk helping a student edit her writing…
Board/chart	b	Board, chart, or	…Teacher - Think about that time when

		card is being used (e.g. whiteboard, pocket chart, hanging chart, flashcards)	you were in a rainstorm. We are going to list what you saw, what you heard, what you felt. There is a chart on the board that has three columns labeled- What you see, hear, feel. Teacher calls on students, lists responses…
Worksheet	s	Worksheet, workbook page, sheet of paper, individual whiteboards for one-word or one-sentence answers. This does not include printed prompts for writing.	…Teacher is meeting with 4 students reviewing a sheet in their reading folders that goes over what to do in Literature Circles…
Audio-tape	a	Audio-tapes or CD's, listening center, etc.	…At the listening center, 3 students are listening to *A Chair for My Mother* and following along in their own texts…
Computer	c	Computer, individual keyboard (e.g. AlphaSmart), etc.	…2 students are doing a letter-sound matching activity on the computer…
Overhead projector	op	Overhead projector, opaque projector, LCD projector (would be coded with c and op)	…Teacher is modeling the revising process using a transparency of student writing on the overhead projector…
Realia	r	Real objects and materials used to introduced or reinforce concepts in the text, or concepts that students will be learning	…Teacher is showing the students a quilt and explaining how the squares were designed by different people. Teacher – Today we are going to read about a very special quilt…
Other	o	Something other than the above is being used, for example, dictionary	…Teacher – Let's look up the word venture. Students open their dictionaries…
Not applicable	9	None of the above seems to apply	…Teacher distributes "Room B-6 Bucks" to students who are on task…

			… Teacher explains that students will audio-tape their discussions and she shows students how to operate the tape recorder. Students are to hold the mini recorder up to their mouths as they participate in the group…

Level 6 – What is the interaction style being used by the classroom teacher during this level 4 event?

For each literacy activity or event, code each style that is observed during the 5 minute period, but code each style only once. If more than one style is observed for a particular literacy event, code all that apply.

Interaction style	Code	Definition	Example
Telling/giving information	t	Telling or giving children information, explaining how to do something. This may include paraphrasing text or translating to convey information (not necessarily to develop language skills).	…Teacher – This is a dash mark, it's kind of like they didn't really finish a thought and there's a sudden ending… …Teacher- See this, that's a shovel (in Spanish and English). Teacher-Shovel, shovel sand, (with gestures)…
Modeling	m	The teacher is coded as explicitly showing, demonstrating, or thinking aloud the steps of how to do something or how to do a process as opposed to simply explaining it (e.g. a teacher models fluent reading after she models word-by-word reading, and she talks about the difference). This may include a teacher dramatizing text or using inflection or gestures to emphasize meaning. When modeling is coded at Level 6, listening should be coded at Level 7.	…Teacher reads the poem aloud with students using no expression. Teacher now asks ss to read with expression. Teacher reads aloud with students. Teacher- Wait, we're sounding a little bit choppy, let's try it again… …Teacher- I don't remember what a centaur is, let's look it up. Sometimes when you're reading, you might need to use a dictionary to look up words like we're doing now…

Interaction style	Code	Definition	Example
Recitation	r	The teacher is coded as engaging the students in answering questions, or responding (q-a-q-a). The purpose primarily appears to be getting the children to answer the questions asked rather than engaging them in a formal discussion. When the dynamic is recitation, but the teacher is requesting elaborated responses from students, level 6 would be coded as r *and* c. Also, recitation is coded if the teacher has asked the students to report their responses to a particular question or prompt to one or two neighbors.	…Teacher - What does that mean (new word, vet)? Student – Vet, like when your animal is sick, you take it to the vet. Teacher- Vet is short for a longer word. Does anyone know what it is? Student - Veterinarian. Teacher- Right!
Discussion	d	Students engaged in a discussion, which is largely led by the teacher. Students may respond to each other, but with the teacher's mediation. Exchange may be t-s-s-s, rather than t-s-t-s.	…Students are taking turns without raising hands and quietly passing the tape recorder. Students are listening to one another's responses…
Conversation	cv	Students engaged in an exchange in which the norms of everyday conversation apply (e.g. students bid for turns without looking to the teacher, students talk to one another and not just the teacher, turns tend to be linked to previous contributions, the teacher is not in charge of the conversation).	…Student 1 – I was surprised when Big Anthony used the pot. Student 2 – But it said that he didn't listen, so I knew he'd disobey Strega Nona. Student 3– Yeah, but she gave him a place to live and he should've been thankful and done what she said…
Coaching and/or scaffolding	c	The teacher is coded as prompting/providing support which will transfer to other situations as students are attempting to perform a strategy or activity or to answer a question. The teachers' apparent purpose is to foster independence to get a more complete action or to help students elaborate on an	…Teacher helps student divide the sentences he's written into different paragraphs. Teacher asks him questions to help him expand his writing with more detail…

Interaction style	Code	Definition	Example
		answer (rather than to simply get a student to answer a question). This may include the teacher translating for the purposes of developing students' language skills. Also, when the dynamic is recitation, but the teacher is requesting elaborated responses from students, level 6 would be coded as r *and* c.	
Listening and/or watching	l	Teacher is listening or watching as students are engaged in an activity. Do not code as listening if the listening is only part of recitation.	… T is listening as students read in pairs. Teacher reminds one pair to sit shoulder to shoulder…
Reading aloud	ra	Teacher is reading aloud to the students.	…Teacher holds up and reads the title of a book, The Skeleton on the Bus. Teacher begins to read aloud and show students the illustrations…
Assessment	a	Engaging in questioning, explaining, providing directions for the purpose of assessing student performance. Typically this would involve record keeping.	…Teacher meets with student and gives words in segmented fashion and asks him to blend the sound into a word (/s/ /a/ /d/). Each word has 2, then 3 sounds. Teacher – Now they're getting harder. Teacher gives words with 4, then 5 sounds. As she says each sound, she holds up her hand and moves it left to right with each sound. Teacher-last time you did this you didn't get any and this time you got 8— great….
Other	o	Interaction style other than what is listed above. Listening or watching without giving feedback would be coded as "other."	…Teacher checks in on each small group to make sure they are on task…
Not	9	None of the above seems to	…Teacher is at her desk

Interaction style	Code	Definition	Example
applicable		apply. Code 9 when students are not working with the teacher (so there is no direct teacher-student interaction).	checking off homework…

Level 7 – Expected response from students.
If more than one expected response is observed for a particular event or activity, code all that apply.

Response	Code	Definition	Examples
Reading	r	Students are to be reading. Code as "r" if students are reading individually, in pairs, choral reading, or reading simultaneously.	…Teacher reads aloud while students read aloud too.
Reading turn-taking	r-tt	Students are to be reading by taking turns.	…Students read aloud, taking turns ("popcorn" or round robin style)…
Orally responding	or	Oral responding is coded when there is choral responding, or a majority of children in the group responding at the same time. Code as "or" when teacher is working with one student who is orally responding	…Teacher – Let's welcome our visitor. Students – Good morning, Mr. Wells… …Teacher- What did you notice? Student- There are two e's. Teacher- 2 e's in what? Student- See...
Oral turn-taking	or-tt1 or-tt2	Students either wait to be called on (e.g. hand-raising or waiting for teacher prompt (or-tt1), students bid for turns using the norms of everyday talk (or-tt2). Or-tt2 is coded if the teacher has asked the students to report their responses to a particular question or prompt to one or two neighbors.	…Teacher places word cards on the table (bear, boar, boy) and asks students to share some "ah ha's" about the words. Student – They all have a b. Student – These two have a b and an r…
Listening	l	Students are to be listening (and no child is reading or orally responding). Typically this is coded when the teacher is telling children information,	…Teacher paraphrases what has just happened in the story and resumes reading aloud…

Response	Code	Definition	Examples
		modeling, or reading aloud to the children (at Level 6).	
Writing	w	Students are to be writing words, sentences, or paragraphs.	…The writing group of 9 students at two tables are working on writing paragraphs…
Manipulating	m	Students are to be manipulating, using their hands (other than writing). Code as "m" is children are coloring or completing a multiple choice activity.	…One group of 5 students is playing a game with contractions cards...
Other	o	Some form of responding other than what is listed is expected.	…Students give a thumbs-up if they agree and a thumbs-down if they disagree
Not applicable	9	None of the above seem to apply.	… Teacher has the students put their heads down on their desks…

Appendix D: Survey Protocol

Survey Administrator: R. Sarah Kohansal
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I would like to express my appreciations for your agreeing to participate in this research. I am interested to know your perspective about reading instruction in your school district. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please use the margin/back of the sheets, if you would like to write notes reflecting on the topics presented in this survey. I assure you that this survey is fully confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of the project. If you would like to contact me with any concerns/questions or are interested to have further conversations regarding this study, I would certainly be delighted to hear from you by phone, in person, or e-mail.
Many thanks!

Grade/s Teaching _____

First Section: Please circle your responses.

1. How would you classify your teaching position?
   a. Full-time teacher
   b. Part-time teacher
   c. Specialist teacher
   d. Other

2. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
   a. 1-3 years
   b. 4-6 years
   c. More than 6 years

3. During your most recent FULL WEEK of teaching, approximately how many hours did you spend teaching reading language arts?
   a. Less than 5 hours
   b. 5-8 hours
   c. 9-12 hours
   d. More than 13 hours

4. The adopted reading language arts program in my school is decided by (check as many as apply):
   __School district
   __School principal
   __Collaboration of teachers and/or the principal
   __Individual teachers
   __School's instructional team

Second Section: Please checkmark your responses.

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about HMR/OCR program?				
	Strongly Agree	**Somewhat Agree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
a. It provides me with useful information about how to teach particular skills, strategies, texts, or other topics.				
b. It provides me with useful information about what students typically know and can do and about difficulties they have.				

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how you plan reading lessons for your students?				
	Strongly Agree	**Somewhat Agree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
a. I frequently refer to and use information from the teacher's guides associated with the HMR/OCR program adopted by the district.				
b. I frequently use student assessments from the HMR/OCR, the state standards, or the district benchmarks to guide my teaching.				
c. Teacher and/or pacing guides are strong elements of instruction in my classroom.				
d. I frequently refer to additional or supplemental instructional materials or other reading textbooks.				
e. I frequently refer to the knowledge/experiences that either I, or my colleagues possess to address my students' needs.				

3. When teaching reading, how often do you use the following approaches to group students for instruction?				
	Every day	**A few times a week**	**A few times a month**	**Rarely or never**
a. Whole class grouping (i.e., all students are taught the same thing at the same time)				
b. Small groups based on ability, achievement or mixed grouping (i.e., the students are grouped based on their abilities or interest)				

c. Individualized instruction (e.g., students work individually on learning assignments specifically tailored to their achievement or interest)				

4. In your opinion, to what extent is each of the following controlled by your school district?

	Highly Controlled	Moderately Controlled	Not Controlled
a. Reading curriculum			
b. Supporting reading instructional materials			
c. Teaching techniques/strategies			
d. Student assessments			
e. Teacher collaboration			
f. Time and pace of instruction			

5. How much control do you have in your classroom over the following areas of reading planning and teaching?

	A Great Deal of Control	Moderate Control	No Control
a. Reading curriculum			
b. Additional/supplemental reading materials			
c. Themes, topics, and skills to be taught			
d. Teaching techniques/strategies			
e. Evaluating and assessing students			
f. Time and pace of instruction			

6. In your opinion, how successful is the district in using the following tools controlling your reading instruction?

	Very Successful	Somewhat Successful	Not Successful
a. Reading curriculum			
b. Pacing guides			
c. Principal's reports/evaluations			
d. Professional development and training workshops			
e. Standards			

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
f. Student assessments				
g. Reading coaches/instructional leaders				
h. Walkthrough inspections				
i. Teacher collaboration				

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?				
	Strongly Agree	**Somewhat Agree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
a. I receive support from the **district** only to implement the HMR/OCR program in my classroom.				
b. I receive support and encouragement from the **school** administrator to implement any appropriate reading program/s in my classroom to meet my students' needs.				
c. The reading instruction objectives and expectations in my school are subject to the agreement of my **school** faculty members and administrator.				
d. My **district**'s instructional approach to reading is flexible enough to allow me to use instructional materials and strategies that are useful and applicable to my students' needs.				
e. My **school**'s leadership approach is flexible enough to allow me to use instructional materials and strategies that are useful and applicable to my students' needs.				
f. Collaboration among faculty members is a strong part of my **school**'s teaching culture.				
g. Collaboration among faculty members is encouraged in my **district**.				
h. The goal of teacher collaboration in my school is to align all the grade level teachers' activities in implementing the HMR/OCR program and/or the standards.				
i. The goal of teacher collaboration in my school is to improve teaching strategies and to promote creativity.				
j. My **district** provides sufficient professional development for teachers to improve their instructional strategies and skills to meet the needs of the students.				

k. Professional development in my **school** promotes variety of instructional strategies and skills to meet the needs of the students.				
l. In my school, teachers are evaluated based on their fidelity to implementing the HMR/OCR program.				
m. The district performs regular classroom walk-through inspections to ensure HMR/OCR implementation.				
n. In my school, the instructional decisions are made collaboratively amongst the teachers and the administrators.				
o. I am the ultimate instructional decision-maker in my classroom.				

8. To what extent do you comply with the district's expectations in the following areas related to reading instruction?			
	Full compliance	**Moderate compliance**	**No compliance**
a. Adopted reading curriculum			
b. Pacing guides			
c. Professional development and training workshops			
d. Standards			
e. Walkthrough inspections			
f. Teacher collaboration			
g. Teaching techniques/strategies			
h. Evaluating and assessing students			
i. Time and pace of instruction			

THANK YOU!