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# Pay-for-Performance Redux: A Comparative Case Study of Four Districts' Experiences in One State

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Pay-for-Performance Redux: A Comparative Case Study of Four Districts'  
Experiences in One State

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF  
EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS  
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

By  
Theresa Sorenson

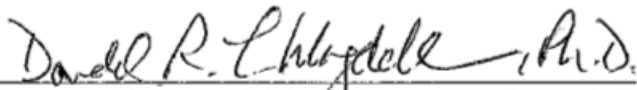
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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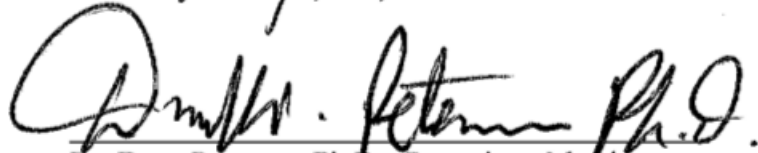
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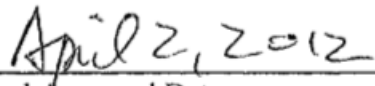
Pay-for-Performance Redux: A Comparative Case Study of Four Districts'  
Experience in One State

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

  
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I also thank my husband and children who learned to cook, clean, and wash clothes and provided countless hours of quiet work time so that I could complete this work. This dissertation has most definitely been a group effort.

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## ABSTRACT

Modern education reform in the U.S. was trending toward privatization and centralization of public education as part of a search for a policy solution that would significantly improve student achievement. This study examined MAST (Merit Accountability System for Teachers) from its inception in 2005 through 2011, the related policy rhetoric, its impact on student achievement, and its implementation in local school districts using ideal typology and grounded theory analysis. The five major findings of the study were: (a) the financial starvation of local school districts fostered a greater willingness to try new initiatives if there was money attached to them; (b) MAST failed as a pre-fabricated solution to improve student achievement by altering teacher compensation, but did prove to be a promising professional development model; (c) CSDE attempted to manipulate the MAST legislation to promote the Governor's agenda regarding teacher compensation; (d) the rhetoric used by CSDE regarding MAST shifted over time; and (e) local district leadership was important to effective MAST implementation.

## INTRODUCTION

This study explored how one state implemented the national education policy movement toward private governance of education through its attempt to transform teacher compensation. I studied the rhetoric related to Central State's Merit Accountability System for Teachers (MAST) Policy and its implementation in local school districts. This study follows the path of this performance-based pay initiative for teachers from its initial legislation in 2005 to the program as implemented by public school districts in Central State through 2011.

When I began this study, I was uncertain about the feasibility of MAST, but the concept of compensation based on performance resonated with my experience with compensation methods in the business sector. I worked in the private sector for 10 years in a marketing and middle management capacity. Performance-based compensation seemed to be an effective tool for retaining quality employees and encouraging weaker ones to voluntarily seek employment elsewhere. As a teacher, in addition to many other hard-working and effective teachers, I saw some teachers working their contractual duty day, taking no work home. I saw those same teachers knitting and passing notes in faculty meetings. I did not understand how they could behave that way and keep their jobs, other than that they must have performed differently until they achieved tenure.

Intellectually, I understood the reason for tenure—the protection of academic freedom and the protection from dismissal solely because a teacher had climbed too high on the compensation schedule and could be replaced by a newer, cheaper teacher. However, I have seen too many district administrators keep poor-performing, tenured teachers because the process to remove a tenured teacher was time consuming and costly,

and at the end of the process, the district may have been forced to keep the teacher anyway. I have also seen too many new, talented teachers forced out of their job because of seniority rules, while poor-performing, veteran teachers comfortably keep theirs.

When I taught, I thought I did a good job and welcomed the idea of being paid based on my performance. I never joined the teachers' union and resented the "fair share" portion of union dues being taken out of every paycheck. I would have been happy to negotiate my own compensation and from time to time saw union rules and politics get in the way of educating students. There was definitely a time in my work as an educator when I would have fully supported a de-unionized, non-tenured faculty that was compensated based on their performance as educators. However, as I have learned more about public education practices in Central State and merit-based compensation plans both in my work as an educator and through the research conducted for this study, I increasingly had more doubts about the effectiveness of performance-based compensation as an effective tool to increase student achievement in the public school setting.

I believed that the drive to align teacher compensation practices with those of the business sector was part of a larger push to open the public education market sector to private enterprise. At the time of this research, public education was a \$712 billion industry and was a largely untapped market. However, that was changing. The marketing materials I used to receive at school were occasional mailings from textbook companies and professional organizations. By the time this study occurred, I received multiple e-mails, phone calls, catalogs, and brochures promoting the latest product or program to increase student achievement and raise test scores on a daily basis. These materials

sounded a lot like ads for weight loss products—“with just six weeks of using this product in your classroom, all of your students will be achieving at or above grade level.” These new companies capitalized on educators’ fears of students not achieving adequate yearly progress like the diet pill pushers capitalized on our fears of being overweight. Weight loss industry products have about a one percent success rate, and from what I had seen, the student achievement gimmicks worked about as well, but desperate educators, like desperate dieters, were willing to try just about anything for success.

These new education product and consulting companies and their programs were not regulated or tested. There was no endorsement of efficacy other than from the companies themselves. I believed the greater motivator for these companies was profit. While working at a large medical device company, I learned the profit lesson first-hand. The company’s rhetoric was all about developing products to improve patients’ quality of life, and employees heard this on a daily basis. It was also a part of the company’s mission statement. Through researching potential new markets for the company, I discovered a disease that could be palliated by one of our existing products, resulting in improved quality of life. The incidence rate (the number of people who would contract the disease each year) for this disease was about 13,000 patients per year in the U.S. When I presented this potential new market to upper management, I was told that because the incidence rate was so low, there was not enough money in it to pursue getting FDA approval and marketing the device for this purpose. I was young, naïve, and had to ask about the mission statement and how the company could turn its back on 13,000 people a year that could be helped by a product we already had. I was told that the company’s first

loyalty was to the shareholders and that it only cared about improving a patient's quality of life if there was a big enough market to turn a sizeable profit for investors.

Over the years that I worked in a corporate setting, I experienced many things that would not be palatable in educating students. These things included giving physicians more company stock to encourage them to provide favorable research results and not to publish unfavorable results and not pursuing cures for diseases that not enough of the "right people" had, and making the "right donations" to open market doors. I believed that these types of practices, if implemented in the education sector, would have a negative effect on student achievement, especially for those students who need more support in order to learn.

It was also essential to note that private sector companies were continuously searching for easy-entry, untapped markets. That was exactly the kind of market they hoped education would be, and many private sector companies were lobbying hard and making the right donations to open the education market for their wares. However, based on my experience in the private industry sector and the research gathered for this study, I believed that increased student achievement was likely secondary to the profits gained from being able to access this previously untapped market. It was difficult for me to otherwise explain why companies would invest so much time and money to open the market when there were so many decades of failed education policies that promised to significantly improve student achievement. Additionally, research data that showed that any educational program or methodology significantly increased student achievement did not exist. In fact, there was data that showed that the most significant factor in

determining student achievement was the mother's socio-economic status and that schools had very little ability to overcome that influence in any significant way.

Although it seemed like a relatively new phenomenon, performance-based pay for teachers was in existence since at least the mid 1800s and performance-based plans have come and gone ever since. In 1862 England established the "Payment by Results" teacher compensation system (Nelson, 2001). Payment by results was abolished in 1897, but as "Payment by Results" was dying in England, performance-based pay for teachers was gaining popularity in the United States (Nelson, 2001). By 1918 almost half of the school districts in the U.S. were using a performance-based pay system for teachers, but within 10 years 30% of those districts had abandoned their performance-based compensation systems (Harris, 2007). Interest in merit pay in the U.S. increased after the 1957 launch of the Russian satellite, Sputnik, and again in the 1980s after "A Nation at Risk," a report that was highly critical of public education, was published (Harris, 2007).

I studied MAST in order to determine what, if any, relationship existed between MAST, de-unionization of public workers, and the increased number of private sector organizations providing educational services. I analyzed communication disseminated through formal communication channels by federal, state, and local policy makers and conducted interviews of teachers, administrators, school officials, and school board members in Central State. Despite the early rhetoric of MAST being a significant tool to reform teacher compensation and increase student achievement, it seemed to have accomplished little in terms of teacher compensation reform; however, it did appear to serve as a promising model for effective professional development for educators.

At the time of this research, most school districts in Central State were struggling financially to maintain the kind of educational programs that would result in a high quality educational experience for students. Because of the financial pressures, teachers' take home salaries have been relatively flat with any compensation increases going to pay skyrocketing health care insurance premiums. As a result, I was somewhat surprised that more districts did not implement MAST. I believed this was due to the early MAST rhetoric that really pushed the "pay-for-performance" aspect of MAST and the Central State Department of Education's insistence that the traditional steps and lanes salary schedule be completely eliminated. Those were two huge culture changes for unions to accept.

The most important things I learned from conducting this research were: (a) how the political process really worked in Central State, (b) how political appointees served to advance political agendas, (c) how political rhetoric influenced the perception of programs and (d) how school district leadership impacted the implementation of programs locally. Each of these things helped to shape my view of public policy implementation and leadership in Central State.

The first thing I learned was how the political process really worked in Central State. At first when I was watching legislative sessions, I was appalled that legislators were debating components of MAST and neither side had the facts correct. As I spent more time at the State Capitol, I began to understand how that happened and that it happened frequently. Legislators had mountains of reading to do regarding the many bills that were brought before them. Additionally, Legislators not only had to read and analyze the bills themselves but also the background information related to the bills on a variety



of subjects, most of which were unfamiliar to law makers. Legislators had research assistants to help, but the amount of information to be processed was overwhelming at times.

On top of the voluminous reading required, as bills went through the House and Senate, compromises were made and the bills were changed. This happened to MAST. As MAST legislation travelled through the legislative bodies, many compromises were made that softened the bill's original pay-for-performance stance. If legislators did not keep up with their reading and did not remember what they read, they were not prepared to accurately debate legislation on the floors of their respective houses. This taught me to follow the pieces of legislation that are important to me throughout the legislative process and to make sure that my representatives were as knowledgeable about them as possible, but also educated me on the political nature of the process and that this lobbying would likely have a minimal impact. In general, I was appalled that conditions existed that enabled laws to be made this way.

The second thing I learned was that political appointees could hold significant power to shape the implementation of laws passed by the Legislature. The final language of the MAST bill was vague enough so that parts of the bill could be interpreted much the same as the bill was initially introduced. One specific example of this that was important in this research was the definition of "reform" as it applied to the traditional step and lane compensation used by the majority of teachers' unions and school districts throughout Central State. The Central State Commissioner of Education, Lydia Mahoney, was appointed by the Governor and led the Central State Department of Education (CSDE). CSDE's definition of "reform" was that the traditional step and lane compensation had to

be eliminated and replaced with a different compensation model. However, many local school districts defined “reform” as that the traditional step and lane compensation had to be changed, but could still exist in some form. Since CSDE approved MAST applications, in most cases, CSDE’s definition of reform prevailed. Options for appealing CSDE’s decisions on local school districts’ application were limited, and included suing CSDE. This was a time consuming and expensive option for financially strapped school districts, so largely CSDE had the power to prevail over local school districts.

The third thing I learned was that the rhetoric used to promote an initiative could have a significant impact on its implementation. The hard-charging “pay-for-performance” rhetoric of the Governor and CSDE cast the teachers’ unions as the villains and the cause of inadequate student achievement in Central State. This was generally well-received by the public who largely worked in the business sector, but not by teachers. Since teachers’ unions had the power to vote for or against MAST participation locally, the rhetoric needed to resonate with them as well. The Governor’s and CSDE’s inability to court the teachers’ unions led to limited local school district participation in MAST.

Eventually, CSDE and, to a lesser extent, the Governor changed the focus of their rhetoric from the pay-for-performance to the professional development aspects of MAST. However, this realization came too late. The teachers’ unions were already cast as the villains and were generally reluctant to participate in a program that was designed to weaken them.

The fourth thing I learned was that local leaders really did have the ability to positively influence program implementation at the local level, provided that they

understood the political nature and rhetoric of the program they hoped to implement.

Leaders of local school districts who were able to see MAST from the point of view of the teachers' union and "translate" the pay-for-performance rhetoric of CSDE and the Governor into the rewarding teachers and professional development rhetoric that was accepted by teachers' unions were more likely to have successful MAST programs in their school districts.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE HISTORY OF U.S. TEACHER COMPENSATION MODELS

In order to understand the current rhetoric regarding what I call “MAST” in this research and how it fits within the broader scope of education reform, we must first understand the history of teacher compensation and relevant education reforms that have set the stage for this most current debate on teacher compensation and student achievement.

### Compensation Level

In colonial America, compensation and social status for teachers was structured with college teachers receiving the highest pay and status, secondary teachers receiving the middle pay and status, and elementary teachers receiving the lowest pay and status (Butts & Cremin, 1953). Teacher salaries needed to be supplemented so that teachers could survive, and many teachers gained additional income from farming, shepherding, tavern keeping, and skilled trades (Butts & Cremin, 1953). As a result, teaching was viewed as something to do until a teacher could find a better job (Butts & Cremin, 1953).

In the 1800s a connection was made between low teacher salaries and the competency level of teachers (Butts & Cremin, 1953). Similarly to today’s rhetoric, calls for increasing teacher salaries to attract more competent individuals to the profession were made repeatedly, but salaries remained low until the 1920s (Butts & Cremin, 1953). Teacher salaries peaked around 1930, declined to their lowest level by 1935, and nearly regained their 1930 level by 1940 (Butts & Cremin, 1953). In 1951-1952 average teacher salaries reached an all-time high of \$3,300 per year (adjusted for inflation) (Butts &

Cremin, 1953). Teacher salaries increased an average of 84% between 1925 and 1949, but the earnings of production workers in industry rose 125%, and increases in dollar salaries for teachers were virtually wiped out by the rise in the cost of living and tax increases (Butts & Cremin, 1953).

In the early 1980s, the Carnegie Forum recommended that teachers be paid higher salaries in general to attract more competent teachers and that teacher compensation be linked to performance and National Board certification and that teachers should have more responsibilities (Chubb & Moe, 1986, June 24). At the time of this research, there was still an abundance of rhetoric surrounding the idea of paying teachers more if they taught in troubled schools or in areas where teacher shortages existed. To implement this type of compensation model would have necessitated a change in the traditional step and lane method of teacher compensation that had all teachers earning the same amount of money based on education level and years of experience regardless of which subject the teacher taught or which school within a district a teacher worked.

However, at the time of this research, in terms of general compensation levels, the debate continued about whether or not teachers were paid fairly relative to other professions. Recent data regarding the equity of teacher compensation was mixed. According to the Census Bureau (2004) and National Education Association (NEA), in 2002 salaries for lawyers were \$77,100, \$72,400 for engineers, \$52,300 for accountants, and \$41,800 for teachers (Cameron, 2005). In some states the beginning salary for teachers was only \$23,000 (Cameron, 2005). The poverty threshold for a two-person household in 2002 was \$12,047 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). However, data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found that the average public school teacher was paid

36% more than the average white-collar worker in 2005 (Honawar, 2007, April 18).

Teacher union leaders strongly opposed this data because it did not take into account the extra hours a teacher worked outside of the school day (Honawar, 2007, April 18).

However, based on my experience, the same argument could have been made for salaried workers. In the companies I worked for, employees' salaries were based on a 40-hour work week with no extra compensation for additional time spent working. However, employees were responsible for performing all duties for which they were responsible.

This often took more than the 40 hours for which the employees were compensated.

Despite the rhetoric that MAST would modernize teacher salaries and increase teacher performance, this brief history shows that the educational debate regarding teacher compensation and competency had changed little in 200 years.

### Uniform Salary Schedule

One of the methods of teacher compensation was the uniform salary schedule. The uniform salary schedule was a compensation system that compensated teachers based on their education level and years of service. It was developed in the early 1920s and gained widespread appeal in the 1950s as a way of creating equity in compensation rates between largely female elementary teachers and largely male high school teachers and was currently used by nearly all school districts in the U.S. (Koppich, 2005). Teacher performance was not a factor in determining teacher compensation in traditional uniform salary schedule plans.

There were a number of advantages to using a uniform salary schedule. Advantages included: (a) freedom for teachers to teach how and what they wanted within

district guidelines, (b) provided a predictable budget for school districts, (c) promoted positive relationships among teachers, (d) promoted the perception of objectivity, and (e) required minimal administrative costs (Harris, 2007). With a uniform salary schedule teachers could experiment and learn new, ultimately more effective, techniques without worrying about a temporary dip in student achievement (Harris, 2007). In districts where there were significant social needs or a transient population, a willingness for teachers to learn new techniques to reach these students was extremely important (Harris, 2007). A uniform salary schedule allowed school districts to accurately budget personnel costs. District administrators could easily look at the previous year's compensation levels, add the appropriate dollars for step and lane changes, and make basic assumptions regarding retirees and new hires to determine a reasonably accurate estimate of projected compensation costs. Since there was no ranking of teacher performance on a uniform salary schedule, teachers had no incentive to undermine the performance of others and were more likely to help each other succeed (Harris, 2007). Teachers also believed that the uniform salary schedule was objective and minimized favoritism (Viadero, 2007). Because there were minimal costs associated with implementing a uniform salary schedule, this compensation method also saved districts money (Harris, 2007).

However, critics of uniform salary schedules have noted potential disadvantages. These included: (a) discouraging good teachers, (b) negatively impacting teacher recruitment and retention (especially in poor districts), (c) failing to provide incentives for teachers to work to their potential, and (d) providing inappropriate rewards (Ritter & Lucas, 2005). Good teachers could become discouraged because their hard work went unrewarded financially. Teachers who worked extra hours improving their skill and

instruction were paid at the same rate as those who put forth a minimal effort, so there was little to no financial incentive to learn and implement new best-practice strategies (Hershberg & Lea-Kruger, 2007). Performance was not rewarded in a uniform salary schedule, and as a result, performance-driven candidates who would be excellent teachers may have been discouraged from entering into the profession (Vigdor, 2008). Instead, the uniform salary schedule may have actually dissuaded many potential teachers due to teachers' low starting salaries (Vigdor, 2008). Because pay was not linked to performance in the uniform salary schedule model, there was no financial incentive for teachers to work hard or implement best-practice strategies (Vigdor, 2008), thus eliminating a potentially effective method of teacher motivation.

The uniform salary schedule rewarded teachers for longevity in their teaching career and attainment of advanced education; however, these were not necessarily characteristics of high-performing teachers (Vigdor, 2008). There was evidence that experience positively impacted teaching during the first few years, but had little impact thereafter (Vigdor, 2008). Likewise, advanced degrees have been shown to have little impact on teacher effectiveness in the classroom (Vigdor, 2008).

### History of Merit-based Models

A second teacher compensation method was pay-for-performance or merit-based models. Although merit-based models were often touted as innovative and modern, pay-for-performance teacher compensation models were found as early as 1862 when, in England, the Payment by Results teacher compensation model was established (Nelson, 2001). Payment by Results compensated teachers based on student attendance and exam



scores (Nelson, 2001). Payment by Results lasted for 35 years but ended when school inspectors who initiated the program retired and criticized it, and teachers unionized and gained power over their working environment (Nelson, 2001).

Similar to criticisms of modern merit-based compensation models, criticisms of Payment by Results included skepticism that a test could accurately measure everything that was important about education, inability to account for normal fluctuations in student population outside of a teacher's control, incentives for teachers to cheat and/or focus only on the tested material, inconsistency of the test and testing environment, and incentives for teachers to move to wealthier schools where there were fewer perceived social problems that would negatively impact test scores and attendance (Nelson, 2001). Over time, there was more evidence gathered that indicated that Payment by Results encouraged negative teacher behaviors that did not promote quality teaching rather than its intended result of encouraging teachers to perform at higher levels (Nelson, 2001). As a result, teacher autonomy became the newly recommended standard in England after Payment by Results ended (Nelson, 2001).

As Payment by Results was failing in England, interest in merit-based models grew in the U.S. By 1918 almost half of the school districts in the U.S. were using a merit-based teacher compensation model (Gratz, 2005). These models were generally short-lived. For example, in 1917, when the St. Paul, MN School District attempted to introduce merit pay, it created extreme tension between teachers, their unions, administrators, and civic associations (Harris, 2007). The District was polarized on the issue of merit pay for teachers, and after 14 teachers and principals were fired for voicing opposition to the plan, the pro-merit pay superintendent resigned to accept a higher

paying position in another school district, and the merit pay plan was abandoned (Harris, 2007). Finding that merit pay plans did more harm than good regarding teacher morale and raising similar concerns to the Payment by Results program, the number of school districts using a merit pay plan in the U.S. dropped to fewer than 18% by 1928 and further decreased to 4% by the early 1950s (Gratz, 2005).

Then, in 1957, Sputnik's launch renewed concerns about public education and raised interest in merit-based compensation programs. In 1957 approximately 10% of U.S. school districts adopted merit-based compensation plans for teachers (Gratz, 2005). However, only 4% of school districts had a merit-based teacher compensation plan in place in 1969 (Gratz, 2005).

In 1978, an Education Research Service survey found that 183 school districts had implemented merit-based compensation plans for an average of six years, and one third of the plans survived two years or less (Harris, 2007). The most common reasons districts cited for discontinuing their merit-based compensation programs included difficulty conducting evaluations, administrative issues, teacher resistance, lack of funding, and inadequate measurement tools (Harris, 2007).

After "A Nation at Risk" was published in 1983 interest in merit-based compensation plans rose again (Podgursky & Springer, 2007). By 1985, 25 states had mandated merit-based compensation programs for teachers (Harris, 2007). One of these was Houston's Second Mile Plan. Under this plan teachers were given financial incentives for low absenteeism, high student test scores, and teaching in geographic and subject shortage areas (Harris, 2007). Evaluators found conflicting results about the success of this program, and by the early 1990s Houston's program and many others

ended (Harris, 2007). When a survey similar to the Education Research Service survey was administered in 1983 the reasons districts gave for discontinuing their merit-based compensation plans were similar to those given in the Education Research Service survey (Harris, 2007). A 1993 follow-up study found that 75% of the plans studied in 1983 were discontinued (Viadero, 2007). This meant that the longevity of these plans was 10 years or less. Like the debate about teacher compensation in general, the discussion regarding merit pay had not changed much in 150 years.

## Modern Teacher Compensation Models

### *Merit-based Models*

At the time of this research, there were two main merit-based teacher compensation models (Odden, 2009). The first was an outcome-based model that linked teacher compensation to the students' performance (Harris, 2007). The second was a performance-based model that linked teacher compensation to the teacher's performance (Harris, 2007).

Advantages of these merit-based teacher compensation models included providing incentives for teachers to work hard, improving teacher recruitment and retention, and gaining political support for education (Odden, 2009). The logic was that hard-working, performance-driven teachers may be more attracted to the teaching profession if they believed they would be rewarded for their hard work and strong performance (Odden, 2009). This was similar to the piece rate method of compensation used in manufacturing where employees were paid based on the amount of goods they produced (Smith, 1982). At the time of this research, there was strong political support for merit-based

compensation models. Districts and states that implemented merit-based compensation models found that legislators were more willing to approve funding increases for public education if they felt those increases would reward high-performing teachers (Podgursky & Springer, 2007).

Disadvantages of merit-based compensation models included a lack of long-term commitment to funding and support, teachers' insensitivity to financial rewards, an imperfect understanding of what merit-based compensation models were, and a lack of support for improvement (Harris, 2007).

Since the inception of Payment by Results in 1862, many merit-based compensation models have come and gone. Historically, the biggest problem with merit-based compensation models was that school districts could not or would not pay the merit compensation to teachers as promised (Cameron, 2005). Most merit-based compensation plans failed because of inadequate funding, and every time a merit-based compensation plan failed, teacher morale decreased and union cynicism increased (Cameron, 2005). School districts and state departments of education often found themselves unable to honor commitments when the Legislature cut their budgets (Harris, 2007). For example, California promised teachers performance bonuses in 1999 as part of its merit-based compensation model, but the state found itself in a budget shortfall and never paid the bonuses (Harris, 2007). Similarly, voters and school districts could freeze or rollback property taxes, leaving district officials unable to honor the financial commitments of their merit-based compensation plan (Harris, 2007). When districts were forced to cut their budgets, merit-based compensation plans were often the first programs to be cut (Olson, 2007, October 3).

Support for merit-based compensation plans was dependent upon political and district leaders' views on teacher compensation. As elected officials and district leaders came and went, so did support for merit-based compensation (Harris, 2007). At the time of this research, the average tenure for school superintendents was seven and a half years, while the election cycle for most elected officials ranged between four and six years (Harris, 2007). These tenures were significantly shorter than a teaching career, and may have impacted teachers' willingness to adopt new plans (Harris, 2007).

Merit-based compensation models were based on the assumption that teachers would work harder and improve their performance for monetary rewards. However, teachers tended to de-emphasize monetary rewards in favor of developing relationships with people, thus making them somewhat less sensitive to monetary rewards than people in other professions (Harris, 2007). Seventy-five percent of new teachers believed they were seriously underpaid, making it unlikely that they became teachers for the money (Harris, 2007). Additionally, normative pressure on new teachers may have further de-emphasized the importance of monetary rewards in the teaching profession. Zhijuan, Verstegen, and Kim (2008) found that monetary rewards were of even less importance to teachers early and late in their careers.

For example, in a study of novice teachers, given the choice between working in a district with higher pay or one with highly motivated and effective teachers, 75% of the teachers studied chose the district with highly motivated and effective teachers (Harris, 2007). In a second study, when novice and veteran teachers were asked about a merit-based compensation plan, they responded that they were motivated by gains in student achievement, positive recognition, and fear of sanctions, but that additional compensation

was not particularly motivating (Harris, 2007). This may have been because the monetary rewards in merit-based compensation plans tended to be small and may have been too small to provide teachers the incentive to change their behavior or improve performance (Harris, 2007).

However in a study of merit-based compensation plans in Kentucky, when given the choice to designate rewards for student achievement to either compensate students or teachers, 98% of teachers voted to designate the rewards for teacher compensation (Harris, 2007). This data corresponded to a 2008 study by Zhijuan, et al.(2008) that found teachers' job satisfaction was most strongly related to school climate, with teacher compensation being the second most important factor.

Most merit-based compensation models were complex and implementation plans varied from district to district, and teachers may not have understood what they needed to do to receive the merit-based compensation (Harris, 2007). This confusion could have led to undesired behaviors and teachers becoming frustrated with the plan and discontinuing their support for it (Harris, 2007).

Some teachers may have worked harder and improved their teaching skills in a merit-based compensation plan; however, others may have wanted to improve their teaching but did not know how to do it (Harris, 2007). Merit-based compensation assumed that teachers knew how to perform, but were choosing not to due to a lack of motivation. Additionally, merit-based compensation models created incentives for teachers to hide their weaknesses rather than share them and work to improve them (Harris, 2007).

Evidence relating merit-based teacher compensation to increased student achievement was inconclusive. Some studies linked merit-based teacher compensation to increased student achievement, but it was unknown whether school districts that choose to implement merit-based compensation already had systems in place that promoted student achievement, developed systems to improve student achievement concurrently with the implementation of merit-based pay, or if the merit-based compensation was the cause of increased student achievement (Harris, 2007). However, researchers like Hanushek and Lindseth (2009) believed that none of the teacher compensation models that had been tried led to significant gains in student achievement. Many researchers felt that more data was needed. For example, according to Matthew Springer, Director of the National Center on Performance Incentives at Vanderbilt University, "We don't know if pay-for-performance is an effective policy. We don't know how it should be designed. We know more research is needed. It is critical that a program of this magnitude is rigorously and independently evaluated" (Honawar, 2007, October 24, p. 6).

### *Performance-based Models*

Performance-based compensation models were a subset of merit-based models that provided teachers financial incentives to improve their teaching in relation to specific pedagogical methodology and content-based criteria (Harris, 2007). Advantages of this model included being able to reward teachers without having to account for complicated factors such as students' backgrounds, providing teachers with concrete feedback on how to improve their performance, and understanding the plans and what teachers had to do to receive the additional compensation was relatively easy (Harris, 2007). However, most of

the indicators of quality teaching were difficult to measure (Podgursky & Springer, 2007).

In large part, this difficulty was due to the fact that there was no single set of best-practice teaching methods. In addition, administrator preference and skill may have influenced assessments (Podgursky & Springer, 2007). For example, sometimes administrators used low benchmarks to try to build a team or inflate teacher performance scores in hopes that teachers would live up to them (Harris, 2007). Additionally, administrators may have faced pressure to minimize the amount of money spent on rewards, or to keep average ratings at or below a certain level due to budgetary constraints (Harris, 2007).

Evaluators needed to be trained in identifying and measuring indicators of quality teaching, and more frequent teacher observations were necessary (Podgursky & Springer, 2007). Additional time had to be spent observing and documenting compensation decisions (Rothstein, 2005). These factors made performance-based models more expensive to administer.

In addition, it was possible for teachers to abuse performance-based compensation models by focusing their efforts only on those items that were measured and ignoring items that were equally as important, but not measured (Harris, 2007). This behavior was observed in studies of NFL quarterbacks and computer programmers receiving performance-based compensation (Harris, 2007).

Thus, there were several unintended consequences of performance-based compensation that would potentially arise. These models included incentives for undesirable teacher behavior (Harris, 2007). Teachers may have attempted to influence



higher-achieving students to join their classrooms and to encourage lower-achieving students to transfer to a different teacher or school (Harris, 2007). Teachers who excelled at working with challenging students may have been discouraged from doing so (Harris, 2007). Additionally, districts had a financial incentive to limit professional development opportunities because having more effective teachers would place an increased financial burden on school districts (Harris, 2007).

### *Outcome-based Models*

Whereas merit- and performance-based compensation models were concerned with teacher behavior, outcome-based compensation models were a type of merit-based compensation model that focused on student achievement (Harris, 2007). Outcome-based compensation was based on student achievement results measured by a set of standardized criteria. This was typically measured by a standardized test that all students in a particular grade level throughout a district or state took to measure their proficiency on the tested material. Advantages of outcome-based compensation models were that (a) they were purportedly objective, (b) teachers were free to use their own desired methods to achieve results, and (c) teachers were encouraged to strengthen areas of weakness (Harris, 2007).

Disadvantages of outcome-based compensation models include: (a) teachers being unwilling to base their compensation on factors that were outside of their control, (b) the plans were more complex, (c) they were expensive to administer, (d) they promoted a short-term and one-dimensional vision of student achievement typically measured by standardized tests, and (e) the ability to cheat on those tests (Harris, 2007). National

teacher unions were opposed to merit-based teacher compensation, especially outcome-based models (Honawar, 2007, October 24). This opposition could make implementation difficult.

In addition to the above disadvantages, student test scores were reflective of more than teacher performance. Items such as parental support, socio-economic status, language barriers, and disability affected students' test scores but were outside of a teacher's control (Harris, 2007). Teachers were generally unwilling to support plans that tied their compensation to factors outside of their control (Harris, 2007). Additionally, this provided an unintended incentive for teachers to avoid working in schools where students had many social problems or for teachers to encourage students with social problems or low ability to transfer to other classrooms or schools (Harris, 2007).

Measuring student achievement through standardized testing was also problematic due to the one-dimensional aspect of the tests. Standardized tests typically focused on reading and math because districts were required to measure student achievement in these areas as part of No Child Left Behind legislation. Not every teacher taught math or reading. Some districts allowed groups of teachers, for example, all music teachers, to develop a common standardized assessment that would be used district-wide; however, that still did not address the factors mentioned above that were simply out of a teacher's control. Additionally, school social workers and counselors typically were part of the teachers' union and were compensated under the district's and teachers' union's master agreement. They did not teach content that could even be measured one-dimensionally through a standardized test.

To combat some of the problems with standardized testing as a measure of student learning, school districts devised value-added compensation plans that tried to measure the teachers' contributions to student learning (Harris, 2007). These were also referred to as "growth models." Under this type of model, the student's previous standardized test score was recorded, then a standardized rate of growth was calculated and added to the student's previous test score to determine the student's new "target" score. Meeting the new target score would mean that the student learned an appropriate amount of material as determined by the standardized test. One drawback of value-added compensation plans was that they may have reinforced low student expectations because student growth was based on past performance (Harris, 2007).

Value-added compensation plans were more complex than other outcome-based pay systems and teachers were often unwilling to endorse plans they did not understand (Harris, 2007). Both straightforward outcome based compensation models and value-added compensation models assumed that a teacher's impact on student learning was easily measurable. This was often deliberated among educators. Moreover, in subject areas where students were not tested in a standardized manner, this was exceedingly difficult (Harris, 2007). Teachers in art, physical education, music, special education, and other specialty areas such as counselors and social workers had concerns about how they would be measured (Harris, 2007).

Determining a teacher's impact on student learning could be difficult and required a significant amount of observation and documentation of compensation decisions, making outcome-based compensation models expensive to administer (Harris, 2007). The

expense required for administering this type of model left school districts with less money to pay teachers (Harris, 2007).

There were also a few negative unintended consequences of outcome-based compensation. One unintended consequence of outcome-based compensation models was that they provided teachers with incentives to take a short-term approach to student achievement. Traditionally, students were often exposed to concepts numerous times in increasing complexity several years before the concept was tested in a standardized manner (Harris, 2007). In outcome-based models, teachers had an incentive to focus only on material that was being tested in the current school year (Harris, 2007). Thus teachers may not have introduced and taught students material that would be tested in future years and that they needed to be successful in following years thus limiting students' long-term academic achievement (Harris, 2007). Another unintended consequence of outcome-based compensation models was that they provided teachers incentives to cheat on tests (Harris, 2007).

Outcome-based models were also a boon to private industry, creating a relatively new and much expanded economic sector. Supplemental education service providers, such as those that provided additional instruction and support for students who lacked educational proficiency, benefitted from outcome-based compensation. This type of in-person, on-site support came with the highest cost of private providers of education services. Online providers also provided additional instruction and support, but at a reduced cost compared to in-person providers. Online providers tailored their support to student needs based on student performance on online assessments administered by the provider. Student lessons were then generated through a database of lessons and selected

to provide more practice in areas where students scored poorly. In my experience, these companies appeared to benefit from the fears of school personnel, students, and their families that their students were in some way deficient and would be “left behind” without some type of intervention beyond what the regular classroom could provide. In my experience, there were also companies that appeared to benefit from teachers’ fears of inadequate student test scores by promising to teach the teacher how to raise his/her students’ test scores through teacher professional development.

### *Individual, Group, and Hybrid Merit-based Rewards*

In addition to being performance- or outcome-based, merit-based compensation models could be based on individual, group, or a combination of individual and group rewards. The following paragraphs describe the similarities and differences of each of these models.

Individual rewards encouraged high-performing teachers to remain in education and lower performing teachers to leave the profession (Harris, 2007). However individual rewards provided no incentives for teachers to help each other or perform non-measured tasks, such as student supervision, that help a school run smoothly (Harris, 2007). Additionally, determining which part of a student success an individual teacher was responsible for was difficult to do simply and fairly (Harris, 2007).

Group rewards could be either outcome- or performance-based; however, they tended to be outcome-based and generally focused on student achievement (Odden, 2000). Group rewards tended to be easier to measure and less costly to administer (Harris, 2007). They also provided incentives for teachers to engage in tasks that helped

the school run smoothly (Harris, 2007). However group rewards did not ensure that all teachers were working together to achieve school district goals. Some may not have believed that their work was significant enough to impact the results of the school or district as a whole (Odden, 2000). Friction could arise between teachers who were working hard and those who received a "free ride" based on the work of others (Harris, 2007). Additionally teachers may have had incentives to avoid working at low-performing schools (Harris, 2007). Teachers naturally had a preference toward schools where there were high achieving students, and group incentives may have strengthened this tendency (Harris, 2007). Group reward models did little to provide incentives to high achieving teachers because the impact of their work was diluted, but low-quality teachers had incentives to remain in the profession because high-quality teachers' work helped increase their compensation (Harris, 2007). Hybrid rewards combined some individual rewards with some group rewards.

### *Piece-rate Rewards*

Piece rate reward models compensated teachers for achieving a predetermined, fixed goal or outcome (Harris, 2007). In this model, there was no incentive to undermine the work of others to improve one's ranking because there was no limit to the number of teachers who could receive the reward; however, this made budgeting difficult for school districts (Harris, 2007). One study found that 17% of school districts eliminated their piece-rate, merit-based compensation models because they were too expensive to maintain (Harris, 2007). In this model teachers may have worked together to refuse to

meet the standard in an attempt to try to lower the standard (Harris, 2007). This behavior was a common problem in the factory setting (Harris, 2007).

### *Relative Ranking or Tournament Rewards*

Relative ranking or tournament reward models established a percentage of teachers who would receive rewards and teachers received those rewards based on their relative ranking among other teachers in the district, thus making it easier for districts to remain within their budget (Harris, 2007). In this model, teachers had the unintended incentive to undermine the work of others to improve their ranking (Harris, 2007). Relative rankings tended to attract people who were competitive and did not like to work as a team (Harris, 2007).

## Relevant Current Merit-based Compensation Models

### *Teacher Advancement Program*

The Milken Family Foundation created and funded the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) founded in 1999 (Milken Family Foundation, 2008). This was a hybrid of performance- and outcome-based models with individual piece-rate rewards. The TAP program included additional income for teachers based on student achievement and teacher performance (Honawar, 2006, November 1). TAP combined bonuses based on classroom observation and student test score increases, provided leadership roles for teachers, and professional development opportunities (Milken Family Foundation, 2008). Under this program, effective, experienced teachers were assigned a role as master

teachers who served as mentors to work with inexperienced teachers to help them work on improving their teaching (Honawar, 2006, November 1).

TAP also provided financial incentives for teachers who taught math or science (Honawar, 2006, November 1). Douglas County, Colorado has had a teacher pay-for-performance model since 1984 and was the first district to implement TAP (Dobbs, 2003). TAP was the merit-based compensation model that most closely resembled MAST. In fact, MAST was developed based on TAP.

#### *Teacher Incentive Fund*

A signature program of the George W. Bush administration, the Federal Department of Education created the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) to help schools that served at least 30% poor and minority students to hire, develop, and retain effective teachers and administrators (Keller, 2006, November 6; Viadero, 2007, March 21). The federal government allocated up to \$99 million in awards for 2006, and allocated 16 grants worth \$42 million (Olson, 2007). Additional funds were awarded to districts that could show that their teachers and communities supported their plans (Honawar, 2006, November 1). Under TIF, school districts could develop their own merit-based pay model, pending Federal Department of Education approval of their grant application. More than 60 Grant applications were submitted, but most were rejected because they "needed improvement" (Honawar, 2006, November 1). Whether or not the grantees received their allotted funds depended upon the grantees' performance and the federal budget (Keller, 2006, November 6).



The Columbus, Ohio School District received the first TIF award of \$5.5 million, with the state of Ohio to receive \$20 million over five years (Honawar, 2006, November 1). The Columbus District planned to use the TIF award to expand its TAP program that was already implemented in some of the schools in the District (Honawar, 2006, November 1).

The future of TIF was in doubt in 2007 when Congress reduced funding its funding from \$99 million to \$200,000 for FY 2007 (Olson, 2007). However, in 2007, no TIF grants were awarded (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). TIF funding was re-established in FY 2008, and in September 2009, a bill to include TIF in a revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was introduced in Congress (Govtrack.us, 2012). The bill was referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce where it died (Govtrack.us, 2012). Since then, TIF funding peaked at \$400 million in FY 2010 and had declined to \$299 million in FY 2012 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

#### *Merit Accountability System for Teachers (MAST)*

The Merit Accountability System for Teachers (MAST) was a hybrid performance- and outcome-based model like TAP with individual piece-rate rewards for performance-based measures. However, MAST allowed individual school districts to determine if the outcome-based rewards would be awarded by individual, group, or hybrid. At the beginning of this research, three states had statewide merit-based teacher compensation plans (Honawar, 2007, August 1). In 2005, Central State launched MAST, the first statewide pay-for-performance model and the basis for this research. Central

State's MAST plan was based on TAP (Honawar, 2007, January 17). Required components of MAST included professional development, a teacher evaluation system that included three annual observations, performance-based pay, an alternative salary schedule to the traditional steps and lanes, teacher mentor programs to evaluate pedagogy and best practices, and goals for improving student performance (Honawar, 2007, January 17). District participation was voluntary but funds were allocated on a first-come-first-served basis (Honawar, 2007, January 17). Specific implementation plans were developed at the local school district level and were not able to financially penalize teachers who failed to meet the new performance standards (Lopez, 2005, August 18).

MAST was a voluntary program that gave school districts financial incentives to create and submit their own plan (Lopez, 2005; Mathur, 2005). Moving toward a free-market model of education, MAST awarded teachers raises based on their performance and student achievement instead of the length of their teaching career (Draper, 2005). Teachers and local school districts were required to vote on whether or not to participate in MAST each year that they participated in MAST. If the teachers and local school district decided to participate in MAST, changes necessary to the master agreements between districts and teachers' unions were typically addressed through memoranda of understanding. MAST provided up to an additional \$260 per student that could be used for teacher salaries, performance awards, staff development, and hiring master teachers and specialists (Lopez, 2005, August 18). The Central State budget did not allocate enough money to fund every district in the state, so it allocated the money on a first-come, first-served basis (Mathur, 2005).

This plan had the potential to create competition among teachers and districts for limited dollars. However, while the state allocated \$86 million in the first biennium of implementation to fund districts' participation in MAST, the Central State Department of Education (CSDE) expected to spend only \$51.4 million, because school districts were slow to adopt the program (Honawar, 2007, January 17). A year and a half after MAST was unveiled only 34 of Central State's 339 school districts were participating (Honawar, 2007, January 17). As of the time of this research, 44 of the state's 338 school districts had implemented MAST or were approved to implement it (CSDE, 2010). This amounted to approximately 13% of the school districts in the state. However, since a few of the largest school districts in the state participate in MAST, CSDE preferred to cite the participation rates in terms of students impacted, which was just over 30% in 2010 (CSDE, 2010).

## CHAPTER TWO: RECENT POLICY AND RHETORIC ON PUBLIC EDUCATION REFORM

### Recent, Related Educational Reforms

Every president elected since 1983 has passed broad education plans including “A Nation at Risk,” America 2000, Goals 2000, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and most recently, Race to the Top. These education programs have focused on short-term results to satisfy policymakers and voters rather than the 15 to 20 years it would likely take to achieve true and meaningful education reform (Seashore-Louis, 1988).

### *No Child Left Behind*

The most significant catalyst in modern education reform occurred in 1983 during the Reagan administration when the National Commission on Excellence in Education released “A Nation at Risk,” a scathing report on public education that called for broad and significant reform (Chubb & Moe, 1990; National Education, 1994). “A Nation at Risk” had little hard data or analysis, but was successfully written for the public and designed to create public opinion that would demand education reform (Viteritti, 2004). Some of the reform initiatives that spawned from “A Nation at Risk” included school choice, state and national standards and assessments, site-based management, and NCLB (Viteritti, 2004). These reforms marked a critical period of questioning public sector governance and increased regulation of public schools.

Through standardized testing, NCLB promoted a national curriculum (Apple, 1996). Apple (1996) believed that the creation of a national curriculum may be the first

step in privatizing public education. A national curriculum along with standardized testing would make it easier for parents to compare schools enabling them to be more informed when making the decision of where to educate their children (Apple, 1996). National standardized testing would also enable colleges and employers to more effectively choose which students to enroll or hire (Apple, 1996).

More recently, in June 2007, Senators Norm Coleman (Republican, Minnesota), Mary Landrieu (Democrat, Louisiana), and Joseph Lieberman (Independent, Connecticut) proposed adding incentives for states to look at merit-based teacher compensation programs to attract teachers to under-performing schools as part of the reauthorization of the NCLB Act (Honawar, 2007, August 1). The Coleman-Landrieu-Lieberman Bill, the All Students Can Achieve Act of 2007, proposed to require states to create data systems to track students' academic progress and link student achievement data to teachers, allowing states to measure teacher effectiveness (Honawar, 2007, August 1). This bill would have also awarded grants for programs that changed teacher compensation from a uniform salary schedule to a compensation model that could include better pay for more effective teachers and incentives for the best teachers to teach in high-need schools (Honawar, 2007, August 1). According to Senator Landrieu's spokeswoman, Stephanie Allen, "We are not trying to set up a merit pay system. We are trying to give states an option" (Honawar, 2007, August 1, p. 20). However, the similarity of components between the plan and similar merit-based compensation plans and the political discourse surrounding the bill indicated otherwise. Ultimately, Congress deferred action on reauthorization of the NCLB Act, which was scheduled to expire in 2014.

*Race to the Top*

Race to the Top was a national program that was highly supported by President Barack Obama. Race to the Top was the latest plan to promote performance-based pay and centralized educational control (CSDE, 2009h). It was a federal program that was initially awarded via competitive grant process to 13 out of the 48 states that applied for the grant (NASSP, personal communication, December 7, 2009). Central State was among the states that applied for the grant, but its application was not accepted for funding in the initial round. According to correspondence sent from CSDE to Central State school district administrators, Governor King planned to apply for the second round of funding in the summer of 2010, but did not have the support of the Central State Legislature to make the statutory changes necessary to fulfill the Federal requirements for Race to the Top grant approval, and ultimately, Central State did not submit a second application (Fox News, 2010).

Initially, Central State was optimistic about its chances to be a first round recipient of Race to the Top funding. CSDE (2009h) believed it was doing many of the things necessary to secure the grant and that the grant may have been an incentive for statewide MAST implementation (CSDE, 2009h). Having a performance-based compensation plan for teachers and principals was one of the requirements of Race to the Top (CSDE, 2009h). However, at a regional informational meeting, school leaders were not enthusiastic about the program that featured national standardized testing, state-wide curriculum development, a state-wide teacher and principal evaluation system, state-involved student data analysis, and performance-based pay for teachers (CSDE, 2009h). Despite these objections, the majority of these school leaders indicated that they would

pursue locally implementing the Race to the Top Program in order to receive the funding because if Central State was awarded Federal Race to the Top Grant funding, Central State planned to require all districts statewide to implement many of the components. However, only districts that signed on in support of Central State's grant application would receive any funding to implement these components (CSDE, 2009h). Districts receiving Race to the Top funding would also be required to implement additional programs, with the main one being MAST (CSDE, 2009h).

### Familiar Rhetoric

#### *Desegregation*

Although desegregation was not directly related to MAST in terms of policy, it was directly related to MAST in terms of policy rhetoric. In 1973, Central State had a statewide policy for implementing desegregation in public schools that was based on a quota system to achieve racial balance (Lavorato, 2007). In the mid 1990s, the policy was revised due to changing demographics, changing case law, legislative mandate, and the effects of the former desegregation policy on students (Lavorato, 2007). The rhetoric regarding desegregation was that it was going to close the achievement gap between White and minority students; however, the program failed at closing that gap, and the achievement gap still existed at the time of this research.

To conclude that any and all types of racial imbalance caused harm and must be remedied through racial quotas was premised on erroneous legal and sociological theories. Moreover, this interpretation has led to negative educational

consequences. As a result of dramatic changes in demographics, the current rule's emphasis on a particular degree of racial balance has resulted in the loss of flexibility for districts struggling to maintain a certain racial balance that is not required by the Constitution and that is questionable as an educational goal. It has meant that students of color have been turned away from enhanced magnet programs specifically designed to serve them. It has also lead to considerably less student and parental choice for the students who most need assistance (Lavorato, 2007).

Despite the implementation of policies aimed to lessen the racial achievement gap for more than 35 years, the gap still existed at the time of this research. In Central State, according to statewide Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data, in 2011, 62.7% of White students scored as proficient in math compared to only 28.5% of Black students (CSDE, 2012b). In reading, 80.3% of White students scored as proficient compared to only 52.1% of Black students in 2011 (CSDE, 2012b). Additionally, according to Ikpa (2003), it was found that 8% of White 17 year-old students can read and interpret technical data compared to 1% of Black students. Additionally only 30% of Black students could solve fractional computations versus 70% of White students (Ipka, 2003). In short, Ipka (2003) found an achievement gap so large that, by the time they completed high school, Black students had comparable skills in reading and math to those of eighth grade White students, and that White students were twice as likely to complete a bachelor's degree than Black students. Clearly, the policies implemented to close the racial achievement gap were not effective.



Although many schools may have been more racially balanced at the time of this research than before defacto segregation, the promised parity in educational achievement has not been realized and the debate has shifted from establishing a racial balance in schools to increasing standards and expectations for minority students. Guthrie and Springer (2004) proposed that the focus on closing the achievement gap between races should shift away from mandated busing and focus instead on increasing standards and achievement expectations and developing an effective method of accountability for schools and students, as well as increasing educational funding. Other studies (Klein, 2002) also promoted smaller class sizes as a way of closing the racial achievement gap.

### *Vouchers*

Voucher programs also have a strikingly similar rhetorical pattern to that of MAST. Educational vouchers, simply put, allowed parents to divert the portion, or part of the portion, of their tax dollars that would normally go to their local public school district to the public or private school of their choice. The rhetoric of voucher programs was framed in discussions of neighborhood schools versus school choice and a free market approach to education—two topics that will be discussed in more detail later in this paper.

From the standpoint of using a free-market approach to improve educational effectiveness and maximize student achievement, researchers have argued that public schools have no incentives to use resources efficiently and, therefore, do not use them wisely (Finn, Jr., Hentges, Petrilli, & Winkler, 2009). To support their claims, researchers have cited the minimal improvements in student achievement when compared with large

increases in education spending (Belfield, 2005). Critics challenged that changing student demographics and increased school responsibilities to provide services beyond the fundamentals of education were the causes of the increased costs (Belfield, 2005).

Most economists believed that the free-market approach was superior to the government-sponsored approach to public education because the free-market approach would create a market that would make schools compete for students and, as a result, would provide incentives for schools to outperform other schools (Finn, Jr., et al., 2009). Critics of this approach argued that while it may hold true for goods and services markets, it was not effective in markets such as education that yielded important social benefits that extended beyond the individuals who received that education (Bracey, 2008). Although no studies have found that voucher programs negatively impacted student achievement, the data was mixed on whether or not vouchers had a positive impact. Study results ranged from non-voucher students performing slightly better than their voucher counterparts to the opposite result (Lewis, December 2008). Even the Friedman Foundation, a firm supporter of vouchers, reported being uncertain of vouchers' impact on student achievement (Lewis, December 2008).

In the voucher debate, there were four main goals that stakeholders tried to achieve: freedom of choice, efficiency, equity, and social cohesion (Belfield, 2005). Freedom of choice emphasized the private benefits of education and helped families choose schools that had philosophies most closely aligned with their preferences (Belfield, 2005). Efficiency promised the largest educational impact for the fewest resources. Equity was a goal of achieving fairness in educational opportunities so that all students could have their educational needs adequately met (Belfield, 2005). Social

cohesion provided for a common educational experience that would orient all students into being productive participants in the social, political, and economic responsibilities of a democratic society (Belfield, 2005).

Social and fiscal conservative groups favored school choice as an educational model. Groups that held the goals of freedom of choice and efficiency at the top of their educational values included the Milken, Broad, and Friedman foundations. The rhetoric of these groups strongly promoted choice and efficiency, but was largely silent on equity and social cohesion (Belfield, 2005). Additionally, their practices were reported as potentially unethical. The Friedman foundation was accused of using questionable research claims to promote the use of vouchers (Bracey, 2008) and donated \$200,000 to advance voucher legislation in Utah that would have been the most comprehensive voucher program in the U.S. (Lewis, February 2008). Ultimately, Utah voters rejected the position of their governor and Legislature and defeated the voucher proposal (Schneider, 2008).

Groups such as the NEA, AFT, the National School Boards Association (NSBA), People for the American Way, and most civil rights groups such as the Urban League and the NAACP focused their rhetoric most heavily on the goals of equity and social cohesion (Belfield, 2005). They believed that the goals of freedom of choice and efficiency undermined equity and social cohesion (Belfield, 2005).

Despite a lack of evidence regarding a significant positive impact of vouchers on student achievement, the rhetoric used by the groups promoting choice and efficiency seemed to resonate best with the general public. According to Belfield (2005) a major

public opinion poll found that approximately 80% of respondents supported voucher programs, but two thirds did not possess an even basic knowledge of what vouchers were.

It seemed reasonable to ask the question, “Why, if there was no evidence that vouchers were achieving the desired outcome of increased student achievement, were people so strongly supportive of the program?” One significant reason was that vouchers had the potential to allow private businesses to gain entry into the public education market. Since the Reagan administration opened the door for private firms to carry out government duties, businesses saw an opportunity to capitalize on the virtually untapped education market. Private and supplemental education providers had an opportunity to access government education dollars in addition to the private sector funds from parents they were already accessing, and lobbied legislators to gain that access. In my experience as a local school district administrator in Central State, I encountered various representatives for these companies waiting to speak with legislators I was waiting for while visiting the Central State Capitol. In March of 2011, I observed two representatives from Teach for America present information about their company and the services they could provide to the Senate Education and Finance Committee.

In the context of MAST, it was also important to note that to date, like MAST, voucher programs had been implemented on a relatively small scale. With the rise of Race to the Top and its required component of districts having a performance-based pay system for teachers, it was important to note that small-scale programs could serve as stepping-stones to large-scale programs. However, the costs and outcomes of a national program may differ greatly from that of a small-scale program (Belfield, 2005).

### Un- and Underfunded Mandates

According to the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) (2004), the 1995 Unfunded Mandate Reform Act's (UMRA) threshold for defining a mandate as unfunded was an unfunded cost of \$50 million for intergovernmental and \$100 million for private sector mandates in any of the first five fiscal years of the mandate. In 2001 and 2002, 28 of 420 federal statutes and 161 of 187 federal rules were at or above these thresholds (GAO, 2004). However, if a mandate exceeded the threshold, there were exemptions that prevented federal statutes and rules from being labeled as unfunded mandates. These exemptions included any legislation that related to national security or ones for which it was not feasible to estimate the cost of implementation (GAO, 2004). For comparative purposes, I will briefly demonstrate how the UMRA assessed government mandate status for a number of education-related programs.

#### *NCLB*

One of the mandates reviewed, but not classified, by the GAO (2004) as an unfunded mandate was 2001 version of NCLB still in effect at the time of this research. There were requirements associated with NCLB, including the requirement for state standardized testing (GAO, 2004). However, the GAO (2004) found that NCLB did not meet the criteria for an unfunded mandate because participation was not required. Districts were only required to participate in standardized testing to receive federal dollars connected to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), of which NCLB was a part. Districts were not required to accept federal dollars. This position was upheld by an 8-8 decision in a 2009 Sixth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals case to dismiss

school districts' claims to abolish NCLB because of a lack of funding to implement its objectives (Walsh, 2009). The ruling to retain NCLB was based on the provision of the statute that stated that nothing in the act shall be construed to mandate that states or school districts spend any money to implement NCLB beyond what was provided by federal funding (Walsh, 2009).

This decision ignored the current status of state and federal funding for public education that has no strings attached. Increasingly, public school districts were hard put not to sign up for whatever additional money they could attract, regardless of how much merit they saw in the associated programs. Technically, states and local school districts could elect to forfeit their federal ESEA-related funding and opt out of standardized testing. In Central State, the reality was that the districts' funding for the testing came from CSDE's budget and the funding the local school districts received through ESEA-related programs was enough that its loss would cause significant cuts in educational programs for at-risk students at the district level. In the district where I worked, these funds were approximately four percent of our operating budget (CSDE, 2012a). In the school district where I worked, multiple teaching and teaching support positions would have to be eliminated if we lost this funding source, so we felt that we had to participate in the testing, even though technically, we did not.

#### *Special Education and Response to Intervention (RtI)*

Local school districts were required to provide special education services to students who required them. Based on my personal experience as a school and district administrator, special education was an underfunded mandate, yet it was not officially

labeled as such. At the time of this research, school districts in Central State received both federal and state funding to help meet the needs of special education students. At the time of this research, the federal government promised to reimburse school districts for 40% of approved special education expenditures, but the actual reimbursement was closer to 17% (Arc of Central State, 2011). Additionally, Central State was also supposed to allocate special education funds to cover the cost of educating students with special needs; however, Central State set aside approximately \$530 million, but the funding districts needed from the state to cover their cost was approximately \$632 million (Arc of Central State, 2011). In my six years as an administrator and in attending numerous meetings throughout Central State, I had never encountered a district representative who stated that his/her district did not have to subsidize its special education funding with its general fund dollars. Despite the pledge to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Act when it was passed in 1975, special education programs were actually funded by the federal government at a rate of closer to 50% ("Bush Budget," 2004).

Response to Intervention (RtI) was an early intervention program that districts were required to use in order to try to implement effective interventions for individual students that would enable them to be successful in the mainstream classroom without special education support (Samuels, 2008). RtI could include educational interventions such as students having tests read aloud to them or being able to provide oral responses, having modified assignments, and being provided with lecture notes. Each intervention took time on the part of educational staff to adapt or modify the curriculum as was appropriate for each student. Legislation allowed school districts to use up to 15% of their special education funding to fund RtI programs; however, with special education

funding already in short supply, districts supplemented their RtI programs with general education revenue (Samuels, 2008).

Despite these sizeable loopholes in how unfunded mandates were classified, the GAO (2004) touted the UMRA legislation as a success. The GAO (2004, p. 19) claimed that this legislation changed the way other legislation was written, “This [the UMRA legislation] is like a shoal out in the water. You know it is there, so you steer clear of it.” In practice it most likely had changed the way legislation was written. Legislators did seem to know that the UMRA legislation existed, and, in my opinion, seemed to have been careful to ensure that legislation drafted conformed to one of the many loopholes in the UMRA legislation.

#### Budget Cuts for Effective Programming

In addition to the expense of complying with new government mandates, at the time of this research most public school districts faced cuts to effective programs. Although these programs were not legislatively mandated, they had been effective and their reduction or elimination also hurt school districts and, ultimately, students. For example, in 1987, the Central State Legislature eliminated funding for summer school (House Research Department, 2009). Educators understood the benefit of extended time programs such as summer school and extended day programs. These programs were the educational equivalent to batting practice and shooting extra free throws. As batting and free throw practice enhanced specific athletic skills, summer school and extended day programs promised to enhance specific academic skills and helped to fill gaps in learning according to the many emails and brochures I received during my tenure as a school



district administrator. This was especially true for poor children who may have experienced little or no intellectual challenge throughout the summer. School districts fought to keep programs that were beneficial to students, so when the Legislature cut funding to summer school, many school districts began using the learning year program as a method to fund summer school until the Legislature closed that loophole in 2003 (House Research Department, 2009).

Additionally, due to the economic conditions that existed at the time of this research, many states cut funding to K-12 education in general and in specific programs like technology (Klein, 2009). This prompted school districts to eliminate or reduce programming in libraries, social services, counseling, extra-curriculars, and electives, and in addition prompted them to increase class sizes. There were also federal cuts to the Head Start program, a program designed to help at-risk preschoolers get ready for kindergarten (Lewis, March 2008).

## Privatization of Public Education

### *Neighborhood Schools versus School Choice*

Historically, students attended schools based on geography, attending the school that was closest to his/her home, thus the term, “neighborhood school.” Due to a variety of factors, there was an inequity between neighborhood schools in terms of resources and needs for those resources. It was reasonable to believe that, if given the opportunity, a parent of a student in a neighborhood school where needs were high and resources were scarce would choose to send their students to a school where needs were low and resources were plentiful.

In being able to choose a school based on criteria other than proximity was a relatively new phenomenon. Proponents of school choice relied heavily on Adam Smith's and Milton Friedman's theories to promote their position that students should have expanded options beyond their neighborhood public school. Smith believed that people could judge their own needs and determine local information about their schools and make choices about what would be best for them better than politicians (Muller, 1993). To encourage people to become educated, Smith recommended that the government pay and award students who did well in school and required entrance exams for some occupations, but required that students find the means to achieve these goals, because they would do it most efficiently (Muller, 1993). Proponents of school choice believed that the over-governance of education denied parental control directly through choosing and paying for schools their children attend and indirectly through local political activity (Friedman & Friedman, 1980). They also believed that increasing centralization benefitted teachers, administrators, and union representatives, but it diminished parental choice and that schools would improve when parents had greater control (Friedman & Friedman, 1980).

However, public school choice was becoming reality for many. Central State pioneered "open enrollment and charter schools" (King, 2006, August 16). Open enrollment was a program that allowed families to choose the schools to which they would send their children. Charter schools were schools that were public schools by definition; however, they were exempt from many of the legislative rules that applied to regular public schools. Charter schools were seen as schools that catered to the needs of a specific population of students. In the 1998-1999 school year, Central State had 347

school districts (CSDE, 2005). By the 2008-2009 school year, the number of school districts in the state decreased to 339 (CSDE, 2009i). By comparison, the number of charter schools in Central State grew from 40 in 1998 (CSDE, 2005) to 155 in 2008 (CSDE, 2009i).

There was also considerable movement nationally on this issue. One provision of NCLB allowed parents of children in failing schools to choose to send their children elsewhere to receive what they perceived as a higher-quality education (Dobbs, 2003, September 15). Although the legislation did not pass, Reagan's tax credits and school choice vouchers were a Friedman-type market mechanism designed to eliminate failing schools through competition (Viteritti, 2004). It was argued that a free-market approach provided parents with more information to be good consumers of education options for their children (Paige, 2006). School choice was a key component of NCLB and was seen as the ultimate step in accountability (Paige, 2006).

### *Free Market Approach to Education*

A popular belief was that if schools had to compete for resources and students, they would be more effective. Privatization was seen as an effective way to break the government's monopoly on educating students. In the 1980s, the Carnegie Forum reported that the cost of meaningful public education reforms (reforms that would significantly increase student achievement) were approximately \$47 billion and included raising teacher salaries to attract better teachers (Chubb & Moe, 1986). This was far more than the funding for any of the educational reforms to date, and since taxpayers were already dissatisfied with the growing cost of public education, the more likely position

legislators would take was that quality of education depended more on learning environment than teacher compensation (Chubb & Moe, 1986). In a survey of 11,000 teachers and principals at 500 public and private schools, Chubb & Moe (1986) found that private and parochial schools made the greatest achievement gains, but paid their teachers the least (Chubb & Moe, 1986). They also found that public school teachers were constrained by rules, bureaucracies, confused over purpose, alienated from colleagues, and compromised in the classroom, but private and parochial school teachers experienced less of this (Chubb & Moe, 1986). Promoters of a free market approach to education used these results to support paying teachers less and privatizing education.

Rod Paige (2006), former National Secretary of Education, believed that monopolies did not work in business or in schools and that reform in public education would not happen until the monopolistic status of public education was removed. Proponents of privatizing public education believed that a privatized education system would provide a better education at a lower cost through competition and minimal regulation (Shaker & Heilman, 2004, July). Beliefs such as these spawned an increasing number of private organizations and brain trusts that attempted to shape public education through reform efforts and tied school funding to initiatives developed by these organizations. Some of the more prominent private organizations hoping to influence public education included: the Milken Foundation, the Broad Foundation, the Comprehensive School Reform Department, the Center for Teaching Quality, the Carnegie Foundation and Forum, the New American Schools Development Corporation, and the Teacher Union Reform Network.

For example, the Chartwell Education Group, Milken Foundation, Broad Foundation, Friedman Foundation, and the National Council on Economic Education's Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce (NCEECSAW) were conservative networks that stood to benefit significantly from having the \$712 billion in education funding available to the private sector. The Friedman Foundation benefitted from donations from education.com, Parent Further, and partnered with Stanford University to provide on-line learning opportunities for students as young as kindergarten (Friedman Foundation, 2011). The NCEECSAW sold its own curriculum, promoted its own motivational speakers, and sold examinations to ensure fidelity to its curriculum (NCEECSAW, 2011). It was also supported by four like-minded foundations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (NCEECSAW, 2011). Additionally, Michael Milken, one of the founders of the Milken Foundation, helped to start Knowledge Universe, a company that owned several other education-related consulting and manufacturing companies, including the company that makes the LeapPad (Phelps & Lehman, 2005), a popular at-home learning tool marketed to parents at the time of this research that made *Time Magazine's* list of the 15 smartest toys of 2011 (Townsend, 2011).

As an example of the magnitude of the importance of these connections, consider the following example. As a result of NCLB testing requirements, Pearson Educational Measurement Solutions was the sole contractor of the United States Department of Education to deliver and score the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), more commonly known as the Nation's Report Card since 1989 and was awarded a five-year contract extension in 2007 (Pearson, 2007, October 29). Nationwide, Pearson

employed 14,045 people and had annual revenues of \$1.6 billion (Indeed, 2008). In Central State, Pearson operated facilities in three cities (Pearson, 2006, March 7). The organization's responsibility for providing testing related services in Central State was nothing short of a monopoly (CSDE, 2008a).

As a result of the educational reforms and changes advocated for by the powerful groups advocating for privatization, Pearson gained access into the education market and captured \$1.6 billion that might have otherwise gone to educating students. Its revenue stream also enabled it to support foundations that supported its agenda and helped it gain further access to the education market. In fact, this had already happened. During the period of this research, Pearson began selling curriculum to help students perform better on the tests they created (Pearson, 2012).

Rod Paige (2006), former U.S. Secretary of Education in the George W. Bush administration (2001-2005), cofounder of the Chartwell Education Group, and member of the Broad Foundation and the NCEECSAW, defined public education as a crisis because standardized test scores “rank[ed] near the bottom in science and math among the industrialized nations of the world” (back cover). Paige (2006, inside front jacket) offered a simple solution conveniently located on the inside front jacket of his book dramatically entitled, *The War Against Hope: How Teachers' Unions Hurt Children, Hinder Teachers, and Endanger Public Education*—“accountability, transparency, and choice are the keys to excellence in education.” Additionally, Paige (2006) named teachers' unions as the greatest obstacle to education reform, clearly labeling the National Education Association as the villain. Paige (2006) stated that there were many special interest groups, such as teachers' unions, that would not benefit if our current system of education was reformed,

but failed to acknowledge how the organizations with which he was affiliated would benefit from his proposed solution.

#### Central State K-12 Education Finance History as an Illustrative Case

Prior to 1956 education funding in Central State came primarily from local property taxes; however, in 1957 foundation aid, state funding paid to school districts on a per student basis, began (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). At this time, the per-pupil formula allowance accounted for 84% of school district funding (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). However, this funding did not grow fast enough to keep up with inflation and increasing costs, and as a result the percentage of costs covered by the state funding formula dropped to below 43% in 1970 (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). The lack of adequate state funding caused increased costs to local taxpayers and cuts in educational programming in virtually all school districts in the state.

#### *Central State Salvation Education Funding Plan*

Because the increased portion of public education was funded by local school districts that had great differences in property wealth and thus the amount of money that could be raised from property taxes to fund local school districts, there was a significant disparity in the funds available to school districts across the state. In October 1971 a federal district court judge ruled that the Central State school finance system was unconstitutional, finding that the level of spending for students' education must rely on the wealth of the state as a whole rather than on the wealth of individuals or individual school districts (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). As a result, in 1971 the Central State

Legislature passed an omnibus tax bill that became known informally as the “Central State Salvation” in response to the legal challenge and in an effort to reduce property taxes (Thorson & Anderson, 2006).

The Central State Salvation bill shifted the main source of education funding onto the state and off of local property tax payers. This increased the state's share of school funding to 93% in 1972 (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). Despite the shift of funding to the state, wealthy districts were still able to levy local taxpayer dollars to improve their school districts, thus still leaving school districts in Central State with a funding gap between wealthy and poor districts.

### *The Great Equalization*

In 1991, Central State passed a referendum equalization initiative that was designed to reduce the effects of discrepancies in property values between districts and to provide property tax relief to residents of poorer districts (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). However, the equalization aid from the state was tied to the ability of the local district pass a local levy as the state would match a portion of the local levy (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). If school districts were not able to pass the local levy, they were not able to receive state equalization aid.

In 2001, subsequent legislation was passed that effectively reduced each school districts' voter-approved referendums by \$415 per student (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). This legislation required the state to pay up to \$415 per student to school districts and reduce the amount levied on the local taxpayer by the same amount. Under this plan, the funding to school districts did not increase, but the burden on local property tax payers



was reduced. In FY 2003, on the state funding formula it appeared that state aid increased from \$4068-\$4601 per student (a 13.1% increase); however, without the local \$415 per student that was subtracted by statute, the actual funding increase was only \$186 per student (a 2.9% increase) (Thorson & Anderson, 2006).

Beginning in FY 2003 the state purportedly planned to pay the entire amount of the general education formula allowance to districts without any contribution from local taxpayers. However, it did not have enough funding to accomplish that goal. The result was an even larger funding gap between wealthy and poor districts (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). After 2001, the Central State economy slowed and the state in turn slowed education spending. From 2003 to 2007, there was a total of an 8% increase on the Central State education funding formula (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). While overall inflation increased a little more than 6% during this period, the cost of employee health care and fuel, two major expenses for school districts, rose even more (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). In the school district where I worked, employee health care increased 160% and fuel costs increased 35% between FY 2000 and FY 2010 according to district budget documentation.

During the same period more than 75% of school districts lost some of their student enrollment due to population shifts and student loss to private and charter schools, with the most severe decreases occurring in the smallest districts in the state (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). In order to help struggling school districts, the state increased the local levy amounts that would be eligible for equalization. After enacting the \$415 per student roll-in 2001, the amount decreased to \$126 per student in 2002 through 2004 before it began increasing again, thereby creating incentives for schools to

once again fund themselves locally (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). Sixteen years after its inception, the great equalization initiative was essentially eliminated, and the funding gap between rich and poor districts worsened (Thorson & Anderson, 2006).

### *After the Great Equalization*

Between FY 2008 and FY 2010, Central State's contribution to education funding remained fairly flat, increasing a total of \$150 per student (3%) (House Research Department, 2009). The gap between net funding and inflation increased from \$62 per student in FY 1993 to \$1,161 in FY 2011 (AMSD, 2009). One of the major reasons for this funding failure could have been that Central State took on the responsibility of funding public education without identifying a revenue stream to fund it, thus leaving public education in a state of structural under-funding (Thorson & Anderson, 2006). This lack of dedicated funding was also one of the main reasons why performance-based compensation historically failed (Cameron, 2005).

### Liberalist Ideology

It was argued that the interest in changing how teachers were paid was political in nature. Liberalism, neoliberalism, and neoconservatism were three competing political ideologies that impacted public education and are described here. Amin (2004) stated that a "liberalist ideology" was developed in conjunction with capitalism and equated social effectiveness with economic success; however, there was a conflict between social and market interests. He argued that liberals believed expansion of capital meant development; however, expanded capital did not necessarily improve or develop society

(Amin, 2004). As capital expanded, it was accompanied by political force (Amin, 2004). That political force was felt in the guise of education reform aimed at serving the needs of capital and appeared to be the case in Central State. An expanding chasm between haves and have-nots was a necessary result of global liberalization (Amin, 2004). Similarly an influx of revenue from the business sector and the malfunction of Central State's education funding was reinforcing a system of wealthy and pauperized schools based on capitalist ideals.

Consequences of global liberalization included pauperization and what Amin termed "low-intensity" democracy. Low intensity democracy is a democracy that no longer has any restriction or controls over the market (Amin, 2004). According to Amin (2004), the decisions in our low-intensity democracy were made in the market. This meant that U.S. democratic practices have been reduced to harmless rituals, because the American liberal ideology served the interests of capital (Amin, 2004). As capitalists became increasingly more involved in public education, the shift from government-controlled public education to capitalist-controlled education was becoming more apparent.

At the time of this research, the definition of neoliberalism was evolving with some disagreement among theorists regarding a specific definition and even the spelling of the word. Based on the work of Amin, "neoliberalism" in the context of this research refers to the doctrine that emphasizes a free market economy with limited government involvement as well as personal choice and freedom. However, it also promotes making progress on social issues such as education through an increase in government regulation. Regarding the spelling of "neoliberalism," the more recent research seems to favor

dropping the hyphen (neo-liberalism). Therefore, I have chosen to use the non-hyphenated spelling in this work. The same spelling issue also applies to “neoconservatism” in this work as well.

### Neoliberalism and Education

Privatizing public education was a goal of neoliberal policy makers for some time. At the time of this research, people still had common access to public education, but that may not always be true. In England, enclosing land once considered to be public space served to benefit the capitalists and was detrimental to the common and poor people (Shiva, 2005). Without too much imagination, one could extend Shiva’s concept of enclosures to the enclosing, or privatizing, of public education, thereby excluding non-dominant groups from accessing the same level of education as those of the dominant group. For example, if parents who lived in neighborhoods that had high needs and few resources had the means to transport their children to schools that had many resources and few needs, they would. However, the students whose parents did not have the means to transport their children to a different school would have to attend the high-need, low-resource neighborhood school. Essentially this would create or reinforce a segregated school system according to socio-economic status. Although school choice programs were designed to alleviate this problem, attending a school other than the student’s neighborhood school still relied on someone other than the school district being able to provide transportation for the student to the school of their choice.

As public education has become privatized and nationalized, some have argued that only the voices and histories of the dominant group would be heard (Apple, 1996).

The United Kingdom had a national curriculum and national testing that was introduced by the Thatcher administration (Apple, 1996). In the U.K., the national curriculum legitimized long-standing forms of structural inequality and disempowered and deskilled teachers (Apple, 1996). At the time of this research, there already was a sort of national curriculum in the U.S. through textbook adoption states like California and Texas that controlled 20 to 30% of the textbook market (Apple, 1996). It could be argued that in the U.S., the move toward a national curriculum was likely to have the same effect of legitimizing inequality and deskilling teachers as it had in the U.K.

In addition to a movement to privatize and nationalize education, neoliberals also favored non-unionized labor. President Reagan was widely touted as representing an anti-government stance during his presidency and it was argued that his successful attempt to weaken the air traffic controllers' union impacted the stance of neoliberals and neoconservatives regarding organized labor. During the "anti-government" Regan era, the number of government employees in the United States rose from 16.2 million in 1980 to 18.4 million in 1990 (Barr, 2004; Cohen & Eimicke, 2000). While the size of the federal government shrank during Reagan's first term, the size of government overall (including states, counties, etc.) grew with local and state governments and government contracts with private and nonprofit organizations picking up some of the work previously done by the federal government (Barr, 2004; Cohen & Eimicke, 2000). In part, the state government growth was a result of the increased capacity needed to make up for the federal down-sizing, but also because of the need to coordinate with private sector businesses and non-profit organizations working for the public sector. The increased collaboration between the public and private sectors was a result of the belief

that public policy would be implemented more effectively if some governmental functions were privatized (Cohen & Eimicke, 2000).

One roadblock to this functional shift was the unionization of governmental employees. Reagan diminished the strength of federal labor unions when he fired 13,000 striking air traffic controllers (Barr, 2004). Within his first nine months in office, the Reagan administration laid off approximately 15,000 other federal employees and another 75,000 positions were cut between 1981 and 1985 (Barr, 2004). This action not only reduced the strength of unions in the public sector, but in the private sector as well (Barr, 2004). Minimizing the strength of the unions was important because unionized workers had a greater likelihood of earning higher wages and having more job security than their non-union counterparts (Perrucci & Wysong, 1999). Higher wages reduced the generative capital available to the elite so that they could grow their own wealth and power (Perrucci & Wysong, 1999).

The Reagan era also marked a critical period in the shift in what we defined as civil and individual rights. The increase in governmental size was accompanied by a reduction in individual rights and a redefinition of what was included in those rights for some groups (Bradford, 2004; Paul, 1987). Reagan was deeply connected to economic policy, so much so that his version of capitalism was given its own name—Reaganomics. His devotion to capitalism through the advice of Milton Friedman helped to popularize the belief that economic freedom or laissez-faire capitalism was a right (Bradford, 2004; Paul, 1987). This position was also commonly linked to neoliberalism.

The neoliberal position centered on the relationship between government and the economy and focused almost entirely on the latter. It promoted the idea that the

expansion of capital meant development and progress (Amin, 2004). Like Reagan, neoliberals believed the state must be minimized, reducing all politics to economics (Apple et al., 2003). Neoliberals also favored tying education to economic needs (Apple, 1996) and equated social effectiveness with economic success (Amin, 2004).

Therefore, neoliberals thought that government sponsorship of education reduced its quality and diversity, increased educational bureaucracy, and rendered schools ineffective places to learn (Friedman & Friedman, 1980). Conversely, they believed that if schools competed for resources, they would have incentive to move toward more efficient and effective organizational systems (Chubb & Moe, 1986). Neoliberals blamed public schools for failing to produce a labor force that was skilled, adaptable, and flexible enough to meet corporate needs (Apple, 1996). They also believed that education should be privatized and marketized, favoring the efficiency and democracy of Smith's invisible hand approach (Apple, 1996; Apple et al., 2003). Additionally, neoliberals thought that teachers' methods were out of date and that substantial reforms were necessary to effectively educate students (Fermoye, 2005).

### Neoconservatism and Education

Neoconservatives, many of whom also identified strongly with the Reagan administration's policy and rhetoric, believed that schools should teach conservative values, norms, and pedagogies (Apple, 1996; Apple et al., 2003). They also believed that schools should have strong accountability measures through a free market system (Finn, et al., 2009). According to former Education Secretary during the Regan administration, William Bennett (1994), who succeeded Terrel Bell, was a neoconservative leader who

believed that all students should know certain cultural and national ideals in order to re-establish a common culture in the U.S. Neoconservatives promoted the idea that schools should have much greater accountability through marketization (Bennett was also a proponent of school vouchers) and that parents should be able to choose the school to which they send their children. Bennett (1994) also stated that education belongs to the public and that the public should be making educational decisions instead of teachers' unions. State or nationwide standardized testing would help parents be informed enough to be able to make good decisions and hold schools accountable for properly and effectively educating students (Bennett, 1994). Like neoliberals, neoconservatives wanted public education to teach only the basics and leave the rest of educating children to families, communities, and the private sector; (Montani, 2005, August).

### Conservative Modernization

According to Apple (1996) policies of "conservative modernization" were a compromise between neoconservative and neoliberal policies. Conservative modernization freed individuals for economic purposes and controlled them for social purposes (Apple, 1996). This means the wealthy would be loosely controlled, but the poor would be tightly controlled (Apple, 1996). In conservative modernization, combining marketization and a strong state removed education policy from public debate, left choice to parents, and allowed the unintended consequences of the invisible hand to take care of the rest (Apple, 1996). A conservative modernist approach to education reform also included a state or national curriculum and testing and school choice (Apple, 1996).



Similarly, Kumashiro (2008) described the government as a “strict father.” In this analogy, the father figure led his family in an authoritarian manner and promoted “traditional” values while encouraging his children to be self-sufficient. It could be argued that education reforms such as pay-for-performance compensation and NCLB fit within this philosophy. Additionally, Kumashiro (2008) also suggested that the political differences of neoconservatives and neoliberals often coexist well within the right-wing politics in the U.S.

#### The Single Most Significant Factor in Determining Student Achievement

With more than 150 years of failed educational policies aimed at improving student achievement (mostly by attempting to link it to merit pay for teachers), one has to ask why all of these policies failed, and what chance MAST had to succeed. The first question will be addressed here and the latter will be addressed in the analysis section of this work.

Throughout decades of studies on student achievement, the single-most important indicator of student success was repeatedly identified as socio-economic status. Holland (2007) reported that the influence of social class on determining student achievement was likely to be so powerful that even with the best educational programs and most highly trained teachers, schools could not overcome it. Holland (2007) also noted that, despite this evidence, schools were doing what they could to close the achievement gap and were making modest gains.

Lee and Burkham (2002) also supported this position. They reported that students entering kindergarten already had significant differences in achievement based on factors

associated with socio-economic status (Lee & Burkham, 2002). They also reported that students with lower socio-economic status entered into poorer performing schools that exacerbated the problem of the achievement gap (Lee & Burkham, 2002). Given the consistency of student achievement data related to socio-economic status, I personally wondered if these lower-performing schools performed lower as a result of their student demographics more than as a result of the quality of their academic programs and teacher quality.

Despite this evidence, at least one study did find a correlation between teacher effort and student achievement for French-Canadian high school students. Bergeron, Chouinard, and Janosz (2011) found that when students had strong, positive beliefs in their competency and a strong relationship with their teacher, they were less likely to drop out of high school. However, when controlled for socio-economic status, they found that the likelihood of dropping out of high school for students with high socio-economic status decreased significantly when they held positive beliefs in their competency and a strong relationship with their teacher; however, when students in the same scenario but with low socio-economic status became more likely to drop out although not by a significant amount (Bergeron et al., 2011).

### Pay-for-Performance Rhetoric

Despite what the research showed about socio-economic status and educational reforms, various stakeholders had their own ideas of what educational objectives were important and how public education should function. All of these various stakeholders used some form of rhetoric to establish and promote their views on how public schools

should operate. Philanthropists, politicians, unions, and educators all established their positions on merit-based pay, largely through the use of the media. This section reviews the position of each of these main players in the teacher compensation debate.

### *Philanthropies' Involvement in Public Education*

Philanthropists were those who desired to benefit humanity through the improvement of social systems like public education. Some of these philanthropists declared that public education was obsolete and did a poor job of educating students. They used their wealth and influence to spread their message by sponsoring research, funding scholarships, creating curricula, starting education-related companies, and other activities to legitimate their policy agenda and implement change (Colvin, 2005). Philanthropies were the organizations founded by philanthropists to help carry out the work of the philanthropists. The range of the involvement of these Philanthropies varied greatly. Some foundations simply promoted staff development as their pet project, while others tried to overhaul the education system in general (Colvin, 2005). Because foundations received little oversight and few, if any, external evaluations, it was difficult to measure the validity of their claims (Colvin, 2005).

#### *Milken Family Foundation*

The Milken Institute was founded as a part of the Milken Family Foundation that, according to the Milken Institute home page (2008) “is a publicly supported, nonpartisan economic think tank whose work makes a difference in the lives of people worldwide by helping create a more democratic and efficient global economy. This Institute’s scholars

use capital-market principles and financial innovations to address social and economic challenges, from energy independence to poverty, here in the United States and around the world.” Michael Milken, Chairman of the Milken Institute and Co-founder of the Milken Family Foundation, was not only known as a philanthropist, but also as a financier nicknamed the “Junk Bond King” who, in 1990, was charged with racketeering and securities fraud including bribery, insider trading, and stock manipulation resulting in a \$600 million fine, a 10-year prison sentence, and permanent prohibition from engaging in securities business (Phelps & Lehman, 2005).

The Milken Family Foundation website (2008) promoted its TAP program as being in “high demand.” In terms of real numbers, high demand in this case means 220 schools encompassing 6,200 teachers and 72,000 students nationwide (Milken, 2008). To put those numbers in perspective, in 2008 Central State, the case site of this research, employed nearly 53,000 teachers (CSDE, 2009j) and educated more than 82,000 students (CSDE, 2009k). When using real numbers, the “high demand” claim seemed to be exaggerated. According to Blair (2000), TAP was implemented in eight states, representing approximately 30% of K-12 students in the U.S. However, how the 30% figure was calculated was not disclosed. It is possible that in 2000 that many students attended schools that participated in TAP, but that many of those schools had dropped their TAP programs by 2008. That would align with other research that showed the lack of longevity for teacher pay-for-performance compensation programs (Viadero, 2007).

As a result of TAP’s “high demand,” Lowell Milken established the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) as a separate charity in order to ensure TAP’s effectiveness and sustainability (Milken, 2008). NIET established partnerships with

federal, state, and local governments as well as other foundations and corporations (Milken, 2008). In 2005, the Milken Family Foundation (2005) launched TAP as a separate 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The TAP organization received grants and appropriations from the federal government “to sustain and expand TAP as a well-documented teacher quality reform” (Milken Family Foundation, 2005). The establishment of NIET and TAP as separate entities from the Milken Family Foundation obscured the link between TAP and the organization created to promote it. This in turn promoted the illusion that TAP was supported by multiple independent organizations that were dedicated to “excellence in teaching.”

#### *Broad Foundation*

In 1999 Eli Broad, Founder and Chairman of AIG Retirement Services and KB Home, and his wife, Edythe, started The Broad Foundation (2008). The Broad Foundation’s (2008) mission was to “dramatically improve urban public education through better governance, management, and labor relations.” The Broad Foundation Brochure outlined the steps toward achieving this mission quite simply on its cover—“Public education needs: (a) more money, (b) better teachers, (c) privatization” (Broad Foundation, 2008). The Foundation also claimed that “public education is the key civil rights issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Broad Foundation, 2008, p. 4).

The Broad Foundation had three main initiatives to help accomplish its mission. First, it awarded one urban school district a half-million dollar grant for having the greatest gains in academic achievement while reducing the achievement gap (Broad Foundation, 2008). Second, it established a national training and support program for

new urban school board members (Broad Foundation, 2008). It also had a leadership center for superintendents (Broad Foundation, 2008).

### *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*

Perhaps the most widely known foundation with a hand in education reform in the early twenty-first century was the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It was the largest contributor to education causes and allocated billions of dollars toward education through a range of specific reforms (Colvin, 2005). While the Foundation did not focus on teacher compensation, it was responsible for creating thousands of new high schools and dividing hundreds of large high schools into smaller schools and increasing the number of college courses offered in high schools for both high school and college credit (Colvin, 2005). Should the Gates Foundation choose to pursue teacher compensation as a cause, I believe that the influence of this foundation could significantly affect a change in teacher compensation.

### *Presidents*

#### *President George W. Bush*

During his presidency, and like many other Republicans, George W. Bush was a supporter of merit-based pay for teachers and for school choice (Honawar, August 2007). Bush proposed spending \$50 million on the Choice Incentive Fund, a fund that provided states with funding to start or expand voucher programs so that students could attend charter, private, or a public school rather than their neighborhood school (“Bush Budget,”

2004). He also proposed spending \$500 million on the Teacher Incentive Fund; however, this amount was significantly reduced by the time the bill was passed (Keller, 2005).

Bush's plan for teacher merit-based pay was to link teachers' compensation to students' performances on standardized tests (Phillips, 2005).

### *President Barack Obama*

President Obama was also a supporter of merit-based pay for teachers (Honawar, November 2007). This was important because previously, most notable supporters of merit-based pay were Republicans (Honawar, November 2007). As a senator, Obama introduced two bills that incorporated merit-based pay models for teachers (Hoff, 2008). While campaigning for President, he proposed a plan that would allow districts to implement a merit pay plan without the input or consent of the teachers' unions (Hoff, 2008).

President Obama also supported school choice through the development of charter schools (Aarons, 2009). He made increasing the number of charter schools in a state as well as merit-based pay required components of Race to the Top funding for states and local school districts (Aarons, 2009). Through the Race to the Top program, Obama also supported centralization of public education in keeping with neoconservative ideals.

## *Unions*

### *National Education Association (NEA)*

Joel Packer, the chief NCLB lobbyist for the NEA, said that the union was firmly opposed to the federal government getting involved in merit pay, even with proposals that made participation voluntary for states or districts (Honawar, 2007 August 1). Packer noted that even models that tracked student growth over a period of years and were based on growth on test scores did not account for differences between individual students, and that one or two test scores based on NCLB test requirements were not a comprehensive or a fair way to evaluate teachers (Honawar, 2007 August 1). The NEA would rather the federal government focused on providing hard-to-staff schools with a variety of tools and resources to improve student achievement and working conditions in those schools (Honawar, 2007 August 1).

### *American Federation of Teachers (AFT)*

In 2001, the AFT believed the first priority of teacher compensation should be adequate compensation levels aligned with what professionals in other professions make. The AFT came out in support of merit-based systems as an augmentation of the traditional salary schedule in order to increase teacher compensation (American Federation of Teachers, 2001). However, by 2007, the position of the AFT changed. Edward J. McElroy, the President of the AFT, said that the Association no longer supported systems that used student test scores or where principals decided which teachers were rewarded (Honawar, 2007 August 1). In 2008, the AFT supported U.S.



Presidential Candidate, Hillary Clinton, largely because she opposed reauthorization of NCLB and merit pay for teachers (Hoff, 2008).

## Analytic Theory

### *The Rise of Global Capitalism*

Global capitalism was usually defined as the expansion of a market economy around the world (Amin, 2004). It was argued that the economic theories and policies that had strong influence over it were the theories advanced by Adam Smith, Milton Friedman, and Fredrich Taylor. Smith (1982) believed that free trade had a better long-term effect on society than monopolies because monopolies could control supply and limit output, thus increasing demand. Another reason Smith (1982) favored an open market was that people tended to do things that would maximize their own benefit. In doing so, people more frequently promoted a greater benefit to society than when they intentionally tried to promote it, and their drive to achieve their own benefit and fulfill their ambition served to fuel individuals to work harder than they would otherwise (Smith, 1982). Smith also believed that, "In every profession, the exertion of the greater part of those who exercise it is always in proportion to the necessity they are under of making that exertion" (Muller, 1993, p. 152). In other words, merit pay models, to at least some extent, increased the necessity of making a greater exertion in one's work.

Because people tend to seek what would benefit them, Smith (1982) also believed that people could determine their own needs better than politicians attempting to do that for them. His "invisible hand" was a metaphor for the negative unintended outcomes

from the perspective of the individual that were positive from the perspective of society (Smith, 1982). It was believed that this argument was the basis for much of the drive to privatize public education.

Proponents of privatizing public education were also able to use Smith's theories to explain why teachers' unions were so strongly opposed to a free market approach to education. Smith (1982) believed that the self-interests of individuals inherently opposed a free market. In other words, they wanted to protect their turf. Those who wanted to privatize education believed that teachers did not want to give up the job security and control they had in their monopoly over public education and did not want to face the accountability that the open market would demand.

Despite Smith's (1982) preference toward an invisible hand to guide the economy, he also believed that sometimes creating preconditions for a market to exist and compensating for negative effects required government intervention. However, as the world increasingly embraced capitalistic ideals, it was argued that the government initiated and regulated monopoly of the U.S. public education system remained at the center of the cultural and economic tapestry of the nation—a situation most difficult for laissez-faire capitalists to accept.

Milton Friedman shared the view that the U.S. public education system was troubling to the nation's pursuit of free market capitalism. He labeled the public schools as "Socialist" and held that they violated the premise of the free market and voluntary exchange (Friedman 1980). Because Friedman's political and economic theories that were strongly advanced during the Reagan administration greatly resembled the theories of Adam Smith, Friedman's theories were also used to drive the push toward a free,

capitalist economy and privatized education system. Although Friedman used the term “economic freedom” in his 1962 book, *Capitalism and Freedom*, the concept was only widely popularized during the Reagan administration after Friedman was appointed to Reagan’s Economic Policy Advisory Board in 1980. Friedman (1962, 1980) advocated a laissez-faire economy with a minimalist government in order to advance economic and political freedom. Similar to Smith, as his theories applied to education, Friedman (1980) believed that increasing centralization benefitted teachers, administrators, and union representatives, but diminished parental choice and that schools would only improve when parents had greater control.

Frederick Taylor’s principles of scientific management were also important to the rise of global capitalism. Taylor’s work in this area was focused on manufacturing; however, over the years since the first publication of *The Principles of Scientific Management* in 1911, principles of scientific management have been applied to the service sector as well. One of the main guiding principles of scientific management was the objective of maximizing profit for both the employer and the employee (Taylor, 2004). In order to achieve this, employers needed to create external pressure to ensure that employees would put forth their best effort and work hard, otherwise workers would slow to the pace of the worker who was the slowest and least efficient (Taylor, 2004). In scientific management, managers were charged with scientifically determining and recording the best, most efficient way to work, training workers how to do that, and supervising the work to ensure that it was being done in the manner prescribed (Taylor, 2004). After it was determined what needed to be done to achieve maximum effort and efficiency from employees, Taylor (2004) recommended managers focus on the benefit

the employees would receive, such as higher wages, rather than the hard work they had to do to receive the benefit. He found that when workers could work in an “every person for themselves” environment and not be subjected to the peer pressure of conforming to a lower output, workers worked harder and more efficiently (Taylor, 2004).

This theory of scientific management was also applied to public schools through the implementation of pay-for-performance models and piece-rate rewards; however, teachers were not successfully insulated from the peer pressure to conform—one of the critical components of achieving maximum effort and efficiency under this theory (Taylor, 2004; Harris, 2007). Under a privatized education system, reformers believed that efficiencies such as those used in scientific management would be used to improve education as a result of competition. The latest merit pay models were touted as a simple, fair, and revolutionary idea. Reward good teachers, keeping the best and brightest in the profession and encourage the others to work in other sectors (Paige, 2006). However, it was argued that the idea stemmed from the work of Taylor, Friedman, and Smith.

On a more global scale, as part of his Cold War strategy in his speech to the House of Commons, Reagan (1982), relying on the economic theories of Friedman, set out to create capitalist economies in multiple countries where the threat of communism was thought to exist. Reagan believed that if people lived in capitalist economies, they would choose a democratic form of government (Friedman, 1962; Reagan, 1982). Given the relatively high wages of workers in the U.S., a world economy had the potential to be problematic for the U.S. economy. “A Nation at Risk” threatened that Japan and other countries would pass the U.S. economically and served to persuade the public that public education in the U.S. was in crisis (Shaker & Heilman, 2004; Viteritti, 2004). However,

the global economy created an economic challenge for the U.S. because workers in developing countries worked for far less money than workers in the U.S. (King, 2006).

### *Deskilling Teachers*

As a result of the rise of a global economy, public education was tasked with preparing workers and itself for this new reality. Therefore, most recent educational innovations were consistent with the dominant paradigm of accountability, cost-effectiveness, and meeting industrial needs (Pappagianis, et al., 1982). The deskilling of teachers would increase the number of people available to become teachers and could serve to attract people to the profession who would work better under a scientific management model. Deskilling teachers, as defined by the principles of scientific management, meant that as much thought as possible was removed from their work, and that thought was reduced to policies and procedures (Braverman, 1998). Thus, employing scientific management techniques served to deskill educators in the process of creating labor divisions.

The principles of scientific management could help explain the move toward implementing state and national curricula and standardized testing. For example, in Central State, there were 52 pages of high school social studies standards and 150 standards each in math and science in addition to standards in every other core subject area that students had to master prior to graduation (CSDE, 2011). This, combined with standardized testing as part of NCLB, served to standardize education content across Central State. This standardization limited the need for teachers to decide what to teach in their courses, and enabled teachers and students to move from one district to another

more freely. This allowed for school choice on the part of students and increased competition on the part of teachers and school districts.

The result of these innovations served to devalue teachers. For example, the use of prepackaged curriculums with almost complete specification of a teacher's every move in the classroom de-skilled the teacher in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. This allowed the teacher to be re-skilled into a less autonomous classroom manager, using techniques of behavioral modification (Pappagianis, et al., 1982). The de-skilling of teachers would lead to paying teachers less, thus reducing the cost of education (Pappagianis, et al., 1982).

There were several factors that could have encouraged a move to deskill teachers. One, ironically, was that as people became more educated the gap between professionals and the general public decreased, resulting in a public sector that was more likely to question the authority of professionals (Friedson, 1986). A second factor was that professionals tended to be employed in bureaucracies that became subject to strict controls that routinized and de-skilled work (Friedson, 1986). School systems were a prime example of this because they had bureaucratic characteristics because they were large, public, and accountable to state and federal mandates (Friedson, 1986). Despite the need to adhere to a curriculum and fulfill a specialized role, teachers experienced considerable autonomy in the classroom until recently, and more reforms were aimed at removing the autonomy that remained.

One such example was the Purple COW. In 2004, the Austin, Texas-based firm, Ignite Learning, founded by Neil Bush (brother to former Texas Governor and U.S. President George W. Bush), launched the Purple COW initiative in Texas public schools

(Ignite Learning, 2012). COW stands for Curriculum on Wheels and was designed to provide whole class learning via a purple COW shaped like a cow (Ignite Learning, 2012). The COW featured a variety of instructional videos in math and science that the COW would play on its own projector (Ignite Learning, 2012). The teacher only had to plug in the COW and push play (Ignite Learning, 2012).

The Houston Independent School District accepted a \$115,000 donation from Ignite-related donors with the requirement that the money be used to purchase COW technology and curriculum (Garza, 2006, March 23). The Houston district put COWs in each of its classrooms, but the donation only covered half of the cost. In another case of “making the right donations,” former First Lady, Barbara Bush made a donation of an undisclosed amount to the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund with the requirement that the money be used to buy COWs for students in New Orleans, Louisiana schools (Garza, 2006, March 23).

Since the launch of the Purple COW, Ignite Learning (2012) has launched many other similar products including Ingite!Science, Ingnite!Math, Ignite!Special Education, Ignite!Class, and Sparkito, a Spanish heritage English language learner program just to name a few. At the time of this research, Ignite Learning (2012) technology was widely used throughout Texas public schools.

Arguably, technology and programs like the Purple COW served to deskill teachers by limiting the how their pedagogical knowledge was able to enter the classroom. It could be perceived that if a teacher was only required to plug in a device and press “play” to teach content, the required skills of the teacher then became lessened in the area of content and greater in the area of student behavior management. I have

worked with hundreds of teachers in my education career, interviewed hundreds more, and have reviewed the credentials of thousands. Never once had any of them stated that they pursued a career in education to have policing student behavior as the focus of their practice. As this type of reform expands, I believe that the type of individual seeking a career in public education will be significantly different from what it was at the time of this research.

### *Policy as a Pre-fabricated Solution*

A social problem is an ambiguously stated issue that is used to further a group's ideology by solving it with a pet policy or legal initiative (Edelman, 1988). Defining an issue as a social problem induced an audience to support measures they may have otherwise found painful, unwise, or irrelevant (Edelman, 1998). According to Edelman (1988), the point of constructing a social problem then was not to solve it, but rather to signify who was virtuous and useful and who was dangerous and inadequate by virtue of the problem. This could be done by discussing how a problem originated. Put differently, and particularly in political discourse, a specific leader or political party's "problems" were a summation of its opponents and the most favorable ways to cast them as incompetent or worse.

Important considerations when choosing which group to target via a pre-fabricated solution to a social problem included the size and diversity of the group targeted (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1989) and the amount of power the group held (Edelman, 1988). Smaller groups that were more easily isolated and defined generally made better targets (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1989). It was also important that the target



group did not have the power to effectively fight against being labeled the cause of the problem (Edelman, 1988).

When a policy was created as a simple solution to a complex problem, using tools such as social problems and effective discourse helped the chance of achieving rhetorical success (Edelman, 1988). Typically, the policy used to “solve” a social problem was developed first, and then a social problem that seemed to fit within the aims of the policy was attached to it (Edelman, 1988). The most common course of action to solve a problem was a gesture such as enacting a law that promised to solve or lessen a problem, even if there was little chance it would do so because conflicting interests usually resulted in perpetuation or intensification of the problem (Edelman, 1988).

This was evidenced in the many education reforms passed since the 1980s and the persistence of the perceived student achievement problem. For instance, neoconservatives and neoliberals likely wanted to privatize education before defining student achievement as a problem and engaging in rhetoric to promote policies that would address this problem. In Central State, teachers were a much smaller group than the general population of the state. Additionally, they were a highly definable group that was easily controlled through policy as they were state employees. This made them an appropriate target group for a policy solution to the student achievement problem. However, despite years of rhetoric and additional legislation aimed at solving the problem, the problem persisted.

*Leadership 101*

Being able to effectively navigate the political waters of education reform initiatives was arguably an important part of the work of local school district leaders. Despite having numerous demands on their time and energies, effective leaders must pay attention to all aspects of leadership of an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In one of the most commonly used texts in school administration and MBA coursework, Bolman and Deal (2008) divided these aspects of leadership into four frameworks: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. The structural framework included the structure of an organization and its strategic mission (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A leader who operated in the structural framework would be focused on implementing the strategy, experimenting with organizational structures, and adapting the organization to meet future needs. The human resource framework was focused on aspects of the organization relating to people (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A leader who functioned in the human resource framework would most likely have had a servant leadership style and would pay attention to advocating for and empowering workers (Bolman & Deal, 2008). This leader would have been visible throughout the organization and accessible to others and would have used collaborative decision-making strategies. The leadership style used in the political framework was one of advocacy and coalition building and these leaders were able to build connections between stakeholders (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The political framework viewed organizations as arenas and also involved the leader's use of persuasion, negotiation, and coercion when necessary (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The leader who was operating in a symbolic framework would be inspiring (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

The symbolic framework involved using symbols to gain attention, sharing experiences and impressions, and communicating vision (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Bolman and Deal (2008) argued that effective leaders had to be skilled in all four frames. To operate in less than all four frames would have meant that the leader was ignoring one or more important aspects of the organization. Additionally, effective leaders needed to not only know their organization, but all of the organizations with which the leader's organization interacted (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Bolman & Deal (2008) contended that leaders often misread situations because they were not able to understand the situation from all four frameworks and from the perspectives of others. Therefore, being able to operate from all four frameworks from a variety of perspectives was essential for an effective leader.

Along complimentary lines, Northouse (2009) ascribed the following characteristics to leadership. It: (a) produces change and movement; (b) establishes direction by creating a vision, clarifying the big picture, and setting strategies; (c) aligns people by communicating goals, seeking commitment, and building teams and coalitions; (d) motivates and inspires by energizing people, empowering subordinates, and meeting unmet needs. Another way to look at leadership is as a transactional process between the leader and others through which the leaders tries to influence the others toward achieving a common goal (Northouse, 2009). Leadership involved influence and groups. According to Northouse (2009) leadership must occur in a group setting because influence is a critical component of leadership. Leaders must get followers to work toward a common goal.

Northouse (2009) explained the importance of being able to attend to both tasks and relationships. Effective leaders not only attended to the tasks associated with leading an organization, but could also cultivate the relationships necessary to a successful organization (Northouse, 2009). This attention to relationships helped the leader to get members of the organization collectively focused on common organizational goals rather than primarily on members' individual goals (Northouse, 2009). The ability to be able to get teachers, administrators, and school board members working toward the same goal of implementing MAST even though each of these groups sometimes held different views of MAST, was critical in effectively implementing MAST at the local level. In short, leadership was an important aspect of moving the four districts in this study through the MAST process.

Additionally, Northouse (2009) noted that effective leaders needed to be visionary, as well as attentive of administrative tasks and conceptual ideas while having strong interpersonal skills. The truly effective leader would demonstrate all of these characteristics and behaviors.

With the increased demands on local school district superintendents, this type of effective leadership became increasingly difficult in Central State as local school districts reduced their budgets by limiting the amount of administrators and administrative support available. However, this type of effective leadership was exactly what was needed to successfully lead a district through adopting and implementing MAST.

### Summary of Analytic Theory As Applied to This Research

The rise of global capitalism, the deskilling of teachers, using policy as a pre-fabricated solution to solve a social problem, and the importance of effective leadership were all factors that influenced the implementation of MAST in Central State. There was a perception that globalization expanded the competition for jobs for U.S. workers and that public schools needed to do more in terms of educating future skilled workers to keep jobs in the U.S. It could be argued that the push for more school choice and the drive to keep the costs of public education low, that curriculum could be standardized, thus eliminating the level of skill required for teachers to develop their own curriculum and increasing competition between schools for students and between teachers for jobs. It was likely that MAST was created as a pre-fabricated solution to improve student achievement through the weakening of teachers' unions. Additionally, the impact of local leadership was important to MAST implementation.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

## Theoretical Traditions

*Grounded Theory*

Grounded Theory was a flexible but systemic methodology used to collect and analyze data in a way that allowed the theory to arise from the data itself (Charmaz, 2006). It could be used in either qualitative or quantitative research, but it was used more frequently in qualitative studies (Charmaz, 2006). Although most qualitative research methodologies allowed researchers to decide what data to gather as they proceed, Grounded Theory also allowed researchers to determine how to collect and analyze the data (Charmaz, 2006). In this study, I began with data and some opening questions, but did not have a specific theory to prove, or disprove, making Grounded Theory an appropriate methodological choice so that the data gathered could direct the analysis.

Using Grounded Theory, I was able to: (a) collect and analyze data during the same time frame, constantly comparing new data with that which was previously collected; (b) construct codes as themes emerged in the data; (c) develop and adjust theories as data was collected; (d) define relationships between districts and identify areas where additional data was needed; and (e) use an ideal type sampling method to develop a theoretical framework. Grounded Theory would have allowed me to develop the literature review after gathering and analyzing data (Charmaz, 2006); however, I found it more useful to draft the literature review and revise it as necessary to include relevant research as determined by the emerging theories developed as a result of the study data.

The process of this study began by gathering data from public sphere discourse from multiple sources that included newspapers, magazines, transcripts from public appearances, and stakeholder websites. I then interviewed participants from four school districts in Central State between 2008 and 2011, although all interviews in each individual district were completed in a one-year period with the exception of Blue Lake. Participants from Blue Lake were reluctant to participate, and it became necessary to locate and interview participants who were no longer employed by the district in order to obtain a clearer picture of the data for that district. Interviews with politicians took place in 2011. Information regarding the viewpoints of private organizations and philanthropies was gathered through their websites. This process of inquiry followed Dewey's method of gathering data and reflecting on that data through consideration of multiple viewpoints (Dewey, 1944). This type of consideration was essential in any educational study where there were so many stakeholders with varied interests.

#### *Exemplar for Case Study Model*

This study analyzed to what extent MAST, one policy in a much broader scope of education reforms, was likely to change public education and to determine the implications of that change. Wirt, Mitchell, and Marshall (1988) used critical policy analysis, a methodology that incorporates multiple perspectives on policies, to analyze how the political histories of two states influenced their education statutes based on four values—choice, efficiency, equity, and quality. The two states were chosen because of their close geographical proximity, but strong contrast in education statutes (Wirt, et al., 1988), essentially using a form of ideal typology. This study used their research as a case

study exemplar, but diverged from this research in the method of analysis. Whereas Wirt, et al. (1988) used Critical Policy Analysis as an analytical framework, this research used Grounded Theory.

Discourse theory helped to analyze contradictions. There was no shortage of contradictions in political discourse regarding education reform. Marx, Lincoln, and Edelman were theorists who supplied a theoretical background to this analysis, while Freidman and Freidman, Apple, and Chubb and Moe provided a more issue-specific lens. Some researchers, such as Ainsworth and Hardy (2004) combined discourse theory with critical theory to form critical discourse analysis and compared that data against data systematically analyzed through other theoretical lenses. This type of multi-lens analysis helped to add validity and reliability to the results (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004). In fashion with other discourse analysis studies, e.g. Lincoln (1989), this study attempted to synthesize the discourse of the constituents rather than promote a single, core theory.

## Data Collection

### *Multi-case Research Using Ideal Typology*

Ideal typology was a method of case subject selection whereby characteristics of subjects were categorized and divided into representative types of the phenomenon studied (Becker, 1998). Ideal types accentuated characteristics of phenomena for the purpose of dividing those characteristics for study. The early history of this method for selecting variations within case data is often associated with Max Weber's work. Weber was one of the first proponents of the ideal type methodology. He used it to determine



primary differences between Protestants and Catholics in Germany in relation to their ownership of capital (Weber & Kalberg, 2002).

By sorting subjects into these types, Weber was able to determine a relationship between people's religious beliefs and their views on capitalism to explain why Protestants owned significantly more capital than Catholics (Weber & Kalberg, 2002). Wirt et al. (1988) used ideal types in their multi-case research to select states for their study regarding the role of cultural values in state education policymaking. Additionally, Berliner (2000, November-December) used ideal typology to study teacher proficiency. Teachers were divided into four categories as follows: one teacher weak in subject and pedagogical knowledge, one teacher weak in subject knowledge but strong in pedagogical knowledge, one teacher strong in subject knowledge but weak in pedagogical knowledge, and one teacher strong in subject and pedagogical knowledge (Berliner 2000, November-December).

Sociologists selected cases they believed to be typical in a certain area of study (Becker, 1998). Studies that looked at programs, organizations, society, or culture typically used some sort of case study format (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This study focused on a program (MAST) within multiple organizations (school districts) that were part of a larger organization (public education) that was engrained as part of our society and culture (expectations for a "free" K-12 education for all). Because there was a long tradition of using a case research format to study this type of phenomenon, using a case approach gave validity to the research. Because there were differences between the types of school districts that implement MAST, looking at multiple cases helped to determine what, if any, factors were present that motivated some districts to be early adopters and

others to resist, and to learn about the life expectancy of MAST. Using a multi-case format allowed for the possibility of finding a negative case—a case that went against expectations (Becker, 1998). Additionally, since school districts had a variety of characteristics that may have impacted their decision to implement or not implement MAST, it was necessary to use a multiple case format.

I used ideal typology as a method for selecting case districts in choosing four school districts. Two of these were suburban districts with student populations greater than 6,500 students; one that had an active MAST program at the time of the study and one that did not. I also chose two regional center districts with student populations less than 4,500 students; one that had an active MAST program at the time of the study and one that did not.

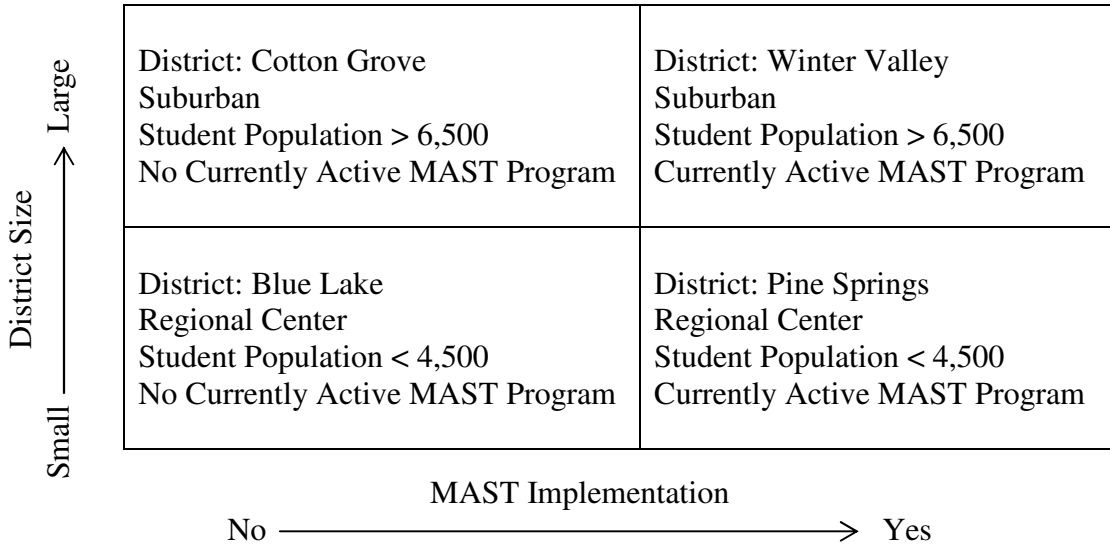
By sorting school districts into ideal types, I was able to establish a relationship between characteristics of districts that successfully adopted MAST and the impact of MAST in that district while controlling for differences in school size and type. This ideal typography was the basis of my research here.

Blue Lake and Pine Springs were two school districts located in regional centers in Central state. Both districts had fewer than 4,500 students, which was typical for this type of school district. Blue Lake was not implementing MAST at the time of this research, but Pine Springs had an active MAST program.

Conversely, Cotton Grove and Winter Valley were both suburban school districts with student populations above 6500 students, which was a typical size for suburban school districts in Central State. At the time of this research, Cotton Grove was not

implementing MAST, but Winter Valley had what participants defined as an effective MAST program (See Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. District Participants Based on Ideal Typology



*Sources*

Sources for data collection included historical research, information disseminated through formal communication channels, and interviews of stakeholders. Data sources incorporated viewpoints of multiple groups of stakeholders including the following: (a) non-partisan foundations, (b) policy makers, (c) political insiders, (d) elected political officials, (e) district administrators, (f) school administrators, (g) school board members, (h) school finance officers, (i) teachers, and (j) union representatives. The various data sources collected from these stakeholders were gathered via the methods described below.

*Historical Research*

In this study, formal communication sources provided insight into the position, strategy, and rhetoric of stakeholders, especially the views of non-partisan foundations, policy makers, national union representatives, and elected political officials. These formal communication sources included official collateral material and websites of organizations that were stakeholders in performance-based compensation for teachers. These websites included but were not limited to those sponsored by CSDE, state and national teachers' unions, Central State government, Milken Foundation, Chartwell Foundation, TAP Foundation, Broad Foundation, National Center for Education Accountability, and Public Agenda Foundation. Local, state, and national newspapers, and education and policy journals helped to determine strategies and rhetoric specific to MAST. A review of legislative session tapes helped to establish the rhetoric used and how the compromised merit pay model called MAST was passed into law. This information was public domain data and available to anyone wishing to see it.

Other studies have used historical analysis to analyze discourse. Wirt et al. (1988) found that analyzing state statutes based on the four cultural values they studied helped them identify contrasts between the two states studied and enabled them to determine relationships between the states' political histories and the values present in their education statutes. Analyzing the discourse carried out in the public sphere helped to determine whether mystification or manipulation of public opinion existed and to what extent (Wirt et al., 1988).

### *Politician Interviews*

Three politicians, one Republican senator and two Democratic congresspersons, were interviewed in order to gain insight into the origin of MAST and policy creation in one state and to ascertain their impressions on the adoption patterns of MAST. Interviews began with open-ended questions such as “Tell me about your relationship to the development of the MAST Policy” and “How do you envision MAST affecting public education?” The answers to these open-ended questions led to follow-up questions based on the information provided.

### *School Data*

This study tracked public domain school data to further determine what if any changes in the district were attributable to MAST implementation. This type of data included financial data, aggregate student achievement data, teacher attendance data, and teacher salary data.

### *District Administrator, Teacher, Union Representative, and School Board Member Interviews*

Interviews of school district administrators, teachers, union representatives, and school board members were conducted in order to gain insight into how the district went about implementing, not implementing, or implementing and dropping MAST. Initial interviews were approximately 45 minutes in length and began with open-ended questions such as “How was the decision made to implement MAST in your district/school?” “How has MAST implementation affected your district/school?” and

“How will your district evaluate the effectiveness of MAST as a program locally?” The answers to these open-ended questions led to follow-up questions based on the information provided.

As the study proceeded, additional questions arose based on data collected and changing conditions for MAST implementation within school districts. Therefore, an additional interview with district personnel was scheduled toward the end of the data collection. Each of these interviews was approximately 30 minutes in length. They began with open-ended questions like “Since our last interview, how has your district/school changed as a result of MAST implementation?” and “What has your district learned regarding MAST implementation since our last interview?” and included other open-ended questions based on trends in the data gathered, gaps in data, and the responses to the initial interview questions.

#### *District Finance Officer Interviews*

School finance officers were interviewed to validate the public domain financial data gathered and to determine the financial impact of MAST implementation on the district. Initial 45-minute interviews were scheduled with school finance officers at the beginning of the study. Interview questions included items such as “How was the decision to implement MAST made?” “How has MAST implementation affected the district financially?” and “How has the public supported the local tax burden as a result of MAST implementation?” and other open-ended questions based on the responses given to these initial questions.

As the study proceeded, additional questions arose based on data collected, and changes to the districts' financial pictures. Therefore, school finance officers were interviewed a second time toward the end of the study as needed and based on participants willingness to participate. These follow-up interviews were scheduled to last approximately 30 minutes and included questions like "Since our last interview, how has your district's financial picture changed as a result of MAST implementation?" and "What new knowledge has been gained as a result of MAST implementation as it relates to school district finances?" and other open-ended questions based on the data collected and the responses to the initial interview questions.

### *Modes of Data Analysis*

#### *Grounded Theory*

Initial Grounded Theory-based coding was based on early data gathered from historical research and interviews and entered into NVivo, an electronic tool designed to aid qualitative data collection. The data was summarized and categorized in order to simplify retrieval and enhance analysis following the data analysis steps of Grounded Theory: defining data, analyzing the meaning of data, and categorizing it (Charmaz, 2006).

#### *Single- and Multi-case Analysis*

Data was gathered during a three-year period from 2008-2011. Analysis of the data began as soon as initial data was collected and continued as it became available until

all data was collected and analyzed. Data was analyzed using a constructivist and critical theoretical lens. Coding of data was initially based on trends found in relevant literature, but evolved to encompass data trends found in the participant interview data collected in this study. As new codes were identified, all previous transcripts and data were reviewed to look for evidence of the newly identified code. Additional follow-up interviews were conducted prior to the conclusion of the data-gathering phase to gain additional data regarding new themes that emerged in the data.

Data was analyzed both at the local level within a single district to attempt to reconcile the data gathered for each district as well as comparatively among all of the districts studied to determine what if any relationships existed to develop a conceptual framework based on the emerging themes present in the data.

At the conclusion of the data-gathering phase, all data was re-read, proofreading for coding additions or errors. Data was entered into NVivo, a computer program designed to sort data by themes. Themes emerging from various perspectives were compared, looking at trends, patterns, similarities, and differences.

### *Content Analysis*

The content analysis phase began with the start of the study as historical data was collected and continued through the end of the study as new information became available on this topic. This historical research was reviewed for emerging trends in the data and to clarify the perspectives of stakeholder views relevant to the data gathered. This data was also used to help determine the public and political discourse trends regarding MAST and its role within public education policy.



### *Multi-modal Analysis*

The multi-modal analysis phase began as data from local districts became available and continued through the end of the study. In the multi-modal analysis phase, I compared the data gathered from the single-case, multi-case, and historical research phases. I attempted to use this information to build a logical chain of events depicting the local implementation of this educational policy and develop a coherent theory regarding the policy's early adoption patterns from this data.

### Validity

#### *Researcher Bias*

I did my best to present the data and research in a fair and balanced manner. I do not currently have a vested interest in whether districts choose to implement MAST or not. At the beginning of the study, I was not sure whether or not the implementation of MAST would benefit public education. As the study progressed, I began to form an opinion, but tried to not let that interfere with the data-gathering or analysis. I did not try to interfere with or influence any district's decision regarding MAST implementation. Additionally, when reviewing communication and public discourse, I was sure to include all perspectives in the MAST debate.

#### *Reactivity*

In order to minimize reactivity, I constructed open-ended interview questions that minimized the risk of leading the interviewee to believe that there was a desired answer.

Additionally, I asked questions in a variety of ways to look for consistency in the data gathered. As with minimizing researcher bias, when reviewing communication and public discourse, I included all perspectives in the MAST debate. When observing participants at meetings and other events, I remained as unobtrusive as possible, but was aware of the possibility that participants may have been putting on a show for my benefit so they would look more favorable in the research. However, because the debate was public and my presence was not a major factor in the discussion, reactivity did not appear to be a factor.

### *Involvement and Data*

By following school districts for one year, I hoped to achieve a long-term involvement that not only minimized reactivity to my presence, but would also provide rich and varied data for analysis and deeper understanding of the data. However, I found that in each case MAST was either running smoothly and not a topic of discussion at public meetings or that MAST was not implemented and not discussed in the district. As a result, several participants felt that the situation in their district had not changed and that they had nothing new to add, so the second interviews in these instances were short and added only minimal additional data. Additionally, as districts and politicians reacted to legislative and financial changes, I thought that their situations regarding MAST might have changed as well, especially for the districts that were not actively participating in MAST at the time of this research. However, this was not the case. Nonetheless, following the districts for a period of time did provide a better sense of their culture and leadership and how it may have impacted MAST implementation at a local level.

*Respondent Validation*

I recorded all interviews and observations via note taking. After completing interviews and observations, transcriptions were shown to participants for their input and feedback on the validity of the evidence.

*Discrepant Evidence and Negative Cases and Comparison*

At the time of this study there were two school districts in the state that adopted, and then rejected, MAST. Including one of these districts provided data on a negative case where the pay-for-performance model did not work as a long-term teacher compensation model for that district. Using ideal typology as a basis for case selection provided a variety of data to either confirm or reject emerging theories through a process of comparison.

*Triangulation*

By conducting interviews with politicians, teachers, union representatives, administrators, and school board members, a variety of perspectives were included. Observing politicians, teachers, and administrators also gave a good variety of perspectives regarding implementation of MAST at a local level. Incorporating historical research and official discourse also provided a broader, balanced, and reliable insight into policy development and implementation.

### *Generalizability*

Since this study used a multi-case format based on ideal typology selection, there were probably many districts in the state that would share some traits with one or more of the four districts included in this study. School districts may use this study to help them decide whether or not to implement MAST, and other state officials may use this data to decide whether and/or how to implement their own merit-based teacher compensation model. However, it was still early in the life cycle of MAST and generalizations regarding its long-term future and sustainability were premature. Additionally, there was not sufficient data to compare MAST to other education reform policies and make generalizations about the implementation and early adoption of other educational policies. In addition, this mostly qualitative cross-comparison of MAST districts by logical type was not intended to be broadly generalizable; this was certainly true beyond the state in which the research was conducted.

### *Ethics and Confidentiality*

All participating districts and individual participants remained anonymous. School data was presented in aggregate so that no individual or district was identifiable in the study. Reference citations that included the names of individuals, schools, districts, or the state studied were altered to reflect the pseudonyms used in this document and to further protect participant anonymity. Since Central State was the only state implementing a statewide teacher pay for performance program at the beginning of the study and the only one implementing MAST, anonymity cannot be guaranteed to the governor or state agencies. However, this study sought information that was already a matter of public

record. In order for others to replicate or build from this study, the names of relevant foundations that have participated in the creation or promotion of performance-based teacher pay were included in this study. However, it was important to remember that all information contained in this study regarding these organizations was public information provided by the organization themselves or through published media and was part of the public domain.

## CHAPTER FOUR: POLICY DISCOURSE ON MAST

There were many stakeholders involved in MAST implementation from its inception to implementation at the local level. This chapter provides background information about the MAST phenomenon, the stakeholders, and the discourse involved.

### MAST as First Introduced

Governor Sam King, a rising star in the Republican Party strongly supported the neoconservative position favoring school choice, raised academic standards, mandated teacher and student competencies, state-wide common curriculum, standardized testing, and schools meeting the perceived needs of business. Governor King promoted the idea that public education in its current state was a danger to children and the future of the U.S., but the problem of inadequate student achievement could be solved through the implementation of policies that included school choice initiatives and MAST, (Johnson, 2005).

Success for Central State in a global economy also demands that we develop the potential of all of our citizens. Disparities in graduation rates and academic performance between white students and students of color continue to be a moral, social, and economic crisis... Ninety-three percent of the students at Johnson Charter School [(a school students can attend by choice)] are disadvantaged and come from homes where English is not the first language. Last year the school joined the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) and it's now part of MAST. Teachers are paid for performance, meaningful professional development is

provided for staff, and rigorous evaluation of instruction is conducted. The results are remarkable. In just over one year, the students have improved on every measurement. The number of students passing the Basic Skills Test went from 38% to 62% (King, 2006).

Through rhetoric like this, King identified the social problem as inadequate student achievement and teachers as the cause of that problem. However, King attributed the increase of students' scores on one standardized test to an increase in meaningful student achievement based on the school's participation in two pay-for-performance programs for one year each without regard to whether or not the test adequately measured student achievement or if TAP and MAST caused the increase in test scores or if there were other factors that may have attributed to the increase in test scores. Additionally, the 2009 evaluation of MAST by Hezel Associates found that MAST's impact on student achievement was inconclusive because MAST had not been implemented long enough. However, these details did not seem to derail the implementation of school choice and MAST initiatives in Central State.

Governor King also implied that teachers and their unions were the biggest problem in public education, thus establishing their position as the villain and a justifiable target in the student achievement policy solution.

The number one school related factor of how our children are going to do in school is the quality, preparedness, and effectiveness of their teachers.... The quality of our teachers has eroded to the point where we should all be quite concerned about it. And the factors that go into it are these: our colleges of education in the United States of America are not nearly sufficient and rigorous

and relevant to the subject matter mastery that our teachers have to have. Number two, we are not attracting the quality people that we need into teaching for a variety of reasons. Once they arrive into teaching as new teachers we are not sufficiently developing, supporting, and training them particularly in the first five years... We need to move to a system where we pay for performance. We have done this in Central State. It is controversial. Does anyone who works outside of government get paid just for seniority? No one. The world has moved on. Eighty-five percent of all the money that goes into schools goes into what? Salaries and benefits and operating budget and you know what? And do you know what it's aligned to? Seniority. And do you know what the correlation is between seniority and the effectiveness of the teacher and student learning? Almost zero.... [The main strategic objective of schools] isn't whether we all feel good about it. It's whether students are learning, what they're learning, and how fast they're learning. We need to have some part of the increased funding for schools, as much as possible in my view, aligned to whether that strategic objective is being met in measurable and accountable ways (King, 2011).

Again, this rhetoric ignored some relevant research. The relevant research in this case was that which showed that socio-economic status was the most important factor in determining student achievement (Holland, 2007; Lee & Burkam, 2002). Arguably, teachers were a much smaller and less diverse group than parents, so teachers made a better target group than parents for a policy solution. This fact was not lost on Governor King as he addressed the Central State Association of School Administrators in 2006.



We can't legislate good parents so we've got to focus on other stuff. We were the first state to implement PSEO, so who better to lead the nation in reform. Let's regain the mantle of education innovation in Central State (King, 2006, August 15).

His early rhetoric on MAST demonstrated a belief that incompetent and lazy teachers were seemingly everywhere and immune to termination through union protection. Governor King's plan was to "fix" public education through increased competition and the weakening of the teachers' union (Weber, 2008). At this point, inadequate student achievement was labeled as the social problem that was the result of poor teaching done by incompetent and lazy teachers that were protected by their unions (Johnson, 2005). It could be argued that this labeling served to name teachers and their unions as the "villains" and the neoconservatives, including Governor King, who were going to stop this practice as the "heroes." The student achievement problem needed to be solved and getting rid of ineffective teachers and their unions was the pre-fabricated solution to the problem as described by Edelman (1988). Arguably, the "fix" to this social problem had no research to support that eliminating or weakening teachers' unions would improve student achievement.

With student achievement labeled as a problem and teachers and their unions as the cause of the problem, the Central State Governor and sympathetic legislators were able to propose multiple legislative initiatives including MAST that were aimed at weakening teachers' unions. These legislative initiatives also included allowing alternative pathways to teacher and administrative licensure that would have allowed

business professionals to obtain their teaching and administrative licensure with little or no training in education. The pay-for-performance rhetoric associated with MAST made it appear to be another piece of union-busting legislation to many Central State educators, but the rhetoric resonated with much of the general population of Central State.

Governor King strongly supported the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) advanced by the Milken Foundation and worked to bring the concept to Central State on a statewide scale. The previous Central State Governor had introduced TAP in the state, and in the few years of its existence only a handful of districts had ever used it, and about one fourth of them had already dropped the program or were in the process of dropping it when Governor King took office. Despite the failure of TAP to gain widespread approval in Central State, Governor King introduced MAST, which was based on TAP, during his first term as Governor. As a result of the similarity of MAST and TAP and TAP's dismal showing in Central State, MAST appeared to lack research and data that supported its potential as a successful performance-based compensation model in Central State.

During both of his terms as Governor, both the Central State House and Senate were controlled by Democrats, but the relationship between the Governor and the Legislature during his first term were relatively good. However, in order to get the MAST legislation passed, a lot of compromises were made, and the final legislation was significantly different from the Governor's initial vision (M. Voss, personal communication, October 24, 2011). When Governor King first proposed MAST, he presented it as a way to "professionalize" teacher compensation and as the first state-wide teacher pay-for-performance compensation program in the U.S.

When the MAST bill was first introduced in the Legislature in March of 2005, by a Republican Congresswoman representing an urban area of Central State, the language regarding alternative teacher compensation included the following provisions.

The alternative teacher professional pay system must: ...use a professional pay system that replaces the lockstep steps and lanes salary system and allows school districts and charter schools to compensate teachers for satisfactory service and completion of annual performance goals; include performance compensation for teachers in districts or charter schools based on, at a minimum: (i) student achievement gains and school achievement gains..., locally selected standardized assessments, or both; and (ii) results of individual teacher evaluations based on classroom observations by a locally selected evaluation team (Central State House, 2005a).

The Republican Senator from the same urban legislative district introduced an identical “companion bill,” four days later team (Central State Senate, 2005a).

As initially introduced, the legislative language provided only \$150 per student in funding for the program, required the elimination of the traditional step and lane salary schedule and tied all of the salary increase teachers would receive to student achievement and their performance evaluation. As first introduced, MAST very closely resembled how salary increases in the private sector worked. Both bills also required that MAST salary compensation plans be developed by regular local school districts and become part of an adopted collective bargaining agreement, memorandum of understanding between the school district and teachers’ union, or some other legally binding agreement.

Arguably, the Governor and these legislators overestimated the desperation of local public school teachers for a salary increase and the willingness of teachers to abandon their traditional compensation model. He likely thought that the rhetoric of “professionalizing” teacher compensation would serve to pressure teachers’ unions to adopt MAST. After all, teachers would want to be seen as professionals and parents would want their children taught by professionals. Additionally, as school districts were claiming to be desperately in need of additional funding, the MAST carrot held financial incentives as well.

#### Mast Metamorphosis

As is almost always the case, MAST legislation was not signed into law in the same form as it was introduced. At the time MAST was introduced, both the House and Senate were controlled by the Democrats and compromises had to be made in order for MAST legislation to pass. During the legislative process, various stakeholders lobbied legislators to alter or eliminate the legislation. As a result, compromises were made and MAST legislation was revised (Central State House, 2005a; Central State Senate, 2005a; Central State Statute, 2005). This process of compromise was similar to the process described by Edelman (1988) where competing interests forced compromises to the policy solution.

The Senate version of the MAST legislation was referred to the Education Committee where it died (Central State Senate Education Committee, 2005; Central State Senate, 2005b). The House version was referred to the Education Committee where it passed with amendments adding school-wide achievement gains to the list of criteria for

teachers to meet in order to receive MAST compensation (Central State House Education Committee, 2005; Central State House, 2005b). The House then amended the bill to increase the amount of compensation to \$260 per student (Central State House, 2005b). However, the amendment was referred back to the House Education Committee where it too died (Central State House Education Committee, 2005). The regular legislative session ended, and the MAST bill was not passed in either the House or Senate (Central State House, 2005b; Central State Senate, 2005b).

Other legislative work was not completed, and the Governor called a special legislative session (Central State Legislative Reference Library, 2012). The Governor and the Republicans were determined to pass MAST, and it was resurrected in July of 2005 as part of the education omnibus bill (Central State House, 2005c; Central State Senate, 2005c). The education omnibus bill was a bill that typically contained numerous smaller bills that were largely non-controversial in nature and were all acted upon as one bill (Central State House, 2005c; Central State Senate, 2005c). However, because of a variety of factors related to omnibus bills including their large size, their presentation at the end of the legislative session (when legislators are tired) and their typically innocuous language, at least some legislators reported that they did not read these bills carefully (M. Wilson, personal communication, January 18, 2011; M. Voss, personal communication, October 24, 2011; C. Sampson, personal communication, February 9, 2011). This may have made it easier to pass MAST.

When MAST was presented in the omnibus bill, it had undergone some significant changes to the language regarding teacher compensation.

The alternative teacher professional pay system agreement must:... reform the “steps and lanes” salary schedule, prevent any teacher’s compensation paid before implementing the pay system from being reduced as a result of participating in this system, and base at least 60 percent of any compensation increase on teacher performance using: (i) school-wide student achievement gains ...or locally selected standardized assessment outcomes, or both; (ii) measures of student achievement; and (iii) an objective evaluation program (Central State Statute, 2005).

In this version of MAST legislation, the MAST funding to school districts remained at \$260 per student, but the state only would provide all of the funding the first year. The second year, a portion of the funding would come from local property tax levies. The steps and lanes no longer needed to be eliminated, just reformed. The amount of MAST compensation tied to student achievement, standardized test scores, and teacher evaluation was reduced from 100% to a minimum of 60%. The legislative language did not describe to what extent the steps and lanes had to be reformed or what percentage of teacher compensation had to be tied to student achievement versus teacher evaluation. As a result, this vagueness led to a great deal of debate after MAST became law.

During the special session, there was a motion to remove MAST from the omnibus bill, because it was not historically the type of bill that would be included in the larger omnibus bill due to its more controversial nature. However, interestingly, the House and Senate floor debates about MAST were not always reflective of the latest revision that was included in the omnibus bill. On both floors, legislators debated the bill

in terms of 60% to all of a teacher's total compensation being tied to student achievement with no mention of the possibility of a good portion of that being tied to teacher evaluation by other measures. In the House, the discussion was not in terms of how much of a teacher's salary should be tied to student achievement, but whether or not tying teachers' compensation to performance was a good idea at all. Representatives talked as if all of teachers' compensation, not just MAST compensation, would be based on performance as could have been interpreted from the initial version of the legislation. When MAST was discussed in the Senate, the discussion went much the same way as it did in the House until one senator clarified that under MAST only 30% of a teacher's salary would be tied to performance. However, this clarification was also inaccurate as the legislation did not tie any specific percentage of the MAST increase to student achievement versus teacher performance. Further, MAST legislation had no impact on tying non-MAST compensation to teachers' performance in any way.

Ultimately, when the motion to remove MAST from the omnibus bill was up for a vote in the Senate it failed in a tie vote. The omnibus bill passed the House and Senate and was signed into law with MAST legislation intact, although I was not sure that the legislators really knew exactly what they had just passed.

Thus far, the legislative process fit precisely with Edelman's (1988) work in so far as the competing interests of the legislators and the constituents they represented served to modify MAST legislation, making the legislative "solution" ambiguous and contradictory. It also seemed to have left all of the stakeholder groups at least somewhat dissatisfied. The legislation as a pre-fabricated solution sought to weaken teachers' unions, but allowed for voluntary participation and union approval at the local school

district level, thus limiting its effectiveness in that regard. Local teachers were not likely to adopt a plan that they believed would not be of benefit to them. The legislative language was also vague and left the definition of “reform” as it applied to teacher compensation subject to a variety of interpretations. A third area of vagueness in the legislative language was the extent of teachers’ compensation that was actually tied to student achievement. With the minimum of 60% of MAST compensation tied to a teacher evaluation combined with local student achievement measures or state standardized test scores, no set amount was required to be tied to test scores. As a result, districts in Central State attached very little of the MAST compensation to test score criteria. I have seen ranges from one to five percent of MAST compensation tied to state standardized test scores, although it is possible that some districts in Central State attached a greater percentage of MAST compensation to this measure.

The three legislators who participated in this research shared their thoughts on MAST legislation. Senator Mary Voss was a Republican who represented a legislative district that encompassed both small, rural towns and outer-ring suburbs of a large metropolitan area. Cotton Grove, one of the case districts in this research, was included in her legislative district. Her professional background was in small businesses. She served on the K-12 Education Finance Committee when MAST was passed into law and served on the Higher Education Committee and as Chair of the State Finance Committee. She has served in the Senate since 1997. Throughout the interview process, she strongly echoed the sentiments of Governor King and his neoconservative approach to education policy, with her strongest support of MAST being in its original legislative version prior to the compromises made in order to get the legislation passed.



Representative Max Wilson was a Democrat who represented a regional center, small towns, and rural areas in southern Central State. He had been a state representative since 2006. Although he had not served on any K-12 education-related committees, he did have work experience as a college professor, and was familiar with K-12 education. His views on education appeared to lean toward the neoliberal point of view of the education policy debate, but were not entirely consistent with the neoliberal education policy agenda.

Claudia Sampson had been a state representative since 1992. She was a Democrat who represented a wealthy suburban area. Prior to her election as a state representative, she served on the board of her local school district. As a state representative, Sampson chaired the House K-12 Education Finance Committee, and was an author of the New Central State Salvation legislation, legislation designed to adequately fund K-12 public education in Central State based on the original Central State Salvation legislation from 1971. At the time of this research, the New Central State Salvation legislation had been brought before the House several times, but never passed. Although Representative Sampson believed that performance-based compensation was a good thing, she thought that the larger issue impacting student achievement was a general lack of funding for public schools, representing more of a traditional philosophical stance among Democrats in Central State.

There was little consensus among these three legislators about what the important components of MAST were, and even if the program should continue. The only component of MAST that all three legislators interviewed agreed upon was that a very

important component of the MAST plan was the voluntary participation on the part of school districts.

Although Representative Wilson thought that there were important components of MAST, he would prefer that MAST was discontinued.

If it were up to me, I'd eliminate MAST in favor of the National Board of Teaching approach. It's the same model that I think Stanford, the University of Minnesota, and the Bush Foundation use for pay increases. It puts more responsibility on the teacher to do a good job and not just collect a paycheck no matter how good of a job they do. That's why the voluntary nature of MAST is so important to me. I don't think we can force a compensation model on a school district when we know there are better models out there...The local levy funding is important for two reasons. One, we could never afford to pay all of it, and, two, there has to be some buy in from the local district that they are committed to it. If they have to pay for some of it, they'll be more likely to follow through (M. Wilson, personal communication, January 18, 2011).

Representative Sampson (personal communication, February 9, 2011) thought that career advancement, performance-based compensation, professional development, state funding, teacher observations, and voluntary participation were all very important parts of MAST, but again, reiterated that the overall lack of reliable, consistent, and adequate funding was a much more significant issue.

Senator Voss (personal communication, October 24, 2011) thought that the only very important part of the MAST plan was its voluntary nature. She noted that the

voluntary nature was important because the data from MAST was inconclusive as to its effectiveness regarding student achievement. However, she also rated local levy funding, performance-based compensation, and teacher observation as important. The local-levy funding and performance-based compensation fit tightly with the neoconservative position of Governor King. These two components of MAST served the neoconservative view that unions harbored poor performers and served to decrease allocation of state resources to local programs. Like Representative Wilson, she believed that the local levy was important to show that districts “buy-in to the MAST plan and aren’t just going along with it to get some additional money from the state” (M. Voss, personal communication, October 24, 2011).

Senator Voss was a supporter of the original legislative language and was greatly disappointed with the compromised version of MAST that ultimately became law.

There was a lot of compromising done to get this [MAST] passed. It was very political. Governor King had a plan, the Democrats (in the Senate in particular) had their plan. The union [CSEA] had a lot of influence in the program. It was softened to the point where I’m not sure it’s worthwhile. If we had to do more budget cuts, I would be willing to freeze participation for a few years and see how we’re doing. I’m not advocating for eliminating it though. I’m not sure we can get better results without changing the program. Its purpose was to get teachers off steps and lanes, but it never did that. I want performance-based compensation for teachers, but not in its present form—not watered down. We need to strengthen the compensation system. It was really intended to get rid of steps and lanes. We won’t ever get it if unions [local teachers’ unions] get to approve the plan. They

might like the outcome, but they don't want to give up control (M. Voss, personal communication, October 24, 2011).

Senator Voss's statement seemed to confirm MAST as a pre-fabricated solution as promoted by Edelman (1988) to the extent that MAST's purpose, as explained by Senator Voss, was really about getting rid of traditional step and lane teacher compensation and implementing performance-based pay rather than increasing student achievement.

One of the results of compromise and the extensive lobbying done to secure that compromise was that no one got everything they wanted. Senator Voss's sentiment could have mirrored that of the Governor regarding the version of MAST that was passed based on what followed during the initial implementation phase of MAST. In fact, Senator Voss seemed to have gotten little of what she wanted out of the MAST legislation, but a compromised version of the legislation appeared to be a greater political "win" than a failure of the legislation to pass at all. The legislative metamorphosis of MAST also echoed Edelman (1988) in describing why the legislation that was ultimately passed had little hope of solving the problem it was intended to fix as a result of the competing interests and resulting compromises made. The MAST legislation passed, but retained little power to do what it was intended to do.

#### MAST Implementation Debate: Reform versus Elimination

In MAST's implementation, there was a great deal of debate about the meaning of "reform" and "alternative" in the teacher pay system. The lack of a clear definition of these terms in the legislation left stakeholders to develop their own definitions. As a result, the definitions between stakeholders varied. The differing viewpoints of various

stakeholders and their lack of ability to reach consensus on the definitions caused dissatisfaction for multiple stakeholders as they discovered that MAST implementation differed from their vision of what it would be like.

The actual MAST legislation did not tie any specific portion of the MAST dollars a teacher was able to receive solely to student achievement. However, 60% of MAST compensation was tied to teacher performance, and student performance was one measure of teacher performance. In implementation one effect of this ambiguity was that the amount of compensation tied to standardized test scores varied by district. MAST legislation did not impact other compensation teachers received from districts except that districts were required to develop a reformed alternative teacher professional pay system. MAST legislation did not freeze a teacher's salary, but could deny the teacher any additional compensation through MAST. Additionally, the way MAST was interpreted by most districts meant that teachers could earn 40% of the MAST dollars without meeting any performance goals. Similar to Edelman's (1988) research, this ambiguity fueled an intense debate between local school districts and CSDE, with multiple districts actually suing CSDE over its interpretation of the legislation (Owen, 2006; FindLaw, 2007).

#### *Governor King*

When MAST was signed into law in 2005, Governor King promoted MAST as a "grass-roots" initiative that would come from the teachers themselves. In a sense, MAST had to come from teachers because a district could not adopt MAST without local teachers' union approval. Governor King predicted that teachers of half of the students in Central State would come into the program during the first two years; the other half

would participate by 2009. At first it looked like that might happen. It was argued that overtly informing districts that only half would receive funding for the program may have briefly sparked a shortage mentality among districts and the majority quickly sent non-binding letters of intent to participate in MAST to CSDE (CSDE, 2010). This echoed the free-market principals of supply and demand advanced by Freidman and Smith, and seemed to be effective in the early days of MAST. The Governor was energized and spoke as if this version of MAST was the program he'd hoped for, with no signs of how much he had compromised to get it passed (M. Voss, personal communication, October 24, 2011). Although the Governor remained enthusiastic about MAST, local school district interest diminished quickly (CSDE, 2010).

When Governor King talked about MAST during the first few years of its implementation, he talked about how MAST would professionalize teacher compensation and pay high-performing teachers for their performance while freezing the pay of low-performing teachers, ultimately driving them out of the profession (Weber, 2008). He talked about how MAST awarded teachers raises based on their performance and student achievement instead of longevity (Weber, 2008), and was quick to point out that MAST caused the improvement in student achievement in Metropolis ("Governor Delivers," 2006). However, in an interview for *Education Week*, the superintendent of Metropolis attributed the gain to new professional development initiatives implemented in the district during the same time period and not to MAST (McNiel, 2006).

In the end, MAST floundered. Teachers did not rise up and demand that their district participate in MAST like the Governor predicted. In fact, relatively few districts actually implemented the program. Six years after MAST was unveiled only 12% of

Central State school districts encompassing 30% of the students were using MAST. MAST seemed to be suffering the same fate as the TAP program that came before it in Central State (CSDE, 2010).

### *CSDE*

MAST was floundering, and was not turning out to be what the Governor originally wanted. However, all was not lost for the Governor's pet education project. In Central State, the State Education Commissioner was appointed by the Governor, essentially making CSDE an education policy implementation extension of the Governor's office. The SCDE championed MAST and its implementation. CSDE published press releases on its website and ensured photo opportunities with the Governor and or Commissioner of Education handing the involved district an oversized check contributing to the political spectacle as described by Edelman (1988). Each press release contained general information about the district's MAST plan and about how excited the district was to be participating in MAST (CSDE, 2006, 2007). Each press release listed all of the districts that had signed on to participate in MAST (that were still participating at the time of the press release) (CSDE, 2006, 2007). It was reminiscent of advertisers using peer pressure techniques to get people to buy products, and seemed to be a strategy as described by Spector and Kitsuse (1977) to get the audience, in this case local school districts, to act.

CSDE also helped to spread the Governor's pay-for-performance rhetoric. Both the Governor and CSDE used words like "professional" and "modern" to describe the compensation method in MAST (CSDE, 2006, 2007; King, 2006). This language served

to convey the message that the traditional steps and lanes salary schedule was outdated and unprofessional without overtly attacking it. In the early years of MAST, the Central State Education Commissioner preached that the public did not support automatic pay increases for employees because industries no longer operated in that manner (Hanson, 2006). CSDE employees, including the Commissioner Mahoney, also helped to paint MAST as a successful program because it tied teacher education to student learning, in effect, although it was not usually the case, as school districts that had implemented MAST did not have substantially different gains in student achievement than those districts that did not (Weber, 2009). The early rhetoric from CSDE focused on pay-for-performance and professionalization of teacher pay so that teacher compensation would be aligned with how private sector professionals were compensated.

In a 2007 interview with *Education Week*, Commissioner Mahoney stated the following.

There are not many industries anymore that give employees and automatic pay increase just because they worked another year. That's not the way of doing things anymore, and the public doesn't support that anymore (Honawar, 2007, January 17).

In interviews for Central State Public Radio and the *Tribune*, Commissioner Mahoney also noted that teachers and districts were not guaranteed MAST dollars once their applications were approved.

We don't want to send the message that this is something that you can game and think you can just pick up \$260 per student and have something that's not going



to be a very significant change in the way you pay your teachers and the way you structure their professional development (Pugmire, 2005).

The legislation says we can take money away if districts are not following through with their contracts. We will have monitors going into the school districts to see if they're doing what they're saying (Draper, 2005,1A).

In keeping with the idea of MAST as a pre-fabricated solution, CSDE offered no research or data that showed that changing how teachers were compensated would increase student achievement. From CSDE's rhetoric, MAST's intended purpose seemed to be eliminating step and lane compensation and replacing it with performance-based compensation.

After the initial onslaught of letters of intent to apply for MAST, the actual applications barely materialized. Commissioner Mahoney accounted for the lack of districts participating two years after the launch of the program by explaining that local districts were taking time to explore and understand the various aspects of MAST (Honawar, 2007 August 1). CSDE was firmly supportive of the Governor's agenda regarding MAST. Having lived in Central State for more than 25 years, including the entire time since the inception of MAST through the completion of this research and regularly watching, listening, and reading mainstream news, I could not recall nor find in the mainstream media any reports of wide-spread public-initiated outrage or even concern about how teachers were paid. This statement seemed to me to echo Edelman's

(1988) research regarding using media to establish public opinion by attributing the neoconservative education policy agenda to the mainstream population of Central State.

CSDE also advanced the Governor's agenda in its oversight of the implementation of MAST. The legislation gave responsibilities for oversight of the program and approval of individual school districts' implementation plans to CSDE. CSDE essentially ignored the revisions the legislature made to MAST when approving applications, especially in the areas of reforming versus eliminating the traditional step and lane salary structure and how much of the compensation would be tied to student achievement through standardized testing. When districts complained that CSDE's approval requirements were not what were stated in the legislation that passed, CSDE claimed that eliminating the traditional salary schedule was the only way to reform it and that was what was intended by "reform" (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009). CSDE also contended that the expectation was that a significant portion of the MAST dollars were intended to be paid based on student performance on state standardized tests (J. Gleason, personal communication, January 14, 2011). Districts that did not meet CSDE's self-imposed criteria either had their plans rejected or had great difficulty getting their plans approved (J. Gleason, personal communication, January 14, 2011). Some districts sued CSDE over its approval criteria. In one case, the district sued over the requirement of having full-time peer coaches (Owen, 2006). The lawsuit was settled and the districts' plans were approved (Owen, 2006). This helped loosen the approval criteria somewhat, but this was short-lived. In the other lawsuit, the judge sided with CSDE regarding the definition of "reform" and found that CSDE did not overstep its

authority to require the step and lane compensation schedule be eliminated (FindLaw, 2007).

Another factor that made MAST implementation challenging was that CSDE was subject to budget cuts over several years to an even greater extent than local school districts. At the time of this research, only approximately 80% of the employees at CSDE were state workers. The other 20% were federal employees overseeing state implementation of federal programs (D. Gomez, personal communication, August 9, 2011). CSDE was plagued by years of staff reductions through hiring freezes. When an employee resigned, the position was not filled and the work was divided among remaining employees. This made responsibility for staffing and overseeing the various programs fluid (D. Gomez, personal communication, August 9, 2011). It created an atmosphere where employees were over-worked and not always knowledgeable of the programs they oversaw (D. Gomez, personal communication, August 9, 2011). New programs like MAST were added to the workload of employees who did not necessarily have the time, and possibly the desire, to learn about and oversee another new program (D. Gomez, personal communication, August 9, 2011). This helped to create an environment where responses to district questions about MAST varied widely based on which CSDE employee answered the question (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009).

In addition to the program's tepid support among educators and vague language, the MAST application process was oppressive. It included a forbidding application form (CDSE, 2012c), advice that changed depending on which person at CSDE answered the question (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009), and a culture at CSDE that

required revision on every application as reported by the CSDE employee who presented at the 2006 MAST workshop. The application needed input from the local teachers' union, administration, and the school board, which required hundreds of man-hours spent in each district writing a plan that districts were uncertain would be accepted (G. Camden, October 1, 2009). As was expected with new legislation, those drafting plans to implement MAST in their districts had questions about what was needed in their plans and how the legislation was being interpreted by CSDE.

At a 2006 CSDE-sponsored workshop I attended that was held to answer district questions about implementing MAST, the presenter told us not to be disheartened when our application was rejected or required revision. She added that Commissioner Mahoney felt that CSDE employees were not doing their jobs if they let applications through easily, so all plans would be returned for revision at least once.

The bureaucratic approval process arguably had a chilling effect on the number of letters of intent that turned into actual districts that implemented MAST. The first year, there were only a handful of districts that implemented MAST, and some of them had special encouragement to participate (CSDE, 2007; J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009; Metropolis Superintendent, personal communication, March 2, 2011). The hard-driving MAST rhetoric was not attracting customers. The Governor's pet educational project and his hopes of moving on to a national stage were fading. Thus a new strategy was implemented.

CSDE and Governor King wanted districts to participate, so in some cases, the Governor's agenda and even the legislation was compromised to get districts to try MAST. The hope was that more districts would join the list of MAST participants,

thereby causing more districts to be motivated by these districts joining the program.

Despite language stating that all aspects of the MAST program needed to be implemented by October 1 of the year the district implemented MAST, Blue Lake (one of the districts that participated in this study) submitted a MAST plan to CSDE that did not have any adjustments made to its traditional step and lane salary schedule. Nevertheless, CSDE approved Blue Lake's plan, waiving the October 1 full implementation requirement and giving Blue Lake one year to get rid of its traditional salary schedule (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008). Ultimately, Blue Lake was not able to reach an internal agreement between the teachers' union and the district on a new or revised salary schedule, so Blue Lake's MAST program had to be discontinued after its first year (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

Pine Springs (another participating district in this study) submitted a MAST application that did not get rid of its traditional step and lane salary schedule, but rather added MAST dollars on top of it. Pine Springs contended that the legislation required that the salary schedule be altered, not eliminated (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009). Pine Springs argued that adding career ladder compensation, MAST dollars to all teachers' salary if the district as a whole made AYP targets, and piece-rate based MAST dollars for completing professional development tasks amounted to altering the district's salary schedule because it did not previously have those items (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009). This was certainly one way to interpret the MAST legislative call for "reforming" teacher compensation.

A battle of wills ensued between CSDE and the district. Still, the Governor's fishing opener was in Pine Springs that year, and he and CSDE wanted the photo

opportunity with the Governor, the district, and the over-sized check. Therefore, Pine Springs' MAST plan was approved just in time for the fishing opener photo with the salary schedule as Pine Springs submitted it intact (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009).

A few years later, the Pine Springs' superintendent gained responsibility for a second school district, Bear Creek. Bear Creek was a regional center located about 120 miles southeast of Pine Springs. Dr. Frodo worked with staff at Bear Creek to adapt the Pine Springs' MAST plan to the new district. CSDE rejected the plan with the salary schedule being a major factor in the rejection, and Bear Creek ended its pursuit of MAST dollars (J. Frodo, personal communication, October 16, 2009). It appeared that CSDE was still attempting to enforce its interpretation of the MAST legislative language.

Although not participating in this research, the superintendent of Metropolis, an urban school district in Central State that had several schools participating in MAST, and I were talking during a break from a meeting we attended in 2010. We were talking about the subjects of our dissertations. When I told her that mine was about MAST, she lamented that when it was first passed they had legislators and people from CSDE coming to the district every day trying to get them on board. She quipped that the district had to adopt MAST just so the people lobbying them to adopt MAST would go away and the district could go back to getting some work done. Interestingly, this school district was represented in state government by the two original authors of the MAST legislation.

Conversely, some felt that their districts were unfairly excluded and that CSDE did not provide them with any assistance or encouragement to participate. Representative Sampson viewed MAST both through the point of view of a legislator and from the

perspective of a local school district when describing what she would change about MAST.

The law changed and we had the feeling that it was partisan [regarding] who got [MAST] and who didn't. At the beginning there were accusations about applications not being fair. Some school districts [that] sent in the same application as another district got rejected. Center City [the district where Representative Sampson was a school board member and still represents legislatively] was represented by all Democrats and was turned down [for not meeting required timelines]. We brought documentation that we met deadlines and then we were approved. Small, rural schools didn't have administrators who had time and couldn't put forth the plans, so it was mostly metro districts that got it (C. Sampson, personal communication, February 9, 2011).

Representative Sampson's statement combined with the experiences of Pine Springs, Bear Creek, Blue Lake, and Winter Valley seemed to support her view that MAST applications may not have been impartially reviewed.

### *Legislators*

The Central State Legislature was less enthusiastic about MAST than the Governor. The legislature preferred to spend the state's limited budget to fund financially strapped school districts in general than to expand MAST (Honawar, 2007, January 17). It capped state MAST funding at \$86 million, enough to cover only half of the teachers in the state. In addition, since MAST initially was signed into law the state portion of funding steadily decreased from being fully funded (when the legislation was passed) to

being increasingly funded through local property taxes. In 2008, the state only picked up the tab for \$171 per student of the \$260 per student tab. This is similar to the financial path of other pay-for-performance initiatives that had come and gone before MAST. Additionally, legislators were not seeing the overwhelming increase in student achievement they thought that they would see due to MAST. They wondered if state funds were being well spent on the program or if MAST was just a ploy to get more money for teachers and a debate about whether or not the state should continue to fund MAST ensued (M. Wilson, personal communication, January 18, 2011).

I found it interesting that legislators considered that MAST might be a ploy on the part of teachers' unions and some Democrats to get more money for teachers. MAST was introduced by neoconservative Republicans in the House and Senate, promoted by a neoconservative governor, and opposed by state and local teachers' unions. One possible explanation was that through continued social interaction as promoted by Berger and Luckmann (1966), neoconservatives were viewed as a group that did not support providing additional education funding and teachers' unions and Democrats were viewed as groups that lobbied for education funding. Legislators interviewed for this study did not seem to consider the possibility that MAST was a failed attempt at weakening the teachers' unions and changing how teachers in Central State were paid. However, at the time MAST was passed, overt legislative attacks on teachers' unions and teachers' compensation were rare. Because overt attacks on teachers' unions and teachers' compensation were rare at the time of this research, this type of social interaction may not have occurred or occurred so infrequently in Central State that the legislators may not have recognized this aspect of MAST. This is because, according to Edelman (1988), the



series of social interactions between the Legislature and teachers' unions that needed to happen for this meaning to be considered had not happened. That could have been why legislative participants did not consider that MAST was a failed neoconservative initiative.

Although Senator Voss and Representative Wilson supported the movement to the local levy aspect of MAST, Representative Sampson disagreed.

When we first started talking about MAST, it was initially all state money, but that has changed. I don't think it was even all state money by the time it got all the way through the Legislature. It's become increasingly funded through local dollars though. It's a really good program, but I think it should be funded by the state. I think education in general should be funded by the state (C. Sampson, personal communication, February 9, 2011).

As part of the debate, legislators threatened to cut MAST funding. So CSDE hired a firm to conduct an evaluation of the impact of MAST on student achievement. The evaluation results stated that MAST might have a small impact on student achievement, but the results were inconclusive (Hezel, 2009). The researchers stated that due to the many different initiatives being concurrently implemented across Central State including in MAST districts, it was impossible to tell what impact MAST had on student achievement versus the other initiatives that were also implemented during the study period. Despite the actual study results, the Governor, CSDE, and many legislators publicly stated that the study was conducted and that MAST participation improved student achievement (Mindeman, 2009). There were some legislators like Representative

Sampson (personal communication, February 9, 2011) who accurately reported that the study results were inconclusive, but their voices seemed to go unnoticed in the public sphere and on their respective legislative floors, based on my observation of legislative tapes of these sessions. This could have also been a type of mystification of the data on the part of these neoconservatives in order to continue the implementation of their policy agenda.

Whether or not MAST actually resulted in better student achievement was important to the three legislators who participated in this study and would impact their decisions on whether or not to continue funding for the program as it existed at the time of this research.

I would also want to make sure that student achievement is measured properly. I don't know if I'm happy with it the way it's measured now. There should be a standard way of doing it. It may not matter though. Soon we'll put a lot of it into law with no funding if districts don't participate [in MAST] (M. Voss, personal communication, October 24, 2011).

Even when asked directly to comment on the student achievement aspects of MAST, Senator Voss continued to emphasize the pay-for-performance aspects of MAST. Her commitment to the pay-for-performance and teacher evaluation aspects of MAST resonated strongly with the neoconservative agenda regarding public education at the time of this research.

Representative Wilson thought that MAST compensation was significantly different than what he thought it would be, making student achievement irrelevant to

MAST. However, student achievement was very important to Representative Wilson, so he preferred to discontinue MAST.

I like many of the concepts, but not the implementation.... I think it has merit and accountability. There were also local levy dollars so it wasn't seen as a gift from the state, but MAST really doesn't compensate based on student achievement or teacher performance. If the school makes the goal, the teachers get paid whether or not they had anything to do with achieving the goal. Some may have to show a portfolio of what they did during the year at the end of the school year, but they all get paid too. It really doesn't change anything. I did expect that it would simply be a "more compensation" tool that utilizes local property tax, but it was primarily presented as merit pay. It didn't work out that way. It was just a way to bring more money to the compensation pool (M. Wilson, personal communication, January 18, 2011).

Representative Wilson seemed to be able to intuitively identify some of the negative aspects of pay-for-performance models. These included the difficulty in measuring achievement and performance, and the unintended consequence of rewarding poor teachers for the work of their higher performing peers through the use of group rewards.

Representative Sampson thought that MAST was working pretty much the way she envisioned it, with the exception of funding.

I never thought we would have state funding forever. I thought by now it would all be local levy. I'm surprised it's hung on for as long as it has. For late comers, it will be all local money. That's not what I thought it would be at all. It should be all state dollars. Everything about education funding should be state dollars. Local

levy dollars are not equalized (C. Sampson, personal communication, February 9, 2011).

Representative Sampson also echoed sentiment about student achievement and the potential of requiring districts to participate. “If the student achievement data is favorable, then it should no longer be optional for districts, but if we can’t prove it’s good for students and aren’t going to fund it, then we can’t require it” (personal communication, February 9, 2011).

As a result of the inconclusive evidence relating MAST to student achievement, although Central State faced an increasingly dire state budget deficit, the legislature continued to fund MAST without definitive evidence that MAST was working. However, the debate continued about whether or not MAST should be reformed or discontinued. At the time of this research, several legislators, including Representative Wilson, were calling for an end to state funding for MAST and new legislation requiring districts to participate in the performance-based aspects of MAST.

When asked how MAST implementation differed from their vision of how it would be when the Legislature approved it, the answers were again varied. Senator Voss was a strong supporter of the original legislative language and was the most disappointed with the compromised version of MAST that ultimately became law. “It hasn’t worked out the way I wanted it to. All of them [MAST components] are disappointing” (M. Voss, personal communication, October 24, 2011).

All of the legislators had ideas of what they would do differently with MAST. Similarly to the neoliberal stance, Representative Wilson would have eliminated MAST altogether.

In Wheatfield [the largest city Wilson represented], we have National Board certification. I think it has better merit and accountability. I would do a NBTC [National Board of Teaching Certification] approach for “merit” pay and implement the Teacher Performance Assessment for new teachers (M Wilson, personal communication, January 18, 2011).

Senator Voss would keep the current MAST components, but strengthen the requirements in each area.

I like the evaluation/observation requirement and the requirement for increased student achievement, but they’re not as strong as I’d like them. I like the performance-based compensation, but it’s not strong enough. The steps and lanes have to go. I guess I don’t mind the steps so much, but the lane thing really gets me. Teachers get paid more just because they take a class or get an advanced degree. It doesn’t even have to relate to what they’re teaching. I would also not let the unions vote to approve the plan; or if they have to vote, not allow more than a 50% plus one vote. Right now they’re [local unions] requiring 67% and 75% votes to approve the plan (M. Voss, personal communication, October 24, 2011).

Again, Senator Voss was clearly promoting the rhetoric of the neoconservative education agenda.

With the exception of Representative Wilson, the legislators thought that MAST had some positive points. For example, Senator Voss (personal communication, October 24, 2011) believed that the greatest impact MAST had on education was professional development. “The staff development has been the best. Staff development should, in theory, relate to increased student achievement. The teacher mentoring can also help.”

Representative Sampson also shared her thoughts on what was good about MAST. She included its voluntary nature and encouragement of tinkering with the relationship between teacher professional development and pay.

Having it [MAST] be voluntary at the beginning was a good thing. There was not enough money to fund it for everyone, so why not have the ones who want it do it. Then we could build data to prove it’s a good thing. Then other school districts will want to do it. There’s also something to be said for professionalizing teaching, and it seems it wouldn’t harm students. I hope the greatest impact of MAST is student achievement and how teachers love the professionalization of teaching with peers giving advice and peers helping peers. It’s not threatening; it’s being able to help others. Sometimes I think Governor King liked the test scores piece best, but test scores aren’t the be-all end-all or even the biggest measure. It started out as being a feared measure passed by legislators, but they [legislators] aligned with teachers’ unions, and now they [teachers] want it. They [teachers] feel it’s an injustice that they don’t have it. It could have been uprooted if Governor King wasn’t so passionate about it. Governor Ritchell [current Central State Democratic Governor] would be a goat if he tried to get rid of it

now, but four years ago, he would have been a hero (C. Sampson, personal communication, February 9, 2011).

That most people would probably no longer have referred to Governor Ritchell as a hero for ending MAST was not because people were starting to get excited about the benefits of MAST. It was more of a case that people had largely stopped talking about MAST and moved on to focusing on other issues. Additionally, Representative Sampson and Senator Voss both seemed to appreciate the unintended outcome of MAST in terms of showing promise as an effective professional development model.

### *Supporting Local School Districts*

Local school districts throughout Central State were financially starved and willing to try just about anything to keep their districts viable. This accounted for the overwhelming number of districts that submitted a non-binding letter of intent to participate in MAST. However, the bureaucracy associated with the approval process, the confusing and contradictory information CSDE disseminated, and the need for union approval stifled the attempts of many districts to secure additional funding for teacher compensation.

In Central State, state funding of school districts funding had always been somewhat unpredictable. State funding increases and decreases were made at the discretion of the legislation with the Governor's approval. At the time of this research, there was not enough money or desire on the part of the legislative body to fund school districts consistently or adequately. At one House Education Finance Committee meeting I attended, the committee chair asked a researcher who was there presenting her findings

on public school funding how much the state could cut in K-12 public education funding without risking being sued by districts. The researcher responded that the state was in danger of being sued now and would most likely lose (Seashore & Alexander, 2010). Since then, Central State only reduced funding to school districts one year when that funding was supplanted by federal stimulus dollars. However, Central State did use some creative borrowing strategies over a period of several years.

In times of shortages of state cash flow, the state would delay making its payments to school districts so that the state would not have to borrow money for cash flow purposes. This was different than the shifting of payments to the following year. This type of delay was when the state announced to school districts that they would not be receiving all or some of the money owed to them that year (Weber, 2010). This forced many fiscally responsible school districts to have to borrow money to maintain district cash flow. The state would then pay the districts the delayed payments when the state had more cash on hand, typically after state income taxes were collected in mid-April. The legislature did this in 2010, but prohibited the practice in a special legislative session during the summer of 2011 (Central State Statute, 2011).

Another borrowing strategy used by Central State was to delay state aid payments to districts. When Central State was fully paying districts, the state paid districts 90% of the funding in the current year and approximately 10% in the following year. This was done to allow the state to double check student enrollment for each district to ensure that the state was distributing the correct amount of aid to each district. Twice during the time of this research, the Central State Legislature voted to shift more of the current year's aid to districts to the following year. The first shift delayed 20% of aid and the second shift



delayed 27% of aid. That meant that under the latest shift districts only received 73% of what the state was obligated to pay them. Again, this caused some districts to need to borrow money to maintain district cash flow (Weber, 2010).

Districts used to be able to levy more local dollars to off-set the instability of state funding. However, beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, Central State made a promise to districts to more fully fund public education. In doing so, the amount of funds districts could levy locally was reduced and the amount of state funding increased. Since then, when adjusted for inflation, the per-student state funding for each of the case districts I studied decreased every year with the exception of Cotton Grove in the 2006-2007 school year (CSDE, 2008b, 2009l; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). That year Cotton Grove moved a special education program into the district that had served by a special education co-operative. The related increase in high needs students in the district thus increased the district's per student state revenue that year. However, during all other years, Cotton Grove's per-student inflation-adjusted state funding decreased similarly to each of the other three districts.

In addition to a lack of stable and sufficient funding, districts themselves were also important in the success or failure of MAST implementation. Having strong, effective district leadership and a positive relationship between the teachers' union and district administration were important factors for MAST implementation in districts. However, in the face of diminishing funds, districts often cut administrative and administrative support positions, trying to keep budget cuts from impacting classrooms. This resulted in over-worked administrators who were focused on tasks to be accomplished with little or no time left to attend to the cultural and symbolic leadership

frames necessary for implementing initiatives like MAST that would impact the culture of a district.

John Fitzgerald, an education policy fellow with Central State 2020, a non-partisan educational think tank, succinctly summarized public school districts' financial position on the organization's website.

Schools are in the worst financial shape they have been in decades. Many Minnesota districts signed on not because they love MAST, but because they can't afford not to sign up. State aid accounts for more than 80 percent of districts' budgets, yet state aid has dropped an inflation-adjusted 14 percent since 2003. This has forced districts to marshal citizen support to run levy elections to support schools. The state has also made several large accounting shifts in the past year that have forced many districts to borrow money to pay their bills and incur interest and fee charges. As a result, class sizes have risen dramatically, programs have been cut, teachers have been laid off and the quality of education in Central State has dropped (Fitzgerald, 2010).

Because districts really were motivated to provide students with the best education they could, and districts' budgets were being squeezed by the state, all four districts in this study attempted to capture available dollars for their districts.

School districts and the people who work within them wanted very much to help students succeed. In tough economic times with frozen or decreased funding and delays in receiving funding, it became increasingly difficult to develop and implement the programs needed to effectively teach an increasingly diverse student population. It was no secret to education professionals throughout the U.S. that innovative and best-practice

education programs took time, personnel, and money to develop and implement. Because of this, even though there were strings attached, the allure of needed funding had many financially strapped districts turning to alternative funding sources. In Central State districts' most obvious option was to turn to MAST for additional financial support.

This need for financial support was not lost on local legislators. Central State legislators that participated in this research all agreed that the lack of funding of Central State's public schools was a serious issue. Whether Democrat or Republican, legislators acknowledged that K-12 public education funding was inadequate. When Representative Sampson began her legislative career, Central State was in the process of paying back school districts for an earlier funding shift.

It took us three bienniums to pay it [tax shift] off. Now we owe schools more than we ever have. If you factor in CPI [Consumer Price Index inflation rate] and factor out special education and building expenses, then funding has been flat since '84. New funding is needed...Any increases in funding schools have received has been going to healthcare and special ed. costs. We owe schools \$2.5 billion--\$1.4 billion in late payments, \$0.5 billion is funding shift, and \$600 million, soon to be \$700 million is how much we owe in special ed. cross subsidy combined with flat funding since 1984...I represent a property-wealthy district and we sometimes feel that we don't have enough money, so I think about the property-poor districts and how they're doing (C. Sampson, personal communication, February 9, 2011).

State Senator, Mary Voss agreed.

Local property tax payers used to pay a higher percent to schools. The burden was heavier on the property tax payers. The state's share was about 60%. Then it went up to about 82% during the Ramirez [former Governor of Central State from 1999-2003] administration, but it's now sliding back. We're working to correct it. We had many lawsuits because funding wasn't equitable. Some districts couldn't pass referendums and others were property-poor districts that couldn't raise much money even if they did pass a referendum. In rural communities, ag[ricultural] land is exempt from taxes on levies, so that property doesn't even count at all.

Property-rich districts could raise more [money, but] we had levy caps and then caps with an inflationary adjustment. Then we had equalization aid for a while, but districts had referendums anyway. I can't see us ever being able to raise enough money to be able to fund all schools to the level of Beachside [a property-rich suburban district with a large operating levy], but it's not fair. I live in Cranston [a property-poor, rural town 10 miles outside of a suburban area] and a \$500 per student levy costs us a lot, but in Shoreline [property-rich, suburban, neighboring district], that same levy only costs them half of what it costs us. That makes it really tough for us to pass referendums (M. Voss, personal communication, October 24, 2011).

MAST did not come close to closing the funding gap, but when districts had a "we have to do this to get the money" mentality, participation in new initiatives where

there was money attached, became a viable funding option for school districts in Central State. MAST was just one example of this phenomenon.

MAST was one pay-for-performance plan in one state; however, paying teachers based on their performance rather than based on education level and years of experience was an idea that was catching on across the U.S. The resurgence of performance-based pay could be seen in programs like MAST, the Teachers' Incentive Fund, and Race to the Top. What was once a Republican, neoconservative initiative quickly gained bipartisan support as our Democratic President was a strong supporter of performance-based pay for teachers. The dismal financial picture of school districts had many considering any option that would bring additional dollars into the district. To some extent, all four school districts studied considered the financial impact an additional \$260 per student would have on the district when making the decision whether or not to implement MAST (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009; B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008; J. O'Connor, personal communication, October 1, 2009; A. Johnson, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

### Implementation Redux

The relationship between the legislature and Governor King was more challenging during his second term. He was accused by legislators and the media of developing a budget that did not match his education goals (Demko, 2009). Even with incentives and "unofficial waivers of rules," districts were not flocking to MAST as he had hoped or predicted. The legislature was straining to balance the state's budget, while MAST dollars sat in reserve, unused (C. Sampson, personal communication, February 9,

2011). Gradually the Governor softened his use of the pay-for-performance rhetoric and began focusing MAST's success as a professional development initiative for teachers. In the early stages of MAST, Governor King rarely spoke of the professional development aspects of MAST, focusing on the professional pay aspect instead. However, when describing his budget plan for the 2007 legislative session, he described MAST as "the MAST performance and professional pay initiative, aimed at encouraging professional development and rewarding quality teacher performance" (King, 2007). The softening of the rhetoric was subtle, but present. However, the damage of the hard-charging pay-for-performance rhetoric he used in his first term had already been done. Even with the softened rhetoric, most teachers in the state did not want any part of MAST and the program remained relatively stagnant in terms of participation.

CSDE, to a greater extent than the Governor, changed its rhetoric regarding the purpose of MAST. At one superintendents' conference I attended, Commissioner Mahoney went as far as to say that MAST was always about staff development and that it had never been about anything else. Although in a less dramatic manner, in a 2009 press release Commissioner Mahoney also touted the professional development aspects of MAST (CSDE, 2009m).

MAST will give participating teachers an opportunity to enhance their skills and take part in real-time, research-based professional development, which will help raise student achievement...MAST is designed to advance the teaching profession by providing structured professional development and evaluation, as well as an alternative pay schedule that compensates teachers based on performance, not just seniority (CSDE, 2009m).

However, at the time of this research communication from CSDE was still often confusing or conflicting. Josh Gleason was the Acting School Improvement Director for CSDE. As part of his duties, he oversaw the MAST program. According to Gleason (personal communication, January 14, 2011), “MAST is all about school improvement and increasing student achievement.” That seemed like a logical position, based on the location of the MAST program within the CSDE hierarchy. However, on the CSDE (2010) website, MAST was located under the “teacher support” section. Mr. Gleason acknowledged the location of MAST on the CSDE website, but stated that he did not know why MAST was in that location on the website. This may have been an intentional attempt on the part of the CSDE at using mystification on educators by labeling “school improvement” as “teacher support.”

Despite this softened rhetoric, participants in two of the three case districts that had at least at one time implemented a MAST plan stated that they did not think that their districts’ plans would be approved if they were initially submitted at the time of this research. They said that it was much more difficult for districts that chose to submit applications at the time of this research to have their MAST applications approved than those that were early adopters. Josh Gleason’s comments seemed to support this view.

Even in CSDE’s softened rhetorical stance, the pay-for-performance aspect of MAST continued to be legislated by CSDE. Although the legislation did not require a specific dollar amount or percentage of MAST compensation tied to student performance beyond its requirement the 60% of the MAST compensation be tied to a combination of student achievement, teacher performance, and peer observation data, CSDE required

certain unpublished minimum percentages of the MAST compensation be tied to student achievement.

The average MAST pay is \$1200 per teacher, but it ranges from \$600-\$2,000.

There is performance pay for meeting a school-wide student achievement goal.

Districts can set this goal, but CSDE has to approve it. It has to be a reasonable goal, not just an increase of one percent. The performance pay needs to be about 10% of the [MAST pay] MAST (J. Gleason, personal communication, January 14, 2011).

Each of the case districts in this study that had MAST plans had goals of increasing student achievement by 3.5% or less (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009; V. Russell, personal communication, September 30, 2009; A. Mason, personal communication, October 5, 2011). Josh Gleason was doubtful that a goal that small would be approved if a district were applying for MAST for the first time in 2011. However, given the research that showed that the greatest educational impact on students was socioeconomic status and that schools only had the ability to make small, incremental increases in student achievement, a goal of a 3.5% increase in student achievement may likely have been a very reasonable goal.

Each of the case districts in this study that had MAST plans used MAST dollars to pay teachers to serve as peer coaches, participate in professional learning and serve in other quasi-administrative roles related to MAST. Each of these positions and the related compensation was allowable by law. However, in an effort to advance the Governor's neoconservative agenda, CSDE tried tying this compensation to student achievement as well.



The individual performance pay is not merit pay for doing extra work like serving on a committee or something like that. Performance pay is for the impact an individual teacher makes on student growth. For example, a teacher sets a goal and measures student achievement on that goal. Performance goals are based on baseline data and student growth (J. Gleason, personal communication, January 14, 2011).

CSDE's failure to realize that the "extra work" teachers were doing had a positive impact on their job satisfaction and provided learning opportunities for them that may have had a positive impact on student achievement may have impeded successful MAST implementation for more districts. However, it was not possible to measure the direct correlation between these activities and student achievement and this also could have been why CSDE did not approve the use of MAST dollars for committee work.

Additionally, the professional development aspect was the aspect of MAST, in addition to the extra dollars, that case districts liked the best, but according to Gleason, CSDE seemed to be more focused on the pay-for-performance and student achievement aspects of MAST.

Had CSDE been able to view MAST from the point of view of the other as described by Bolman and Deal (2008), it may have been able to attract more districts to MAST by focusing initially on the professional development aspects of the program. That CSDE was out of touch with the views of the case districts was also exemplified by its stance on what training was needed to have someone qualified to conduct peer observations and coaching.

The third component is peer observation scores. Teachers are observed by a trained observer or coach. This is often the biggest hang up [to teachers agreeing to participate in MAST]. They say, “What does he know better than me about teaching? I’ve been doing this for  $x$  number of years. What does he know?” Well, now he’s been trained for a week in observation and coaching so, yes, he’s qualified to help. There’s no problem after that. Teachers get on board with it (J. Gleason, personal communication, January 14, 2011).

Gleason’s dismissal of veteran teachers’ concerns about having their compensation tied to performance reviews conducted by someone who had a week of training was problematic. That this would often be the biggest barrier to teachers voting to approve MAST was not surprising to me, based on the manner with which Gleason dismissed the concern. That CSDE believed that one week of training would adequately provide a teacher the skills necessary to effectively observe and mentor veteran peers and that veteran peers would accept the feedback offered was incongruent with my experience, especially if the observation and feedback was tied to the observed teacher’s compensation. Judging by the reaction of districts across Central State in terms of lack of participation in MAST and CSDE’s acknowledgement that districts found this stance troubling led me to believe that it probably was. However, in the three case districts that tried MAST, all reported that the peer coaching and observation became a part of MAST that they really liked once they got used to it. If CSDE used rhetoric that was more in touch with the experiences of local school districts, this part of MAST could have been one of its greatest selling points rather than one of its greatest barriers.

Another significant barrier to district participation in MAST was the application paperwork and process. These remained bureaucratic. Most districts were not participating in MAST and had no intention of pursuing an application, unless their teachers' unions pushed for it. Additionally, more schools that were participating in MAST dropped the program. However, CSDE still appeared to be optimistic about the future of MAST and blamed failures on the districts themselves without acknowledging any culpability on the part of CSDE.

All districts must be implementing their plan by October 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. If [MAST] is not working for districts, it's because they're not implementing it with fidelity. Like with any program, in districts where they are implementing MAST as it should be, it is working and very successful for them (J. Gleason, personal communication, January 14, 2011).

CSDE continued to believe that most, if not all, districts would eventually participate in MAST, and lauded MAST as a success. One might have thought that since MAST was promoted as being all about school improvement and increasing student achievement that school improvement and increased student achievement would have been the measures that determined the success of the program. However, CSDE gauged the success of MAST based on the number of school districts and students that participated in the program.

CSDE was cautiously optimistic about the longevity of MAST as well, at least in the near future. Despite a multi-billion dollar state deficit, Gleason believed that MAST would endure for a while.

As far as the likelihood of [MAST] funding to continue, I have no inkling as to where we're going with it. It is a state law and it would have to be repealed. That would be a big deal. Even if the legislature wanted to repeal it, it would take at least two years. This was initially a Republican initiative. We now have a Republican majority in the House and Senate. I don't think it's going anywhere anytime soon (J. Gleason, personal communication, January 14, 2011).

Gleason was likely correct in regard to the Republican majority and that MAST would likely remain in statute. However, at the time of this research district administrators were more aware of the costs to the district associated with MAST and were more likely to only consider implementing MAST if the district's teachers wanted to participate in the program (S. Barnes, personal communication, October 1, 2009; L. Baker, personal communication, October 16, 2009). Although CSDE was beginning to realize that MAST was not going to progress as a voluntary pay-for performance measure, at the time of this research it still did not acknowledge that the discourse regarding MAST had quieted not because districts and teachers were suddenly more willing to participate, but that most districts and teachers simply were not interested.

#### Summation of Stakeholder Interaction

Because of the vagueness of the language of MAST, each of the stakeholders involved with MAST tried to use it to forward the agenda of their respective group. The Governor wanted MAST to eliminate or severely weaken the power of the teachers' unions in Central State by getting rid of the "guaranteed" annual salary increases awarded to teachers under a traditional step and lane compensation model. This would have been

accomplished by tying more of teachers' compensation to performance measures that could not be negotiated through a collective bargaining agreement.

By extension, CSDE wanted whatever the Governor wanted. Leaders of CSDE were loyal appointees and used the vagueness of the statutory language to further the Governor's agenda rather than simply enforcing the legal mandates established under MAST. The inconsistency with which CSDE approved the MAST plans of local districts opened the agency to accusations made by legislators and school districts that it was only approving MAST plans in school district located in areas represented by Republican legislators. However, those claims were never proven. Additionally, the drop off between the hundreds of school districts that submitted letters of intent to apply for MAST and the handful that actually applied left CSDE pushing districts to participate in MAST regardless of the political party status of their local legislators. In order to attract those early adopters, CSDE suspended its enforcement of the Governor's agenda and sometimes the actual rules of MAST. The inconsistency between what MAST plans were approved and what ones were rejected angered local districts. As more MAST plans were approved, districts used them as models for their own applications. Those that were rejected screamed, "Foul!" but CSDE contended that each MAST plan had to be unique to each district and could not be copied from another district. This led to more claims of pay-backs for some districts and punishments of others as well as claims of a CSDE secret agenda. However, as CSDE waived rules for school districts like Pine Springs that were exclusively represented by Democrats, the claims of favoritism faded.

Local legislators were split on their support of MAST, but many, and especially Republicans, shared the Governor's view of MAST. Legislators of both the Democratic

and Republican parties who wanted their party's support in a re-election campaign needed to tow the party line while they were in office. At the time of this research, the Republican Party line in Central State seemed to include teacher accountability and performance-based compensation for teachers. MAST was seen as a way to bust the union and enforce teacher accountability. However, due to the political nature of MAST, when local representatives met with their constituents from local school districts, they often codified this message into terms of increasing student achievement and using MAST as a vehicle to achieve that.

The next two chapters share a glimpse into the interaction between the stakeholders as MAST was considered in four Central State school districts. MAST was deemed to be a success in two of the districts. One tried MAST for one school year then the teachers voted to discontinue it. A fourth district had a CSDE- and local school board-approved MAST plan, but the teachers did not approve it. At the time of this research, the fourth district had not implemented MAST.

## CHAPTER FIVE: TWO ENDURING MAST DISTRICTS

Each District had a slightly different implementation structure for MAST, although each plan needed to have the following components in order to be approved by CSDE: (a) career ladder and career advancement opportunities, (b) job embedded professional development, (c) performance-based pay, (d) comprehensive and objective teacher observations, and (e) an alternative professional compensation schedule. A brief description of each district, its MAST program, and how it was implemented follows.

## Pine Springs

*District Background*

Pine Springs was primarily a blue-collar regional center, and the local school district benefitted from tax revenue generated by industry. Although it was the largest city in the region, Pine Springs was a geographically isolated, small community with a school district that enrolled just under 1300 students (CSDE 2009c). The Pine Springs school district's financial struggles were greater than an average school district in Central State, but were similar to those of other small school districts. Its unreserved general fund balance was declining prior to MAST implementation (CSDE, 2009d). The average school district property tax per home was \$195 per year (CSDE, 2009d), indicating that Pine Springs was not a property-wealthy district. Additionally, it did not have significant operating or bond levies. Since participating in MAST, Pine Springs gained an additional \$260 per student from MAST funding that had to be used for teacher compensation (CSDE, 2009d).

At the time of this research, Pine Springs' students scored as making adequate yearly progress (AYP) on the NCLB goals in four of the past seven years (CSDE, 2009d). In terms of achieving NCLB goals, Pine Springs' students achieved at the second lowest rate of the four districts studied; however, it also had the lowest socioeconomic status of the four districts based on the percentage of its students who qualified for free or reduced lunch (CSDE, 2009d).

Pine Springs adopted MAST in 2006 and was still enjoying the benefits of the program at the time of this research. The program gained in popularity with teachers, administrators, and community members and became an important part of the culture of the Pine Springs District.

Like in much of rural Central State, student enrollment in the district was declining. Pine Springs experienced additional enrollment pressures due to competition from Central State's Post-secondary Education Options (PSEO) program and online learning options. PSEO programs allowed students to enroll in college courses while they were a junior or senior in high school and concurrently earn high school and college credit. Under this program the college received 88% of the school district's funding for each course hour for every PSEO-enrolled student unless an alternative agreement was negotiated with the college. Pine Springs High School was located across the street from a local community college and many of its high school students took advantage of the PSEO program. Because of its relatively small size and limited budget, elective course offerings were somewhat limited for high school students. Many of the students who did not enroll in PSEO courses took courses via the Internet. The financial arrangement with online course providers was the same as those through the PSEO program.



Dr. James Frodo, Superintendent of Pine Springs, was an experienced superintendent who was approaching retirement. At the beginning of the study Dr. Frodo was employed full-time at Pine Springs. Due to budget constraints, however, Dr. Frodo became a part-time superintendent at Pine Springs and a part-time superintendent in Bear Creek, another school district approximately 120 miles southeast of Pine Springs. A shared or part-time superintendent position was becoming increasingly more common among small Central State school districts as these districts struggled to balance their shrinking budgets.

Pine Springs was a proud and independent community, and, like many of the smaller communities in Central State, was closely knit with a skeptic's regard for outsiders and the unfamiliar. Teacher and union president, Natalie Rose, summarized this mentality well.

This is my 16<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. I'm not originally from Pine Springs, so I'm kind of an outsider from that perspective. Pine Springs strives to be an exemplary school district. It doesn't accept anything less than what we can be because we are small or remote. We are very proud of our district whether you're a Stallion in hockey or a graduate like one we had last year who was accepted to Harvard.... We want to be a model of what a good, small school district can be (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009).

Natalie's feeling of being an outsider after being a part of the community for 16 years was also indicative of the long memories of the community members in Pine Springs and other communities like it. When asked to describe the core values of the Pine

Springs School District, Richard Larson, Building Principal and Assistant

Superintendent, noted how the District's history impacted its present core values.

We want to provide a safe environment, which is conducive to learning for all students. We're looking to provide the best education we can with what we have. With MAST, we were looking to make improvements, and it was a way to get the district and union working together. We had had two strikes in approximately 15 years with the latest being in 2001. We were not too far out from the strike in 2001 when we started MAST. The superintendent and union president worked hand in hand to explore it and get it going. It was a great way to bring all of us together—a great step and a great opportunity (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

The tendency to hold onto the past and reject new people and ideas, especially in smaller communities like Pine Springs, also helped to explain the lack of collegiality between teachers and administrators at the time of the strikes and MAST implementation. “The staff and administration, although both acceptably performing their respective duties, were divided as a district as a result of the strikes” (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

On the surface, the culture of the Pine Springs community made it a surprising candidate to be an early adopter of MAST. At the time of implementation, the relationship between teachers and administrators was strained. Dr. Frodo was new to the district and the community. MAST was the brainchild of a Republican Governor from another part of the state, and the political make-up of Pine Springs was strongly

Democratic. However, the explanation was really quite logical. It was all about the money.

With K-12 education funding not keeping pace with the rising costs to educate students, and Pine Springs' loss of a significant number of students to the Pine Springs Community College through the PSEO program and online instruction, Pine Springs was struggling financially. Its fund balance was in decline, making it difficult to grow or even maintain the type of educational programming necessary to meet the criteria of the district's core values. When asked about the primary reasons for pursuing MAST, Dr. Frodo (personal communication, January 5, 2009) replied, "\$426,000" [the amount of MAST revenue the district he projected the district would receive].

#### *The MAST Plan*

Dr. Frodo and the union president had some serious conversations about the district and its future. They really thought that the money available through MAST would help move the district in the direction they thought it should go (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009) and Pine Springs was willing to do what they had to in order to secure those dollars. "The truly substantive and immediate required components of the MAST plan— specifically evaluation, professional growth plans, and leadership/coaching positions within the faculty (i.e. career ladders) all were viewed initially as 'we have to do it to get the money'" (J. Frodo, personal communication, March 22, 2007).

In an effort to secure nearly a half million dollars for the district, Pine Springs developed an implementation plan for MAST with the following components: career

ladders or career advancement opportunities for teachers; integrated, job-embedded, on-going, site-based, and teacher-led professional development; a minimum of 60% of teacher compensation increases within a performance pay system that aligned teacher performance measures with student academic achievement and progress; an objective and comprehensive teacher evaluation system based on the educational improvement plan, the staff development plan, and multiple evaluations of a teacher's performance conducted by a locally selected and trained evaluation team that included classroom observations; and an alternative professional pay schedule (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009).

Pine Springs' career ladder included five positions—mentors, a learning team leader, a learning content leader, a professional development team member, and a quality oversight team member. In the Pine Springs plan, any teacher who received mentor training received an additional \$200 in compensation (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009). In exchange for this compensation, mentors needed to make weekly contact with an assigned teacher and document that contact (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009). All other career ladder positions received an additional \$1500 in compensation (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009). The learning team leader had duties including moderating learning team meetings and evaluating progress being made by staff members on their professional growth plans (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009). The learning content leader was responsible for acquiring materials and best-practice information to be used by teachers as they worked toward achieving site goals designed to improve student achievement. The professional development team member was responsible for developing professional

development forms and procedures and verifying that participants met their professional growth plans and site goals (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009). The quality oversight team member worked within the context of a team to attempt to resolve MAST program issues, determine site goal achievement, coordinate professional development, oversee MAST expenditures, and aid in establishing future site goals (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009).

Teacher training and development and achieving specific goals were also essential components of Pine Springs' MAST plan.

We started a mentor program and developed focused goals that were really specific. We looked at one specific piece of math for our goal. We never focused on specific goals before. We had general ones. It [MAST] was a way to compensate people involved with that (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

In Pine Springs professional development teams met. They used a variety of best practice methodologies to strengthen teachers' pedagogical skill including modeling instructional strategies, demonstration teaching, team teaching, mentoring, content and cognitive coaching, lesson study, and analysis of student work (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

The teacher evaluation system included three formal evaluations each year. Peers completed two of these evaluations and a building administrator completed one. Teachers also conducted four self-evaluations. In addition, probationary staff received three formal observations by a building administrator annually (R. Larson, personal communication,

October 16, 2009). The district used a method of inter-rater reliability to prevent score inflation by having all teachers and administrators trained on the Charlotte Danielson evaluation model. The Charlotte Danielson model of teacher evaluation focused on four domains of teaching. They were planning and preparation, classroom instruction, classroom management, and professional responsibilities. The inter-rater reliability scores were achieved through the process of having teachers score their own evaluation, comparing their score with that of the formal evaluator, and having all scores available to other team members to prevent score inflation (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009).

The Pine Springs MAST plan had many components that required more of teachers in terms of skill and time. This was evident based on Pine Springs' commitment to professional development and the increased hours teachers worked since MAST implementation. A common concern amongst teachers in districts that considered MAST was whether or not the additional compensation was worth the additional time teachers would need to invest to make the MAST program effective in their districts.

We had things we wanted to do, but it was hard to get them done during the school day. I think MAST is supposed to happen during the school day, but let's face it. There are things that have to happen outside of the school day. Whether it's enough compensation or not for that, some people would debate (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

This questioning of whether the adequacy of the additional compensation in a district where MAST was successful, was aligned with Honawar's (2007) research that suggested

that the relatively small amount of pay-for-performance compensation did not adequately motivate teachers to significantly change their behaviors.

### *MAST Implementation*

#### *The Crucial Importance of Local Leadership*

The leadership of the teachers' union, school board, and the district administration and the collaboration between these stakeholders was critical to the successful implementation of MAST in Pine Springs.

After working with him [Dr. Frodo] for a few years, he wanted us to have everything we deserved to have. He felt that we were an exemplary faculty and should be getting in on MAST. We should be getting the accolades and money to go with that. We had a supportive school board, union, and administration. You know, we had been on strike a few years earlier. When we started MAST, we settled [the teachers' contract] before school started. We used to usually go past the January 15th deadline. We'd seen things beyond settling our contract with MAST. We were looking at school improvement. Dr. Frodo said we can do this, and he put it to the union leadership. We thought that we should get people together on this...Membership trusts the union officers very much. They're respected and trusted. We knew our leadership would never agree to anything that would be bad for teachers (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009).

Richard Larson echoed the sentiment that teamwork between the teachers' union and an effective leader were critical to the district's successful implementation of MAST.

Definitely the team approach [was important to our success]. The willingness of the superintendent at the time, the board, and union president to work together. If this would have come along a few years earlier, our superintendent at that time wouldn't have had the vision. The union wouldn't have picked up the ball. There wasn't a working together relationship at that time. It was adversarial. Each party did their own job; they just didn't work together (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

The trust that Dr. Frodo was able to establish between the school board, the teachers, and himself in such a short period of time as an outsider to Pine Springs demonstrated that he excelled in the human resource and symbolic aspects of leadership as described by Bolman & Deal (2008) and the relationship and interpersonal and relational aspects of leadership as presented by Northouse (2009). Additionally, his personal involvement in creating and negotiating the district's MAST plan with internal and external stakeholders showed his skill in the political arena as defined by Edelman (1988) as well. Dr. Frodo was able to successfully translate "pay-for-performance" to "reward teachers" in Pine Springs. His ability to codify the rhetoric of the Governor, Legislature, and CSDE into language that was accepted by local stakeholders helped to grow the trust Dr. Frodo was building in Pine Springs and aided MAST implantation locally.

Despite the trust and teamwork between the current superintendent and teachers' union, there were still concerns. Laurie Baker (the district's Business Manager) and Richard Larson shared some of the major obstacles from within the district.



From the union side, there were ones who were hesitant and those who jumped in right away. There have been many programs that have come and gone. There were concerns about getting approved and if the program would be approved for our district. We were concerned that it would be a lot of work to get the application done and approved, and there was no guarantee that after we did all of this work it would even be approved. But once we had the idea, we thought, let's see if it is a one- or two-year program. Let's try it out. We can get out of it if we want to, because it takes board and union approval each year. We do a MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] format, and we vote on that each year. If either side said, for whatever reason, we want to discontinue, we can. It's not like it's part of the regular contract and that once it's there, it's there (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

The oppressive application process was certainly a concern for Pine Springs when considering applying for MAST. Because Pine Springs was a small district, the hundreds of man hours needed to create and submit an application to CSDE was divided over fewer people than would be the case in a larger district and therefore was a consideration along with the \$426,000.

Natalie Rose (personal communication, October 22, 2009) noted that there were also obstacles to implementation within the district that needed to be overcome. "Number one was fear of the salary schedule in the writing of the plan and getting it through. That was a barrier as far as getting it approved."

From a teacher's standpoint there was a concern about the salary schedule.

[Before MAST] teachers were guaranteed the step each year. There was a concern

if some would be favored and some would not and how this would affect who would get paid (Laurie Baker, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

I remember that it was looked at like it's the new buzzword. We've been down that route before. There was a lot of skepticism. Will it work? Will we really get the money? Will the board look at MAST in lieu of a salary increase? (L. Baker, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

That's true. There was skepticism, but there have been raises every year since. People may wonder if instead of a 1 % raise, would we have gotten 2% if we weren't on MAST (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

The sentiments shared by Pine Springs participants regarding the salary schedule, mirror the concerns shared by participants in other pay-for-performance models that were studied by Honawar (2007). Pine Springs' concerns about not getting the money once they had done the work, reflected the experience of teachers studied by Cameron (2005) and Harris (2007) who had done the work to earn pay-for-performance compensation, but the districts either could not or would not pay the teachers as promised.

The teachers' union, school board, and administration ultimately took the leap of faith and worked to implement MAST under the direction of the superintendent. All participants at Pine Springs attributed the success of implementation of MAST, at least in part, to Dr. Frodo's leadership. This success points to the importance of being able to lead

from all four leadership frameworks and being able to integrate all of the aspects of leadership described by Northouse (2009) as well.

In addition to the normal district responsibilities that Dr. Frodo needed to attend to in order to keep the district functioning in the administrative aspect and structural framework, he was also able to attend to the human resource, political, and symbolic frameworks and attend to the tasks and relationships while promoting a vision that teachers were already professional and that MAST was a financial accolade that they deserved as well in order for MAST to be implemented in Pine Springs. Dr. Frodo's attention to the human resource frame and relationships helped mend the rift between the district's teachers, administrators, and school board. His praise and reassurance that Pine Springs had an "exemplary staff," for example, helped to ease tensions, build trust, and paved the route to be able to work collaboratively.

The political framework, both as discussed by Bolman & Deal (2008) and Edelman (1988), was no less important in this case. Dr. Frodo was not only able to put the right stakeholders together and negotiate a successful plan within the district, he was also able to negotiate successfully with CSDE. His unwavering view that Pine Springs' MAST compensation plan fit the requirements of the legislation and his refusal to give into CSDE's or Governor's interpretation of reform was critical to the success of MAST on two fronts. One, it reinforced the human resource frame and relationships as participants from Pine Springs witnessed their superintendent "taking on" CSDE and the Governor on their behalf. Two, it allowed Pine Springs to use a compensation plan they felt would work for them. Although there was an emerging culture of trust, it was not a culture of blind faith, and the Pine Springs' teachers were not likely to approve a MAST

plan that eliminated the traditional steps and lanes. In addition, it was important that Dr. Frodo had considerable experience dealing with CSDE in Central State. He understood the need to be aggressive yet reasonable in his attempt to get CSDE to adhere to the legislation as passed rather than how it was envisioned by the Governor.

Evidence of Dr. Frodo's work in a visionary manner and in the symbolic frame was demonstrated by his ability to lead the cultural change from a district where teachers did not work outside of their duty day to one that put students first with teachers working extra to ensure that they were performing at their best. He accomplished this through vision, inspiration, motivation, and keeping people focused on the district mission and purpose and the steps necessary to fulfill them. These were all essential aspects of leadership as related by Northouse (2009).

#### *District Costs Associated with MAST Implementation*

Although MAST was seen as a way to get dollars into a district, and it was, the money went exclusively to teachers and none of it could be used to cover the administrative costs associated with administering the program. As a result, teachers in Pine Springs received more money, but the district had to budget money from its general fund, the fund that is most stretched in school districts across Central State, to cover administrative costs.

Really the district doesn't benefit from [MAST]. It goes right to teachers. It's not treated as a reserved account. It's undesignated, but we do track it. We do keep the money separate. There have been overages in the fund, but we keep that for

the teachers and they can use it in a later year (L. Baker, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

If anything, it has cost the district money. Administrators are sitting on numerous committees, planning in-services. There's extra work there. Administrators have followed the plan too and have gotten an extra stipend for doing those things. It can't come out of MAST so it comes out of the general fund (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

With the staff development money we had set aside, there was some money for developing the plan. There was time spent out of school. There were about a dozen people involved—that's just a rough number. There were people who were allowed days or partial days to work on it. On an in-service day we don't charge all of our teachers' salaries out to staff development, so that has helped the district save some money over the years in that fund. If we didn't have those funds available, it would have been a roadblock. If it had been all on your own outside, it wouldn't have happened or at least not be as good as it is (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

As a result of MAST implementation, Pine Springs also saw a need for more professional development time. However, the perceived cost associated with having more days where teachers were paid, but students were not in school, was also a concern.

Now we saw a need for extra days for professional training, not knowing if the board and community would accept more time for teachers not teaching. We were concerned about how the public would view this because there is a levy portion [of MAST] that the taxpayers pay (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

During the initial phase of MAST, districts may not have realized there would be an extra cost to the district in terms of MAST plan development and administration. According to Pine Springs participants, it was a negative consideration in the decision to implement MAST. As the general funds of districts across Central State dwindled, it was not surprising that many districts would only consider implementing MAST if the teachers approached the district for its support as they learned of the unfunded costs associated with MAST. Districts that looked to MAST to help balance their budget could have been disappointed in the result. MAST dollars would have been helpful to districts that had no money for teacher salary increases and wanted money for that purpose, provided the district understood and budgeted for the unfunded administrative costs associated with MAST. Although MAST most definitely did not meet the criteria of an unfunded mandate at the time of this research, the local administrative costs were unfunded. Sometimes when districts applied for grants, a portion of the grant money was able to be allocated toward administrative costs, sometimes, as was the case with MAST, there was no such provision. Districts pursuing any grant needed to be aware of and account for administrative costs for implementation. Additionally, as more of the MAST funding was supplied at the local level, districts needed to be aware of the impact on their

local taxpayers and the impact that a local MAST levy would have on their ability to pass a general operating or bond levy.

*Communication between CSDE and Pine Springs*

The trust between local stakeholders was important in getting MAST off the ground in Pine Springs, but that same type of trusting relationship based on strong communication and understanding was lacking between the district and CSDE. This was evident in the approval of Pine Springs' MAST plan and the bureaucracy related to its implementation.

*Salary schedule: Augment versus eliminate.*

The debate between Pine Springs and CSDE regarding what "alternative, reformed salary schedule" meant provided an excellent example of Edelman's (1988) work regarding how groups with competing interests interact politically. In the Pine Springs model, 80% of MAST dollars were awarded for using research-based professional standards and completing classroom observations and the professional growth plan. The additional 20% was awarded for teacher evaluations relevant to student achievement and school-wide student gains (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009). The alternative salary schedule used in Pine Springs focused on using MAST dollars to augment their existing salary schedule (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009). However, the definition of an "alternative, reformed salary schedule" in terms of MAST legislation was an area of contention between CSDE and local school districts throughout Central State.

The focus of this debate was what had to be done with the traditional steps and lanes when a district implemented MAST, and Pine Springs was no different. As with all of the districts in this study that implemented MAST, along with all others I have encountered in my professional career as an educator, all but one expressed a concern about abolishing the traditional salary schedule. This concern led Pine Springs to look beyond the rhetoric and focus directly on the legislative language.

The Legislature said that the salary schedule had to be “changed or augmented.” CSDE came to lobby to us, and said that we had to get rid of the schedule. [But] that’s not what we have (L. Baker, personal communication, October 16, 1009).

At the time of this research, Pine Springs still had the traditional step and lane salary schedule and used MAST dollars to compensate teachers for work they did over and above what was traditionally compensated. The Governor also wanted Pine Springs to eliminate its salary schedule; however, the legislative language was vague enough to allow Pine Springs to augment its traditional salary schedule with career ladder and goal-based compensation rather than replace the steps and lanes (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

The Governor wanted us very much to change our salary schedule. [But,] the Governor wanted to have his fishing opener in Pine Springs and wanted the photo op with Pine Springs and the big check. There may have been some pretty significant political pressure to get this done and allow our plan to go through. Other plans like ours haven’t been approved since (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009).



We've been pointed out several times—I think even in legal cases—about how we've augmented teacher salaries above and beyond steps and lanes [without getting rid of them]. We didn't replace our salary schedule. In our plan, if you accomplish your goals, you receive [MAST compensation] (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

One of the factors we joke about is that MAST is very political and very politicized. One of the problems we had was the salary schedule. There was debate about whether it had to be changed versus gone. The Legislature said “changed or augmented.” CSDE came to lobby to us, and said that we had to get rid of the schedule. That's not what we have [because the legislative language was not written that way] (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009).

The salary piece was a big problem. Several people [from CSDE] came up and worked with us on the whole plan. If we had to cut the steps and lanes, the union would have walked away, and the district would have walked away (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

The vagueness of the legislative language on this issue fueled the debate. The legislation did not use the terms “eliminate” or “augment;” however, it did not adequately define “reform.” The legislation also did not define to what extent the traditional steps and lanes had to be reformed. To CSDE and the Governor, reform meant eliminate. To

Pine Springs, reform meant augment. Each of these stakeholders had a valid position based on their own interpretation of what reform meant.

Using analysis of how political discourse shaped leaders and policy, I was able to analyze how Pine Springs could have such different definitions of “alternative” and “reform” than the Governor and CSDE. Because people and groups tended to view things based on their experience, their interpretations focused more on what they wanted to see in the legislation. The vagueness of the legislation presented itself to these stakeholders similarly to a picture on an ink-blot test. The Governor and CSDE wanted to eliminate steps and lanes from teacher compensation so that is how they established their definition. Pine Springs wanted to retain steps and lanes, but also obtain the MAST money for their teachers, so augmenting the salary schedule was how it defined the legislative language. Because the relationship between local districts and CSDE was more adversarial than cooperative at the time, each of the stakeholder groups was determined to hold on to its respective definitions of “alternative” and “reform” rather than work together to find common meaning. The collaborative environment that was created in Pine Springs could not be replicated among these three stakeholders, so they performed the same political dance as they had done for years—local school district versus state control. In this particular battle of David versus Goliath, David won, but the district had many headaches yet to come as a result of the victory.

*Murphy’s Law of implementation.*

Pine Springs ultimately prevailed on the “augment versus eliminate” interpretation debate, but that was not the end of the obstacles Pine Springs faced in

implementing its MAST plan. In the words of Dr. Frodo (personal communication, January 5, 2009), “Every problem we envisioned was encountered.” The majority of obstacles encountered were the result of a lack of experience with MAST implementation on both the part of the district and CSDE and a lack of working models from which the district could learn.

There was a presumption that the “MAST model” was a model. In fact the “MAST model” was nothing more or less than a description of components and was incomplete with the interaction of components completely ignored by the “MAST model” (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009).

It [MAST] was a big unknown. There was the plan the state had and forms to fill out—the required pieces. There were districts in the process that had things accepted. There were districts, and this was just rumor, we didn’t talk directly with them, that we heard about who were rejected (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

With the rush to get MAST implemented quickly, neither CSDE nor Pine Springs had much time to research and learn how the list of requirements presented in the MAST legislation would work together cohesively to promote student learning and a positive district culture. The lack of consistent communication from CSDE to Pine Springs led to frustration due to several instances of a “trial and error” implementation model. Pine Springs had to make a significant number of changes to its district structure in just over four months to meet the October 1 full-implementation deadline, so there was little to no

time for reflection during this period. Initial implementation was a daunting task that Pine Springs had to accomplish largely on its own.

If we turn to year one and implementing, we took on a lot. We never had a mentorship plan, teams, or PGPs [professional growth plans], or observed each other, and we were starting to do that...A lot of other districts going into MAST had these components already in place. Pine Springs had none of that, but we were confident that we could do it all. The first year I was on the Oversight Committee. The Oversight Committee has three teachers and three administrators. We had to figure out how do we develop teams, and so forth. The ideas were in the written plan, but the nuts and bolts were all in the first year. The Oversight Committee was given the authority to implement the plan. We made it work. It was important to have the Oversight Committee and know where to go with questions. It was also important that it [the Oversight Committee] was balanced between teachers and administration. All of the key players were together. Without a united faculty and leadership it could fracture (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009).

Given the natural obstacles of being an early adopter combined with the roadblocks established by CSDE and the number of sub-programs embedded within Pine Springs' MAST plan that had to be put in place, it was amazing that a small district like Pine Springs was able to accomplish such a large task in a relatively short period of time.

*Benefit of Hindsight in Plan Improvement*

Although the Oversight Committee was important to the success of the plan, its members were not properly trained or prepared for the job they had to do. If Pine Springs had to implement its plan again, there were some things it would have done differently based on its experience. These included altering the Quality Oversight Committee, being more knowledgeable about MAST before writing an implementation plan, and making the plan more equitable amongst staff members who qualified for the additional compensation.

We would redefine the role of the Quality Oversight Committee. The Quality Oversight Committee is three teachers and three administrators. They are the appellate body. We were not adequately trained and the authority was not adequately defined. We corrected that for 2008-2009. With the Quality Oversight Committee we start treading a fine line with decisions affecting employment and compensation and those only affecting classroom and performance. It's a tough line to define (J. Frodo, personal communication, January 5, 2009).

Although, for the most part, Pine Springs had been able to successfully negotiate that balance, having teachers' compensation based in part on observations conducted by minimally trained teachers was unsettling at first for the teachers who were observed as well as for the ones who were observing.

Another thing the district would have changed about MAST was the initial decision that non-tenured and part-time teachers would not be eligible to receive the full amount of MAST compensation.

The only change we made from the plan to the implementation was that new teachers wouldn't have the opportunity to earn the same as a tenured teacher. When we got to the end of the year, they were like, "What? We did the same amount of work and we get paid less?" We looked at it and said, "Yeah, you're right. If you're doing the work and going the extra mile, you deserve the same compensation." We immediately changed it that spring so those teachers got the same compensation. We also had the same issue with part-time teachers. We had it where part time teachers only got part of the money, so if they were working half time, they got half the money. But they did the same work and went to the same meetings, so we changed it. There are always struggles with personalities and issues, but we had a lot of things thought out and in place to deal with it (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009).

Had there been more time to develop the MAST plan, some of these issues could have been avoided.

### *Education Reform Hash*

As with most initiatives in public education, MAST was not the only initiative that districts were encouraged to adopt. At the time of MAST implementation in Pine Springs and in the years following while they were trying to perfect their MAST plan, the district was also charged with implementing other initiatives.

We get one thing started and then there's another and another thing. We just got MAST going and then we started "Charlotte Danielson," [a comprehensive teacher observation model]. In year two, because of the testing piece, we added

NWEA [Northwest Evaluation Association] testing and had to learn about testing and data. Now it's RtI [Response to Intervention] and we have to learn about that. There have been so many things that have been thrown at us in the last four years. How to do peer observations, mentor a new teacher, form a PLC [professional learning community], and now there are other things [we are expected to implement]. They're happening, but not at the level they could be because of how much has come at us. We could learn more about PLCs but we've got too many other things going on (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009).

As the Charlotte Danielson model was the currently accepted "gold standard" of teacher evaluation, the Rick DuFour model of PLCs was the equivalent in the realm of professional development. PLCs essentially were groups of staff members coming together to solve a professional dilemma, for example increasing student achievement in reading. They researched professional literature to learn more about an issue and collaborated on ways to solve it. PLCs were the core element of the DuFour version of teachers' professional development.

We also saw a need for increased in-service days. Before MAST, we typically had a few days at the beginning of the year to get ready for the school year, a day at semester break to work on grades and do some actual staff development for part of it, a day at the end of the year, and a few others scattered through the year. (R. Larson, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

This sentiment made sense: teachers could handle the simultaneous implementation of multiple initiatives, but could not achieve a level of mastery as quickly as they would

have been able if the district had been able to limit the number of initiatives being concurrently implemented. However, implementing the components of MAST often required the implementation of other embedded initiatives as well if the district was not already implementing those MAST requirements. The need to implement multiple initiatives concurrently to satisfy the rules of MAST was experienced by all case districts that had adopted MAST plans.

When districts, including Pine Springs, implemented many reform initiatives at once or over a short period of time, staff did not have the time to become fully skilled in implementing the new initiative. As more new initiatives were implemented, it was more likely that staff would implement them with less fidelity. Ultimately these initiatives faced a strong likelihood of failure due to the district's lack of ability to implement any of them well. However, at the time of this research, Pine Springs was committed to continuing with implementation of all of these initiatives.

#### *Positive Cultural Impacts of MAST*

Participants from Pine Springs reported that MAST had a positive impact on the district culture that would not have happened without MAST. Benefits included the enhancement of the emerging collaboration between teachers and administrators and promotion of professional growth.

Having had it [MAST] be part of the contract and settled, having a positive relationship with the board, administration, and union working together [was important]. The majority of people working on the plan were teachers and were from different grade levels and disciplines. We're a small school with only two



buildings, but we had people in all levels who were knowledgeable about what went into the plan. That the plan was teacher-driven was important... People get money as part of being on the Oversight Committee and coaching. There are no teachers pulled out of the classroom [for MAST-related assignments]. No one has release time. One thing that was helpful in implementing the plan was that we didn't take our best teachers out of the classroom and make them middle managers. Our plan is egalitarian. All had an opportunity to run for positions; they are elected. Teachers can take the training and become a mentor teacher. Everyone had the opportunity to step up and do the work and get some extra compensation (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009).

Although money was the primary reason Pine Springs pursued MAST, over a relatively short period of time the district culture changed so that the money became less important than the opportunities for collaboration and professional growth.

Our school day by contract is an 8:10 a.m.-3:50 p.m. contract day. Before we started this effort (and the effort was a District-wide shot), I could drive in the parking lot at 7:45 a.m. and shoot a cannon in any direction without fear of vehicular damage. Now there are any number of faculty here conducting team meetings, working on professional growth projects, and all the etceteras. Same way with the 3:50 p.m. experience. The difference this has made in community perception of us as a faculty and the District has been huge... At this point there has been such a shift from paranoia to a feeling of pride and 'we needed to do this,' that even if the funding dried up in this session, we would be compelled to

find some way to fund the majority of the professional activities we implemented this year (J. Frodo, personal communication, March 22, 2007).

The public in Pine Springs also appreciated the change in culture within the district. Laurie Baker, the District's Business Manager, was working in the private sector at the time MAST was implemented in the District and offered perspectives from a community member as well as that of a district employee. Baker easily appreciated a pay-for-performance model.

From a financial standpoint, I think it's trying to compensate employees for going above and beyond. In the business workplace, people get paid based on performance, but teachers automatically move to the next level every year. It's a way for people to get paid for going above and beyond, like for being mentor teachers (L. Baker, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

Although this was how Pine Springs viewed MAST compensation, the Governor, Legislature, and CSDE thought that performance-based pay was about student performance as measured by standardized test scores. However, this did not seem to bother participants in Pine Springs as they had a MAST plan that was working well for them.

Natalie Rose, Teacher and Union President, agreed that the public seemed to approve the culture change, but she also acknowledged that the teachers changed too.

For the first time ever teachers work together on a weekly basis. We never looked at test data or curriculum teaching strategies, and we never took the time to meet

like we do now. Whether it's learning from them [other teachers], or 'they're in the same boat I am' has really brought us together. Team meetings and observations have brought us together as a whole. There's also collegiality. Usually we only have one or two new teachers each year. We're an isolating place. If you're not from here, it's hard to be accepted. Mentoring new teachers helps them get through with more success. The mentorship program has helped them be successful. I think the public has been impressed with the interaction of teachers. The public likes to think we're working hard. They see the cars in the parking lot. They see that we have time to do collaboratively what's best for kids. I think the public did. I know the board did. We have a new board now and I think they still do (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009).

The sense of pride and collegiality at Pine Springs was tested during the second year of implementation when not every teacher received the additional compensation. Pine Springs had some serious conversations about whether MAST was actually a divisive program. Ultimately, the teaching staff took responsibility for meeting the criteria and holding peers accountable for meeting the established criteria. As a result, a higher level of professionalism became more ingrained in the Pine Springs culture. "Teachers know that now when we say we're going to do something, we do it. One of the things that is totally unacceptable is lack of professional effort" (J. Frodo, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

Significantly, Dr. Frodo went out of his way to point out that the real change in Pine Springs was a result of collaboration and staff development—not simply a change in the compensation structure.

Our goal is to improve schools for kids. MAST is viewed in Pine Springs as having a solid chance of doing just that. If “quality compensation” is to mean [improving teacher quality], and all we do is change the formula for compensation and then assume that [teacher] “quality” will necessarily follow is an argument we can't make in Pine Springs (J. Frodo, personal communication, March 22, 2007). Based on the lack of data tying compensation to student achievement in general, Dr. Frodo’s statement was likely accurate that any correlation between MAST and student achievement was probably driven by the professional development and cultural change rather than the change in compensation structure. Given the successful implementation of MAST in Pine Springs and the positive changes in school culture and perhaps student achievement, one would think that CSDE would lessen the amount of reform necessary to the salary schedule and embrace the potential of MAST for these positive cultural changes and professional development model if it were not concerned with promoting the Governor’s agenda.

#### *MAST’s Long-Term Prospects in Pine Springs*

Despite the positive accolades from all of the Pine Springs study participants and Pine Springs’s approval from CSDE to implement the compensation plan as it desired, due to pending personnel changes there was some doubt as to whether the program would continue in the district. Dr. Frodo retired from Pine Springs in June 2010. He believed

that the union president and assistant superintendent would leave the district then also. There were many new members on the Pine Springs School Board who did not understand and value MAST at the level of those who initially implemented the program.

I'm not sure how the three bodies [teachers, administration, and school board] are going to adhere to the MAST plan we espoused in 2006. The real key whether you're talking MAST or whatever is, "Does it have the potency to survive into the next generation?" The next generation of MAST in Pine Springs is going to happen in 2011-2012. If Richard [Assistant Superintendent], me, and Natalie, and the Board had stayed, it would have kept going—no questions. Although the \$347,000 is good, it has brought a lot of pride that people hadn't anticipated (J. Frodo, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

Natalie Rose also shared this concern from a teacher's perspective.

We're going to have 12 teachers retire at the end of this year. The new teachers coming in won't have the background in MAST and what we've been through. We are going to need some refocusing on what it means to be part of a PLC and what a PGP means (N. Rose, personal communication, October 22, 2009).

Despite his reservations about the longevity of MAST at Pine Springs, Dr. Frodo continued to be a champion of the MAST program and was actively pursuing MAST in Bear Creek, the district where he also worked part-time for the 2009-2011 school years. However, he had concerns about Bear Creek's plan being accepted due to the debate between unions and CSDE about the salary schedule.

I don't know how rigorous the Department [of Education] is going to be on the lane/step issue. Bear Creek sent in its letter of intent [to participate in MAST]. My hope was that we could just take the Pine Springs's project and take it to its current status, put Bear Creek's name on it, and get it approved. I was told that wouldn't have a chance. I was told that what we did with our language in Pine Springs wouldn't get approved. For example, our view of the salary schedule is [that the levels of union-negotiated compensation is] a minimum, not a maximum. Our view of MAST is that it is something above and beyond to augment the salary schedule is acceptable. I've been told that it's not acceptable anymore. There will be no steps and lanes. If that is going to be the Department's view for new applications or renewing projects, younger projects will dissolve and new projects will not come forward. Unless districts are in such dire straits that they need the \$260 [per student] and that is the only way they can get the money to survive—even though it will bastardize the district—they will do it. It was never the goal of MAST [as passed by the Legislature] to do that, but that is what is happening with the Department of Education.

Now the new ones coming in, they were thinking about this when they were broke, now that they are broker, they are thinking about it more. That's not what MAST is about. It's not my philosophy of it. It's basically a program to reward good teachers for going above and beyond, but they didn't ask my opinion of it (J. Frodo, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

Dr. Frodo seemed to have an accurate position on the likelihood of districts to implement MAST going forward; however, he did not seem to be aware that eliminating the steps and lanes was the intent of the legislation as initially written. He was correct though in that the requirement to eliminate the steps and lanes was not in the legislation as passed despite CSDE's attempts to arbitrarily reinsert it through the application approval process. Additionally, despite concerns on the part of the Pine Springs participants about MAST continuing in Pine Springs beyond the 2010-2011 school year, at the completion of this research (spring 2012) MAST is still in place in Pine Springs.

## Winter Valley

### *District Background*

The Winter Valley School District was located in a suburban area of a large, Midwestern city and enrolled just over 8000 students (CSDE, 2009e). Winter Valley was primarily a bedroom community with a high residential property value throughout most of the district, but with little industry. It was represented by Republicans in both legislative bodies at the state level. Winter Valley's financial struggles were less serious than the average school district in Central State, and its unreserved general fund balance was increasing prior to MAST implementation (CSDE, 2009f). Winter Valley's average school district property tax per home was \$1891, significantly more than Pine Springs, and the district gained an additional \$260 per student in MAST revenue (CSDE, 2009f). Winter Valley was only one of four school districts in Central State and one of 50 in the U.S. that had a Moody's AA1 bond rating (Winter Valley Public Schools, 2008).

Its high school was on *Newsweek's* list of top 500 high schools in the U.S. in 2007. The district also received a “Gold” rating from *Expansion Magazine* and the “What Parents Want Award” from *SchoolMatch*, a corporate relocation service, every year since the inception of the award (Winter Valley Public Schools, 2008). Neighboring districts generally viewed Winter Valley as the district of excellence that employed great teachers and used innovative and effective programming for its students.

When measuring proficiency using NCLB goals, Winter Valley students performed the best out of the four districts studied, making adequate yearly progress on the NCLB goals in six of the past seven years (CSDE, 2009f). Its socioeconomic status was also the highest among the four districts studied based on the percentage of students eligible to receive free or reduced lunch (CSDE, 2009f). Winter Valley adopted MAST in 2006. The program gained in popularity since it was first implemented and it remained a vital part of the district culture at the time of this research.

Winter Valley’s superintendent since 2001, Dr. Alan Johnson, was a frequent author and speaker on innovative educational ideas. Innovative ideas that he championed while leading the Winter Valley School District included the International Baccalaureate, elementary language immersion schools, and advanced placement programs. The district was also honored on a national level for its use of technology in classrooms while under Dr. Johnson’s watch. Also, he was once named the Central State Superintendent of the Year.

In Winter Valley, everything the District did related directly to its mission and vision statements as echoed by School Board Chair, Victoria Russell.



We have a vision statement. At the center is being a world class, child-centered district. Everything we work toward comes back to the vision. There are very specific things about what we will do, but everything comes back to that vision. I really think we have done a very extensive strategic planning process. We started in 2002 with 5 key strategies. Now we're up to 15 or 16. Each one is a key area we are focusing on...The vision really drives what we do. That's the core piece of it all (V. Russell, personal communication, September 30, 2009).

Betty Greene, a Winter Valley teacher and teachers' union representative, explained how this vision related to the students.

If you asked me to describe the core values of the district it's all about the single student learning. It's about differentiating for individual students. It's about growth targets and we want their dreams to set sail. You know mission statements can be kind of kooky, but we want everyone to succeed—we really do. If you provide the support for the teachers they can really help those learners grow and develop. Everything supports classroom learning (B Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Greg Camden, a building principal in Winter Valley, illustrated the district's dedication to its mission and the time and thought behind its creation with this simple statement, "The published mission and vision statements drive student achievement...Most districts have a one- or two-page document, Winter Valley's is 104 pages" (G. Camden, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

That all participants from Winter Valley could speak to the district's mission and vision and explain how MAST fit within that mission and vision was evidence that Dr. Johnson excelled in visionary leadership and the symbolic frame.

### *The MAST Plan*

Like all of the other districts in Central State that implemented MAST, Winter Valley had its own unique program. According to Betty Greene (personal communication, October 1, 2009), a Winter Valley teacher and teachers' union representative, Winter Valley created 11 positions to provide career ladder and advancement opportunities for teachers. These positions included mentor teachers, a lead mentor, teacher instructional coaches, district department chairs, literacy specialists, and distinguished teachers. These positions allowed teachers to earn additional stipends of between \$400 and \$5000 per year. The job-embedded professional development plan included using data to analyze student performance on the MCA II assessments by utilizing professional development teams that met for a minimum of 50 minutes per week with five late start/early release days for additional meetings. Winter Valley used a combination of group, individual, and piece-rate incentives to meet the MAST performance pay requirements, with 10% awarded to individual teachers when the school met its achievement goals, 10% awarded to individual teachers if their students met identified student achievement goals, and 80% awarded to individual teachers based on student growth and the completion of individual teachers' professional development plans. Teachers in Winter Valley were evaluated three times a year using professional

teaching standards, and an annual review determined teacher advancement through the pay schedule.

### *Local Leadership*

Dr. Johnson seemed to be adept at understanding the political nature of MAST and effectively led the translation of messages from the Governor, Legislature, and CSDE into language that local stakeholders accepted. As Dr. Frodo was able to translate “pay-for-performance” to “reward teachers” in Pine Springs, Dr. Johnson was able to translate the pay-for-performance rhetoric into “supporting teachers,” “student achievement,” and the “culture of excellence” that permeated the culture and mission at Winter Valley. This translation was significant in the successful implementation of MAST locally.

In terms of Dr. Johnson’s attention to Bolman & Deal’s (2008) four leadership frames, Dr. Johnson was highly attentive to the symbolic frame. The district’s imagery-laden mission statement in which “students’ dreams set sail” provided a backdrop for a culture that exuded excellence. Even the district’s 104-page mission was symbolic of the district’s desire to be the best at educating students. Each study participant from Winter Valley related positively in some way to the symbols of the district that represented its quest for excellence. Participants could relate MAST implementation back to the mission, even if they did not agree that MAST fit in well with the mission, showed the importance of the mission to the district. That everyone shared some form of the symbolic language of the district in a positive light indicated that the symbolic leadership of the district was effective. This was also evidence that Dr. Johnson also excelled at visionary leadership.

Regarding MAST implementation, leadership in the other three frames appeared to be shared or delegated. That this delegation was done effectively demonstrated Dr. Johnson's proficiency in the handling of administrative tasks. In a district the size of Winter Valley, it would have been impossible for the superintendent to fully lead all initiatives, so it became important to assess the strengths of district team members and delegate responsibility for certain aspects of implementation as was appropriate. After establishing the key stakeholders that would negotiate the MAST plan, Dr. Johnson led the meetings and kept the school board informed of progress, but let stakeholders share their ideas freely in a collaborative manner. This not only worked well in the political frame, but set up success in the human resource frame as well as showing attention to the relationship aspect of leadership.

When it was time to actually write the plan, Dr. Johnson turned over the leadership of the structural frame to building principals and committee members to meet and write their respective parts of the MAST plan. This helped to free Dr. Johnson's time to attend to other district issues and provided a vehicle for other stakeholders to feel valued and trusted that they could create a plan that would fit into the culture of excellence at Winter Valley.

### *MAST Implementation*

Despite being a lighthouse district with very different demographics and district structure than Pine Springs, Winter Valley had many similar experiences to Pine Springs during MAST implementation. In Winter Valley, the drive to see each student succeed was an important consideration in the decision to explore implementing MAST. From the

beginning, Dr. Johnson believed MAST would be beneficial to the Winter Valley District but not because of any change in the salary schedule. For Dr. Johnson, the promise of MAST was as a professional development initiative.

I believe Winter Valley's MAST plan holds a lot of promise for continuing to raise student achievement in the Winter Valley Schools. Increasing teacher collaboration and providing a framework for teachers to coach and mentor colleagues holds the greatest potential for increasing student achievement. I think we always have a frame of mind that we are always looking for things to help support teachers and enhance instruction for students. MAST looked like it would do that. We were negotiating even before it became law. Staff development, student growth, and staff compensation were three main factors that prompted us to implement MAST (A. Johnson, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

Although not the most important factor, the money Winter Valley would gain from participating in MAST was at least a consideration—for some more than others. Competition amongst neighboring districts also appeared to be a consideration.

Obviously the money was there. We wanted to understand what it meant for Winter Valley. Any time there is money for Winter Valley, we want to take advantage of it. We wanted to learn more about how it could help us implement PLCs [Professional Learning Communities]. It's amazing how much PLCs have become part of our culture. We shifted at that time to becoming a very data-driven district. That work shifted dramatically as a result of our PLCs. That work and those dollars were very beneficial. The dollars weren't the most important part.

The dollars are nice, but if it didn't do what it needed to do, we wouldn't do it (V. Russell, personal communication, September 30, 2009).

It had to do with compensation levels. I wish I could say it was about student achievement, but it really was about trying to capture every dollar possible for the district (G. Camden, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Our neighbor, Bakersville, got into it [MAST] the year before. We were getting reports from several levels about them. Our union president heard from their union president, I heard from their staff development coordinator. Our administrators heard from their administrators. We were hearing positive things, and there was a sizeable amount of money that could be used. You really want to compensate people for going the extra mile so to speak. All of the metro districts, at least in this part, have high parent and student expectations and are high performing. This would allow us to have additional compensation for high performance (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

The pressure that Winter Valley felt regarding implementing MAST because a neighboring district had implemented the program, was likely the type of reaction CSDE was looking for by listing the districts that were participating in MAST on each press release. Winter Valley's knowledge that a neighboring district implemented MAST influenced participants' decision to implement MAST in Winter Valley to at least some extent. This influence showed the benefit to CSDE and other state-level MAST supporters in using the media to communicate with the audience of school districts in its

press releases to induce districts to act by submitting MAST applications in keeping with the theories proposed by Edelman (1988).

Since Winter Valley was a fairly large district, it was not unusual for its stakeholders to have differing views about initiatives than in Pine Springs. The participants in Winter Valley had somewhat differing interpretations of the district's reasons for choosing to implement MAST—student achievement, staff development, compensation, and competition. This may have been caused by the district's larger size and inability of stakeholders to communicate about various issues or initiatives on a daily basis as was possible in smaller school districts like Pine Springs. However, in the MAST legislation, it was possible to find something that applied to each of these reasons.

Like Pine Springs, for Winter Valley a team approach was an essential component of developing and implementing the district's MAST plan. This was echoed by all of the study participants from Winter Valley.

From my standpoint what happened was this. A board member was aware of it. It came through PACE [an education-related legislative liaison group]. One woman from our board is very active in that organization through the Legislature. Terry Smith [another school board member from Winter Valley] and Alan Johnson brought it to the board and the board made a decision based on their recommendation. It made sense for us to participate. There were also things in terms of discussions with staff members and union. Terry, Alan, and Lowell Turner, who was the assistant superintendent at the time, did a great job communicating with teachers and the union and really educating them on it. It's great if we decide to do it, but if staff wasn't going to participate, it didn't matter.

A lot of work was done by administration to work with the union (V. Russell, personal communication, September 30, 2009).

We did a lot of collaboration with teacher leaders. We didn't want to push it administratively. That wouldn't work. We were negotiating the 2005-2007 contract [at the time]. It took a lot of discussion. We had to deal with contract parts like the salary schedule and MAST philosophy (A. Johnson, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

A committee was pulled together. It had administrators, teacher union leadership, teachers, some people from the district office that work with teachers, and an Education Central State representative that our union invited as well. We spent several meetings discussing the program, reviewing the statute, and interviewing other districts that had MAST or TAP. We reached out to other districts, and we found that their feelings were that it was a positive program. Our committee went to the next step. Then we got one or more teachers from each level and then began to write the application. Each person would go out, and with a group of our cohorts, we drafted the sections. Then we reconvened and put the sections together. The bottom line is it was a joint union and administrative decision. Dr. Johnson would have kept the board apprised of the progress. That's the beauty of the program. You have to get together and get along for it to become a reality (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).



The inclusive nature of the development of the MAST plan and the effective delegation of MAST implementation oversight was again a testament to Dr. Johnson's strength in visionary leadership with attention to relationships and interpersonal aspects of leadership. It was also a testament to Dr. Johnson's skill in the human resource and symbolic frames.

Several factors helped implementation proceed. One of these was teamwork. Another was an existing commitment to professional growth and student achievement. A third was a willingness to consider alternative compensation options.

The views that the school board, administration, and teacher leaders had about professional growth, teacher compensation, and student achievement were already strong. The discussion was more about how we work through the details. The MAST structure helped. If it had been more [like] how it was presented initially (Governor King's initial concept rather than the end result that was modified quite a bit from the Governor's initial plan), it probably would not have passed in our district (A. Johnson, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

The district's views on professional growth, teacher compensation, and student achievement helped focus the implementation plan around the development of professional learning communities in order to enhance professional development and ultimately impact each of these areas through this process.

There was enthusiasm from beginning. Betty Greene worked through the operational piece of it and worked hard to set up PLCs. We set up leadership positions to help the PLCs get started. Initially we were more about helping the

PLCs get started. We helped them navigate how frequently to meet, when they would meet, how they would meet, and helped them establish goals for the meeting. There were a lot of things to work out at the beginning (V. Russell, personal communication, September 30, 2009).

*Communication between CSDE and Winter Valley*

As in Pine Springs, Winter Valley experienced multiple experiences related to what Pine Springs participants believed was CSDE over-stepping its bounds regarding the components of MAST, especially as it related to the salary schedule, and nightmarish bureaucracy related to its implementation. Additionally, Winter Valley also reported experiencing a high degree of ineptitude on the part of CSDE. Answers to questions varied greatly based on which CSDE employee answered the question. Winter Valley participants had the feeling that CSDE employees were making up the rules as they went along. This created a feeling of “building the plane while they were flying it” in Winter Valley. Among the issues about which Winter Valley scuffled with CSDE were the salary schedule, bureaucracy, and the timing of CSDE’s approval of the district’s MAST plan.

*Salary schedule: Augment versus eliminate.*

Although the preceding factors facilitated the MAST plan’s initial development in Winter Valley, implementation was not always easy. Because Winter Valley was an early adopter of MAST, the plan was being refined at CSDE even as Winter Valley was trying to develop the details of its own plan, causing some concern. “As the plan was being developed, CSDE was imposing criteria upon district plans that went beyond the law

passed by the Legislature” (A. Johnson, personal communication, October 16, 2008). As in Pine Springs, this was largely focused around differences between CSDE’s and the district’s interpretation of how or how much the salary schedule had to be reformed.

Reforming the salary schedule was a difficult task both at the local level and in getting it approved by CSDE.

The biggest barrier was teachers themselves. People weren’t trusting of it [MAST]. The real problem was that the state required that the salary schedule be reviewed and changed to reward performance rather than rewarding people for longevity. That was a very scary change for most teachers. This was scarier than, “What if the money goes away?” What if the money goes away was easier. If the money is gone, then, well, it’s gone (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Winter Valley ultimately acquiesced to the demands of CSDE for salary schedule reform and worked to find a solution that was acceptable to both the local teachers and CSDE.

This was a critical juncture for MAST implementation that required effective local leaders’ ability to gain and leverage trust as well as being able to translate the neoconservative rhetoric that was disseminated at the state level into language that was acceptable locally.

At the point of revising the salary schedule, the trust between teachers and administrators was tested. Not having many districts in existence with a successful MAST program that could be used as a model was an obstacle to successful MAST implementation in Winter Valley.

New changes can be viewed with a discerning and cynical eye at times. Was this something teachers would rely on? Would it be used to replace existing salary dollars? Was there a hidden agenda? What happens if our side wants out? The experience of people involved was lacking. There were not a lot of models to draw on, so we couldn't really look at how it was working somewhere else. There was also the question of was this just "window dressing" or would it be around for a while. I'd call that "political trust." That political trust changes with changes in leadership (G. Camden, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Because of CSDE's insistence on interpreting the legislative language in a way that would more effectively promote Governor King's neoconservative education policy agenda, the political trust between Winter Valley and CSDE was lacking. When adding the inexperience of CSDE employees whom local school districts relied upon for advice on writing and submitting their MAST plans, that trust was further eroded.

*The bureaucratic nightmare.*

In addition to serious differences of interpretation of the legislation and lack of experience with MAST, the philosophy of CSDE to reject each plan at least once negatively impacted Winter Valley's ability to successfully implement MAST.

It took us three applications to get the plan approved, and took a memo of understanding added to the contract [with the teachers' union]. The school board approved it, and the teachers approved it. The first year it passed by 12 votes [with a total] of 607 teachers [voting]. The union only required a simple majority vote. (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Winter Valley was unable to begin MAST implementation before receiving CSDE approval of their plan and then a union vote approving the CSDE-approved plan, so the timing was also a negative factor in MAST implementation. Because it took three attempts for CSDE to approve its MAST plan, Winter Valley did not receive approval for its MAST plan until late summer of 2006 (A. Johnson, personal communication, October 16, 2008). The union vote did not occur until the teachers returned for the fall workshop the week before classes began. However, according to the legislation, MAST had to be fully implemented by October 1<sup>st</sup> in order for districts to pass review the following spring so that [Winter Valley] would not lose [its] MAST funding (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

This put the district in a serious time constraint to develop plans and select teachers to fill various career ladder positions created by the plans, and then hire other teachers to take the place of the newly “promoted” teachers in the classrooms.

We didn't get approval until late summer and teachers didn't vote until after school started. Pulling teacher coaches out of their classrooms was an issue for teachers and parents. It was also an issue deciding how many peer coaches to employ (A. Johnson, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

When we came back in August, we hadn't heard yet whether our plan had been approved by the state or not. We couldn't move forward until we had a union vote, and we couldn't have the vote until after we had been approved. If we had tried to make some contingency plans, we would have lost trust. The union would

have thought that we were going to do this anyway regardless of how they voted (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

As noted in the previous quote, CSDE's timelines in approving the district's MAST plan obviously hampered Winter Valley's ability to adequately prepare for the 2006-2007 school year. Had CSDE not had the informal policy of rejecting MAST plans a minimum of one time, Winter Valley may have been better able to implement its MAST plan with less disruption to students and families. Additionally, if there was a requirement that CSDE needed to inform districts of the status of their MAST application status no later than May 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, districts would have more time to better implement MAST plans. Moreover, the implementation timeline created by the delay in approval was perhaps even more problematic. Interestingly, CSDE appeared to have quietly waived the October 1 full implementation deadline for Winter Valley.

Had the timeline been different, it would have been better. Districts should know in the spring if their plans are approved so they have the summer to prepare. When we rolled MAST out, we started PLCs at that time. It really would have been nice had we been able to bring Rick DuFour or someone like that to work with the whole district. We set about work while we were starting the school year. Our instructional goals were being developed as we went. Our instructional coaches began in January. It was tough on the community as teachers were pulled from the classrooms in the middle of the year. For example, a beloved elementary teacher who would also be an excellent instructional coach was pulled out of the classroom in January to serve as an instructional coach. Parents and community

members didn't like the disruption of having teachers pulled out of the classroom part way through the year. It would have been nice to know in advance so we could make personnel decisions over the summer.

DuFour says the best way to learn is by doing. I found a clip on YouTube of guys building a plane while flying it. This is what [implementation] felt like for us. The first year it was like teachers were doing a prescribed activity, [something we had to do, but were not sure why]. "What do we want them to know?" can be one to two years of work. We didn't have any staff development time to build the big picture and develop common knowledge. You're approved and have to be ready for the state to come in and determine if you're compliant. You either have to do it or lose it. Truly they came in to evaluate us in March or early April that year, and we moved from level one to level two. Imagine the amount of work we did that first semester. It was a lot of work (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Betty Greene personally had to deal with these obstacles when she was chosen to lead the MAST implementation for the district.

I don't believe we envisioned the implementation during the planning process.

When it came time for the implementation, we wondered, "How are we going to do this?" They said, "Since you're the staff development coordinator, why don't you be the MAST coordinator?" They let me pare off the new teacher development part of my job and half of my job became MAST and half remained

staff development. We never imagined what it would be like to roll it out. I wasn't thinking in terms of leading it, although it did make sense when they asked me to do it (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Like Pine Springs, Winter Valley struggled with getting the various components of MAST to work together in a cohesive manner.

We could have done more visioning along that line. I'm a very goal and task oriented person, but you need to break it down into who needs to do what, when, and how. I developed the plan in isolation of other things I was doing. And then I brought it together. For example, with the PLCs, I trained people on how to do PLCs and then brought them together to lead the PLCs. I just used the skills I developed over the years in skill development and program planning (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

This echoed Dr. Frodo's belief that the MAST model was not really a model, but rather a list of components. Figuring out how the components would work together seemed to be a task that districts were on their own to complete.

Additionally, the program was mired in paperwork. School districts were strapped for resources. This meant that fewer employees were doing more work, so districts tried to limit activities to those that added value. In yet another interaction between CSDE and local school districts where the two groups attached different meanings to the same situation, CSDE and Winter Valley personnel disputed the necessity of the reporting and paperwork requirements of MAST. Typically, district personnel viewed the paperwork requirements associated with many CSDE programs as oppressive. CSDE viewed the



paperwork requirements as documentation of school district accountability in implementing these programs.

If there was a way to go from operational to cultural, that would make a huge difference. The paperwork to show what's done is excessive. It feels more like being an accountant and not "let's write a book about how teaching has improved and student achievement has increased." We need to talk about how this will help us culturally instead of that a PLC will meet for 52 minutes five days a week... From an administrative standpoint, having fewer meetings [would help]. I can meet with teachers or school board members about student achievement and have a plan of action in 30-60 minutes. With the MAST meetings, we can have a four to six hour long meeting and I walk away wondering what was going on there. We have about eight of these a year, and I don't feel it makes an impact. For example, we've discussed at length whether you can have two people on a PLC or if you can have three people on a PLC and still get paid. Most MAST meetings are from an accountability lens. At those meetings I feel more like an accountant than an educational leader. (G. Camden, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

After the first year, an analysis was done to evaluate the success. Through the analysis, we found that different kinds of groups formed—building level, subject specific, and grade level. The information we received through the analysis helped us to know what type of PLC was more helpful to the district and we guided future groups in those directions, but the reporting mechanism is

incredibly laborious. The amount of paper Betty [Greene] has to complete seems incredible. I wonder if there couldn't be goals established that could be reviewed from a metric standpoint rather than completing a 50-page document...It would reduce the amount of time spent reporting and increase Betty's time doing. I do understand that there has to be some reporting, but she could be analyzing how it's working and recommending improvements instead of spending so much time on that paperwork. Time spent reporting is time lost doing (V. Russell, personal communication, September 30, 2009).

In general, Winter Valley was pleased with the success of MAST in the district. However, continued legislative support and funding was a concern not only for Winter Valley, but for the majority of districts in Central State that considered submitting a MAST application. "Many districts were bothered by the uncertainty. That's a very big impediment. We took the point of view that it will be there if it's working well. If not, we enjoyed it while it was here" (A. Johnson, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

A second concern that was related to the funding of the program was the stagnant funding to the districts. "One variable is the inflationary factor on the amount available for teachers. Teachers won't be happy with the same amount of money every year. They need to feel it's improving some" (A. Johnson, personal communication, October 16, 2008). MAST funding had remained at \$260 per student since the program's inception.

Finally, key Winter Valley personnel were critical of the legislative discussion of MAST from the beginning. If MAST was to really work, it required structural and cultural change in how P-12 schools operated from the ground up. This was not

something that could be accomplished without true educational experts working on the issue from the start in an even-handed way.

MAST can be seen as a carrot. While there are times a carrot is helpful, most people would move that way anyway when the data is clear. I would love for King to be able to say here's what it [MAST] did. I'm not finding that cultural change. [MAST] seems like more of an operational change. Those types of changes are not sustainable, but you need to be patient for cultural change. The culture needs to focus on student achievement. Legislatively, they can't change the culture in a district. The last time I had a senator in here talking about what the Legislature could do for us, I said, "When H1N1 came, they had the best health experts in the world working on the problem. They had the Center for Disease Control and all of their experts working on it. Yet, because we all share this common education experience of having gone to school, you choose to tackle that problem yourselves."

They're not qualified to do it. If you haven't been in a high school in the last five years, you don't know what a high school is like today and what the issues are, and legislators don't have the training or experience to deal with it. That they feel they can tackle education themselves without the help of experts in the field is like a slap in the face (G. Camden, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

*The (Relatively) Calm Morning after the Nightmare*

Despite these early challenges, MAST was successful in Winter Valley by all accounts. Even though Winter Valley had already been a high-performing district, some of the study participants credited MAST with helping the district to become even better.

MAST helped drive student achievement higher [and] opened doors for teachers to watch others teach rather than having traditionally closed doors. We have placed more emphasis on specific kinds of staff development, and staff has a more comfortable feeling about MAST and other district programs. We have reached a place of peace, if you will. (A. Johnson, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

I don't think anyone thought we would get as much lift from the staff as we did. I thought we'd get more resistance. They love what we're doing and how it has changed education. That's really gratifying. Seeing something like data that was scary for these folks, and seeing that change, we've been able to see growth in our district. It's really kind of a model for making change (V. Russell, personal communication, September 30, 2009).

We have really become a data-driven district. This was a huge change for teachers. That combined with evaluation by peers or principal for success. The union was scared about that—the evaluation and data. Both have been instrumental in changing the way we do things. For example, say third grade reading looks at scores, and the range of data says “this,” what can we do to get

“that.” We were able to direct resources to change results. That’s why our district is performing at the level it is today. TICS (Teacher Instructional Coaches) evaluate others in the classroom. At first it was intimidating, now teachers find it to be very beneficial and appreciated. Staff is open to it, sees value, and is cooperating (V. Russell, personal communication, September 30, 2009).

Teachers who were once skeptical of the plan became thrilled with how far they had come both as a staff and as a district. They not only saw themselves as teachers in a high-performing district, but also as change agents who were advancing education to fit the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner.

This will sound silly, but we’ve moved from a culture of teaching to a culture of learning. We focus on the learner. We’ve changed in so many ways. Our staff development goals prior to this time were general. They were not measurable, difficult to measure at best. Now we write SMART [simple, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound] goals at the site and PLC level. Now they are easily measured. We shifted in that way, now our goals are simple and effective. They are simple, measurable, achievable, and we have a deadline, like we will get this done by this date. Our focus has shifted to the learner. We truly ask the question, “What is best for our students?” (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

I was a high school teacher before I went into this role. If I’m teaching ninth grade history, it’s so much easier if I have a schedule that allows me to end each

class at the same spot. It makes life as a teacher easier, but if you are really teaching at a student level—if you are learner-centered—when do you ever have all students learning at the same level all at the same time? We've changed in that way. Are we 100% there yet? No. It takes time. We're starting year four. Some experts say it takes three to five years...we are differentiating more for our students (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Another change that is at the heart of what we do is the PLCs, the collaboration, common formative and summative assessments, and discussing how are we reporting this to parents. We're looking at how were reporting this information to parents. We're changing that 19<sup>th</sup> century teaching model and now the reporting model doesn't fit what we do. Learning and students look different. If you look at the five components required by statute for the MAST program, there is so much wisdom in having those five components. Teacher leadership has been phenomenal. Instructional coaches I work with and train, they're doing observations and we're using an inter-rater reliability scale to do that. We use the Danielson domains. Everyone when they were hired in the district is trained in Danielson and how we use the domains. Instead of having a principal come in once every three years, now people are evaluated three times a year. We have most of the district retrained in effective teaching components. We've also included technology. It's our district's own addition to Danielson. We've created a common language regarding what effective teaching looks like (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Although the focus of Winter Valley's MAST plan was internal, Dr. Johnson also noted support from the public at large. "We had a lot of public support, not just parents, but in general. Folks outside of schools think that it should be that way. When implemented well, like our plan, folks are pleased with it" (A. Johnson, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

### *Education Reform Stew*

Although not concurrently implementing as many initiatives as Pine Springs, Winter Valley was implementing several other initiatives to improve student achievement at the same time it was implementing MAST. Both districts were also committed to implementing the Charlotte Danielson method of evaluating teacher performance. Implementing MAST and Charlotte Danielson were two major undertakings. Implementing both programs at the same time could strap a district's resources in terms of finances, time, and the staff's willingness to adopt the change. However, school districts in Central State could no longer afford the luxury of implementing one program at a time and measuring its effectiveness. Districts were increasingly pressured to implement multiple programs designed at improving student achievement simultaneously, especially if there was money attached to implementation.

Often, as in the case of MAST implementation, there were multiple components within a program that required the development of "programs within programs." Both Pine Springs and Winter Valley addressed the MAST requirement of achieving job-embedded professional development through the implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs).

The component that Betty Greene was actually most proud of in Winter Valley's MAST plan was the PLCs that lead to increased teacher collaboration and, ultimately, increased student achievement.

PLCs, to me, are the heart of our plan. When we have teachers around a table, we use the DuFour model. We ask, "What do we want each student to know?" In years past when I was teaching, when the door closed, we were all probably doing something different [in our classrooms]. We all got to the same place by the end of the term, but that was all we had in common. [The extent of our collaboration was that] we shared lessons if we saw something interesting—usually student work waiting to be graded, and then asked about it. The other person may have shared it if they had something they were really excited about....That's the part I'm most proud of—and the time has been provided for [teachers] to collaborate (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

#### *MAST's Impact on Student Achievement*

Although student achievement was on the rise at Winter Valley, it was honestly difficult to determine what if any of that improvement was attributable to MAST. As with the other districts studied, there were multiple initiatives being implemented across the district during the study period that could have all positively impacted student achievement. Therefore, Greg Camden was not certain that there was necessarily a direct correlation between MAST and the success of the Winter Valley School District.

It's difficult to slice MAST off and say that MAST has done this for us. I wish I could say that test scores went up, but they've always been up. Since MAST is



ted to the PLCs, it may have helped those grow and flourish, but I can't say there's a one to one correspondence necessarily (G. Camden, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

With all of the focus of the early MAST rhetoric on pay-for-performance and the Governor's and CSDE's over-focus on the salary schedule component, the Governor, CSDE, and the legislative body overlooked the primary benefit of MAST as it was actually implemented in school districts across Central State. As implemented by local districts, this was its contribution to the professional development of teachers. That in turn seemed to have a positive impact on student achievement, although due to the fact that districts did not implement any one program in isolation, the impact MAST had on student achievement could not be measured. As Dr. Johnson (personal communication, October 16, 2008) explained it, "I don't think the Legislature realizes how powerful a tool [MAST] has been for raising student achievement."

#### *MAST's Long-Term Prospects in Winter Valley*

Winter Valley did not rest on its laurels and continued to work to improve MAST implementation. One improvement—making MAST a cultural phenomenon—would take time, but would likely yield important gains due to the ability of teachers and administrators to spend more time focused on the learner and less time focused on the required paper trail associated with MAST. When a new program became a cultural phenomenon, it seemed like the program was always a part of the culture. Its components

fit together well and the implementation flowed smoothly. It also coordinated with other programs in the district without creating gaps or overlaps in programming.

As the MAST program matured, it seemed to be popular with teachers in Winter Valley, and at the time of this research, the district had no plans to eliminate the program. “This year [2009] when the union did the survey, it was, I believe, in the neighborhood of 94-95% of the teaching staff in favor of [continuing MAST]” (B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

### Emerging Themes between Pine Springs and Winter Valley

#### *MAST Rhetoric*

Central State’s MAST program had five required components: (a) career ladder/advancement options; (b) job-embedded professional development; (c) teacher evaluation; (d) performance-based pay; and (e) a reformed, alternative salary schedule. The initial objective of MAST as promoted by the Central State Legislature, Governor, and Department of Education was to improve student achievement by linking teacher compensation to student performance. However, the professional development component of MAST, rather than the compensation components of MAST, was the focus for increased teacher and student achievement in Pine Springs and Winter Valley.

Superintendents in Pine Springs and Winter Valley were able to successfully translate the neoconservative, state-level rhetoric into rhetoric that was more palatable locally. These leaders focused on the professional development, student achievement, and additional compensation aspects of MAST and never referred to it as a “pay-for-

performance” program in any of the interviews I conducted. Further, none of the participants in either district reported that district leaders had ever described MAST as a pay-for-performance initiative or even linked the compensation aspect to student achievement gains.

However, and in keeping with the neoconservative perspective from which the original impetus for MAST was developed by Governor King, proponents of performance-based pay outside of the districts attributed the increase in student achievement to the way teachers were compensated—performance-based pay and the alternative salary schedule. However, both Pine Springs and Winter Valley attributed the increase in student performance to the increased focus and time allotted for professional development and collaboration for teachers—the job-embedded professional development. These differences in what local participants versus state-level neoconservative participants viewed as the most promising aspects of MAST effectively demonstrated how competing ideologies impacted the political discourse and perceptions surrounding MAST.

That both districts saw increases in student achievement, while only one of the districts had a teachers’ salary schedule that conformed to the expectations of CSDE in terms of the extent of reform required indicated that the resulting increase in student achievement was not likely related to compensation. If there was a relationship between MAST and increased student achievement, it had to be connected to the part of the program the districts shared in common. That was the professional development to which teachers were attracted and eventually included in the cultural assumptions of both

districts. These findings were aligned with previous reports by Honawar (2007) that showed no correlation between teacher compensation and student achievement.

### *CSDE*

In the Governor's, Republican Party's, and CSDE's focus on the promotion of professional compensation for teachers, they missed the most positive aspect of MAST from a local school district perspective. It took several years of data and a change of Governor and Commissioner of Education for CSDE to openly admit that improved professional development practices was a positive, although unintended, outcome of MAST.

In the interaction between CSDE and these two districts, CSDE assumed the role it was accustomed to playing—they heavy-handed enforcer and education annex of the Governor's office. Winter Valley and Pine Springs played their respective roles as obedient minions faithfully as well to a point. Winter Valley made the required changes to their salary structure, completed the paperwork, and met as many timelines as they could due to the late notice it received about the approval of its MAST program. In terms of "fidelity of MAST implementation," as Josh Gleason from CSDE referred to it, Winter Valley ranked highest among the four districts studied.

Typically, political adversaries are individuals or groups that lack the power to harm the group that labeled them as the adversary (Edelman, 1988). It could be argued that, at the time of this research, the relationship between CSDE and local school districts was this type of adversarial relationship. The interaction between the districts and CSDE was typical of how political adversaries, as defined by Edelman (1988), related to each

other until Pine Springs changed the game. Pine Springs may have caught CSDE off guard in how Pine Springs handled its role in the dramaturgy. Pine Springs dutifully completed and submitted the MAST application, and, as it was instructed, adapted the plan to fit the district. However those adaptations were not aligned with CSDE's expectation of a teacher compensation plan that eliminated the traditional step and lane system. In the typical interaction, Pine Springs would have acquiesced and eliminated the step and lane salary schedule, but Pine Springs held firm. Perhaps only because of the Governor's Fishing Opener to be held there, CSDE conceded. In addition to the Governor wanting the photo opportunity with Pine Springs District personnel and the big check, numerous media personnel would be in Pine Springs covering the event. If the media knew that Pine Springs refused to change its salary schedule and stood up to CSDE, it had the potential to cause negative publicity for MAST and the Governor and perhaps inspire more districts to openly question CSDE's interpretation of the MAST legislation and negatively impact CSDE's and the Governor's ability to use the media to shape the public opinion of MAST. If more local school districts would have stood up to CSDE's MAST requirements that they felt overstepped the bounds of the MAST legislation, it could have altered the ability of CSDE and the Governor to safely label local school districts as adversaries. Up to that point of MAST implementation, the Governor and CSDE had run a highly successful media campaign garnering support from the public and enough interest on the part of local school districts to submit letters of intent and garner some political success regarding MAST. These aspects were not lost on the savvy veteran Pine Springs Superintendent nor likely on Governor King.

Both Pine Springs and Winter Valley had a successful MAST programs for many years with successful evaluations conducted by CSDE and earned the privilege of self-monitoring their programs, a benefit districts get after four years of successful CSDE program monitoring and evaluations. Both districts appeared to be relatively satisfied with their programs (aside from the paperwork CSDE still requires). CSDE would argue that Pine Springs did not implement the salary schedule with fidelity. Nevertheless, and despite the counter assumptions of Governor King, CSDE, and the Republican Party in Central State, the data indicated that the traditional steps and lanes salary schedule was not a factor influencing student achievement in the districts; a finding first stated in the official assessment commissioned by the Governor and CSDE (Hezel Associates, 2009).

However, when Bear Creek (the district where Dr. Frodo later shared his time) submitted a MAST application that was nearly identical to that of Pine Springs, CSDE flatly rejected it on the basis that the salary schedule had not been reformed (J. Frodo, personal communication, October 16, 2009). Since Pine Springs' approval was prior to CSDE prevailing in the courts regarding the extent of reform they could require and Bear Creek's application came afterward, this may have indicated that changing the traditional steps and lanes salary schedule may have been the priority over student achievement on the part of CSDE and the neoconservatives whose agenda CSDE attempted to advance.

### *Financial Persuasion*

The financial carrot extended to both districts incentivized them to explore and ultimately participate in MAST, although the financial incentive was greater in Pine Springs. The Legislature was probably wise to increase the amount of money districts

could receive for participating in MAST from \$150 to \$260 per student, and it was likely still not enough to persuade most teachers in Central State to abandon the traditional steps and lanes salary schedule. However, in both districts, the money they received from MAST allowed them to pay their teachers more and possibly retain and attract teachers because of the increased compensation. It also allowed districts to fund professional development activities in a more effective manner. In terms of dollars into the district, both districts spent money out of their general funds to support MAST. Therefore, there was no financial incentive to districts to pursue MAST or to persuade teachers to pursue MAST at the district level. The only financial incentive went to the teachers themselves.

MAST funding to districts remained at a flat \$260 per student since it was passed. Participants in both districts expressed concern over the flat funding and the increasing amount that was shifting to local taxpayers. There was also an uncertainty regarding how much longer the teachers would perform the work associated with MAST without any increase in MAST compensation. Neither district wanted to fill yet another funding gap from its general fund by using general fund dollars to increase MAST compensation for teachers. The other concern was the increasing amount of tax burden to local property taxes in the event that either district needed to pass an operating or bond levy because the increased tax burden may have caused local taxpayers to reject an even greater tax burden through local, voter approved levies like operating and bond levies for schools.

#### *De-unionizing Teachers*

The legislative position on union-busting bills like alternative licensure and MAST gave credence to Greg Camden's (personal communication, October 1, 2009)

belief that because people shared a common educational experience of having attended school that they were qualified to teach or run a school. Having performed management duties in both the business and education sectors, I could attest that they were two very different entities. However, as anyone who has taken a number of college courses taught by adjunct faculty (as I experienced in MBA courses) could also have understood, being a strong business professional did not necessarily make one a strong educator.

In both districts MAST did not appear to weaken the teachers' unions. Additionally, teachers themselves reported feeling more empowered and in charge of their teaching. If anything, MAST created positions in both districts where teachers observed and evaluated other teachers, pushing them into what was once considered solely an administrative function.

Additionally, the teachers' unions in both districts required a 50% plus one vote to approve the MAST program. Under the provisions of MAST, teachers' unions in regular public school districts could set their own required margin of victory for passing MAST. Rather than serving as a union-busting, or at least weakening tool, MAST seemed to have strengthened the teachers' union in Pine Springs and Winter Valley. From the neoconservative point of view, this was likely an unintended negative outcome of MAST similar to the unintended negative outcomes of pay-for-performance compensation models described by Harris.

### *Leadership*

Although leaders in Pine Springs and Winter Valley had countless other things to attend to besides MAST, both made MAST implementation a focus during the initial planning and application phase of the program. In Pine Springs, MAST received a mixed



reaction on the part of teachers. MAST was initially viewed as one more in a long line of state programs that had come and gone. Although not explicitly stated by participants in Winter Valley, based on the closeness of the vote in that district, teachers there were probably thinking the same thing. The ability of local leaders to understand the political nature of MAST and to translate the messages from the Legislature and CSED into what local constituents would accept and the trust established between local stakeholders were key factors in developing and implementing the MAST plan in Pine Springs and Winter Valley and were aligned with qualities of effective leadership as described by Northouse (2009); Bolman & Deal (2008), and Edelman (1988).

The trust between teachers and union leadership and the trust between teachers, union leadership, and the superintendent was key to developing a culture of trust and teamwork that enabled Pine Springs to overcome the obstacles that CSDE placed in its way regarding the augmentation of their salary schedule and other implementation concerns and allowed full implementation of the District's MAST plan. The relatively small size of the District (with the entire staff housed in two buildings that were right next to each other) likely made effective communication easier. This culture of trust allowed Pine Springs to experiment with new programs and helped stakeholders understand that mistakes would be made in good faith. As a result, Pine Springs was able to acknowledge shortcomings of its initial plan and corrected those shortcomings without damaging intra-district relationships.

Winter Valley also attributed the success in developing the district's MAST plan to using a team approach, showing effective leadership in the human resource frame and interpersonal and relationship aspects of leadership. Winter Valley was a much larger

district than Pine Springs with more stakeholders qualified to lead and shape the MAST program. However, the district's attention to the symbolic frame and visionary leadership by attending to its mission, vision, and goals as drivers of district decision-making helped members of the application and implementation teams effectively communicate how MAST related to the district mission and vision to other stakeholders that were not part of those committees. In addition, Winter Valley as a district organization was a model of coordination of multiple departments and administrators working toward the same goals. That the school board, administration, and teacher leaders were already focused on professional growth and student achievement prior to discussing MAST was also a factor that helped MAST implementation proceed.

Being able to effectively lead in the human resource, symbolic, structural, and political frames as presented by and the ability to attend to visionary, conceptual, tasks, administrative, interpersonal, and relationship aspects of leadership appeared to have been important to successful MAST implementation in both districts. In both districts, the ability of teachers to see how MAST helped them be successful led to increased support for MAST as the districts continued to participate in MAST, emphasizing the importance of viewing MAST from the point of view of others.

## CHAPTER SIX: TWO DISTRICTS WHERE MAST DIDN'T TAKE

### Cotton Grove

#### *District Background*

Cotton Grove was a suburban area of a large, Midwestern city. It was primarily a bedroom community that had a generally high residential property value, but little to no industry. The school district was the largest employer in the community. Like the other districts (except for Pine Springs) Cotton Grove was represented by a Republican senator and a Republican congressman at the state level. Senator Mary Voss represented Cotton Grove and also participated in this research.

The average school district property tax per home was \$1454 (CSDE, 2009g). The district was part of a rapidly growing community, but despite that growth found itself needing to trim the school district budget by as much as 10% each year for the last three years (2006-2009). As part of those budget reductions, teachers were placed on unrequested leave and class sizes grew. At the time of this research, the school district had an operating levy on the ballot for the past two years and each year the levy failed, leaving the district with one new elementary school it could not open and numerous reductions in services to its students. On the third attempt to pass the operating levy, the levy was divided into two questions. The first question to provide funding to open the new elementary school passed, but the second question to provide funding to reduce class sizes in the middle and high schools failed.

Cotton Grove enrolled just under 7000 students (CSDE, 2009g). Despite being one of the fastest growing districts in the U.S., Cotton Grove experienced a declining unreserved, undesignated fund balance at the time of this research (CSDE, 2009g). Cotton Grove did not implement MAST, but the school district engaged in a two-year discussion of whether or not to implement it between 2005 and 2007. Cotton Grove students scored as making adequate yearly progress on the NCLB goals in only two of the past seven years (CSDE, 2009g). In terms of achieving NCLB goals, Cotton Grove students achieved at the lowest rate of the districts studied.

In its transition from small town to rapidly growing suburb, Cotton Grove had seen perhaps more than its share of cultural change in the past decade. Part of that change involved the retirement of a long-time superintendent and the growth of the district office staff from essentially a two-person operation to a modern, mid-sized district model with a staff of 10 coordinator/director-level personnel. Beginning with his arrival in 2002, Dr. Joe O'Connor, the new hard-charging superintendent, directed that transition. This transition included increasing the number of district administrators, building five new schools and a district office; and remodeling or re-purposing of the rest of the schools in the district. Under Dr. O'Connor's leadership Cotton Grove grew into a respected suburban school district. Dr. O'Connor was lauded as a visionary leader with a strong commitment to environmental learning.

The change also involved the creation of a comprehensive mission statement for the district as well as one for each school. The district mission statement was as follows.

Our mission as the Cotton Grove School District, is to be the community hub of intergenerational learning, is to develop people who enthusiastically engage in

purposeful learning, who are critical thinkers fully prepared to excel in everything they do, and who are responsible and productive members of an ever-changing global society. We will provide: opportunities that constantly challenge our learners to discover and enhance their individual skills and talents; a vibrant, welcoming environment focused on the needs of the learner; and an innovative staff that is fully passionate about teaching and learning (Cotton Grove Public School District, 2005).

This mission statement was accompanied by 14 belief statements, 8 goals, and 10 strategies to achieve those goals. Additionally, each school within the district had its own mission statement that was related to the district mission statement, as well as goals and strategies to achieve those goals. The mission and goals of the district were reinforced through financial policy. All spending in the district was tied to the goals and strategies of the district. Items that were not aligned with the goals were not funded. The financial alignment to the district mission and strategic plan gave the district a focus and direction for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that it had not seen before.

#### *MAST Exploration*

As noted earlier, Cotton Grove never initiated a MAST plan, but there was discussion about implementing MAST that began in the 2005-2006 school year and became quite serious in the 2006-2007 school year. Cotton Grove already had some components of MAST in place and filed a non-binding letter of intent to participate in MAST with CSDE in October of 2005. The district had many components of MAST

already in place when it submitted its letter of intent. There were some opportunities for career ladders where teachers were able to assume staff development positions without becoming administrators. The district had district-wide and building goals and staff development and budgets that were tied to those goals. The district established professional learning communities and peer coaching. It also had a goal setting process for individual teachers. Additionally, an administrator observed non-tenured teachers three times per year.

If Cotton Grove were to implement MAST, the following items also needed to be in place. All faculty members needed to be formally observed three times per year and an alternative compensation schedule had to be created. Additionally, the local teachers' union representatives stipulated that the MAST plan had to be approved by a three-fourths majority in order to pass.

The district explored MAST extensively. We formed a committee that Logan Taylor [Human Resource Director] headed for a year. I served on it too. There was a building principal, HR, [School Board Member], and the Union President, and [Union Representative] was there too. We worked hard, and spent a year working on all of the components (J. O'Connor, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Jack Sutton, a building principal in the Cotton Grove school district, agreed with Dr. O'Connor about the thorough manner in which the district explored the potential of MAST implementation.

We did have a committee that consisted of teacher representation, union leadership, district administrators, building principals, human resources, and the school board that did explore in a thorough manner some proposals of implementation of MAST (J Sutton, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Susan Barnes, Business Manager at Cotton Grove, described how the attempt to implement MAST proceeded.

About a year ago, Logan worked with the CGEA [Cotton Grove Education Association] President and a committee to see what [MAST] would look like for Cotton Grove—staff development, mentor training, all those kinds of things. I think last fall, I might have the timing wrong, Candy [Candy Jackson, CGEA President] and Logan went to sites to explain the program (S. Barnes, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

Other districts reported tying teacher compensation to observation results as an initial barrier, although not as big of a barrier as altering or eliminating the traditional salary schedule. However, this was not seen as a barrier in Cotton Grove. At Cotton Grove, peer observation was generally regarded as a positive component of the MAST plan as described by Charlie Jones, a teacher and union representative in Cotton Grove.

Having teachers evaluate teachers is always good. Once you get in your box, you don't see anything else. Math teachers seeing math teachers would help us collaborate more than we do... Teacher observation was a small component, but not as great as in the Bakersville [a nearby school district that implemented

MAST] plan. The only problem is if you get evaluated by a teacher who is not in your discipline. They can give basics of feedback, but no subject-specific ideas. I've always enjoyed going into other math teachers' rooms and other subject area teachers' rooms just to see what other teachers do in terms of classroom management (C. Jones, personal communication, September 29, 2009).

The goal-setting component of MAST was well-received by teachers; however, teachers seemed to be more interested in the professional development aspects of MAST the most.

I think the professional development opportunities and the funding for the professional development opportunities [were most beneficial]. I think specifically within the MAST plan that would be the PLCs. That's what we were planning to do. We were going to create teacher leaders and collaborative teams. We have been doing that anyway, but don't have people being compensated for that. I think it would enhance staff development at the building level (J. Sutton, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Charlie Jones, a teacher and union representative, repeated the positive attitude teachers had for the professional development aspects of MAST.

Teachers would be able to collaborate with [other] teachers and be compensated for the extra work they were doing. The district and teachers felt it would promote the mentor program and other programs we think are beneficial (C. Jones, personal communication, September 29, 2009).



Even though her position focused on the district's finances, Barnes saw professional development as a significant benefit of implementing MAST.

You would expect me to say the money [was the most enticing aspect of MAST implementation]. There's definitely a cash incentive, but we can't just use the money any way we want. The biggest benefits would be [professional development] training for teachers, and we would hope to increase student achievement and improve employee morale. It's a way to get funding so teachers can team together and get paid for it. Without that money we would have to pull it from somewhere else (S. Barnes, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

Despite the teachers' and other stakeholders' perspectives about the professional development aspect being most beneficial, their view of what was important about MAST varied from what Dr. O'Connor thought should be the focus of the MAST discussion.

With the parameters given at the time, the way the discussion needed to go on, in my opinion, was for there to be responsibility on the part of the staff person in conjunction with their direct supervisor to develop a plan for themselves in terms of goals, processes, the weight of each component, and how external versus internal factors would be measured... In my opinion, group goals didn't gain a lot of steam in our committee, but joint team level goals and [group] building goals would help [MAST be an effective program]. MAST works the best when there is a joint effort on the part of staff to reach a goal. The group goal takes out the factor of having a [low-achieving] class [for reasons outside of the teacher's

control]. The changing role of leadership and who is a leader is an important part [of MAST]. Is a teacher a leader? A principal? What is a leader and how does that fit into MAST (J. O'Connor, personal communication, October 1, 2009)?

The differences between the Dr. O'Connor's vision of what was important about MAST and what other stakeholders believed was most important contributed to the failure of MAST implementation. This also demonstrated Dr. O'Connor's lack of attention to interpersonal and relationship aspects of leadership and the human resource frame at least in the area of MAST. Whereas the teachers and other administrators were attentive to the positive aspects of MAST as a professional development tool, Dr. O'Connor focused more on the neoconservative values regarding what was good about MAST.

#### *Derailing the MAST Train*

Dr. O'Connor's focus on the pay-for-performance and teacher accountability aspects of MAST that were promoted by neoconservatives, served to erode trust between teachers and Dr. O'Connor—a component that was critical to successful MAST implementation in Pine Springs and Winter Valley. The lack of trust brought on by Dr. O'Connor's frequent use of the neoconservative rhetoric regarding performance-based compensation and teacher accountability, along with his general inattentiveness toward the MAST discussion led to the derailing of MAST in Cotton Grove.

However, MAST did not become a part of the Cotton Grove culture due to a number of factors. The two main contributors were leadership and communication. CSDE and the local school board approved the district's plan; however, local teachers did not support it to the level required for implementation (a three-fourths majority). Study

participants reported that the majority of the stakeholders were on board, but there was a large enough minority of teachers who were opposed to the plan that defeated it.

There was a committee that looked into what [MAST] would look like. It was presented to staff as free money. The school board approved it, but teachers voted it down. I'm pretty sure the high school said yes and elementary voted it down (C. Jones, personal communication, September 29, 2009).

Seventy-five percent of the [CGEA] members had to vote yes. There weren't that many, so it failed. There were more than 50%, if I remember right. The rationale is you don't want 50% because you want a significant majority of the teachers on board. Candy and Logan had a positive feeling about the program, but the program was too new and we didn't get a chance to educate teachers enough on what it was...More education [was possibly needed]. I don't know if the district has any say [in what would help MAST pass]. Probably a discussion about what percentage is needed to pass. I understand needing more than 51%, but what's the appropriate percentage? I think the groundwork and site visits were headed in the right direction. We just needed more education (S. Barnes, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

The perceptions of participants from Cotton Grove regarding why MAST did not pass demonstrated a realization that communication between stakeholders and MAST planners was deficient. One of the drawbacks of pay-for-performance plans like MAST was that they could be extremely complicated and difficult for teachers to understand

similar to what Harris (2007) found when studying merit-based compensation. Teachers may have needed more time to understand Cotton Grove's MAST plan and perhaps a decision to delay the vote until more teachers understood the components of Cotton Grove's MAST plan would have helped it to pass. The lack of accurate knowledge regarding the level of understanding the teachers had about the district's MAST plan was an indication of a lack of competence in the human resource frame and interpersonal and, perhaps, the conceptual aspects of leadership.

The teachers' union's requirement of a 75% majority vote in order to pass MAST was also a barrier to approving the plan.

It came to a vote by the board. The board accepted it. The teachers determined that they needed to have a super vote, a 75% majority. They had a majority vote, but did not have a super majority, so it died (J. O'Connor, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

The vote result was that the teachers didn't vote in favor of it, and it has not resurfaced. That was in 2006-2007. I think the school board was ready to move on it at that time, but unfortunately it didn't pass with the teachers (J. Sutton, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Both of the two case districts that had successfully implemented MAST plans throughout this research required only 50% plus one vote to pass MAST. Perhaps this was related to the level of trust among stakeholders in the districts as participants in Pine Springs and Winter Valley reported strong trust between teachers and administrators whereas Cotton

Grove reported that there were some negative issues regarding trust in the district at the time of the MAST discussion.

### *Local Leadership*

Dr. Joe O'Connor was in his third superintendency while he was at Cotton Grove at the beginning of this study. His first superintendency was in a small, rural community in a Midwestern state where he served for three years. The second was in a small, rural community in Central State, where he also served for three years. He was the fifth superintendent to serve in the Cotton Grove district in its history. Of the former superintendents, one served for 26 years, one for 12, and two for relatively short terms. Dr. O'Connor was at the helm of the Cotton Grove school district for six years. He later left Cotton Grove and became the superintendent of a school district in a regional center in another state. Dr. O'Connor's departure from Cotton Grove was unrelated to the district's MAST status. He left because he was frustrated when a former employee, whom Dr. O'Connor had personally recommended for termination for what Dr. O'Connor believed was illegal promotion of religious beliefs in school, was elected to the school board.

Effective leadership for MAST implementation was lacking at Cotton Grove. Participants seemed to agree that something went wrong, but they didn't agree on what it was. However, participants' statements all reflected leadership and/or communication issues as factors that derailed MAST.

In the end, it was the vote. It died probably because of leadership issues. I believe one of the buildings killed it. I think it was one of the middle schools, but I can't

remember which one. I think there was a lack of trust with the building principal. Staff was afraid of how it would be used against them. Union leadership could be an issue too [in many such votes against an initiative], but it was not in our case. They were with us. Candy and George [another union representative] helped lead the process and worked hard. There were employee fears that [teachers] were going to be evaluated on factors over which they had no control. Probably, lastly, a lot of staff [members] don't see themselves in a leadership role. They see themselves as a classroom teacher. They don't take that role seriously or necessarily want it (J. O'Connor, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Dr. O'Connor was accurate in identifying a lack of trust as a barrier to successful MAST implementation. However, at the time the plan was being promoted to teachers, Dr. O'Connor was focused on the structural aspects of leadership rather than the human resource frame and interpersonal and relational aspects of leadership that appeared to be necessary to successfully implement MAST. Additionally, his lack of attention in successfully remaining informed of MAST's status in the district once it was delegated to others showed ineffectiveness in the task aspect of leadership.

Dr. O'Connor believed that leadership and a lack of time on his part (to be able to leverage the trust and communication he had established with staff and administration) were the telling issues in the failure of the MAST effort. At the time MAST was being discussed in the district, Cotton Grove was one of the fastest growing school districts in the country. This growth put an incredible demand on Dr. O'Connor's time.

My life at Cotton Grove was mostly building buildings. We had five new schools in five years. While I was an active part of the [MAST] committee, I made every meeting, but Logan [Human Resource Director] led it. It was just because I didn't have the time to do it all. I think it needs a superintendent to be out and personable about it. I didn't know until after the fact that the union was going to require a super vote. If I had known, I would have gone to the buildings personally. I don't know if that would have made a difference or not, but a superintendent has to be very proactive. You can't turn it over to someone else and say good luck. As a superintendent, you represent the spirit of trust in district. If you don't have that trust, you're not going to get the vote anyway, but if you do have it, you need to use it (J. O'Connor, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Dr. O'Connor's over-focus on the structural frame was understandable. A focus on the building of infrastructure and hiring and leading many new people was required to keep the district running, especially when considering the number of building projects that occurred during the year the district worked on its MAST plan. However, greater attention to the symbolic, political, and human resource leadership frames and visionary, relational, interpersonal, task, and conceptual aspects of leadership would likely have aided MAST implementation had Dr. O'Connor been able to keep his neoconservative rhetoric in check.

Dr. O'Connor may have been a strong negotiator in the political frame; however, he seemed to be unable to translate the "pay-for-performance" rhetoric of CSDE, the

Legislature, and the Governor into language that would be accepted by the teachers at Cotton Grove. His inability to codify this rhetoric further eroded the trust between teachers and administrators in the district. Dr. O'Connor seemed to lack understanding of the political nature of MAST and appeared to accept the state-level MAST rhetoric. I think that he believed that Cotton Grove teachers would accept that rhetoric as well. However, this was not the case.

Additionally, Dr. O'Connor completely delegated the oversight of the development of the MAST plan to Logan Taylor (Human Resources Director) and Candy Johnson (Union President). Had Dr. O'Connor participated in the development process, he might have realized that MAST was more accepted in some schools than in others. He also would have known that 75% of teachers had to vote to approve the plan. If he had been aware of these issues, he could have spent more time in those schools promoting the MAST plan. He would have also known that some schools strongly supported MAST. Dr. O'Connor should have also known that MAST did not need to be implemented district-wide, but could also be implemented school by school. He could have worked to have the MAST plan and vote implemented by school. If one school implemented MAST (especially the high school because of its size and the number of teachers who worked in it) it probably would not have been long before other schools in the district demanded MAST. This was because Cotton Grove already had many MAST components in place, but teachers were not getting compensated for the work. It was possible that teachers in schools that did not have MAST would resent that they were doing much of the same work as the teachers in the school that had MAST, but were not getting paid for that work and would request to participate in MAST as well.



The district already had a mission statement, goals, and a strategic plan, but MAST was never discussed symbolically in terms of how it would help Cotton Grove fulfill its mission. This was a failure of symbolic leadership. Cotton Grove could have leveraged the idealism that was present in its mission documents to inspire teachers to work to fulfill this mission and illustrated how MAST would help accomplish that. However, district leadership largely used the mission, goals, and strategic plan as financial accountability tools rather than as symbols of pursuing excellence. This reinforced the trend of Dr. O'Connor to focus on the structural frame of leadership and be inattentive to the other frames as how MAST fit into the district's mission, strategic plan, or goals was not discussed with stakeholders.

#### *Communication between Local Stakeholders*

The lack of attention to areas outside of the structural framework also manifested itself in ineffective communication and contradictory messages showing ineffective leadership in the interpersonal and relational aspects of leadership as well. Inattention to the human resource and symbolic frames and a lack of clear and consistent communication that focused on the benefits of MAST from the teachers' perspective permeated implementation. Teachers wanted to participate in the professional development aspects of MAST, and were even receptive to the goal setting component if it tied into the goals the district already established through its strategic plan. However, much of the superintendent's communication with stakeholders related to the accountability portions of MAST and failed to take into account the perspective of the teachers. The perspective Dr. O'Connor promotes was his own which was aligned with

that of the Governor, Legislature, and CSDE but was not shared by the Cotton Grove teachers.

Teachers in Cotton Grove felt like they were doing a good job, but could do better if more professional development opportunities were provided that would allow them to use what they had learned in the classroom. Teachers were not receptive to changing the salary schedule or adding additional accountability measures; however, teachers may have accepted these components as the cost of having access to job-embedded professional development, if the focus of MAST as communicated to stakeholders was professional development rather than increased accountability.

Within the district, participants cited a lack of trust and communication as key reasons why the initiative failed. However, participants had contrasting views about what the trust issues were, thus reinforcing the belief that ineffective communication per se was also an issue. As mentioned earlier, Dr. O'Connor believed that his own leadership, as well as poor leadership on the part of one of the middle school principals, was the instrumental to the failure of MAST implementation at Cotton Grove. Charlie Jones also saw trust and communication as issues, although he attributed these issues to a different source.

At the high school we had many meetings and were well informed. I think the elementary teachers got different information and weren't as comfortable with it. There was fear that teachers would be pitted against each other and it would be more competitive versus looking at achievement at the student level. There was fear on the teachers' part that we wouldn't get as much of a raise if we got MAST money. The board said it was two separate issues. I'm not sure that the elementary

[schools] got that information (C. Jones, personal communication, September 29, 2009).

The fact that different participants attributed trust and communication issues to different sources, gave further credence to their belief that trust and communication were issues at the time of the MAST discussion.

Finally, another reason that teachers at Cotton Grove may have considered the focus of MAST to be pay-for-performance intended to undermine the union's legitimacy was how Dr. O'Connor presented MAST when he did communicate about it as evidenced by his retrospective view of the most important component of MAST.

Being able to pay for performance [was the most important part of MAST]. What I mean by that in particular is being able to recognize financially the staff members who are change agents. Putting themselves out there being leaders and being competent and beyond with their peers. Also, focus on professional growth and development. It's the "good to great" mentality. We've never reached perfection. We need to keep improving toward it. This was not a component of ours, but I would have found site goal-setting very helpful so that there is a common purpose within the building (J. O'Connor, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

I think teachers tend to be more skeptical. There needs to be a way to answer that skepticism. One question is whether [MAST] would truly result in teacher professional development. At least here that was the enticement, but I don't think necessarily there was real belief in that because [the teachers] thought it was

something other than that. They thought it was something else in terms of evaluation processes (J. Sutton, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

I have noted that Dr. O'Connor's deficiencies at the time, particularly in regard to the symbolic aspects of his job, had a lot to do with MAST's fate in Cotton Grove. This was true, but the problem was deeper than that. Dr. O'Connor was completely unable to promote the goals of MAST beyond those of the neoconservative supporters of MAST in the Legislature and sympathetic district board members. Thus the Cotton Grove teachers' union's negative vote on MAST may have been a result of the focus on accountability and pay-for-performance aspects of MAST promoted both by Dr. O'Connor and CSDE in addition to the key leadership issues at the time as much as it was simply due to his inattention to MAST. Perhaps rather than simply the expression of one school's disenfranchisement with its principal, the key block of "no" votes additionally reflected unstated "extra" premises attached to the MAST proposal. It was also possible that if Dr. O'Connor did actively promote MAST within the district based on his view of its important components and not on the teachers' view of its important components, MAST would have failed by a larger margin.

#### *Communication between CSDE and Cotton Grove*

Teachers at Cotton Grove did not want to spend the time necessary to develop and implement a MAST plan only to have the funding go away and have the program cease in a couple of years, so they also questioned the longevity of the program. They wanted to know, "How long is the state going to fund it and what happens when the money goes

away? What happens when the money runs out? Can the district afford to keep it going?” (C. Jones, personal communication, September 29, 2009).

The district’s business manager, Susan Barnes, also saw trust issues with the state in terms of long-term funding of MAST and shifting costs of the program to local districts through a property tax levy.

On the financial side, I would like it if none of the money was from local levy. Personally, I think it was a hidden part of the program where the first year it seemed like “here’s this great new program and this money,” but the second year part of it became local levy. State taxes come from local taxpayers too, but when we’re trying to pass local levies, it gets harder. When you tack on the MAST part, the impact on local taxpayers is small, but when you’re trying to build, it’s hard. I try to keep a close eye on the local levy impact...I don’t think that would change implementation. Teachers really don’t care about that. That’s more of a board concern. It’s a district choice. Districts can choose to take less revenue by just taking the state aid portion and not participating in the local levy. The school board could decide to do that. I don’t see that the local levy would stop implementation, because the school board can decide whether or not to do that (S. Barnes, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

Barnes’ sensitivity to the tax impact was likely colored by the district’s inability to pass operating levies for the past few years.

Barnes, also saw CSDE’s scrutiny of plans in regard to altering or eliminating the traditional salary schedule as an issue. Cotton Grove had to determine how to restructure the traditional compensation grid to the extent CSDE would require it to be reformed.

Now the state is looking at plans more closely. It's not that [CSDE was] passing them easily before, but now they are scrutinizing [MAST plans] more closely to see if they are aligned with what the Governor wants. There is also a question about ongoing funding. We didn't get far enough into it, but blending the old contract with the new MAST requirements and having teachers trust it could be an issue (S. Barnes, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

If it is intended to be a restructuring overhaul of the step and lane schedule, that's not going to fly here... We have a very strong union in that regard, and a very strong desire to maintain the status quo in that regard. I think that [MAST] would certainly allow for people to see it as I think it could be intended—to be a huge boost to professional development. If that were the case, I think people would be more apt to adopt it, but it's been touted as pay for performance, and it can't lose that negative connotation. It can't lose that connotation unless the structure changes. (J. Sutton, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

The time period that Cotton Grove attempted to implement MAST was during the time period that participants from Pine Springs and Winter Valley in addition to Cotton Grove reported CSDE was more critical of approving MAST plans (J. Frodo, personal communication, October 16, 2009; B. Greene, personal communication, October 1, 2009). This was also after CSDE won the lawsuit over their definition of "reform" (Findlaw, 2007). This likely enabled CSDE to push toward more closely adhering to the Governor's vision of MAST.

There were also issues of trust with the Legislature and CSDE in terms of MAST itself and whether a hidden agenda existed with the program implementation.

I think not being tied to a particular political agenda would make it [MAST] better. I also think a different resource structure [would help too]. I mean if it were to be funded differently. For our district that would make it an easier sell.

There would need to be a level of commitment outside of the Governor for people to be willing to do it. There are a lot of people who think this is the Governor's baby and it will only be around as long as the Governor is around. I think it needs more champions (J. Sutton, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Jack Sutton's thought that MAST was something other than what it purported to be seemed to be accurate; however, despite the departure of Governor King, MAST was still in statute at the time of this research. This was possibly due to the Republican controlled House and Senate, although increasingly more Democrats were embracing performance-based pay for teachers.

#### *Crying over Spilled Milk: Remorse over the MAST Vote*

Despite the "no" vote for MAST, the majority of stakeholders in Cotton Grove were disappointed that MAST would not be implemented. In addition to the post-vote finger pointing about which people were responsible for voting it down, there was a real sense of loss about the extra money that would have been used to pay teachers, especially during the economic downturn and limited school funding facing districts in Central State at the time of this research.

I say that knowing what was coming to a certain extent —not knowing the extent of what we're in now that we're in it. [In hindsight] we were foolish not to do it [implement MAST]. Now we don't have that funding source. We're missing out on that money, and we can't do some of the things we would like to do. We continue to do the mentor program that was going to be expanded with MAST, but we don't do it to the level that we did even before MAST. We've had to scale that back due to budget cuts, so every teacher doesn't get their own mentor. Some teachers share a mentor—like two teachers have one mentor. Collaborative teams have been reduced because of budget cuts as well, but we still have them to some extent. There are only a few that have collaborative time any more. Each year there gets to be less and less (J Sutton, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Although some teachers were distrustful of the MAST program, they still felt the pain of losing the MAST funding.

[With MAST] Teachers would be able to collaborate with teachers and be compensated for the extra work they were doing. The district and teachers felt it would promote the mentor program and other programs we think are beneficial. There would also be more money for collaboration. The district still supports collaboration through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), but they've dropped off in the last couple of years. They're not as prevalent as they were a few years ago. Also, the high school has dropped all MAP [Measures of Academic Progress standardized] testing, except for special ed[ucation]. The



middle school still uses it to show progress. I wish we still had it. It was really valuable, but times are tight and you know about cuts (C. Jones, personal communication, September 29, 2009).

*MAST's Long-Term Prospects in Cotton Grove*

Despite regrets about missing the funding at the time of this research, Cotton Grove had no plans to resume talks about MAST. In these tough economic times school board members were reluctant to levy an additional tax on taxpayers in order to fund the local portion of MAST. “We recently had trouble getting our school board to support a \$5 [per student] lease levy. You know, it was a really small amount, and we had trouble getting them to support that” (J. Sutton, personal communication, October 1, 2009). There were also significant issues about trust within the district and between the district and the state government that served as barriers to resuming the discussion about MAST.

They [administrators] need to convince the teachers that it's [MAST] a good thing or have other policies in place that it can't have anything to do with negotiations. Negotiations and MAST have to be two separate things. One thing I really liked was the open-endedness of it. Each district could have their [sic] own plan (C. Jones, personal communication, September 29, 2009).

Once the Cotton Grove teachers' union rejected its MAST proposal, the district experienced a number of challenges. In 2008 Dr. O'Connor left Cotton Grove; however, much of his legacy remained, but not all of what was good. Since his departure, the district faced an inability to pass building bonds and operating levies that led to

overcrowded schools, larger class sizes, and devastating cuts to its flagship environmental education program, including forfeiture of a \$500,000 environmental learning grant.

Also, many members of the district office staff hired during Dr. O'Connor's tenure left—some voluntarily and some because the positions created during Dr. O'Connor's tenure were eliminated due to the district's need to reduce its budget. Mirroring the recent turbulence within the district, the district's mission statement also changed. The new mission statement for the district was, "Our mission is to educate all learners to reach their full potential as contributing, productive community members of an ever-changing world. We are innovative, environmentally focused, and wise stewards of our resources" (Cotton Grove Public School District, 2009). According to Jack Sutton (School Principal) the new mission statement was intentionally more focused and easier to connect to the district's recent difficult times.

We've shortened it considerably. We now have a one-page document. We had a different consultant come in, and I think its better. It's much more succinct than our previous one, but it wasn't the one that was in place when we explored MAST. The core values included in the district's new mission statement include partnership, innovation, respect, wise stewardship, accountability, and striving for excellence (J. Sutton, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Charlie Jones reported that the district's core values were updated to incorporate the following components that were reflective of the district's difficult financial situation.

There's a commitment to rigor, and environmentalism is very important here. The district also tries to maintain diversity in choices of courses while maintaining class sizes of 23 or more. There is a policy in place now that says you have to have 23 students in your class, otherwise the class is cancelled. There is no maximum [number of students allowed in a class] (C. Jones, personal communication, September 29, 2009).

Interestingly, this was the first time I had ever heard of an organization change its mission and vision statements to reflect its poor financial situation.

As Central State's finances deteriorated and its Legislature shifted education financing due in the current year to being paid in a future year and withheld aid payments to districts in order to preserve its own cash flow, districts in Central State felt the pinch. With most teacher unions settling for modest pay increases or no increase at all, it did not appear to be enough of an incentive for Cotton Grove teachers to consider MAST implementation again.

We aren't having to borrow money for cash flow needs at this point yet, but we aren't able to invest as much. The tighter that gets, the more we should have in fund balance to help us through those tight cash flow times. And that's tough because how are we supposed to do that with no money? We shared that information with the union, but I'm not sure there's a mutual concern or understanding of that. The district always says that, so the union doesn't understand why it's different now (S. Barnes, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Despite the lack of any conversation about MAST for three years at Cotton Grove, at least some would not be surprised if the depressed economic situation of the district caused the subject to be revisited. However, there was a general feeling among the participants in the district that MAST did not have a realistic shot at being implemented in Cotton Grove any time soon.

I haven't heard it mentioned at all since the vote. I don't know if either side is bringing it up because I haven't heard anything. At the same time, I wouldn't be surprised if [MAST exploration resurfaced] because that's the only money out there. If teachers want new money, it's the only way to get it right now. That's why I think we should have jumped on board when we had the chance. I didn't foresee the extent of the economic downturn, but it was a pot of money we could have had access to (J. Sutton, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

When interviewed in 2008, Barnes reported that she and the new superintendent were in fact talking about reviving the MAST discussion in the district; however, in a year, that conversation had not gained momentum.

I think [MAST] might spark a conversation after negotiations. Last time they discussed it in between—in the year in between negotiations. I could see that happening here. It depends on how negotiations go. I think if it's brought back up again because of the economic times, I think the board will be very sensitive to local taxpayers. Last time the board was going to try to access all of the dollars. This time I think they'd just access the state dollars to be conscious of the

economic times and the local taxpayers while still supporting MAST (S. Barnes, personal communication, October 1, 2009).

Right now CGEA feels [MAST is] a dead issue. If it happened again there would need to be better communication with teachers. We would need to meet to find out what went wrong last time and fix it before moving forward again (C. Jones, personal communication, September 29, 2009).

## Blue Lake

### *District Background*

Blue Lake was a regional center comprised of typical working class families. Tourism was the most notable industry in Blue Lake, although there were numerous varied manufacturing-type businesses as well. Blue Lake was represented by both a Republican congressman and a Republican senator in the state Legislature. Its school district was one of the largest employers in the city, and enrolled approximately 3,800 students (CSDE, 2009b).

Despite spending less than the state average, Blue Lake had a declining general fund balance at the time of this study (CSDE, 2009b). The average school district property tax on homes in Blue Lake was \$421 (CSDE, 2009b). However, the industrial base helped offset Blue Lake's low revenue generated from residential property taxes. While the district was participating in MAST, it also received an additional \$260 per student (CSDE, 2009b). Blue Lake adopted and implemented MAST in the summer of

2005, but abandoned the program prior to the start of the 2006-2007 school year due to an inability to reach an agreement with its teachers' union and CSDE on a reformed teacher salary schedule. Blue Lake students scored as making adequate yearly progress on the NCLB goals in five of the past seven years, ranking second of the districts that participated in this study, just behind Winter Valley (CSDE, 2009a).

The Blue Lake School District had a strong set of core values that it used to guide district decision-making. These values included acting ethically, respecting diversity, preparing learners, developing students' leadership and problem-solving skills, and being accountable as a district.

According to Blue Lake Superintendent Ben Adams (personal communication, September 23, 2008), Blue Lake also worked toward annual goals to focus its decision-making. The district's 2008-09 strategic goals included increasing student literacy, improving district infrastructure, and improving communications and access.

### *Local Leadership*

At the time of this research, Dr. Ben Adams had been with the Blue Lake School District for 22 years. At the time Blue Lake adopted MAST, he was the assistant superintendent, but worked with local stakeholders to implement MAST. He became the superintendent of the Blue Lake School District in 2006, at which time the Blue Lake's teachers' union voted to discontinue the MAST program. He remained the superintendent at Blue Lake for the duration of this research.

Dr. Adams did not appear to be emotionally or intellectually attached to MAST, but rather seemed indifferent to it during both interviews. This could have been because

of the costs to the district associated with MAST in terms of administering the program and the amount of his time that was devoted to that administration during the year Blue Lake implemented MAST as well as the two years that had passed since Blue Lake teachers voted to discontinue MAST. Additionally, although Dr. Adams spoke mostly about MAST in terms of professional development and student achievement, he also referred to it as a “pay-for-performance” program on occasion. However, Dr. Adams’ comments regarding the pay-for-performance aspects of MAST were much more subdued than those of Dr. O’Connor at Cotton Grove. It appeared that Dr. Adams was largely able to translate the neoconservative MAST rhetoric promoted at the state level into language that was accepted locally; however, local teachers may have just not been willing to dramatically change their compensation method.

Trust and collaboration were key leadership elements that helped secure the local approval of the initial MAST plan. This was similar to the experiences of Pine Springs and Winter Valley. That Dr. Adams was able to develop the level of trust and collaboration necessary to lead the district through its rapid application and implementation process, showed his strength in the relational and interpersonal aspects of leadership as well as his ability to operate successfully in the human resource and political frames. That Blue Lake teachers did not approve the MAST plan with a reformed salary schedule was probably more of a reflection of that particular component of MAST rather than a reflection of Dr. Adam’s leadership.

*Education Reform Hash*

Like the other districts that implemented MAST, Blue Lake did not implement MAST in isolation. As part of its job-embedded professional development, Blue Lake also implemented several other initiatives promoted as tools to increase student achievement.

While we were working on MAST, we were also trying to start a lot of other things. We did SMART goal setting, lesson study, tuning protocol, common assessments, Marzano's instructional strategies, Understanding by Design, literacy training, differentiated instruction, at-risk programming, inquiry based science, and understanding and using student standardized test data in instruction.

I think that's all of them. (A. Mason, personal communication, October 5, 2011).  
With all of these initiatives being implemented at approximately the same time, it was extremely difficult to determine what impact, if any, any one initiative had on student achievement as was true with the other case districts that implemented MAST.

*MAST Plan*

Amy Mason was a teacher in the Blue Lake district at the time of its MAST implementation, but was working at CSDE at the time of this research. She shared the components of Blue Lake's MAST plan. That plan had all of the required components similarly to the other case districts with the exception of a reformed salary schedule. Blue Lake's MAST application included career ladders, job-embedded professional development, a comprehensive evaluation system, and alternative teacher compensation that linked 40% of the MAST-funded compensation to individual teachers' students'



assessment performance and 60% to school board approved site goals. These items were already in place when Blue Lake submitted its application to CSDE. According to CSDE, an alternative teacher compensation schedule for the non-MAST funded teacher compensation was also a required part of the application; however, in order to get more school districts involved with the MAST program quickly, Blue Lake was allowed to begin its participation in MAST without this aspect completed with the understanding that the district would develop and implement this portion prior to the following school year (A. Mason, personal communication, October 5, 2011).

Otherwise, Blue Lake's MAST plan was much like those of the other case districts that implemented MAST. Its career ladder included the following five rungs: resource teacher, career teacher, site leader, instructional assessment coach, and mentor coordinator. All of these positions included an additional stipend with the exception of resource teachers (A. Mason, personal communication, October 5, 2011).

The comprehensive evaluation plan involved rubrics aligned with Central State's standards of effective practices and course content assessments, and everyone that participated in MAST had to develop and follow an individual growth plan (A. Mason, personal communication, October 5, 2011). In order to be able to do this, Blue Lake principals, peer coaches, and teachers were trained in coaching and developing and using instructional frameworks (A. Mason, personal communication, October 5, 2011).

Performance pay compensation was awarded with 40% of the MAST dollars being awarded based on individual teachers' instructional assessments and 60% based on school board approved school site goals. The alternative teacher professional pay

schedule was not in place at the time Blue Lake began the MAST program, but there was a provision for it in the district's MAST application.

Blue Lake planned to implement an alternative teacher professional pay schedule that included expanded use of learning resource teachers, leadership pay opportunities, revised responsibility pay, teacher board certified awards, and a modified salary schedule. Blue Lake didn't have this in place, but it is common for districts to have their applications approved without having all of the components in place...Blue Lake did have a memorandum of understanding covering all of the components mentioned above with the exception of the modified salary schedule. In their MAST application, Blue Lake stated that this would be in place by July 1, 2006 (A. Mason, personal communication, October 5, 2011).

With CSDE's insistence on districts radically changing their traditional step and lane salary schedule, it seemed strange that Blue Lake's MAST plan would be approved with essentially a promissory note in this area. However, that CSDE regularly approved MAST plans without having all of the components in place seemed to be accurate based on the experiences of Pine Springs and Winter Valley. This practice could have also fueled the rumors that CSDE approved plans on a partisan basis.

#### *MAST Implementation*

For Blue Lake, like the other case districts, money was an important consideration in pursuing MAST, especially since the district had some of the required components already in place.

There was a twofold opportunity for implementing MAST. Money was a strong consideration. We had a number of things already in place for MAST—building goals, teacher goals, collaboration, and a targeted professional development program that we could build upon. We were heavily into peer coaches already (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

Having at least some of the required MAST components already in place seemed to be an incentive for districts to pursue MAST, probably because this was perceived to make implementation easier and teachers could receive compensation for something that they were already doing for free.

At Blue Lake, as with the other districts studied that implemented MAST, there was a collaborative effort between teachers, administrators, and the school board. This was necessary for implementation as Blue Lake experienced a challenging time frame to put a plan together in order to be accepted by CSDE for implementation at the beginning of the following school year.

There was a tight time frame between [teacher contract] negotiations and the MAST deadline so MAST became part of [teacher contract] negotiations. This was from July to September. There was a strong relationship between the [union] and administration, and we worked collaboratively (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

As Blue Lake progressed through its year of MAST, it found that teachers improved their ability to set and work toward goals as site-based teams.

We got better at building individual and site goals. We learned a lot about creating goals that were measurable. We didn't realize at the beginning it would be so difficult to develop measurable goals (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

That implementing the MAST components was more difficult than expected was also a common experience among the districts that had implemented MAST.

Like the other districts that implemented MAST, Blue Lake found that as a result of implementation, collaboration between teachers improved, as well as their ability to effectively use data. According to John Murphy, Blue Lake Business Manager (personal communication, December 10, 2009), "It gave the teachers more insight on how to improve their instruction, which in turn would improve academic achievement."

Dr. Adams also echoed this sentiment.

Since implementing MAST, we've improved at developing building goals using data and tying professional development goals to building goals. We are much better at collaboration and teamwork for instructional purposes...Our building goals were more measurable, our staff development is tied to building goals; individual goals are tied to professional evaluations. We have teacher leadership and building leadership teams focused on how we get better at what we do. Teachers work with principals on building goals; communication; and in some cases, hiring. We feel good about our peer coaches and the support they provide. (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

Two factors affecting the continuation of MAST in Blue Lake included the requirement of a super-majority vote to continue MAST and employee turnover in key leadership areas. Blue Lake's teacher's union required 70% of union members to vote in favor of changing the salary schedule and continuing the MAST program. Like in Cotton Grove, the majority of Blue Lake's teachers voted in favor of the MAST plan, but the majority was not large enough for MAST to pass. In addition to needing a super-majority vote, there was staff turnover in the union leadership and in the superintendent and assistant superintendent positions areas that impacted continued MAST implementation at Blue Lake.

We had to get an alternative salary schedule by the state's timeframe. Maybe by spring of 2007 we had to start getting it done. We had new union and district leadership. We got together over two days to put together a plan. We shored up areas that needed improvement in our first plan, including the alternative salary schedule and less paperwork. We needed a 70% majority for passing the plan. The plan passed 55%-45%, but didn't pass by 70%, so it failed... If we had completed the salary schedule up front, there's a chance MAST could have survived in our district (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

However, there was also the possibility that the Blue Lake teachers were simply not supportive of the idea of the reformed salary schedule to the extent CSDE required.

*Communication between CSDE and Blue Lake*

As with most of the other case districts, Blue Lake experienced confusion and frustration related to CSDE over-stepping its bounds regarding the components of MAST, especially as it related to the salary schedule, the timing of its implementation, and MAST bureaucracy.

*Salary schedule bypass and roadblock.*

The collaborative effort between administrators and teachers enabled Blue Lake to put together a MAST plan that was tentatively approved by CSDE in the fall of 2005. However, the plan was not complete, because it did not address the teachers' salary schedule at all. Blue Lake, like other districts, struggled with the newness of MAST that resulted in a lack of models to draw from, and a lack of expertise on the part of CSDE staff. This was problematic because the district relied upon CSDE staff for assistance in developing its MAST plan.

We came together as a district to begin implementation and developing our plan. We were meeting frequently to resolve challenges. We got better at using data at the district and the building level because of our MAST experience...Barriers included the fast track with the October MAST deadline. The Central State Department of Education was implementing the program as they were designing it, so it was difficult to get consistent answers from them. The district's MAST program was tentatively approved without an alternative salary schedule. Ultimately this became a barrier (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

Had CSDE been able to properly train its employees in MAST prior to its implementation in local school districts, the inconsistent answers to district questions about MAST could have been avoided. However, this would not have addressed CSDE's insistence on eliminating step and lane compensation from the teachers' salary schedule.

When participants were asked what would have made MAST implementation better at Blue Lake, the idea of having a clearer idea at the state level of what MAST was and what plans needed to have in order to be approved and successful, as well as accepting only completed plans for approval, were common themes.

I wish we would have been asked to meet the criteria of the alternative salary schedule up front. I'm not sure that our starting point would have been different. The timeframe was too tight. CSDE should have put their plan together for another year first because of the inconsistent messages they were sending us...If there was a consistent message from CSDE, we wouldn't have had to backtrack as we were designing the plan (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

This frustration was common on the part of all case districts.

Still, because it was not clear that teachers would have signed on for the "pay-for-performance" overtones of MAST, if CSDE had required Blue Lake to reform its teachers' salary schedule prior to approval, the MAST vote might not have been different. However, if CSDE had required the salary schedule to be reformed prior to approving Blue Lake's MAST plan, it would have saved Blue Lake a lot of time and energy on a one-year program. That said, the district improved its professional development practices due to its MAST planning and implementation. This is an area of

district activity that Blue Lake kept in place as much as possible through the duration of this research.

Because MAST was not gaining popularity as the Governor predicted, CSDE was under pressure to work with districts to get them participating in MAST so that the Governor's cornerstone education program would not be viewed as a major failure. Since Blue Lake was a regional center and showed early interest in MAST, CSDE worked hard to ensure that Blue Lake was added to the short list of districts participating in MAST. CSDE even waived the deadline for a complete proposal in order to get Blue Lake to participate that first year of MAST (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

Interestingly, while Blue Lake was participating in MAST, it was listed as one of the districts that had implemented MAST on every CSDE press release about the program, and Blue Lake's MAST plan was included on CSDE's website. However, after Blue Lake discontinued MAST, its name was removed from the press releases, its plan removed from CSDE's website, and all press releases regarding Blue Lake's adoption of MAST removed from the public CSDE archive. These items were still available by request through CSDE; however, the first two times I asked for these documents, my request was denied. On the third try they were only provided reluctantly after I reminded the CSDE employee that they were public documents. It seemed as though CSDE was trying to erase Blue Lake's brief participation in MAST from the public consciousness. This could have been another attempt at mystification of other school districts and the public on the part of CSDE by giving the illusion that all of the districts with approved



MAST plans were still successfully implementing them, thus inflating the perception of MAST as a successful program.

*The bureaucratic traffic jam.*

Blue Lake, like the other districts studied, found that the MAST paperwork was burdensome, and the initial implementation process was daunting.

In our first round with MAST, there was too much paperwork. It was a frustration. We were more focused on doing paperwork than talking about coaching (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

Dr. Adams and Mr. Murphy both felt that the reporting requirements with MAST negatively impacted the time Blue Lake had to actually implement MAST and its focus on improving teaching and learning. This was similar to the experiences of Pine Springs and Winter Valley as well.

Amy Mason concurred. She attempted to email me a PDF file of Blue Lake's original MAST application; however, the file was too big. She had to divide the document into three sections and email each section separately (personal communication, October 5, 2011). Upon reading the documents, I found them to be tedious and repetitive and that the same or very similar information appeared in multiple sections on the application.

*MAST through the Rearview Mirror*

The vote to discontinue MAST was a surprise and disappointment to many of the Blue Lake stakeholders because for the most part they were finding its professional

development qualities helpful. But, the district still had an obligation to its students, so life at Blue Lake moved on.

There was disappointment from the school board because they believed in pay-for-performance and put a lot of time into it. There was initial surprise and limited emotion, and then we got back to the business of getting better at what we do. We felt good about our plan, but support wasn't there (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

John Murphy believed that MAST was successful the year it was implemented, but that issues related to the requirement of reforming the salary schedule caused the collapse of MAST at Blue Lake.

[MAST] maybe was successful for a very short time and then for whatever reason, they abandoned it...The inability to agree on an alternative salary schedule was ultimately the major cause of the downfall of MAST in Blue Lake. We would still have it if the teachers hadn't voted it out...It would have been helpful to have the salary schedule revised at the forefront instead of trying to revise it after we got going. That was a real challenge. It was perceived that there was a lot of work on the staff part because of the goals and that. Staff is still doing that, but now they're just not getting compensated for it (J. Murphy, personal communication, December 10, 2009).

It seemed that in Blue Lake, the professional development components were successful as they were in Pine Springs and Winter Valley. From participants' descriptions of the demise of MAST in Blue Lake, it seemed that if Blue Lake had received approval for the

same salary schedule that was approved in Pine Springs that Blue Lake may well have still been participating in MAST at the time of this research and CSDE would not have had to mask its brief participation in MAST. However, that would not have done anything to advance the Governor's agenda regarding eliminating the traditional step and lane salary schedule.

Without the continued availability of the MAST dollars, Blue Lake had to prioritize its programming and make some decisions on how to fund the parts of the MAST program the district wanted to keep. "We had to decide how to reallocate dollars to continue these programs... It affects people because of pay. It took away some professional development money" (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008). John Murphy (personal communication, December 10, 2009) echoed that sentiment, "One of the successes was teachers having coaches to help them improve. We're no longer doing that part."

A lesser factor, but still significant in the decision to discontinue MAST, was the increasing shift of fiscal responsibility for the program from the state to local tax levy.

As we were leaving the program, a growing concern was the shift from state to local funding. More veteran teachers were more wary of funding disappearing and the shift of financially supporting the program becoming increasingly local (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

During the time of this research, Blue Lake passed a successful referendum to build a new high school. Dr. Adam's attention to the local taxpayer may have been an indication

of his ability to view an issue from other perspectives and to successfully navigate the political frame of leadership.

Since stopping MAST participation, Blue Lake continued many of the components of MAST, but had to reallocate dollars to fund those initiatives.

Our building goals were more measurable, our staff development is tied to building goals; individual goals are tied to professional evaluations. We have teacher leadership and building leadership teams focused on how we get better at what we do. Teachers work with principals on building goals; communication; and in some cases, hiring. We feel good about our peer coaches and the support they provide. We had to decide how to reallocate dollars to continue these programs (B. Adams, personal communication, September 23, 2008).

One of those tough decisions was the decision to eliminate peer coaches due to a lack of funding.

#### *MAST's Long-Term Prospects in Blue Lake*

Blue Lake continued to operate an exemplary staff development program and provided students with the best education it could within its means. Since dropping MAST, there was no formal discussion of re-entering the program (B. Adams, personal communication, October 16, 2009). At the time of this research, despite the trying economic situation in which districts were immersed with the state delaying its payment of a significant portion of districts' budgetary allocations for a year, there was only a dim chance that the conversation about MAST implementation would resurface (B. Adams,

personal communication, October 16, 2009). However, some components of MAST survived without the related funding.

There were things that were created like building leadership teams, our coaching model, collaboration, and more attention given to data results and achievement. I think those things have sustained themselves over that time (B. Adams, personal communication, October 16, 2009).

Whether or not discussion about MAST would continue would likely depend upon factors outside of the district. “I guess it [revisiting MAST] would all depend on state finances. If it were the only way to get additional dollars—that may be the only thing” (J. Murphy, personal communication, December 10, 2009).

The state finances continued to deteriorate, and Blue Lake experienced the impact.

It [tax shift] will cause us to borrow and to use aid anticipation certificates to cover cash flow. We’ll use a combination of borrowing and drawing on fund balance to maintain cash flow. We’ll lose earned interest and spend more on interest on borrowed dollars and use money from fund balance. It impacts the bottom line on the budget (B. Adams, personal communication, October 15, 2009).

The funding freeze and tax shift were a part of the teacher negotiations picture, as were state and district finances in every negotiation year.

It's part of the background information we use as we go through with negotiations. It's part of the economic times. That and the tax shift is all information that is out there. We use the problem-solving model for negotiations. It's part of the understanding of what the lay of the land is and understanding the data that's out there. It's part of understanding the economic landscape and planning cycle we use to build the budget every year. We always do that and that's how we go through negotiations too (B. Adams, personal communication, October 15, 2009).

Despite the rough economic times, the great majority of school districts in Central State settled for at least a continuing contract at existing compensation levels with their teachers' unions. Very few districts were able to freeze teacher salaries completely. Blue Lake was aligned with the majority of districts in not settling for a "hard freeze."

We're not going to have a hard freeze here, so we're not in that scenario. I don't know if it [state and district economic climate] will spark renewed interest or not. I don't know if there's an interest in it [MAST]. It has to originate out of teachers' union. We're prepared for that conversation from a school board point of view but we don't know if it's going to come or not. There have been no formal conversations about it since it was discontinued (B. Adams, personal communication, October 15, 2009).

## Emerging Themes in Cotton Grove and Blue Lake

### *MAST Rhetoric*

In both Cotton Grove and Blue Lake both superintendents referred to MAST as a pay-for-performance model, although to a much greater extent in Cotton Grove during their interviews. The external pay-for performance rhetoric was similar to what was experienced in Pine Springs and Winter Valley with board members and community members openly referring to MAST as a pay-for-performance plan. This external rhetoric was similar all four case districts.

Dr. O'Connor seemed to be oblivious to how local teachers received the state-level neoconservative pay-for-performance rhetoric. In Cotton Grove, where MAST was not implemented at all, Dr. O'Connor consistently cited paying teachers based on their performance as a key component of MAST. The pay-for-performance rhetoric use in Cotton Grove could be understood by teachers to mean that Dr. O'Connor did not believe that teachers were performing at a desired level. This interpretation led to a lack of trust between teachers and Dr. O'Connor. However, Dr. O'Connor did not appear to even realize that this was an issue; a clear failure of "taking the point of view of the other." That made symbolic leadership nearly impossible.

This was contrasted by Blue Lake where the administrators (at least Dr. Adams) did not promote CSDE's neoconservative line to the same extent. Dr. Adams only mentioned MAST as a pay-for-performance program once while referring to what the Blue Lake School Board liked about MAST and in one other instance. During interviews, Dr. Adams seemed to be most pleased with the professional development aspects of

MAST—the aspects Blue Lake did its best to maintain after it no longer received MAST funding. This translation of the neo-conservative rhetoric likely aided MAST’s early implementation in Blue Lake. Additionally, the district culture in Blue Lake seemed to be more cohesive than that of Cotton Grove, possibly a result of the level of trust among local stakeholders.

Both districts did implement professional development components of MAST. Blue Lake implemented them formally through its one-year trial of MAST and retained those that it could afford after it discontinued MAST. Cotton Grove implemented them without MAST funding at all. During the time of this research, both districts saw modest gains in their student achievement as measured by state-wide standardized testing. Neither district implemented a reformed salary schedule. This added further evidence that MAST’s pay-for-performance component most likely was not the driver of increased student achievement.

### *CSDE*

CSDE’s attempted manipulation of the legislation had a role in MAST implementation in Blue Lake. Although district participants said that they might have still had MAST at the time of this research if CSDE had required them to submit the salary schedule up front, the District and the teachers’ union were unable to reach an agreement on a reformed salary schedule in the year that followed their initial approval. I had a difficult time believing that Blue Lake would have reached a salary schedule agreement if it had a shorter time frame to do so. It seemed to me that Blue Lake would have been more likely to keep MAST and develop a reformed salary schedule as a condition of



keeping a high-quality professional development program. The “blame CSDE” response could have been a result of continued social interactions with CSDE that led district participants to view CSDE as bureaucratic, inefficient, and perhaps inept. Additionally, blaming CSDE allowed the district stakeholders to maintain their cohesiveness by not blaming each other. However, in Cotton Grove, the blame seemed to be directed at both CSDE and local district stakeholders.

Although CSDE required Cotton Grove to revise their plan once before approving it, in keeping with CSDE’s unofficial policy of requiring at least one revision, it did not seem to upset any of the participants at Cotton Grove. They simply made the revisions, all of which were minor, and re-submitted the plan. Similarly, Blue Lake had no major concerns about the plan revisions. The major issue by far at Blue Lake was the requirement of the reformed salary schedule.

However, all four case districts shared a concern, although to varying degrees, that the funding and future of MAST was uncertain. Many pay-for-performance programs before MAST had come and gone—largely due to a lack of funding and difficulty and expense of administering the program. The concern about the longevity of MAST was also voiced by participants in Cotton Grove and Blue Lake. Blue Lake also shared concerns about the costs to administer the program that were not covered by MAST funding. Cotton Grove participants did not list the administrative costs of MAST as a concern. Perhaps since they had not implemented MAST, they were not fully aware of this obstacle.

*Financial Persuasion*

As in Pine Springs and Winter Valley, the financial incentive for MAST participation was the benefit to teachers. Districts would have had money to pay teachers more and provide job-embedded professional development, but would have incurred costs to administer the program. In terms of providing high quality professional development and empowering teachers, this may have been money well spent; however, the teachers in these two districts did not buy into MAST.

Since Blue Lake was trying to pass a building bond and Cotton Grove was trying to pass a building bond and operating levy, the increasing burden of MAST funding that was shifted to local taxpayers, was a concern for both of these districts. If the teachers' unions in these districts had chosen to pursue MAST again, it was unlikely that these school districts would have accepted the local levy portion of MAST. This would have placed the financial needs of the district ahead of the financial desires of the teachers and left fewer dollars available for MAST compensation. As Central State shifted more of the MAST funding burden to local taxpayers, it was likely that more districts would discontinue MAST or at least stop accepting the local levy portion of MAST funding. If MAST funding were to shift entirely to local taxpayers, increasingly districts would drop MAST as they needed to pass bonds and operating levies to keep their districts functioning.

*The Importance of Trust*

Trust among case district internal stakeholders and between the Cotton Grove and Blue Lake districts and CSDE seemed to be important aspects of planning and

implementing MAST successfully. The teachers' unions of both school districts may have been distrustful of CSDE, MAST, and to a varying extent, district leaders, which may have spurred the requirement for more than a 50% plus one majority vote requirement to approve MAST. The Blue Lake teachers' union required a 70% vote to pass MAST, and Cotton Grove required a 75% vote to pass MAST. Nothing in MAST legislation established a level at which public schools were required to pass MAST. In districts where perhaps the union leadership was more skeptical of MAST, the leadership could have established a required percentage of "yes" votes that would have made MAST adoption unlikely. Unions could have also misinterpreted the legislative language and believed that a 70% "yes" vote was required for public school districts to participate in MAST (This was only a requirement for charter schools at the time of this research). At any rate, both districts had a majority of teachers who voted in favor of MAST, but did not have the extra votes necessary to implement the program.

Likely because administrators in Blue Lake did not promote the neoconservative components of MAST, but rather focused on the professional development aspects of the program, trust amongst internal stakeholders was never raised as an issue, despite the difficulty teachers' union and district representatives had in settling the contract. The trust issues in Blue Lake seemed to center around the "pay-for-performance" rhetoric and the "reformed" salary schedule required by CSDE.

However, in Cotton Grove, a lack of trust and effective communication were mentioned frequently by participants. At Cotton Grove there appeared to be strong communication between the members of the MAST exploratory team, and all Cotton Grove participants reported that all members of the exploratory team worked hard,

worked well together, and that there was a culture of trust between them. However participants pointed to a lack of time to effectively educate teachers about MAST to the degree necessary to have at least 75% of union members vote “yes” on the district’s MAST proposal. Additionally, Dr. O’Connor did not know that the Cotton Grove teachers’ union required a 75% “yes” vote. Although if he was attending to MAST effectively, he should have known, especially since Dr. O’Connor reported that he had attended, but had just not led, all of the MAST meetings.

Being unable to effectively communicate with teachers about the benefits of MAST for the Cotton Grove District raised issues of trust and questions about whether a hidden agenda existed within the program. In Cotton Grove a lack of understanding about the program raised fears that teachers would be more focused on competing with each other for dollars than focusing on student achievement. There was also concern about MAST dollars being used to replace regular salary increases. Study participants reported feeling like they received correct and adequate information, but that they did not believe that that information was disseminated thoroughly throughout the district, as participants reported being uncertain that various groups received correct information about MAST. It was also interesting to note that as participants reported on the group that did not receive correct information, the group identified varied among participants.

In the Cotton Grove District the human resources director and the union president went to individual schools to explain to teachers the MAST program the district hoped to implement. Perhaps with a longer time frame between developing the plan and implementation, there would have been more time to have multiple meetings with

teachers so that development team representatives could have been able to answer more questions and established a greater feeling of trust in regard to the MAST program.

Dr. O'Connor pointed to a lack of trust between one of the building principals and the teachers in the school he led. His failure to address this trust issue prior to the MAST vote allowed rumors about MAST to spread faster than the factual information about the district's MAST program. He also failed to acknowledge that his own hard-charging rhetoric may have had anything to do with the failure of MAST implementation at Cotton Grove. Had Dr. O'Connor been able to understand the political nature of MAST and lead effectively from the human resource and political frames and leverage the relational, interpersonal, and conceptual aspects of leadership regarding MAST, Cotton Grove may have had a different result in its attempt to implement MAST.

Additionally, at the time of this research, the MAST discussion in both districts was dead unless the teachers' union in its respective district chose to pursue MAST again. This position put the power of implementation squarely with the teachers' unions. This was most likely another unintended consequence of MAST, but rather than dissolving or weakening teachers' unions, MAST appeared to strengthen them as the legislation clearly gave the local teachers' unions the power to block MAST locally.

### *Leadership*

At Blue Lake, the tight time frame between teacher negotiations and the deadline to submit their MAST application was only a month and half, but the strong relationship between the teachers union in the administration helped provide the collaborative atmosphere necessary to mostly meet this deadline. The tight time frame did not allow

Blue Lake enough time to tackle the toughest question about MAST implementation for their district. The question about how to revise the salary schedule had not been answered and ultimately became the main reason that MAST did not survive in Blue Lake. That teachers did not favor adopting a reformed salary schedule as dictated by CSDE did not appear to be a local leadership issue.

However, in Cotton Grove, lack of effective local leadership was one of the main reasons MAST implementation failed. Dr. O'Connor also reported being out of the communication loop as far as knowing a 75% vote would be required. He attributed this to factors external to MAST. The district's rapid growth and the need to focus on facilities to accommodate the growth was an urgent district need at the time that consumed much of Dr. O'Connor's time. As a result, he chose to delegate the task of communicating the MAST plan to others, a decision, in hindsight, he wished he made differently.

When Dr. O'Connor did communicate about the MAST program and potential plan he overtly promoted the neoconservative pay-for-performance rhetoric used by Governor King and CSDE. This was not well-received by teachers and showed a lack of ability to be able to frame an issue from the point of view of the teachers, an important leadership skill. This ineffective rhetoric combined with a general lack of oversight and involvement with MAST led to Cotton Grove's failure to implement MAST.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

### Basic Findings

The five major findings as a result of this research were: (a) the financial starvation of local school districts fostered a greater willingness to try new initiatives if there was money attached to them; (b) MAST failed as a pre-fabricated solution to improve student achievement by altering teacher compensation, but did prove to be a promising professional development model; (c) CSDE attempted to manipulate the MAST legislation to promote the Governor's agenda regarding teacher compensation; (d) the rhetoric used by CSDE regarding MAST shifted over time; and (e) local district leadership was important to effective MAST implementation.

The first major finding was that the financial starvation of local school districts fostered a greater willingness to try new initiatives if there was money attached to them. When first introduced, the majority of school districts in Central State submitted to CSDE a non-binding letter of intent to participate in MAST. However, most of those school districts did not participate in MAST. With MAST there were additional unfunded costs associated with the initiative. These were largely related to the administration of MAST. These unfunded costs also likely had some influence on the number of school districts that ultimately chose to participate in MAST. When already faced with mounting financial pressures, allocating dollars out of the district general fund to administer an additional program was not high on the priority list for local school district administrators if the local teachers' union was not interested in MAST participation.

In addition to the unfunded costs, another financial barrier to implementing MAST was that the \$260 per student local school districts could gain through MAST was not likely enough of an incentive for the majority of teachers' unions in school districts in Central State to abandon their traditional step and lane compensation model.

The second major finding was that the pay-for-performance legislation was aimed at unions and at teachers as part of a pre-fabricated solution to the problem of inadequate student achievement. Identifying the teachers and their unions as the "villains" who caused the inadequate student achievement paved the way to create legislation designed to undermine the power of teachers' unions in collective bargaining and encourage poor teachers to leave the profession. MAST was one example of this type of legislation. However, it failed to undermine local teachers' unions and its impact on student achievement was inconclusive.

MAST did not appear to weaken local teachers' unions. In fact, MAST legislation essentially gave veto power to the teachers' unions with regard to implementing MAST. Without union support, at whatever level the local union leadership deemed appropriate, districts were unable to proceed or continue with a MAST plan. In order for MAST to be implemented in each district, teachers' union approval of the local MAST implementation plan was required by law.

Additionally no relationship could be established between how teachers were paid and student achievement. All four case districts implemented at least some of the professional development aspects of MAST and all four case districts saw increases in student achievement at the time of this research. However, only one of the case districts, Winter Valley, actually implemented the reformed salary schedule as envisioned by



Governor King and administered by CSDE. Since Winter Valley's increase in student achievement was not substantially different from that of the other case districts, a relationship between teachers' compensation and student achievement could not be made. MAST did show strong promise as an effective professional development model that may have had some correlation to student achievement. However, this was an unintended consequence that was seemingly unappreciated by the neoconservatives in Central State Government and CSDE.

The third major finding was that CSDE attempted to manipulate the MAST legislation to promote Governor King's agenda regarding teacher compensation. As MAST progressed through the Legislature, it was modified from the original version first introduced. However, the legislative language was vague enough to allow for a variety of interpretations, especially regarding the requirement to "reform" the traditional step and lane salary schedule. CSDE's interpretation of reform as meaning that the traditional step and lane salary schedule needed to be eliminated was aligned with Governor King's initial vision. However, many local school districts construed "reform" to mean to change, but not necessarily eliminate the step and lane compensation model.

These varied interpretations occurred amidst mixed messages from CSDE and perceived incompetence on the part of CSDE employees by case district participants. Participants in the case districts were angered and frustrated by CSDE imposing its own, seemingly arbitrary requirements on MAST through the approval process, along with its lack of consistency in the criteria it required for plan approval. From the perspective of the case districts, CSDE's enforcement of MAST requirements varied across local districts. Additionally, as case district participants received varied answers to questions

depending on which CSDE employee responded to the question, case district participants tended to view CSDE employees' administration of MAST as incompetent.

The fourth major finding was that the initial rhetoric that focused on MAST's pay-for-performance and reformation of the traditional step and lane salary schedule aspects of MAST shifted to a focus on professional development. At first, CSDE's and Governor King's rhetoric regarding MAST revolved around "pay-for-performance" and "professionalizing" teacher pay by eliminating the traditional step and lane compensation. CSDE and Governor King failed to realize how this hard-charging rhetoric would impact the decision to participate in MAST at the local level. The majority of local teachers' unions did not bite on the lure of \$260 per student in additional compensation to eliminate their traditional step and lane salary schedules. This necessitated some type of rhetorical shift on the part of those promoting MAST.

The realization that MAST would not be implemented in most Central State school districts with a focus on the "pay-for-performance" and "professionalizing" teacher compensation components of MAST came too late to be effective. However, CSDE and Governor King realized that school districts that participated in MAST found that the professional development aspects of the program were well-received. CSDE and, to a lesser extent, Governor King softened their rhetoric around pay-for-performance and professionalizing teacher compensation and switched the focus of their rhetoric to MAST as an effective professional development model.

Finally, the fifth major finding was that district leadership was important to effective implementation of MAST. As district leaders attended to the many issues that demanded their attention, they needed to pay attention to all four leadership frames as

discussed by Bolman & Deal (2008) and all aspects of leadership as presented by Northouse (2009). The human resource and political frames and the relational, interpersonal, and cultural aspects of leadership as well as the ability to “construct the political spectacle” differently that how it was promoted at the state level seemed to be the most critical leadership areas for successful MAST implementation. If MAST was important to the district, leaders needed to attend to the initiative personally and from the appropriate leadership frame in order to optimize the chances of MAST’s success in the local school district.

Additionally, MAST rhetoric as it was used by local school district leaders was also a factor. In the two districts that had active MAST programs at the conclusion of this research, the reformed salary schedule and pay-for-performance aspects of MAST were not the focus of the discussion, but rather the focus was on professional development. This also appeared to be the case, at least initially, at Blue Lake. However, CSDE’s requirement of a reformed salary schedule pushed the issue in that district, ultimately leading to the demise of MAST in Blue Lake. In Cotton Grove where the Superintendent’s rhetoric was almost exclusively about pay-for-performance, the District lacked the trust necessary to approve MAST.

### Suggestions for Further Research

The ideal typology used in this study focused on district size and type and whether or not the district was implementing MAST at the time of this research. The districts were not selected based on whether they were represented politically by Democrats, Republicans, or another party, and three of the four districts were represented

by Republican legislators. Given the accusations that CSDE had approved MAST plans on a partisan basis, it would be interesting to study districts' experiences with MAST based on their legislative representation to explore this potential aspect of MAST implementation.

Wirt et al. studied the impact of two states' political histories and their impact on education statutes. A similar study could be done comparing the pay-for-performance teacher compensation programs between states. This research would serve to give greater insight into how political differences between states impact the implementation of teacher pay-for-performance initiatives.

This study only superficially touched on education reform history in Central State. Additional research more thoroughly comparing MAST to other education policy in Central State could reveal any commonalities or trends that may exist. One such policy that may be of particular interest in this comparison is legislation that was recently passed in Central State that had not yet gone into effect at the time of this research that would require teachers' compensation to be tied to performance evaluation rather than longevity. Additionally MAST could be compared to other past education reforms that have been seen as successful in Central State such as open enrollment or post-secondary enrollment options, commonly referred to as PSEO.

This study focused largely on overall MAST implementation at the local level, and case district participants reported the majority of individuals eligible for MAST compensation in their district, received it. However, there were five major components to MAST: (a) career ladder and career advancement opportunities, (b) job embedded professional development, (c) performance-based pay, (d) comprehensive and objective

teacher observations, and (e) an alternative professional compensation schedule.

Therefore, it may be beneficial to evaluate the specific components of MAST, especially with regard to peer observations, administrator observations, and criteria for receiving MAST compensation compared to the expectations of Central State legislators regarding performance-based pay.

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