

Chapter 5

Stuck in the Middle With You: District Response to State Accountability

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Introduction

State-mandated, performance-based accountability systems depend largely on theories of motivation that argue that schools will alter their practices in order to meet carefully defined outcomes that merit reward and recognition. At the very least, proponents argue, schools will aspire to demonstrate achievement in order to avoid increased state intervention, negative publicity, and a loss of professional autonomy. Such accountability systems became extremely popular over the last decade, and while they have undergone some significant changes in terms of the particular aspects of the systems, the overall theory and structure have remained unchanged. Although only a handful of states were using such performance-based systems in the mid-1990s, currently all 50 states have adopted policies that follow the model just described (Goertz, Duffy, & Carlson-LeFloch, 2000).

Analysis of performance data resulting from state assessment systems shows that while many elementary schools have seen significant strides in educational performance over the last decade, high schools continue to lag behind. A combination of increased focus on early education research and resources, smaller gaps to address at those early stages, and the more unified and uniform nature of elementary schools has allowed educators in the early grades to amass gains in

achievement. Some argue that a portion of these gains can be attributed to state accountability systems that have set standards, focused attention, and created incentives for improved performance (Carnoy & Loeb, 2004; Grissmer & Flanagan, 1998). High schools have not experienced the same positive effects. External indicators such as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) regularly point to a system that loses ground as students progress in their educational careers. In part, this may be due to the relatively minimal attention that high schools have received until recently from state departments of education and state accountability systems. While there is undoubtedly some merit in postponing accountability for high schools until better-prepared elementary students advance to the high school level, the lack of attention to instruction and outcomes in high schools has stifled improvement.

Regardless of the levels of attention that schools receive or the amount of accountability pressure that they feel, the strides that schools at all levels are able to make are heavily dependent on the resources for improvement that are available to them. School districts, also referred to as local education agencies (LEAs), are frequently cited as the most logical venue for providing assistance to significant numbers of schools. The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) seeks to increase the role that districts play in providing assistance and monitoring performance. However, state

accountability policies and the research on those policies have traditionally overlooked the role of school districts. Little research is available about the ways in which districts respond to accountability pressure or, until recently, the strategies that they might use for improvement. Much of the research that does examine the district role in school improvement or reform has focused on the elementary school level. High schools, with their distinct and somewhat autonomous departments, present districts with very different challenges.

Because of the limited investigation that has been done, and the urgent need for high school improvement, I have chosen to focus on the state–district–*high* school relationship. Through case study analyses, I have documented how districts devise different strategies, based in part on the accountability policies in their respective states, to help high schools to meet the challenges posed by state policy. This chapter argues that the district has a vital role to play in building capacity in all schools under accountability pressure. However, the extent to which districts fulfill that role is dependent upon a combination of variables both within the state policy and within the local district context.

In this chapter, I briefly review previous research on districts' function and their role in school improvement. I then describe my research to assess district role in a variety of contexts. I describe particular principles for assessing the quality of district initiatives. My research in 12 districts in two states found that districts could generally be divided into two "types," which I have labeled A and B. Each of these types demonstrates certain behavioral traits that are more likely to lead to improved performance in the state assessment system. Finally, on the basis of this research, I provide policy recommendations to enhance

the role of districts and improve their response to state policy pressures.

Local district context can often be as much a factor in district activity and decision making as the state policy to which local actors are ostensibly responding. It has become common to state that "context matters" (Fuhrman, Clune, & Elmore, 1991; McLaughlin, 1991) to the way in which schools and districts implement policies and practices. The particular elements that comprise the "context" of LEAs are not always particularly clear. In conducting this research, I sought to specify elements of district context that are important in local implementation of state policy. Marsh (2000) has conducted a review of research on district–state relations. On the basis of this review, she identified six contextual factors of districts that may help to explain district response to state policy. The contextual characteristics that she identified are capacity, size, understanding, leadership, organization and governance, and political culture and reform history. Borrowing from Marsh, I use demographics, leadership, organization, and culture and history as contextual variables. Building on Marsh's work and drawing on research by Elmore (2003), I define capacity (one of Marsh's characteristics) to include the knowledge, skills, and resources that exist within the district. Additionally, on the basis of previous research about response to state accountability policy (Debray, Parson, & Avila, 2003), I add the history of test performance as an essential element of district context that will impact whether and how a district responds to state policy in general and accountability policies in particular. In the following section, I define each of the characteristics as they were used and analyzed in this research.

District Characteristics

- *Demographics* (including district size). Community and student demographics have frequently been found to impact the ability and willingness of schools and school districts to engage in ambitious reform (Anyon, 1997; Lipman, 1998; Thernstrom, 1991). Similarly, research has found demographic issues to influence student performance (Fetler, 1989; Howley & Bickel, 2000; Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990). This becomes particularly important when discussing accountability systems, because the extent of state–district interaction that occurs within the framework of the state system is frequently based on school and district performance. Additionally, one of the demographic features that have a bearing on the district’s ability to respond to the pressure it faces is the size of a district, both the number and size of schools as well as the number of central office staff. While most agree that size impacts district function, researchers differ on whether bigger or smaller districts are better for schools.
- *Leadership*. Leadership that is focused on well-defined, instruction-related issues over an extended period of time is most likely to succeed with implementation of policy and improvement in the district. Research describes the way in which school leaders who take the “opportunity” that accountability pressure can provide and use it to restructure existing leadership norms can demonstrate significant success in changing system behavior in instructionally effective ways (Lemons, Luschei, & Siskin, 2003). While educational research has recently taken a more favorable view of “distributed leadership” in which power, authority, and responsibility do not reside in a single individual but are encouraged at a number of levels of the organization (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001), this chapter does not regard distributed leadership as an empirical benefit but assesses the style of leadership and its match with district activities.
- *Organization*. The organization of the district needs to support both the model of leadership and the goals being pursued. Frequently, a lack of communication between units of the district is responsible for incoherent improvement efforts. Occasionally because of historical causes, cultural habits, or resource constraints, within-district segmentation is a challenge for central offices engaged in system-wide improvement.
- *Culture and history*. This characteristic attempts to capture the turmoil of local politics and historical divisions at the district level. Historical events that can impact district culture and approaches to reform include previous experiences with change, the alignment between the demands of state policy and the stance of the local district with regard to those demands, and the culture of the local community.
- *Knowledge, skills, and resources*. As described previously, accountability response depends heavily on the marshalling and manipulation of knowledge, skills, and resources by agents to accomplish the tasks required of them. This means that an essential characteristic impacting district response is the degree to which knowledge, skills, and resources that can support that task exist in a district. In their discussion of

human, social, and physical capacity, Spillane and Thompson (1997) describe the ways in which the knowledge and skills of individuals within the system and the resources devoted to materials, personnel, and facilities play a key role in determining the ability of districts to respond to policy demands.

- *Performance.* In an accountability system, school and district performance determines state action, which influences districts' incentives to respond. As a result, it is extremely important to understand a district's previous performance history in order to have an understanding of particular aspects of state policy with which the district may be engaged or have some experience.

Districts or central offices are very much caught between the demands of state policy and the constraints and/or supports of local context. Districts with struggling high schools must respond in some way to the state policy in order to avoid sanction. However, districts are only willing or able to do so given the characteristics (as defined in the preceding) of the districts themselves. Assessing the simultaneous impacts of both policy and context is a challenge. The research community has relatively little understanding of the ways in which state-level, performance-based accountability systems and local school districts interact given various contexts. In no small part, this is due to the fact that many of the state accountability systems focus on schools and students rather than districts. As a result, much of the research has looked at the school level, and not investigated the ways in which such policies influence districts. In addition, the task of analyzing the broad contexts of districts, as opposed to a single school, is daunting.

Research Questions

With these relevant challenges in mind, I have developed several research questions to guide my study of these issues. The research questions I sought to answer are the following: Is there evidence that state accountability policies lead districts to engage in practices that are likely to result in instructional improvement at the high school level? If so, how? Do the type of state accountability policy and/or the particular characteristics of the districts significantly influence the district role in instructional improvement in high schools? These questions seek to assess whether districts are responding to state pressure in ways that are targeted at and likely to improve high school instruction and student performance. If such a response exists at the district level, I am interested in learning which levers at the state level and context variables at the local level combine to produce such a response. Additionally, I am studying whether the particular policy design choices that states make are likely to have a significant impact on the role of the central office.

The literature that informed my thinking about these issues and the design of this study is composed of three parts: research on accountability, district role, and high school response. The general theory of action that supports the "new" educational accountability identifies student achievement as the primary goal of schooling and the focus of measurement and oversight. Achievement is measured by standardized assessments, and performance data is provided to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and members of the community. Stakes are attached to performance on these assessments, and the combination of information and stakes is used to motivate agents. The theory posits that agents in the system (most frequently teachers and students) will then work harder

(or smarter) in the areas the state has designated as important. Staff will either put previously acquired skills to better use or will seek to acquire the knowledge and skills that they feel will allow them to achieve the designated goals (Fuhrman, 2004). This means that the goals, standards, assessment mechanisms, data sources, stakes, and potential support all play a vital role in the ways in which this theory of action is enacted in the ongoing work of schools and school districts.

Using this understanding of the current educational accountability models, I based my analysis of two state accountability systems on the work of Adams and Kirst (1999). The framework they offer describes performance-based accountability systems in terms of principal-agent theory. It asks questions about six elements of accountability policies: Who is identified as the agent? How is action authorized? How is agents' productivity managed? How are accounts defined? How is compliance promoted? And how does the principal (the state in this case) ensure causal responsibility? This framework permitted me to examine the allocation of authority, standards at the high school level, assessments being used in the states, targets that schools and districts have to reach, incentives used to encourage actors to meet those targets, and the provision of resources by the state in order to help schools and districts reach their targets. Accountability policies that follow this design are rooted in the ideas of standards-based reform and systemic school reform as described by Smith and O'Day (1991). They are meant to align standards and assessments to focus students, teachers, schools, and districts on particular contents and competencies that, at least in this case, are of particular concern to state policymakers.

The question of what role the district generally plays in moderating the influence

of state policies at the school level is somewhat open for debate. Some researchers have claimed that districts are barriers to the type of school improvement that accountability advocates envision, arguing that districts' incentive and organizational structures impede such sustained and meaningful reform (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Finn (1991) has argued that state-level accountability policies which possess the elements that Adams and Kirst (1999) identify obviate the need for school districts. That is, once the state sets standards and assessments (and perhaps provides resources for schools to get assistance), districts become an unnecessary governmental entity, not necessarily obstructionist, but certainly not possessing any significant utility. This proposition assumes that state policy is a "zero-sum" game in which the growing state role takes over the district role. In fact, this image is repudiated by research that shows that districts have played a significant role in a variety of state reform efforts (Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990). District roles in the face of increasingly active state policymaking have ranged from emphasizing particular pieces of state policies in order to further local goals (Firestone, 1989) to building on to the policy to increase its significance at the local level (Goertz, Massell, & Chun, 1998). Spillane (1996) has discussed how policy from a higher level of government frequently creates more policy at lower levels. This chapter sheds light on the extent to which the increase in local policy and activity is true in a variety of districts.

Given the potentially broad range of district action that is possible in light of previous research, it is necessary to more clearly identify what I mean by "district response" to state accountability policy. In this area, my thinking was informed by research on districts that has regularly identified four particular areas related to

instructional improvement in which districts have tended to be active (Massell, 2000; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Murphy & Hallinger, 1988). Those four areas are curriculum and instruction, professional development, data use, and resource allocation. As a result, my research focused on district strategies that related directly to any or all of these four functions. These four areas comprise the core functions that are theorized to lead to improvement of instruction and student performance. Key to their potential is the extent to which these functions are aligned and focused on a particular goal or set of goals. While later in this chapter I describe particular principles for assessing the quality of district initiatives in these areas, included among these principles is the degree to which functions in each area have the potential to support activities in the other areas.

It is my hope that this research will contribute to our understanding of districts and their functions in several ways. First of all, much of the research on districts has studied districts that are, for some reason, “outliers.” Many recent studies of school districts have focused on those districts that are deemed to be particularly successful or engaged in unique and innovative practices. Researchers have based their identification of such districts on unexpectedly high student performance outcomes, or on the reputation of districts among researchers and practitioners (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). In either case, these “outlier” districts do not represent the bulk of school districts that are struggling with student performance and do not catch the eye or interest of well-known researchers and practitioners. This research attempts to rectify this knowledge gap by focusing on districts that have at least one high school that is performing below average on the state assessment, that have not, at the district

level, demonstrated any dramatic performance gains (or losses) in the recent past, and that would be expected to be among those districts for which accountability pressure would be a particularly salient feature of their functional environment because of the presence of one or more low-performing high schools. The districts and individual high schools included in this study have been relatively flat in terms of performance on the standardized state exams.

This research is also different from much of the previous research on school districts because it limits its focus to the work that central offices are doing with high schools. Much of the research that has been done on school districts, including much of that being built upon here, has examined how central offices interact with elementary schools. Until recently, that is where much of the districts’, and researchers’, attention has been focused. The limited attention that most districts have given to high school improvement, the significant difficulties of demonstrating improvement, and the increased pressure related to high school improvement make them a particularly rich area on which to focus district research. High schools have not demonstrated the achievement growth that has been seen at the lower levels of the K–12 system (Haycock & Huang, 2001; Olson, 2001). In part, this is due to the emphasis of lower grades within many accountability systems. Siskin (2003) has identified seven potential reasons why high schools pose more challenging contexts for change and improvement than do lower grades. Among the reasons Siskin cites is the fact that high schools are being asked to do something entirely new—have all students study and master a common set of standards in order to graduate. Additionally, she points out that high schools vary tremendously in terms of size, organization, performance, and

capacity. These differences, frequently within a single district, make designing improvement strategies particularly difficult. Such challenges were considered in studying the strategies that districts were using to stimulate high school improvement. Additionally, by limiting research about the effects of state accountability policies to the high school level, particular differences between state systems may become more stark. While all states are testing regularly in the elementary schools, the range of approaches to high school standards, assessments, and stakes is significantly broader.

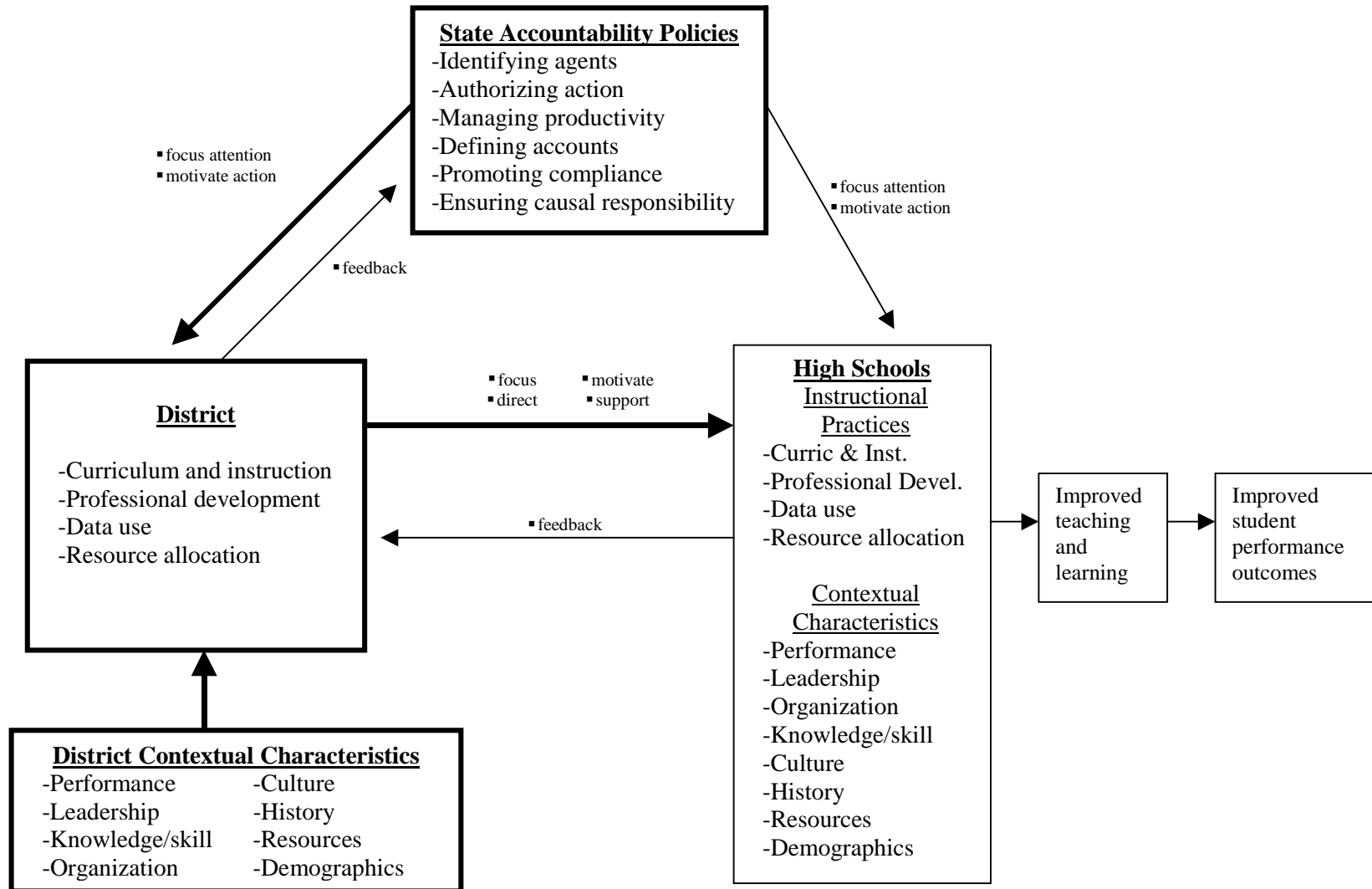
Additionally, much of the research on districts has examined *one* district function. Such studies include examinations of curriculum implementation, or professional development strategies, or data use. The research presented in this chapter looks across all four functions, with the conviction that the four functions are highly interrelated. A comprehensive study of districts' strategies and responses requires an examination of the ways in which various strategies are aligned with one another and support a common goal. Finally, that research that does look at district behavior rarely considers in a detailed way the demands and impact of state policy. This study is focusing on those policies and the impact that they have on school district function.

Conceptual Framework

In considering the issues that I have mentioned and the previous research on district function, I have designed a conceptual framework (see Figure 1) which takes the state accountability policy as its starting point. Using the elements identified by Adams and Kirst (1999) to analyze state policy, I assess the mechanisms of influence that the policy uses to focus district

attention. Additionally, I discuss district contextual characteristics and the ways in which they may serve to constrain or support district improvement. Both visually and metaphorically speaking, the district is “stuck in the middle” between these two sets of potentially competing, potentially complementary, legal and environmental demands and conditions. The ways in which districts deal with these messages from both sides and how the stimuli impact the practices that the districts select in carrying out improvement through the four functions identified earlier (curriculum and instruction, professional development, data use, and resource allocation) compose the bulk of this research. How are the district strategies serving to focus and motivate and build capacity for improvement at the high school level given their “middle” position? This map and my areas of focus attempt to capture the design of the state policy, the impact of that design on district practice, the meaning of district context for district behavior, and the overall approach that districts use in working with high schools to produce improved performance.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Map



Research Design

Because this research takes the state policy as its primary point of comparison, I began my research with two states—North Carolina and Pennsylvania—that have accountability policies that contrast on a number of levels. (These were two of the six states included in the larger CPRE study, the data from which are reviewed in this publication.) Typically, North Carolina and Pennsylvania are generally thought to be “strong” and “weak” accountability states respectively. They lie at opposite ends of an accountability scale developed by Carnoy and Loeb (2004) that assesses the presence of particular elements such as school sanctions and rewards, high school level assessments, and high school exit exams. However, these states also differ in many of the ways in which they address the elements of the state accountability system identified by Adams and Kirst (1999).

The two states identify different agents, the entities that are ultimately responsible for the changes that the state policy demands. North Carolina has identified schools as the level for change. As agents, *schools* receive sanctions and rewards as the agents. Pennsylvania has chosen to place responsibility for curriculum coverage, alignment, and improvement with *districts*, and sanctions *districts* for underperformance. Though data in Pennsylvania are publicly reported at the individual school level, and receive considerable attention from school and community, the state is holding the district responsible for improvement and has intervened in a number of school districts where more than half of the students are performing at a “Below Basic” level (the lowest of the state’s four performance categories).

There is also a great difference in the ways in which the states authorize action

and define accounts. North Carolina has standard courses of study for 11 courses at the high school level as well as end-of-course (EOC) exams to assess performance in each of these courses. Pennsylvania has one set of standards for high school students, to be met by the end of 11th grade, and tests at that point to assess student mastery of these standards. (At the time of data collection for this research, standards had only been disseminated in math and language arts. Since then, additional curricular areas have been addressed.) These different standards and assessment strategies provide schools and districts with very different amounts and kinds of data. North Carolina’s data become available much more quickly following the end of a large number of courses, while Pennsylvania’s single high school assessment provides data (about high school students) that are generally not received by schools until the tested students are at the start of their 12th-grade year. Table 1 summarizes the differences between the states.

In spite of the differences discussed earlier, there are similarities between the two state systems that are nearly universal in the United States. Both of the state systems are performance-based. They use changes in student performance on standardized measures as evidence of improved practice at the school level. These state systems are not seeking to monitor teacher practice or build capacity on any wide scale. They are focused entirely on outcomes. Related to this, both of these state systems, like most others, have been largely negligent in the area of ensuring causal responsibility.

Table 1. Contrasting State Accountability Systems

	North Carolina	Pennsylvania
Identifying agents	Schools	Districts
Authorizing action	Course-level goals	One set of high-school-level standards
Managing agents' productivity	Performance-based	Performance-based
Defining accounts	Detailed, frequent	General, one-time only in high school
Promoting compliance	School-level sanctions and rewards	District-level sanctions, school-level rewards
Ensuring causal responsibility	Minimal	Minimal

It is perhaps a conscious decision on the part of states to make clear the limited state involvement and to assure that districts and schools are responsible for increased achievement. However, there is little reason to assume that all schools or districts possess the capacity to engender the improvement in instruction that will be necessary to achieve the required targets. According to the theoretical functioning of these systems, such an assurance should be required before holding individuals or organizations accountable for their performance. Yet no state has developed the ability and resources to ensure such capacity at the local level. This is particularly true at the high school level, where continued debates about standards, the subject-specific nature of teacher expertise, and the lack of basic research about effective practices at the high school level make effective improvement strategies complex.

To look at the range of district responses resulting from the policy choices of these two states, I used interview and document analysis. The data and analysis

used in this chapter are a bit deeper than in some other chapters in this publication. By limiting my focus to only two states (out of six in the larger study), I was able to collect additional data during an iterative interview process and to engage in several rounds of analysis. Because accountability policy aims at eliciting individual responses, qualitative research is an appropriate method to assess those individualized situations and to look at practices that might be most appropriate in particular contexts. Analysis of this type of data can help to explain why appropriate or desired changes are, or are not, taking place. The data sources that were used for this research include interviews at the district and school level. Interviews were conducted during the 2002–2003 school year. One interview was done in each district prior to a site visit, and a complete set of interviews was done during a site visit using set protocols. The individual respondents that I selected at the central offices and the high schools were teachers and administrators in charge of the four functions that are at the heart of this work – curriculum and instruction, professional development, data

use, and resource allocation. In addition to the staff members at the central office, I spoke to a sample of math and English teachers and department chairs in each high school. Table 2 summarizes my sampling choices.

Less formal follow-up interviews with particular district and school staff members were conducted where needed during the process of data analysis. I also collected and analyzed a set of documents, including state legislation about the policy, public information, surveys and self-studies conducted by the districts, and local and state reports related to achievement, demographics, and funding.

Six districts in each of the two states were included in this study. After a preliminary analysis of data from all 12 districts, I selected four districts (two in each state) to study in depth. My selection was based on the districts' large size, providing at least the potential for regular interaction and intervention with the high school. I also sought demographic variation. In each state, one of the districts is wealthier, whiter, and more suburban, while the other is more urban, more heavily composed of students of color, and less wealthy. My sample was also purposive. It was selected after a preliminary review of data from six districts in each of the two states. I sought to represent the wide range of variation in response as we saw it within each state. In each of the districts, I collected data at the

lowest performing high schools (where the district had more than one high school). This was done under the theory that if the state accountability pressure were causing the districts to respond by creating or implementing high school improvement strategies, district leaders would most likely target assistance toward the schools that are having the greatest difficulty demonstrating achievement within the state assessment system. Collection of data at the school level also provided a way to corroborate or triangulate data provided by central office respondents. Findings, however, are based on all 12 districts. From these, I chose exemplar cases to make the evidence most clear.

I analyzed interview data using ATLAS.ti qualitative research software. Interviews were fully transcribed and the software allowed me to go through at least three rounds of coding for analysis. I relied on at least three types of coding as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Beginning with open coding, I was able to begin to label various phenomena in each of the districts. While I focused on the district functions and contexts that I had previously identified on the basis of research, this open coding does not preclude the identification and labeling of previously unconsidered action. For me, open codes consisted of broad categories like "professional development," "data use," "history," and "policy knowledge."

Table 2. Sampling Choices

Districts (4 in-depth, 12 total)	High Schools (5 in-depth, 12 total)	Individuals (63)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large size • demographic variation • representative variation in response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lowest performing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • administrators, math and ELA teachers • central offices (25) • high schools (38)

During this process, I simultaneously began to consider patterns that exist and to look for commonalities and differences within and between the cases. Axial coding, which involved not only the district and school interviews but the state and district documents as well, helped me to identify potential interactions. It was through the use of axial coding that theory began to emerge about the particular interactions occurring between states and districts. Axial coding included both potential causative relationships like “response to state” or “superintendent goal,” as well as assessments of action like “targeted,” “high quality,” and “passive.” Finally, using selective coding, I produced the narrative account that allowed me to generate case studies of each district as well as to begin to understand the influence that state accountability policies are having on school districts in both states. This final stage of coding was done by identifying particularly important relationships and quotations that could provide evidence supporting my findings.

Once case studies were generated for each of the four districts, I looked across the four areas of district function and attempted to describe and assess the manner in which district functions are being introduced, shared, and supported. I have created five continua to capture this approach. Within each range, the first descriptor represents behavior more likely to result in improvements in performance at the high school level that are aligned with the demands of the state accountability system. The latter descriptor represents a less strategic approach by the districts to high school improvement. These continua are based on a theory of systemic reform that demands a coordinated and active response to shifts in the policy environment (Smith & O’Day, 1991).

- *Interventionist to noninterventionist.* Interventionist central offices staff are a regular presence in the high schools in the districts. They are very “hands-on” with regard to the operation of high schools, using school staff to support centrally defined programs and goals. A noninterventionist central office may possess expertise equal to its interventionist counterpart but may function much more as a support provider, offering assistance only when requested by school personnel.
- *Active to passive.* Central offices classified as active are regularly attempting to identify both challenges and solutions for their high schools. They are engaged in meaningful searches in advance of school requests. An active district is not necessarily interventionist. For example, a district that is active in a particular area may offer a host of carefully selected professional development programs, though it may not require anyone in particular to attend. In this way, the district can be actively working to help high schools but noninterventionist in its approach. Districts may be active or passive in one particular functional area, or all four.
- *Differentiated to uniform/generic assistance.* The approach that a district takes with regard to a high school may be extremely individualized in seeking to meet the unique needs of a particular school. This implies that the central office has developed a unique understanding of each school and has developed a plan to improve the school. In contrast, a district may have a more uniform approach to school improvement and will seek to meet needs that the central office has

identified as being universal. In an optimal case where central office assistance is differentiated, it may be differentiated by high school performance level or by grade level. It may be differentiated within a particular function (for example, the district may provide professional development in each school though the various approaches may be very different) or across functions (meaning that the functions in which the district is active with regard to each school may be very different).

- *Prescriptive to nonprescriptive.* Within any of the functions identified earlier, the district may be extremely prescriptive in the changes or initiatives that schools are to undertake, meaning that they determine the improvement approach for the schools. On the other end, the district may determine the need for improvement in an area, but may then offer schools a range of options or allow them to seek out their own remedies. While I have placed the prescriptive identifier at the improved end of the continuum, there is considerable debate about the appropriate locus of decision making. However, because I have targeted schools with some history of low performance in this research, it is likely that school leaders do not possess the capacity needed to improve performance (if they did, their schools would not be low-performing). For this reason, the

locus of decision making should, at least temporarily, be removed from the school itself.

- *Coherent to unaligned.* This continuum cuts across the areas of district function to describe how well the set of improvement efforts in a district is arranged with regard to a coordinated focus for teachers. It refers to the ways in which the district-initiated improvement efforts in the four areas work together to create a coherent system that is arranged around a clear set of goals and priorities.

Describing district approaches along these dimensions will serve to paint a fuller picture of the role the district is playing. I created this system of research-based qualities in order to describe and analyze the approach to high school improvement that districts are pursuing. In order to categorize districts efficiently in subsequent discussion, I refer to those districts with behaviors that represent the improved end of the spectra described (that is, interventionist, active, differentiated, prescriptive, and coherent) as “Type A” districts. Those districts whose behaviors are closer to the unimproved end of the spectra (noninterventionist, passive, uniform, nonprescriptive, unaligned) are labeled “Type B” districts. It was the case that districts tended to fall into one category or the other, as shown in Table 3. For example, districts were unlikely to be on one end of certain spectra while on other end of other spectra.

Table 3. District Types and Descriptors

Type A School District	Type B School District
Interventionist	Noninterventionist
Active	Passive
Differentiated	Generic
Prescriptive	Nonprescriptive
Coherent	Unaligned

However, it is theoretically possible that Type A districts were prescribing and supporting high school interventions that were not likely to lead to improvements in student performance. Optimally, districts would engage in high-quality initiatives in each of the four functional areas while selecting and supporting them in ways represented by the improved ends of the continua.

In order to assess the quality of the initiatives (as opposed to the general approaches described by Type A or B) of the districts' actions, I compared the particular content of the districts' responses to "best practice" in each of these areas as they have been widely endorsed by prominent scholars. Relying on a range of research in the areas of professional development, data use, and resource allocation, I was able to make judgments about the quality of the practices that districts were using or encouraging their high schools to use. I did not develop a continuum on the fourth function studied, curriculum and instruction, because it lacks professional consistency on what qualifies as improved practice. The debates about the merits of direct instruction versus constructivist or discovery learning approaches are just one example of the diversity of professional opinions that exist. Such an inconclusive environment prevents me from evaluating the curriculum and instruction choices made by a school

district. Table 4 provides an example of the quality measures that were used and the ratings given to two sample districts, one of each "type." (The ratings of the sample districts here were based on an analysis of the programs in place in each of the districts.)

Table 4. Qualities of District Response

Principles of successful professional development^a	Type A	Type B
Content focuses on what students are to learn and on addressing different challenges students may have	Moderate	Weak
Based on analyses of differences between performance and goals	Strong	Weak
Involves teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and the development of learning experiences	Moderate	Moderate
Primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching	Moderate	Weak
Organized around collaborative problem solving	Weak	Weak
Continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up support and external sources	Strong	Weak
Incorporates evaluation of multiple outcome measures	Strong	Weak
Includes an opportunity to gain an understanding of the theory underlying the skills	Weak	Weak
Connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning	Strong	Weak

Principles of effective data use^b	Type A	Type B
Focus attention on performance indicators directly relevant to teaching and learning	Strong	Moderate
Motivate staff to attend to relevant data	Moderate	Moderate
Develop knowledge of school staff about how to use data to take action	Moderate	Weak
Use data in order to make decisions about resource allocation	Strong	Weak
Use individual level student data to better meet student needs	Strong	Moderate
Generate additional data as needed to improve program and practices	Moderate	Moderate

Principles of effective resource allocation^c	Type A	Type B
Reduction of specialized programs	Moderate	Weak
More flexible student grouping	Moderate	Moderate
Structures to support more personal relationships	Moderate	Weak
Longer and more varied blocks of instructional time	Moderate	Moderate
More common planning time	Moderate	Weak
Increased support for curriculum review and improvement	Strong	Weak
Support for high-quality professional development opportunities	Strong	Weak
Resources for improved data analysis and use	Strong	Weak

^aThese principles are drawn from the work of the National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching (2002). ^bThese principles are a combination of concepts described in an article written by Jennifer O'Day (2002) and ideas emerging from the data. ^cThese principles were identified on the basis of the work of Miles & Darling-Hammond (1997).

Findings

As is evident from Table 4, Type A districts tended to employ practices that were supported by research, while Type B districts were much less invested in research-based practice. In many ways, this is encouraging news. Districts that were more highly involved in their high schools were promoting good practice, while those that were more passive had a less well-designed set of improvement strategies.

Among the six districts in North Carolina, there was an even split between Type A and Type B districts. In Pennsylvania, there were four Type A districts and two Type B districts. Though districts had been selected because of the presence of a low-performing high school, district behaviors or potential for improvement were not factors in the original selection. With such a small sample size, it is not appropriate to make universal judgments about the proportion of districts

of each type in each of the states. However, two points should be made. First, despite Pennsylvania's less well-developed accountability system, there was a greater number of Type A districts in that state than in North Carolina. For reasons that will be discussed, while the numbers of districts of each type in each state were similar, the patterns in district response were much more clear in North Carolina than in Pennsylvania, where district response tended to be less predictable and more idiosyncratic. Second, this study included only those districts with high schools that are struggling. It is quite possible that if the sample were more random, and included districts with more well-performing high schools, the proportion of Type A districts might in fact be significantly greater.

Type A Districts

One of the most salient characteristics of Type A districts was that respondents described making a change in district practice in response to state pressure. There was evidence that the district had changed as a result of state policy initiatives. Though I was dependent upon the retrospective view of respondents for measurement of change over time, there were some very telling statements by district leaders that gave insight into the question of whether districts had changed their approaches since the introduction of state accountability systems for high schools. One central office administrator said in a North Carolina Type A district said:

I guess a lot of my role has changed from just when I first got the job it was, OK, does everybody have that they need? And we'll provide some staff development every year too. I've had to be the change agent to push them to get things going. I've had principals that frankly have been

in position so long that everything status quo is fine with these folks, I've had to drag them along.

It is evident that there has been change in the district and that much of it is emanating from the central office. Similarly, when asked how practices in his district had changed since the introduction of the latest version of the state accountability system, a superintendent in one of the Type A districts in Pennsylvania said:

I'm much more autocratic. I did all the site-based and all the team and we all hugged each other and everybody was happy and the scores were going down, literally through the basement. . . . Now, I will entertain any idea if they've done a review of literature, come with a proposal, show me the accountability, show me the benchmarks. So from that sense I think I've become less tolerant.

Type A district leaders clearly had approaches that had been affected by state policy.

In Type A districts, central office staff is very *interventionist*. It is clear from the previous quotation that district staff is involved in the selection of strategies at the school sites. Staff from Type A districts are out in the schools, working in a very hands-on way with schools, not waiting for school staff to come to them with questions or problems. They are actively looking to identify problems in schools, as well as actively looking for solutions. District administrators in Type A districts were frequently visiting classrooms and actively engaged in examining performance data in order to help teachers and administrators in their high schools to identify challenges and select resources. The searches that they led often represented the more in-depth and successful strategies as represented by

Gross, Kirst, Holland, & Luschei (in this publication).

These districts also have a *differentiated* approach to their work with high schools. They are getting to know each individual high school (where there is more than one) well enough to be able to assess strengths and weaknesses. The districts select strategies needed for improvement in particular schools. For example, in one Type A district in North Carolina, the central office had done an assessment and identified the challenge in one of its high schools as being an issue of teacher skill. In another high school in that same district, teachers demonstrated sufficient teaching skill on the individual level but the school lacked any sense of community or collaboration, in part because of a lack of leadership at the building level. These two “diagnoses” required and received very different remedies, ranging from professional development in the former to a change of leadership in the latter. While districts maintain a differentiated approach to working with high schools, it is not a site-based approach to differentiation.

Once Type A districts have done an assessment and diagnosed a problem, they tend to be rather *prescriptive*. They direct their high schools to implement certain practices, and monitor the implementation of those practices. In some cases, the high school staffs felt that they had made the selection of a certain practice. In conversation with district leaders however, it became evident that high schools were in fact presented with some very limited choices, all of which the central office had already approved.

Finally, Type A districts possess a *coherent* strategy for improvement of student performance. They are aligning their practices and goals around a target. Most commonly that target is improved student performance on the state assessment. The

districts have adopted that as their goal, occasionally going beyond the state target, and are working to align a range of practices that they believe will lead to improvement. These behaviors differed in the two states in accordance with the design of the state assessment system. However, regardless of the state, Type A districts are doing assessments of instruction, measurements of learning and improvement, and making decisions about what is working and what is not. In Type B districts, much of this responsibility stays at the high school level.

Type B Districts

Type B districts represent a very different approach. These central offices are much more *passive*. They view themselves as one of a variety of external resources available to schools. They wait for schools to ask for help, and then are available as a resource. In contrast to the Type A districts, they have not changed practice as a result of the demands of state accountability. The superintendent in one North Carolina Type B district said, “When I look back at the big picture of what we do and how we do it, I think we operate somewhat similar to the way we have been operating for the last 10 years.” Given the fact that the North Carolina state accountability systems at the high school level only began 6 years prior to my data collection, it is clear that there has been a minimum of improvement-oriented response in this district and those like them. In Pennsylvania, where the state accountability policy for high schools has been in place for a shorter time than in North Carolina, a superintendent in a Type B district said that he could not point to any changes that had been made in district practice in the last 3 to 5 years. Given that the current state accountability system had only been in place for 3 years at the time of data collection, it became clear that this

district had continued to function relatively unchanged in spite of the change to state policy. Neither district was alone in their respective states in terms of their static practice.

When Type B districts do act, they tend to adopt programs without clear matches to school needs and rarely follow up to see that the programs are being implemented as planned. They frequently do not have a clear goal around which they are aligning efforts. While Type A districts most frequently cited improvement in test performance as their central goal, Type B districts cited everything from character development to technology enhancement to improvement in state test performance. This wide range of goals caused effort to be refracted in a number of directions.

Districts in both North Carolina and Pennsylvania tended to fall into the typologies represented here by Type A and Type B. Their overall approaches to high school improvement, and the quality of the strategies that they were using tended to be very similar, in accordance with the group into which they fell (Type A or B). However, districts in the two states tended to focus on slightly different areas of activity. In Pennsylvania, Type A districts were frequently focusing on things like creating explicit grade and course level standards. They were just beginning to think about grade-level articulation and pacing guides to help teachers move through the district curriculum at a speed that would allow coverage of all of the standards. Pennsylvania Type A districts were heavily focused on introducing teachers to the state standards and reinforcing the connections between standards, curriculum, and assessments. In North Carolina, this was not necessary, as state-defined course level standards and pacing guides are an accepted part of teaching in most school districts. Instead, districts in North Carolina were

analyzing the more frequent, detailed, and course-specific data that the state system there provides and were trying to take action related to that data. So, while districts broadly fell into the Type A and B categories, the particular improvement strategies that they were using varied widely.

Analysis

While the district types in both states were similar, across the six districts in each state it was much easier in North Carolina than in Pennsylvania to predict from district characteristics which districts would behave in a Type A or B fashion. In North Carolina, the determination could be made from the confluence of three factors: previous performance, central office size, and leadership. Those districts that had particularly low-performing high schools were more likely to behave in a Type A manner. This makes sense given that the lowest performing schools are most in danger of state intervention. However, in order to respond in the way described previously, central offices had to have sufficient numbers of staff to work with high schools on an ongoing basis. In a district that did have one very low-performing high school, the small size of the central office made it impossible for staff to work with the high schools on a regular and interventionist basis. In North Carolina, Type A districts tended to have an average of more than twice as many professional staff leaders at the district level in comparison with Type B districts (29 in Type A districts versus 13 in Type B districts). Finally, in each of the Type A districts there were one to three key leaders who strongly believed that it is the role of the central office to direct schools and not simply to serve as an additional resource. This team of leaders had a very clear and uniform approach and set of

strategies that they were pushing high schools to use. It is perhaps somewhat counterintuitive that districts with the lowest performing high schools had the most promising practices. The fact is that in most cases, the overall district approaches and particular strategies in the Type A districts were relatively recent innovations. We do not yet have sufficient time to measure the impact of their instructional improvement efforts on student performance.

In Pennsylvania, it was not possible to predict from a particular set of district characteristics which districts were likely to be behaving in a Type A or B fashion. As in North Carolina, issues of staff size, previous performance, and district leadership were certainly important. However, they were not as determinant in Pennsylvania as they were in North Carolina. While in North Carolina all of the Type A districts had certain contextual characteristics in common, this was not the case in Pennsylvania. Type A districts in Pennsylvania were both large and small and had high schools that ranged widely in terms of achievement. Response in Pennsylvania districts, it seems, depended to a much greater extent on the individual entrepreneurship of local actors. In Pennsylvania districts, the primary determinant was the presence of what has been called a “dominant coalition” (Firestone, 1989). In Type A districts in Pennsylvania, changes were dependent on a group of individuals (most frequently district and high school administrators) who decided to make use of the state system in order to push forward an improvement agenda that would support both the state system as well as their own goals.

The differences between district response patterns raise the question of why response in North Carolina was so much more predictable on the basis of certain contextual characteristics, than was response in Pennsylvania. In North Carolina, it

appears that those districts that contained a high school that was a potential target of sanction under the state accountability system were very likely to respond, provided they possessed the staff capacity to do so in an effective manner. In Pennsylvania, even those districts with high schools that were performing at very low levels did not necessarily feel the same pressure to devise a strong response or improvement plan pegged to the state system. Later, I will discuss some reasons why districts reacted or failed to react.

Analysis of the data made clear five policy factors that differ under these two systems and help to explain the different response patterns in the two states. In addition to the conscious policy choices described by the Adams and Kirst (1999) framework, the reasons for the contrast between the states cut across the six elements of accountability policies described earlier (identifying agents, managing productivity, defining accounts, etc.). These policy features affect the way in which the overall message as well as particular pieces of information impact districts. These characteristics of state policy design and implementation that impact district response patterns are what I label the “Five C’s.” While the stakes associated with the state accountability systems were considered in the sampling frame for the overall study, the characteristics identified in the following are independent of the level of stakes, but rather describe policy design using a different frame.

Five C’s

Consistency

North Carolina’s system is internally consistent. Schools are treated as agents throughout. They are subject to all of the requirements, rewards, and sanctions that

the state has to offer. They are also the targets of change. The state wants the learning process in the schools to change in order to align with state standards. In this system, all of the mechanisms in the system are focused on the unit that is expected to change. In Pennsylvania, districts are agents for setting local standards, accounting for performance, and being sanctioned. But schools are agents when it comes to receiving rewards and are the most frequent subjects of public performance reports. The state has designated districts as the primary agents but is also looking for change at the school level. Thus, it has designed a system that presses for action at one level in the hopes that it will influence practice at another level. The state accounts for performance not at the level of the primary agent, but at a subordinate level. There is an inconsistency in the logic of the system. It is not surprising then, that a more consistent system, like the one in North Carolina, would have more consistent responses at all levels of the system.

Credibility

North Carolina has accrued a much greater degree of credibility for its goals and standards than has Pennsylvania. The vast majority of people with whom we spoke in North Carolina felt that the standard courses of study included information that students completing a particular course should master. The goal of proficiency in a course, as demonstrated by the EOC exams, seemed to matter to all staff. In Pennsylvania, it was much more common to hear school and district staffs question both the origins and importance of particular state standards as well as the reliability and validity of the test being used to measure mastery of those standards. The system used to both authorize action and define accounts lacked legitimacy in the eyes of many respondents.

Additionally, respondents in North Carolina were more likely to agree that the required assessments were reasonable for all high school students. In Pennsylvania, some respondents questioned the need for all students to meet certain standards. This was particularly true in math, where the necessity of high levels of math skills was questioned. As a result of this, school staffs were more amenable in North Carolina to learning from their districts about how to help students to excel on state exams. In this situation, performance becomes a (nearly) universally valued outcome, making it easier for intermediary organizations to assist with its attainment. In Pennsylvania, school and district staffs were less likely to embrace the state standards and testing, adding another layer of resistance to change.

Chronology

It is very likely that part of North Carolina's credibility has been achieved simply with the passage of time. In North Carolina, the state accountability system had been in place without any obvious significant changes for 6 years at the time of my visits. In Pennsylvania, the state policy had been in place for just 2 years, and during that 2-year period had seen changes regarding the highly visible question of placing endorsements based on test performance on student diplomas. District leaders in North Carolina expressed familiarity with the state accountability system and confidence that it would not be eliminated. In contrast, many teachers and leaders in Pennsylvania did not feel certain that the state accountability system would last through the new governor's administration. The different impact that these two attitudes have on organizational behavior at the district level cannot be underestimated. Though there is no real way for the state to address this at the outset, it

does speak to the need for states to commit to a system over the long term, rather than continuously making changes that may undermine agent confidence.

Comprehensiveness

An accountability system that provides a full set of standards at the high school level as well as data in sufficient depth and detail to assess the attainment of those standards is much more likely to have a systematic effect on districts than is a system that is weak in both of these areas. Data about performance is the essential tool of the accountability system. It must be tightly linked to, and aid in the instruction of, clear standards. Without rich standards and data from the state, districts in Pennsylvania that want to focus high schools on making instructional change must first set the standards and create the measures. The process of clarifying standards and creating (or choosing) appropriate assessments is a lengthy one that not only consumes significant time and resources, but further confuses the role of district as principal or agent within the system. The variation that occurs when the content and progression of courses is left at the local level makes it more difficult for groups of districts to collaborate with each other and with outside entities on improving both instruction and data analysis. Leaders in Type A districts in North Carolina were much more likely to report collaborating with other districts, regional consortia, or even the state, because all units of the system shares clear, statewide goals. Accountability is all about setting clear goals and having a clear idea about how the agents are progressing toward these goals. Without such clarity, there is more “noise” in the system that can allow districts to become distracted and consumed with actions that will not necessarily lead toward mastery of state goals.

Consider the Type A districts discussed in this chapter. One in North Carolina is much more focused on getting all students to proficient levels on the EOC exams. It is the guiding mission for the district and provides their activities with a coherence they might otherwise lack. Another in Pennsylvania, while also Type A and working to improve high schools, is creating particular course sequences for each of its high schools, manipulating programs to attract certain groups of students, and preparing teachers with good instructional practice. They are just beginning to consider making curriculum consistent across the district and linking it to standards. The comprehensive nature of the system in North Carolina means that those districts that are predisposed to intervene in high schools (due to their size and capacity, risk of being sanctioned, and leadership) will be more likely to act in a way that is directly aligned with the state system. In Pennsylvania, districts that may possess similar characteristics may act in a variety of ways that may or may not be aligned with the state system.

Comprehensibility

This characteristic attempts to describe how well district (and to a lesser extent, school) staffs understand all of the aspects of the state system that may impact them. Respondents in North Carolina had clearer understanding of the state’s accountability system than did respondents in Pennsylvania. While respondents in both states were not entirely clear on how certain algorithms related to annual growth are calculated, North Carolinians overall were much more aware of the categories that their high schools fell in and what would be required to receive a performance bonus. They were also more familiar with the consequences of failure, namely the

presence of state assistance teams. Pennsylvanians expressed confusion about how performance bonuses were decided, shared a wealth of rumors about how state standards were set, and did not seem clear on what state intervention might mean should it occur. This confusion extended to student-level stakes as well. Several staff members told me that they were not certain what role the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) played in high school graduation.

Because the theory of accountability is at its heart an effort to motivate agents to comply with the demands of principals, it is extremely important that agents understand both the demands as well as the consequences of success or failure in meeting those demands. One of the reasons for greater predictability about the impact of the policy on school districts in North Carolina is the more uniform level of

understanding about the policy among district and school staffs across the state. In Pennsylvania, where the understanding of the system was much more variable, and poorer overall, it is more difficult to predict how districts must react. One Pennsylvania district, for example, has had what might be considered a “North-Carolina-like” response to the state policy. It also has a superintendent with an administrative connection to the state board of education and has a very rich understanding of state policy. He has shared that information with a set of colleagues with whom he has worked for a number of years. Without such a complete picture, we may not have seen the same response. Another Pennsylvania district, with larger percentages of students in the lowest performing category on the PSSA, has not demonstrated such a coherent or interventionist approach.

Table 5. Review of Distinguishing Policy Features

	North Carolina	Pennsylvania
Consistency	Schools get sanctions and rewards	Districts get sanctions, schools get rewards
Credibility	Standards and assessments are reasonable	Tainted by politics, of questionable validity and utility for all
Chronology	In place since 1996, stable	In place since 2000, with changes
Comprehensiveness	11 course standards and assessments	One set of standards, one assessment
Comprehensibility	Provides growth and status categories	Provides only overall averages

Discussion

I want to be clear that all districts, in both states, were responding to the state accountability system to some degree. They were aware of the state standards and were making some effort, be it ever so modest in some cases, to align curriculum with standards and to provide at least some professional development related to the standards. However, as discussed previously, in Type A districts, response was generally aligned with professional opinion about instructional improvement. These districts were using approaches that were closer to what scholars indicate is “best practice.” Type B districts, in addition to being less active and interventionist, were employing practices that were less supportable with existing scholarship. It became clear that the match between state policy and district context was particularly salient in making a district Type A or Type B. State policies only “spoke to” or were being “heard by” certain subsets of districts, generally those that I have classified as Type A. Some districts were not able to respond (e.g., too small or lacking leadership), while others did not feel that the policy affected them (e.g., performing close to average).

For Type A districts, the theory of action that supports performance-based accountability was working. The policy spoke to districts and the districts had the ability to act in ways that would lead to improvement in areas that the state was measuring. It is perhaps more important to ask why some districts were *not* responding to the state accountability system, despite the presence of at least one high school that was performing below the state average. There are two possible explanations for this. It is possible that there was something lacking in the policy design that did not consider local contextual factors. For example, if the low-performing high schools

in a district were closer to the state average, the district was less likely to be proactively engaging its high schools in improvement efforts. Or if districts were very small, they frequently did not possess the capacity to engage in the sorts of high school capacity building that larger districts were able to do. Alternatively, the policy design did not convey to these districts the press or direction that designers may have hoped. The reasons for this had to do with the Five C’s. Features of policy design and implementation combined to send mixed or unclear messages to actors at the district level.

It appears that where state accountability policy does meet the five criteria discussed previously, it is possible for policy to influence a distinct and predictable subset of districts. On the basis of the sample of six districts examined in this study, this is the case in North Carolina. Given particular district contextual factors (size, performance, leadership), it is relatively easy to predict whether a district will be Type A or Type B. Where the policy is not clear, response is much more dependent on local factors. Such a situation creates the kind of unpredictable and idiosyncratic variation that we saw in Pennsylvania. However, as we saw, this did not lead to an absence of supportive and proactive districts. In fact, in this small sample, Pennsylvania had a slightly higher proportion of such districts than did North Carolina. However, the focus of this research is the consistency with which districts can be moved to Type A behavior. There is no doubt that the policy in North Carolina moves districts in a more predictable and systematic way than does the policy in Pennsylvania.

The challenge that this research poses for policymakers who wish to create successful *and* predictable patterns of response is at least twofold. First, policy

created with attention to the Five C's will be more likely to send a clear message to a distinct group of local actors and to elicit a response. However, as we saw in North Carolina, even a well-constructed policy does not provoke action by all of the school districts that need improvement. This raises the issue of whether one can construct a policy that is both clear enough and broad enough to turn Type B districts into Type A districts. Such a policy would need to address both motivation issues—in order to get the attention of more districts, rather than be ignored as it was in many Type B districts—as well as local context and capacity issues. Some districts could not respond to state policy because they lacked sufficient staff or leaders who knew about appropriate improvement strategies. Without outside assistance, these districts cannot become Type A's regardless of the how much they might want to, on the basis of the motivation the state policy provides. Accountability policies may not be sufficient to address all of the needs of a Type B district, but other state programs should consider these issues if the state is seeking to maximize the benefit to be gained from local school districts.

them from doing so. These are the context issues at the district level that will need policy attention and support if districts are to be a viable resource in encouraging and helping high schools to improve.

Future Research

This research was based on a relatively small sample of districts, six in each of two states. It found relatively similar proportions of Type A and Type B districts in each state. It would be worth expanding the sample sizes to see if the proportions remain similar. Also as part of this expansion, it would be possible to see if the predicting factors in North Carolina remain the same and whether any patterns in district response in Pennsylvania become apparent. This work would help to elucidate some of the key contextual factors that are either allowing districts to become Type A or are preventing

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