

Initiatives and initiative:
Second-stage teachers' assessments of autonomy

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INTRODUCTION

Over thirty years ago in his seminal work *Schoolteacher*, Dan Lortie (1975) presented a metaphor for schools and teaching that many now reflect on as disturbingly accurate. He described “egg crate schools” that made “mutual isolation the rule” and perpetuated the occupational norm of autonomy among teachers (p. 14). Teachers in his Five Towns study based their classroom practice on individual experience, style, and personality. Individualism trumped shared technical expertise among colleagues and resulted in what Little (1990) referred to decades later as the ever-present “persistence of privacy.” Indeed, teachers then and now struggle to protect the boundaries of their classrooms against unwanted intrusions from administrators and colleagues, illustrating the sentiment that individual teachers should control decisions about what and how to teach (Achinstein, 2002; Ball, 1987; Donaldson, et al., 2005; Elmore, 2004; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Hart, 1994; Helsby & McCulloch, 1996; Johnson, 1990; Little, 2002; Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1985; Smylie, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Westheimer, 1998).

It was arguably not until the release of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) that policymakers and the public closely scrutinized and seriously challenged the occupational culture of teaching. The ad hoc commission concluded in its report “that declines in educational performance are in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way the educational process itself is often conducted” (cite). According to their findings, teaching was a primary factor contributing to the inadequacies of the educational process. Consequently, the authors of the report called upon teachers to meet higher standards upon entry, demonstrate expected competencies once working in classrooms, and integrate curriculum standards into their teaching repertoire. Those working inside and outside of

education circles responded to the report with *A Nation Prepared* (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986) which recommended reforms aimed at professionalizing teaching and developing the technical expertise of teachers by differentiating roles within the ranks as well as by fostering teacher community. This promised to redraw what Lortie (1975) recognized as historically prevalent social patterns among teachers, thereby threatening their individual autonomy and provoking their resistance to change.

The tension between individual discretion and collective influence regarding matters of teaching is widely documented (Achinstein, 2002; Ball, 1987; Donaldson, et al., 2005; Elmore, 2004; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Hart, 1994; Helsby & McCulloch, 1996; Johnson, 1990; Little, 2002; Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1985; Smylie, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Westheimer, 1998). The norms of autonomy and privacy prevail in many schools despite reforms intended to develop professional culture through collegial interactions (Donaldson, et. al, 2005; Elmore, 2000; Hart, 1994; Little, 1990; Metz, 1986; Smylie, 1994). For example, Little (1990) found that teachers' willingness to give up their occupational independence in favor of professional interdependency or "collective conceptions of autonomy" is revealed by the content of their interactions (p 3). The most common interactions among teachers—those in which they share stories, provide assistance, or share materials and ideas—do not threaten the culture of privacy nor do they facilitate meaningful professional interdependence. Other interactions, however, do cut against the grain of the normative (privatized) culture of schools. Teachers working to solve technical problems together and to improve instructional quality, for example, embody the "critical collegueship" described by Lord (1994; see also, Elmore, 1997; Little, 1983; Lortie, 1975; Westheimer, 1998). When teachers come together to talk about problems of practice, to share solutions to each others' technical struggles, and to create common approaches to reaching instructional goals, there is interdependence. This

professional interdependence pushes back directly on autonomy and threatens the culture of privacy within schools (Little, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1985).

Past research points to “vigorous collegial communities” as being essential to instructional improvement and school reform (Little, 2002; p. 918); however, there are many interpretations of what collegiality and membership in a professional community really mean. On one hand, teachers in a given community may hold on to the view that teaching is personal, private, and idiosyncratic work (Elmore, 2000; Rowan, 1990). It follows that members of such a community look for “the good colleague” (Lortie, 1975, p. 194) with whom to share ideas and materials or provide and be provided assistance when solicited. Collegiality in this professional community does not threaten the boundaries of the classroom; individual autonomy is the rule. On the other hand, teachers in another community may value and believe in interdependence, inclusiveness, and participation (Westheimer, 1998). Here concrete, specific goals shared by all members govern teachers’ ongoing collaboration in matters of instructional improvement (Elmore, 2000; Little, 2002; Rosenholtz, 1985); vigorous interaction is the rule.

Individual autonomy in an age of high-stakes accountability

Just as Lortie (1975) so aptly portrayed a culture of teaching that has deep roots in history and is resistant to change, he also predicted that “changes in the education climate [will] point up need for greater adaptability, more effective colleague relationships, and more sharing in issues of knowledge and expertise” (p. 221). Indeed, since the inception of standards-based accountability and *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* teachers face new and challenging demands for student achievement. Their professional performance is a major factor in determining whether their schools meet state standards for “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP)¹. Consequently, recent accountability measures have altered both the work and the discretionary power of today’s teachers in many schools

¹ For a full explanation of AYP see www.ed.gov

(Costigan et. al, 2004; Goodson & Hargeaves, 1996). Some schools have adopted prescriptive instructional programs to avoid external intervention while others have been compelled by the state to do so. And in many schools teachers are called on to collaborate about data, align curriculum with standards and tests, and develop their professional knowledge and skill by engaging in critical interactions with colleagues.

It is worth noting that although teachers today are heavily influenced by standards-based accountability, the merit of standards-based reform is highly contested in the literature. From one perspective it serves to improve instructional practice (and, thus student academic performance) because it (theoretically) standardizes and aligns teacher behavior with proven approaches (Cooper, Slavin, & Madden, 1997). Seen from another perspective it deteriorates effective instructional practice because it constrains the discretion of practitioners who have the most informed view of how best to meet students' academic needs (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Interestingly, recent research indicates that teachers today appear to want specified curriculum as well as more time to both collaborate with colleagues and participate in professional development (Costigan, et al., 2004; Johnson, et al., 2004; Kauffman et al., 2002; Sunderman et al., 2005). They do not tend to associate well-designed, standards-based curriculum and pedagogical support and guidance with professional de-skilling or a stripping away of their individual autonomy. Some scholars (as perhaps do teachers) see teacher learning as directly tied to the provision of specified, standards-based curricula (see Kauffman et al., 2002).

Given that teachers believe classroom instruction may be the only domain in which they can exercise any control (Ingersoll, 2002) and that experienced teachers have historically valued their autonomy (Johnson, 1990; Lee & Smith, 1996; Little, 1990; Lortie, 1975), how do teachers respond to current initiatives which may alter their control over what and how they teach? Have changes in the climate of education caused them to reassess the value of individual teacher autonomy?

With these questions in mind I set out to explore whether teachers' descriptions and assessments of autonomy might be evolving as a result of their own professional preferences, the pressures of school-based accountability reforms, and the social interactions they have with colleagues. The study focused on second-stage teachers with between four and eight years of classroom experience. The beginning of their professional careers coincided with the onset of high stakes accountability and *NCLB*. Consequently, their expectations about autonomy may be different from those of their more veteran colleagues. They may see reforms as a means of gaining professional legitimacy and needed professional support. Indeed, they may see reforms as a means for striking the ideal, long-sought balance between individual discretion and desired support. This possibility is interesting to consider given that second-stage teachers have survived the trials associated with being a novice and they have comparably more instructional expertise and organizational savvy than beginning teachers (Donaldson, 2005; Murnane & Phillips, 1981; Rockoff, 2003). Thus, they are likely to feel more competent and self-reliant than they did early in their careers and they may feel ready to rely on their own professional judgment regarding classroom matters (Huberman, 1993; Johnson et. al, 2004; Rosenholtz, 1990). Furthermore, Rosenholtz (1990) theorized that issues concerning task autonomy and professional discretion may be especially important to teachers beyond the novice stage.

My analysis of the data from this study suggests that the teachers who participated may regard the freedom to make independent decisions about curriculum and instruction as virtually impossible to claim, and in most cases, undesirable to have given the context of high-stakes accountability in their urban school district. The prevailing educational context in which they work, with its state-mandated testing and district-level initiatives, influences what they are able and permitted to do in their classrooms. It also influences whether and when they rely on their own

professional expertise, that of teacher collectives and/or their district administration to make decisions about curriculum and instruction.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study was conducted in Bagley, an urban district that serves a diverse population of students. Table 1 illustrates the wide range of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic status of students represented in the district.

Table 1. Student diversity in Bagley’s schools

Student population 14,708

Hispanic	Asian	African African American	Native American	White	Special Education	Free or reduced lunch	Limited English Proficient	Immigrant and refugee
22%	29%	7%	0%	42%	14%	65%	27%	6%

The study was conducted with a purposive sample of 10 middle school teachers who, at the time of their interviews, had between four and eight years of experience in urban classrooms. I identified potential participants for my sample through personal and professional district and school level contacts. I sought to include teachers who primarily worked in regular content area classrooms as well as those who worked as special educators. Table 2 offers a fuller description of who was included in the sample.

Table 2. Information on the 10 study participants

Name	School	Grade	Subject*	Years Teaching	Mid-Career/Prior Experience**
Maggie	Smith	8	Science	7	No/in-district
Phoebe	Parker	8	Science	8	Yes/dental hygienist
Evangeline	Turner	7-8	Math	7	No/urban district
Hedgie	Szcnaider	mixed	Math*	5	Yes/Computer Technician
Sofia	O'Malley	6 & 8	Math*	8	No/urban district
Libby	Parker	7	EnglishLA	7	No/in-district
Celeste	Sznaider	5	EnglishLA & Social Studies	10***	Yes/entertainer
Rich	Parker	8	Social Studies	6	Yes/attorney
Bridget	Parker	6	Special Education	6	No/in-district
Alice	Smith	8	Special Education	23***	Yes/accountant

*Hedgie and Sofia were math classroom teachers and math resource teachers

**yes or no denotes whether teachers held careers prior to holding their classroom posts; also denoted is whether teachers had teaching experience in another urban district prior to coming to Bagley

***Celeste was a day-to-day substitute and permanent substitute for 9 years; Alice was a paraprofessional for 18 years

At the time of the study, Bagley was identified by the state as a district in need of improvement and was working on a number of district-wide initiatives. There was a specific focus on literacy and math and there was a district-level administrator to oversee each subject area. Full-time Literacy Instructional Specialists provided coaching for all teachers in all of Bagley's schools. Federal and state grants supported implementation of a balanced literacy program in the elementary schools and writing-across-the-curriculum was in place at the middle and high schools. Middle school teachers participated in balanced literacy workshops, but were not required to carry out the practices (unlike elementary school teachers). Under the supervision of the district-level math coordinator, Bagley launched a major math initiative in 2003 which introduced new teaching materials and extensive professional development to support the effective implementation of *Investigations* in grades 1-5 and *Connected Mathematics (CMP)* in grades 6-8. Both curricula were intended to promote deep, conceptual mathematical thinking in students. District-level math specialists collaborated with school-based math resource teachers to develop coaching skills and

lesson planning strategies. The resource teachers, in turn, worked with classroom teachers to improve their math instruction. Table 3 outlines the ways in which Bagley approached the content areas and special education at the middle school level. The district intended for these structures and programs to help teachers more effectively provide instruction to students, particularly those students who were underperforming.

Table 3. District structures and programs for middle schools

	Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development	Administrative Structure (leadership, decision-making)	High-stakes test
English Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Curriculum content outlined broadly for teachers by state standards and high stakes test *Standard textbook (chosen by district administration) *Trade books (chosen by teachers) *Writing program (mandated by district administration) *Balanced literacy (optional for teachers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Balanced literacy *Making meaning *Sheltered instruction *Differentiated instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *District-level administrator *School-level instructional specialist *School-level reading specialist 	Grades 5, 7
Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Curriculum content defined by <i>Investigations</i>, <i>CMP</i>, and high stakes test *Standard textbook (chosen by the district) *Writing program (mandated by district) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Coaching (optional for all but new teachers) *Math Brigade (on-site, day long retreat for teams of teachers to discuss series of topics) *Study groups led by resource teacher *Sheltered instruction *Differentiated instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *District-level administrator and expertise *District-level math specialists *School-level instructional specialist *School-level math resource teacher 	Grades 5-8
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Curriculum content defined by district authorized guidebook *Standard textbooks *Writing program (mandated by district) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *No district-level administrator and expertise; decisions overseen by Math administrator 	Not tested
Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Curriculum content defined by the “Making History Project” (developed by district administrators, higher education representatives, city officials, and teachers) *Standard textbooks (chosen by district administration) *Writing program (mandated by district) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *workshops and resources through the “Making History Project” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *No district-level administrator and expertise; decisions overseen by ELA administrator 	Not tested
Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Curriculum and instruction define by general education classroom and student IEP 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *District-level administrator 	Grades 5-8

Between May and October, 2006 I interviewed each teacher face-to-face for sixty to ninety minutes. The semi-structured interview protocol was intended to address the broad research

questions: How do second-stage teachers—particularly those with between four and eight years of experience—describe and assess their autonomy? And what role, if any, does school context play in second-stage teachers’ descriptions and assessments of autonomy? The protocol consisted of questions that prompted participants to talk about how they made decisions about curriculum and instruction; how they perceived the roles state standards, district level and school level initiatives, administrators, and colleagues play in their decisions; and how they perceived their own expertise as informing decisions about curriculum and instruction. (See Appendix A for interview protocol.) All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

Upon receipt of the transcripts I coded the data using thematic codes drawn from the literature and emerging from the data. For example, in my first round of analysis I coded half of the transcripts; comments about “approval,” “experience,” and “collegial” emerged from participants’ discussions. I also used the codes “collective teacher control,” “centralized control,” and “individual teacher control.” By looking at prominent codes across participants, I identified themes that I wanted to investigate further². Using matrices, I organized the data to capture patterns across participants, and based on this cross-case analysis I developed theories upon which I wrote analytic memos. I constantly returned to the data to confirm or reject what I hypothesized might be going on with these teachers and I relied heavily on members of my research groups to challenge my interpretations. This process helped me to refine my theories of how the teachers in the study experience autonomy.

Limitations

This study is based on a small, purposive sample and the findings I present here cannot be generalized to a larger population. Although I can make no causal claims based on my findings, I can

²One major theme was the role of colleagues in determining what and how to teach. Another was the desire among participants to be recognized by their district as having professional expertise. Based on these themes, I crafted analytic questions such as “What role do participants say their personal experience and content expertise plays in their decisions?” and “What role do participants say their colleagues play in their decisions?”

learn something about how this particular sample of second-stage teachers describes and assesses autonomy by closely considering their accounts of how they decide what and how to teach. There is little research dedicated to second-stage teachers generally and none that examines their attitudes toward autonomy and discretion in the context of high-stakes accountability. It is particularly important to employ qualitative methods to better understand how individual teachers make sense of their professional lives and the way they shape or are shaped by the reforms they encounter. Future studies should include data not permitted in this small, exploratory study. For example, I was not able to observe the teachers in their workplaces to understand how their descriptions and assessments of autonomy translate into their everyday lives. Furthermore, I was not able to talk with other teachers to get alternative perspectives on the issues and events brought up by the participants in the study.

FINDINGS

The teachers in this study work in an underperforming, urban school district that serves a diverse student population, a high percentage of whom do not speak English as a first language and/or are from low socioeconomic backgrounds. These teachers regard themselves as competent professionals who provide their students with high quality curriculum and instruction. They also describe their teaching as being heavily influenced by district-wide initiatives in curriculum and instruction that are aligned with statewide standards and tests. Despite the pressure they feel from high-stakes tests, most participants seem to respect the intended goals of state standards and district initiatives: to establish academic outcomes for students across the district and to promote teaching practices that are identified (by teachers and administrators alike) as most effective for the diverse learning needs of students in the district. Their descriptions suggest that they do not see themselves as having complete control over what or how they teach in their classrooms. Moreover, they do not suggest that they want complete control over such decisions.

In the section that follows I will present my findings. First, I will lay out state, district, and school factors that seem to heavily influence what and, to some degree, how participants teach. I will also explore participants' suggestions that it is undesirable for individual teachers to have complete control over decisions about curriculum and instruction due to the multiple demands and pressures they describe. Second, I will consider instances in which participants describe having some control over curriculum and instruction. Here I will highlight teachers' described reliance on personal expertise, teacher collectives, and district administrators to make decisions about curriculum and instruction.

Finally, I will move to a discussion of what these themes suggest. The stories these teachers tell send the message that they, at varying levels, respect and support the intentions of state and district level initiatives *and* that they want a role in shaping how those initiatives come to life in their own classrooms as well as in classrooms across the district. I conclude by addressing the important implications for policy and future research that emerge from this analysis.

Participants don't have complete control over what and how they teach

Participants in the study described how the state, district and schools specify decisions for teachers about curriculum and instruction. Statewide curriculum frameworks and high-stakes accountability tests inform district and school-level initiatives which, in turn, define the expected academic outcomes in participants' classrooms and create boundaries around what content they are expected to cover and how they are expected to deliver it.

How do they decide what to teach?

Statewide curriculum frameworks broadly define the content that is taught by all of the participants in the study. For example, when asked how she makes such decisions, Phoebe stated plainly, "How I choose my content...Well, that's rather established by the curriculum frameworks." All teachers, regardless of their content area specialization, described the state curriculum

frameworks as laying the foundation for what they teach. It was not, however, the only force influencing their decisions about what to teach. The statewide test also loomed large in the minds of these teachers, whether or not theirs was a tested grade level. The high-stakes test served as a constant reminder of what their students must know and the content they must cover in their classrooms. Alice illustrated this when she recalled what she said at the beginning of the year to her students with special needs:

When we first start in September, we say to the kids, “You do realize that this is the year that you have to pass the Science and you have to pass the Math.” And they’re going to take an English MCAS test (early). “So, you know, we’re teaching you how - - the strategies in order to be successful to do MCAS.”

Although testing alone did not determine what and how participants teach, it clearly played a role. Most teachers described working with students to develop their content knowledge (based on tested items), their essay skills, and their test-taking strategies, which took significant class time and required particular pedagogical approaches.

District input further limited the scope of most participants’ control over curriculum content. In science, for example, the district adopted a curriculum guide for teachers to follow that integrated district textbooks, state standards, and content from the state tests. Outlined by grade level in the guide, science teachers across the district were expected to teach specific content at specific times during the year. Similarly, in social studies the district developed a standards-based curriculum that, as Rich described, “broke down the standards into three units” and provided teachers with “literally outlines of exactly what it is we want kids to know and what we’re supposed to teach them.” All of the teachers in the study acknowledged that what they choose to teach was somewhat predetermined by the district because, as Evangeline noted, “obviously, you have to fulfill what the district wants.”

How do they decide how to teach?

State, district and school-level initiatives also appeared to play a role in determining how most participants taught their students. As Rich put it, “there’s a lot of stuff that [the administration] look[s] at in terms of what you’re teaching, how you’re teaching it...” Among the “stuff” described by Rich was the district-mandated writing program, which required teachers across disciplines to teach the technical skills and composition processes of writing. As a result of underperformance on high-stakes tests, pressure to develop students’ essay writing skills heavily influenced how many teachers in the study delivered their content, particularly those in the Humanities. Libby noted that, until the testing period ended in the spring, it defined what she would teach and how she would teach it for much of the year. Like others in the study, she declared that when testing was over for the year, “I’m not doing an essay. This time I’m going to do something fun.” For Libby and other participants, decisions about classroom practice were determined largely by the demands of accountability. Similarly, Phoebe described that because there was “so much mandatory stuff to cover” in preparation for the high-stakes test, she did not have “time to do real effective teaching.” From her perspective, it was not just “fun” that was lost as a result of testing pressure. Phoebe felt that “real effective teaching” was compromised because she and her colleagues had to deliver content at a pace that precluded deep, integrated exploration [of the content]. Had it not been for testing demands, Phoebe would have used project-based, interdisciplinary units that span weeks. For example, “for two weeks she [and her content-area colleagues on team] would do a whole unit on World War II” and “everybody would do a piece of it.” This kind of cross-discipline collaboration, she believed, would allow students to grasp a rich understanding of the content that they could apply to more than a test.

Participants further noted that teachers in their district were trained to deliver “sheltered instruction” and “differentiated instruction” to address students’ diverse learning styles and needs.

More specifically, they spoke of the “Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol Model” (SIOP), which trained them to plan and deliver grade-level content that was geared to attend to the academic needs of students learning English. They also described how the district trained them to differentiate their instruction in order to vary and adapt their instructional approaches so that their students would have a variety of ways to take in and make sense of information and ideas.

Some participants reported that school level administrators expected their pedagogy to reflect their training. Sofia pointed out that administrators in her school looked for and expected to see particular pedagogical elements such as sheltered and differentiated instruction in teachers’ practice because those approaches were, in many cases, part of the school’s formal improvement plan (or the USIP). The plan, as described by Sofia, was intended to define for teachers what effective instructional practices looked like and were expected in her school. These expected practices also included posting lesson objectives, following the pedagogical framework of “launch, explore, summary,” and employing cooperative learning (as suggested by desk placement). Sofia reported that “part of the accountability in the USIP” was that administrators could walk into any math classroom in her school and find “unified method[s]” that teachers have adopted as effective strategies for teaching.

Participants in the study said contextual factors, such as the school-wide improvement plan described by Sofia, heavily influenced individual teachers’ decisions about what and how to teach. According to Sofia’s accounts, these practices were not just expected. She perceived administrators held teachers accountable for carrying out the practices. Thus, from her perspective the accountability climate of the district was a formidable influence on individuals’ teaching practice in her school.

Participants don’t want complete control over what and how they teach

When asked how they made decisions about what and how they teach, participants implied that they did not want to completely control curriculum content or instructional practice. Maggie described the benefits of the district curriculum guide for Science as “cool” because

[A]ny Science teacher coming into any of the city schools, to be honest with you, doesn’t even need to look at the standards. They don’t even need to look at the [state] standards because it’s all - - the standard’s at the top and then it’s broken down according to the text book objectives. And, it’s got columns for what the kids need to know and be able to do and that kind of stuff.

According to Maggie, a new teacher to the district could pick up the guide and know exactly what to do in his classroom. By characterizing the guide as “cool,” she suggested that curricular content was not an aspect of her professional practice that she necessarily felt a need to control.

Participants felt pressure to raise students’ test scores, and because of this pressure, they all described relying on the state and district to determine what they should teach their students. Libby, like other teachers in the study, felt “stressed out” due to all of the “scrutiny over” her school’s test scores and she described relying on the state and district to determine what and, to some degree, how she should teach her students. Libby turned to the “7th grade appendix,” which specifically outlined what standards she should address in her teaching. This allowed her to spend more of her time and energy on other matters such as improving students’ reading. She drew on district workshops that equipped her to teach effective reading strategies—strategies that she “had no idea about” when she first began teaching.

Libby was typical of the participants in the study, who all praised district trainings because they informed their practice and made them more effective with their students. By relying on the state and district for curricular and instructional matters, Libby and others decreased some of the pressure they felt because the burden of figuring out what had to be taught and how best to teach it

was not entirely theirs. Thus, complete control over curricular and instructional decisions was widely seen as undesirable; most participants said they wanted support and guidance from the district. In fact, Rich was looking for more than he was already getting. While he viewed the Making History Project curriculum for social studies as “really helpful” because it provided teachers with pre-designed “projects,” “base knowledge,” “and a ton of materials,” Rich wanted more specificity:

I just would have liked to have seen it a little more clear for the teacher...if they're going to hand you something and say, “Teach this” I would want it to be a little more specific as to what it is that they want us to do and not as vague.

Rich did not at all mind the district’s telling him what to teach the students in his classroom, nor did he mind being given pre-designed projects to carry out with his students. He did, however, mind what he perceived as ambiguity in the document and the prospect of being left alone to figure it out.

With this in mind, it is important to recall that these teachers regarded themselves as competent professionals. They frequently mentioned their classroom experience as a measure of their ability to effectively teach students. Each, in one way or another, described the day-to-day, direct contact with students in their classrooms as resulting in a significant accumulation of content knowledge and pedagogical skill. Classroom experience, in large degree, constituted what most described as their professional expertise and that of teachers generally. This became important when participants were faced with instances in which they had some control over curriculum and instruction decisions.

Participants do want and have some control over what and how they teach

State-mandated testing and district-level initiatives limited what teachers could decide about curriculum and instruction, but participants described instances in which they had some control over these decisions. This became evident as they discussed whose expertise they sought out regarding decisions about curriculum and instruction. Most participants valued the influence of collective

teacher expertise on curriculum, and they wanted to collaborate with their colleagues in order to influence district-level decisions about what to teach. Yet, there was less of a consensus among participants regarding the role of collective teacher expertise in decisions about how to teach. Some seemed to believe that individual expertise, garnered through classroom experience and district trainings, was the legitimate source for decisions about instruction. Critical collegueship was not viewed as a necessary part of their professional learning. It is important to note, however, that even though all in the study associated the prospect of collaborative work with tension and conflict, the majority expressed a readiness to struggle with problems of practice with other teachers. These teachers believed that they could learn much about their practice by tapping into their colleagues' expertise.

Curriculum decisions: Where do they turn and why?

All of the participants in the study, with the exception of Celeste, recognized that their content-area curriculum would be better if it reflected the collective expertise of teachers. This resource was particularly important because they felt they were not provided with enough specificity about what to teach. Participants who relied primarily on the state's curriculum standards to determine what to teach described the frameworks as being too vast, lacking scope and sequence, and as being ill-aligned with the content of the state's high-stakes test. Others who relied on district curricula had similar criticisms. They said that [the curricula] were not always appropriately sequenced, were sometimes ambiguous, and that they often had gaps that did not cover material on the state tests. They attributed flaws in curriculum to a lack of necessary expertise in those individuals at the district level given the task of developing it.

Participants described instances in which they made decisions about paring down the scope and changing the sequence of curriculum. In these instances they said they relied on what they knew about curriculum as a result of their experiences in the classroom and most also described

turning to their content-area colleagues to work on such matters. Furthermore, participants described turning or wanting to turn to the district regarding curriculum for two distinct reasons. Many, like Maggie and Sofia, used their own expertise and that of other teachers to make decisions that would influence the scope and sequence of their content-area curriculum across classrooms in the district. They turned to district administrators for approval of and support for their decisions. Others, like Rich and Libby felt they had expertise, but lacked collective power to influence decisions at the district level. Without such influential power, they wanted to be able to turn to district administrators for more specificity and guidance about what to teach.

Maggie, a middle school science teacher, believed that practitioners' experience is the legitimate basis of expertise and that teachers should play a primary role in deciding what content to teach. According to her, teachers' classroom experience gives them a solid understanding of what content kids need and when they need it. She pointed out that teachers "know what's going on" in classrooms and "can make those curriculum decisions" better than people without first-hand experience "in the battlefields." This is important to consider if we recall her earlier description of a district-authorized curriculum guide that prescribed exactly what teachers at various grade levels should be teaching throughout the year. This district-level initiative, designed to bring consistency in science classrooms across schools by standardizing the content scope and sequence, would appear to leave Maggie and her colleagues with few decisions about what they teach. Interestingly, however, it was Maggie and her colleagues who spearheaded the effort to establish the district-wide curriculum after they realized that students had significant gaps in their knowledge and vastly different experiences in science education. She described turning to her colleagues because "we know our curriculum. We know what we need to teach. We know the kids." And, together they turned to the district for authorization rather than expertise.

Phoebe, also a science teacher, confirmed the “supportive” stance of “central office” by pointing out that the district paid them for their work, purchased the books they recommended, published the curriculum guideline they developed, and agreed to distribute it to teachers across the district. Both women felt respected as professionals by their central office administrators and also acknowledged the importance of the administration “letting” the teachers do this work. As noted by Maggie, because there was no recognized district-level expert or “science guru” to make decisions about science curriculum in the district, teachers collectively filled the expertise vacuum:

The Central Office has been huge with letting us just, kind of, control this whole thing with the curriculum guide which is big. Because, if not they could be telling us what to do...they have, like, a Math Specialist and they have an English Specialist. They really don't have a Science guru or a Science Specialist.

Maggie described the process in science as being different from other content-areas “because it’s all the teachers that are making the decisions.” She reported that individual teachers’ comments, opinions, and concerns expressed through emails “coming to [her] constantly” were brought to committee and integrated into the final version of the guide which was, as noted by both Maggie and Phoebe, voted on and approved by teachers across the district. Although some might assume that this limited individual teachers’ discretion in choosing what to teach, Maggie said her colleagues accepted it because it came from teachers.

Sofia, a math resource and classroom teacher, described how teachers’ collaborative work in her school played a “big role in shifting” who made decisions about the math curriculum by “having more teacher input in the scope and sequence” which mediated feelings of a “top down effect.” Like Maggie, she deeply valued expertise developed in classroom practice. Sofia’s classroom experiences and confidence in her own expertise provoked her to question a curriculum that did not “make sense” to her. This was illustrated in a story she told:

[W]hen I joined the staff, I was just given the scope and sequence from the math coordinator downtown and I was told, “This is what you need to teach.” And I looked at it and I was like – that doesn’t make sense to me. I’m going to switch this around.

And, based on her accounts, that is just what Sofia did. She “worked with teachers” to reorder the content and the accompanying books across grade levels. Together teachers collected data about student performance (which improved markedly) and collectively endorsed changes to the curriculum that Sofia took the lead in writing. In turn, the district took notice of the improving scores at the school and, according to Sofia, began to ask, “What are you guys doing that the rest of the city isn’t doing?” Sofia’s story illustrates how she turned to her own expertise and that of her colleagues to inform curricular decisions. Even though math, unlike science, had a district level administrator to make such decisions, there was, as pointed out by Sofia, still an expertise vacuum to be filled because the district “had just purchased the [curriculum] program and was just dabbling in it” while she had experience with it in her previous school and “was familiar with it.”

Rich and Libby also preferred curriculum decisions that were based on the expertise of teachers, individually and collectively. They said they longed for the kind of professional collaboration and recognition in social studies and English that the science and math teachers in the study described experiencing. After being invited as a teacher representative to participate in the district-wide effort to develop the social studies curriculum, Rich left the process feeling that central office “weren’t really listening to a lot of what we had to say.” Like Maggie, Rich believed that because teachers are “the ones that know what our students are able to do and what our students are not able to do” and because they are “the ones that have to teach it”, it was “a shame” to not consider teachers’ suggestions. And, while there was no district-level administrator for social studies, the Making U.S. History project consisted of other district administrators, university faculty and various historical specialists who, according to Rich, claimed authority over curriculum

decisions. Ultimately, despite his frustration with the curriculum he was expected to teach, Rich remained willing to turn to central office administrators and the project for more specifics because, he said, “it’s hard to know what to do and what not to do.” Because Rich did not feel he and other social studies teachers could collectively influence decisions about district curriculum, he stated that he would turn to one of his colleagues to answer the “question of what we’re going to teach and when we’re going to teach it.”

Similarly, Libby said that while she was comfortable using the state standards and the high-stakes test as a guide for what she should teach in English Language Arts, she wished for more consistency across English classrooms in the district. She recognized the collective expertise of teachers, but she was dubious about the prospect of actually being able to reach consensus about the scope and sequence of the ELA curriculum. She stated that she wished her district administration would facilitate such a process. Lacking the specification she desired, Libby relied on her own expertise, student performance data, and the 7th grade appendix of the state frameworks to make decisions about what to teach and when to teach it.

All of the teachers in the study believed that practitioner expertise should be reflected in broad decisions about curriculum, particularly since many saw a lack of content-area expertise at the district level. Consequently, teachers like Maggie and Sofia drew from their own professional knowledge and skill and that of their colleagues to successfully fill the expertise vacuum and bring what they viewed as much needed specificity and consistency to district-level curricula. Other teachers, like Rich and Libby, wanted teacher expertise to play a role in refining their respective content curricula; however, they did not attempt to rally teachers across the district to collectively influence curriculum decisions. Instead, they returned to their classrooms alone or they turned to a colleague to determine what content to include, how to sequence it, and how to align it with state tests.

Instructional decisions: Where do they turn and why?

All of the teachers described relying on their own expertise when faced with decisions about how to teach their students. They also spoke of district-sponsored programs, trainings, and workshops that enriched, rather than constrained, their instructional repertoire and contributed to their personal expertise. Some teachers in the study seemed to view these district resources as more beneficial to their practice than collegial interactions. Indeed, they all associated collegial collaboration over instructional practice with tension and conflict. This led some to dismiss entirely the role of colleagues in decisions about instruction. For the majority, it led to establishing certain criteria for engaging in collaboration. Clear in all accounts was the obligation, or at least the effort to honor, that teachers not feel intruded upon or criticized.

Rich was typical of most when asked how he made decisions about how to teach. He responded head on by saying, “nobody’s telling me, ‘this is the way that you should teach.’” He followed with a sentiment that was expressed by many participants:

I think it’s important for teachers to be able to be creative and to bring in their own stuff...And, I would never want to give up that part of it. I think that it’s important to me to be able to bring in my own stuff, to be able to do things that I know work for my students that I have success with. It’s important for me to have the **freedom** [emphasis his] to do that.

Rich described at great length the instructional “stuff” he used with students. For example, he could not imagine teaching the “middle passage” and “triangular trade” by lecturing. It was important to him to have his students experience through role play the ways in which slaves were “cram[med]” onto ships like “cargo.” He used his classroom as a virtual ship in which students were lined up in a confined area while he described to and discussed with his students the long journey of “someone who was taken from Africa, placed on a ship, and brought over to Jamaica.”

Rich, like others in the study, said he relied heavily on his own expertise to make decisions about pedagogy. He associated the development of his expertise with district workshops that provided him with materials and ideas. Similarly, Libby and Celeste both described improving their instructional practice by integrating into their repertoires the district's balanced literacy program and other reading approaches that they took away from district trainings. Importantly, they did not perceive their instructional freedom as being compromised; indeed, they viewed such trainings as refining their own professional expertise.

Participants said they relied on what they had learned from classroom experience, graduate courses, and district trainings to decide what would engage students and promote academic achievement. For Rich this meant using “quick [physical] examples that the kids will remember and that they'll take with them”; for Maggie, Phoebe and others it meant doing “hands-on” or “project-based” activities. Even though Maggie said she “believe[s] that's the way kids are going to learn” she also expressed the thought that “every teacher is different” and that “how you go about teaching [the content] is all up to you.” Because some of the teachers in the study viewed instructional practice as being “all up to you,” they described making decisions based on their own strengths and preferences. Thus, they did not frequently refer to their colleagues as playing a critical role in how they taught. There were many who did, however, see the necessary role of colleagues in their instructional improvement and wanted opportunities to work with them.

In Phoebe's discussion of how she made instructional decisions, she set up a sharp contrast between the work she did with colleagues on the science curriculum and the work she would like to do with colleagues on instructional practice. Recall that science teachers in the district worked collectively to establish a curriculum guideline standardizing what content would be addressed at specific grade levels. The specificity of the guideline stopped at the level of the lesson to preserve

teachers' "wobble room" even though Phoebe wanted it to include collaboratively developed unit projects that teachers could use in their classrooms throughout the year:

...soup to nuts, with background information, everything you'd need to know to teach like a two-week unit on this. Using the standards that you were having to cover anyway...sort of project-based learning, with support and materials, like you're given the box, "here you go. This is everything you need to do this year...with everything."

Phoebe's desire to provide such explicit lessons to teachers was, in part, to serve her own needs and that of her students. She identified project-based learning as an effective instructional practice and she had some "three week projects", but she acknowledged that she needed "some help with how to do it", "some materials and some skills [she] probably [doesn't] have." Phoebe's reliance on district-level trainings and workshops as a means for expanding her instructional repertoire was typical of all the teachers in the study. Her willingness to collaborate with colleagues as a way to improve her own instruction, however, set her apart from some of the other teachers in the study. Nonetheless, Phoebe described resisting the temptation to discuss instructional practice with her team because she had been teaching at her school only for a year and she did not want to "upset the apple cart quite yet." Her decision to "behave and keep [her] mouth shut," rather than push her colleagues to think about developing interdisciplinary projects, illustrates her keen awareness of the prominent role individuality plays in instructional practice as well as how deeply a teacher's practice can become entrenched in personal "style."

Most participants in the study commented on the tendency of teachers, particularly more veteran teachers, to become "inflexible" and to resist outside "questioning and critiquing" of individual practice. Many wanted collegial support in their areas of weakness, but acknowledged criteria by which to choose with whom and how to collaborate. Rich, who was earlier described as seeking out a colleague to figure out the social studies curriculum, commented that when he felt

weak in supporting students' reading skills he sought out advice from a colleague with whom he had a "good working relationship" because they "were already good friends" and she was "easy to get along with." Some teachers dismissed altogether the role of collaboration with colleagues if it meant sharing criticisms. Celeste simply limited her collaboration with a colleague to sharing a "cute activity" or "an idea to use with a book" they might both be teaching. She did not look to her colleagues to observe her classroom instruction or to discuss areas in which she struggles and possible ways to improve. This norm of non-confrontation was also evident in the way Libby described how she and her colleagues "agreed not to disagree" and agreed "not to talk about" divergent beliefs about effective instructional practice.

There were teachers in the study who did describe engaging in critical forms of collaboration, despite their awareness of the risk it posed to their collegial relationships. Evangeline, a math resource and classroom teacher, began her discussion of how she made decisions about instruction by saying that no one tells her how to teach. Yet, she immediately reconsidered her comment. Recent district level and school level initiatives had pushed math instruction away from a rote learning approach to a more conceptual process and she noted that, "maybe that is somebody telling you how to teach. But for those of us who believe in that way...we probably don't see it as telling them." For Evangeline there was no discernable difference between her own beliefs about effective math instruction and those of the district's initiatives. It was difficult, however, for her to collaborate with her colleagues who had divergent opinions about how to best teach math. Rather than engaging them directly about what she might view as weak practices, she turned to her colleagues "to start discussing and sharing strategies" that were "research based." This type of discussing and sharing, in turn, she believed would inform her own work and help "traditional" teachers with "great things to offer" visualize or understand math instruction in "a different way." She acknowledged, however, that when turning to her colleagues regarding instructional practice she

worked hard to “stay professional” and “not get heated and step on anyone’s toes.” Evangeline noted that this was particularly important when the colleague was someone who had been teaching “for twenty years.”

Similarly, Alice, a special educator who worked in an inclusion setting which required regular and special educators to work together in the same classroom, noted the tension she felt because she wanted “to be a team player” and “to get along with colleagues” but she knew they could “end up in a war” over differences in their pedagogical philosophies. Alice referred to it as “faculty inflexibility.”

There were marked differences in how participants described their regard for and reliance on the collective expertise of teachers in matters of instruction. This was evident in accounts that ranged from not engaging colleagues at all, “sharing” materials, offering “suggestions,” and receiving support from “friends” to being critical without “stepping on anyone’s toes” or “ending up in a war.” By and large these teachers understood the strength of the normative culture in which they worked and pointed to individual expertise—acquired primarily through classroom experience and district-sponsored trainings—as the most influential factor in deciding how to teach.

DISCUSSION

The teachers in this study described themselves as competent professionals working in a context of standards-based reforms and accountability initiatives. They further described how these factors made it impossible and undesirable for them to completely control curriculum and instruction decisions. Yet, they also said there were instances in which they retained some control. In these instances, they described relying on their own expertise, the expertise of others, and district administrators and trainings to decide what and how to teach. Although this study was based on a small sample, the teachers’ stories offer important messages about the role of the practitioner’s expertise in a context of high stakes accountability.

First, it is notable that none of these teachers viewed the influence of state standards, district curriculum guidelines, or district initiatives aimed at improving curriculum and instructional practice as slighting their own professional expertise. To the contrary, most described these factors as supporting their efforts in the classroom and they expressed a desire for more. Participants like Rich and Phoebe suggested strongly that district initiatives were not overly prescriptive, but rather allowed them to have a lot of professional freedom, perhaps more than they actually wanted. The science curriculum guide defined exactly what Phoebe should teach, but it implicitly granted her autonomy in deciding how to teach it. The social studies curriculum provided Rich with content and materials from which to base his teaching, but it too implicitly granted him the autonomy to decide not only how to teach it, but what to teach as well. While such scenarios might appear to offer the long-sought balance between individual discretion and support, Rich and Phoebe—like most of the other teachers in the study—wanted more specificity and guidance from the district regarding curriculum and instruction rather than the autonomy to figure out what and how to teach by themselves. Indeed, the teachers in the study viewed access to well-developed curricula and effective professional development as being a way for them to learn more about teaching (see Kauffman et al., 2002). They seemed to see their participation in the district-level initiatives as a means of gaining professional legitimacy and needed professional support.

Second, the stories of these participants help us to understand the expertise and influence of second-stage teachers in a context of high-stakes accountability. These teachers have graduate level degrees, take on leadership roles, and feel confident and competent in their professional responsibilities. Like others of their generation, they want to be recognized for their expertise and, consequently, they want to be involved in decisions that influence their work. Of note were the ways in which some teachers engaged in interesting interplay with their district administrator, leading to practitioner expertise taking a prominent role in broad curriculum decisions. The teachers, namely

those in math and science, who were instrumental in influencing such decisions worked with their colleagues to establish collective expectations about what content students should know and when it should be taught. They presented these expectations, in the way of curricula, as a united front to district administrators. Conversely, those who did not play such an influential role, namely in English and social studies, questioned the feasibility of teachers across the district coming to such consensus or they were dubious about the degree to which teachers could really assert any power—collective or otherwise. These two very different responses to the district’s role in providing curriculum are interesting when considered alongside recent calls for districts to scale up instructional efforts by distributing leadership (see Elmore, 2002).

Taken together, the messages in these teachers’ stories are complicated and at times seemingly contradictory. They, at once, view themselves as competent professionals who want to be involved in district-level decisions about curriculum and instruction while also wanting substantive guidance and support from their district administration about curriculum and instruction. This apparent contradiction may be interpreted as teachers’ desire to share with district administrators some of the accountability pressure they experience in their classrooms. More specifically, teachers who take a more public role in developing curriculum and who participate in district-sponsored professional development may be in essence saying “these are the concepts, ideas, and practices that we as an organization agree upon and believe in” and “we—teachers and central office—share accountability for the subsequent outcomes.” Math and science teachers in the study did just this. Other teachers, when not allowed the opportunity to contribute their expertise, wanted the district to give them specifics about what and how to teach, because they did not want to be left alone in their own classrooms to be held to account for decisions that they did not make.

The question as to whether these teachers are unlike those of past generations regarding individual autonomy should not go unanswered here. Their stories provide some commentary, albeit

complicated commentary, on the matter. The easiest distinction first: Participants did not appear to be at odds with district-level decisions about regarding curriculum and instruction. They all acknowledged the need for broad organizational supports and guidance that reach into individual classrooms and help teachers improve student outcomes. Furthermore, they all associated well-designed, standards-based curriculum and district-sponsored programs and workshops with their own professional learning. This seems an obvious departure from past generations of teachers who established themselves as separate from (or in opposition to) their district-level administrations, and who in isolation, defined academic goals, tinkered with curriculum and employed preferred instructional practices (see Lortie, 1975).

Less clear is whether a distinction can be made between participants' and their predecessors' willingness to work interdependently on matters of practice. Without question, participants favored collective teacher expertise in matters of curriculum. They saw practitioner knowledge and skill as a necessary resource to district administrators who (they perceived) lacked the expertise to make decisions about what to teach. What arguably sets some of them apart from earlier generations of teachers may not be their interdependent work on curriculum, but may rather be their interdependent resolve to interject themselves into the district's decision-making structure.

Participants' assessments of collegial interaction in matters of instructional practice mirrored those illustrated in the vast literature dedicated to research on teacher autonomy. All associated the prospect of such collaborative work with tension and conflict. Some teachers, such as Rich for example, believed that individual expertise, garnered through classroom experience and district-sponsored professional development, was the legitimate source for decisions about instruction. They dismissed the role of critical collegiality (Lord, 1994) in their practice. Others, like Evangeline, represented the majority of teachers in the study who expressed a readiness to struggle with problems of practice with other teachers. That is not to say that individual expertise did not play a

prominent role in their decisions about practice. It did; however, their expressed willingness to confront the culture of privacy within their schools, whether acted upon or not, set them apart from earlier generations of teachers who privileged individualism over shared technical expertise.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The stories these teachers tell send the message that they believe in and feel responsible for carrying out the intentions of state and district level initiatives. Their stories also suggest that they want a role in shaping how those initiatives come to life in their own classrooms as well as in classrooms across the district. Their stories have important policy and research implications.

First, these teachers' descriptions suggest that policymakers consider what decisions teachers actually want to make in relation to curriculum and instruction. Teachers like Phoebe and Rich suggest that it is possible to be left with individual autonomy that they do not necessarily want. They, like many teachers in the study, wanted more direction and support in matters of curricular scope and sequence as well as in how to most effectively deliver the content to their students. Further research should investigate the optimal balance between individual autonomy and professional support among second-stage teachers in contexts of high-stakes accountability.

Second, most of these teachers wanted to play a role alongside the administration in making decisions about what would be taught by teachers in their respective content areas across the district. Policymakers should consider how the expertise of teachers might improve initiatives and how best to broker relationships with teachers in order to work collaboratively on developing policies aimed at bringing forth large-scale curriculum and instruction reforms. Future research should ask questions about responses to initiatives collaboratively developed by teachers and administrators as opposed to those that are perceived as top-down. Questions should also be asked regarding the level of commitment and morale associated with teachers who see themselves as playing an important role in decisions that impact their work.

Third, policymakers should consider the district's role in facilitating collaborative work among teachers. Math teachers in the study spoke of teachers who worked together to confront differences regarding instructional practice. They were given the time and resources to do so and teacher expertise under girded decisions about practice. Future research might investigate the ways in which teachers who are instrumental in important decisions about their practice and that of other teachers take responsibility for collegial work.

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Appendix A: Interview protocol

Section A: Background Information (Collected prior to interview)

What grade do you teach?

What subject(s) do you teach?

Are you part of a teaching team?

How many years have you been teaching?

How many years have you been teaching at this school?

Where did you teach prior to your current school?

Is teaching the only career you've had/did you go directly into teaching from college?

What teacher preparation program did you participate in? Where? Was it a Masters program?

Alternative certification program?

How long do you plan to stay in teaching?

Section B: Main talking points

Thanks for sitting down with me today. I'm interested in understanding the role that teachers play in deciding *what* to teach the students in their classrooms and *how* to teach them. I want to begin by asking you to tell me about a typical day of teaching for you. For example, you could tell me about a class that you recently taught that generally represents your work as a classroom teacher in this school. What did you teach and how did you teach it?

- **What did you teach?**
 - Why (did you choose to teach what you taught)?
 - Can you tell me about things that affect what you teach? Do all teachers have to teach this?
 - Is this typical of all of the classes you teach?
- **How did you teach it?**
 - Why did you teach it the way that you did?
 - Can you tell me about things that affect how you teach? Are you given materials? What are they?
 - Is this typical of all of the classes you teach?
- **How would you characterize the balance between the structure imposed on your teaching (if there is any) and what you can do on your own? [*Expertise and Privacy*]**
 - Do you feel like there is too much structure imposed on your teaching or not enough? Or, do you feel there is a good balance?
 - Why do you feel this way?
 - Do you think that you are better at what you do when you can independently make decisions about what and how to teach? Why or why not? If so, what resources do you draw on when you're thinking about what and how to teach your students? Do you think this is true for teachers generally?
 - Or, do you think that you are better at what you do when you have other supports to rely on? If so, tell me about some of those supports. (They could be colleagues, curriculum, professional journals, etc.)

- Can you think of a time when you were unable to teach particular material or in a particular way? If so, tell me about that time. *[If they begin talking about students who obstructed her efforts, redirect.]*
 - If you wanted to teach in a particular way that was inconsistent w/ how you were being told to teach, what did/would you do?
- **What do you feel you are responsible for as a classroom teacher in this school?**
[Responsibility and accountability]
- **How do you think people in your school understand accountability?**
- **What are you held to account for as a classroom teacher in this school?**
[Accountability and school-based reforms]
 - Who holds you accountable?
 - How are you held to account?
 - What do you think/how do you feel about this? (Do you think there is too much focus on professional accountability, not enough, just right?)
 - Can you think of a time when you were asked to account for your teaching? Tell me about it; why were you asked to account for it, by whom, and how?
 - How did it make you feel? Did it have an effect on your teaching? Why or why not?
- Are there accountability reforms in place at your school? (Accountability reforms could be new curricula to address areas of academic need, new professional development programs to address instructional practice, or structural changes that, for example, put teachers on teams.)
 - If so, what are they? Why are they in place?
 - What, if any effect, do they have on your teaching?
 - How do you feel about them?
 - If not, do you think there is a need for such reforms? Why/not?

Section C: Wrap up

I've asked you to think about and talk about the role you have in making decisions about what and how to teach in your classroom. Is there anything that you'd like to add that was not asked?

Can I follow up w/ you through email if I find I'd like a little more information?