CLEARvoz Journal

Center for Leadership Equity And Research
CLEAR

Understanding Leadership within Comprehensive Early Childhood English Learner Reform

Anya Hurwitz, *SEAL (Sobrato Early Academic Language model)*

Abstract

English Learners represent a significant student population in California, yet schools and districts have persistently been unable to support their learning needs. The current policy setting of new standards that situate language in more prominent and cross cutting manners make this an ideal context to study reform leadership focused on English Learners. This is a critical case study of one district implementing a comprehensive early childhood reform model focused on English Learners. The concepts that frame this inquiry are rooted in the socio-political context, shared-ownership, and the crafting of coherence within reform implementation. Findings indicate that leaders enact implementation by building a coalition while navigating critical socio-political factors. Implications suggest that 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.

Keywords

English learners, leadership, school reform

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 majority of these students enter California schools as preschool or kindergarten students and are Latino ELs. The *Getting Down to Facts II* report released in September 2018 reaffirms that California's education systems continue to underserve its Latino ELs (Santibanez & Umansky, 2018).

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).

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 standards 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 integrates language arts, science, social studies, and English Language Development (ELD). The model is taught throughout the day ensuring that rich language development is explicitly planned across content areas. Schools work in sets of three or four to implement the model, building communities of practice across sites. It takes three years for all teachers, preschool through 3rd grade, to go through the training series. Schools are required to have an internal coach to support teachers with implementation and support job-embedded professional learning.

This study examines the leadership dimensions of SEAL implementation within a small suburban district in Northern California. Implementation of the model 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 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?

Literature Review

Policy plays a key factor in determining the context and content of school reform, and in turn, how key actors work to implement reforms. 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). By the mid 1990s, almost all states had developed academic standards and most were developing accompanying assessment systems (Gandal, 1996). 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.

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 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 cannot accomplish two goals simultaneously— raising overall student performance and closing the gap for historically underachieving students.

Scholars 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). 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; 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, the NCLB era of educational reform and policy proved problematic for historically underserved student populations, specifically ELs.

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). 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.

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. Similar to CCSS, these new standards outline the role of ELD within content areas. 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.

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; 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.

Conceptual Framework

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 socio-economic 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 (Malen, 2006, 2011; Shipps, 2003). Additionally, this conceptual framework is grounded in notions of shared-ownership and partnership across actors as important to understanding leadership of reform (Coburn, 2003; Datnow & Stringfield, 2000; M. I. Honig & Copland, 2008; McLaughlin & Mitra, 2002). 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 customize reforms and negotiate the coherence between initiatives, programs, and curriculum becomes key to creating the conditions for deep and lasting instructional change (Datnow, 2002; M. I. Honig & Hatch, 2004a; McLaughlin & Mitra, 2002; Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001; Thompson & Wiliam, 2007).

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.

Malen (2011) argues that there has been a significant move towards centralization over the last 50 years, and that policies associated with standards and high stake accountability seem to be particularly durable. High-stakes accountability systems have become the key measure of effectiveness within public education (Malen, 2011; Trujillo, 2013; Trujillo & Woulfin, 2014). Therefore, exploring how actors make sense of the policy context, specifically accountability, and their related notions of effectiveness are important to understanding reform implementation.

Shared-ownership and Partnership

Notions of shared-ownership 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) study comprehensive school reform (CSR) models and find positive effects when the CSR model is enacted at all levels including reform designers, local policymakers, school site educators, and when the model connects families and the school.

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 set of concepts within reform implementation are joint-work and partnerships. 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). Relatedly, 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.

Building relationships focused on partnership helps reorient the district office to be in support of instructional improvement (Honig, Copland, Newton, Matson, & Rogers, 2010). 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.

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; 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.

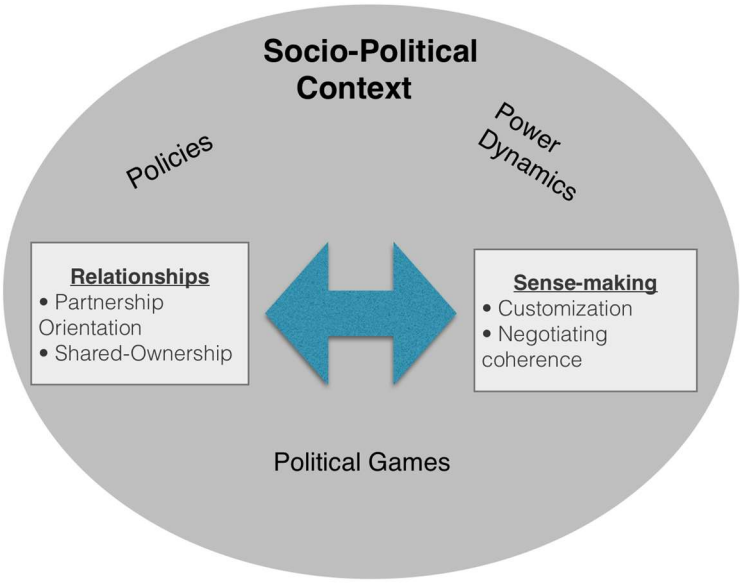
McLaughlin and Mitra (2002) posit that theory-based change requires co-invention and flexible implementation because it must engage those doing the changing and be fully contextualized. Similarly, Datnow and Park (2009) and Stringfield, Datnow, and Ross (1998) argue that co-construction of reform implementation 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. Crafting coherence is connected to customization and adaptability of reforms to the specific contexts within which they are being implemented.

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.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Methods

This critical case study examines leadership of SEAL implementation within one school district representing a case that yields important information in the pursuit of knowledge development (Patton, 2001). Using the conceptual framework described above, 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 (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2003). 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.

The context of this study is a suburban school district located in the San Francisco Bay Area which I've given the pseudonym, Sequoia Grove School District (SGSD). This elementary school 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.

When I conducted this inquiry, I was 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. 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?

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, focusing on the district and two schools as subunits of analysis. I selected a total of 11 participants: three key district leaders, two principals, three coaches and three teachers. Both schools began SEAL implementation the fall of 2013 and were in year three of implementation when data gathering began. They were chosen purposefully because they represented two of the four schools within the district with the highest numbers of English learners and represented information rich contexts to gather data.

There were four phases of data collections. Data gathering occurred from July 2016 through March 2017. 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. The primary data collection strategy was structured open-ended interviews. The interview protocols were generated to support inquiry into the two research questions. My conceptual framework also guided my interview question development. 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).

Interviews of teachers and observations of staff meetings constituted the third stage. Teacher interviews followed the design described above. Additional data was gathered through observations of staff meetings at each school, brief classrooms 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.

The final phase involved follow-up interviews with two of the district leaders, both principals, and the two coaches to deepen questioning in some areas and begin to test some emerging patterns. These methods and sources of data were chosen given the epistemological nature of this study, which is firmly constructivist and participatory.

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). Inductive strategies were also used to build on the constructivist nature of the methods, to leave room for unknown dimensions to arise, and challenge bias. Core to 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. I began with a set of deductive codes that were derived from my research questions and conceptual framework. This set of theory-based codes evolved throughout the analysis. Because interviews were the central data gathering strategy, their analysis was the most complex.

Given the context-driven nature of this study, I was 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. The two key strategies to ensure qualitative reliability were: 1) the interview protocols were followed to create uniformity across data gathering; and 2) 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 was the acknowledgement of my assumptions and biases, generating ways to test and challenge them.

Throughout this investigation I strived to recognize my positionality, and my associated assumptions, biases, and values in an effort to strengthen reliability (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, I continually used my theoretical framework and my knowledge base to guide and situate the design, data collection, analyses, and findings. Additionally, 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, etc.

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 effected my interpretations was 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.

As a practitioner scholar, I bring a unique and important perspective shaping this study's contribution to the knowledge base. Nonetheless, occupying this role also creates limitations.

The constraints of time were an important factor to be accounted for, and in turn 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 from one of the schools, skewing the data to some degree.

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. 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.

Findings

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 further unpack these findings below.

What do district and site leaders do to implement SEAL?

The key action leaders have taken to implement SEAL is to build a coalition across actors grounded in the belief of the model's ability to meet their students' need. Yet 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 and partake in 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?

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 and recognize this as a major area of need.

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.

There is varying authority for and knowledge of SEAL across actors

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 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.

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.

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 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 and authority manifest differently across all internal actors. 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.

Partnership and collaboration appears more complex at different levels

As explored within the conceptual framework, learning focused systems use partnership and collaboration as a strategy to build internal and external capacity (Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki, & Portin, 2010; Levin et al., 2008; Thompson, Sykes, & Skrla, 2008). Nevertheless, relationships within and across organizations prove to be complicated (Coburn et al., 2008). Joint-work cuts across different parts of the system and 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 their leadership of implementation. 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.

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; 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. 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 not sustaining initiatives and 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.

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. 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.

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

Findings suggest 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.

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. One principal 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.

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 transitions 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. As one participant shared, "The overall philosophy of common core is very congruent with the philosophy of what education should look like".

Furthermore, all participants acknowledged the alignment between SEAL and this new era of standards. A 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.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was mentioned by five of the 11 participants, contrasting the differences between CCSS and NCLB. One coach referred to NCLB 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 and CCSS.

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.

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 a time when the state accountability system was 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 framed quite differently from previous notions of accountability, continuous improvement and trust are the core tenets. These shifts have not seemed to translate to local policy in SGSD where accountability still focuses on test scores 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. Each of these participants spoke of the significant qualitative changes in their classrooms but the need for "data" was unyielding. 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…".

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.

Implications

This study attempts to illuminate the contextualized nature of educational reform and leadership rather than make casual claims about what is definitively causing particular implementation dynamics. 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, raising some important considerations for practitioners, policy makers, and researchers.

Implications for Practitioners—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.

Implications for Policy Makers—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.

Implications for Researchers—My final set of implications are directed at scholars, where 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 attempts 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. Implications suggest the importance of also investigating the leadership dimensions of instructional reform, as well as the broader socio-political context that influences reform efforts.

This study contributes to practice, policy, and scholarship as it attempts to broaden perspectives while layering complexity into the ways we examine educational reform leadership focused on the schooling of ELs. I use a widened definition of leaders, focusing on actors across the system. The theoretical concepts guiding this inquiry bridge 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.

References

Au, W. (2007). High-Stakes Testing and Curricular Control: A Qualitative Metasynthesis. *Educational Researcher*, *36*(5), 258–267.

CA Dept of Education. (2016). Accountability and Continuous Improvement Report. Retrieved from http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ar/account-report-2016.asp

Chen, K., Macey, E., Simon, M., & King, K. (2013). Equity Now! Will the Common Core Promote Equity? *Great Lakes Equity Center Newsletter*, (April).

Coburn, C. E. (2003). Rethinking Scale: Moving Beyond Numbers to Deep and Lasting Change. *Educational Researcher*, *32*(6), 3–12.

Coburn, C. E., Bae, S., & Turner, E. (2008). Authority, Status, and the Dynamics of Insider–Outsider Partnerships at the District Level. *Peabody Journal of Education*, (September 2012), 37–41.

Coburn, C. E., Pearson, P. D., & Woulfin, S. (2011). Reading Policy in the Era of Accountability. In M. Kamil, P. Pearson, E. Moje, & P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research Volume IV* (Vol. IV). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Coghlan, D., & Brannick, T. (2014). *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. London, UK: SAGE Publications.

Cohen, D. K. (1990). A Revolution in One Classroom: The Case of Mrs. Oublier. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *12*(3), 311–329.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Datnow, A. (2002). Can We Transplant Educational Reform, and Does It Last? *Journal of Educational Change*, *3*(3–4), 215–239.

Datnow, A., & Park, V. (2009). Conceptualizing Policy Implementation. In G. Sykes, B. Schneider, D. Plank, & T. Ford (Eds.), *Handbook of Education Policy Researcg* (pp. 348–361). New York/London: American Educational Research Association.

Datnow, A., & Stringfield, S. (2000). Working Together for Reliable School Reform. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, *5*(1–2), 183–204.

Davidson, D. (2010). Common Core Standards: Hegemony and Racial Equity – West Wind Education Policy. Retrieved from http://westwinded.com/blog/common-core-standards-hegemony-and-racial-equity/

Dickinson, D. K., Golinkoff, R. M., & Hirsh-Pasek, K. (2010). Speaking Out for Language: Why Language Is Central to Reading Development. *Educational Researcher*, *39*(4), 305–310.

Gandal, M. (1996). *Making Standards Matter 1996: An Annual Fifty-State Report on Efforts To Raise Academic Standards.* Washington, DC: American Federation of Teachers, Order Dept., 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20001 ($10 prepaid).

Gandara, P., & Contreras, F. (2009). Is Language the Problem? In *The Latino Education Crisis:*

The Consequences of Failed Social Policies (pp. 121–160). Harvard University Press.

Gándara, P., Rumberger, R., Maxwell-Jolly, J., & Callahan, R. (2003). English learners in California schools: Unequal resources, unequal outcomes. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *11*(36), 1–54.

Gee, J. P. (2001). Reading as Situated Language: A Sociocognitive Perspective. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *44*(8), 714–725.

Givens, L. (2008). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Goldenberg, C. (2012). Unlocking the Research on English Learners: What We Know--and Don't Yet Know--about Effective Instruction. *American Educator*, *37*(2), 4.

Gutierrez, K. D., Zepeda, M., & Castro, D. C. (2010). Advancing Early Literacy Learning for All Children: Implications of the NELP Report for Dual-Language Learners. *Educational Researcher*, *39*(4), 334–339.

Hakuta, K. (2011). Educating Language Minority Students and Affirming Their Equal Rights: Research and Practical Perspectives. *Educational Researcher*, *40*(4), 163–174.

Honig, M. I. (2012). District Central Office Leadership as Teaching: How Central Office Administrators Support Principals' Development as Instructional Leaders. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *48*(4), 733–774.

Honig, M. I., & Copland, M. A. (2008). *Reinventing District Central Offices to Expand Student Learning.*

Honig, M. I., Copland, M. A., Newton, M., Matson, E., & Rogers, B. (2010). *Central Office Transformation for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement The Study of Leadership for Learning Improvement*. Seatle.

Honig, M. I., & Hatch, T. C. (2004a). Crafting Coherence: How Schools Strategically Manage Multiple, External Demands. *Educational Researcher*, *33*(8), 16–30.

Honig, M. I., & Hatch, T. C. (2004b). Crafting Coherence: How Schools Strategically Manage Multiple, External Demands. *Educational Researcher*, *33*(8), 16–30.

Hout, M., & Elliot, S. (2011). *Incentives and Test-Based Accountability in Education*. (M. Hout & S. W. Elliot, Eds.). Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

Knapp, M. S., Copland, M. A., Honig, M. I., Plecki, M. L., & Portin, B. S. (2010). Learning-focused Leadership and Leadership Support : Meaning and Practice in Urban Systems The Study of Leadership for Learning Improvement, (August).

Levin, B., Glaze, A., & Fullan, M. (2008). Results Without Rancor or Ranking. *Phi Delta Kappan*, (December).

Madda, C. L., Benson Griffo, V., Pearson, P. D., & Raphael, T. E. (2011). Balance in Comprehensive Literacy Instruction. In L. M. Marrow & L. B. Gambrell (Eds.), *Best Practices in Literacy Instruction* (Vol. 4, pp. 37–63). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Malen, B. (2006). Revisiting Policy Implementation as a Political Phenomenon, the Case of

Reconstitution Policies. In M. I. Honig (Ed.), *New Directions in Education Policy, Confronting Complexity* (pp. 83–104). Albany, NY: State University of NY Press.

Malen, B. (2011). An enduring issue: The relationship between political democracy and educational effectiveness. In *Shaping Education Policy: Power and Practice* (pp. 23–60). New York and London: Routledge.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach (Applied Social Research Methods)* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

McLaughlin, M., & Mitra, D. (2002). Theory-based change and change-based theory: Going deeper, going broader. *Journal of Educational Change*, 301–323.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd Editio). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Newmann, F. M., Smith, B., Allensworth, E., & Bryk, A. S. (2001). Instructional Program Coherence: What It Is and Why It Should Guide School Improvement Policy. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *23*(4), 297–321.

O'Malley Borg, M., Plumlee, J. P., & Stranahan, H. A. (2007). Plenty of Children Left Behind: High-Stakes Testing and Graduation Rates in Duval County, Florida. *Educational Policy*, *21*(5), 695–716.

Olsen, L. (2010). *Reparable Harm: Fulfilling the Unkept Promise of Educational Opportunity for California's Long Term English Learners*.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative Interviewing. In *Evaluation and Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Patton, M. Q. (2001). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. SAGE Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*. SAGE.

Pearson, P., & Hiebert, E. (2012). Understanding the Common Core State Standards. In L. M. Marrow, T. Shanahan, & K. K. Wixson (Eds.), *Teaching with the Common Core Standards for Engligh Language Arts PreK-12* (pp. 1–21). New York: Guilford Press.

Peshkin, A. (1988). In Search of Subjectivity--One's Own. *Educational Researcher*, *17*(7), 17–21.

Peshkin, A. (2000). The Nature of Interpretation in Qualitative Research. *Educational Researcher*, *29*(9), 5–9.

Ryan, J. E. (2004). Perverse Incentives of the No Child Left behind Act, The. *New York University Law Review*, *79*, 932–989.

Santibanez, L. & Umansky, I. (2018). *Getting Down to Facts II*. Standford, PACE.

Shipps, D. (2003). Pulling Together: Civic Capacity and Urban School Reform. *American Educational Research Journal*, *40*(4), 841–878.

Smith, M., & O'Day, J. (1990). Systemic school reform. In S. Fuhrman & B. Malen (Eds.), *The Poltics of Curriculum and Testing* (pp. 233–267). Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.

Stringfield, S., Datnow, A., & Ross, S. M. (1998). Scaling up School Restructuring in Multicultural, Multilingual Contexts: Early Observations from Sunland County. *Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence*.

Thompson, M., & Wiliam, D. (2007). Tight but Loose: A Conceptual Framework for Scaling Up School Reforms. In *AERA*. Chicago, IL.

Thompson, Sykes, & Skrla. (2008). *Coherent, Instructionally-Focused District Leadership: Toward A Theoretical Account*.

Trujillo, T. (2013). The reincarnation of the effective schools research: rethinking the literature on district effectiveness. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *51*(4), 426–452.

Trujillo, T., & Woulfin, S. (2014). Equity-minded Reform amid Standards-based Accountability: A Qualitative Compararive Analysis of an Intermediary's Instructional Practices. *American Educational Research Journal*, *51*(2), 253–293.

Valdés, G., Kibler, A., & Walqui, A. (2014). *Changes in the Expertise of ESL Professionals: Knowledge and Action in an Era of New Standards*.

Walker, E. V. S. (1995). Research at Risk: Lessons Learned in an African-American Community. *Educational Foundations*, *9*(1), 5–15.

Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Applications of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.