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Understanding Leadership within Comprehensive Early Childhood English Learner Reform

By

Anya Hurwitz

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
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Committee in charge:
Professor Tina Trujillo, Chair
Professor Bernard Gifford
Professor Cristina Mora

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Understanding Leadership within Comprehensive Early Childhood English Learner Reform

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By

Anya Hurwitz

Abstract
Understanding Leadership within Comprehensive Early Childhood English Learner Reform

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Doctor of Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Tina Trujillo Ph.D., Chair

This is an examination of leadership within the implementation of an early learning reform model that centralizes the needs of young English Learners. The English Learner student population continues to grow in California, yet schools and districts have persistently been unable to support their learning needs. The current policy context is driven by a new set of 21st century standards in which language is situated in a more prominent and cross cutting manner. The longstanding failures of our educational systems, along with this policy setting, make this an ideal context to study reform leadership within implementation of a model that is specifically designed to support young English Learners.

This study is situated in literature focused on systemic reform, English Learner policy and reform, and a review of scholarship about the actors that operate within reforms. The concepts that frame this inquiry are rooted in the socio-political context, shared ownership and partnership, and the crafting of coherence within reform implementation. This is a critical case study of one district, Sequoia Grove School District, in its fourth year of implementation of the Sobrato Early Academic Language model. This design is most appropriate because it enables a deep and thorough examination of the leadership dimensions of reform implementation, a context-driven aspect of school change.

There are two overarching findings from this study. First, leaders are able to build a coalition embodying shared ownership and collaboration for the reform across actors, though crafting coherence appears to be particularly context specific and complex. Secondly, there are three key socio-political factors that leaders are navigating: 1) the socio-economic context related to declining enrollment; 2) the policy context of transitioning to new 21st century standards; and 3) the unrelenting influence of the accountability framework established within the No Child Left Behind era. This study is written in a time when public education's legitimacy is being undermined at the federal level in new and extreme ways. Practitioners, policy makers, and researchers committed to understanding and improving education for English Learners should consider the deeply political nature of school improvement efforts that centralize English Learners' needs.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, my eternal rock and foundation. As I wrote in my application statement, my drive to work for social justice through public education comes from seeds that each of my four grandparents planted in me, and from the water and nutrients my parents raised me on. To Stefan for your love, patience, support (including editing), encouragement, and acceptance. And to Naomi and Rafael for your all your love and affection which always sustains me. Finally, to Deborah and Dennis for the love and support that helped create the space for this to happen. With much love and gratitude, I dedicate this study to each of you.

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Chapter I. Introduction

The Big Picture

This study examines the leadership dimensions of the implementation of the Sobrato Early Academic Language model (SEAL), a comprehensive instructional reform model, within a small suburban district in Northern California. SEAL aims to transform preschool through 3rd grade classrooms to thoroughly support the language, literacy, and academic development of young English learners (ELs) in California. District and site leadership is an under-examined element of reform implementation, yet is key to understanding how reforms play out. As such, this critical case study focuses on the leadership of SEAL implementation within one of the sixteen school districts implementing the model.

The persistent inability of schools in California to support their Latino ELs makes the current transition to new, more rigorous 21st century standards a challenging and critical time. Despite their growing numbers, few districts and schools have been able to build high quality programs and services that meet the academic needs of Latino ELs (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003). One study found that 59% of secondary level ELs in California were "Long Term English Learners", having been in California schools for over 6 years without making adequate progress on the path to English proficiency while also struggling academically (Olsen, 2010). The vast majority of these students are Latino ELs. In 2013, only 28% of Latino students in California graduated high school having fulfilled the requirements necessary to apply to a University of California or California State University campus. Although it is not reported, we can surmise that this number was far lower for Latino ELs. California's education system, along with the rest of the nation, continues to underserve its Latino ELs.

Meanwhile, California's adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010 represents an era of increased expectations of rigorous, higher-order learning for all students, and are said to be the most ambitious set of standards yet developed (Pearson & Hiebert, 2012). Pearson and Hiebert highlight the emphasis on critical thinking and collaboration, as well as standards for language and literacy throughout the content areas as key elements of increased rigor. Scholars focused on ELs note that there are major issues regarding how to make CCSS accessible to ELs (Goldenberg, 2012; Hakuta, 2011; Valdés, Kibler, & Walqui, 2014). Hakuta (2011) points to these new content-based language standards for Science and Social Studies as an area where the impact of implementation for ELs is unchartered territory. He cautions that assessment, specifically discerning the assessment of English proficiency as integrated or separated from CCSS, is another area of concern. Goldenberg (2012) warns that this is a challenging and important reform era for ELs.

This set of circumstances makes California an ideal context to study attempts to implement CCSS in ways that specifically meet the needs of Latino ELs. The Sobrato Early Academic Language model (SEAL) was developed as a response to these issues. The SEAL model is

designed to build the language and literacy skills of young ELs in preschool through 3rd grade within rigorous CCSS-based thematic instruction. SEAL is a comprehensive model, not an intervention or program that happens in a specific time of day. When implemented fully, SEAL thematic units span language arts, science, social studies, and English Language Development (ELD), and are taught throughout the day. Moreover, SEAL's high-leverage instructional strategies are embedded throughout all learning activities, ensuring that rich language developments is explicitly planned for across the content areas. Schools that implement the model work in sets of three building communities of practice across their schools. Teachers are trained in grade spans, preschool through 1st grade as one group, and 2nd and 3rd grade as the other. The training series is two years long, and begins with the preschool through 1st grade teachers, while the 2nd and 3rd grade teachers begin training the following year. As such, it takes three years for all teachers to go through the training series. Schools are required to have a coach, someone from within the school or district to support teachers with implementation. Coaches, principals, and district leaders all receive support and technical assistance from the SEAL team through convenings, workshops, and ongoing meetings to problem solve and customize implementation. SEAL is currently being implemented in 87 schools across 16 districts throughout the state, with plans for further expansion.

Framing the Problem of Practice

This critical case study is focused on understanding the leadership dimensions of SEAL implementation. The aim of this study is to explore site and district capacity to lead deep and persistent implementation of SEAL, an equity-minded reform focused on transforming preschool through 3rd grade classrooms to fully support the language, literacy, and academic needs of young Latino English learners. SEAL training and implementation requires all teachers in preschool (transitional kindergarten) through 3rd grade within a school to participate in roughly 24 days of professional development across two years, with an additional 10 optional days (paid) over the summer. As such, it is an intense process for teachers who are the primary actors of the reform. Nevertheless, research suggests that leadership plays an important role in reforms, and shared ownership across actors is necessary for deep and sustainable implementation (Coburn, 2003; Datnow & Stringfield, 2000; McLaughlin & Mitra, 2002).

The conceptual framework that drives this critical case study is rooted in the need to better understand the socio-political context within which leaders operate and reforms are implemented. Much of educational research seeks to distill 'interventions', and study them against comparable contexts. This approach is based on a simplified notion of context that is usually defined by limited factors such as demographics and location. Alternatively, the theoretical base of this inquiry elevates the complexity of the socio-political context, and explores how political games and the local, state, and national policy milieu impacts leadership and implementation. Additionally, this conceptual framework is grounded in notions of shared-ownership and partnership across actors as important to understanding leadership of reform. Though leaders have different roles and responsibilities, exploring the extent to which they take ownership of and partner around reforms emerges as an important element of implementation. Relatedly, how leaders work to negotiate the

coherence between initiatives, programs, and curriculum becomes key to creating the conditions for deep and lasting instructional change.

The context of this study is Sequoia Grove School District[1] (SQSD), located in the San Francisco Bay Area. This elementary district serves about 11,000 students, with 45% coming from low-income homes. About half the student population is Latino, 30% are ELs, and 20% are Fluent-English-Proficient (FEP). The district began implementing SEAL in the 2013-14 school year within their four Title 1 schools where the majority of their ELs are enrolled. They rolled out implementation in another twelve elementary schools in subsequent years.

I am the Deputy Director of the SEAL model and firmly situated as a researcher practitioner. When I took on this position in 2014, the beginning of the second year of SEAL replication, there was no articulated theory of action for how to engage principals and district leaders with their role in implementation of this reform. As such, I began working with my colleagues to build that dimension of our external support for our district partners. We began convening principals and district leaders multiple times a year, communicating regularly with them to foreshadow and recap the content of the trainings their teachers and coaches were participating in, and providing increased technical assistance. Focusing on the leadership dimensions of this comprehensive instructional reform is an authentic problem of practice.

SGSD represents a critical case to further investigate these elements of reform implementation primarily because shared-ownership and partnership around reform implementation appeared to present prior to this investigation. The following research questions guide this study: What do district and site leaders do to implement SEAL? What are the contextual factors that create more enabling or constraining conditions for leaders implementing SEAL?

Synopsis

There are two overarching findings of this study. First, related to what leaders have done to implement SEAL, SGSD leaders have established a coalition around SEAL implementation and share ownership across actors, though in varying degrees and enacted in different ways. This ownership seems to be related to each participant's belief that the reform was needed to better serve their ELs, particularly within this new era of standards. Moreover, a core group of important leaders have considerable experience working within bilingual education, which is somewhat unique and serves to strengthen the coalition. Partnership and collaboration around reform implementation are also enacted differently across actors, though they are espoused values across participants. Furthermore, those most active in reform implementation, particularly teachers and coaches who work in deeply collaborative ways across multiple sites, illustrate the most complex and multi-faceted understandings. Crafting coherence between SEAL and other initiatives, programs, and curriculum appears to be an ongoing process, requiring negotiations across actors.

The second finding is associated with the contextual factors impacting reform leadership which are influential within SEAL implementation and will likely prove to be important within sustainability. There are three main factors: 1) the socio-economic context of declining enrollment which is creating instability; 2) the larger statewide policy context related to the new era of 21st

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[1] Pseudonym

century standards that seems to be enabling reform leadership; and 3) the relics of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), namely the accountability frame related to high-stakes testing which looks to still be present. How leaders individually, and as a coalition, negotiate these socio-political contextual factors will be consequential particularly given that this is a reform that centralizes the needs of ELs, making it politically vulnerable.

These findings denote several implications of which I outline specifically for practitioners, policy makers, and researchers. Practitioners planning for or engaged in comprehensive reform initiatives might consider these suggestions: 1) work to actively define differing roles of shared-ownership across actors, and the relationship of roles to each other; 2) acknowledge and facilitate the complexity of collaboration and partnerships; 3) approach coherence across reforms, programs, initiatives, and curriculum as a process that moves beyond superficial notions; and 4) be mindful of how to build strong coalitions around multilingual program development within Proposition 58 implementation, with special attention to how they are designed to adequately serve ELs.

I posit two key recommended areas of focus for policy makers based on this study's findings. The first is to consider the impact of the economic context and economic policy strategies in relation to instructional policy strategies focused on EL reform. Because districts and schools that serve the majority of ELs are the most economically vulnerable, transformative reform efforts should be buffered so that their impacts are not undermined by the continuous instability of public educational funding. The second is to address the residual effect of high-stakes accountability on schools and districts because it serves to limit educational reform efforts focused on transforming schooling for ELs. These are two areas appear to be quite relevant within the larger socio-political context and policymakers would benefit from considering their implications.

Relatedly, I recommend that researchers more deeply investigate elements of political games within educational reform focused on ELs, framed as these two questions for further research: 1) How do leaders build coalitions focused on ELs within the implementation of Proposition 58? And, 2) What are the political games that play out as leaders focused on the needs of ELs tackle issues of coherence within this new era of 21st century standards?

This study contributes to practice, policy, and scholarship as it attempts to both broaden perspectives while layering complexity into the ways we examine educational reform leadership specifically focused on the schooling of ELs. I use a widened definition of leaders, focusing on actors across the system. Moreover, I integrate theoretical concepts that bridge across scholarship on instructional change, systems change, and politics within educational reform. As a practitioner researcher, my aim for this study is both to deepen understandings about how the socio-political context impacts reform leadership, while also gaining insights into promising practices of those working to lead ambitious equity-minded instructional reform.

Chapter II. Review of Literature

This review of the knowledge base is focused on the implementation of educational reforms. I pay special attention to those that are equity-minded given that this review of the literature informs the study of SEAL implementation, an equity-minded reform focused on English Learners (ELs). I begin by exploring what scholars have learned about reforms intended to impact instructional practices, the core of schooling. Next, I investigate the broader policy context within which our current transition to 21st century standards is situated. Moreover, I investigate reforms and policies focused on ELs, as is the key aim of SEAL. Lastly, I examine the role of various actors within educational reform implementation, both those traditionally acknowledged as key to implementation, as well as those less commonly defined as central to instructional change. Understanding reform actors, and how they relate to each other, is essential to examining the complexity of comprehensive reform implementation.

Complexity of changing instructional practice

Leading scholars have noted that reforms in schools have done little to significantly impact instruction (Cuban, 1990; Elmore, 1996). Elmore (1996) asserts that reforms directed to aspects of schooling that are farther away from the instructional core will be easier to implement than those directly related to the core. Similarly, Honig (2006) differentiates between policies that intend to impact the core of schooling versus those that focus on the periphery. Coburn (2003) contends that in order for reforms to penetrate beneath the surface and achieve a significant level of depth, they must consider teachers' beliefs, norms of social interaction, and underlying pedagogical principles. Teachers tend to gravitate towards their established instructional approaches, even adapting reform principles to fit their preexisting practices (Cohen, 1990). Therefore, Coburn suggests that implementation intended to change teacher practice will need to move beyond the technical dimensions of a specific reform, and employ a broad framework and set of strategies that include social relationships and belief systems.

Spillane and Jennings (1997) study an ambitious language arts reform and find that though on the surface it seems to be fully implemented, a deeper analysis of teaching and learning uncover a different story. On first examination, looking through the lens of materials and instructional methods, these researchers find that all the classrooms they analyzed had fully implemented the reform. But when they conducted a more in-depth investigation looking at learning tasks and classroom discourse, a more complicated story arose. They conclude that ambitious instructional reform must consider practitioners not just as implementers, but also as learners. Furthermore, teachers are in different places in their instructional orientation and development, and they learn in different ways. These authors recommend that policies and implementation designs take practitioner learning into account.

Correnti and Rowan (2007) look across three Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) models and find that for reforms to be most effective they need to have well-defined curricular targets and be, "…built around clear and highly specified designs for instructional practice…" (p. 328). In another paper on CSR, these authors find that the model that relied almost entirely on changing the cultural dynamics of schools promoted strong professional communities, but because the model lacked a clear instructional design it produced classroom practices and student outcomes

that were similar to comparison schools (Rowan, Correnti, Miller, & Camburn, 2009). They also find that within the models that had clearly specified instructional designs, deeper levels of implementation led to higher rates of student achievement. They go on to recommend a conceptual framing of instructional reform designs that move beyond the dichotomy of 'programed' or 'adaptive', to a more nuanced framework.

The research discussed above indicates that changing the instructional core of classrooms is no small feat. The implementation of reforms that are designed to transform teaching and learning should be specifically designed for this goal. While having a clearly devised instructional model is significant in impacting classroom practice and student achievement, incorporating elements of adaptability also seem to be essential. Practitioners are both implementers and learners, and for instructional change to take root, it is important to employ frameworks that address the technical dimensions as well as broader belief and relational systems.

Policy Context of Educational Reform

Policy plays a key factor in determining the context and content of school reform, and in turn, how key actors work to implement reforms. Within this section I discuss significant elements of state and federal policy over the prior two decades. I begin this examination by grounding it in the emergence of the notion of systemic reform in the early 1990s. Next, I consider how No Child Left Behind (NCLB), enacted in 2001, created systems of "mean accountability" across the nation, which proponents argue is needed to make lasting change in public schools (Hess, 2006). I then outline important factors in the current transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and in California, the revised English Language Development (ELD) standards, both of which are swiftly changing state and federal expectations for teaching and learning. I use policy as a lens to explore the context of reform because it is deeply consequential to how schools and districts work with reform designers and the broader community to enact their school improvement efforts.

Systemic Reform—Since the 1990s, standards-based reform has been a key component of educational policy across the nation. The notion of systemic reform began to influence policy makers, linking ambitious visions of teaching and learning with standards, professional development, and assessments to monitor progress (Coburn, Pearson, & Woulfin, 2011; Smith & O'Day, 1990). The rationale for re-conceptualizing school improvement in this new way was grounded in a critique of prior reform. Advocates argued that although there were increasing federal, state, and local efforts and resources spent to improve public education, little had advanced (Smith & O'Day, 1990; J. P. Thompson, 1993). More so, a fragmented, sometimes conflicting, and uncoordinated policy environment created huge barriers to school improvement. Systemic reform reimagined a policy context characterized by alignment and coherence from the classroom to state and federal levels. Rigorous standards for all students would be the core of curriculum, on-going professional development, and regular assessments to monitor progress. But Smith and O'Day's (1990) concept of alignment did not preclude flexibility and autonomy. As they clearly note in their groundbreaking essay, "The [education system] we present here seeks to combine the vitality and creativity of bottom-up change at the school site with an enabling and supportive structure at more centralized levels of the system" (p. 245).

Systemic reform proved to be a compelling concept and by the mid 1990s, almost all states had developed academic standards and most were developing accompanying assessment systems (Gandal, 1996). In 1996, Gandal authored a report published by the American Federation of Teachers on states' progress towards raising standards. The primary recommendations focused on ensuring rigor across all states. The next set of suggestions related to alignment and rigorous assessments. Additionally, the report called for incentives and consequences for failure to meet standards. By the late 1990s, several states began developing high-stakes accountability systems, paving the way for "mean" or coercive measures to lead the next iteration of systemic reform (Hess, 2006). With the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, all states were subject to severe consequences for not meeting performance targets based on standardized test achievement linked to academic standards. This brought significant issues for districts and schools serving high number of ELs because these standardized tests were in English, which I will unpack further below.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)—Though NCLB is credited with bringing a heightened awareness to underserved populations, it has done little to improve the outcomes for these students. Some argue it has created perverse incentives for districts and schools (O'Malley Borg, Plumlee, & Stranahan, 2007; Ryan, 2004). O'Malley Borg and colleagues (2007) posit that high-stakes accountability will not positively impact minority students because a single policy agenda such as high standards can not accomplish two goals simultaneously— raising overall student performance and closing the gap for historically underachieving students. Their study found that low-income, African American, and Hispanic students had a higher probability of being negatively affected by high-stakes accountability systems in Florida. These authors warn that, "…any school that serves a student body made up of a significant percentage of demographically at-risk students will likely be less competitive when standardized testing is used to assess school performance" (p. 713). Ryan (2004) claims that NCLB inadvertently encouraged states to lower their standards, promoted segregation and the pushing out of poor and minority students, and discouraged talented teachers from working with challenging populations. Such assertions frame NCLB as a policy with dangerous, albeit unintentional consequences.

Sanctions and rewards based on high stakes accountability systems are the foundation of competition within public education. Burch (2009) argues that neoliberalism— the creation of competitive markets and privatization in the public sector — has gained significant legitimacy and greatly affects our current context within public schooling. NCLB and neoliberalism have reinforced each other, deeming increasing numbers of schools failing and calling for their closure. The growing presence of charter schools, along with other market driven reform efforts, exemplify significant trends towards privatization within public education.

Scholars also note that one of the main costs of NCLB was a narrowing of curriculum (Au, 2007; Coburn et al., 2011; Hout & Elliot, 2011). As schools and districts were held accountable to a limited measurement of student learning via standardized tests, the scope of curriculum and instruction was reduced to that which the assessments emphasized. In turn, basic skills driven by purchased curricula were increasingly employed across districts throughout the country (Coburn et al., 2011). This is in direct contradiction to the bottom-up innovation and creativity that Smith

and O'Day (1990) envisioned when they described systemic reform. In California specifically, districts moved farther and farther into a centralized model of curricular control, where pacing guides and textbooks were the base of instructional plans, expectations, and school improvement efforts.

At the height of NCLB, federally-funded research served to deepen reductive notions of literacy development and reinforce federal policies, specifically those associated with high-stakes testing. In response to the 2008 National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) report, several scholars warned that the findings were inaccurate and could have detrimental consequences on early literacy, particularly for ELs (Dickinson, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010; K. D. Gutierrez, Zepeda, & Castro, 2010). Dickinson and colleagues (2010) posit that the report preferences discrete code based skills because they are easy to measure and have strong shorter-term gains in the early elementary grades, yet alone will not lead to lasting literacy development. The authors worry that the report undermines the role of oral language, and in turn, instruction that supports its development, which is essential to long-term literacy achievement. Furthermore, Gutierrez and colleagues (2010) argue that it is insufficient to generalize research based on monolingual students and apply it to the learning and development of dual-language learners. Both these responses to the NELP report illuminate the dangerous inclination to preference curricula and instruction that is easier to measure over that which supports more complex learning. Furthermore, as the earlier section on EL educational reform and policy illustrates, NCLB put pressure on districts and schools to move away from bilingual education and towards English-only instructional models. Overall, the NCLB era of educational reform and policy proved problematic for historically underserved student populations, specifically ELs.

The New Era of Standards— The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represent the newest wave of standards-based reform and are said to be the most ambitious set of standards yet developed (Pearson & Hiebert, 2012). The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers initiated CCSS in 2009. In 2013, 45 states had adopted these standards, but today several states are experiencing a backlash from both conservative and liberal sides of the political spectrum (Paulson, 2014). The aim is for states to have a common set of rigorous standards that will help ensure that all students are prepared for college and careers. Similar to the original call for high standards, ensuring global competition and economic security are central to their rationale. Furthermore, ensuring commonality across states creates broad systemic alignment. Critics argue however, that both internationally and within the United States, high standards have historically had little impact on student achievement (Mathis, 2010).

There are major changes within these new English Language Arts (ELA) standards. Pearson and Hiebert (2012) highlight four main elements of CCSS for ELA that are new and different from previous standards. They are: 1) close and critical reading, 2) integration of language processes and disciplinary content, 3) media/research literacy, and 4) text complexity. These authors point to the importance of capacity building for teachers and schools. Hope for these new standards rests in their ability to help schools and districts create learning experiences that are based in more complex, higher-order, integrated skills and content. Nevertheless, Pearson and Hiebert discuss several "dilemmas", including the questionable ability for high stakes assessments to accurately measure complex knowledge and skills. Given their impact within NCLB, one can

predict that questions of assessment, and in turn accountability, will prove to be highly consequential to classroom instruction within the CCSS era.

Educators focused on equity also raise concerns about the potential negative implications of CCSS for historically underserved communities. A key problem is the standards' lack of consideration for culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy (Chen, Macey, Simon, & King, 2013; Davidson, 2010). As O'Malley Borg and colleagues' (2007) argue in regards to NCLB discussed earlier, the dual goal of increasing rigor for all students while simultaneously addressing historically underserved students' lower achievement levels is inherently difficult and problematic. Pearson and Hiebert (2012) argue that raising text complexity expectations will be a challenge, yet this challenge is more complicated when students are already reading below grade level. Schools and districts serving historically underachieving student populations are therefore under enormous pressure.

Hakuta (2011) aptly notes that there are major issues regarding how to make CCSS accessible to ELs. California's revised English Language Development (ELD) standards, adopted in 2012, are the state's attempt at outlining the new expectation for the teaching and learning of ELs within the context of CCSS. In a manner similar to CCSS, these new standards outline the role of ELD within content areas. As Appendix D states, "The CA ELD Standards correspond with California's Common Core State Standards… and are designed to apply to English language and literacy skills across all academic content areas, in addition to classes specifically designed for ELD" (2012, p.12).

Both CCSS and the revised ELD standards support a broader notion of language than those of previous standards and are better aligned with research and theory that supports a more comprehensive conceptualization of language and literacy (Dickinson et al., 2010; Gee, 2001; K. D. Gutierrez et al., 2010; Hakuta, 2011; Madda, Benson Griffo, Pearson, & Raphael, 2011; Valdés et al., 2014). This is particularly important and relevant for ELs. The implementation of both CCSS and the revised ELD standards in California present both great opportunity and challenges to transforming and improving the learning experiences of ELs.

The literature discussed above indicates that systemic reform, established in the 1990s and driven by standards and assessment, is in many ways still the predominant reform strategy being implemented nationally and specifically in California. Given the implications of NCLB on schooling for historically underserved students, this new era of standards has the potential to have negative repercussions for these student groups. It is critical for both researchers and practitioners to pay close attention to these student groups, devising implementation models that are designed for their needs, and thoroughly analyzing the impacts overall and specific to different reform models. SEAL is a reform model aimed precisely at serving the needs on young ELs within this new era of standards. This study is an inquiry into the leadership dimensions of SEAL implementation, it is an investigation into what role leader play within the implementation process, and what enables and constrains their ability to support implementation.

English Learner Educational Reform and Policy

In this section I review literature related to English Learner educational reform and policy. I first explore the historical context, both looking at the treatment of language throughout the history of the United States of America, as well as the beginnings of formal language policy. I then turn to the more recent history of the late 20th century where there was a shift away from bilingual education to English only instructional models. The subsequent three sections explore key dimensions of EL reform and policy: the interplay between research and policy; the interconnections between language, culture, and race; and the new expectations around language enacted by our latest set of standards. This portion of my literature review helps situate EL reform in both its historical and current context.

Historical context— As a nation of immigrants, language in the United States has always been related to power, social control, and social status. Historically there have been vast differences in how certain ethnicities have been treated with regards to language (Wiley & Wright, 2004). Language was used to systematically oppress and disempower both native populations and Africans brought as slaves. Meanwhile, multilingualism was tolerated and even promoted in certain communities of European descent. Wiley and Wright (2004) suggest that during World War I, nativist sentiments became mainstream and English as a key tool of assimilation became more widely promoted within communities of European decent.

Given this historical context, educational policies and reforms focused on English learners (ELs) are tightly linked to politics. Bilingual education emerged as a part of the civil rights movement. In 1968, the first federal language policy was enacted, the Bilingual Education Act, and districts could apply for funding to support bilingual programs. Gandara and Contreras (2009) suggest that the Nixon White House's focus on and support for bilingual education rather than desegregation became a divisive tactic between Black and Latino communities. Latino leaders worried that desegregation plans could undermine the critical mass needed to build effective bilingual programs. As such, desegregation and bilingual education became political dividers between these communities and part of the larger racial politics.

Though the Bilingual Education Act passed in the late 1960s, many ELs all over the country were being instructed in English and were not being adequately served. The Lau vs. Nichols case, originating in San Francisco, made its way to the Supreme Court which ruled in 1974, "There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum, for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from a meaningful education". This created the legal basis for bilingual education (Olsen, 2009). The Office of Civil Rights then drafted the Lau Remedies which essentially mandated bilingual education for ELs, but this was met with considerable backlash and was never formalized into law (Wiley & Wright, 2004). Still many states passed legislation supporting bilingual education, including California.

A shift away from bilingual education— By 1984, the funding associated with the federal Bilingual Education Act was no longer reserved for just bilingual programs, and districts could now use these funds to support English immersion programs. This marked a clear shift in policy

where full emersion in English gained increasing support and resources. By the 1990s there was a major push in multiple states, namely California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, to eliminate bilingual education and promote English only instructional models. Scholars note that this powerful political initiative aimed at decimating bilingual education was linked to the backlash of fear and racism brought about by influxes of immigrants, particularly Latinos (August, D., Goldenberg, C., & Rueda, 2010; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Olsen, 2009; Wiley & Wright, 2004). Again, we see language used as form of social control.

In 2002 the Bilingual Education Act was replaced under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) with Title III, Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students, and the notion of bilingualism fell even farther from the core of dominant policy forces. Though the NCLB era was marked by a greater focus on monitoring the achievement of ELs, it lacked any significant changes in the academic success of this student population (August et al., 2010; Gandara & Contreras, 2009b; Wiley & Wright, 2004). One report found that in California in 2010, 59% of ELs at the secondary level were Long Term English Learners (LTELs) having been in U.S. schools for six or more years and stagnated at an intermediate level of English proficiency along with a lack of success in other academic content areas (Olsen, 2010). The sanctions associated with high-stakes testing established through NCLB put enormous pressure on schools and districts to focus on English acquisition at the expense of and disconnected from other content areas, as well as bilingualism. This accountability system enacted through federal and state policy was oriented towards English acquisitions as fast and furiously as possible, and under this system many ELs achieved very low levels of academic success in English and other content areas.

Interplay of research and policy—There is a powerful interplay between policy, politics, and research in regards to EL education. In light of the restrictive language policies of California, Arizona, and Massachusetts enacted in the 1990s which require English only instruction, August, Goldenbery, and Rueda (2010) examine the research base indicating that such policies are not best practice. Their synthesis of the research leads them to assert with confidence that teaching young ELs to read in their native language first, or in their native and secondary language at the same time, is the most effective practice. They go on to affirm that bilingual education can promote cognitive flexibility, metalinguistic awareness, self-esteem development, and cultural connections to a child's academic identity. These authors make several policy recommendations including the elimination of restrictive language policies and promoting the use of native language instruction, as well as a call for more research.

Scholars also note that recent national panels of researchers organized to produce guidelines for policy and practice have fallen short in regards to the education of ELs (Cummins, 2009; K. D. Gutierrez et al., 2010). Gutierrez et al. (2010) argue that the report issued by the National Early Literacy Panel over emphasizes decoding skills and minimizes the role of oral language development for young dual language learners. These scholars suggest that the panel used inappropriate studies to draw implications for policy and practice that will impact young ELs, and they warn against using its findings.

Cummins (2009) asserts that the report issued by the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth is flawed and that important studies were left out. He notes that there are contrary claims about the role of reading engagement, that the authors ignore the evidence

that native language instruction does not negatively impact English acquisition, and he suggests that the dismissal of sociocultural factors related to language and literacy development is problematic. Furthermore, Cummins raises a major concern about the fact the panel does not address the policy issues related to the high-stakes testing of ELs after just one-year English instruction. Overall, he believes, "that much more definitive, policy-relevant conclusions can be reached on the basis of a critical review of the empirical data than those articulated by the authors" (p. 382). Both Gutierrez et al. and Cummins' critiques point to ongoing misunderstandings and under-conceptualizations with regards to ELs within influential national dialogues focused on educational reform. Their work points to longstanding tensions within and across policy, politics, and research.

Language, Cultural Identity, Ethnicity and Race within Education—Gandara and Contreras (2009) explore some of the issues surrounding the relationship between language, cultural identity, ethnicity and race for Latino students. These authors ask a fundamental question, is language the problem? They assert that one reason why language becomes the primary focus is that it is easier to address language needs then racial isolation. As is discussed above, these authors note how bilingual education and desegregation became divisive issues in the late 1960s and early 70s, establishing language as the key issue for the Latino community, and race as the key issue for the Black community.

Nonetheless, Gandara and Contreras affirm the deep connection between language, cultural identity, ethnicity, and race, and assert that, "…when our approach to language education involves eradicating a student's native language in an effort to transform their identities, the results are predictability negative" (p. 150). Seeing language as the "problem" constrains reforms and policies intended to have positive impacts for ELs. A broader acknowledgement of the power and importance of native language development has begun to permeate the educational reform conversation, pointing to a move towards a more asset-based approach.

Equity-minded reforms and initiatives, specifically those meant to impact ELs have historically been driven by regulatory mechanisms and consequently become issues of compliance. In turn, the responsibilities for attending to ELs are often segmented and delegated to a department and/or specific programs. The next section will explore our current era of standards and educational reform as it pertains to language, in which there are attempts to redefine some of these siloes by making language development a shared-responsibility.

New Expectations: The Teaching and Learning of Language—Educators and scholars who advocate for a heightened awareness of the significance of language within the learning process have become increasingly influential (Dickinson et al., 2010; Gee, 2001; K. D. Gutierrez et al., 2010; R. Gutierrez, 2003; Madda et al., 2011). Accordingly, language plays a new and expanded role in the most current set of standards. In a report published by TESOL, Valdés, Kibler, and Walqui (2014) discuss the importance of teacher expertise in ensuring that ELs are included in CCSS aligned instruction. The authors go on to argue for the need to make conceptualizations and theories of language explicit. Furthermore, they note that previously there have been extremely different and often contradicting notions of language.

Valdés and colleagues point out the degree of change that CCSS necessitate, specifically, the increased rigor and expectations for language demands within content areas. The implication of this for ELs is significant and requires a deep transformation from the current state of instructional practices and systems that support English language development. As the authors note:

> The advancement of expertise to work with ELLs in ambitious ways requires an investment in professional development different from the isolated, piecemeal workshops many teachers have experienced. Deep, transformative knowledge can only be brought about through sustained, focused professional development… (p. 25)

Scholars focused on ELs also raise concerns about assessment within this new era of standards (Goldenberg, 2012; Umansky et al., 2015; Valdés et al., 2014). An overreliance on test scores as the sole measure of success and effectiveness reinforces and perpetuates simplistic framings of school and has led to the narrowing of curriculum and pedagogy (Au, 2007; Hout & Elliot, 2011). Furthermore, administering high-stakes assessment of ELs in English after only one year within a public school system is problematic (Cummins, 2009). Though the standards have changed quite significantly, powerful relics of our previous systems remain in place leaving great uncertainty about how these new standards will be enacted and measured, particularly in relation to Latino ELs. The next section will explore the broader policy context within which we operate and further unpack our most current era of reforms.

WHO are the actors within educational reform?

Educational reform is complex and involves multiple people with differing roles. The central actors in most reform literature are designers and school staff. I begin this section by exploring the literature related to reform designers, defined here as intermediaries or external partners. I then look at school staff, or the implementers of instructional reform. Next, I examine research related to the emerging awareness of the role of the central office within reform implementation. Finally, I investigate what surfaces as an underdeveloped dimension of the "who" of educational reform implementation: parents and families.

Reform designers, intermediaries—External entities, also known as intermediaries, are increasingly responsible for designing and leading the implementation of reforms within schools and districts (Trujillo, 2014). This is a growing industry and these organizations often align their work with federal and state policies (Burch, 2009). More so, recent policies mandate that districts hire intermediaries to comply with accountability regulations (Burch, 2009; Trujillo, 2014). Other research indicates that intermediaries play important, at times necessary, roles within reform implementation (M. I. Honig, 2004; Rowan, 2002; Supovitz, 2006).

Research on comprehensive school reform (CSR) finds that externally designed instructional models do have the potential to significantly change student achievement outcomes (Correnti & Rowan, 2007; Rowan et al., 2009). These authors posit that the two main dimensions for school improvement design are: 1) an instructional design, and 2) a design for faithful implementation. Their framing positions the "designers" as the most powerful and influential, with a lack of agency awarded to the broader school community. Conversely, other research reveals

that externally driven instructional changes are often not sustained within schools over time (Datnow, 2002). Datnow recommends that reform designers work with local policy makers and educators in a co-constructive and reciprocal manner. Coburn (2003) notes that transferring ownership of and authority for reforms from external designers to internal actors is important to scaling reforms.

Coburn, Bae, and Turner's (2008) study explores the complicated power dynamics between districts and intermediaries. In her examination she finds that insiders, i.e. district leaders, tend to have more authority whereas reformers, the outsiders, have status. This research highlights the multifaceted and complicated nature of collaborative work between internal and external actors. Her findings suggest that there is more potential to leverage change if outsiders and insiders have aligned points of view. If authority tends to reside with internal actors, how might intermediaries use their status to establish on-going internal authority for and ownership of reforms?

Honig (2004) looks across four intermediaries working within a school district to more closely examine their functions and the conditions that enabled and constrained them. She discovers that these intermediaries played important roles such as: strengthening the knowledge of and social/political ties between sites and policy systems, ongoing knowledge building, developing administrative infrastructure, buffering sites from policy systems, and translating site demands into actionable terms. One key aspect of her findings is that an intermediary's ability to enact these functions is context specific. Additionally, intermediaries were vulnerable to district leadership changes and held unstable positions.

In his book detailing the district-based reform efforts of Duval County Public Schools from 1998 through 2005, Supovitz (2006) makes the case for district collaboration with external partners. In Duval, the superintendent affiliated with the National Center on Education and the Economy in deep and lasting ways. This intermediary helped craft and lead the district-wide plans, systems, and professional developments. Their CSR model was also implemented in 60 of the 149 schools. Supovitz posits that external partners are better resourced and positioned to provide instructional services related to curriculum development, professional development, and organizing data. He cautions that both the district and the intermediary must approach the relationship as a true partnership, where internal leaders work hand in hand to build the infrastructure to support implementation.

Other more recent research on intermediaries indicates that they play a powerful role in setting the agenda for implementation of school reform. Trujillo and Woulfin's (2014) qualitative case study finds that one intermediary played an influential role in limiting the scope of reform within schools. Though the organization boasted a mission devoted to bringing deep educational change for ELs and students of color, their professional development and services did not produce specific pedagogical changes for these students. Instead it reinforced practices that were oriented towards standardized test scores and therefore directly responsive to the political pressures from federal and state policies. Elsewhere, Trujillo (2014) finds that the tools and practices this same intermediary employs introduce and strengthen market driven and managerially focused reforms that minimally impact the learning experiences of underserved students. Nonetheless, the intermediary was fulfilling the functions that the district requested. This work indicates that intermediaries are vulnerable and highly influenced by the larger political environment, which

preferences the implementation of reforms that are focused on standardized tests and accountability.

The literature reviewed here suggests that intermediaries have the potential to introduce, support, and facilitate transformational change within public education. Nonetheless, it also illustrates how these external organizations are influenced by sociopolitical and educational contexts at the local, state, and federal levels. Intermediaries occupy a vulnerable space, where leadership, policy, and funding changes help determine their focus and fate. This vulnerability helps to reinforce political pressures leading to an overemphasis on reduced curriculum and instruction that orients towards standardized test achievement. Building relationships among schools, districts, and intermediaries raise complicated questions of positional power and alignment, areas to be mindful of within the implementation of educational reform.

Implementers—There is a rich body of work that acknowledges the role of implementers within instructional reform, and conceptualizes them as active in helping to mold and customize implementation and reform design (Datnow & Park, 2009; McLaughlin & Mitra, 2002; Spillane & Jennings, 1997; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). In this sense, the reform designers are not the ones with the intellectual capital to be deposited in schools and teachers. Conversely, implementation is conceived of as a process of sense-making and adaptation. Studies find that when a relationship focused on local customization and adaption is established between designers and implementers, better results are achieved. McLaughlin and Mitra (2002) look across 15 schools in 8 districts, each implementing one of three different theory-based reforms. They find that when teachers are seen as co-inventors, implementation is strongest. These authors argue that reform designers cannot be the "sole proprietor" and that there must be a transfer of authority within the implementation process, from external to internal. This is similar to Coburn's (2003) conceptual framework discussed above where she argues that scaling requires transferring ownership of reform initiatives to schools and district.

Spillane and Jennings (1997) illustrate the importance of teacher learning within the implementation of ambitious instructional reform implementation. Their study looks at 9 teachers who are implementing language arts reform and finds that all the teachers appear to have fully implemented the reform from a shallow perspective. When researchers looked more closely at the classroom tasks and discourse, several had not undergone deep transformation. The authors recommend a reconceptualization of policy implementation where teachers are seen as learners rather than just implementers.

Kennedy (2016) reviews 28 studies to examine some under investigated aspects of teacher professional development efforts. She is interested in more deeply understanding the theories of action behind professional development, both about teaching and about teacher learning. Kennedy presents important dimensions of teacher learning that are often not considered. Teachers are inundated with a myriad of messages about what is important, and she posits, "We need to ensure that PD promotes real learning rather than merely adding more noise to their working environment" (p. 974). She argues that there should be a greater focus on teacher motivation to learn, and deeper understandings about how and when professional development is meaningful to teachers.

Research also indicates that teacher learning is highly influenced by collaborative professional communities (Coburn & Stein, 2006). In turn, many districts and schools enact policies, structures, and procedures focused on creating professional learning communities (Talbert, 2009). Nevertheless, the quality of social interaction amongst teachers is an important factor and impacts the depth of teacher learning (Achinstein, 2002; Blankstein, 2004; Westheimer, 1999). Talbert (2009) compares the bureaucratic versus professional approach to establishing professional learning communities. She contends that there are inherent tensions between bureaucratic and professional methods. Kennedy (2016) argues for moving past the concept of collaboration to greater focus on the content of the collaboration and the nature of the intellectual work teachers are engaged in. Developing professional learning communities that transform professional culture must be understood as an ongoing process. Bureaucratic resources should support professional strategies.

Achinstein's (2002) study re-conceptualizes the role of dissent within teacher collaboration. She uses a micro-political lens to examine teacher collaboration within two middle schools, focusing closely on the role of conflict. Both schools were considered to have strong collaborative cultures yet she finds that the school where conflict was embraced had more potential for organizational learning and change. Because the ideology about schooling was more internally aligned, conflict was not avoided, opening the space to tolerate and solicit dissenting and diverse opinions. Achinstein concludes that conflict is a core element of community, and whether it is suppressed or embraced indicates the capacity for growth and learning. Similarly, in Westheimer's (1999) case study of two schools, the school with a strong collective ideology about schooling embraced diversity of opinions. In both studies, the schools where dissent was not circumvented were equity-minded and oriented towards collective responsibility. Both were organizations that looked critically at the duty of teachers and schools to address inequity and injustice.

Practitioner networks also offer both a powerful but potentially problematic strategy for reform implementation (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1991; Spillane & Thompson, 1997). Lieberman and McLaughlin recommend that teacher networks should not solely focus on what works, but rather focus on the "meaning of work for teachers" (p. 677). Kyndt and colleagues (2016) focus on informal learning which represents much of much of the day to day development of teachers. These authors posit, "Teachers learn from the interplay between individual activities and those involving others" (p. 1138). Coburn and Russell's (2008) study suggests that district policy influences aspects of teachers' networks, specifically related to the structures, access to expertise, and depth of interactions. Networks and professional learning communities represent a powerful approach, but how they are enacted influences the depth of teacher learning and professional capacity building.

As the implementers of school reform, teachers are a pivotal part of the implementation process. The literature reviewed implies that viewing teachers as active learners and co-inventors of new instructional models is essential. Additionally, collaboration through the use of networks and professional learning communities is a potentially powerful way to support teacher learning and growth. However, research indicates teacher collaboration that sustains and deepens teachers' commitment and capacity to work towards equity for their students should be organized,

facilitated, and resourced in ways that focus authentically on the work of teachers and builds a professional, not bureaucratic, culture. A pattern throughout the literature is that reform implementers are most commonly defined as teachers. This study adds to the knowledge base by broadening this perspective to include a more comprehensive notion of implementers, which helps further uncover additional dimensions of reform implementation.

Districts—There is a fair amount of agreement that districts matter within school improvement efforts focused on curriculum and instruction (Elmore, 1993; M. I. Honig, 2006; Olson, 1994; Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Supovitz, 2006; Thompson, Sykes, & Skrla, 2008; Trujillo, 2013). Elmore (1993) argues that districts' positionality enables their mediation across local, state, and federal levels to promote deep instructional change. He suggests the key district responsibilities are to: 1) mobilize support and buffer policies; 2) test new ideas; 3) allocate and redistribute resources; and 4) adapt policies to local needs. Similarly, Rorrer and colleagues (2008) posit that creating cohesion is an essential role of the district, negotiating across local, state, and federal policies.

Earlier research finds that districts which build adaptive systems rather than codified policies were most instructionally effective (Murphy & Hallinger, 1988). Spillane and Thompson (1997) looked across 9 school districts and find that their ability to learn new ideas from policies and professional sources determine their capacity to support ambitious instructional improvement across schools. These authors suggest three interrelated dimensions of this capacity: social capital, human capital, and financial resources. In turn, their notion of capacity moves beyond individualism and towards a more complex interplay of relationships, expertise, and resources.

Research and literature on CSR points to the important role of on-going district support and leadership as key to implementation (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000; Olson, 1994; Stringfield, Datnow, & Ross, 1998). When leadership is shared at multiple levels within the system, schools are able to implement reforms more deeply. Berman and Mclaughlin (1978) find that when district administrators took an active role in implementation of reform projects, they were more successful.

The overemphasis on technical aspects of district instructional improvement efforts serves to limit ideas about the complexity of this work (McLaughlin & Mitra, 2002; Trujillo, 2013). Trujillo's (2013) review of district effectiveness research finds an overly technical conceptualization. The emphasis on the technical aspects of district change creates a checklist notion of change and a simplistic notion of districts as organizations implementing reform. Trujillo recommends an expanded framework that includes socio-political and normative dimensions. More so, she raises concerns about the decontextualized explanations of district effectiveness that predominate in this field, which can perpetuate incomplete examinations of the roots of educational inequity.

The literature reviewed in this section suggests that districts play an important role within school reform implementation. When districts can mediate across policies and negotiate the various federal, state, and local demands on schools, they help create systemic coherence. More so, a district's capacity to learn and share new and ambitious instructional policies and practices throughout the system supports reform implementation. Research suggests that schools have deeper levels of implementation when district leaders play active roles. The work of effective

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districts is multidimensional and complex, and under-theorizing it serves to perpetuate overly technical and decontextualized notions.

Families and community— Although there is a fair amount of consensus on the importance of building partnerships between the school, family, and community (Epstein & Connors, 1992), there is a lack of scholarly thinking related to the role of families and the community in instructional reform implementation. In their examination of CSR models being implemented across 13 multilingual, multicultural schools, Stringfield and colleagues (1998) briefly note a positive impact when models help make a connection between schools and families. But generally, reforms that seek to specifically create family and community partnerships are usually disconnected from the instructional core.

The Comer Process is a CSR model grounded in the notion of deep school, family, and community collaboration (Comer, James P. & Others, 1995). Within this model there are three core teams that share leadership across the school and each of these teams includes parents or family members. But as Payne (1991) points out, the Comer model is not, "…a program of pedagogy or curriculum" (p. 14), and in turn it is not oriented towards the instructional core. Similarly, the growing community schools movement, which turns schools into resource and service hubs for the community (OUSD, 2011), is not focused on the core of schooling.

Meanwhile, within popular media it is not uncommon to hear about parents banding together to oppose instructional reforms. CCSS, particularly the math standards, are experiencing an intense wave of parental dissent (Green, 2014). It seems that given the common agreement that partnerships with families are key to educational success, and the obvious investment that families and communities have in their children's success, there would be greater focus on this dimension of instructional reform implementation.

The power dynamic of race and culture is an important element to pay attention to concerning the relationships between schools and families. Valdés's (1996) ethnographic study of 10 immigrant families of Mexican origin illuminates some of the tensions arising from how schools interact with the parents of Hispanic ELs. At several points throughout her investigation there were deep cultural mismatches between the schools and families. Valdés warns that family intervention strategies sought to change cultural familial behavior, further marginalizing these communities. This study raises questions about how to bridge the gap between historically marginalized communities and schools without further marginalization. Valdés (1996) uses three categories to evaluate educational efforts directed at non-mainstream families: educating, involving, and empowering. She argues that both the educating and involving categories, those that are most prevalent throughout schools, aim to assimilate families into the dominant ways of relating to schools. Furthermore, both are based in models of deficit thinking where parents are blamed for their children's lack of academic success, and their cultures and parenting styles are deemed deficient. This begs the question, how can schools serving Latino ELs that are implementing reforms focused on improving the instructional core create empowering relationships with families, specifically related to the reform implementation, and move away from employing deficit models?

In conclusion, the literature discussed in this chapter reviews multiple dimensions of educational reform. Changing instruction is a complex endeavor and largely driven by the broader policy context. Policies and reforms focused on ELs are inextricably related to issues of civil rights, and deeply connected to matters of culture, race, immigration, as well as language. There are various actors involved in comprehensive instructional reform implementation—reform designers, implementers, district administrators, and families. More so, the relationships between these actors become an important part of the complexity of school reform. This study adds to this knowledge base by exploring some crosscutting dimensions of reform implementation that are underexplored, particularly concerning reform leadership.

Chapter III. Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, I lay out the theoretical framework that guides this investigation of the leadership dimensions of a comprehensive equity-minded instructional reform. It is based on the patterns discussed in the literature reviewed in the previous chapter. This literature sheds light on many aspects of educational reform and was selected because of its relevance to my problem of practice—to more deeply understand the leadership components of SEAL implementation. Nevertheless, there are still important gaps in scholarship on reform implementation, to which this study aims to contribute. The current reform era, though influenced by previous policy efforts, represents a new context that requires investigation. Furthermore, within California policy specifically, there is an increasing focus on ELs and multilingual education. This conceptual framework in grounded in an exploration of the socio-political aspects of reform implementation within this new era because it an area that is under-investigated. Moreover, though there is evidence that school and district leaders play an important role in reform implementation (Elmore, 1993; M. I. Honig, 2006; Olson, 1994; Rorrer et al., 2008; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Supovitz, 2006; Thompson et al., 2008; Trujillo, 2013), little light is shed on what that role is and how it is enacted. As such, I call attention to political games that play out within reform implementation, shared-ownership of reforms across leaders, and crafting coherence across initiatives and programs as a set of interrelated concepts that can help us gain deeper understandings of reform leadership.

My conceptual framework is based on three important elements of leadership within reform implementation: 1) the socio-political context, and related power dynamics that reforms operate within; 2) the ability to develop shared-ownership and partnership focused relationships within reform implementation; and 3) the adaptations, customizations, and negotiations of coherence as key to how actors make sense of and enact reforms. There is a trend within educational scholarship focused on implementation to move away from "universal truths" and towards "…revealing implementation as a complex and highly contingent enterprise" (Honig, 2006, p. 4). In this sense, reform implementation is understood to be decidedly dependent on context and relationships.

Power dynamics, political games, and the larger policy context deeply impact the manner in which implementation unfolds, and therefore offer a strong theoretical frame through which to analyze reform implementation. The policy context related to the Common Core, California's English Language Arts and English Language Development (ELA/ELD) Framework, and the focus of ELs within the state's most recent finance reform, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), are all inter-related factors as to why SEAL might be seen as a "solution" for schools and districts. Furthermore, examining political games and reform coalitions deepen understandings about how EL focused reforms get adopted and what makes them vulnerable. If the reform coalition around SEAL implementation shifts, or loses an important member, the implementation and sustainability can become weakened. Relationships across reform actors become a crucial aspect of the context of implementation.

SEAL is a comprehensive reform and requires teachers have the time and support to implement the model. We have seen that when principals and important district leaders don't understand and "own" the reform, teachers receive mixed messages, are unable to carve out "enough" time, and implementation suffers. As such, using partnership and the ability to develop

shared-ownership across leaders helps illuminate how relationships are enacted. Whether principals "own" SEAL and support its implementation will likely be consequential. Furthermore, if district leaders are not able to create partnerships and share ownership of SEAL, principals, coaches and teachers will likely hear mixed messages and experience opposing pressures.

Lastly, examining how actors make sense of reforms, how they adapt and customize reforms as they negotiate coherence with other programs, initiatives, and curriculum, illuminates the contingent nature of reform implementation. This is key to SEAL implementation because SEAL is both instructional pedagogy and curriculum redesign. SEAL is not a program, but rather an approach to teaching and learning, and doesn't happen in just one specific time of day but throughout the entire instructional program. If leaders institute another initiative that is conflicting with the SEAL approach, implementation will suffer. Negotiating coherence, shared-ownership, and the larger socio-political context are all inter-related components of the leadership of reform implementation, and are the concepts that are most relevant to helping understand this phenomenon.

Socio-Political Context: Power, Politics, and Policy

Often missing within literature on reform implementation is a discussion of power dynamics and politics. Malen (2006) argues that politics must be attended to, using the framework of political "games" to help name and explore the factors that affect reform implementation. She advocates for paying attention to several key political components, such as: a) whose interests are served, b) the clusters of actors who are most influential in particular circumstances, c) their efforts to be influential, and d) the structures that create opportunities for actors to be influential. Though Malen notes that empirical evidence is not vast enough to predict how power and politics will affect implementation, the evidence indicates that it is an ever-present dynamic. Political games play out at both the micro and macro levels, and analysis of them can lead to far deeper understandings.

Shipps (2003) uses notions of civic capacity, urban regime theory, and three general types of educational reform to create a conceptual framework to analyze school reform in Chicago. Her study unpacks the complexity of coalition building. The author concludes that the type of reform, in other words the "what", is interrelated to the type of coalition. Shipps warns reformers that they should pay attention to the relationships between a reform's agenda and coalition membership. In this sense politics are an essential element of reform implementation, one that can both assist and impede. This adds complexity to ideas of shared-ownership and partnership within reform implementation, which will be discussed in a later section of this conceptual framework.

In this study's literature review (Chapter 2) I explore the policy context as a key component of educational reform, focusing on systemic reform, specifically standards and accountability. Malen notes, "…the standards-based, high-stakes accountability policies emanating from federal and state governments appear to be a more durable strain of policy" (2011, p.36). Furthermore, scholars argue that high-stakes accountability systems have become the key measure of effectiveness within public education (Malen, 2011; Trujillo, 2013; Trujillo & Woulfin, 2014a).

Therefore, exploring how actors make sense of the policy context, specifically accountability, and their related notions of effectiveness are important to understanding reform implementation.

Malen (2011) argues that there has been a significant move towards centralization over the last 50 years. She notes that this does not mean that local actors have necessarily lost power. "Indeed, policies initiated and enacted at one level may provide the political cover and currency required to advance agendas forged at other levels of the system" (Malen, 2011, p.26). Using the lens of centralization/de-centralization, and the power dynamics associated with such, adds another important dimension to understanding reforms and their implementation.

Actors' beliefs and knowledge base, and the related instructional practices, greatly impact policy and reform implementation (Cohen, 1990). Cohen's (1990) study of one teacher's implementation of a major math reform reveals how enduring one's previous pedagogical approach can be. He asserts, "Policy has affected practice in this case, but practice has had an even greater effect on policy (p. 311)". In this sense, the interplay between practice, policy, and reform implementation is a dynamic and complex endeavor.

Within this conceptual framework, I use the socio-political context as the larger frame within which other important components of reform leadership occur. The policy context, and how leaders respond to it, is a key concept within this framework. Furthermore, the political games that play out related to coalition building, and the power dynamics that effect who is most influential, why they are able to be most influential, and how they influence others, all illuminate the leadership of reform implementation. I use these concepts to guide my investigation into the leadership of SEAL implementation within Sequoia Grove School District (SGSD).

Shared-ownership and Partnership

Notions of shared-ownership of reforms and partnership emerge as important concepts within reform implementation. Within her multidimensional framework, Coburn (2003) advocates for the transfer of ownership as a core element of scaling reform. McLaughlin and Mitra (2002) also posit that there must be a transfer of authority where reforms move from being external to internal. Coburn (2003) notes that most authors conceive of ownership as "buy-in" rather than authority for and knowledge of the reform. She then goes on to point to building internal capacity to provide professional development, make key strategic decisions, and generate on-going funding as key elements of ownership.

Stringfield, Datnow, and Ross (1998) find that when site leaders believed the comprehensive school reform (CSR) model they were implementing fit with their school culture and existing instructional program, they were more supportive of the reform, a precondition for ownership. District and intermediary leadership, contact, and guidance, all elements of ownership, also increased the depth of implementation. This study also indicates positive effects when the CSR model helped make a connection between families and the school. These authors recommend strong support at all levels, including reform designers, local policymakers, and school site educators. Such findings suggest that shared-ownership across actors can positively impact reform implementation.

Building from these scholars, I define reform ownership in three dimensions: 1) actors' support for reform implementation grounded in beliefs about its "fit" within schools' cultures and instructional programs; 2) transfer of authority for reforms from external actors to internal actors;

and 3) internal actors' knowledge of and authority for the reform that manifests through building the internal professional capacity to lead professional development and provide on-going funding for reform implementation.

Another related and enduring concept within reform implementation is joint-work and partnerships. Honig and Copland (2008; Honig, 2012) argue that jointly defined work builds concrete partnership around specific areas that have mutually high levels of significance and importance. This allows for the co-construction of solutions and collaborative planning, leading to plans that are contextualized, shared, and better situated to address stakeholder needs. Joint-work is the setting within which shared-ownership and partnership-oriented relationships are lived.

Partnership is characterized by collaboration among stakeholders as the central method of interaction, and this is integral to enacting shared-ownership. Supovitz (2006) advocates for deep collaboration between districts and intermediaries but warns that the relationship must be partnership-oriented. Levin, Glaze, and Fullan (2008) write about Ontario's success at large scale reform and point to one of the key elements being "coherence and alignment through partnership" (p. 278). Here we see comprehensive reform efforts at all levels of the system working in a coordinated fashion to build systemic capacity. These authors posit that relationships built on partnership are key to collaboration at this scale.

Partnership is a key concept within Honig and colleagues' (2010) study of school systems working to transform their school support to be centrally focused on student learning. Building relationships focused on partnership helps reorient the central office to be in support of instructional improvement. Partnership is linked to the recurring concept of professionalism that permeates educational discourse. Thompson and colleagues (2008) state that district-wide instructional effectiveness is dependent "…on the professional system, which consists of person-to-person linkages among teachers and administrators, and the channels of trusted communication and the norms that arise within these linkages" (p. 34). Through building a system based on professionalism rather than bureaucratic control and oversight, the district strengthens its capacity to partner with schools to support instructional effectiveness.

Coburn and colleagues' (2008) study helps to prevent an over-simplification of partnerships. Individuals and groups are bound to have differing perspectives, power tensions, and competing priorities. These authors find that even among insiders, issues of authority impede reform implementation. They suggest that creating alignment of goals and points of view, and clearly delineating authority can promote effective implementation.

The literature and concepts discussed indicate that relationships oriented towards partnership can serve to build collaboration and shared-ownership, which appear to be key elements of reform implementation. Throughout the literature we see that learning focused systems use partnership as a strategy to build internal and external collaboration and capacity. Nevertheless, relationships within and across organizations prove to be complicated. These concepts form the second part of this conceptual framework which help uncover aspects of the nature of relationships across leaders within SGSD, and how they work together within SEAL implementation.

Customization and Negotiation to Craft Coherence

Scholars focused on the implementation and scaling of instructional reforms note the importance of building systems and strategies for adaptability and customization to schools' contexts (Datnow, 2002; McLaughlin & Mitra, 2002; M. Thompson & Wiliam, 2007). This research indicates that reforms are best positioned to have lasting impact on classroom practices if they incorporate ways to adapt implementation to specific district, school and even teacher contexts.

Sense-making offers a strong theoretical basis for understanding how reform actors interact with reforms (Datnow & Park, 2009). In simplest terms, sense-making is the process of making sense. Sense-making is inherently reciprocal, where ideas are simultaneously constructed and received, authored and interpreted, created and discovered (Weick, 1995). Rooted in social psychology and organizational theory, sense-making acknowledges that local actors are not just responding to external demands but are also deeply engaged in interpreting and creating implementation. Research suggests that as implementers make sense of and implement reforms, their existing beliefs and instructional practices deeply influence how those reforms are enacted (Cohen, 1990). This conceptualization places context, including the existing knowledge, beliefs, and instructional practices of reform actors at the forefront.

Thompson and Wiliam (2007) present their 'tight but loose' strategy for scaling a literacy intervention which they posit allows for a dynamic orientation where the implementation is responsive to the context within which it is intended to improve. Borrowing heavily from Coburn's (2003) scaling framework and Churchman's (1982) "systems design", they describe this strategy as an "obsessive adherence" to the core design principles and theory of action, with space to adjust to the "needs, resources, constraints, and particularities" of schools and districts (p. 41). The authors frame this as a negotiation and a dynamic process where they continually assess the 'tight but loose' balance that then positions their reform to persist within many unique 'school ecologies'.

McLaughlin and Mitra (2002) posit that theory-based change requires co-invention and flexible implementation because it must engage those doing the changing and be fully contextualized. Similarly, Datnow and Park (2009) and Stringfield, Datnow, and Ross (1998) argue that co-construction of reform implementation by designers and implementers allows for consideration of the sociopolitical and cultural dimensions. Notions of co-construction and co-invention are an attempt to shift the power dynamics so policy-makers, reform designers, implementers, and even community members, partner to collaboratively create context specific reforms. As such, shared-ownership and partnership are key to creating co-constructive, adaptive reforms.

A related concept, coherence, permeates educational reform literature. Kennedy's (2016) review of professional development literature raises concerns about the "noise" that teachers are inundated with, filled with conflicting ideas and goals, which are both self-imposed and imposed by others. The notion of coherence seeks to address this "noise". Newmann and colleagues (2001) define instructional program coherence in three parts: 1) an instructional framework that links teaching, curriculum, assessments, and the learning environment; 2) working conditions that support the framework; and 3) resources to advance the framework and avoid diffuse, disconnected

efforts. Honig and Hatch's (2004) conceptualization focuses on coherence, "…not as objective alignment but as an ongoing process involving multiple actors both internal and external to formal school systems" (p. 17). This notion requires schools and district offices to negotiate internal and external demands, and incorporates the importance of partnership-oriented relationships. They propose goal and strategy setting as a simplification system enabling the translation of complex problems into manageable forms. Furthermore, these authors suggest that disagreement and varying perspectives are part of this negotiation, and that trust and collegiality are most consequential.

The third part of this conceptual framework is focused on how leaders make sense of reforms, and in turn how they negotiate coherence. Crafting coherence is connected to customization and adaptability of reforms to the specific contexts within which they are being implemented. Rather than various programs and curriculum being disjointed, working towards coherence requires collaborative sense-making and negotiations that lead to adaptations and customizations. Through these processes, reforms have a greater possibility of being internally owned and more deeply enacted. Core to this is a shift in traditional power dynamics between districts and schools, where formal district and site leaders are reimagined less as managers and more in the role of bridging, buffering and negotiating. Crafting coherence between SEAL and other initiatives, programs, and curriculum is another important dimension of reform leadership that frames this study.

In sum, this conceptual framework theorizes that the socio-political context is key to understanding reform leadership. As illustrated in figure 1 below, this context is set by current policies, as well as the political games and power dynamics which are key to understanding reform implementation. Furthermore, this framework posits that when relationships between leaders are characterized by partnership and reform ownership is more widely shared, reform implementation can be positively impacted. The arrow in the figure below attempts to signify the mutual dependency between these relationships and the crafting of instructional coherence. Shared-ownership across actors and customization of the reform are situated within the socio-political context of the school and district, and will impact the process and capacity to craft coherence. In the next section, I detail how I operationalized these concepts in my research design.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
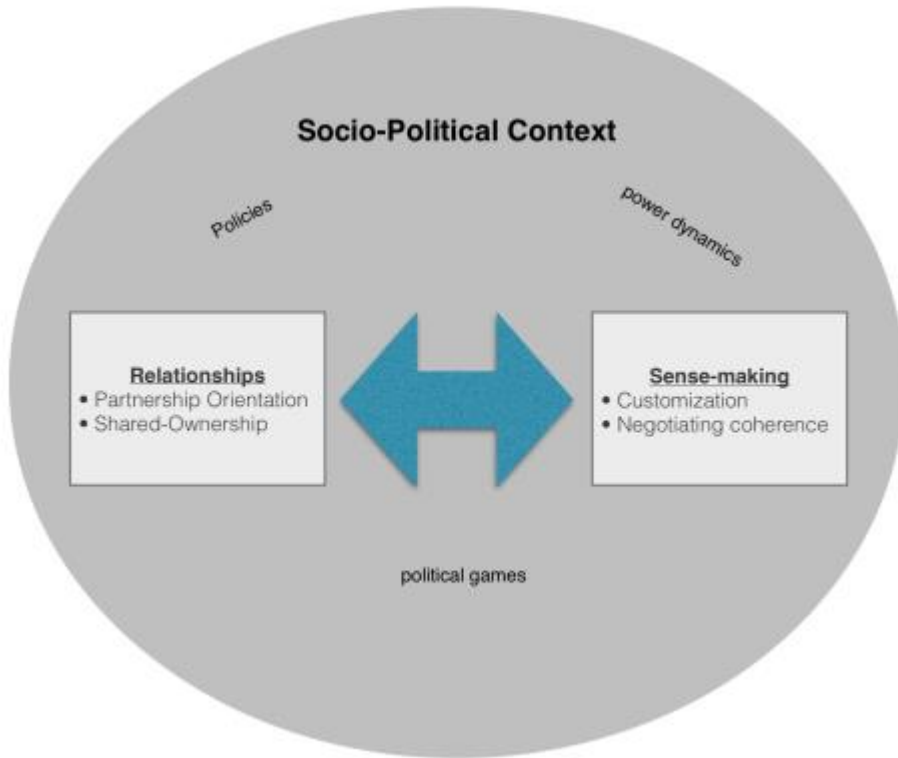
Chapter IV. Methods: Descriptive Case Study

Descriptive Case Study

This descriptive case study examines leadership of SEAL implementation within one school district representing a critical case. Using the conceptual framework described in the previous chapter, I explore how leaders define their roles within SEAL implementation, and seek to uncover the constraining and enabling factors they experience. Case study methods are most appropriate because the contingent nature of school reform requires a thorough and deep understanding of the specific context within which the reform is situated. Furthermore, qualitative methods allow me to explore the themes of my conceptual framework: the socio-political context, relationships and reform ownership across leaders, and instructional coherence across programs, initiatives and curriculum.

I approach this study from a critical realist perspective, though my epistemological assumptions are more firmly grounded in the constructivist and participatory elements of this bricolage (Maxwell, 2013; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Ontological realism, is the notion that something is real. This is particularly important within public education. Inequity, and the current and past actions that have perpetuated it within our world, society, and school systems, "…exists independently of our beliefs and theories" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 43). SEAL is a comprehensive instructional reform model that seeks to address educational inequity for English Learners (ELs), and I assume a critical realist standpoint that asserts the reality of educational inequity for ELs within our schools and school systems.

Epistemologically this inquiry is founded on constructivism and is participatory. As such, the design of this study is based on a belief in constructing deeper understanding of phenomena through uncovering perceptions and interpretations of those experiencing the phenomena. In this sense, each person's perception of the world is constructed by his or her experiences and beliefs, and therefore forms one's notions of reality (Maxwell, 2013). The participants of this study collectively help construct deeper understanding of this phenomena. As scholar practitioner, this study represents a real-life problem of practice of which I am engaged. I am the Deputy Director of SEAL, an external partner to this district, and therefore a participant observer.

I selected qualitative methods for this study because they help explore complex, natural settings and build holistic pictures (Creswell, 2013). Through the descriptive case study method, I am able to examine the complex social phenomena associated with leading SEAL implementation (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2003, 2014). Given the multifaceted dimensions of school and district leadership, a descriptive case study approach allows for a needed holistic and real-time perspective. Other study designs, such as an effectiveness study, would overly narrow the nature of my inquiry by distilling the research questions and evidence sources to the conventional inputs and outcomes that are typically measured in such studies – test scores. Contrastingly, a long-term ethnography would be too time consuming given the time limits of this doctoral program. As such, case study methods are most appropriate when considering how the boundaries between a district's context and the phenomenon of leadership of reform implementation, both effective and ineffective, are not clear. Case study methods help develop in depth understanding of a complex, multi-faceted situation (Yin, 2014).

As a descriptive case study, the goal of this inquiry is not to look for casual relationships, but rather to more deeply describe and understand dimensions of leadership of reform implementation. Theory is key to the design of this study helping to guide where my investigation is focused (Yin, 2003). The conceptual framework explored in chapter 3 provides the theoretical foundation for this case study and shapes my design and analysis.

As a leader within the SEAL organization, my role within this study is also multifaceted as I am both researcher and participant. As an external partner to the district, I have both insights that I would not otherwise have, and an undeniable subjective perspective. I have tried to continuously attend to my biases and predetermined ideas, knowing that pure objectivity is not feasible (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). I have sought to maintain awareness of my positionality rather than accept the pretense that I might analyze it away. This will be discussed further within the section on reliability and rigor.

Critical Case Study Selection

Though SEAL is being implemented across 16 districts within California, Sequoia Grove School District[2] (SGSD) was chosen as a critical case where implementation appears to be successful, leadership seems to be aligned, and there is perceived widespread "buy-in" across the district. Furthermore, SGSD presents a strong single-case in which I can examine whether shared-ownership and partnership-oriented relationships have enabled reform customization and the crafting of instructional coherence as variables that impact the conditions of implementation. As an actor within the implementation of SEAL in SGSD, I am not strictly an outsider conducting this investigation. I chose this district because from my perspective, as well as the perspective of others involved in SEAL implementation across multiple districts, it appears to stand out as strong case.

Components of SEAL

The SEAL model is designed to build the language and literacy skills of young ELs in preschool through 3rd grade within rigorous CCSS-based thematic instruction. The model is both an instructional methodology that is enacted through a set of high-leverage research-based strategies, and an approach to integrated curriculum design. SEAL is comprehensive, not an intervention or program that happens in a specific time of day. When implemented fully, SEAL thematic units incorporate language arts, science, social studies, and English Language Development (ELD), and are taught throughout the school day so that children are able to be deeply immersed in their learning. High-leverage instructional strategies are embedded throughout all learning activities, ensuring that rich language development is explicitly planned for across the content areas and within the context of authentic learning.

Schools that implement the model work in sets of three building communities of practice across their schools. Teachers are trained in grade spans, preschool through 1st grade as one group, and 2nd and 3rd grade as the other. The training series is two years long, and begins with the preschool through 1st grade teachers, while the 2nd and 3rd grade teachers begin training the following year. As such, it takes three years for all teachers to go through the training series. Schools are required to have a coach, someone from within the school or district to support teachers

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[2] Pseudonym to maintain confidentiality of participants and sites

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with implementation. Coaches, principals, and district leaders all receive support and technical assistance from the SEAL team through convenings, workshops, and ongoing meetings to problem solve and customize implementation.

Within the training series, teachers learn the high-leverage instructional strategies while digging deep into the Common Core, Science, ELD, and Next Generation Science Standards to plan their thematic units. SEAL has a methodology for thematic unit design that teachers and coaches also learn in the training series. They apply this methodology to the development of their units rather than being given a set of standardized units that are already designed. At the core of this design approach is that SEAL believes that teachers need to gain the skills of unit design, and the skills of collaborating with their colleagues, in order to deeply understand the standards and to be able to fully drive and differentiate the learning happening in their classrooms. Teachers work with their grade level teams across three sites to design these thematic units, and coaches act as the facilitators of this process. In this way, teachers weave together the materials and curriculum that are available to them and are adopted by the schools or districts. SEAL also requires districts to allocate roughly $2,000 per teacher for additional materials to be purchased for the thematic units, specifically for items that are often lacking in primary grade public school classrooms, such as materials for dramatic play and researcher centers, and rich literature and nonfiction books to accompany their themes.

Coaches learn the SEAL model along with their teachers, but the SEAL team also brings them together across districts and schools three times a year to receive a preview of the trainings and develop their understanding of their role. Partnering with families is an important element of the SEAL model, and is woven throughout the teacher trainings and coach convenings. There is also a Parent Module where coaches, principals, and parent liaisons/coordinators comes together to learn about this component of the model and collaboratively create an action plan for their partnership with families to support language development. As is noted in the introduction, deepening SEAL's support for principals and district leaders has been a key role that I have played in further developing the model. In turn, we bring principals and district leaders together across our network of schools three times a year to build their understanding of the model, explore how they can best support their teachers and coaches, and unpack the evolving policy context within which SEAL implementation operates. In these ways, SEAL attempts to support actors across the system.

Context: Sequoia Grove School District (SGSD)

SGSD is an elementary school district located in the Bay Area serving a little over 11,000 students, with 16 elementary schools and 4 intermediate schools. Latinos represent the largest student population at 50%, while 20% of students are Asian, 20% are White, 5% are Black, and 5% are other race/ethnicity. 30% of students are ELs, and 20% are Fluent-English-Proficient (FEP). 45% of students come from low-income families where they meet the requirements for free or reduced lunch. 60% of teachers are White, 15% are Latino, 10% are Asian, 5% are Black and 10% are unreported[3].

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[3] These percentages are approximate to maintain confidentiality of participants and sites

SGSD has four elementary schools that receive Title I funding and these schools serve the majority of ELs within the district. Three of these schools have bilingual programs that were established in the 1980s and persisted under the statewide restrictions placed on bilingual education associated with the passing of Proposition 227 in 1998. These programs were originally Kindergarten through 6th grade models but after Proposition 227 they became early exit programs where students are transitioned to English-only instruction by 3rd grade.

The district began implementing SEAL in the four Title I schools in the 2013-14 school year, with the desire to strengthen the bilingual programs and the English only instructed classrooms. They added eight schools the next school year, and another two schools the year after that, bringing the total number to 14 elementary schools implementing SEAL. The impetus for such a rapid and vast expansion of SEAL came from district leaders who report that they wanted SEAL to be their core strategy for transitioning to CCSS for the early elementary grade levels, while addressing the needs of young ELs as an underserved student population. Nevertheless, SEAL attempts to work actively with school communities to build shared-ownership of the decision and commitment to implement the model. All school communities have been through SEAL's standard process where critical masses of teachers visit the SEAL demonstration site, get a comprehensive overview of the model and professional development series, and have a chance to ask questions. SEAL leaders explicitly state the need for school "buy-in" in order for the model to be implemented well, and avoid partnering with schools and districts where these conditions are not evident.

SGSD was selected for this critical case study because there is early indication that shared-ownership across site and district leaders is positively impacting implementation. A pre-assessment was conducted through informal interviews with the superintendent, assistant superintendent and the director of English Learner programs as well as observations of professional development, principals' meetings, and implementation work-sessions. This preliminary data indicated: 1) the superintendent has become a spokesperson for SEAL at conferences and within professional networks; 2) the assistant superintendent has mobilized and well-resourced her instructional team to be tightly connected and coordinated around implementation; 3) most principals appear to be supportive of the initiative; and 4) teacher turnover is fairly low.

Selection of Participants and Subunits of Analysis

In order to explore the leadership dimensions of reform implementation within SGSD, I used purposeful selection; participants and subunits of analysis were chosen because they could provide information that was particularly relevant to my research questions and conceptual framework (Maxwell, 2013). Furthermore, given that a core idea within my conceptual framework is the notion of coalitions and shared-ownership across actors (Malen, 2006, 2011; Shipps, 2003), I chose participants with different types of leadership roles. I selected three key district leaders, and two schools as subunits of analysis, gathering data from principals, coaches, and teachers from these two school communities with a total of 11 participants (see Table 4.2).

The Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Service, and the Director of English Learner Programs were selected because they hold key roles within the district's socio-

political context— setting overall direction for the district, interpreting and enacting policies, and influencing the power dynamics within and around implementation of SEAL. The Superintendent was first approached to request permission for the district to be the focus of this case study, and then for his participation in data collection. Once his approval was granted, the Assistant Superintendent and Director of EL Programs were approached. Once they agreed to participate, I worked with them to select the two schools as subunits of analysis.

School level data gathering was important to the design of this study because, as noted above, examining leadership across actors is key to the conceptual framework. Moreover, the notions of customization of reforms into local educational contexts, and negotiating coherence between and across policies, initiatives, and curriculum are also central to the theoretical foundations of this inquiry. The selection of only two schools as units of analysis was driven by time limitations. As a doctoral candidate within an EdD program, it was necessary to realistically scope this investigation given that I am employed full time and have a limited time within which to complete the study. The two schools were selected using criteria related to the student population, length of implementation, language model of instruction, and stability of school staff (see table 4.1). This selection was purposeful, and some criteria was intended to be common, while other criteria was deliberately contrasting.

The shared criteria were similar student demographics and length of implementation. As a reform focused on transforming schools to better meet the needs of underserved ELs, selection focused on schools with higher numbers of these students. A common length of implementation served as a strong shared-context for analysis. The divergent criteria were specifically focused on language model of instruction and staff turnover because both are factors relevant to the implementation of SEAL. As noted in chapter 2, bilingual education is an important aspect of the EL policy context. Within California, few schools kept their bilingual programs open after the passing of Proposition 227. SEAL is a reform focused on centralizing the needs of ELs and promoting bilingualism, and therefore it was important to compare across bilingual and non-bilingual settings. Staff turnover rate is an important factor impacting public schools that serve low-income ELs, and is particularly relevant to reform implementation and shared-ownership. Including one site with high staff turnover, and another with low staff turnover broadens the lens and provides data from contrasting contexts. These criteria, both congruent and divergent, create two strong subunits to focus this inquiry.

Table 4.1 School Selection Criteria

	School A	School B
English Learner Population	45%	68%
Latino Population	70%	85%
Low Income Population	74%	88%
Language Model of Instruction	Structured English Immersion	Early Exit Bilingual and Structured English Immersion
Staff Turnover	Low	High
Began SEAL Implementation	2013-14 school year	2013-14 school year

I approached the principals and coaches from the two schools selected via email to ask their consent to participate in the study and all but one coach agreed. Each school has two coaches that support SEAL implementation. Both coaches at School A agreed, but one of the coaches at School B denied because she felt too new to the school and the SEAL model, having only been working at the school and district for under a year. Teacher participation was based on snowball sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) where the coaches were asked to suggest two teachers from each school, one from Kindergarten or 1st grade, and one from 2nd or 3rd grade. Emails were sent to the four suggested teachers and both teachers from School A agreed, but only one teacher replied from School B. Given that I was only able to collect data from one coach and one teacher from School B, my data likely leans more heavily on School A and there is a possibility that my data may be skewed and less representative of School B.

Table 4.2 Critical Case Study Participants

Role	Total
Superintendent	
Assistant Superintendent	
Director of English Learner Programs	
Principal School A	
Coach 1 School A	
Coach 2 School A	
Kinder Teacher School A	
2nd Grade Teacher School A	
Principal School B	
Coach 1 School B	
2nd Grade Teacher School B	
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Data Collection

Within this study, I focus on qualitative data to build context specific understanding. The core data collection strategy was interviews, with observations and document review as secondary strategies. My research questions guided my data collection methods (see table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Data Collection Matrix

Research Question	Purpose	Participants	Data collections methods
RQ 1: What do district and site leaders do to implement SEAL?	Site and district leaders play a critical role in implementation. Understanding their responsibilities, perceptions of their roles, and relationships with other stakeholders will help unpack their role.	Principals District leaders Coach/facilitators Teachers	Interviews Observation notes Document review: ● LCAP ● 5 Year Strategic Plan
RQ 2: What are the contextual factors that create enabling or constraining conditions for leaders implementing SEAL?	To understand how the context (state, district, and school specific) impact the leadership of SEAL.	Principals District leaders Coach/facilitators Document review	Interviews Observation notes Document review: ● LCAP ● 5 Year Strategic Plan

There were four phases of data collections (see table 4.4). The first phase was a review of key district documents, the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and the Five Year Strategic Plan. These documents were chosen to provide background information about the district's stated goals, to analyze if/where SEAL appeared in these plans, and to illuminate how the district defines its overall agenda. The LCAP is a state mandated process that requires districts to write a plan articulating their goals and activities related to the revised state funding formula, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Through this new formula, funds are generated based on the unduplicated number of English Learners, low-income students, and foster youth. Within the LCAP, districts must address the state's 8 strategic areas: basic services, implementation of standards, course access, student achievement, other student outcomes, student engagement, parent involvement, and climate (California State Board of Education, 2014). The Five Year Strategic Plan (2015-2020) was a charge of SGSD board of trustees and was written with input from staff, parents, community members, and various district committees. Both the LCAP and the

Strategic Plan represent information that helps elucidate the district's response to the larger and local socio-political and policy context.

The second phase—interviews with district leaders, principals, and coaches—served as the core data collection period where the most information was gathered. Interviews of teachers and observations of staff meetings constituted the third stage. The final phase involved follow-up interviews with two of the district leaders, both principals, and two of the coaches to deepen questioning in some areas and begin to test some emerging patterns. As noted above, these methods and sources of data were chosen given the epistemological nature of this study, which is firmly constructivist and participatory.

Table 4.4 Data collection phases

Phase 1	Document review of district LCAP and Strategic Plan
Phase 2	Interview district leaders, principals, and coaches
Phase 3	Interview teachers; observe staff meetings
Phase 4	Follow-up interviews of district leaders, principals and coaches

Open-Ended Interviews

The core data collection strategy was structured open-ended interviews. I conducted a total of 11 initial interviews and six follow-up interviews using semi-structured interview protocols. The interview protocols (see appendix XX) were generated to support inquiry into the core research questions—1) leadership roles within reform implementation, and 2) enabling and constraining factors of implementation. My conceptual framework guided the specifics of my interview questions. I purposely left considerable room for interpretation of questions, to be authentically open-ended and allow participants to share their perspectives and opinions (Patton, 1990, 2015).

Observations and Document Review

Additional data was gathered through observations of staff meetings at each school, brief classroom observations, and observations of SEAL professional developments. These observations allowed for data to be gathered in authentic environments, to create additional data points, and to get at "…tacit understandings and 'theory-in-use,' aspects of the participants' perspectives that they are reluctant to directly state in interviews" (Maxwell, 2013). Observations allowed me to challenge both my own bias as well as those inherent in using self-reporting through interviews. Data was recorded through field notes.

Document analysis was also conducted, looking at the districts Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and its publically available 5-year strategic plan. Both these documents are posted on the district's website and are meant to communicate the districts' strategic goals and activities to their stakeholders. These documents serve as a window into how the district

interprets broader policy and community contexts, and an understanding about where SEAL sits within that context.

Data Analysis

Data analyses within this study were both deductive and inductive. This is a theory-based critical case study and therefore its design is grounded in my conceptual framework. As such, theory-based codes were employed to analyze data (Creswell, 2013; Givens, 2008; Maxwell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Nonetheless, inductive codes were also used to as a part of the constructivist nature of the methods, to leave room for unknown dimensions to arise, and challenge bias. Core to my data analysis was the acknowledgement of the complexity of the phenomena of school reform implementation. Furthermore, being a participant-observer required me to confront my preconceptions and bias in an ongoing, rigorous manner. As such, data analysis was iterative and data were analyzed multiple times as outlined below.

I began with a set of deductive codes that were derived from my research questions and framework. This set of theory-based codes evolved throughout the analysis, as my conceptual framework evolved. Because interviews were the core data gathering strategy, their analysis was the most complex. Within 24 hours of each interview I wrote memos to record emerging themes and patterns. I recorded all interviews, and within one week of each interview I created transcripts and reread them to highlight key areas, take notes, and begin the initial coding process.

I then uploaded my transcripts, notes, memos, and district documents to Dedoose, an online data management system designed to support qualitative data analysis. I began coding with a set of parent codes (see table 4.5) that were aligned with my research questions, and derived from my knowledge base and conceptual framework, the theoretical foundations of this study.

Table 4.5 Theory-based Parent Codes

Research question	Theory-based Parent Code
RQ 1: What do district and site leaders do to implement SEAL?	• Role in implementation • Leadership • Ownership • Coherence
RQ 2: What are the contextual factors that create enabling or constraining conditions for leaders implementing SEAL?	• Policy context • Inhibiting factor/Challenge • Enabling factor/Positive Opportunity • External partnerships • Perceptions of effectiveness

The codes were applied neutrally, as low-inference categorization. As such, excerpts were assigned codes without ascribing positive or negative analysis. Codes such as *coherence* and *ownership* were applied when data suggested they were relevant, not to imply a positive judgment. I continued writing memos to capture emerging analysis that might lead to potential findings, record my questions to deepen the inquiry, and to manage my own bias and assumptions.

While I applied these theory-based codes, I also began to develop a set of inductive codes, themes that were emerging from my data. These codes became sub-codes within some of the parent codes, and helped to deepen my analysis (see table 4.6). Furthermore, I continued to reread all data and refine my coding of excerpts, and I continued writing memos to record my meaning making. At this stage I set out to problematize my emerging ideas, to challenge and interrogate them to both deepen my analysis and to question my bias. I chose this district as a critical case study on the assumption that their leadership of SEAL, a comprehensive instructional reform, was shared and therefore positively impacted implementation. Nevertheless, the goal of this study was to explore the complexity of the phenomena of school reform leadership. As such, challenging my assumptions and biases, and pushing beyond surface conceptions was paramount.

Table 4.6 Parent Codes and Sub-codes

Theory-based Parent Code	Inductive Sub-code

Leadership	• Instructional Leadership
	     o Knowledge of SEAL Model
	     o Knowledge of EL and Bilingual pedagogy
	     o Knowledge of early education pedagogy
	 • Shared leadership and collaboration

Policy context	• CCSS • NCLB • Accountability • Focus on ELs and underserved students
External Partnerships	• Alignment with SEAL

The final phase of analysis was focused on deepening examinations to synthesize findings. The two core aspects included using the data management program to analyze code co-occurrence, and to export coded excerpts to more deeply look across the data. These steps allowed me further synthesize the themes and patterns that were emerging, and relate them to the theoretical foundations of the study. Drawing from all my notes and ongoing memos, I began writing "findings memos" that synthesized the evidence and led to the final two chapters of this research study, the findings and implications.

Reliability and Rigor

Given the context-driven nature of this study, I am not concerned with the strict replicability associated with the notion of reliability that emerges out of a positivist notion of research (Creswell, 2013). Nevertheless, the procedures for data gathering and analysis were applied consistently. I standardized data collection protocols at both sites and across participants to ensure uniformity of across data gathering. Data analysis processes and outcomes were shared with colleague researchers to get feedback and check for consistency (Yin, 2014). These

opportunities for collaboration supported metacognition, creating internal distance for greater awareness and reflection (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). Key to this is the acknowledgement of my assumptions and biases, generating ways to test and challenge them.

Throughout this investigation I have strived to recognize my positionality, and my associated assumptions, biases, and values in an effort to strengthen reliability (Creswell, 2013). The nature of this study is constructivist and participatory, employing recursive reflection associated with action research methods to maintain distance and some "objectivity" within my perspective level (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). As Peshkin (1988) advises, I have continually strived for awareness of how my subjectivity have shaped this study—research questions, methods, case selection, analysis, and findings.

My role within this study is multifaceted, as I am an external partner to the school district and leader within the SEAL team, as well as a researcher. As such, I have continuously acknowledged and deliberated over my positionality. Throughout all phases of this study I have reflected on my assumptions, examining what I "want" to see. Being a leader within the SEAL model requires me to unpack my role as an actor within this context, using the literature on intermediaries to help me check my assumptions (Burch, 2009; Datnow, 2000, 2002; M. I. Honig, 2004; Rowan et al., 2009; Supovitz, 2006; Trujillo, 2014). Though research indicates that external reform designers and intermediaries have the potential to positively impact school improvement efforts, these organizations are situated in and influenced by a complex set of socio-political contexts, forces, and circumstances that make them vulnerable. Given that I occupy the role of external partner within this case, it has been key for me to check my bias towards "seeing" evidence of shared-ownership, coherence, and other core concepts that ground this study.

Peshkin (2000) notes, interpretation within qualitative research is an ongoing process that requires the perception of importance, order, and form. Deeply examining how my role as a participant effects my interpretations has been key to strengthening the reliability of this study. This includes looking for alterative explanations and striving to understand the difference between what Walker (1995) identifies as "public discourse versus private beliefs". Furthermore, it has been essential to incorporate other researchers and practitioners to access differing perspectives and interpretations.

Validity

As a qualitative critical case study, this research does not seek to create generalizable understandings to apply to other cases but rather to explore the phenomena of reform leadership within this particular context to expand theoretical understandings. I used the theories and ideas from my conceptual framework to create the foundation of external validity (Yin, 2014). Throughout data collection and analysis, I continuously tested and challenged my interpretations and results, looking for plausible alternatives and rival explanations to test for internal validity (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

I wrote conceptual memos as the key strategy to synthesize my understandings, check for my assumptions and biases, and explore rival explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I employed this strategy throughout all phases of data collection and analysis, aiding my ability to check for accuracy of data collection and analysis, relate data to my conceptual framework, and assisted in the surfacing of major and minor themes and patterns. Furthermore, I used these memos

to continuously check for my internal biases. To build construct validity, I shared my emerging findings with both participants of the study and fellow researchers (Yin, 2014). This case study is valid externally as a contribution to theory.

Limitations

As a practitioner scholar within an EdD program, I bring a unique and important perspective shaping this study's contribution to the knowledge base. Nonetheless, occupying this role also creates a set of limitations. The constraints of time, and in turn the scope of this study, is an important factor to be accounted for. As such, a major limitation of this study is the sample size of the subunits of analysis; only two of the 14 schools implementing SEAL within SGSD were analyzed. Though these two schools represent strong cases for selection, a more comprehensive analysis of all schools within the district would have allowed for a more robust study. Additionally, I was only able to gather data from one coach and one teacher in School B, skewing the data to some degree.

As a participant observer, my perspective cannot be fully "objective", and my relationship with participants impacts the information they shared with me. As noted in my reliability and rigor section, I have been guided by Walker's (1995) notion of "public discourse versus private beliefs". Given my positionality as Deputy Director of SEAL, my discourse with participants was more than just public, it was informed by my role within SEAL. As such, it is likely that information shared was more favorable to SEAL and/or certain information was not shared at all. This represents a limitation to this study.

While the methods used offered in depth, descriptive data that revealed the complexity of leadership within reform implementation, the findings cannot be generalized to other districts or reform initiatives. Moreover, being a single critical case of "successful" leadership of SEAL implementation has the potential to limit the applicability of recommendations. Nonetheless, findings from this critical case study do three important things: 1) corroborate important claims from the research base on reform implementation, 2) deepen understandings about the complexity of reform implementation, and 3) inform the support provided by the external partner (SEAL) within the unique context of SGSD.

Chapter V: Findings

The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership dimensions of reform implementation, namely the SEAL model—a comprehensive school reform intended to centralize the learning needs of young English learners (ELs) and transform teaching and learning in preschool through 3rd grade classrooms. This critical case study of reform leadership focuses on Sequoia Grove School District (SGSD), one of 16 districts implementing SEAL.

SGSD is an elementary school district serving just over 11,000 students comprised of 16 elementary schools and four intermediary schools. 30% of students are ELs, and 20% are Fluent-English-Proficient (FEP). Latinos are the largest student group at 50%. 20% of students are Asian, 20% are White, and 5% are Black. 45% of students come from low-income families. 14 of the 16 elementary schools are implementing SEAL, with implementation beginning in 2013-14 in the four elementary schools that receive Title I federal funds. Two of these four Title I schools serve as the subunits of analysis for this study.

The research questions that guided this investigation were: What do district and site leaders do to implement SEAL? What are the contextual factors that create more enabling or constraining conditions for leaders implementing SEAL? Interviews, observations, and document review were the data collection methods used to investigate this phenomenon. The conceptual framework guiding the analysis that generated the following findings focused on three key dimensions of reform leadership: the socio-political context, reform ownership and partnership, and the ability to adapt the reform and build instructional coherence within the schools and the district overall.

The first key finding asserts that to implement SEAL, SGSD leaders have built a coalition amongst themselves, grounded in a belief in the model's ability to address the unmet needs of ELs, which requires them to centralize the needs of ELs such that SEAL is their primary initiative for the early elementary grades. One important aspect of this coalition is that many of its members have instructional experiences working in bilingual education. SGSD leaders work, with varying degrees of success, to craft instructional coherence across existing programs and curriculum, and limit new initiatives. This requires collaboration and partnership amongst themselves, but also valuing and resourcing the collaboration and partnership of teachers who are the primary implementers.

The second main finding is that this coalition of leaders is navigating three key socio-political contextual factors, and how they do so impacts SEAL implementation. The larger policy context related to the new era of standards seems to support SEAL implementation, yet the more local factor of declining enrollment, and relics of the accountability frame leftover from the previous policy context associated with NCLB represent potential inhibiting factors. These three factors are important given that the SEAL model is a reform that centralizes the needs of young ELs, making it especially politically vulnerable. I unpack these findings further in the sections below.

Research Question #1— What do district and site leaders do to implement SEAL?

The key aspect of what SEAL leaders in SGSD have done to implement the SEAL model is to build a coalition across actors that is grounded in a belief in the model's ability to meet their

students' needs. Though these leaders have built a coalition in support of SEAL implementation, ensuring that this coalition is effective in leading implementation is a work in progress. There are four key patterns that substantiate this finding, which are framed by my conceptual framework: 1) reform ownership is shared across actors and is connected to a belief that the SEAL model is needed to serve their ELs and therefore "fit" the schools' instructional needs; 2) actors enact ownership differently, having varying authority for and knowledge of the model; 3) all actors seem to value collaboration and partnership, but those with formal power characterize it as listening to others, showing support, and removing obstacles, whereas coaches and teachers experience it as negotiating complex dynamics associated with implementation; and 4) all actors struggle to craft coherence, working to make sense of how SEAL fits with other initiatives and programs, reinforcing the notion that coherence is process not a state

 As discussed in the conceptual framework, I borrow from multiple scholars (Coburn, 2003; McLaughlin & Mitra, 2002; Stringfield et al., 1998) to define reform ownership. For the analysis of my data two key dimensions stood out as most useful: 1) actors' support for reform implementation is grounded in beliefs about its "fit" for their schools; and 2) internal actors' knowledge of and authority for the reform manifests through building the internal professional capacity to lead professional development and deepen instructional practices. As such, elements of ownership for SEAL implementation appear to be shared across various actors within SGSD. Nevertheless, ownership seems to manifest differently across actors and within actors. The question is therefore not whether reform ownership is present or not across all actors, but rather how do actors define and make meaning of their ownership?

 Throughout the literature, we see that learning focused systems use partnership as a strategy to build internal and external collaboration and capacity (M. I. Honig, 2012; M. I. Honig & Copland, 2008; Levin et al., 2008). Nevertheless, relationships within and across organizations prove to be complicated (Coburn et al., 2008). Within this section, I first unpack findings regarding shared ownership, as defined as instructional fit, and knowledge and authority of the reform. Though threaded through this discussion of ownership, I then more deeply explore findings focused on partnership-oriented relationships. Lastly, I discuss the crafting of coherence within schools and the district related to leadership of reform implementation.

Leaders believe SEAL instructionally fits the needs of their schools

 All participants appeared to be supportive of SEAL implementation, indicating that it was a "fit" within their schools' cultures and instructional programs. Furthermore, this notion of "fit" expressed itself in two key ways. First, participants had different roles in the decision to bring SEAL to the district and schools, but no one responded that they felt it was pushed on them. Additionally, district leaders, principals, and coaches, representing eight out of the 11 participants, discussed that the decision to bring SEAL into the district was related to an overall collective understanding that English Learners were underserved and that they needed to revamp their approach to educating this student population. In this sense, the "fit" of this reform within SGSD was related to its focus on centralizing the instructional needs of ELs.

 The district leaders all spoke about an espoused belief in and work towards educational equity that preceded SEAL implementation. This was also demonstrated within the district's Five

Year Strategic Plan and the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) that was reviewed for this study. Furthermore, all three district leaders discussed a process preceding their decision to implement SEAL where they studied their EL data and EL programs. The superintendent shared a story of visiting an English Learner Development (ELD) Center, classrooms set up across the district where many ELs spent the majority of their instructional time rather than in mainstream classrooms. She asked one of the students when she had come to the district, assuming she was a newcomer student. She was surprised and troubled when the student shared that she had been in the district since kindergarten and was now 12 years old. The superintendent reported that this was the type of experience that led her to believe they needed to overhaul their approach to serving ELs.

Similarly, all principals and coaches discussed how their schools had been persistently in Program Improvement within the state's previous accountability system, and that they felt they were failing their ELs. The principal and two coaches from School A were part of the group that made the initial decision to adopt the SEAL model within SGSD. The principal and coach from School B were not yet employees of the district at the time when SEAL was first introduced as a possibility. The School A participants discussed their role in deciding to bring SEAL to their schools. They went on a visit to a school where SEAL had been piloted, and observed several classrooms across all preschool through 3rd grade classrooms and across bilingual and Structured English Immersion (SEI) classrooms. They also received a comprehensive overview of the model and implementation process and commitments. They then went back to their school staff and had in depth conversations about whether to agree to implement the model. The principal of School A shared how he had originally not been interested and didn't even want to go on the visit. After he saw the classrooms and the level of student participation and production of language, his mind was changed. In these ways, SEAL's fit within SGSD is related to their awareness of instructional program ineffectiveness, their desire to change instructional practices, some knowledge of the SEAL model, and their belief in education equity.

The second, related dimension of "fit" is linked to the transition to new standards that also necessitated changes of instructional program. The SEAL model is seen as a needed departure from SGSD's previous instructional practices and curriculum. All 11 participants reported that they saw SEAL as aligned with CCSS and that the model was key to their transition to CCSS. More so, all participants asserted a belief in the "type" of learning that CCSS called for and that the SEAL model enacted, in contrast to the NCLB era of instruction. As one principal said:

> I was super glad when common core came in and I was super glad to pick up something like SEAL… because I think for our kids it's going to work really well. It's a different sort of way of teaching because clearly what we were doing before wasn't doing it, no matter what Bush said.

Here we see a more complicated notion of SEAL as an instructional program that "fits" given that it was brought in to disrupt the previous instructional practices associated with NCLB. Though participants report beliefs in the need for this disruption, it nonetheless indicates the potential for tensions and areas of mismatch with preexisting instructional practices.

Another important dimension of instructional "fit" is related to bilingual education. Unlike many districts across the state, SGSD was able to maintain bilingual programs in three of their

Title I schools throughout the Proposition 227 era, whereas many districts closed their programs. Given that SEAL promotes bilingual education, and works to strengthen and/or start new programs, this represents a clear area of "fit". Furthermore, seven of the 11 participants, including all three district leaders, both principals, one coach and one teacher, had significant experience within bilingual educational programs and therefore had related pedagogical knowledge that is aligned with the SEAL model. This has likely influenced their level of ownership, as well as their prior knowledge of related aspects of the model, and has helped to solidify their coalition.

Leaders within SGSD believe that SEAL fits their schools' contexts and needs. This is key to understanding what leaders do to implement SEAL because it is an important part of reform ownership. This was consistent across both subunits of analysis, as was the fact that though only one had a bilingual program in place, both principals had prior experience and expertise in bilingual education. Only the coaches and principal from School A participated in the decision to initially implement the model, but leaders from both schools indicated that SEAL was needed to address the needs of their students. The belief in SEAL as strong instructional fit across leaders is also related to a shared acknowledgement of inequity within the district and a desire to make significant change.

There is varying authority for and knowledge of SEAL across actors

All three teachers asserted the importance of trying all the strategies, "fully implementing the model", and not skipping out or avoiding the more complicated strategies. Furthermore, they all indicated that teachers could weaken and undermine the model by not implementing it fully. As such, an important element of ownership for teachers is the actual "doing" of the model, the extent to which they implement the model. This relates to both the depth of their knowledge of the model and their authority for the model. All 11 participants reported varying degrees of teacher ownership across the schools implementing SEAL, but also reported that they felt few teachers had no ownership of SEAL, and therefore almost everyone was implementing the model to some degree.

The critical role coaches play within SEAL implementation was acknowledged by all participants. Teachers and coaches stressed the role of coaches in developing and refining the SEAL thematic units, and facilitating teachers within this process. All three coaches emphasized their responsibility to ensure quality, helping teachers deepen their understandings of the model, and assisting in the reflection and refinement of both the units and the instructional practices associated with SEAL. All coaches and teachers, totaling six of the 11 participants, underscored the important role coaches play in ordering and organizing materials and resources, getting teachers the tools they need for implementation.

Within the model, teachers work across four sites to develop their units, and two of the coaches stressed their role in navigating the interpersonal dynamics across teachers. These coaches also elaborated on conflicts that arose within the upper and lower grades. SEAL is a preschool through 3rd grade model, and they reported that the 4th-6th grade teachers felt under-supported compared to the lower grades. In turn, these coaches worked to increase their support for the upper grade teachers to work through this conflict. In this sense, for coaches, authority for

the reform is connected to facilitating the conflicts and complicated dynamics of group collaboration and building professional communities.

Both principal participants signaled the need for them to know the model well enough to recognize different elements and be able to speak to the components. They both recognized that the coaches' depth of knowledge about the model was far greater than theirs', and that they rely on coaches to deepen their understandings and to do the "in the weeds" support for the teachers. Nevertheless, both principals acknowledged the importance of their stance as "learners" of the model.

One of the principals, as was a pattern across two of the district leaders, referred to herself as a "cheerleader", that her role was to celebrate and encourage teachers' implementation. She stated, "It helps to be the cheerleader for SEAL and to talk it up." The other principal stressed the significance of removing barriers and obstacles that might get in the way of implementation. He asserted, "I make sure that they (coaches) have what they need so they can get the teachers what they need. I try to do problem solving and I try to troubleshoot." In this regard, both principals highlighted the importance of playing supportive roles.

Knowledge of and authority for SEAL varied highly across district leaders. The main commonality is that they each took responsibility for bringing SEAL to the district and some responsibility for sustaining the implementation. The superintendent described her ownership as symbolic, "…ensuring that there is a very clear understanding that this is important to our system." The external partnership and initiative that she "owns" more explicitly is related to developing principal leadership and an overall instructional framework for the district. She describes SEAL as a part of that framework, and her role is to show her support for the model.

The assistant superintendent defined his ownership as focused on resourcing implementation, working across the district office departments such as Human Resources, the Business Office, and Educational Services to make sure the system was working together to support implementation. He also described his role as a "cheerleader", to listen to the requests of teachers, coaches, and principals, and make sure everyone has what they need. He repeatedly expressed the pressure he felt to have data to prove SEAL's effectiveness. In this way, his authority for SEAL was in part experienced as political pressure.

For the Director of English Learner Programs, authority for SEAL was explicit, and she referred to SEAL as her "baby". She explained the way she works closely with coaches, meeting weekly to problem-solve and align their work. She described her role as "hands on", keeping all the pieces and elements of implementation moving forward. Furthermore, the systems and practices that she and the coaches have put in place are evidence of internal professional capacity to lead professional development.

Ownership manifests differently across all internal actors. For teachers, ownership seems to be related to "doing" the reform, and variation is evident in the degree to which they implement the components of the SEAL model. Coach ownership appears to be linked to their depth of knowledge of the model, their ability to support refinements within implementation, and their capacity to facilitate and manage conflicts and group dynamics. Principal ownership is connected to having broad knowledge of the model, encouraging implementation, and removing barriers.

Within district leaders, ownership varies across the three distinct roles, from symbolic ownership to full authority and responsibility.

Though authority for and knowledge of SEAL varies, all actors illustrated some degree of ownership. This pattern is important because it indicates that though actors will have differing roles, it is key that they each play an active and appropriate part within implementation. While the two principals described their roles somewhat differently, one as a cheerleader and the other as a remover of barriers, they both defined their role in support of implementation. Shared-ownership underlies the coalition across leaders that is built around SEAL.

Partnership and collaboration appears more complex at different levels

Throughout the literature we see that learning focused systems use partnership as a strategy to build internal and external collaboration and capacity (Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki, & Portin, 2010; Levin et al., 2008; Thompson et al., 2008). Nevertheless, relationships within and across organizations prove to be complicated (Coburn et al., 2008). The notion of partnership-oriented relationships departs from the traditional way schools and districts operate where hierarchy and bureaucracy characterize the way actors and structures work. Instead, a partnership-orientation works to align people and structures within the system to collaboratively work on instructional improvement. Furthermore, joint-work that cuts across different parts of the system is defined as a vehicle to enacting partnership oriented relationships (M. I. Honig, 2012; M. I. Honig & Copland, 2008).

Notions of collaboration came up as a pattern across participants. All those in formal leadership roles—three coaches, two principals, and the three district leaders— spoke about collaboration as a part of leadership. This was characterized as shared-leadership, distributed leadership, and working as a team, but all entailed the idea that part of leadership is to listen to, work with, and empower others. The assistant superintendent stated, "To be a leader you have to become a part of a team. I'm not authoritarian I don't believe in authoritarian leadership." Similarly, a coach from School A shared:

> I think leadership is really about someone who has a solid vision and kind of knows where they're headed but is able to trust and delegate, build leaders in their school. Someone who doesn't think that they're the one and only who can do everything, but that they build and develop on everyone's strengths and use those to benefit the greater good.

This quote characterizes a sentiment across actors that collaboration is an important part of leadership. In this sense, strong leadership is equated with empowering others, and for leaders, being a good collaborator means being part of the team, not just directing the team. Additionally, there was a common understanding across all 11 participants that CCSS required collaboration from students as a 21st century skills, which validated and necessitated their work to also be collaborative.

Both the assistant superintendent and the director of EL programs discussed elements of joint-work within their roles. The assistant superintendent talked about working across different departments within the central office as part of his role within SEAL implementation. He shared the importance of working with the Human Resources and Business departments to ensure that "everyone has what they need" to implement the model. This included scheduling substitutes so

that teachers could go to professional development and collaborative-planning days, releasing funds for materials to be purchased for thematic units, and having both the budget and position openings to hire SEAL coaches. The director of EL programs elaborated on the weekly systems she has in place to work with coaches to "problem-solve" and plan for implementation. In these ways, both these district leaders report that SEAL represents areas of joint-work that require partnerships across the system.

However, there was a deeper awareness of the complexity and complications of collaboration within some participants. The director of EL programs use of the term "problem-solving" suggests that her notion of collaboration includes the complexity of navigating different perspectives, competing needs, and/or complex personal dynamics. Furthermore, all teachers and coaches, six of the 11 participants, spoke about the complexity of collaborating across grade levels and sites, and stressed the important role coaches play to facilitate that process. In this sense, good and productive collaboration for these participants required facilitation, and the incorporation and working through of diverse perspectives. Within the SEAL process teachers develop grade-level thematic units across multiple sites. This is often the most comprehensive collaborative professional experience they have been a part of. As such, the SEAL model is built on the belief that scaffolded teacher-driven joint-work is the most powerful way to change instructional practice. Data indicated that though all 11 participants valued this component of the SEAL model, the teachers and coaches more fully understood its complexity and difficulty.

Collaboration and partnership within SEAL implementation were enacted differently across actors, but it nonetheless appears to be an important part of how relationships across actors are characterized. There was also a pattern related to notions of collaboration as part of leadership and 21st century learning. As such, collaboration is part of how leaders within SGSD understand their role within SEAL implementation, yet how collaboration and partnership are enacted appears to vary across different roles and responsibilities of actors rather than across subunits of analysis.

Crafting coherence is a complicated process, representing public discourse

Scholars suggest that adaptability and customization to schools' contexts are important dimensions of reform implementation (Datnow, 2002; McLaughlin & Mitra, 2002; M. Thompson & Wiliam, 2007). This framing acknowledges the context specific nature of school change, and that reforms get layered onto existing knowledge bases and experiences of educators. Therefore, the notion of crafting coherence (M. I. Honig & Hatch, 2004b; Newmann et al., 2001) becomes important because it illuminates the multidimensionality within which reforms and initiatives operate, requiring a process of negotiation.

The SEAL model attempts to create room for customization through the unit development process. As is noted previously, teachers work collaboratively to develop their units and are encouraged to use and embed existing materials, programs, and units or lesson plans if they address the standards and support student learning and language development. Furthermore, the process of unit development requires teachers to collaboratively customize and adapt to both students' and teachers' interests and needs.

When asked about SEAL in relationship to other external partnerships and initiatives, all participants reported that they felt there was coherence. All participants indicated that they felt SEAL, as a TK through 3rd grade model, fit well with their upper elementary instructional model.

One district leader stated, "We've tried to stay pretty focused, and whatever we bring in kind of compliments and goes with it (SEAL)." This is representative of a general pattern around the public discourse surrounding coherence where it was described as being in place.

Nevertheless, approaches to coherence building varied across the two schools. The principal of School B shared about his process to connect SEAL with a larger instructional framework that the district was adopting across all sites. She shared, "I had to sort of integrate both (SEAL and other initiative) which makes my job harder…" She went on to explain that the other initiative was an overall instructional frame that was supposed to apply to all grade levels, and that she felt it was both aligned to SEAL and to their school's existing vision and mission. Nevertheless, it required intentional integration so that she saw the relationship across the initiatives and could describe them to her staff.

The principal of School A described a different process where he felt the district had a history of unsustained, scattered attempts at building a shared vision for instruction. He stated:

> I feel like we have been very fragmented and sort of disjointed in our focus for several years and I feel like now we may be coming to a point where we're looking really at simplifying things and making sure that we're on the right track. And the fact that we are working with (the other initiative) for two years in a row rather than dumping them like has been our pattern for a while, I think is a good sign. I have my issues with some of that as well because it's a company as well and... But I like some of their rubrics and I like their idea of rigor and relevance, and that makes a lot of sense and fits in with what we really believe.

In this quote, we see that he had previously tried to protect School A, and describes buffering the school from previous district initiatives. This newest instructional framework is seen as better, and he acknowledges that there appeared to be a longer-term commitment from the district. He described beginning to skeptically use some of their tools and protocols. Clearly, the two principals approached crafting coherence from very different perspectives, though they were both actively engaged in negotiating the district's attempts to develop a shared instructional vision. In this sense, coherence is subjective and very much relates to one's perspective.

The public discourse indicated that the five district and site leaders felt they were crafting coherence with regards to SEAL implementation, yet there was evidence of the complexity of this process. At School A, they had begun also implementing a new writing model because they felt their teachers needed a more delineated writing program. The principal stated, "It will fit really well with both (the upper grades instructional model) and SEAL." Yet one teacher indicated that she saw it as completely separate from SEAL. Follow up interviews with coaches confirmed that at the time little had been done to make connections between this new initiative and SEAL. Though the principal articulated understanding the importance of negotiating coherence related to SEAL and other initiatives and programs, it seemed to be underdeveloped in this regard. This evokes what Walker (1995) warns of concerning public discourse versus private beliefs. As such, a sentiment, often one that the researcher wants to hear, is discussed publically but doesn't fully represent the whole picture. The data gathered directly related to coherence proved to largely be public discourse.

Data from this study supports that crafting coherence is a multifaceted process, and awareness of this complexity within SGSD leaders appears to be somewhat superficial. Data also indicates that building coherence is subjective and defined quite differently across participants. This supports the concept that instructional coherence is a process not a state, and those participating in the process may have distinctive perceptions. This is significant because the perpetual shifting of the educational policy context requires leaders to work in an ongoing manner to limit the fragmented, disjointed nature of public education. The subjectivity of coherence plays a role in leaders' ability to negotiate coherence. As such, the crafting of coherence related to SEAL implementation will likely prove to be consequential to the model's sustainability over time.

In sum, the first key finding of this study is that SGSD leaders have built a coalition across actors in support of the SEAL model, and this is grounded in their belief in the model's ability to address the unmet needs of their young ELs. Though actors have different knowledge of and authority for the reform, this shared-ownership, and an overall orientation towards collaboration, seem to support implementation. Still, the ability to craft coherence between SEAL and other programs, initiatives, and curriculum appears to be a complex process that will require ongoing commitment and attention by leaders.

RQ #2— What are the contextual factors that create enabling or constraining conditions for leaders implementing SEAL?

I find that there are three important contextual factors that are impacting SGSD leaders as they implement SEAL, and the ability of leaders to maintain and strengthen their coalition in relationship to these factors will prove to be significant to SEAL implementation. The three core factors influencing the leadership of reform implementation are: 1) declining enrollment within the district which undermines economic stability and shifts the political games at play; 2) the larger policy context related to the new era of standards which enables SEAL implementation; and 3) the continued impact of the accountability frame established within the NCLB era.

Declining enrollment and economic instability shift attention and decision-making

SGSD, along with many districts in the Bay Area, is experiencing declining student enrollment. Participants report that this is related to the fact that many of their low-income families cannot afford to live in the area anymore and are leaving for places with more affordable housing. This declining enrollment, and the subsequent fiscal consequences on the school district, came up throughout the course of data gathering. Below, I explore how it impacts the political games playing out within SGSD.

As is discussed in the Chapter 3, Malen (2006) argues for the need to pay attention to four key political components: a) whose interests are served, b) the clusters of actors who are most influential in particular circumstances, c) their efforts to be influential, and d) the structures that create opportunities for actors to be influential. The economic context affects these components, influencing the power dynamics and political games at play within the district and schools.

At the start of SEAL implementation there were multiple streams of revenue that supported the reform effort generated by a statewide focus on CCSS implementation and ELs. The state gave districts one-time CCSS dollars to help make the transition to these new standards. Additionally,

the same year the district began implementing SEAL the state instituted a new funding formula called the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which tied increased funding directly to districts' EL and low-income populations. These factors helped create the political context to support SEAL implementation, making the conditions possible for this large investment in a model of CCSS implementation that centralized the needs of EL. It created the opportunity and structures for actors at various levels to align around SEAL. Now that the district faces a grim set of fiscal circumstances, interests are shifting, as are the cluster of actors who are most influential and the structures that create opportunities for them to be influential.

District leaders all shared the pressures they face given that their budget is increasingly constricted, fewer resources are available, and hard decisions must be made. Some of the issues raised were related to the possibility of closing a school and consolidating programs. Furthermore, at the start of the 2016-17 school year, the year within which this study focuses, student enrollment was down about 200 more than expected which resulted in shuffling of teachers across schools and overall instability. These pressures have both overt and less obvious impacts on the context within which SEAL implementation takes place.

Last minute increases in combination classes, where grades are mixed within a classroom, became necessary creating changes in teachers' assignments even after the school year began. Within SEAL implementation, teachers work in grade level teams to plan thematic units tied to the grade level content standards. Having a class with two grade levels creates a very different curricular context then just one grade level. Such belated changes have significant impacts on teachers' instruction and curriculum, and therefore their ability to serve students best. The Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent both shared their concern about SEAL units within combination classes.

Nevertheless, challenges can serve to strengthen commitments. The Superintendent shared:

> We continue to be challenged with enrollment and the implications that has on funding. We have to be strong, not compromising the significance of giving teachers the opportunity to be prepared when they step into a classroom, and feel like they are at a high level of implementation and effectiveness because they have the time.

Here we can see that the Superintendent reasserts the value of giving teachers' time to work collaboratively even in the face of decreasing funding. The public discourse represented here indicates that economic instability could serve to reinforce commitments to the reform. Nonetheless, the context is changing which will impact how this reform is implemented.

The larger economic pressures that are affecting the families that SGSD serves also came up as a constraining factor. Both principals and all three teachers reported on the struggles of poverty their students and families face, and a sense that it is increasing. One teacher described a student who had become homeless, sharing both her sadness for his situation and the pressure she felt to ensure that he did not fall behind his classmates. This sentiment, both sadness for their students and anxiety about how to meet their needs, was represented across all three teachers. The principal of School A shared her sense that the economic situation for many of the families in her school is becoming increasingly more difficult, and that it impacts the overall climate and socio-

emotional environment of the school. This changing context has the potential to influence the schools' and district's focus, and could result in a shift away from one initiative and onto another.

The economic context of both the communities and families who attend SGSD, as well as the district itself, plays a significant role in the socio-political context of this reform implementation. Data indicate that when SEAL began being implemented, all 11 participants acknowledged the importance of it as a strategy to address the unmet needs of young ELs. But it is an intensive, resource-heavy reform model. As resources become increasingly limited, interests are changing, as are those who might be most influential in decision-making. SEAL centralizes the needs of young ELs and therefore centralizes spending resources to serve these students. As will be explored below, the current policy context has supported this. However, the power dynamics are shifting, and this is and will continue to impact reform implementation, and the coalition that has been built around SEAL.

Statewide policy context seems to enable leadership of SEAL implementation

Malen (2011) asserts that standards and accountability are particularly durable policy efforts. This is congruent with the ways in which the leaders of SGSD understand their policy context. Participants overwhelmingly cited two influential policy contexts: the transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the California ELA/ELD framework. When asked which policies they think most about, all 11 participants mentioned these interconnected policies. Furthermore, all participants indicated overall approval of this new era of standards. One participant shared, "The overall philosophy of common core is very congruent with the philosophy of what education should look like". And another explained that CCSS was, "…more about real life then about memorizing facts". Some of the specific benefits noted by participants were the focus on connections across content areas, language development across content areas, and student collaboration embedded in the standards. A coach expounded, "The thing I love about common core in the interconnectedness of all of the subject matter and how we're looking at skills that children will need to be successful. We were always kind of looking at skills. But I think that in the accountability time, we lost a lot of that and a lot of -- what it means to have a joyful education in our country."

All participants interpreted a connection between CCSS, the ELA/ELD framework, and the SEAL model. Though this is not surprising given that SEAL frames itself as enacting the ELA/ELD Framework and spends considerable time incorporating all the CCSS, it was reiterated multiple times. One district leader explained, "This (SEAL) is exactly what we needed to implement the common core". The principal of School B shared, "SEAL was our district's response to the need to implement the Common Core in a systemic way that would integrate this new generation science standards, that would integrate the new ELA/ELD framework." These quotes are representative of all participants.

Though overall participants indicated their support for CCSS, two participants shared that with some of their students' parents, as well as in their own social circles, they had to defend CCSS. Moreover, two teachers shared their concerns about meeting the intensified rigor associated with CCSS for students who were disadvantaged by poverty and unstable home lives, and both shared stories about children within their classes who were homeless. While these

concerns were raised about CCSS and this new era of standards, SEAL was seen as aligned with and supported by the overall policy context.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was mentioned by five of the 11 participants, contrasting the differences between CCSS and NCLB. As is noted above, one coach referred to it as "the accountability time", where the joy of education was lost. Another district leader described the NCLB era as being, "…driven by assessment and having the kids bubble in…there wasn't much thinking." She went on to discuss how hard it is to change that mentality within teachers and the overall school system.

Participants frequently contrasted the NCLB era, specifically accountability and scripted curriculum, with SEAL. The principal of School B expanded, noting a difference between SEAL and other CCSS curriculum:

> One thing we are seeing with SEAL is it needs to be organically developed by groups of teachers, it can't just be given to them. Even if it's good curriculum like Engage NY, it can't just be given to people because it will be taught as a curriculum versus… a living piece of matter… I think that is a huge change for a lot of educators who were brought up in the NCLB era.

This quote suggests that SEAL represents a different type of curriculum from the NCLB era, and also a distinct process around curriculum development which sets it apart from other "good" curriculum aligned with CCSS. Within SEAL, teachers work across multiple sites within their grade-level, guided by their coach and SEAL trainers, to construct thematic units, "…a living piece of matter."

This same principal went on to say that she felt a principal could undermine SEAL implementation by using NCLB type management strategies, holding teachers accountable to measurable goals based on discrete skill-based assessments. Contrastingly, she described what SEAL represents:

> …the joy of learning, the joy of exploring, the wonder of growing ... your creativity and critical thinking within content knowledge, and in your communication skills.

Here we see SEAL described as supporting learning that is interconnect and inquiry-based, where language and critical thinking are developed in the context of content knowledge. And there is a clear acknowledgement that this is a vast and needed departure from NCLB.

Across participants, a theme arose where NCLB was looked upon negatively, specifically related to accountability, assessments, and scripted curriculum. In this way, the transition away from NCLB and towards this new era of standards serves as a political "game", enabling SEAL implementation.

The NCLB era accountability frame endures even though it is disliked

A contradiction emerged related to the overall negative perception of NCLB and the related high-stakes accountability system, and yet the untiring pressure of accountability that has persisted into this new era of policy. Though SGSD leaders contrast the current era of new standards and the SEAL model from that of NCLB, the forces of accountability emerge as enduring and prevalent. As noted in the previous section, NCLB was characterized as the "accountability time",

and all participants indicated a welcomed sense of departure from that time. Nonetheless, the potency of accountability is looming.

Within the district's Five Year Strategic Plan, accountability is the first priority, with equity and closing the achievement gap as second. Isolating accountability as the first priority of their strategic plan, separate from equity and the achievement gap, is questionable since they would seem to be interrelated. This strategic plan was written during the time when the state accountability system is being redefined and redesigned, as is illustrated in this excerpt from the "Accountability and Continuous Improvement Report" (CA Dept of Education, 2016):

> California has started on a pathway towards the creation of a better system for our students, one that rests on a foundation of student success, relies on high standards, more equitably distributes resources (through the Local Control Funding Formula), and trusts local educators and communities to design the educational structures and supports that our students need to reach their full potential (through the Local Control and Accountability Plans).

This emerging "California Way" is being framed quite differently from previous notions of accountability, and now continuous improvement and trust are core tenets. These shifts have not seemed to translate to local policy in SGSD where accountability still focuses on test score to drive their planning. The goals and objectives of the SGSD Strategic Plan are quite consistent with that of the previous era.

The need to have "data" to show that "SEAL is working" was also a pattern across two district leaders, one principal, and one coach, even though each of these leaders spoke of how they see significant qualitative changes in their classrooms. One district leader shared, "I'm stressed all the time about those results even though I question in my heart how important is that really… but it is". She then went on to say:

> It (SEAL) has changed everything. I wish you could have seen a kindergarten the year before SEAL began compared to today… I mean it, it has just changed everything kids are talking about. They collaborate, they have choice, and they are excited.

These two quotes represent a set of contradictory patterns, where a pressure for data sits alongside beliefs that instructional improvements related to SEAL implementation are evident, and a clear acknowledgement of the detriments of the data-driven, assessment culture of NCLB. At the coach and principal level, this contradiction seemed to be somewhat recognized. On the other hand, for district leaders, the pressure to justify the time and resources spent on SEAL implementation reinforces the systems, culture, and assessment tools associated with how accountability was framed within the NCLB era.

Although a departure from the previous era of standards and accountability seems to enable SEAL implementation, a contradictory pattern also arises within SGSD. The accountability frame from NCLB continues to permeate the pressures put on leaders. This force translates to a hyper focus on data that is based on assessments that are largely decontextualized skill-based standardized tests. Furthermore, they are generally not designed for ELs and pose serious questions around validity. Though leaders in SGSD have some understanding about these issues, this accountability frame is still influencing the context.

In the sections above, I explore three central socio-political factors that SGSD leaders are navigating within SEAL implementation. The local context of declining enrollment is creating instability across the district, specifically related to funding. However, the transition to a new set of 21st century standards seems to be enabling leaders as they implement the model because of its alignment with the goals of this policy agenda. Still, the relics of the accountability frame established within the NCLB policy era seem to be pervasive. How leaders are able to negotiate this socio-political context will prove to be consequential to the ability of SEAL to have lasting change within SGSD, and to sustainably transform the teaching and learning of young ELs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are two overarching findings from this critical case study of reform leadership within SGSD. The first focuses on what leaders do to implement the SEAL model. I find that SGSD leaders have been able to establish a coalition across actors where shared-ownership seems to be present, although it manifests in different ways. This coalition is rooted in a collective sense that SEAL fits the instructional needs of their students, particularly given the focus on ELs, and overall is pedagogically aligned with participants' beliefs about teaching and learning. Still, actors have differing authority for and knowledge of SEAL. Collaboration and partnerships seem to be valued across participants, but manifest differently, and appear more complicated in relation to the nature of the "joint-work". Crafting coherence is a complex process and is context-specific, differing across the two schools as sub-units of analysis. Furthermore, working to build coherence across programs, initiatives, and curriculum appears to represent the notion of public discourse and has the potential remain at superficial levels.

The second central finding is related to the socio-political contextual factors that enable and constrain leaders as they implement SEAL. There were three primary factors that arose. First, declining enrollment and the associated economic context appears to be constraining the district overall, and therefore reform leadership. The larger policy context of CCSS and the California ELA/ELD Framework has enabled SEAL implementation. Nevertheless, the accountability frame from the previous policy era of NCLB seems to still have a hold on local policy makers. Leader's ability to navigate this context is particularly important given that as a reform focused on the needs of ELs, it is politically vulnerable. In the next chapter, I explore the implications of these findings for practitioners, policy makers, and researchers.

Chapter VI: Implications

The findings outlined in Chapter V elucidate the leadership dimensions of reform implementation in SGSD. This chapter will consider the implications of these findings for practitioners, policy makers, and researchers. I begin with a discussion of some of the limits of this study while framing the value of qualitative inquiry for educational change. I then go on to make recommendations for some areas that practitioners, policy makers, and researchers might consider moving forward.

First and foremost, this study does not seek to make casual claims about what is definitively causing particular implementation dynamics. Rather, it attempts to illuminate the contextualized nature of educational reform and leadership. As such, I do not attempt to explain how one aspect of reform leadership is directly changing another, nor that it leads to a specific outcome. This study's design, and qualitative methods generally, have an important role in more fully explaining the complexity of how educational reform and change is firmly situated within socio-political contexts. Furthermore, education overall is a deeply social, cultural, and political enterprise, and attempts to study it in ways that do not acknowledge its interconnected, contextual nature can be seen as short sighted. This study endeavors to position the context as central to understanding how implementation takes effect and how actors operate within change efforts. Moreover, this study raises some important considerations for practitioners, policy makers, and researchers.

Implications for Practitioners

In this section, I explore implications this study has for practitioners which I define as both internal implementers and external reform designers and intermediaries. I share four key recommended areas for practitioners to pay attention to as they engage in school change efforts, particularly those focused on ELs: 1) the differing roles of shared-ownership across actors; 2) the importance of approaching coherence as a process that moves beyond superficial notions; 3) the complexity of collaboration and partnerships; and 4) the building of coalitions around multilingual program development.

Findings from this study suggests that though shared-ownership may be an important element of reform implementation, different actors enact ownership in different ways. As such, practitioners working to implement educational reforms should consider how to engage different actors across the system, both internally and externally, and work to define their different roles. In this way, shared-ownership becomes a more complicated notion that should be understood and defined contextually. Ownership can, and perhaps should, look different depending on these different roles of actors and different contexts. Therefore, findings from this study indicate that practitioners should think strategically about who and how they engage actors across the system in reform implementation. Historically reforms focused on ELs operated in a silo, disconnected from much of the core of schooling. If we are to enact the vision of the California ELA/ELD Framework, actors across the system must define their role within EL focused reform efforts.

Although outside of the perimeters of this study, I have observed districts implementing SEAL where key district leaders do not share ownership of the reform, which seems to have a

detrimental impact on implementation. Often, these key leaders have different initiatives and programs that they do own, and little is done to make connections across initiatives, undermining the ability to work towards coherence across the district and schools. In this way, there seems to be a relationship between shared-ownership across actors and the crafting of coherence. When key leaders within the district and schools have differing foci with their associated initiatives and programs, coherence is weakened.

Furthermore, data from this study suggests that though both principals appeared to have a sense of ownership of SEAL, issues of coherence were playing out differently. This reinforces the notion that coherence is a context-specific, ongoing process rather than a state of being, and requires practitioners' continuous attention. Moreover, findings suggest that leaders may tend towards superficial understandings of coherence where discussion and engagement remains public discourse. One potential way to deepen the manner in which practitioners, both internal and external, work to craft coherence is to consider the pedagogical theories that underlie their various initiatives and programs, and explore where there is consistency and contradiction. Also, it is key, particularly in urban and suburban educational settings, for practitioners to pay attention to the number of reform efforts and work to limit the phenomena of "reform overload". When there are many different unrelated reforms being implemented at the same time, there is little ability to craft coherence.

Pushing towards more complex, multi-layered notions of collaboration is also an important implication of this study. Often in education, along with other fields, working collaboratively is an espoused value yet remains understood and enacted in superficial manners. Findings suggest that different actors involved in collaborative efforts experience it differently, and that the quality of the collaboration is likely related to types of "joint-work" different actors are engaged in. As the "joint-work" gets more complex and the scope gets bigger, the complexity of the collaboration is likely impacted. Furthermore, given that collaboration is interpersonal and often requires navigating complex personalities and relationships, it is important for practitioners to invest the time and resources needed to ensure it can be productive. Embracing the complexity of collaboration requires developing the structures, systems, and cultures grounded in teamwork and partnership, veering away from simplistic notions, and acceptance of the interpersonal dynamics that necessitate facilitative leadership.

Another important implication of this study is related to the building of coalitions and partnerships for multilingual program development. As we move out of the English-only Proposition 227 era, and work to implement Proposition 58, transforming our school systems to develop strong multilingual programs, this study suggests we need to consider some important aspects of coalition building. The three district leaders and both principals, as well as a coach and a teacher, all had a strong foundation in bilingual education. As such, their prior knowledge and experiences, as well as their belief systems and values about bilingualism, are well aligned with the SEAL model, and likely play a role in how the coalition was built to support the reform effort, an important aspect of political games. Practitioners working to implement new multilingual programs should pay attention to the prior experiences and knowledge related to bilingual education as they build their coalitions and partnerships. Moreover, Proposition 58 was branded as multilingual education for all students and strategically played to non-English Learner

communities that have grown increasingly interested in dual immersion education. Practitioners committed to improving educational outcomes of underserved EL students need to pay close attention to who is served by their new multilingual programs. Historically, bilingual education has been deeply politicized, and although the socio-political context is shifting, this study affirms the importance of both paying attention to and thoughtfully navigating the political games that play out with educational reform.

Implications for Policy Makers

This study also suggests some consequential implications for policy makers to consider that have relevance at the local, state, and national level. I posit two key recommended areas of focus for policy makers based on this study's findings: 1) the impact of economic policy strategies and contexts in relation to instructional policy strategies within educational reform efforts; and 2) the residual effect of high-stakes accountability on schools and districts. I unpack these two areas more fully below.

Different components of educational reform policy tend to be conceived of, implemented, and analyzed in isolation. This study suggests that though SEAL is a reform primarily situated as a standards-based policy implementation effort, layering an economic lens deepens understandings and informs policy makers. As SEAL was first being implemented in SGSD, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was also being implemented across the state. The alignment between LCFF and SEAL, particularly that both elevate the importance of serving ELs, likely reinforced each other within their respective implementation processes. Policy makers continue to primarily use standards as the policies intended to reform curriculum and instruction. It can be argued that part of the aims of LCFF is standards implementation through the related Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs) that include standards as an area of focus. Nonetheless, the core effort is aimed at redesigning the financing formula and getting rid of categorical funds. This study suggests that policy makers consider deepening the intentionality between aligning different policy strategies and adopt a multidimensional strategy that includes instructional and economic policy reform efforts.

Local economic contexts are another area policy makers focused on instructional change efforts should pay attention to within their broader educational reform efforts. Within the field of educational finance policy and research, there is an understanding of the funding constraints that public schools and districts operate within. School budgets are tied to the larger economy, and in times of economic downturn, school systems experience enormous budget cuts. Districts and schools that serve the most marginalized EL communities are often the most vulnerable to the ebb and flow of public resources. There are also more locally driven factors that can deeply impact the fiscal context of districts. Within this study, declining enrollment, and the subsequent loss of funding, appears to be an important contextual factor that influences SEAL reform leadership and implementation. This suggests that policy makers at the local, state, and national level pursuing reforms focused on instructional change, particularly those aimed at transforming education for ELs, should take a multidimensional perspective and consider the local economic contexts when designing and implementing reform policies. Furthermore, educational change takes time and

ongoing investments. Policy makers focused on reforming schooling for ELs should look for ways to fiscally buffer schools and districts as they embark on ambitious EL reform efforts.

Lastly, for policy makers, this study indicates that mind-sets from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era of high-stakes accountability have proved to be enduring, even though there are attempts to redefine accountability within state and national policy. Recent efforts to reformulate accountability systems take into consideration the failings of NCLB and high-stakes accountability, and focus on new theories of action such as continuous improvement and peer support. The California Department of Education (CDE) posts on their website as an update from the task force working to define the new accountability system, "This emerging 'California Way' builds on a collaborative approach to positive education change." This is a vastly different notion of accountability than the "mean-accountability" of NCLB. Nevertheless, the lingering influence of high-stakes accountability, and the data-driven systems, beliefs, and cultures that it birthed, has the potential to orient schools and districts in ways that limit instructional opportunities for ELs, as well as all students.

The pressure to show impact using standardized assessment data within short periods of time presents several dangers for comprehensive instructional change efforts. First, deep and sustainable instructional change takes time, and the insistence for evidence of impact in short timeframes undermines the ability to make the commitment of focus that is required. Additionally, the standardized assessments that are used to determine impacts on student achievement are almost universally not valid and reliable for ELs. And finally, this type of high-stakes data driven culture and system has proven in many places to reinforce decontextualized skill-based instruction that is oriented towards the standardized assessments rather than research-based instructional practices associated with complex, real world, context-embedded language development and learning experiences. In these ways, policy makers should pay attention to the residual impact of previous notions of accountability, and work to more deeply redefine continuous improvement systems and reorient school systems.

Implications for Researchers

My final set of implications are directed at scholars, related to many of the ideas discussed above but framed for researchers. Here, I argue for the need for more cross-cutting, cross-systems analysis that support deeper understandings of the complex, nested nature in which educational change occurs. This study illuminates the interrelated dimensions of school reform. In an attempt to build "scientifically" strong investigations, we often see educational research attempt to distill and isolate variables to create objective truths. Such positivist research poses an epistemological dilemma for educational research because the nature of learning is so deeply social, and schools are firmly situated in nested sets of social systems. Though it is impossible for scholars to simultaneously investigate all the elements at play, this study reinforces the need for research to take on cross-cutting perspectives that allow for deeper understandings of the relationship between different actors, forces, and levels of the system. Moreover, when reform efforts are oriented towards the classroom, research tends to focus on instructional and curricular change. This study reinforces the need to also investigate the leadership dimensions of instructional reform, as well as the broader socio-political context that influences reform efforts.

This is particularly relevant with regards to more deeply understanding the leadership dimensions of school reform focused on educational equity, specifically for ELs. EL education has, and will likely continue to be, highly politicized. Just as the methods of educational research have become more mixed and blended, so should the conceptual frameworks that guide them. As Malen (2006, 2011) argues, there is critical need to use political lens as we study educational reform implementation. This is particularly important in efforts to understand the leadership dimensions of reform because leaders play a key role in negotiating the political contexts within which they operate. Nevertheless, we find that much of the scholarship focused on educational leadership and district effectiveness use technical perspectives, leaving the socio-political context under-investigated (Trujillo, 2013). Researchers interested in educational reforms focused on ELs should especially consider the socio-political context, fore excluding that frame will severely limit the scope of the inquiry.

Findings from this study point to some key areas that would benefit from deeper analysis using a socio-political lens, specifically related to the most recent policy context taking root in our schools. Two key questions for further research are: 1) How do leaders build coalitions around reform efforts focused on ELs, and particularly within the implementation of Proposition 58? And, 2) What are the political games that play out as leaders focused on the needs of ELs tackle issues of coherence within this new era of 21st century standards?

Concluding Thoughts

This study attempts to both broaden perspectives while layering complexity into the ways we examine educational reform leadership. I use a widened definition of leaders, focusing on top and middle district leaders, principals, coaches, and teachers, which is based in my understanding of the multifaceted form in which leadership is enacted in school systems. Meanwhile, I have tried to integrate theoretical concepts that bridge across scholarship on instructional change, systems change, and politics within educational reform. This study is deeply influenced by my perspective and positionality as a practitioner researcher and participant observer, imparting both insights and limitations, while contributing an important vantage point into educational reform.

Underlying the focus of this study is the hope that if we refine and deepen our understandings of educational leadership, we can more fully deliver on the promise of educational equity. Given the current national context, where our top federal educational leaders are challenging the legitimacy of public education, leadership for educational equity is more important than ever. Since the middle of the last century, public education has risen to the top as the key social welfare with bipartisan support (Kantor & Lowe, 2013). That context has changed, and the very right of public education and public education systems are being contested in new and concerning ways. As such, it seems more important than ever to deepen our research base and understandings about educational reform leadership, specifically reforms focused on transforming schooling for ELs. Furthermore, the current political context underscores the deeply political nature of public education. It is impossible to disconnect EL educational issues and policies from the larger immigration political context. This study calls for continued research and analysis of the socio-political context of EL focused school reform.

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Appendix 1: District Leader Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study. I am looking at implementation of SEAL within this district as a case study to explore how programs are implemented, and how different people with different roles participate in the implementation process. I wear two hats, one for SEAL and one for UCB. Today I am wearing my researcher hat and not my SEAL Deputy Director hat. It is an opportunity to be reflective and understand some blind spots, but I am here today first and foremost as a researcher. This is wholly confidential and not evaluative, and I will be using a pseudonym for the district within my dissertation.

- Why did you get into the field of education?
- What are the roles you've held up until this point?
- What does it mean to you to be an educational leader? What do you define as good leadership?
- What would you say are your district's greatest priorities?
- What are your district's greatest assets?
- What are its greatest challenges?
- What are your greatest challenges as a leader?
- When you first started at the district what were your goals and priorities? How have they changed? What are your goals and priorities now?
- How often do you think about federal or state educational policies in a typical week? Which ones do you encounter in your work? How?
- What is your opinion of those policies? Why?
- [If not already stated] How helpful/hurtful have those policies been to your district's work? In what ways?
- Besides SEAL, what other external organizations does your district partner with?
    o How do these various partnerships support your vision for this district?
- Why did you decide to partner with SEAL?
- How does SEAL relate to your goals for the district?
- Tell me about your role within SEAL implementation?
    o What do you do to help support implementation?
    o What, in your opinion, could a superintendent do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
    o What could other district leaders (for others- including those in your position) do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
    o What, in your opinion, could SEAL itself do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
- In regards to SEAL…
    o Where have you seen the biggest impacts?

- o What have been the biggest challenges?
- o What would you change about the model?
- o What would you change about the implementation process?
- o Tell me about a difficult experience you've had with SEAL that did not go as well as you'd liked. What happened?
  - ▪ What made it difficult?
  - ▪ What could have made that experience better?
- o Are there other experiences with SEAL that have been particularly challenging either for you or for your schools? Like what?
- o Where do you see the SEAL work as really taking root in your schools?
- o Where do you think it still has room to develop?
- o When thinking back to some of the federal or state policies we discussed a bit ago, how have those policies supported or challenged SEAL implementation? [If necessary] Can you describe an instance where that was the case?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix 2: Principal Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study. I am looking implementation of SEAL in this district as a case study to explore how programs are implemented, and how different people with different roles participate in the implementation process. I wear two hats, one for SEAL and one for UCB. Today I am wearing my researcher hat and not my SEAL Deputy Director hat. It is an opportunity to be reflective and understand some blind spots, but I am here today first and foremost as a researcher. This is wholly confidential and not evaluative, and I will be using a pseudonym for the district within my dissertation.

- Why did you get into the field of education?
- What are the roles you've held up until this point?
- What does it mean to you to be an educational leader? What do you define as good leadership?
- What would you say are your school's greatest priorities?
- What are your school's greatest assets?
- What are its greatest challenges?
- What are your greatest challenges as a leader?
- When you first started at the school what were your goals and priorities? How have they changed? What are your goals and priorities now?
- How often do you think about federal or state educational policies in a typical week? Which ones do you encounter in your work? How?
- What is your opinion of those policies? Why?
- [If not already stated] How helpful/hurtful have those policies been to your school's work? In what ways?
- Besides SEAL, what other external organizations does your school partner with?
  - How do these various partnerships support your vision for your school?
- Were you part of the decision to bring SEAL to your school? If so, how?
- How does SEAL relate to your goals for your school?
- Tell me about your role within SEAL implementation?
  - What do you do to help support implementation?
  - What, in your opinion, could a principal do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
  - What, in your opinion, could SEAL itself do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
- In regards to SEAL…
  - Where have you seen the biggest impacts?
  - What have been the biggest challenges?
  - What would you change about the model?
  - What would you change about the implementation process?

- o Tell me about a difficult experience you've had with SEAL that did not go as well as you'd liked. What happened?
  - What made it difficult?
  - What could have made that experience better?
- o Are there other experiences with SEAL that have been particularly challenging either for you or for your school? Like what?
- o Where do you see the SEAL work as really taking root in your school?
- o Where do you think it still has room to develop?
- o When thinking back to some of the federal or state policies we discussed a bit ago, how have those policies supported or challenged SEAL implementation? [If necessary] Can you describe an instance where that was the case?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix 3: Coach Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study. I am looking implementation of SEAL within this district as a case study to explore how programs are implemented, and how different people with different roles participate in the implementation process. As both a doctoral student and part of the SEAL team, I wear two hats— one for SEAL and one for UC Berkeley. Today I am wearing my researcher hat and not my SEAL Deputy Director hat. This is an opportunity for me to be reflective and focus on understanding other's perspectives, even areas where we may have some blind spots. I am here today first and foremost as a researcher. This is wholly confidential and not evaluative, and I will be using a pseudonym for the district within my dissertation.

- Why did you get into the field of education?
- What are the roles you've held up until this point?
- What does it mean to you to be a teacher leader? What do you define as good leadership?
- What would you say are your school's greatest priorities?
- What are your school's greatest assets?
- What are its greatest challenges?
- What are your greatest challenges as a coach?
- When you first became a coach what were your goals and priorities? How have they changed? What are your goals and priorities now?
- How often do you think about federal or state educational policies in a typical week? Which ones do you encounter in your work? How?
- What is your opinion of those policies? Why?
- [If not already stated] How helpful/hurtful have those policies been to your school's work? In what ways?
- Besides SEAL, what other external organizations does your school partner with? Are there other initiatives going on?
  - How do these various partnerships/initiatives support your school's goals?
- Were you part of the decision to bring SEAL to your school? If so, how?
- How does SEAL relate to your schools goals?
- Tell me about your role within SEAL implementation?
  - What do you do to help support implementation?
  - What, in your opinion, could a coach do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
  - What, in your opinion, could SEAL itself do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
  - What, in your opinion, could a superintendent do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
  - What, in your opinion, could a principal do to weaken or detract from its

implementation?

- o What, in your opinion, could a teacher do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
- In regards to SEAL…
  - o Where have you seen the biggest impacts?
  - o What have been the biggest challenges?
  - o What would you change about the model?
  - o What would you change about the implementation process?
  - o Tell me about a difficult experience you've had with SEAL that did not go as well as you'd liked. What happened?
    - What made it difficult?
    - What could have made that experience better?
  - o Are there other experiences with SEAL that have been particularly challenging either for you or for your school? Like what?
  - o Where do you see the SEAL work as really taking root in your school? In the district?
  - o Where do you think it still has room to develop?
  - o When thinking back to some of the federal or state policies we discussed a bit ago, how have those policies supported or challenged SEAL implementation? [If necessary] Can you describe an instance where that was the case?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix 4: Teacher Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study. I am looking at implementation of SEAL within this district as a case study to explore how programs are implemented, and how different people with different roles participate in the implementation process. As both a doctoral student and part of the SEAL team, I wear two hats— one for SEAL and one for UC Berkeley. Today I am wearing my researcher hat and not my SEAL hat. I am not here to evaluate SEAL or, of course, you, or anything at all, actually. This is just an opportunity for me to be reflective in my research training and focus on understanding other's perspectives, even areas where we have blind spots. I am here today first and foremost as a researcher. This is wholly confidential and not evaluative, and I will be using a pseudonym for the district and any individuals in my dissertation.

- Why did you go into education?
- What are the roles you've held up until this point?
- How do you define good leadership in education?
- What would you say are your school's biggest priorities?
- What are your school's biggest strengths?
- What are its biggest challenges?
- What are your biggest challenges as a teacher?
- When you first became a teacher what were your goals or priorities?
    - How have they changed, if at all?
    - What are your goals and priorities now?
- How often do you think or talk or hear about federal or state educational policies in a typical week?
    - Which ones? [if they've not listed any]
    - Which ones of these do you actually encounter in your work? How?
    - What is your opinion of those policies? Why?
    - [If not already stated] How helpful/hurtful have those policies been to your teaching? In what ways?
- Besides SEAL, what other outside consultants or organizations does your school partner with? Are there other initiatives going on?
    - How do these various partnerships/initiatives affect your teaching goals?
- Were you part of the decision to bring SEAL to your school?
    - If so, how?
    - Why did you want it to be at your school? [If they were a part of a yes decision]
- How does SEAL relate to your schools goals?
- How does it not?
- Are there any areas at all where SEAL seems out of place with where your school wants to go?

- Tell me about your role within SEAL implementation.
  - What do you do to support implementation?
  - What, in your opinion, could a teacher do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
  - What, in your opinion, could SEAL itself do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
  - What, in your opinion, could a coach do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
  - What, in your opinion, could a principal do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
  - What, in your opinion, could a superintendent or other district leaders do to weaken or detract from its implementation?
- In regards to SEAL…
  - Where have you seen the biggest impacts, if any?
  - What have been the biggest challenges, if any?
  - What would you change about the model?
  - What would you change about the implementation process?
  - Tell me about a difficult experience you've had with SEAL that did not go as well as you'd liked. What happened?
    - What made it difficult?
    - What could have made that experience better?
  - Are there other experiences with SEAL that have been particularly challenging either for you or for your school? Like what?
  - Do you see the SEAL work as really taking root in any place in your classroom?
    - How much of this would you say comes from SEAL and how much comes from you? How so?
    - What about in your school?
    - In your district?
  - Where do you think SEAL still has room to improve?
  - When thinking back to some of the federal or state policies we discussed a bit ago, how have those policies supported or challenged SEAL implementation? [If necessary]
    - Can you describe a specific instance where that was the case?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?