

ABSTRACT

MARSHALL, CHRISHELE IRENE KINGDOM. Instructional Change in the Era of No Child Left Behind: Perspectives from Veteran Teachers (Under the direction of Lance. D. Fusarelli.)

This multiple case study takes place in a North Carolina school district. This study examines teachers' perceptions of the accountability mandates passed down under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and to examine how those accountability mandates have prompted veteran teachers to change their instructional practices. Additionally, this research seeks to answer questions about the training that participating teachers received as well as their perceptions of the changes made to their practice.

Interviews were conducted with six middle and high school teachers who taught tested subjects during the 2016-2017 school year. Participants' responses were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using both a priori codes and emergent themes. Each participants' responses were used to create a case. A cross-case analysis of the data was conducted to explain the similarities and differences in participant responses. Although the teacher participants had an understanding of the purpose of NCLB, the way that the law changed their instruction varied from teacher to teacher.

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Instructional Change in the Era of No Child Left Behind: Perspectives of Veteran Teachers

by
Chrishele Irene Kingdom Marshall

A dissertation proposal submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in

Educational Research and Policy Analysis

Raleigh, North Carolina

2017

APPROVED BY:

Dr. Lance Fusarelli, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

Dr. Gregory Hicks, Ph.D.

Dr. Colleen Paepflow, Ph.D.

Dr. Tracey Ray, Ph.D.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work and this degree to every person who provided support and encouragement as I worked my way through this process.

Mom and Daddy, you have always pushed me to exceed my potential. If it were not for the lessons that you instilled in me as I grew up, I would never have had the drive to pursue this degree in the first place. Thank you for always challenging me and driving to me to be the best version of myself.

Antoine, I owe you a large part of everything that I have been able to accomplish while in this program. Thank you for being understanding and supportive during my late-night writing sessions and for being Mr. Mom after Chrisette and Janell were born so that I could complete this work. You have been one of my biggest supporters and you pushed me to continue even when I considered giving up. This study would not even exist if it had not been for your continued encouragement and belief in my ability to succeed.

Chrisette and Janell, everything that I have done has been for you. I wanted to give you the best example to follow in always striving to reach your goals. This degree is for you, precious girls.

I also dedicate this work to the memory of my late great-grandmother, Pearl Lee Wallace, who always made me feel as though I could do anything I put my mind to.

BIOGRAPHY

Chrishele Irene Kingdom Marshall is the middle child of three children, born to Roy and Phyllis Kingdom Jr. She was born in North Charleston, South Carolina and raised in several states due to her father's employment with the United States Navy.

Chrishele attended schools in South Carolina, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and California. During her elementary and secondary years, she was an honors student and was active in many different extracurricular activities. After graduating with honors from Summerville High School, Chrishele attended Claflin University on a full academic scholarship majoring in Early Childhood Education. At Claflin, she continued achieving high academic standards, served in many campus leadership roles, and later served concurrently as Miss Claflin University 2008-2009 and President of the National Pre-Alumni Council (NPAC) of the United Negro College Fund.

Upon graduating from Claflin University, Chrishele accepted a job teaching kindergarten with the Richland School District Two. She remained there until 2012 when she received a partial scholarship to the University of Rochester to pursue a Master's degree in Educational Policy. After completing the year-long program, Chrishele relocated to Raleigh, North Carolina.

Chrishele currently serves teachers as an instructional resource teacher in the Wake County Public School System and is an active member of The Flood Group, an education advocacy organization based in Southeast Raleigh. She lives with her husband of four years, Antoine, and their daughters, Chrisette and Janell.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are a host of people that I would like to thank for helping me throughout my journey through the doctoral program.

First, I would like to thank Dr. Lance Fusarelli for his guidance, support, and expertise as I crafted this work. Thank you so much for the encouragement that you gave and know that your support has been essential to my success.

I would also like to thank Dr. Greg Hicks, Dr. Colleen Paeplow, and Dr. Tracey Ray for their willingness to serve on my committee and for the feedback they provided to make this work its best.

Dr. Lisa Bass, thank you for the time and attention you provided while I was in the early stages of developing this work. Your feedback and reassurance as I navigated this process were extremely timely and helpful.

Dr. Chaunte Garrett, thank you for agreeing to be a member of my support network from the moment I declared my intention to seek a doctoral degree. You have been an invaluable source of information and encouragement.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Over the past few decades, high-stakes testing has become commonplace in America's effort to improve learning outcomes for all students. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002, created a system where sanctions and rewards were put in place to force schools and districts to address the academic needs of all students. Under NCLB, each state had to develop a system for holding educators accountable for student performance. As part of that requirement, state departments of education also had to create consequences to levy against schools and/or districts that consistently failed to meet the new standard for academic excellence under NCLB. The impetus for NCLB mandates was that the implementation of a high-stakes system of testing and accountability would eventually increase student achievement (Aldridge, 2003; Amrein & Berliner, 2002).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was intended to increase the rigor of state curriculum standards, better align curriculum and instruction, and to increase the achievement outcomes for students belonging to historically disadvantaged groups. Under this law, new accountability mandates were created to increase the likelihood that the law would achieve its intended goals. States were required to develop and implement standards to guide student outcomes in math and reading in third through twelfth grades. As required by NCLB, 95% of all students enrolled were required to take the state-developed assessments. There were also specific requirements for the percentages of special needs students and English language learners were required to take the assessments.

It is important to note, however, that the use of standardized tests to measure school and teacher effectiveness is not unique to NCLB. Originally published in 1923, the Stanford Achievement Test was used to monitor the effectiveness of school programs (Hamilton & Koretz, 2002). From the 1940s to the 1960s, testing was typically used to assess students as a means of evaluating the curriculum in our nation's schools. After the 1960s, however, the development of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) played a pivotal role in the shift from using assessments to evaluate school programs to using assessments to monitor the academic achievement of the nation's students over time. In recent years, NAEP scores have been used to gauge whether achievement outcomes for students are increasing following the establishment of high-stakes testing under NCLB. Standardized tests are also used to evaluate the Title I program that was established under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965.

In the 1980s, there was an increased focus on the educational system. NAEP had been reporting declines in test scores since the 1960s and, over time, many policy makers and educational stakeholders became concerned that the American education system was in a state of decline. NAEP's reports indicated that students were failing to demonstrate mastery of basic skills; other studies compared the academic achievement of American children to that of children in other countries. The results were scathing.

A Nation at Risk (1983) was a report that was written as an open letter to the American people. It detailed the failings of our schools as well as recommendations for school improvement. The report was effective, as it put an increased focus on the need for accountability, assessment, and school evaluation. As such, this report played a large role in the

movement of assessing students to monitor their progress by using assessments to evaluate teachers and schools in the name of preserving our global superiority. The NCLB Act of 2001 required states and districts to have accountability systems in place and it also required that all students reach grade level proficiency by the completion of the 2013-2014 school year. The accountability mandates passed down under the No Child Left Behind of 2001 also required states to design and implement state curriculum standards that encouraged the development of higher-order thinking skills (Scott, 2011). Even though NCLB was intended to be an innovative way to encourage teachers to go the extra mile in the classroom, critics of the law argued that it encouraged teachers to focus more energy on test preparation activities.

Statement of the Problem

The accountability mandates passed down under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 placed a great deal of pressure on school districts and states to increase student outcomes. As such, schools and districts have worked tirelessly introducing program after program to increase student achievement across groups of students. Scott (2011) suggested that these accountability mandates were having an adverse effect on both instruction and students, especially those attending low-socioeconomic and majority-minority schools (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Teachers in schools that served large populations of disadvantaged or historically underrepresented groups were often found to limit their curricular scope to the concepts that students needed to master to do well on the test. This narrowing of the curriculum as well as a decrease in the variety of instructional methods used in the classroom have also been cited as negative results of the nation's current high-stakes testing atmosphere (Berliner & Nichols, 2007; Cawelti, 2006). In 2008, the Center on Education Policy studied the ways

in which instructional time had shifted at the elementary level. The organization found that over half of all school districts increased the amount of time students were being taught English Language Arts (reading, writing, grammar, etc.) since 2002 (the year that NCLB was signed into law). In addition to a shift in the allocation of instructional time, the researchers also found that the subjects that were not being tested received far less attention than the subjects that were being tested (Stecher, 2002). Because of these and other findings, many policy analysts and educational stakeholders were concerned that NCLB mandates would compel teachers to spend more time on test preparation activities instead of focusing on creating opportunities for authentic learning (Fusarelli, 2004).

The stakes are highest for those schools that have Title I status (serving large numbers of students who are at risk academically or living in poverty) (Malburg, 2015). Those who teach and work in higher-performing schools often face less pressure to make adequate yearly progress. Teachers in low-performing schools have less power to resist the pressures of achieving adequate yearly progress and they often experience greater oversight than teachers in high-performing schools. Teachers in higher-performing schools could teach using a greater variety of instructional methods than those teachers in lower-performing schools because their students continued to achieve adequate yearly progress (McCarthy, 2008).

The pressures created by adequate yearly progress and other accountability mandates included in NCLB have been reduced by the 2015 authorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Under ESSA, schools and districts are still required to measure student performance using state-selected standardized assessments. In North Carolina, the Department of Public Instruction has employed the use of the READY initiative to measure student

outcomes, school performance, and teacher effectiveness. The READY initiative has three core components: a standard course of study that emphasizes the most critical skills that students will need to be ready for college or career, end-of-grade standardized assessments that feature rigorous questions and require real-world application of skills acquired during the school year, and an accountability model that accurately measures how well schools are preparing students for college and career (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016).

Under the READY initiative, school performance is graded using a 15-point grading scale. The grades are issued based on the school's overall achievement score (80 percent) and students' academic growth (20 percent). A school's achievement score is determined by the percentage of students in the school who score at achievement levels one through five. Students scoring at achievement level three are considered to be grade-level proficient while students scoring at achievement levels four and five are considered to be on track for achieving college and career readiness. The student growth accountability measure indicates the rate at which students have learned during the school year. Growth is reported as exceeded growth expectations, met growth expectations, or did not meet growth expectations (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016).

Under the READY initiative, standardized test scores are used to meet federal reporting requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). Test score data are also used to identify third graders who fail to meet grade level proficiency in reading as required by North Carolina's Read to Achieve law,

assign school performance grades, identify low performing schools and districts, and to evaluate North Carolina teachers. Because of the emphasis on test scores under the READY initiative, there is still a possibility that educators can face a considerable level of pressure to move students towards grade level proficiency even though the adequate yearly progress provision of the No Child Left Behind Act has been eliminated. In short, although the reporting requirements for states have changed, there is still a focus on using standardized tests to measure student proficiency and growth.

Teacher Voice in Educational Research

Historically, teachers' involvement in education has been limited to the classroom setting. The only expectation was that teachers keep order and teach the curriculum in the way that the district or state prescribed. In recent years, however, teacher voice in educational research has been on the rise. Researchers have come to the realization that teachers should have a prominent role in educational decision making because change will not happen by telling teachers what to do in their classrooms; they must be permitted to share their experiences and knowledge to create sustainable change in our educational system (Navarro, 1992). There is value in including the voice of classroom teachers in educational debates because they are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of many of the reforms being passed from the top down. As Hargreaves (1996) expressed, teachers become resistant when reforms seem to be thrust upon them from above. Much of educational research has even been used to encourage a "blame the teacher" atmosphere and many teachers have come to mistrust educational research.

Previous research on policy implementation in education has repeatedly shown that

policy initiatives ultimately depend on what happens as individuals interpret and implement the policy (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Coburn, 2005; McLaughlin, 1987; Spillane, 1999). This means that teachers' perceptions of education reform have a great deal of impact on the way they respond to the mandates as well as the effort they put into implementing the reform in the classroom (Jiang, Sporte, & Luppescu, 2015). Datnow (1998) and Sikes (1992) both found that teachers take one of three stances when it comes to implementing education reforms: some actively advocate for and support the reform, others resist the reform, and others comply but make little effort to truly accept the reform effort. The latter group seems to adopt an "and this too shall pass" mindset that is all too common among teachers. It stems from the feeling that education reform is a revolving door. Just as teachers begin to feel proficient with implementing a reform, it is often cast out and replaced with another reform effort (Hess, 1999). This is a point of contention with some teachers and it encourages them to comply with implementation of the reform effort without truly becoming engaged in the process. Based on my experience as an educator, this is especially true where the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 is concerned.

Purpose of the Study

Although there is a large body of work that examines the effects of high-stakes testing on instructional methods in schools, few studies have focused on how NCLB mandates changed the instructional practices of teachers throughout the life of the legislation. This study will add to the research literature by examining veteran teachers' perceptions of the relationship between No Child Left Behind accountability mandates and changes to their pro-

fessional practice. Additionally, this study will also examine the types of training and support teachers were given in the transition to NCLB.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it will provide insight about the level of instructional change that is spurred by accountability policies. It is a retrospective analysis of No Child Left Behind and its impact on the instruction of classroom teachers. Teachers have previously reported that the perceived negative effects of accountability mandates on instruction led to the decline in instructional creativity, increased preparation for tests, a focus on how many topics were covered instead of focusing on the depth at which they were covered, and the developmental inappropriateness of the curricular sequence and pace (Clark et al., 2003). This study will add to the literature on the impact of high-stakes testing on instructional practices based on teachers' years of experience. This study only includes participants who have fifteen or more years of teaching experience. Limiting participation to this group means that each teacher participant will have experience teaching in the pre-NCLB era which means that they have a comparison to their experiences teaching in the NCLB era. Finally, this study will provide valuable data concerning the way instruction is changed at the classroom level by the implementation of top-down education policies. This is especially important as states and school districts plan for the transition from the mandates of the No Child Left Behind legislation to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

ESSA is the newest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). It was signed into law on December 10, 2015 and reduces significantly the federal government's involvement in education policy by retuning a great deal of decision-

making power to the states. ESSA is scheduled to fully replace NCLB mandates during the 2017-2018 school year.

Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following questions using a qualitative case study approach:

- Have veteran teachers' instructional practices been altered by NCLB accountability mandates? If so, in what ways?
- How do veteran teachers report that accountability mandates have influenced their experience or satisfaction in teaching?
- What training/support was provided to teachers in the transition to NCLB? How did this training impact their instructional practice?
- In what ways, if any, do veteran teachers believe their instructional practices will change now that NCLB has been replaced with ESSA?

Definition of Terms

Accountability mandates: requirements for schools and districts under NCLB; examples include requiring states to design and administer tests to all third through eighth graders and once in grades ten through twelve, requiring that every classroom teacher be highly qualified, and requiring that states have a plan in place for supporting schools that fail to meet adequate yearly progress (McGuinn, 2006).

AYP: acronym for adequate yearly progress; used by districts to describe if a school has met its performance targets for the year (McGuinn, 2006).

ESSA: acronym for the Every Student Succeeds Act; the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), signed into law by President Obama in December of 2015 (American Enterprise Institute, 2017).

High-stakes tests: any test used to make important decisions about students, educators, schools, or districts, most commonly for accountability.

NCLB: acronym for the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

Title I School: schools where more than 40% of students come from poor families; these schools also receive federal funds to provide additional services to students (Scott, 2011).

Veteran teacher: Although veteran teachers are typically defined as those with ten or more years of teaching experience, this study defines veteran teachers as those who have fifteen or more years of teaching experience. (Edwards, 2003) This modified definition is necessary to ensure that all teacher participants have experience teaching both before and during the implementation of NCLB.

Assumptions

This study is built upon two assumptions. The first is that all teachers will be willing to participate and will be truthful in the reporting of their practices. Additionally, the researcher assumes that all teachers, regardless of years of experience, will report that their instructional decisions are impacted in some way by accountability.

Delimitations

1. The study will be limited to a series of North Carolina schools receiving a 'C' (average) rating on the school report card.

The rationale for focusing on teachers at schools with a 'C' rating on the school report card is that many of the teachers employed at these schools face an increased pressure to adhere to accountability mandates. These teachers provide a unique perspective of the changes that have taken place in how teachers teach since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 took effect.

2. The study will be limited to teachers with fifteen or more years of experience in the field.

The sample population for the teacher participants is being limited to veteran teachers because they have knowledge of the instructional decisions made before the impetus of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Their experiences are unique and will fill a gap in the current body of relevant literature.

Researcher Positionality

The researcher brings six years of elementary teaching experience to this study. Three of those years were spent teaching students in testing grades (fourth and fifth). The researcher has seen and experienced first-hand the pressures of accountability and the trickle-down effect those mandates have on what is taught in the classroom. As a current classroom teacher, she also has experience with many of the themes present in the relevant body of literature (narrowing of the curriculum, focusing on teaching test-taking strategies, etc.). With two years' experience as Dean of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment at a public charter school serving a majority low-income, minority population, the researcher can also reference her experiences overseeing and reporting accountability results to the appropriate agencies. These experiences led to an increased interest in teachers' perceptions of the impact of No

Child Left Behind accountability mandates on instructional decision-making. These experiences also contribute to a negative perception of NCLB and the impact that it has had on instructional practice. In order to minimize the risk of confirmation bias in this study, the researcher will continually reevaluate participants' responses to truly examine how they challenge her assumptions about the impact of NCLB on classroom instruction.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a brief overview of the previous research followed by the statement of the problem. The introduction was followed by the purpose and significance of the study. The research questions are presented along with the definitions of key terms that are used throughout the proposal. To close the chapter, the assumptions, delimitations, and the researcher's positionality were discussed.

Chapter 2 provides the review of the literature pertaining to the history of federal involvement in education policy, the impact of accountability on instruction, perception studies, and teacher perceptions of accountability. Chapter 3 describes the study's methodology and procedures for data analysis and collection. Chapter 4 describes the findings of the study while Chapter 5 provides the discussion of the findings, connections to the previous research, and implications for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

There have been several studies that have investigated the effects of high-stakes testing on the instructional practices of teachers. For the most part, these studies aimed to gather information from teachers and administrators using surveys, interviews, observations, and document analysis. The results from these studies have been mixed as teachers and administrators report that there have been both positive and negative impacts on instructional decision-making due to high-stakes testing.

The first section of this chapter will provide a historical review of the federal government's increased involvement in public education through the establishment of three significant education policies. Next, the review will provide an overview of the existing research concerning high-stakes testing's impact on instructional practice. The next section will discuss the place of perception studies in educational research. The final section will summarize the results of studies that have previously investigated teachers' perceptions of high stakes testing, accountability, and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

A Brief History of Federal Involvement in Education Policy

During the last fifty years, at least until passage of ESSA in 2015, the role of the federal government's involvement in education has become more and more pronounced. The more recent education policies have been focused on making American students globally competitive and are founded upon the belief that the nation's public education system has failed in its mission to prepare students for economic and global success. As such, there has

been a push for an increased focus on standards, goals, and other measures to ensure that students are reaching their full academic potentials while enrolled in American schools.



Figure 1. Overview of the major federal education policy legislation and initiatives that led to increased accountability for the nation's schools.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). In the simplest terms, this act increased the power of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 because it reinforced the idea that federal funds could be stripped from organizations who defied the law and continued to discriminate against people based on race, religion, or national origin (Caldas & Blackston, 2005). Additionally, the ESEA provided an increased amount of financial resources to states and local school districts to enhance the learning experiences of historically underprivileged children (Thomas & Brady, 2005). Caldas and Blackston (2005), note

that ESEA was the most comprehensive federal education legislation that had ever been written into law because it provided billions of federal dollars to school districts that could be taken away if there was evidence of a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Of the six titles included in this landmark legislation, Title I is considered to be the most significant title because it provides the requirements for the funding and education of children who belong to historically disadvantaged subgroups.

Title I of the ESEA. Title I represents the largest financial component of ESEA. It was intended to provide financial assistance to schools serving high percentages of students from low-income families. This increase in funds was to be used by the schools to enhance and expand their educational programming to increase academic outcomes for students. Because of the Title I provision, the federal government funneled approximately \$1 billion in financial assistance to school districts and schools. The distribution of these funds was largely determined by child poverty data and the services provided by ESEA were made available to children demonstrating educational need (Jennings, 2001). As such, children attending Title I schools could still receive the benefits of Title I funding even if their family was not poor if he or she was struggling academically.

One of the major debates surrounding Title I funding was the question of whether its benefits should be reserved for those impacted by poverty or if the benefits should also be extended to those who are at risk for academic failure (Stein, 2004). Because this debate was not fully addressed prior to the implementation of Title I, there were many issues of abuse of ESEA funds. To address and end the abuse, ESEA was amended four times between 1965 and 1980. Each amendment was authored to bring the nation closer to the original intent of

supporting educationally disadvantaged students from low-income families (McDonnell, 2005). Regardless of its amendments, during the 1980s, support for ESEA began to decline.

A Nation at Risk. The election of President Ronald Reagan in 1980 was the beginning of a sharp reduction in the funding of federal education programs. For example, the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act was passed in 1981 as part of a larger piece of legislation (the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act) and it reduced federal funding across many domestic policy areas, including public education. Some educational historians suggest that the current focus on standards and accountability took shape during the Reagan administration (Graham, 2013). The reason for this was the release of the *A Nation at Risk* report that was issued in April 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The seminal report was the result of an attempt to address the perception that the state of American education was in decline. In fact, the famous report cautioned readers that “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people” (U.S. Department of Education, 1983, p. 1).

A Nation at Risk also provided a clear idea of the potential impact of the education system on the nation’s economy (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2012). Because of this, many people who read the report were concerned that the nation’s educational system would have an adverse impact on our ability to create and sustain new jobs. For the first time, improving education was imperative to securing the economy for future generations. This connection helped education find its place at the top of the political agenda at the federal, state, and local levels.

The report, described by its authors as an “open letter to the American people”, was a call to action of all educational stakeholders to reform a public education system that was in desperate need of improvement (Park, 2004). The authors supported their claim for improvement with numerous statistics that showed the poor quality of the American public school system. Those statistics, along with other data, were organized into five major sections: content, expectations, time, teaching, and leadership and fiscal support. At the end of the report, the commission made four major recommendations.

First, the commission recommended that all students pursuing a high school diploma should have a solid foundation in the “five new basics” (content). The five new basics included four years of English, three years of math, three years of science, three years of social studies, and at least one semester of computer science (U.S. Department of Education, 1983). It was the committee’s belief that the new English standards would increase high school graduates’ abilities to comprehend what they read, write well, listen effectively, and have meaningful discussions. The math standards were intended for students to understand basic mathematical concepts and to increase the likelihood that graduates could successfully apply those concepts in everyday situations. Taken together, the five new basics were intended to put American students in a position where they could realize academic success.

The second recommendation suggested that schools, both K-12 and higher education, adopt more rigorous academic standards that set higher expectations for student performance. Part of the recommendation for higher education institutions was to raise admission standards to encourage students to strive for better academic performance in high school (expecta-

tions). The thought behind this recommendation was to create environments designed to support the highest level of learning and accomplishment.

When considering time, the commission recommended that more time be devoted to teaching students the new basics. The strategies for implementation were to assign students in high school more homework, introduce the new basics in the early grades, lengthen both the school day as well as the school year, that there should be fewer intrusions and interruptions during the school day, and that schools should implement clear attendance and conduct policies. The committee suggested that the school day be lengthened to seven hours a day and that the school year be lengthened to 200- or 220-days (U.S. Department of Education, 1983). The committee's intent was to provide more time for instruction and learning in the hopes that it would increase student achievement.

The fourth recommendation was specifically targeted at improving teacher preparation and elevating the status of the profession. The overarching recommendation that teaching be improved was accompanied by several specific recommendations for implementation. First, people preparing to enter the profession should be held to high educational standards and the teacher preparation programs that train these people should be judged by how well their graduates meet that expectation. Second, salaries for teachers should be increased to create a profession that is competitive and performance-based. The committee also suggested that decisions concerning raises, promotions, and tenure should be tied to an evaluation system to increase the likelihood that great teachers can be rewarded, average teachers given support, and poor teachers can either be retrained or removed from the classroom. The next two related directly to the work of school boards. The committee felt that school boards

should adopt an 11-month contract for teachers to ensure that they had time to dedicate to curriculum and professional development. Additionally, the committee recommended that school boards work together with district and school-level officials to create career ladders that distinguish beginning teachers, experienced teachers, and master teachers. It was also the recommendation of the committee that master teachers should be involved in designing teacher preparation and for the supervision of beginning teachers in the early years of their careers.

The final recommendation set forth by the committee concerned leadership and fiscal support. They urged the American public to hold educators and elected officials responsible for achieving the reforms that were recommended throughout the report. This recommendation outlined the responsibilities that states, localities, and the federal government have to education. States and localities were encouraged to include the recommended reforms in conversations about school finance. Per the committee, the federal government should drive the national interest in education. As such, the committee felt that the federal government should help fund and support sustainable education reform.

The problems and data outlined in the report caused a lot of ire for both the public and the education community. Many people were offended by the insinuation that American schools were failing while others simply felt that the report was undergirded by faulty data. President Reagan, however, used the report to champion additional school improvement measures throughout the country. These school improvement efforts are evident even in today's policy atmosphere.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). Before December 2015, the latest

reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) of 1965 was the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. In its intent and scope, NCLB extended the mission of the ESEA. Its contribution to the field of education reform was that NCLB specifically and unapologetically focused its efforts on improving educational outcomes for students belonging to historically disadvantaged subgroups, those living poverty, students with limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities (Darling-Hammond; 2007). Simply stated, the main purpose of NCLB was to narrow the achievement gap between minority and non-minority groups (which would also narrow the gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers) (Fusarelli, 2004). The enactment of NCLB brought about significant change to primary and secondary education—the act required states to annually test the reading and mathematical skills of all public school students (Murnane, 2007). NCLB differed from past initiatives in two very important ways. First, it was one of the federal government’s more systemic approaches to educational reform and achievement. Second, it completely raised the stakes for failing to demonstrate that students could meet basic academic proficiency status (Murnane, 2007),

NCLB created a system through which schools were either rewarded or punished through the increasing or withdrawal of federal dollars (Fusarelli, 2004). In addition to the threat of losing federal dollars, schools that failed to meet the adequate yearly progress requirement faced increased pressure from state and federal governments to provide better schooling options for their students. The use of dollars to strongly encourage state compliance with federal mandates is consistent with other federal education policies (McDermott & Jensen, 2009). Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, all schools were expected to

make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward ensuring that all groups of students, including groups defined by poverty, ethnicity, or race, achieve proficiency in reading and mathematics by the year 2014. In order to measure AYP, NCLB required the use of standardized tests to measure accountability. This emphasis on testing was considered a departure from the education reform of previous administrations (DeBray, McDermott, & Wohlstetter, 2009).

Although this lofty goal was unrealized, NCLB has been successful in its efforts to provide the parents of children attending low-performing schools greater choice in where their child may go to school through increasing accountability standards for all educational stakeholders at the state, district, and local levels. This was due to the requirement that parents could choose an alternate school if their base schools consistently failed to meet AYP. The act also requires states to determine which educational programs are having the greatest impact on the achievement gap by requiring that “evidence-based” programs are used. “Evidence-based” denotes that a program or practice that has consistently produced positive results when tested (Simpson, 2005). While No Child Left Behind granted greater freedom in choosing the district programs that would receive the coveted Title I funds, it also imposed costly requirements on states.

Accountability provisions under NCLB. The accountability provisions set forth by the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act were driven by a few key ideas: (1) the establishment of high standards for all students would provide indicators for improvement; (2) identifying schools and districts that fail to meet their improvement targets would increase the likelihood that assistance and interventions are being provided where they are needed

most; (3) increased access to school performance data would allow parents to make more informed choices about the best way to ensure that their student's needs are being met; and (4) the provision of targeted assistance and consequences would encourage consistent school and district improvement efforts (Taylor, Stecher, O'Day, Naftel, & Le Floch, 2010). It is important to note that although NCLB was not the first policy undergirded by these ideas, it did expand on these ideas in a way that other policies had not.

NCLB's goal of all students being proficient in reading depended on the successful implementation of the accountability provisions outlined in the law. These requirements were that states had to: develop a system of standards, assessments that align with the standards, and accountability measures that applied to every local education agency; identify schools and districts that needed improvement based on complete, disaggregated student data; ensure that stakeholders had access to school performance data; and provide appropriate assistance so that schools and districts could continue improving.

Provision #1: Develop standards and assessments. No Child Left Behind required states to establish either grade-level content standards or grade-level expectations instead of using broad content standards as previous reauthorizations of ESEA had (Taylor, Stecher, O'Day, Naftel, & Le Floch, 2010). NCLB also increased testing requirements requiring annual testing of all students in third through eighth grades. States also had to develop science content standards so that assessments for students in grades three through eight could be designed. NCLB also required that states develop standards that were specific to those students with limited English proficiency. States were charged to annually assess the progress of students in this subgroup to gauge their progress towards the reading proficiency goal.

In addition to creating content standards, states were required to develop measures that could assess schools and districts. NCLB used adequate yearly progress (AYP) to measure school and district performance and required states to measure AYP for every public school and district. To make AYP, schools and districts had to assess at least 95 percent of all students as well as each relevant subgroup. They also had to meet annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for each key subgroup (racial and ethnic groups, low-income students, students with disabilities, and students of limited English proficiency). Monitoring the progress of these subgroups was a major component of NCLB. The idea behind requiring schools and districts to monitor the progress of these key subgroups was to ensure that these agencies were accountable for meeting the needs of all students—not just the needs of the dominant group.

Provision #2: Identify schools and districts for improvement. NCLB established five stages of identification for schools and districts that failed to meet AYP. The stages are: Identified for Improvement Year 1, Identified for Improvement Year 2, Corrective Action, Restructuring planning, and Restructuring implementation (Taylor, Stecher, O’Day, Naftel, & Le Floch, 2010). If a school failed to make AYP for two consecutive years, then they would move into the first stage of intensive support. If a school or district failed to make AYP after beginning the intensive support process, it began to advance through the stages until they were placed in the Restructuring Implementation stage (six years of missing AYP) (Taylor, Stecher, O’Day, Naftel, & Le Floch, 2010).

After a school missed AYP for two consecutive years, they were placed in the Identi-

fied for Improvement Year 1 stage. This stage was the least intensive of the five-stage system. At this point, schools and districts were required to implement a handful of interventions. They had to provide an alternative school choice to students attending the school. This meant that school districts had to offer their students the opportunity to transfer to a higher performing school if the school they were attending failed to make AYP (Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). The alternate school had to be one that was not designated as a school under improvement (DeBray, McDermott, & Wohlstetter, 2009). A school improvement plan had to be developed and parents had to be notified of the school's identification status. The district was charged with allocating ten percent of its funds to pay for professional development and providing technical assistance for identified schools. There were several issues with the implementation of these interventions; many school districts did not have enough schools that met AYP to provide appropriate alternatives for students eligible to transfer to higher performing schools (Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008).

If a school failed to meet AYP after being placed in the Year 1 stage, it would be moved to the more intensive Identified for Improvement Year 2 stage. Schools in this stage were required to implement each of the interventions mandated in Year 1 in addition to implementing supplemental educational services. Supplemental educational services referred to “free academic help, such as tutoring or remedial help, that was provided to students in subjects such as reading, language arts, and math” that were provided by the district at no cost to students and parents (United States Department of Education, 2012). These services were provided to students outside of the regular school day (before or after school, on weekends, or during the summer) and were paid for through Title I funds (DeBray, McDermott, &

Wohlstetter, 2009). SES could be provided by both non-profit and for-profit organizations as well as districts themselves as long as they obtained state approval and were placed on the approved providers list. Because it was far easier to implement the SES provision than it was to implement the school transfer provision, more school districts were willing to provide the required SES services to eligible students (Fusarelli, 2007). Although the provisions of SES were far less complicated than the school transfer provision, there were still barriers to implementation.

School districts reported a lack of service providers willing to provide SES to eligible students. Much of the difficulty could be attributed to a district's location or to the number of eligible students within a district had. Districts in rural areas had trouble locating service providers. Additionally, if there was a lack of eligible students, service providers would be unwilling to commit to partnering with the district due to a lack of profit (Fusarelli, 2007). There was also the issue of late notification of SES for parents and students.

If the school missed AYP again, it moved into Corrective Action status. In this stage of identification, schools were required to implement the interventions of the previous stages in addition to one or more of the following: implementing a research-based curriculum or program, decreasing the school's management authority, extending the school year or the school day, restructuring the school's organization, replacing staff that were responsible for school performance issues, or appointing an outside expert. If the school missed AYP again after beginning these interventions, it moved into restructuring status. This final stage of the identification process was split into two phases. During the first phase, schools were required

to develop a restructuring plan. During the second phase, schools were required to implement all the interventions of the other stages in addition to implementing one or more of the following: reopening the school as a charter, replacing all or most of the staff, contracting with another organization, the state taking over the school, or change the way the school was being governed. These corrective options were retained from the previous authorization of ESEA (DeBray, McDermott, & Wohlstetter, 2009). Schools could exit the identification process if they made AYP for two consecutive years. If they made AYP for one year, they retained their identification status (Taylor, Stecher, O'Day, Naftel, & Le Floch, 2010).

Provision #3: Provide information about school performance to stakeholders. One of the ideas central to NCLB was that stakeholders would be able to make more informed decisions about what is best for students when they have information about school performance (Taylor, Stecher, O'Day, Naftel, & Le Floch, 2010). For this to be true, school performance information had to be accurate, reliable, and valid. NCLB set forth guidelines to ensure that the information provided to stakeholders was uniform and useful. Schools and districts were required to break achievement data down by student subgroups and to make public the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers. Education agencies were expected to make this information available to stakeholders in a timely manner so that parents could take advantage of both school choice and supplemental education services. The school/district report cards that parents received contained student achievement data disaggregated by subgroups, comparisons of students based on their level of academic achievement (basic, proficient, or advanced), graduation rates, information regarding the highly qualified status of teachers employed by the school/district, percentages of student by subgroup that did not take

the standardized assessment, and the names of schools that were identified as needing improvement (Fusarelli, 2004). Providing school improvement information as soon as possible also allowed schools to make plans for improvement as necessary.

Provision #4: Aid and interventions that encourage improvement. The purpose of the No Child Left Behind Act was to put provisions in place that would make schools and districts collect data and use that data to provide appropriate interventions to students in the hopes of reaching 100 percent proficiency by the target year (Taylor, Stecher, O’Day, Naftel, & Le Floch, 2010). The requirement that districts report student achievement data by subgroup was intended to make it easier for districts to see where, and for which groups, additional interventions were needed (Fusarelli, 2004). As such, the law set forth requirements regarding the assistance and interventions that should take place once a school had been identified for improvement. For instance, once a school had been identified at the first stage of improvement (Year 1), NCLB required that the district notify parents and offer every parent the option to transfer their child to a school that met AYP. The information had to be provided to parents before the start of the school year and if a parent decided to transfer their child, the district was required to provide transportation to the parent’s school of choice. Under this provision, districts were also required to provide supplemental education services once a school entered Year 2 of the identification stages.

Table 1
Important Requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

1. Adoption of academic standards to guide the state curriculum
2. Adoption of a state testing and accountability system
3. Every student in grades 3-8 must be tested in math and reading and at least once in grades 10-12
4. Annual testing for English Language Learners (ELLs)

Table 1 Continued

5. Standardized test scores must be available to the public
6. States must administer the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test to select groups students in grade 4 and 8 every other year
7. “Highly qualified” teachers must be hired for classrooms where core subjects (reading and math) are taught
8. School and district report cards must be published each year
9. Schools that fail to meet proficiency must be identified publicly
10. Schools/districts must release information about a teacher’s credentials when requested

Cortiellia (2006)

Additional Requirements of NCLB. The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 placed several new mandates on states and school districts (See Table 1). NCLB required every state to use academic standards to guide the curriculum and to implement a testing system that aligned to those standards. This meant that states now had to test every student in grades three through eight (instead of leaving out students who were lower-performing) in mathematics and reading beginning in the 2005-2006 school year (McGuinn, 2006). States were also required to administer a test in science at least once at each level (elementary, middle, and high school). As shown in the table above, NCLB also required states to administer the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test to a sample of fourth and eighth graders every other year to create a benchmark for states to compare performance on the state assessments. School districts were then required to publish an annual report card that included information about students’ performance on state assessments in a manner that made the results easily accessible to the public. The test performance data had to be presented in a way where it was broken down by race, income, and other categories that would make any gaps between subgroups clear.

To meet the lofty testing requirements, NCLB also passed down mandates concerning

the qualifications of classroom teachers. Any teacher teaching one of the core subjects in a classroom had to achieve “highly qualified” status. “Highly qualified” simply meant that the teacher in question had been awarded a license to teach by a state (or through alternate certification) and had achieved a high level of competency in the cores subject(s) they teach. NCLB required that every public school teacher had to achieve “highly qualified” status by the end of the 2005-2006 school year (DeBray, McDermott, & Wohlstetter, 2009).

With the extra scrutiny on test performance, there was no chance that districts could “hide” schools that failed to meet the mandates set forth by NCLB. These “failing” schools were classified as those that failed to meet the adequate yearly progress standard in NCLB. The law mandated that school districts publicly identify these schools every year. For the first time in the history of our education system, the federal government was requiring that officials at every level (state, district, and school) take serious action in return for federal funding. As such, it came as no surprise that many educators and administrators began to call for a repeal of the law in the early stages of its implementation.

To achieve the purpose of this research study, the focus will be on how requirements one, two, three, and five impact the instructional decisions of classroom teachers (see Table 1). This focus is appropriate because these are the requirements that have a direct impact on the classroom teacher. The other requirements have only a minimal impact on classroom teachers.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The nation’s newest education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law by President Barack Obama on December 10, 2015. ESSA addresses many

of the same areas that NCLB did: academic standards, assessment, accountability, school improvement, teacher/leader effectiveness, providing a comprehensive academic experience for students, and federal education funding. Of these categories, academic standards, assessment, accountability, and teacher/leader effectiveness are the most relevant to the current study.

With its implementation slated for the 2017-2018 school year, ESSA will return a considerable amount of power to the states where academic standards are concerned. Specifically, ESSA allows states to create alternative educational standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities, adopt their choice of standards in reading, math, and science, and prohibits the Secretary of Education from having any input in a state's choice of academic standards (ASCD, 2015).

With assessment, the most significant change will be the establishment of opt-out laws that allow parents to choose whether they want their children participating in the administration of state-wide standardized assessments. Additionally, states will be able to choose which standardized assessments are administered to students and ESSA again prohibits the Secretary of Education from dictating any aspect of assessments used at the state level (ASCD, 2015). The No Child Left Behind Act required 100% of students to be proficient in reading and math by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. ESSA overturns the 100% proficiency requirement as well as the adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirement. Under ESSA, states will be free to develop their own accountability systems and determine how much weight standardized assessments should have in the new system. ESSA requires that

states create standards aligned with college expectations for coursework in math, English language arts, and science, adopt an achievement scale with at least three levels, and apply those to all students in the state attending public schools (American Enterprise Institute, 2017). States will also have the power to determine the consequences that low-performing schools will face. Unlike NCLB, ESSA only requires that states identify the bottom five percent of schools, high schools with a graduation rate of less than sixty-six percent, and any schools that have been identified as a targeted support school (where any subgroup of students has consistently failed to meet proficiency standards) (AEI, 2017). The Secretary of Education will be prohibited from using incentives to influence states' accountability decisions (American Enterprise Institute, 2017; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2015).

Determining teacher/leader effectiveness has been a priority in the last few federal education policies and ESSA is no different. The new law will eliminate the highly qualified teacher status required by NCLB while maintaining the requirement that states develop procedures to demonstrate that all teachers and assistants have met the state's licensure requirements. This reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act further defines professional development as support that is personalized, ongoing, and relevant to the job. ESSA also permits states, districts, and schools to create leadership academies to provide additional training for teachers, principals, and other school leaders working in high-need schools. Most importantly, ESSA will require states and districts to provide evidence-based professional development to all teachers instead of only targeting those who teach core subjects as was NCLB's requirement (ASCD, 2015).

As states begin planning for the implementation of ESSA, it is important to consider what lessons can be learned from the implementation of NCLB. This study will attempt to provide recommendations for the implementation of ESSA based on participants' experiences with NCLB.

The Impact of Accountability on Instruction

Stecher (2002) suggests that researchers began studying the impact of accountability on instruction in the 1980s and 1990s as the nation began to move toward the use of high-stakes testing systems. He also suggests that examining the effects of accountability mandates on instruction is important for two reasons. First, the major justification for the implementation of accountability systems was to change the instructional practices of teachers. Those who promote accountability do so with the belief that these systems will require schools to rethink their policies, require teachers to adopt evidence-based instructional practices, and motivate students to work their hardest. For this reason, it is important to examine the impact of accountability on instruction to understand if these accountability systems are meeting the reform standards of policymakers. Second, these changes in educators' behaviors could have an impact on the validity of how test scores are interpreted. Increases in test scores do not always mean that there has been an increase in knowledge. It is important that all factors (environment, testing conditions, etc.) be considered in the interpretation of test scores.

Positive Impacts. A 2003 study conducted by Clarke et al. found that over half of the teachers interviewed felt positively about their state's accountability standards. Factors that

encouraged this positivity were greater curricular consistency across schools and the increased focus on developing students' problem solving and writing skills. The perceived positive effect on instruction was the increased emphasis on writing, critical thinking skills, discussion, and explanation.

Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, and Harrington (2014) found that teachers reported an increased feeling of classroom control and support from peers, administrators, and parents. Because teachers reported these positive feelings, the researchers could show that there had been an increase in job satisfaction and commitment in the sample of teachers they surveyed. Stecher (2002) also noted that accountability mandates have led teachers to work more effectively. He cites case study research by McIver and Wolf (1999) and Borko and Elliot (1999) that found that innovative use of assessments prompted teachers to adjust their instructional practices in ways that were beneficial to students. Stecher (2002), Popham (1987) also found that states have used accountability mandates and high stakes testing systems as “instructional magnets” to encourage teachers to allocate their instructional time based on what will be tested at the end of the year. Additionally, Shepard and Dougherty (1991) found that teachers in two districts reported that high-stakes test results were helpful for instructional decision making where interventions and remediation were concerned. Teachers said that the test results helped them identify students' strengths and weaknesses and helped them identify the appropriate interventions needed to fill those gaps.

Negative Impacts. In the Clarke et al. (2003) study, the researchers found that teachers from Massachusetts were more likely to mention the negative impacts of accountability

than positive impacts. Those teachers expressed concern about the developmental inappropriateness of the curricular material and pacing, narrowing of the curriculum, and decreased flexibility. The perceived negative effects on instruction were the decline in instructional creativity, increased preparation for tests, a focus on how many topics were covered instead of focusing on the depth at which they were covered, and the developmental inappropriateness of the curricular sequence and pace.

Stecher (2002) also reported that there were many negative effects of accountability on instructional practice. Much of the research around the impact of accountability on instruction references the narrowing of the curriculum (English & Steffy, 2001; Jones, Jones, & Hargrove, 2003; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). This narrowing simply refers to the neglect or total elimination of subjects that are not explicitly tested. For example, a study of two Arizona schools revealed that teachers decreased the amount instructional time allotted to science, social studies, and writing based on what was being measured by the state accountability program (Smith, Edelsky, Draper, Rottenberg, & Cherland., 1991). This was done in order to increase the instructional time given to tested subjects. Another negative impact was the adaptation of teaching styles to test formats. Here, teachers would neglect their pre-accountability teaching methods to create assignments and presentations that looked more like the assessment that would be given. Accountability mandates also encourage teachers to allocate instructional time for “negative coaching” activities (Stecher, 2002). These are activities that only focus on one aspect of the test (i.e. practicing constructed response answers or practicing how to fill in the bubbles correctly). These activities can consume large amounts of instructional time.

Cheating is also considered to be the result of accountability's negative impact on instruction. In our current educational atmosphere, cheating can take many forms: providing test items in advance, suggesting revisions, providing hints, changing students' answers before scoring, leaving instructional aids in plain sight during test administration, and the list goes on. Cheating scandals have surfaced frequently. In the spring of 2015, thirteen Atlanta Public Schools educators were found guilty of racketeering and sentenced to time in prison after an investigation by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation found that cheating on standardized tests was evident in the district. Throughout the investigation, school and district officials used intimidation tactics to prevent teachers from speaking out on the issue of cheating in the Atlanta Public School System.

Teacher Perceptions of Accountability Mandates Under NCLB

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) attempted to improve education using statewide curriculum standards and increases in test-based accountability. This reform was intended to "hold educators accountable" for their day-to-day work in the nation's schools. Policy makers and proponents of testing argued that increased pressure on teachers would increase pressure on students and that the nation would see a rise in student achievement (Evers & Walberg, 2002; Raymond & Hanushek, 2003). In recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in understanding what teachers think about the intentions and effects of NCLB.

Jones and Egley (2007) studied the effects of test-based accountability on student learning by surveying 708 Florida third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers. Specifically, the

teacher participants were asked to discuss how testing had influenced their ability to use effective teaching methods, how professional development had helped them improve their instruction, how much time students spent practicing test-taking strategies, and how accurate and useful they felt student test results were for assessing strengths and weaknesses.

Nearly all of the teachers they surveyed believed that the testing program implemented under NCLB restricted or had no effect on student learning. The respondents felt that testing took time and focus away from learning, encouraged teaching that was developmentally inappropriate, restricted student creativity, and did not allow teachers to fully meet the individual needs of students. These teachers felt that students would learn more if they did not have to focus time and energy on preparing them for the test. These teachers also reported that the testing program had a greater impact on their reading instruction than on their instruction in math and writing.

Teachers' responses to the question about professional development were split. Those teachers who perceived the testing system to have a positive influence on their teaching methods also believed that professional development had helped their overall teaching ability. Conversely, teachers who perceived the testing system to have a negative impact on their teaching believed that professional development had a negative influence on their teaching ability. When it came to the Florida testing system's effect on developmentally appropriate practices, teachers' responses were generally negative. This was due to the idea that most teacher respondents felt as though the testing system failed to consider or account for the fact that students learn through different methods and at varying rates. This helps explain why

many of the teacher respondents feel as though students' test results were not useful or accurate in measuring students' strengths and weaknesses.

Jones and Egley (2007) also found that teachers were spending a great deal of time teaching test-taking strategies. Teachers reported spending an average of 43 percent of math instructional time, 42.6 percent of writing instructional time, and 38 percent of their reading instructional time introducing students to a number of test taking strategies. The fact that teachers spent so much time teaching these strategies helped to explain why so many of them felt that the testing system had a negative effect on student learning.

Studies of teachers' perceptions by Brown (1992, 1993), Smith, Edelsky, Draper, Rotenberg, and Cherland (1991), and Smith (1991) support the findings of the Jones and Egley (2007) study. Major findings in these studies were that the testing programs unfairly narrowed the curriculum, encouraged anxiety, confusion, fear, shame, and mistrust among teachers, made teachers feel powerless in their own classrooms, and inaccurately measured teaching and learning. Haney (2000) found many of the same things in his work but he thought it was important to note that testing programs do not affect every teacher negatively.

Brown (1993) studied teachers' and principals' perceptions of state mandated testing. The study was designed to examine the relationships that existed between state tests and teachers' instructional decision making, teachers' perceptions of the relationships between the curriculum taught and the content of state tests, the effects of state mandated tests have on teacher control of the curriculum, and whether tests were seen as appropriate measures of students' abilities. The study's participants were made up of thirty fifth and sixth grade teachers and twelve principals for a total of forty-two respondents.

There were six major findings that emerged from Brown's (1993) study. Many of the respondents reported a mistrust of state legislators and state departments of education. At the start of the interview process, there were several concerns about the confidentiality of the study. There were three respondents who expressed fear that their comments would somehow be reported to the state department of education. During the interview process, several respondents asked that the tape recorder be turned off for certain responses.

Participants also reported that they did not understand the purpose behind testing mandates. Only a few of the respondents could provide accurate information about why the state department of education had implemented testing mandates. Educators believed that testing results were used primarily to compare school districts. Principals and teachers also perceived themselves as powerless with regard to the testing mandates. They felt that their opinions about the appropriateness or usefulness of testing were ignored by state legislators and state departments of education. Respondents reported that state tests were limited sources of information where student evaluation was concerned. They also reported a belief that too much emphasis had been placed on test scores.

In order to understand the role that external testing played in elementary schools, Smith et al. (1991) observed classroom instruction and interviewed teachers and administrators about their perceptions of testing. The study focused on examining the testing activities that were taking place in two schools in the same district.

Smith et al. (1991) noted in their findings that the teachers' beliefs about the educational attainment of their students was inconsistent with the existing testing model. The model focused on outcomes such as "pupils can attain correct solution of 8 out of 10 two-

digit multiplication problems” while teachers reported that they placed more emphasis on helping their students develop an understanding of multiplication concepts (p. 18). When discussing what the tests tell them about students, many of the teacher respondents reported that the standardized tests show student growth from year to year. Others reported that the tests were used as a measure for comparing student progress across the nation. The remaining teachers reported that the standardized tests provide information about whether students are good at completing worksheets, what a student knows on a particular day, and who were the smart students. Teachers also reported that there were discrepancies between what they thought achievement was and how achievement was defined by standardized tests. They believed that the tests measured intellectual ability more than they measured achievement. As such, teacher participants reported that students with below average intelligence struggled on tests. Students with above average intelligence could also struggle on standardized tests by reading too much into the questions and choosing the wrong answer. Because of this, teachers were reluctant to place too much trust in the information standardized tests provided about their students.

Sunderman, Tracey, Kim, and Orfield (2004) contributed to the research by examining teachers’ perceptions of the No Child Left Behind Act and its effects on their schools, practice, and curriculum. Using a survey, they tested the theory that identifying schools for improvement and requiring them to offer choice and supplemental educational services would increase both the quality of the school and of teachers’ instructional practices. Teachers were asked to report whether they had observed positive or negative effects. Teacher participants were recruited from urban schools since NCLB sanctions were concentrated in these

areas.

Teachers whose schools had been labeled as needing improvement but were making adequate progress reported positive feelings about their school's instructional program. Teachers whose schools had only been identified as needing improvement were not as positive about their school's instructional program. While most teachers in the latter group recognized that improvement was possible, they reported feeling limited in what they could accomplish in their schools. The same was true when it came to questions about the standards for student achievement. A high percentage of teachers working in adequate progress schools reported that the standards were challenging but attainable. Teachers in schools needing improvement were less likely to agree. In fact, about 35 percent of teachers in the latter group chose to leave the question unanswered.

When it came to questions about teacher instruction, many of the respondents reported that teachers provided high quality instruction to students. Less than six percent of teachers reported that high quality instruction was not taking place. Although many teachers reported that their colleagues were highly qualified, they also stressed the importance of removing ineffective teachers from schools. That was true for teachers regardless of their school's improvement status. Overall, teachers believed that there were insufficient resources to meet the demands of NCLB although they had positive feelings about their school's instructional program. Teachers also believed that the professional constraints placed on them by NCLB had a negative effect on both their satisfaction with teaching and their instructional decision making.

Other researchers have found that the teachers' perceptions of mandated testing

caused them to alter the scope of their curriculum, eliminating the topics or subjects that would not be tested (Brown, 1992). In addition to changing the curriculum, Brown (1993) found that teachers often felt confused about the intentions of the state testing program, that they often mistrusted evaluation measures, questioned the effectiveness of testing, and expressed concern that test results were often over-utilized by those who did not fully understand them. Thus, Brown (1993) concluded that accountability mandates had a negative influence on the practices of classroom teachers.

In addition to reporting mistrust between teachers and policy makers, Arizona teachers in Smith's (1991) follow-up study reported that they worked to avoid the shame of low test scores by teaching to the test. Teachers in that study also felt that the test results had little to no value because they were not perceived to be accurate indicators of teaching and learning. An additional effect on teachers' perceptions in this study was the impact that test scores had on students. Many teachers reported that students were embarrassed by their low test scores and often cited instances where students would experience anxiety attacks while preparing for testing. Smith (1991), however, is deliberate about pointing out that the influence of accountability mandates differs across both grade levels and individual teachers.

Chapter Summary

Chapter two presented previous research that describes the phenomenon being studied. The literature review provided a brief history of federal education policy, the positive and negative impact of accountability mandates on classroom instruction, the place of teacher voice in educational research, and teacher perceptions of accountability mandates under

NCLB. Chapter 3 describes the study methodology and procedures for data analysis and collection.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to examine teachers' perceptions of the relationship between No Child Left Behind accountability mandates and classroom instruction; specifically, the perceptions of veteran teachers on how these mandates have affected their practice. For this study, veteran teachers were defined as those who had been licensed by the state to teach and had fifteen or more years of classroom teaching experience. The following research questions guided the study:

- Have veteran teachers' instructional practices been altered by NCLB accountability mandates? If so, in what ways?
- How do veteran teachers report that accountability mandates have influenced their experience or satisfaction in teaching?
- What training/support was provided to teachers in the transition to NCLB? How did this training impact their instructional practice?
- In what ways, if any, do veteran teachers believe their instructional practices will change now that NCLB has been replaced with ESSA?

Documenting veteran teachers' experiences with this phenomenon extended what is known about how federal education policies impact instructional practice.

This chapter details the methods that were used to answer the research questions outlined above. The chapter begins with an explanation for the use of a qualitative research design for the study. It is followed by an explanation for the use of multiple-case study as the method, procedures for data collection, and an explanation of how the data was analyzed.

Use of Qualitative Methods

Per Creswell (2003), qualitative research is used when the researcher desires to understand the experiences of individuals or advocate for certain perspectives. It utilizes lines of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, or case studies. In qualitative research, the researcher acts as an instrument in the field, collecting open-ended data that continues to emerge in nearly every stage of the research process. These data are then analyzed into themes or descriptive categories. Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, the researcher does not attempt to control or manipulate the phenomenon being observed.

Creswell (2013) also notes that qualitative research begins with the researcher's assumptions and beliefs concerning the world around them. Those assumptions lead to the study of a research problem that seeks to understand that meaning individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem. Creswell (2003) and Merriam (1998) identify several characteristics of qualitative research. One characteristic is the site of data collection. In qualitative research, data collection tends to take place in the field. The data are collected through dialogue with the participants or by observing them in their environments. Another characteristic is that qualitative data are generally collected by the researcher, not by a survey or questionnaire. Qualitative researchers collect data through document analysis, behavioral observations, interviewing, and/or focus groups.

A qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study because it sought to understand how a group (teachers) perceives an education reform policy as well as how those perceptions influence the decisions they make in the classroom. There have been many studies

that utilized quantitative measures such as surveys to understand the effects of accountability mandates on classroom instruction. These studies have consistently demonstrated that teachers feel that their classroom decision making is adversely impacted by accountability mandates. Unlike the studies mentioned in the previous chapter, the intent of this study is to understand the perceptions of veteran teachers on how accountability mandates have affected their practice. To fully understand the impact of teachers' perceptions on instructional decision making, it is necessary to conduct interviews.

Use of Case Study Approach

Several qualitative approaches were considered for use in this study. An ethnography would have been inappropriate for this study because it would have had to be conducted as teachers were preparing to implement NCLB, during the implementation, and after the implementation, and that is not a possibility since the program was implemented in 2001. A grounded theory study could have been employed, but since the intent of this study is not to generate a theory, grounded theory is not a viable choice. A phenomenological study would be most appropriate if the intent of this study were to describe teachers' experiences with No Child Left Behind. In the current study, the purpose is to understand their opinions concerning how their professional practice has or has not been impacted by the implementation of No Child Left Behind. Additionally, since phenomenological studies are typically longitudinal, this study's design disqualifies it from using that approach. The same is true for a narrative research approach.

A case study approach was used in this study to gain an in-depth understanding of how teacher participants perceive the relationship between accountability mandates and

changes to their classroom instruction. Yin (2003) suggests that the case study approach is most appropriate when “how” or “why” questions are being asked, when the researcher has very little control over events that may take place, and when there is a current issue that can be studied in a real-life context. The intent of a case study is to “illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result” (Schramm & Mayo, 1974, p. 6).

This case study is a multiple case study of several teachers in North Carolina. Merriam (1988) explains that the case study approach can be used to analyze data from either a single case or multiple cases. In instances where multiple cases are used, the researcher should collect and analyze data from several sources to understand the impact of the program or phenomenon across different settings (Stake, 2006). In this study, the phenomena studied are NCLB’s accountability mandates and the cases are veteran teachers across multiple schools. The rationale behind interviewing teachers over multiple schools was to enable comparisons both within and across cases. In the discussion and interpretation of the case study’s results, each case is presented individually and then a cross-case analysis is discussed. A multiple-case study approach was appropriate for this study because it created an opportunity to allow multiple cases to be studied to provide information that encourages an increased understanding of this specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2003).

Six classrooms, each taught by a veteran teacher, were studied. The unit of analysis was the class; specifically, the instructional practices of the teacher. The individual cases were bound by time and location. In this study, each case was bounded by the semester in which data collection takes place and the five schools in North Carolina.

Sites and Participants. Five sites were selected for this multiple-case study to examine the phenomenon across different settings. Middle and high schools were included in the study because they have all been impacted by NCLB accountability mandates. With the passage of NCLB, teachers at all levels were required to reach reading, math, and/or science at higher levels than before. To demonstrate that ability, teachers were required to meet the ‘highly qualified’ standard. Although the law established similar requirements for schools at all levels, there may be some variation in how teachers at each level were impacted by those requirements. Selection of the final sites were chosen based on proximity to the researcher, willingness to participate in the study, and the school’s annual report card grade. This study focused specifically on schools that received a grade of ‘C’ or lower at the end of the 2014-2015 school year. This was because teachers in these schools often feel increased pressure due to their school’s low-performing status.

To gain multiple perspectives of teachers’ perceptions of accountability mandates and their relationship to classroom instruction, this study used the snowball sampling strategy. Snowball or chain referral sampling refers to the process where initial participants recruit additional research participants from among their colleagues or acquaintances. The sample of participants is made up of veteran teachers (those with fifteen or more years of experience).

Data Collection

The initial group of participants were identified with the assistance of a gatekeeper. In qualitative research, gatekeepers are used to assist the researcher in gaining access and developing trust with the group that is being studied (Hatch, 2002). For the purposes of this

study, the gatekeeper was the principal at each school. The gatekeeper and researcher discussed the scope and purpose of this study. The researcher then contacted teachers who met the criteria to request their participation in the study. That communication was sent in the form of an email that outlined the major goals of the study and explained what participation required (See Appendix A). Once the teacher agreed to participate after clarifying questions were answered, initial meetings were scheduled. These meetings gave the researcher an opportunity to provide each participant with a letter that explaining the purpose of the study and reiterating what participation required (See Appendix B). The Participant Welcome Letter described the purpose of the research as well as the primary researcher's role. It was designed to give participants something that they can refer back to if they had questions about the study. At that time, potential participants were also given a Participant Demographic Form to complete (See Appendix C). This form asked potential participants to describe the types of schools they have taught at, the grades they have taught, and other information that was pertinent to the analysis of their responses to interview questions. Most importantly, the Participant Demographic Form asked participants to choose a pseudonym that would be used to protect their true identity in the analysis and discussion of the results. At this meeting, interview dates and times were scheduled and consent forms were signed. The participant consent form can be found in Appendix D. For this study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews and field notes. The gatekeeper was not present during the data collection phase of the study.

Interviews. A semi-structured interview was conducted with each teacher participant. Using semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask questions that were not

included on the interview protocol. Any additional questions were clarifying questions that were based on the participants' responses. Teacher participants were interviewed separately. Interviews were thirty to forty-five minutes in length and were conducted in an environment that was conducive to interviewing. All interviews were recorded to aid with transcription. The researcher also took notes. Prior to the interview, each participant was asked to choose a pseudonym that was to be used in transcription and in the presentation of the findings. All participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

Interviews were most appropriate for data collection in this study because they allowed the researcher to gather information from the participants that could be used to create rich, detailed descriptions of each participant. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix E.

Conducting the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of the relationship between No Child Left Behind accountability mandates and classroom instruction; specifically, the perceptions of veteran teachers on how these mandates have affected their practice. The intent of the study was to interview veteran K-12 teachers. However, there was no response from elementary teachers even though I made numerous attempts to contact them after they were identified by their principals as being eligible for participation in this study. This means that the findings of this study are limited to the experiences of middle and high school teachers. It was also proposed that the study would have nine participants, ideally three at each level (elementary, middle, and high). As the first initial contact emails were sent, I had nine

teachers express interest in participating in the study (seven middle school teachers and two high school teachers). Unfortunately, my initial contact with teachers occurred at the end of the school year during the testing season. As such, I believe that two of the middle school teachers were consumed with end-of-year preparations and neglected to respond to my attempts to follow up with them. The third middle school teacher was on vacation and never responded to my attempts to contact her. This left me with six participants—four middle school teachers and two high school teachers.

As teacher participants confirmed their interest in the study and expressed their willingness to participate, initial meetings were scheduled. At these meetings, the consent form was reviewed and signed. The date and location for interviews were also established. Of the six interviews, one was conducted at my school, two were conducted at the teacher's school, two were conducted in meeting rooms, and one was conducted via phone.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began after all the data were collected from the interviews. The interview data were transcribed by the researcher and loaded into Dedoose, a web-based qualitative analysis application. The data from interviews were analyzed using a combination of a priori codes that emerged from the existing body of literature and new themes that emerged from the data.

The pre-set list of codes contained ten codes (See Appendix G). The emergent codes consisted of the ideas, actions, and meanings that are present in the data (and were different from the a priori codes). As the data analysis continued, the codes were refined. This simply means that some categories and themes were collapsed, expanded, or revised. The researcher

also captured her reactions to participant responses as well as any ideas that emerged.

Interview Data. The purpose of using interviews to collect data for the study was to create rich, descriptive case descriptions of participants. The recorded interviews were transcribed and used to create individual summaries of each participant's responses to the interview questions. Those summaries were sent to the participants to ensure that all their ideas were accurately captured. Each case is presented using the pseudonym chosen by the participants at initial contact. All the findings extracted from the interview transcripts are presented in narrative form.

Data collected through the interviews was compared to the other participants in order to identify similarities. Those similarities were then organized into themes to allow for analysis between cases. All interview data were transcribed verbatim and coded by me. For each participant, participant responses were initially coded according to the list of a priori codes. After all six interviews had been conducted, a second cycle of coding took place in which emergent themes were identified. The emergent codes pulled from the data during the second cycle were tracking/ability grouping, increased responsibility, testing pressure, and increased effectiveness. Tracking/ability grouping referred to instances where teacher participants described, directly or indirectly, how students were assigned to classes based on their perceived level of ability. Increased responsibility referred to excerpts in the data where teacher participants either directly or indirectly described feeling as if they had more responsibility than before NCLB implemented. All reports of feeling stressed or anxious about testing were included in the emergent theme 'testing pressure'. And finally, increased effectiveness was not discussed in the previous literature, but the middle school teacher participants talked about it

quite frequently. That theme was attached to any reports of teacher participants feeling as if they were able to do their job better now than at the implementation of NCLB. The final cycle of coding included organizing the emergent themes into critical themes. This was done by collapsing and grouping the emergent themes with the a priori codes. After the analysis of the data was complete, the themes were compared across cases.

Coding. All of the interview transcripts were coded to aid in the analysis and creation of the emergent themes in this study. Coding is the process of taking data and separating it into segments. Those segments are then organized in order to give them meaning (Creswell, 2003). Using the coding tools provided in Dedoose, segments of meaningful information from the interview transcripts were color coded. Each a priori code had its own color. Once that was completed I used the code application feature in Dedoose to determine how many times, if at all, the codes had been highlighted in each transcript. From there, I began to look for similarities and differences in the data.

Research Validity and Reliability

Researchers must consider three tests of validity while designing the research study. Construct validity is a challenge in case study research because it is believed that the researchers who use this approach fail to create measures that challenge their preconceived notions about the population or phenomenon being studied (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2014). To meet the test of construct validity, Tellis (1997) suggests that case study researchers use multiple sources of evidence, establish a chain of evidence, and permit key participants to review the case study draft. Internal validity, the attempt to establish a causal relationship, does not ap-

ply to this study because it is not explanatory in nature. The final test of validity, external validity, requires the researcher to define the bounds to which a study's findings can be generalized (Yin, 2014). In multiple-case study research, external validity can be addressed using replication logic.

Reliability, the final test of research quality, aims to minimize errors and bias in a study. To achieve that aim, the researcher has ensured that the study could be conducted by another researcher using the same procedures (Yin, 2014). This study addresses reliability by utilizing a case study protocol (See Appendix F).

Ethical Considerations

To conduct this study, the researcher sought permission from the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once the IRB proposal was approved, the researcher began the process of obtaining approval from the school district the sites are situated in. Once consent was received from the district, the researcher began contacting the gatekeepers. Consent forms were provided, reviewed, and signed before the data collection phase began. It is important to note that this study did not pose any harm to participants. Each participant chose a pseudonym that was used throughout the research process.

All the data collected were stored on a password-protected computer that belonged to the researcher. Additionally, the data were backed up using both Google Drive and an external flash drive that will remain in a secure location. Both the copies on Google Drive and on the external flash drive were redacted copies of the interview transcripts and individual summaries in order to further protect participants' identities. Audio and video recordings will be uploaded to all three platforms and deleted from recording devices as soon as interviews and

are finished.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed description of the methodology of the study. The research questions were presented at the beginning of the chapter, followed by the outline of the research design. Procedures for data collection and analysis were also described, along with the strategies for addressing issues of validity and reliability.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

This research study is designed to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of the relationship between No Child Left Behind accountability mandates and classroom instruction; specifically, the perceptions of veteran teachers on how these mandates have affected their practice. The following research questions guided this study:

- Have veteran teachers' instructional practices been altered by NCLB accountability mandates? If so, in what ways?
- How do veteran teachers report that accountability mandates have influenced their experience or satisfaction in teaching?
- What training/support was provided to teachers in the transition to NCLB? How did this training impact their instructional practice?
- In what ways, if any, do veteran teachers believe their instructional practices will change now that NCLB has been replaced with ESSA?

Documenting veteran teachers' experiences with this phenomenon extends what is known about how federal education policies impact instructional practice.

This chapter describes the findings that came out of the interviews. The chapter begins with a broad description of the sample. It is followed first by the analysis of each case, then by a synthesis of the findings, and closes with the chapter summary.

Participants

It was initially planned that veteran teachers from all levels (elementary, middle, and high) would participate in this study. However, due to a lack of response from elementary

teachers, the sample of participants only includes middle and high school teachers. Any data alluding to elementary teachers are the reports of the participating teachers and are not an indication that elementary teachers participated in the study. Data were collected from interviews. Six interviews were conducted; four with middle school teachers and two with high school teachers. Interview questions focused on teachers' perceptions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), their process of instruction, satisfaction in teaching, training/support, and teacher perceptions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The case-by-case analysis will be organized using the major concepts of the interview protocol.

Scarlett

Scarlett is a veteran teacher with twenty-two years in the profession. She has only taught in North Carolina but has taught at high-performing, Title I, and low-performing schools. Over the course of her career, she has taught second, third, sixth, and seventh grades. She is currently teaching sixth grade English Language Arts.

Perceptions of NCLB. When asked about her perceptions of NCLB, Scarlett offered both pros and cons of the law. She felt the main benefit of the law was that it helped teachers become “more aware” of the children that were being promoted year after year without meeting grade level standards. When asked to explain her answer further, she reported that they were required to keep documentation (tests, classwork, etc.) on each student so that they could promote said student even if they failed to meet proficiency on the end-of-year standardized test. Scarlett felt that requirement made her feel “more accountable” for knowing her students and being able to chart different pathways to promotion for them.

When it came to describing the drawbacks of NCLB, Scarlett had quite a bit to say.

NCLB brought new demands for teachers and Scarlett was no exception. She reported that she had to fill out large matrix cards for each student. The matrix cards listed every objective for math and reading (the only tested subjects) and she had to record their grade for each objective or standard. She noted that the requirement increased her duties as a teacher which also created added pressure. Another drawback Scarlett reported was that schools failed to adhere to the standard or law because students were continually being promoted due to parent interference. She felt that all a parent had to do was say, “Oh, I didn’t know that my child was struggling” for the teachers or administration to acquiesce and promote a child that would benefit from retention and/or intervention. Overall, Scarlett felt that NCLB “really didn’t do anything” to prevent social promotion. Students who failed to meet proficiency on the end-of-grade test were still promoted to the next grade because in reality, “you can’t keep everyone that didn’t pass back”.

Scarlett was also asked to explain how, if at all, she felt NCLB impacted what she did in her classroom from day to day. It was her opinion that NCLB did not change the essence of teaching as “no teacher worth their teaching wants to move a child up who’s not ready”. She did, however, feel that the implementation of the law made teachers more accountable and increased the amount of paperwork. Ultimately, she did not feel that NCLB had much of an impact on her instruction although it did have quite an impact on what she was required to do as a teacher.

Instructional Process. Questions about instructional process were intended to provide insight into how teacher participants decide what they are going to teach, how they will

teach it, and when in the year they decide to teach it. Scarlett credited her professional learning team (PLT) for the way she designed and taught the content to her students. She also noted that the state sets the curriculum standards and essential questions while the district provides a pacing guide that provides the day-to-day content focus for teachers. Within her PLT, Scarlett worked with her team members to take the objectives and create differentiated lessons for students. In addition to working together to create differentiated lessons, the team also created pre-tests. The pretests were given to students to provide the teachers with information about which critical skills needed the most instructional time.

Satisfaction in teaching. Although she mentioned that she gets frustrated with the way that teachers are blamed for everything that is perceived to be wrong with the school system, Scarlett said that she still felt good about being teacher. She made a lighthearted joke about wishing that teachers were paid more, but she acknowledged that after twenty-two years in the profession, most veteran teachers stay because of a genuine love for what they do. Even though Scarlett reported that she remained satisfied with teaching, she shared a few of her frustrations. First, she was frustrated by the idea that the people making laws about education often “have no idea about what goes on in a classroom”. A second frustration was that she felt that policymakers often try to implement change at the school level when the focus should be on starting within the communities the schools serve. The last frustration that she shared dealt more with the instructional methods used by the district in their digital lesson plan database. Scarlett stated, “I’ve taught at all these different schools--so I’ve seen all of the different socioeconomic areas and I know what the kids are like in each one and the county can’t say to teach everybody the same; you just can’t do it.”

Support and training. Through her PLT, Scarlett felt a sense of increased support. She could depend on her PLT members to help with creating differentiated lesson plans and intervention plans for students performing below grade level. When asked to think back on whether the district provided training to teachers prior to the implementation of NCLB, Scarlett was unable to recall if any training had been provided to teachers but was able to recall conversations had about test scores:

That's the thing that I've noticed--that is frustrating after years and years--because things like this get passed down and nobody has a conversation with you ever. Like if I don't remember it, that doesn't mean it didn't happen, it just wasn't impacting. Here's what I do know--I can recall a lot of conversations that had in staff meetings about test scores. We've already had that conversation at my school. You know, we had our projected growth, what is this? Why did we do that? What's going on guys? I mean, you could hear the frustration in the principal's voice and I can understand that. It's frustrating. It's just a blame game.

Perceptions of ESSA. Scarlett was unaware of the Every Student Succeeds Act so she was unable to answer the questions about what she perceived to be its potential pros and cons. When asked what kind of training activities she would like to see the district provide around ESSA, she wanted trainings to explain what the law says and what the overall goal is. She also wanted the district to clearly outline its expectations for teachers, administrators, and district personnel. Once the district training was completed, she also thought it would be beneficial for the building level administration at each school to sit down with staff to discuss how they could best implement North Carolina's ESSA mandates in their school.

Starr

Starr has been teaching for twenty-six years in the state of North Carolina. He has taught grades kindergarten through sixth and is currently a sixth grade science teacher. He has taught at high-performing schools and schools with high free and reduced lunch populations.

Perceptions of NCLB. Starr described NCLB as a federal act that allowed schools to “make sure that all children are learning in a safe environment with competent teachers.” He also noted that NCLB provided funding opportunities to schools that could reach their goals. For Starr, a significant pro of NCLB was the emphasis on making sure that all students were achieving by providing each student a “fair shot in the classroom”. He also felt that NCLB decreased the rate at which students were tracked or placed into classes based on their perceived ability. Starr’s perceived cons dealt mostly with the way that its implementation was funded. He felt that there was a loss of critical resources after the implementation of NCLB that negatively impacted his ability to teach. For example, he discussed the need for an in-classroom resource (ICR) teacher for each teacher to help with remediation and classroom management.

In the discussion of his perception of how NCLB impacted his classroom from day to day, Starr referenced the idea that NCLB’s accountability mandates made him more aware of the students he taught and what their needs were. He is employed by a school that has made it a priority for teachers to deliberately establish positive learning environments for students. The program encourages teachers to work with students to establish classroom expectations and requires teachers to do things like greet students at the door and direct them to review the

chart (where classroom expectations are recorded) before they are removed from the room for behaving inappropriately. Starr also mentioned that he uses a variety of instructional strategies to engage his students. For example, he uses interactive science notebooks in his science classes. Students place the content that will be tested on the right side while classroom activities are placed on the left side. Starr explained that he tiered his lessons to include activities that could be understood by all students, even if they were reading below grade level.

Instructional process. When asked to describe how he made decisions about what to teach, how to teach it, and when in the year to teach it, Starr explained that he uses the district curriculum website as a guide. There, he can access the curriculum standards, unit plans, lesson plans, and pacing guides. Starr relied mainly on the district’s website because he “would hate for any student to go from one school to another school and have a gap in their learning. I want them to feel like they’re just continuing on. You know, sometimes it’s really fast because of the content we have to cover in a short amount of time, but we try to adhere to that pacing guide as much as possible.”

Satisfaction in teaching. Starr reported that he continued to feel satisfied in the profession because of the support system that he had in both his grade level team and his school. He was not discouraged by the ever-changing expectations in teaching because “if something doesn’t work, then you just move on and try to make it work in a different way.” Even when he had a tough day dealing with student behavior, he still felt satisfied because he knew that his grade level team was there to provide a safe space for him to vent and/or problem solve.

Support and training. Both the school staff and sixth grade team provided a great

deal of support for Starr. The thing that stood out in his interview is that he looked to his team for both professional and emotional support. Professional support was manifested through collaborative planning and the establishment of a professional learning team while emotional support took the form of just having a space in which to vent about a particularly rough day. As far as receiving training prior to the implementation of NCLB, Starr could not recall receiving any such training.

Perceptions of ESSA. Like NCLB, the Every Student Succeeds Act had both pros and cons for Starr. One of the pros that he discussed was that ESSA would return a great deal of decision-making power to the states. For him, that signaled a chance to reallocate funds to some of the programs whose funding had dried up after the implementation of NCLB. One of the cons that he expressed was the idea that if a state government lacked vision when it came to education, that the newfound decision-making power would be used to create voucher systems that would hurt public education in the long run.

Rebecca

Rebecca is a middle school teacher with sixteen and half years of experience. She has only taught in North Carolina and has spent the bulk of her career teaching sixth grade. She has worked at a variety of different schools including international baccalaureate, magnet, and global magnet schools. She has also worked with student populations where the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch was high.

Perceptions of NCLB. Rebecca believed the purpose of NCLB was to mainstream students so that all students had access to equal opportunities. She felt that NCLB greatly re-

duced the rate at which students were being tracked or placed into classes based on their ability. As someone who was placed on the advanced placement track while being schooled in New York, Rebecca had very vivid memories of how that experience made her feel. She recalled never being in the same classes with students who were struggling academically and feeling ire at the way the lowest-performing students were placed in ‘basic’ courses. Because she had not witnessed the same as a teacher, it was her perception that “you’re not labeling students” with NCLB. The removal of labels and mainstreaming of students were both coded as pros of NCLB.

For Rebecca, there were two significant drawbacks to NCLB. The first dealt with the way struggling students were pulled out for intervention. She stated:

Parents coming in have mentioned that sometimes their child was in a pullout program to get them up to grade level but they were being pulled out during that course of study. So I think that was one of the drawbacks. They were trying to get kids caught up so they could be ready for um, you know that level and be with their peers um but they were getting pulled out during the time they needed.

The second concerned the loss of critical resources that were no longer provided due to budget cuts. As an example, Rebecca referenced the loss of in-class resource (ICR) teachers for science and social studies. That additional support for teachers was missed by science and social studies teachers even though math and reading teachers still enjoyed the benefits of having that extra person in the classroom. Having made the transition from teaching science to teaching math, Rebecca was able to reference her experiences teaching both subjects

when talking about the difficulties of trying to provide quality instruction to all students without that in-class resource teacher.

When describing how NCLB impacted her classroom on a daily basis, Rebecca referenced her belief that the law deliberately provided opportunities for all students to be successful. As such, she was more deliberate about using the same instructional strategies for all of her classes. She explained:

What I do for one group, I do for everyone. So if it's guided notes, everyone gets guided notes. Study guides? Everyone gets study guides. So I've changed my way of just--my outlook on things and how I present the information so that every student has an equal chance of being successful in the course.

Instructional process. When it comes to deciding what to teach, how to teach it, and when in the school year to teach it, Rebecca relies heavily on the district's online curriculum website. She had a positive perception of the online curriculum management system because it provides teachers with a detailed list of the concepts that students should have learned in the previous grades as well as what they will learn in subsequent grades. Additionally, the online system comes with a complete parent guide that includes the scope and sequence for the school year (broken down by quarter), print resources that parents can use to prepare their child, and video resources (math) that parents can use to help reinforce strategies taught in the classroom at home.

Satisfaction in teaching. Rebecca still finds satisfaction in teaching because she experiences increased effectiveness every year. She stated, "I feel like every year, I do it better. Every year, your craft, you're just building on it and building on it. And you try new things,

and if it doesn't work, it doesn't work. It's okay.” She discussed how she used to experience increased stress where test preparation was concerned. At this point in her career, she has come to a place where she does not think about testing until the last two weeks of the school year. Being able to decrease the stress she felt allowed her to focus more on what the students need to learn and the best way to deliver the content to them.

Support and training. Rebecca reported a sense of increased support from her grade level and school teams as they worked together to improve outcomes for their students. She mentioned several times that she worked together with her colleagues to provide experiences for their students that were not just academic in nature. When describing how the sixth-grade team plans field trips, Rebecca said:

Oh, the field trips! I really think through what field trips I want to do with the kids as a team to bring them together, so they can see each other. Because sometimes when you go to the cafeteria everyone just cliques up. But the field trips bring them together. It's just one way to get them to trust one another, to really--build that relationship so that in the classroom, they're ready to work together.

Perceptions of ESSA. While she was unsure of the impact ESSA would have on her classroom, Rebecca was able to communicate what she wanted the law to allow the district to do. Those things included increasing technological resources for students that were adaptive and would allow students to work more independently while teachers could provide more one-on-one instruction for struggling students.

Anne

Anne is a career teacher with thirty years in the profession. She has only taught in

North Carolina. She spent one year teaching sixth grade and spent the rest of her career teaching eighth grade. Throughout her career, Anne taught mainly at an average performing middle school with occasionally high performing groups of students.

Perceptions of NCLB. Anne believed that the purpose of NCLB was to enforce the idea that students who failed to meet grade level expectations should not be promoted to the next grade. She explained:

Therefore, the name no child left behind--because if they keep moving up and are behind grade level, then they get farther and farther behind. So by the time they would get to me in the 8th grade still reading on a 3rd grade level, their skill level and their reading level and math level is just cumulatively getting them farther and farther behind. So I think that was the original intent of the law.

When asked for her opinion about NCLB, Anne shared that she felt the law was never fully funded so that its purpose could be realized. She referenced the loss of summer school programs, accelerated programs such as Saturday school, and afterschool programs due to budget cuts and loss of funding. Anne also described how schools were impacted by the recession of the 2000s saying that “states started giving less money to the local schools.” In her opinion, everything her school had in place to help them reach adequate yearly progress was lost to inadequate funding and understaffing. As a result, “regular classroom teacher[s] [are] trying to work with kids who were reading two grade levels beyond and working with kids still reading on a third-grade level and it is five years later. So, you know, they’re just way behind.”

For Anne, the most significant pro of NCLB was its purpose. She agreed that the

premise of the law was appropriate. She explained, “I do know that if a child leaves kindergarten already behind, then they'll be lucky if they're not still not 6 months behind no matter how great a first a grade teacher they have. And so, those crucial skills, staying on track and on grade level are very, very, very important. I see that cumulatively.” However, she also acknowledged that there were some fundamental issues with the law’s reach. Funding was a major issue and so was the loss of intervention specialists. Anne elaborated:

We have to have a whole lot more specialists working with kids, we've got to make kids feel like they're part of the school--an important part of the school--and they are being helped to catch up. I don't know that retention is the answer either but you know, back many years ago there were those TK-1 classes (Transitional kindergarten-1st grade). Do we need a T5-6? Do we need a school for those kids who are not ready to make that transition to middle school? Whatever it is. But it's going to take money, it's going to take effort, and it's going to take a whole change in mindset for us to think about how we're working with kids. Kids do not need to feel like a failure because they got behind.

When asked to think about how NCLB impacted her classroom on a daily basis, Anne explained that the law seemed to pressure teachers to “teach to the test” in an effort to help their school meet adequate yearly progress and subgroup targets. Even though teaching to the test generally has more of a negative connotation, Anne felt that some of that pressure lent itself to making schools and classrooms more data-driven. As a result, she felt that she looks more at her curriculum standards when making decisions about where she “want[s] them to go with the curriculum.” Even with the positive association with being data-driven,

Anne admitted that end of the year testing is still a challenge for her because “it felt like Judgement Day and you felt like no matter how you had done-you know, it didn't matter if you'd done well with five kids, you still hadn't met adequate yearly progress on all of your benchmarks so you felt a failure.” She elaborated on this point saying:

We dreaded those first faculty meetings where you had to look at your data because it meant that you didn't get credit for anything you had done right, you just got credit for everything you had done wrong. It didn't matter that you had brought the subgroup up ten points, the mark was fifteen, so ten wasn't enough. And every year, it went from ten to fifteen and then you had to go up to twenty. Well if I'm still at ten, you expect me to double it? How about letting me get to the first benchmark? And so, I think that's very defeating for teachers. And that's how you start a school year off. You end it with the pressure of testing and then you begin it with “you failed at testing”. And you forget all about kids and teaching. And to me, it's just become all about assessments.

Instructional process. Anne makes instructional decisions with her professional learning team. First, they consulted the standards document provided to them by the state education department. That document provided valuable information for the team because it described the concepts, misconceptions that may need to be addressed, and the prior knowledge the students should have. Having that information helped Anne’s team create pre- and post-assessments that informed their instruction. Anne also made some use of the district’s online curriculum management system but most of the activities and ideas she uses in her classroom have been shared by and developed with her colleagues throughout her career.

Satisfaction in teaching. Anne, who was retiring at the time of her interview, still found satisfaction as a teacher. Even so, she talked at length about how teachers now have to take on the bulk of the accountability where student achievement is concerned. “I’ll say that you have to be your own best advocate now as a teacher. Many days it feels like the accountability is about 80/20--80% with the teacher, 10% with the student, 10% with the parent--instead of being 33 and a third a piece because it is a three-way partnership, we all have to be working together.” She also expressed concern that failing schools are made public without explaining the context behind why those schools failed. She summed her experience as a teacher up by saying, “Nobody’s looking at those dynamics so it feels like the accountability, as my career has gone on, is more and more on my lap. And maybe when I was younger, I just didn’t realize it.”

Support and training. Much of the support that Anne received was from her professional learning team. Together, they navigated the pressures of testing and creating instruction that benefited their students. As far as implementation training on NCLB was concerned, Anne did not know of nor did she attend any district- or school-sponsored professional development. Her opinions of NCLB were influenced by both her principal and instructional resource teacher.

Perceptions of ESSA. Anne explained that she did not know enough about ESSA to form an opinion about it. She was able to recall that it was one of the last pieces of legislation that President Obama was able to pass, but she felt that coverage of ESSA had been overshadowed by the controversy surrounding United States Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos.

Anne was, however, able to make recommendations for training activities to be provided prior to the implementation of ESSA. She suggested that the district provide information about what the law says, how local schools are impacted, how classroom teachers are impacted, and how the state is planning to fund any changes. She was also adamant that the district be “honest and upfront” about what teachers were going to be required to do without the benefit of additional funding. Anne elaborated, “It's always an add on, it's never a take-away. And there's not adequate funding so therefore the regular classroom teacher or whatever employee you have in the school, it gets added to their job without more hours being added to the day.”

George

George has twenty-six years of experience as a teacher. He has taught in Massachusetts, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South America. George has worked at both private and public schools. He is currently teaching at a public high school.

Perceptions of NCLB. George primarily described NCLB’s purpose as a way to “take inner city and rural kids and let them be on an equal footing with the other suburban rich kids.” To realize that purpose, the federal government distributed money to states and the states then distributed that money to schools in different ways. In discussing the purpose, he also said that he agreed with it, but wished that teachers had been given an opportunity to weigh in prior to implementation. For George, one of the more significant pros of NLCB was its attempt to place students on equal footing when it came to their academic options. One of the most significant cons for him was that NCLB was very top heavy and was never individualized for the communities that were being served. That individualization, George

felt, is something that needed to happen at the school level instead of at the state or district levels because state and district officials rarely, if ever, visit the schools that are most affected by policy.

Instructional process. When making decisions about what to teach his students, George relies heavily on the state curriculum for his science course. After reviewing the state standards, he breaks them down into two-week units and begins to write his lesson plans. He decides how to pace his units and then shares his scope and sequence with his professional learning team. From there, he makes decisions about how to differentiate his instruction for the special needs students he teaches. He works closely with the curriculum assistance (CA) teachers to make sure that his instruction is developmentally appropriate for students with special needs. For his English as a Second Language (ESL) students, he incorporates pictures and allows them to draw. George also differentiates instruction for his honors students by assigning “more rigorous assignments and projects”. Behavior is also a factor for George as he plans his instruction. He explained:

Because I had a bunch a gang kids, really rough kids. I don't take them to the lab because that's all they're in to is breaking stuff. So it was really like the way we were taught by a teacher, I've gone to that level with them because anything short of that, they basically can't get out of their seats and they can't do group work. They make it a bad, boring class. So for that group, it's really rigorous. I probably reach--if the group were all failing--I could probably get 40% of them to a D range, but the others I can't--you know. But it's their part not being done. I don't think there's anything that I'm not doing to reach out.

Satisfaction in teaching. When asked whether he was still satisfied being a teacher, George said that he simply tries to do the best that he can dealing with an education system that seems to be “ a hypocrisy”. His goal each day is to control his classroom and work with his students to help them realize their academic potential. George experienced more satisfaction as a teacher when he was able to work on more creative projects with his students. He referenced a time about six years ago when his students had the chance to participate in a schoolwide STEM night. His students presented projects about astronomy and George decorated his room to look like Mission Control for the event. He really enjoyed the preparation and execution of the event, but felt like those things are no longer a focus for schools as they have taken a more comprehensive approach to academics. In the current educational climate, George finds satisfaction in assisting with the soccer team and supervising the ecology club. With the latter, he organizes environmental studies, highway cleanup, and gardening.

Support and training. George is a critical member of his professional learning team as he is often charged with developing the lesson plans for the team. This is due to the fact that many of the teachers working with him are new teachers who have not quite mastered the content to be taught as he has. In fact, George was asked by his principal to prepare lessons and activities for a teacher who left abruptly at the winter break. Although a long-term substitute teacher was placed in the classroom, she did not have the content knowledge necessary to develop her own lesson plans. In addition to providing the lesson plans, he also had to input student grades into the digital gradebook.

George started his career in Tennessee and vaguely remembers having conversations

about federal education policy at the teachers' college, but could not recall any training specific to NCLB. He also mentioned that there is a lack of training for teachers on how to teach students with dyslexia, autism, and severe learning disabilities. Without that training, George felt as if it was "almost like it doesn't matter if learning is going on as long as the test scores are good."

Perceptions of ESSA. George described ESSA as a "post-President Bush thing". He was unable to describe how ESSA changed the goals of NCLB or what its general tenets were. He expressed mild frustration with the fact that his principal hosts a staff meeting at the start of each school year but education policy is never discussed. George suggested that, at the very least, the district provide basic information about the law to teachers and explain what schools and teachers are supposed to be doing. He explained:

It's like me not doing my job if I don't know more about it. It's like when they say, "Where is the chemical safety plan? Do you know where it's located? What would you do if there were a spill in your classroom or lab?" I have those answers because that's my department.

Tiffany

Tiffany has been a teacher for fifteen years in North Carolina. She has taught at both high and low-performing schools, an early college high school, and a university. She has spent her career teaching high school math and also teaches a university level math course.

Perceptions of NCLB. Tiffany's perceptions of NCLB were that the law was intended to "get kids to graduate and doing whatever it takes to get the students there". She also acknowledged that NCLB was responsible for changes to the curriculum and testing.

She mentioned that there was federal funding that was allotted to help states and districts secure resources that would enable them to realize the purpose of the law. While she agreed with the general spirit of the law, Tiffany felt that it had failed to initiate meaningful change for students and teachers. She stated:

I just kind of feel like it's one more thing that we have to do. So, I think over the years, with all of the different changes, I don't feel like things have gotten better for students. I feel like it's worse. I feel like we're just trying to check off a whole bunch of boxes and meet different standards--federal, state. But I don't really think it's helping the students. So like honestly, I don't really pay a lot of attention to things like that even though they're kind of pushed down. But the people that I deal with are kind of like me--it's just that one more thing that's put on our plate and we just kind of do it to check off a box basically.

For Tiffany, there were no pros of NCLB outside of the law's intent to focus on graduation rates. There was, however, an extensive list of cons. First, she felt that NCLB placed an increased amount of emphasis on testing and teacher evaluation. That emphasis worked to create a competitive atmosphere that kept teachers from truly collaborating. She explained:

I really felt like it did a disservice to students because it kind of created this atmosphere of um, like teachers not really working together in PLTs and things like that. We work together, but it's like you hold stuff back in the hopes that your kids will maybe do a little bit better and that's not as helpful.

A second con of NCLB was that Tiffany felt that NCLB had changed the way that students were taught to think about and do math:

I came when math was just calculators, Algebra, Algebra 2 but now you have the Core and all of this extra stuff like we don't even teach kids to do math from rote memory like memorizing times tables--the things you need to build that strong math foundation. I feel like it does students a disservice.

Finally, Tiffany felt that NCLB created a toxic work environment for teachers. The emphasis on testing creates stress for teachers as does the teacher evaluation piece. She provided an example of teachers avoiding lower-performing schools even though those schools may be in need of competent teachers.

Instructional process. Tiffany started planning for her instruction by consulting the state standards. From there, the district provided guidance for teachers through meetings with area high schools. At those meetings, district personnel would communicate expectations for mathematics instruction, provide additional resources for teachers to use in their classrooms, and allow teachers to collaborate as an area-wide professional learning team. Tiffany saw these meetings as an attempt to make sure that all teachers were staying on the same page as far as the content was concerned. For example, Tiffany pointed out that the district's high school math contact provided area math teachers with guided notes that they could use with their students. While some teachers might have appreciated this gesture, Tiffany felt that it decreased her ability to make decisions for her students.

At the school level, she also had a professional learning team to work with. In that PLT, Tiffany and her team worked together to decide how to pace their instruction as well as what instructional methods they should use when teaching. Because of this required uniformity, she felt that "teachers [can't] be as creative--well you can, because you can share

best teaching practices--but it is really is like you're forced to do things one way. But if you kind of waiver from that, then if your test scores aren't good, then it comes back on you.”

Satisfaction in teaching. Tiffany was very straightforward in her response to the question about her level of satisfaction when it comes to being a teacher. Overall, she mentioned feeling burnt out and that she definitely did not enjoy teaching as much in year fifteen as she did in year one. That was mainly due to feeling as though she could no longer “just teach”. With all of the added responsibility due to NCLB and other accountability mandates, Tiffany felt as though she was just checking boxes instead of actually investing time into the students. She elaborated:

Like if a student is failing, we have to put so much time into the students that are failing that it's like you can't even focus on everything else. You have to document everything and it's just too much. I'm just over it. And then I think administration heads are tired when it comes to discipline and discipline is becoming a huge issue. I feel disrespected sometimes and I don't feel supported. So yeah, I'm kind of over it. I have a student at the high school who actually pulled out an electronic cigarette and started smoking and nothing happened to him. That's how bad it's gotten. So, I don't know--I'm kind of over it. You have some really good students and I feel like we're doing them a disservice because you know stuff is just coming down the pipe--and coming down from people who are not in the classroom.

Support and training. Tiffany worked with both her school and district level professional learning teams to develop instruction. Outside of those teams, she did not mention

having any additional professional or emotional support. She also described a lack of support from her administration when it came to dealing with students' behavioral issues.

While Tiffany did not remember attending any district-level meetings about NCLB and its impact prior to implementation, she was able to recall having a meeting at the beginning of that school year with her principal. When asked if the training was beneficial, she described the meeting as one that “caused a sense of anxiety among the staff because of the accountability piece.” Tiffany also shared that early in her career the heavy emphasis on test scores made her anxious because she wanted to be considered “good at what [she does].” Now, she is able to put the anxiety aside and focus solely on teaching her students what they need to know.

Perceptions of ESSA. Tiffany did not know enough about ESSA to have formed an opinion about it. She did, however, talk at length about the changes that were being made at her school to improve student achievement. Tiffany described changes being made to the math curriculum that she taught, saying that it would be replaced by a more scripted curriculum that would make teaching more uniform across the district. There had also been a change in the passing grade being moved from a seventy to a sixty. She did acknowledge that the change was done in an effort to help more students pass their classes but overall, she did not think that it was the right move as it lowered expectations for student success.

Synthesis of Findings

Veteran teachers in this district report varying perceptions of how NCLB impacted the way they teach. Overall, most of the teacher participants were able to articulate their perception of NCLB's purpose as well as how the law impacted them at the classroom level.

The teacher participants conceptualize the purpose of NCLB differently. Each participant offered a different perception of the purpose of the law. However, they all referenced that the law was intended to impact students in some way. The teacher participants also described NCLB as having more cons than pros. The cons ranged from loss of funding opportunities to having a negative impact on students. Most of the pros that were shared had to do with participants' descriptions of the purpose of the law. It is also important to note that every participant said that they had a positive perception of the purpose of NCLB. Teacher participants also described the law as having different impacts on their classrooms. Some felt that it changed the way their content area was taught while others referenced a feeling of increased responsibility.

Almost all of the participants described working with a professional learning team (PLT) to make decisions about content and pacing. Some worked with their school-wide PLT, some with their grade-level PLT, and one with a district-wide, subject-specific PLT. All of the middle school teacher participants relied heavily on the district's online curriculum to guide their instruction from day-to-day. The high school teacher participants referred to the online curriculum from time to time, but relied heavily on the standards provided by the state to guide their day-to-day instruction.

When it came to satisfaction in teaching, all but two of the teacher participants said that they were still completely satisfied with the profession. One of the high school teacher participants was semi-satisfied, meaning that he was trying to make it to retirement. The other high school teacher participant was not as satisfied with the profession as she was early in her career. Two of the participants included in their responses frustrations they had with

the profession.

Every teacher participant referenced the support of a professional learning team at some point in their interviews. Most of the PLTs described were grade-level PLTs but school- and district-level teams were also referenced. When asked if they participated in any training prior to the implementation of NCLB, all of the teacher participants except for one said that they did not participate in any trainings about NCLB.

Of the six teacher participants, only one had enough knowledge of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Most of the others had not heard of the law before participating in the interview. When asked what kind of training activities they would like to see prior to the implementation of ESSA, almost all of the teacher participants wanted to see the district provide basic information about the law. That basic information includes what the law is and how it impacts schools and teachers. Some participants expressed a desire for those trainings to include how the implementation and changes were going to be funded.

Chapter Summary

I interviewed six veteran middle and high school teachers. While the participants provided different descriptions of the No Child Left Behind Act, they reported positive perceptions of the law's purpose. The participants also had different perceptions of how the law impacted them on a daily basis. Chapter five will discuss these findings grouped by the research questions that guided the study and will include implications for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The intent of this research study was to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of the relationship between No Child Left Behind accountability mandates and classroom instruction; specifically, the perceptions of veteran teachers on how these mandates have affected their practice. The following research questions guided this study:

- Have veteran teachers' instructional practices been altered by NCLB accountability mandates? If so, in what ways?
- How do veteran teachers report that accountability mandates have influenced their experience or satisfaction in teaching?
- What training/support was provided to teachers in the transition to NCLB? How did this training impact their instructional practice?
- In what ways, if any, do veteran teachers believe their instructional practices will change now that NCLB has been replaced with ESSA?

The study's findings were discussed in chapter four. This chapter will present a summary of those findings as they answer each research question.

Summary of the Study's Findings

Research Question #1: Have veteran teachers' instructional practices been altered by NCLB accountability mandates? If so, in what ways?

Ideally, teachers participating in the study would have experienced positive changes to their instructional practice since the implementation of NCLB's accountability mandates. In this study, each teacher participant reported changes to their instructional practice since the

implementation of NCLB. Some teachers reported minor changes to their practice while others reported that there had been drastic changes to their practice.

Rebecca and Starr described their instruction as being more student-focused compared to their pre-NCLB days. Rebecca started teaching in 2001 as NCLB was being implemented, so she did not have much to report when it came to describing her pre-NCLB teaching methods. Throughout the years, however, she found that she was using guided notes more frequently and took extra care to ensure that her guided notes were engaging for students. Before 2001, Starr described using more lectures and textbooks to teach content to his students. He described his pre-NCLB instructional methods as being more teacher-driven. After 2001, he began to use interactive notebooks and more lab activities to engage students. Coupled with the increased access to academic technological resources, Starr felt it made his instruction more student-centered.

Prior to the implementation of NCLB, Anne taught science and felt that her instructional methods revolved around increasing student engagement. She recalled doing lab days regularly, using the content vocabulary to help her students apply what they were learning in the classroom to the real world. When asked if she felt NCLB had changed that, Anne shared that students were being tested back in 2001 as well but the scores were used differently. Before NCLB, test scores were used to verify that a student had learned what they were supposed to during the school year. Now, she felt that test scores were being used to evaluate the effectiveness of school and teachers. She also mentioned that she felt any changes to instructional practice were driven more by the principal than by the law itself. Anne did not feel

that her instructional methods had changed, but she did report that she began to use a backward planning approach to planning what she was going to teach. She described backwards planning as a process where she started with planning assessments and then building her instruction based on the assessments.

Scarlett, who was teaching third grade as NCLB was being implemented, described her pre-NCLB instructional methods as student-driven. She taught through the use of learning centers where students were given high-interest independent or small group activities to complete. As she settled into the accountability mandates of NCLB, she explained that her instructional methods became more teacher-driven as she wanted to make sure that students were receiving the content and meeting grade-level expectations. Scarlett also noted that she ended up using a mix of both student- and teacher-driven methods which was extremely effective in allowing her to meet the needs of her students. At the middle school where she worked at the time of our interview, she was still using a mix of student- and teacher-driven methods through the use of technology.

George started his career teaching botany at a school in Tennessee. His instructional methods focused mainly on lecture, notetaking, and individualized work. Then, most of the content was given to students through textbooks and lab discussions where they were expected to use the notes provided during the lecture to complete the lab successfully. Now, George describes his instructional methods as being “all electronics”. He felt that while technology is good for some students, the students that he taught needed something else outside of the device. They had gaps in their ability to understand the content area vocabulary and were often brutally honest with George about their lack of understanding. It is important to

note that George was only one of two participants that had a negative perception of the changes made to his instructional practice.

When Tiffany’s teaching career began, she used more lecture when teaching because that is what the teachers around her were doing. She also felt that her instructional methods were enhanced by the collaborative spirit of the team she was working with. Tiffany explained that the teachers she worked with did not hesitate to share lesson ideas and activities that she could try in her classroom. She also mentioned that she relied heavily on worksheets at the start of her career. At the time of our interview, Tiffany felt that her instructional practice was being dictated by the district in order to make teaching more uniform. She was frustrated by the loss of flexibility and the ability to be creative. Along with George, Tiffany had a very negative perception of the changes made to her instructional practice after NCLB was implemented.

Rebecca	Starr	Anne	Scarlett	George	Tiffany
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pre-NCLB: n/a •Post-NCLB: uses guided notes to increase engagement, very little lecture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pre-NCLB: lecture •Post-NCLB: uses interactive notes and increased lab activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pre-NCLB: regular lab days, emphasis on content vocabulary •Post-NCLB: backwards planning approach to instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pre-NCLB: content taught through learning centers •Post-NCLB: mix of student- and teacher-methods coupled with technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pre-NCLB: lecture, notetaking, individualized work •Post-NCLB: technology based, "all electronics" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pre-NCLB: lecture, heavy worksheet use •Post-NCLB: very little creativity/flexibility, changes in delivery of content

Figure 2. Summary of participants’ responses to research question one.

The teacher participants in this study defined instructional practice as the methods they used to deliver content to students. Figure 2, Summary of participants’ responses to research question one, provides a visual summary of the participants’ responses. Middle

school participants' responses are in blue, high school participants' responses are in orange. Prior to NCLB, half of the teacher participants were using lecture or other teacher-focused methods to deliver content. Two participants were using student-focused methods to deliver content. After NCLB, five of the participants were relying on more student-focused instructional methods. Although it was not part of the original research question, I asked each teacher participant if they thought the changes to their instructional practice was mostly positive, mostly negative, or neutral. All four of the middle school teacher participants saw the changes to their practice as positive because of they were able to know their students' academic needs much better than they did prior to the implementation of NCLB. The two high school teacher participants reported that they did not see the changes to their instructional practice as positive because they did not feel that the changes were beneficial for their students.

Research Question #2: How do veteran teachers report that accountability mandates have influenced their experience or satisfaction in teaching?

Rebecca reported that she still found satisfaction as a teacher. This was due to feeling like her craft improved from year to year as well as feeling that her ability to teach effectively also increased. Rebecca mentioned during her interview that the accountability mandates and emphasis on testing were once a source of increased stress and pressure for her, but she had settled into a place in her career where her only focus is teaching her students.

Starr also reported that he was still satisfied in the profession. Like Rebecca, he felt that he was still satisfied because each year he was able to try new things and replace things that failed to work in a short amount of time. One of the main reasons that Starr still found

satisfaction in teaching was because of the support of his professional learning team (PLT). The members of the team were there to support him both professionally and sometimes emotionally. That was an area of great importance for Starr.

Anne, who had decided to retire at the time of our interview, reported that she was satisfied with her career in teaching although there were some aspects of teaching that had changed. One of the major changes she mentioned was the inequitable distribution of responsibility for student achievement. That, together with the increased responsibility for teachers, impacted her satisfaction in teaching.

Scarlett also reported that she remained satisfied by the teaching profession. After twenty-two years of teaching, she found satisfaction in getting to know her students each year and in the challenge of finding ways to engage them in the curriculum. Scarlett was one of the few teacher participants that did not report any frustrations with teaching when discussing her level of satisfaction.

George described his level of satisfaction in teaching by stating, “Well I think it's been a hypocrisy for a long time with me. I just try to do the best I can.” I took that to mean that he had been unsatisfied with the profession but was trying to do whatever he could to see it through to retirement. He even mentioned at one point during our interview that one of the only reasons that he was still teaching was because he promised his principal that he would give him three more years. At the time of our interview, George was completing the first of the three years and was not sure that he was going to be able to keep his word. His dissatisfaction with the profession seemed to revolve around the idea that students were no longer being challenged to think outside of the proverbial box or to be creative. He referred to many

examples of environments throughout his career where he felt the students he taught were motivated to not only succeed, but to exercise their creativity while doing so. George talked about teaching English to students overseas and how they were motivated (mainly by their parents) to earn good grades. He also talked at length about Honors students and how they differed from the Honors students that he worked with in the early part of his career. It would seem that this is the hypocrisy to which George repeatedly refers to.

Where George alluded to his dissatisfaction without actually saying that he was unsatisfied, Tiffany was very upfront about being unsatisfied with teaching. She reported feeling burnt out and said that she no longer found joy in teaching because of “all of the other stuff that [teachers] have to do”. She elaborated by explaining her school’s processes for working with students who fail to meet grade level expectations and the lack of support from administration where discipline was concerned.

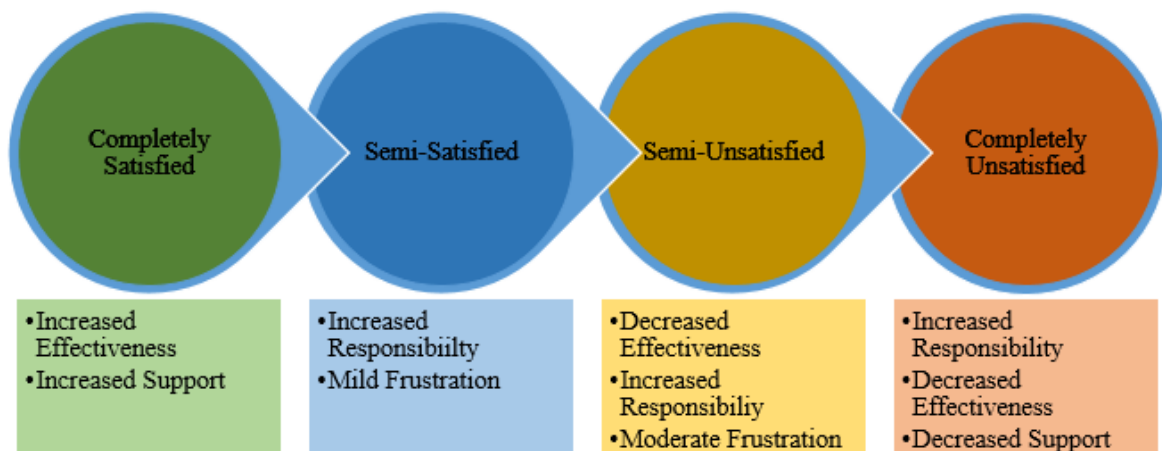


Figure 3. Continuum of teacher satisfaction based on participant responses.

The participants’ responses have been captured and placed along a continuum (see

Figure 3). Teacher participants who reported that they were completely satisfied also mentioned that they experienced increased effectiveness and support. Those who reported being somewhat satisfied discussed increased levels of responsibility and seemed to be mildly frustrated by the changes taking place in the profession. The semi-unsatisfied participant reported decreased effectiveness, increased responsibility, and a moderate level of frustration with changes taking place in the profession as did the completely unsatisfied participant.

Research Question #3: What training/support was provided to teachers in the transition to NCLB? How did this training impact their instructional practice?

Surprisingly, five of the six teacher participants reported that they had not received any training to aid them in the transition to NCLB. George, whose career began in Tennessee, vaguely remembered having a discussion with colleagues about the pending law but could not remember if it was actually NCLB or another law. With this group of participants, a definitive answer as to how training teachers prior to the implementation of new education policy impacts their instructional practice remains unanswered.

Research Question #4: In what ways, if any, do veteran teachers believe their instructional practices will change now that NCLB has been replaced with ESSA?

Again, the study participants were largely unable to provide responses to the fourth research question due to a lack of knowledge about ESSA. Of the six participants, Starr was the only one with enough background knowledge to make a prediction about how his instructional practice would be impacted by the new reauthorization of NCLB.

Starr thought that ESSA could potentially allow the state government to reallocate

funding to schools. For his instructional practice, that meant increased funding for instructional programs, instructional aides, and/or additional resources. Starr was concerned that a state legislature that “lacked vision” when deciding how to allocate funding to schools could potentially have an adverse impact on his instructional practice because it would mean a continued decrease in resources, personnel, and opportunities for students.

Discussion of Findings

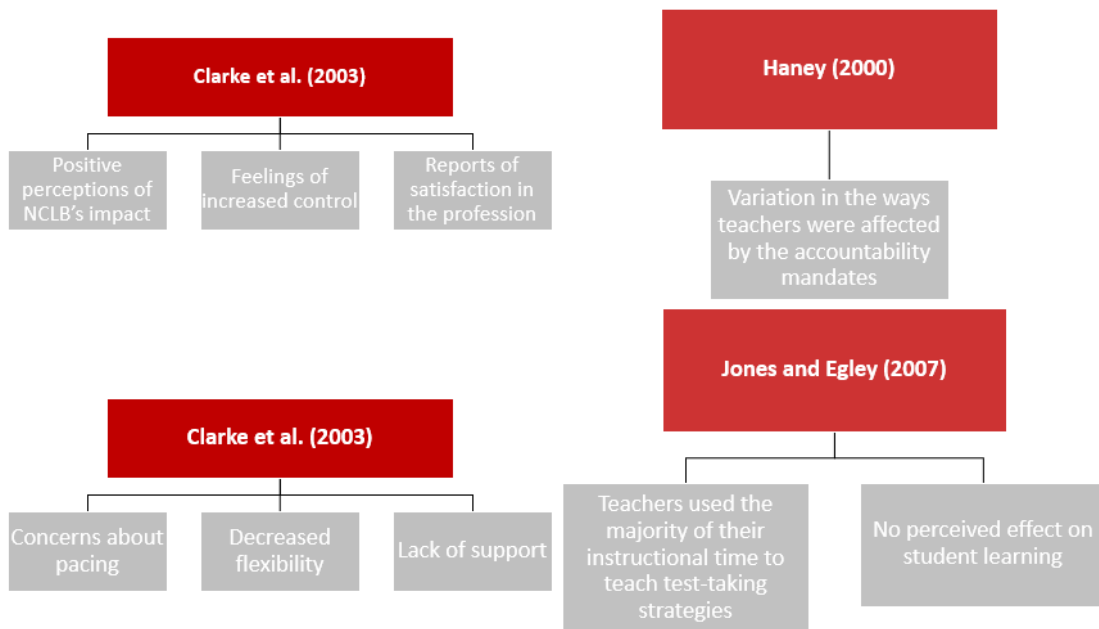


Figure 4. Findings of previous research that were either supported or contradicted.

This study yielded some of the same results as previous studies on the topic of accountability mandates’ impact on teacher instruction. Studies in the relevant body of research have found that accountability mandates have had both positive and negative impacts on instruction. The perception of their impact varied from teacher to teacher and school to school. Positive impacts were mainly associated with feelings of increased control and support, increased effectiveness, and a greater focus on student needs. Negative impacts were

associated with the narrowing of the curriculum, developmental inappropriateness, teaching to the test, and decreased flexibility.

The Impact of Accountability on Instruction

Figure 4 outlines the findings of the previous studies that the findings of this study either support or contradict. Clarke et al. (2003) found that the majority of teachers had positive perceptions of their state's accountability standards because they provided both curricular uniformity across schools and a heightened emphasis on helping students develop problem-solving and writing skills. The perceived impact on instruction was the increased emphasis on writing, critical thinking, discussion, and explanation. Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, and Harrington (2014) studied teachers' perceptions of the impact of accountability on instruction and found that their teacher participants felt that they were more in control and had more support from their principals, colleagues, and parents. This led to increased levels of satisfaction with the profession. Stecher (2002) found that teachers reported working more effectively because of the accountability mandates which led to increased satisfaction. Accountability mandates have been found to serve as "instructional magnets" that encourage teachers to allocate their instructional time based on what is assessed on standardized tests (Popham, 1987).

The findings of this study partially support the findings of Clarke et al. in that the middle school teacher participants had positive perceptions of the impact of NCLB accountability mandates on their instruction. Their positive perceptions were influenced by an increased emphasis on character education and using data to drive instruction. The impact of accountability on instruction was that instruction became more student-centered. Middle

school teacher participants also reported feeling increased control over their content and increased support, mainly in the form of professional learning teams. Each middle school teacher reported feeling satisfied by the profession because they felt that each year they were able to do their jobs more effectively. Only one participant, Anne, specifically mentioned using her assessments to decide what she was going to teach throughout the year in what she described as a backwards planning approach to instruction.

Previous research studies also outlined what teachers perceived to be negative impacts on their instruction. The findings of the Clarke et al. (2003) study describe teachers having concerns about the developmental appropriateness of curriculum standards, the pacing, the elimination of concepts or subject areas, and a decrease in flexibility. Impacts on instruction included a decline in teacher creativity, an increased focus on making sure that students had test-taking skills (bubbling answer sheets, etc.), and using the standards as a checklist instead of using them to guide academic exploration. A host of other studies also reference concepts or subject areas being removed (English & Steffy, 2001; Jones, Jones, & Hargrove, 2003; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008; Stecher 2002). This is referred to as the narrowing of the curriculum in the relevant research. Cheating is also considered to be a result of accountability's negative impact on instruction.

Again, the findings of this study partially support the findings of the studies outlined above. The high school teacher participants were the only ones to report negative impacts of accountability on instruction. Both teachers were straightforward in their descriptions of feeling like they could not be as creative in designing their content (decreased flexibility) and also described feeling a lack of support from administration when it came to their instruction

being impacted by negative behaviors. Tiffany, who also taught at the university level, referenced the standards being more a checklist than an academic guide and viewed the push for curricular uniformity as undesirable. George also referenced feeling less flexible in his ability to include project-based learning experiences during the year. These perceived negative impacts on instruction left both high school teacher participants feeling significantly unsatisfied with the profession.

Teacher Perceptions of Accountability Mandates Under NCLB

After the No Child Left Act became law, researchers became interested in understanding what teachers believed about the intent and effect of the law. Jones and Egley (2007) studied teacher perceptions of the effects of test-based accountability on their instruction. They found that nearly all of the 708 teachers surveyed felt that the NCLB's accountability mandates either restricted or had no impact on student learning. Those that had negative perceptions of NCLB felt that testing took time and focus away from learning while those who had more neutral views felt that the mandates did not impact student learning at all. Teachers were also asked to describe how professional development impacted their instruction. Teachers with more positive perceptions of the accountability mandates also had positive perceptions of the professional development while teachers with more negative perceptions of the mandates had negative perceptions of the professional development.

Teachers also reported that they were using an increased amount of instructional time to teach test-taking strategies than they were prior to the implementation of the accountability mandates. In other studies of teacher perceptions of accountability, researchers found that mandates narrowed the curriculum, encouraged decreased control, and inaccurately measured

teaching and learning. These studies also found that mandates caused teachers to experience anxiety, confusion, fear, shame, and mistrust (Brown, 1992; Brown, 1993; Smith, Edelsky, Draper, Rottenberg, & Cherland, 1991; Smith, 1991). Haney's (2000) findings supported the findings of the aforementioned studies, but he added to the research with his suggestion that accountability mandates do not affect every teacher negatively.

The findings of this study support the findings of the previous research. Participants in this study reported that NCLB had some effect on their instructional practice. Some participants, like the middle school teachers, reported that NCLB had a positive effect on their instruction even though there were things that they would change about the implementation of the law. Other participants, like the high school teachers, reported that NCLB had a negative impact on their instruction. The variation in their perceptions support Haney's (2000) assertion that accountability mandates affect teachers in different ways. However, the findings of Jones and Egley's (2007) study were partially contradicted in that all six teacher participants reported that there had been some level of impact on student learning due to the implementation of NCLB. Teacher participants in this study were also asked to describe how professional development or training impacted their instructional practice. None of the participants were able to describe the relationship between professional development and instruction due to a lack of training that was specifically focused on NCLB.

Brown's (1993) study of teacher perceptions of accountability mandates found that participants were unable to communicate the purpose of accountability mandates. Some reported that the mandates were used compare district performance. Teachers and principals

also believed that they did not possess the power to make changes to the accountability system as their opinions went largely ignored by policymakers and the state department of education. Where teachers in Brown's (1993) study were unable to speak to the purpose of accountability mandates, teacher participants in this study were able to communicate what they believed to be the purpose of NCLB.

Implications for Practice

Teaching in the era of increased accountability is a massive job and requires one to be able to multitask effectively. Teachers' experiences with accountability mandates under NCLB help frame their perception of federal education policy. For those experiencing increased control and support, federal education policy can empower teachers to employ a variety of methods to help their students meet or exceed grade-level expectations. For teachers experiencing decreased support, increased responsibility, and decreased control, federal education policy can be intrusive and constraining. There is a need for school districts and schools to clearly explain federal education policy, its impact on classroom teachers and local schools, and the expectations that teachers are expected to meet in order to help the district and state meet its goals. There are several ways that this can be achieved.

All of the participants were asked to provide recommendations for training activities that they thought would be helpful in the transition from NCLB to ESSA. Almost every participant suggested that the school district provide training that explains the basic tenets of the new education policy. Further, they felt that the training should outline what the expectations were for schools and teachers as well as a description of changes to the funding formula. The teacher participants suggested that this knowledge would be helpful for alleviating some of

the uncertainty that comes with new policies and procedures.

Once expectations and understandings are clear, more attention should be given to supporting teachers as they begin to feel the impact of the new education policy in their classrooms. In order for district personnel and building administrators to support the implementation, they should also receive training so they know how to support teachers and monitor implementation. Building administrators should also know how to encourage teachers who have negative perceptions of federal education policies to implement any required changes with fidelity. Additionally, they have to be able to monitor and adjust for the staff in their building in the event that an implementation strategy fails to yield positive results for students.

The district has a variety of strategies to provide information to teachers. Building administrators meet regularly with district personnel and take information provided back to their schools, the district superintendent sends an email correspondence when important information needs to be given to teachers, and instructional resource teachers also meet with district personnel and take information about curriculum changes back to teachers. Even so, the dissemination of information pertaining to ESSA should be delivered to teachers either through building administrators and/or the instructional resource teachers. Disseminating the information through email would not be the most appropriate option because it does not guarantee that the information will be viewed by those who are critical to the success of the implementation. Training efforts should be focused and made available to all teachers.

Implications for Future Research

The research questions and the interview questions were designed to assist in the examination of veteran teachers' perceptions of the relationship between No Child Left Behind accountability mandates and their classroom instructional practices. Analyzing the participants' responses, there would seem to be greater impact on high school teachers versus middle school teachers. While all teacher participants reported some degree of change, high school teachers reported the greatest level of change to the actual content they delivered to students. As such, the high school teacher participants reported that they were either semi-unsatisfied or completely unsatisfied with the profession. This is depicted in George's comment regarding the hypocrisy of the education profession and Tiffany's comments about being "over [teaching]". Both teachers discussed barriers to learning that influenced the instructional strategies that they used in their classrooms. It seemed as though those barriers to learning were a large part of their dissatisfaction with teaching. Consideration for future research should be given to analyzing high school teachers' experiences with perceived barriers to teaching and learning.

The majority of teachers in this study could not recall attending any training before NCLB was implemented. As such, the teacher participants had been left to their own devices when it came to understanding the intent and purpose of the law and what was required of them to help their schools meet expected goals. This phenomenon, implementation without explanation, led to increased responsibility for teacher participants and loss of critical resources without them understanding why. Future research should give consideration to how teacher perceptions of the impact of federal education policy are influenced by training and messaging.

The participants in this study were made up of middle and school teachers due to a lack of response from elementary teachers. Given that the middle school teachers provided similar narratives and the high school teachers provided a similar narrative, future research should consider the narratives of elementary veteran teachers. It would be of interest to determine if their perceptions of accountability mandates' impact on their instruction aligns more with the middle school or high teachers included in this study.

Further research is also needed to understand the impact that ESSA has on classroom instruction. Ideally, it would be beneficial to the field of research to conduct one study at the start of the implementation and conduct another study a few years after ESSA is fully implemented. Doing so will encourage an understanding of how federal education policy impacts classroom teachers and their instruction.

Conclusion

This study set out to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of the relationship between No Child Left Behind accountability mandates and classroom instruction; specifically, the perceptions of veteran teachers on how these mandates have affected their practice. This was accomplished through interviewing six veteran middle and high school teachers. These teachers felt that NCLB accountability mandates had impacted their instructional decisions although the level of impact varied. Middle school teachers viewed the impact as more positive, providing examples of increased effectiveness, increased control, and increased support. The high school teachers, however, viewed the impact of accountability mandates as more negative, providing examples of decreased effectiveness, decreased flexibility, and decreased support.

Teacher participants reported varied levels of satisfaction in teaching due to the implementation of NCLB's accountability mandates. The middle school teacher participants were generally more satisfied due to the support they received from peers and feeling like each year they were better at their jobs. The high school teacher participants were less satisfied with teaching due to frustration with a lack of resources and drastic changes made to the content they teach.

Surprisingly, the majority of the teacher participants had not received any training before NCLB was implemented in their schools. The majority also could not recall having conversations with building administrators or support personnel about how their classrooms would be impacted by NCLB. This study highlights the need for schools and districts to provide some level of professional development to staff to assist with transitions in federal education policy. This provides an opportunity for the district office or state department to disseminate the same message, clearly outline expectations and goals, and explain how classrooms will be impacted. This research failed to determine how, if at all, teacher participants felt their instructional practice would be changed by ESSA because many of the participants did not possess enough knowledge to have an opinion.

This study provides many examples that NCLB had many positive impacts on classroom instruction and teacher practices. Even so, this study also provides examples of NCLB's more negative impacts. The one thing that remains clear is teacher perceptions continue to be a major factor in their satisfaction and efficiency. As we move closer to the pending implementation of ESSA, it is important to consider the power of professional learning teams and communities. The participants in this study have made it clear that those teams are

valuable resources for teachers and they provide an opportunity to share the work. Without those teams in place, teachers can end up becoming more and more unsatisfied if they have to do the work of planning and assessing alone. We should also consider the place of technology in our schools and classrooms. Starr and Rebecca were convinced that additional technology in classrooms would provide teachers with an opportunity to work one-on-one or in small groups with their most at-risk students, which would increase teacher perceptions of effectiveness. Further exploration of this topic is needed so that the teachers doing the day-to-day implementation of these education policies feel supported, satisfied, and effective.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Initial Contact Email

Date
XXXX
Teacher
School Name

Dear XXXX,

My name is Chrishele Marshall, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis program at North Carolina State University. I asked your principal for a recommendation of a veteran classroom teacher who may be willing to participate in a small research study, and she/he suggested you.

My dissertation is a qualitative multi-case study that aims to describe and understand teachers' perceptions of the relationship between No Child Left Behind accountability mandates and classroom instruction. The study is not intended to evaluate or judge your teaching in any way. Participation will require a thirty to sixty minute interview.

If you are interested in volunteering for this study or have any clarifying questions, please contact me at cikingdo@ncsu.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Chrishele Marshall
Doctoral Student
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
College of Education
NC State University

Appendix B

Participant Welcome Letter

Greetings!

I want to begin by thanking you for your willingness to participate in this study. This study is open to teachers with more than 15 years of experience in education. I would like to understand how you perceive the relationship between accountability mandates under No Child Left Behind and your classroom instruction. To collect this information, I will use interviews that are designed to be thirty to sixty minutes in length.

During our interview(s), feel free to discuss your views openly and in any way you prefer. You may also ask me questions that you may have at any time during our discussion. Again, your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation in the study at any time.

I am the primary researcher for this study. This means that I will be overseeing the research process from start to finish. I am also the only person who will have access to the information that I collect during our discussions. When transcribing the interviews and reporting my findings, I will use the pseudonym that you choose. I understand that the discussion of your opinions regarding No Child Left Behind is not something that takes place often in the school setting, so the protection of your identity is of the highest priority to me.

Again, thank you for your willingness to participate in this study! Once you have completed and returned the Participant Demographic Form I will contact you to schedule your interview. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach me at 919-436-5996 or cikingdo@ncsu.edu.

Respectfully,

Chrishele Marshall

Appendix C
Participant Demographic Form

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study! Please take your time and answer each of the following questions in the survey.

1. Please choose a pseudonym (for use in the final work)

2. What is the best phone number to reach you at? _____
3. What is your email address?

4. How long have you been teaching? _____
5. Which states have you taught in over the course of your career?

6. What types of schools have you taught at over the course of your career? (High-performing, low-performing, Title I, etc.)

7. What grades have you taught?

Appendix D
Participant Consent Form

North Carolina State University

INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: Instructional Change in the Era of No Child Left Behind: Perceptions of Veteran Teachers

Principal Investigator: Chrishele Marshall

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form, you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher named above.

What is the purpose of this study? The purpose of this study is to understand veteran teachers' perceptions of the relationship between accountability mandates under No Child Left Behind and their classroom practice.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a list of activities:

- **Interview:** 30-60 minutes. This interview will consist of questions that allow the instructor to discuss their beliefs about No Child Left Behind and its impact on their classroom instruction. It will be conducted prior to the collection of any classroom observation data. The interview will take place in a location convenient for the instructor. The interview will be audio-recorded.

Risks

There are no physical or emotional risks associated with participation in this study.

Benefits

I will share the study findings with the instructors which will allow them to reflect further on their classroom practice.

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely by the principle investigator. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. You will not be asked to write your name on any study materials so that no one can match your identity to the answers that you provide.

Compensation

For participating in this study, you will receive a \$25 Visa gift card at the completion of data collection. If you withdraw from the study prior to its completion, you will not receive any compensation and all data that has been collected up to that point will be destroyed.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact Chrishele Marshall at cikingdo@ncsu.edu.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated per the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919-515-4514).

Consent to Participate

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Indicate **YES** or **NO**:

- I give consent to be audiotaped during this study.
- Yes No I give consent for video data resulting from this study to be used for presentations on the study’s findings.
 Yes No

Subject's signature _____ **Date** _____

Investigator's signature _____ **Date**

Appendix E

Interview Protocol

Say: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I have some questions regarding your beliefs about No Child Left Behind as well as your classroom instruction. I would like to record this interview so that I can focus on what you are saying. The audio-recorder will be used to capture your responses because I will not be able to document everything by hand. Is that okay? I will be taking minimal notes during this interview. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Questions about No Child Left Behind:

1. What do you understand about No Child Left Behind and its purpose?
2. What is your opinion of No Child Left Behind?
 - a. Do you agree or disagree with its purpose?
 - b. What are its pros and cons?
3. What do you understand about the relationship between No Child Left Behind and classroom instruction?

Questions about Classroom Instruction:

4. Describe your process of instruction. How do you decide what you're going to teach, how you're going to teach it, and when you'll teach it?
5. Think back to your classroom instruction before No Child Left Behind. Describe the instructional strategies you used.
6. Did the implementation of NCLB accountability mandates change your instructional practice?
 - a. Have changes to your instruction been mostly positive or mostly negative?
7. How, if at all, have the changes to your instructional practice influenced your satisfaction in teaching?

Questions about Training:

8. Did you participate in any school or district sponsored professional development regarding No Child Left Behind? If so, do you remember what the PD covered?
9. Was the training beneficial to you in the switch to NCLB?

Questions about ESSA:

10. What do you understand about ESSA and its purpose?

11. What concerns, if any, do you have about the impact of ESSA on your instruction?
12. What training/activities, if any, would you like to see from the district before ESSA is fully implemented in the 2017-2018 school year? Why?

Say: Is there anything you would like to add that was not asked? Thanks for your time.

Appendix F

Case Study Protocol

A. Overview of the Case Study

- a. The goal of this study is to examine veteran teachers' perceptions of the relationship between No Child Left Behind accountability mandates and changes to their professional practice. Additionally, this study will also examine the types of training and support teachers were given in the transition to NCLB.
- b. This study will be guided by the following questions using a qualitative case study approach:
 - i. What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between NCLB mandates and classroom instruction?
 - ii. Have veteran teachers' instructional practices been altered by NCLB accountability mandates? If so, in what ways?
 - iii. How do veteran teachers report that accountability mandates have influenced their experience or satisfaction in teaching?
 - iv. What training/support was provided to teachers in the transition to NCLB? How did this training impact their instructional practice?
- c. This is an exploratory case study.
- d. This protocol serves as an agenda for the study's line of inquiry.

B. Data Collection Procedures

- a. Person responsible for fieldwork: Chrishele Marshall
- b. Interviews will be conducted with veteran teachers

C. Data Collection Questions

a. Questions about No Child Left Behind

- i. What do you understand about No Child Left Behind and its purpose?
- ii. What is your opinion of No Child Left Behind?
 - 1. Do you agree or disagree with its purpose?
 - 2. What are its pros and cons?
- iii. What do you understand about the relationship between No Child Left Behind and classroom instruction?

b. Questions about Training:

- i. Did you participate in any school or district sponsored professional development regarding No Child Left Behind? If so, do you remember what the PD covered?
- ii. Was the training beneficial to you in the switch to NCLB?

c. Questions about Classroom Instruction:

- i. Think back to your classroom instruction before No Child Left Behind. Describe the instructional strategies you used.
- ii. Did the implementation of NCLB accountability mandates change your instructional practice?
 1. Have changes to your instruction been mostly positive or mostly negative?
- iii. How, if at all, have the changes to your instructional practice influenced your satisfaction in teaching?

Appendix G
List of a priori codes for analysis

Code	Description
Increased Support	Teacher makes direct/indirect reference to feeling that NCLB mandates increased support from others
Increased Control	Teacher makes direct/indirect reference to feeling that NCLB mandates increased control over how, what, and when they taught concepts
Increased Effectiveness	Teacher makes direct/indirect reference to feeling that NCLB mandates increased their ability to teach and teach well
Developmental Inappropriateness	Teacher makes direct/indirect reference to feeling that NCLB mandates did not account for the needs of different types of students
Narrowing of the Curriculum	Teacher makes direct/indirect reference to feeling that NCLB mandates required that they decreased instructional time for non-tested subjects
Decreased Flexibility	Teacher makes direct/indirect reference to feeling that NCLB mandates created pressure to use certain instructional strate-

	gies while abandoning others
Teaching to the Test	Teacher makes direct/indirect reference to feeling that they were encouraged/expected to teach test-taking strategies or to focus their instruction on the concepts that were present on the test