The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

NEGOTIATING RACE TO THE TOP: AN INTERVENTION TEACHER'S STORY

A Dissertation in

Curriculum and Instruction

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2013

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ABSTRACT

When President Obama signed The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in February of 2009, he authorized the use of $4.35 billion to fund Race to the Top, an education initiative encouraging states to compete for grant money to use towards education reform. When Colorado failed to win in Rounds 1 or 2, the state department of education submitted yet another application and finally received a token $17 million for its persistent efforts. The implications for teachers were significant, particularly in the case of "Intervention" teachers such as myself.

For this reason I have developed an autoethnography of my three and a half years in this Colorado school where I experienced and made sense of the discourse of these reforms. Capitalizing on the power of narrative tradition to reveal the beliefs underlying particular discourses, my teacher narrative serves as a window into the world of policy as it intersects with the lives of real teachers and students.

In this study, I have drawn on positioning theory as a framework for understanding the ways in which Race to the Top reforms position my school, teachers, and students, as well as the ways in which educators and students may attempt to resist, or re-position themselves. In order to make sense of these positioning forces, I kept an electronic, reflective journal of my experiences and gathered documents and artifacts that pertained to Race to the Top. I also obtained permission to gather student reflections during a Career Research Unit. As I accumulated these resources, I conducted narrative analysis of my teacher story, as well as critical policy analysis of Race to the Top reforms and thematic analysis of policymaker and student discourse. I used my teacher autoethnography to weave the multi-layered narrative together and unpack its implications.

It is my hope that other educators will hear my story and be encouraged to engage in similar critical inquiry as a platform for agency, and that policymakers will recognize the value of our teacher stories as they develop and enact policy.

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In memory of my grandparents, William and Hazel Bender

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Amy Sutcliffe for allowing me to talk through my comprehensive papers, and Jessica Swain for assisting me with some of the editing. Thank you to my colleagues in School District 27J for your collaboration and support during my years in the district.

Thank you to my parents, Ken and Nancy Cone, who fostered in me a love for learning and constantly encouraged me from elementary school through every year of graduate school. Thank you for reading my exam papers and quizzing me in preparation for my oral exam. Thank you for allowing me to talk over and over again about my research.

And finally, thank you to my husband, Rick Hernbloom. It is no easy task to be married to a doctoral candidate, and you have constantly offered your love and support. Thank you for remaining by my side and believing in me every step of the way.

Preface

"We've beaten them before, and we can beat them again!" Our building principal held a makeshift torch, encouraging the ninth and tenth graders who filled the bleachers to best our rival high school on the upcoming standardized achievement test, known at this time as the Colorado Student Assessment Plan (CSAP). If our school won, we would be the proud possessors of "The Torch of Knowledge." In fact, the losing school would even send its principal to the following year's assembly to present the torch to the winning school in a dramatic gesture of defeat. At one point, our head principal even posted the test scores of our rival high school in order to demonstrate our superior achievement in years past. Clearly, our administrative team felt that competition would motivate our students to invest in the tests, which would help them to earn better scores.

As I listened to this rhetoric, I could not help but think of my own students--high school students categorized as struggling readers and English language learners. Where did my students stand in relation to this competitive rhetoric? If my students were to score "proficient" on such tests, they would no longer be a part of my classes. Their very placement in my classes indicated a "lack" of proficiency in English language or literacy. If my students were to have any chance of competing, they would have to develop at much faster pace than their classmates who were already deemed proficient.

In the last two years, we even began asking our students to monitor their growth according to their NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) reading and math scores, graphing each successive score and comparing these with target scores for their grade level. Three times a year, we herded our students to the computer labs throughout the building. They each logged onto a computer to take these tests. As they tested, the computer would adjust its line of questioning

according to their success or failure. For some of my newcomers, especially one in particular, this process was overwhelming. Jorge came to our school from Mexico for his ninth grade year. As our department worked to find ways to support him in this transition, we contacted his family. Through this conversation we learned that his fifth grade teacher had grown frustrated with him to the point that Jorge became discouraged and quit attending school. He came to our school after a three year absence from any kind of formal schooling, yet we could not exempt him from this reading assessment.

A humorous, yet pleading set of eyes perpetually glanced back at me. "Please!" those eyes spoke as Jorge clicked on an answer and looked at me for approval. "Please, tell me if I'm right!"

After several minutes, his screen was showing pictures and individual words rather than paragraphs, and still Jorge was looking over his shoulder for my help. How could a competition to best a rival school help this student?

I was almost as uncomfortable with this situation as my desperate student was. It made little sense to administer an English reading test to a student who had just moved to the United States with scarcely a handful of English words in his repertoire, and yet I found myself in a position without an exit, or even an alternative route. The state would hold our school accountable, just as the school held me accountable for this student's progress. At one of our district English Language Acquisition meetings our district Director of Assessment announced that our district was not making all of our Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) for English Language Learners, including students currently in our ELA program, as well as students who had been exited and were currently in our Reading Intervention classes, such as *Read 180.*My students' growth was key to our district's efforts to make adequate progress on our AMAOs.

When I first came to the school, both building and district seemed to be in a state of transition. The district had recently adopted *Read 180* as its core reading Intervention program for secondary students, and shortly thereafter began the process of developing a Reading Intervention Flowchart, believing that these measures would aid in the closure of achievement gaps made apparent by annual CSAP (Colorado Student Assessment Program) scores. Similar curricular and structural changes for English Language Acquisition followed shortly thereafter. Such decisions and ensuing efforts are not made in a vacuum; rather, I quickly surmised that both high school and district were under pressure to improve performance as spelled out in the No Child Left Behind mandates. This certainly explained some of the emphasis on testing and achievement, yet there was something more to this racing metaphor, a metaphor which clearly denotes a category of losers.

I mused. Why competition? Where does this push for competition come from? Can competition help a school? Does it work for our students? Where do teachers fit into the scheme of things? These questions led me to reflect on previous teaching experiences where I did not feel the intense pressure to race towards proficiency.

My shifting teacher identity

I was as idealistic as the next novice teacher when I began my teaching career in central Pennsylvania. Aside from a few core requirements for tenth grade English, I was given rather loose reins. In my first months, I introduced my students to symbolism and had them write their own hero quests. Shortly thereafter, I was able to have my students interview individuals who had lived through World War II as we studied the parallels between Lord of the Flies *and this era of history. During the spring semester, my students developed their own movie scripts revealing various themes in* Julius Caesar. *Before the year's end, my students spent several weeks*

developing Memory Books, including writing from a variety of genres and other artifacts

representing themselves.

When I was recruited to the English as a Second Language department in the same

school district, my colleagues asked me to develop a program to monitor and support all of the

English language learners who had exited our ESL program. At times we discovered that some of

our monitored students were struggling with some of their courses, and they asked me to conduct

an inquiry into the root causes of these struggles. My department also recognized the resources I

could bring my students as a mainstream English teacher. "Lisa, could you design some units that

would help our Intermediate and Advanced students prepare for future English classes?" As we

approached the week our school was scheduled to administer the state standardized assessments,

my colleagues asked me if I would develop some activities to acquaint our students with the types

of writing they would need to engage in on these tests. The teachers I worked with were always

finding ways in which I could be a resource for our students as they learned how to navigate their

English-speaking school and community.

Several years later, I relocated to a charter school with a multicultural, multilingual

emphasis. In this setting, I was responsible to develop both Language Arts and Social Studies

curricula in ways that supported the school's multicultural focus. While I was given some general

recommendations, the school entrusted me with decisions regarding books, unit design, and daily

lessons. I designed all of my own reading guides and an array of activities for both Language

Arts and Social Studies. Although I grouped students according to reading level as the school

requested, I ensured that everyone was engaging in parallel reading goals and reading similar

types of novels. While I often facilitated my students' novel discussions, they were also able to

conduct novel discussions on their own, within the context of their reading groups. For Social

Studies, I was able to engage my students in the re-creation of a miniature Aztec city, read aloud

with them the story of two Inuit boys trapped on an ice flow in the Greenland Strait, and guide

them through an inquiry project on a national or world leader which they eventually presented to their parents at our Social Studies Fair.

These experiences contrasted sharply with the pressures I faced in my Colorado school. In each of these Pennsylvania positions, I saw myself as the creator and facilitator of opportunities for students to explore their world through reading and writing. Although I hoped that my students would develop or strengthen their reading and writing skills or broaden and deepen their repertoire of vocabulary, I felt that all of this could be accomplished during meaningful activities rather than isolated skill and drill exercises. During the years that I worked as an English as a Second Language teacher, I believed that I could be a resource to English language learners as they learned to navigate their English speaking school and community. While I certainly intended to support their growth in the area of English proficiency, I never felt or attempted to induce a sense of urgency or panic regarding the pace of their growth. In each of these positions I viewed students from diverse backgrounds as capable.

Upon moving to Colorado, I carried the burden of urging English language learners and developing readers to race towards proficiency in the areas of literacy measure by our state standardize assessments. Furthermore, I was no longer simply a "Reading" or "English Language Acquisition" teacher. As I perused the school website one day, I realized that the school categorized me as an "Intervention" teacher. Anticipating that this Colorado school would be eager to draw upon my rich teaching experiences in Pennsylvania, I was surprised to find that my professional judgment was bound by the greater authority of data and those who deemed themselves capable of interpreting it.

I handed my assistant principal the chart, which included standardized test scores, grades, comments regarding my own observations, and recommendations regarding placement for the next semester.

"Well, we need to base our decisions on the data."

I was puzzled; surely my incorporation of test scores evidenced my consideration of the test scores which our system held in such high esteem. Perhaps she was not aware of my background.

"You know, I am certified in Reading, Language Arts, and English Language Learning." I left this meeting puzzled; I thought that this administrator had hired me because of my rich academic and experiential background, but my background appeared to be insignificant. Deprofessionalizing moments like this continued to trouble me throughout my three and a half years in this Colorado high school.

Synopsis of Study

As I attempted to make sense my shifting teacher identity in light of episodes such as the CSAP assembly, Jorge's response to the reading assessment, and my principal's decisions regarding schedules, I decided to conduct an inquiry into the roots of this shift. This inquiry led to the discovery of several prominent Discourses that pervaded my experience in this school, including the Discourses of Intervention, Standards and Assessment, Competition, and ultimately Market Economics. The pressures I felt as an "Intervention" teacher stemmed from the ways in which these Discourses worked to position me and my students, shaping our identities through the language used in the context of our school. And yet I also began to realize that my students and I did not always accept the ways in which Discourses positioned us; in fact, there were times when we actively resisted these positioning forces, particularly as we became aware of our own positioning.

For this inquiry, I needed a design that enabled me to reveal these Discourses and their positioning effects on myself, an "Intervention" teacher, as well as my students. Subsequently, I elected to use autoethnography as a research design, which allowed me to capture vignettes of my

own teacher experiences, trace the most recent education reforms from the federal level down to the state and local levels, and make sense of the voices of both policymakers and students through the lens of an "Intervention" teacher. I began this study during my second year in this school and completed it after serving there for three and a half years. As I gathered vignettes, I asked myself what experiences caused me to feel pressured and what ways my students and I resisted or redefined our own positioning. These questions enabled me to conduct narrative analysis of these vignettes. In order to make sense of recent reform, I engaged in critical policy study, selecting documents from the federal and state department of education, as well as our local school district. I searched these for evidence of the values behind policy and the ways in which these values filtered down to our school. Finally, I incorporated the voices of policymakers and student, analyzing their words and searching for common themes representing their values regarding education and career preparation.

As I synthesized my data and began to critically reflect upon its implications, I recognized that the voices of our local district echoed the voices behind recent reform. They spoke of preparing our students for the future and doing so with great efficiency of time and resources. Similarly, policymakers stressed the importance of preparing a future workforce to compete in a global economy and the glaring failure of our nation's education system as compared with our economic competitors. In contrast, the voices of my students revealed frustration when their abilities and language were deemed deficient or not valued. Others expressed career interests and motivations that did not seem to align with the values of current reforms.

As I reread my own autoethnography, the positioning power of Discourse was evident throughout my vignettes. The Discourse of Intervention pervaded my school's systems and was reinforced through professional training in best practices, particularly for English language learners. Policymakers promoting current recent reforms have similarly used the Discourse of

Intervention in reference to our deficient national education system. District and school leadership engaged in the Discourse of Standards and Assessment as a foundation for decision-making regarding placement, as well unit and daily lessons. Standards and Assessment also pervaded the rhetoric of reform, as it called for states to adopt the new Common Core standards and to create corresponding assessments. Our school participated in the Discourse of Competition, urging students to press towards proficiency and beat a neighboring school on the upcoming Colorado standardized assessments. At the federal level, the latest reform initiative centered on the premise that states would be motivated to enact reform if challenged to compete with one another for funding. This rhetoric echoes Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's speeches regarding the need to compete with other countries. The introduction of career preparation in our school revealed the drive to prepare students to compete in a global economy, much like language of current reforms.

My growing awareness of these Discourses helped me to make sense of the pressures I felt my students and I felt in this Colorado high school. This sensemaking, in turn, caused me to question the values behind these competitive reforms and particularly the ways in which these values often seemed to clash with the values of students, as students resisted or sought to re-define their identities in the context of their school. This awareness also led to a recognition of my own desire to resist the positioning power of these Discourses, and finally, to find spaces for teacher and student agency in this current policy environment. I have organized my stages of

awareness into the following chapters.

Why do I feel so different here?
Intervention as a district/school model

↓

Where is this coming from?
Making sense of policy and school frameworks

↓

Why don't my students buy into this?
Making sense of student resistance

↓

How do my students' perspectives compare with policymakers' perspectives?
Recognizing positive versus negative positioning

↓

What does it mean to be an "Intervention" teacher in a globally competitive context?
Implications: Awareness as a starting point for agency

Figure P-1. Stages of Awareness

As I synthesized my autoethnography, I continually returned to questions regarding the competitive nature of these recent reforms.

Stepping Back

In generating this autoethnography, I strove to provide an example of how educators can work to comprehend policy with its underlying ideology, and to identify ways in which we can deconstruct the misconceptions underpinning the deficit positionings of policy, such as the

Discourse of Intervention. Further, I sought to use student voices as a beacon of hope, reminding us of the positive possibilities for education which extend beyond, and in some ways counter to our competitive culture of achievement and career preparation.

My narrative serves as the binding which pulls each component of my research project together into a unified whole. Chapter 1 begins my narrative with an account of the mounting pressures I experienced upon transitioning to this Colorado school. In the second chapter, I provided an overview over Race to the Top as it was enacted at the federal and state levels before returning to my narrative where I depicted my "sensemaking" processes regarding the ensuing changes occurring in my local district and school. I have used Chapter 3 to conclude my narrative with a series of vignettes revealing episodes of resistance that I encountered in this context, as well as the ways in which I also became resistant to policy's impact upon my classroom. In chapter 4, I shifted away from narrative form in order to illuminate the voices of students and policymakers, revealing points of apparent intersection and dissonance. I concluded with implications of this narrative quest in Chapter 5.

After synthesizing my teacher narrative with critical reflections, critical policy analysis, and thematic analysis of Discourse, I stepped back to make sense of the way the worlds of policy, school, teachers, and learners intertwine. I discerned that the Discourse of Competition, which is so dominant at the policy level, resulted in a Discourse of Intervention at the local setting in which I was teaching. This Discourse of Intervention positioned my students, both English language learners and developing readers, as possessing a deficit which needed to be "fixed," and me as the doctor who needed to utilize prescribed methods to repair these deficits.

I have concluded that this orientation limits our understanding of developing readers and English language learners and results in a narrow definition of learning, discounting the capabilities of these learners and the types of learning not measured in college and career readiness-oriented assessments. Deficit positioning has also resulted in a de-professionalizing

distrust of educators and an overreliance upon empirical research data as local authority has been replaced by centralized standards, culminating in a one-size-fits-all formula for success. These observations have led me to conclude that educators must be critically aware of policy and its positioning powers in order to proactively respond, and when necessary, to counter its minimization of learners and learning.

It is my hope that my narrative will heighten awareness of the intersection of policy and classroom spaces while encouraging educators and education researchers to invest in similar type of inquiry in ways that will serve as a foundation for agency, for positively positioning or re-positioning ourselves and our students.

Introduction

Competition and Education Reform

In February of 2009, President Obama signed The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), authorizing the use of $4.35 billion to fund Race to the Top, an education initiative encouraging states to compete for grant money to use towards education reform. The philosophy behind Race to the Top echoes the concern of A Nation at Risk, that America's students are falling behind academically and putting themselves and their nation "at risk" of falling behind in the global economy (Neef, 1998). Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, Arne Duncan, represented the administration's position on this competitive program:

> Today, our standards are too low and the results on international tests show it. Worse yet, we see the signals in the international economy as more and more engineers, doctors, and science and math Ph.D.s come from abroad (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Race to the Top has pushed states to ensure college and career readiness by implementing more uniform college and career-oriented standards, developing data systems for measuring growth and reflecting on pedagogical practice, hiring and retaining high quality educators, and revolutionizing low-achieving schools.

As states wrestled with the recent financial crisis, the promise of millions enticed many to take up the challenge and align their next round of education reforms with the values of Race to the Top. Forty states (including the District of Columbia) submitted applications in the first phase, which took place in November of 2009. In this round, Delaware was awarded $100 million and Tennessee $500 million (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). In the following phase, thirty-nine states applied. This time, New York and Florida were awarded $700 million; Georgia, North Carolina, and Ohio were awarded $400 million; Maryland and Massachusetts were awarded $250 million; and Rhode Island and Hawaii were awarded $75 million (U.S. Department of Education,

2010). Of the nine states declared eligible for an additional round, seven applied for the third phase of RTTT. All seven states, including Colorado, have received a portion of the $200 million earmarked for this phase of the competition (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

The moneys are granted at a high price, however. Many states spent countless hours developing their applications, which included extensive roadmaps for education reform and corresponding budgets. Winning states were obliged to follow through on all of the promised reforms, which included changes at a systemic level, as well as at the school level, particularly for the lowest performing schools. States saw that they must profess a deep level of commitment to reform if they were to have any hope of competing for this funding. They also needed to garner support from a large percentage of Local Education Agencies (LEAs), as per the competition's requirements, if they were to present a compelling case to the panel of judges. Subsequently, they presented the aims of Race to the Top to a spectrum of local educators, union representatives, community leaders, and even students, gathering feedback throughout the planning process. These would be the people who implemented the reforms at the ground level, and so much hinged on the LEAs' buy-in of the changes.

The effects of Race to the Top extended beyond the borders of winning states, however; in order to be considered for the moneys during the application process, states like Colorado were already implementing the promised reforms when they learned that they had not won any money in Round 1 or Round 2. Such high-pressure tactics certainly proved effective in terms of the federal government influencing state decision-making, and yet perhaps we should be concerned at the speed with which such changes were implemented. Why the high pressure tactic? Why is reform demanded with such expediency? How can we be certain that these reforms are the best fit for students in schools across each state without any period of reflection? And how ethical is it to embrace change for the sake of monetary winnings?

After Round 3 in the fall of 2011 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011), the state of Colorado finally received $17.9 million, a miniscule sum considering a single large district, Jefferson County, has cut its budget by roughly $60 million since the 2010-2011 school year (Jeffco School District, 2012). Our district received $43,675 of these winnings, a quantity designated for changes in the teacher evaluation system over the course of the next four years (School District 27J, 2012). In exchange for this small quantity of money, our district has embraced all of the requirements of Race to the Top, perhaps as eagerly as the state of Colorado launched its efforts to compete in the program, round after round.

Although our administrators may not have been motivated specifically by Race to the Top when they planned this assembly, there is no doubt that the competitive environment at the federal and state levels are having a trickledown effect on our district, and more specifically, on our school. I believe that our administrative team designed this assembly in hopes of helping our students and our school. They knew that 1) our school is situated in a competitive context, 2) our students will face competition when they exit the doors of our school, and 3) it can be challenging to motivate teens whose educational values may not align with those of the school, district, state, or federal government. It was their hope that this notion of competition would help align student motivation with the state's requirements, just as the federal government has used the notion of competition to try to align state's educational systems and initiatives with the current federal administration's philosophy of education. Kohn (1986) suggests that our nation has a deeply rooted and very unhealthy fixation with competition.

Why has this metaphor of competition become so prominent within the discourses surrounding education?

Competition as a Discourse

In order to understand the meaning of "discourse," we must first be aware that "text" is "the actual use of language" (Widdowson, 2007, p. 4). Discourse, then, is the use of these texts to convey meaning, "explain," or encourage action. Listeners must make sense of what is being communicated, "to interpret the text as a discourse that makes sense to them" (p. 6). James Gee (2008) characterizes Discourse as a type of "identity kit" which informs us of specific "social roles" and guides us as we communicate with body, speech, and written language. Participation in particular discourses indicates membership in a certain social group which takes up a particular ideology, either blindly or knowingly. "It is sometimes helpful to say that it is not individuals who speak and act, but rather that historically and socially defined Discourses speak to each other through individuals" (p. 145). When my administrators spoke to the student body of competing for the torch of knowledge, they were participating in this Discourse of Competition.

Discourse is far more than the language that we use from day to day; rather, it is rooted in the ideology of our social worlds (Gee, 2008). According to Gee, it is not merely scholarly researchers who formulate theories; everyday people also form theories, or "cultural models," based on these ideologies. "For now, we take them to be everyday theories, stories, images, metaphors, or any other device through which people try to simplify a complex reality in order to better understand it and deal with it" (p. 8). "Competition's" prominence in the Discourse of my school and district led me to uncover its roots in our nation's capitalist cultural model--the belief that free market principles are the foundation of individual and national success. This cultural model, in turn, has led us to a belief that our schools are in a state of crisis with specific regard to literacy, and more broadly with regard to career preparation. Gee identifies this "literacy crisis" as one of our "master myths," or widely accepted beliefs, which rest on oversimplified or contradictory evidence. Poststructuralists such as Foucault and Derrida identify this authoritative

Discourse, which classifies winners and losers as a "totalizing Discourse" or a "grand narrative" that dominates the Discourse of a context, such as education and schooling (Bishop, 2005; Peters & Burbules, 2004).

In reality, even the participation of "everyday people" in Discourse is complex, as each person negotiates multiple, sometimes contradictory Discourses, even within the space of one particular setting (Holland et. al., 1998). Gee (2008) explains, "Meaning is a matter of negotiating and contestation, and people by no means just give into experts" (p. 22). For instance, the creators of Race to the Top imply that our nation's students will have greater opportunities as schools become more competitive, and yet the very notion of competing rests on the existence of both winners and losers. This contradiction has not prevented the Discourse from becoming a master myth, or grand narrative, and yet my own struggle and the resistance I encountered reveal an unwillingness to accept some of the positionings resulting from this Discourse of Competition.

According to Polkinghorne (1988), narratives are the primary form of discourse which humans use to make meaning. "We retrieve stories about our own and the community's past, and these provide models of how actions and consequences are linked" (p. 135). Furthermore, we draw upon these models as we make decisions regarding our actions and make sense of the actions of others. Drawing on Dilthey, Polkinghorne discusses the potential of looking not within oneself, but rather outward towards "the values, rules, and norms of the culture" (p. 39). The narratives which carry these Discourses can transmit either positive values of a culture, which can be preserved and "emulated," or negative values which ought to be reformed or "avoided." While Race to the Top is portrayed as an effort to provide opportunities for all students, a value that certainly seems positive, in actuality it rests on the deficit positioning of schools, teachers, and students.

The danger of such negative positioning stems from what Bourdieu refers to as "habitus," the schemata one acquires over time as a person adapts to and begins to embody "social and

cultural messages" (Grenfell & James, 1998, p. 14). These schemata serve as "tools" for making sense of one's experiences. When an individual is situated in the context or social world that produced this habitus, he or she is likely to perceive this way of knowing to be normal. In the case of Race to the Top, competition's role in our market economy has long been accepted as the norm; the belief that schools have an instrumental role in preparing to participate in and meet the needs of this economy has led us to a point of accepting competition as a framework for education as well. This is how "racing" has become "most powerful of American metaphors for education" (Varenne, Goldman, & McDermott, 1998, p. 106). Living within this culture, many of us do not take the time to question this metaphor and its implications for schools. In order to understand the strength and prominence of the Discourse of competition as it has come to pervade education, we must examine its history.

Competition has a lengthy history in the United States, one that has strong roots in the economic culture of the nation (Kohn, 2002). Within our culture of capitalism, competition is seen as a highly successful way to incentivize pathways to success. Although competitive frameworks have origins in business and trade, these principles have also been applied to human services, including education (Ravitch, 2010). Our federal government has felt the pressure to compete in a global economy because of what they see other countries accomplishing and what they hear from critics about the American educational system's failure to adequately prepare students to face the challenges of globalization, leading to the design of a program that will serve as a catalyst for state reform. In this age of increasing global competition, the stakes are rising, pushing economic pressures further into education policy, and education policy into actual schools and classrooms. This application of competitive principles has its roots in the free market model and the neoliberal agenda.

The term "neoliberalism" has been applied to the resurgence of free market principles in the wake of President Roosevelt's "New Deal" and President Johnson's "The Great Society"

(Edmondson, 2004). Neoliberalism's advocates believe in the power of the free market, but these principles are not confined to the world of economics. Neoliberalism refers to the extension of free market principles into social worlds. According to Ball (1994), there is often a point of confusion between the application of *structures* of business versus the application of its *values*, which are not necessarily appropriate or beneficial to those impacted. In this study, I examine the consequences of economic values as a foundation for education reform. The speeches of President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan are fraught with economic terms, as well as terms of comparison and competition. At its best, the neoliberal framework provides individuals with a pathway to accessing the global economy. From this perspective, the students from "Main Street" across American deserve the opportunity to acquire skills that will enable them to secure viable employment, or postsecondary education which can lead to viable employment. There tends to be bipartisan agreement on this issue, as it reminds us of individual children we intend to help. At its worst, neoliberalism runs the risk of whittling individual identity down to "human capital" that serves powerful bureaucratic entities, such as the governments of economically and politically influential countries or large multinational corporations (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Edmondson, 2004). From this vantage point, Wall Street determines the usefulness or worth of individual students as they exit high school or college, deeming some to be worthy of more or less income than others. This mindset replaces the image of individual children with statistics and dollar signs, quantifying this human service and dehumanizing education. Clearly, the Obama administration believes in the power of education to strengthen our economy, and thus economic principles are applied to education reform. How can we be certain that our recent education initiatives have been enacted in the interest of the students, and not merely in the name of economic strength and superiority?

Although I was not initially conscious of the ways in which my school's discourse reflected free market principles, I was troubled as I continued to immerse myself in the culture of

the school and my students, most of who were from Mexican immigrant families. I quickly

sensed tension between the expectations I felt obliged to convey to my students because of past

and present reforms, and the values my students exuded as I interacted with them.

Table P-1. District and Student Voices

District Leadership's Voices	Students' Voices
"Data is how we make decisions."	*"This is a baby's book!"*
"We will be coming to your room to look for Strategy 1."	*"Miss, I was just explaining!"*
"Tenure as we know it is disappearing."	*"No entiendo (I don't understand)."*
"We will be looking at test data as we go through the evaluation process."	*"Miss, I was born here."*
"Our students are making progress, but we need to do more."	*"Miss, I want to be a manicurist."*

This tension, along with the substantial pressure I felt as their teacher, drove me to step

backwards in order to reflect on my positioning as an Intervention teacher in the competitive

environment that current policies have actively promoted.

Positioning, Identity, and Agency: A Theoretical Frame

The longer I taught in this context, the more aware I became of the intersection of policy

and my personal experience as a teacher. C. Wright Mills (1959) refers to this critical awareness

as "sociological imagination," which "...enables its possessor to understand the larger historical

scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals"

(p. 5). One may also conceive of this perspective as understanding history through the lens of

biography. At the personal level, one deals with "troubles," but with a greater awareness, a person

may come to see his or her "trouble" as part of a larger societal "issue." Wright suggests that

examination of social issues requires three types of questioning:

1) What is the structure of this particular society as a whole?
2) Where does this society stand in human history?
3) What varieties of men and women prevail in this society and in this period? (p. 6, 7)

As I sought to understand the source of my district's expectations, I found myself exploring the Discourse of education policy, which was embedded in the broader Discourse of Market Economics. Because the United States was historically driven by free market principles and continues to be influenced by such principles, the Discourse of Competition has been accepted as the norm for our culture. As countries like India and China have begun to challenge the United States' status as an economic powerhouse, the pressure to develop a competitive workforce has escalated. According to the dominant Discourse, only those with a college education will be successful; schools, then are charged with preparing this future workforce, and teachers are positioned accordingly.

Positioning is the way in which an individual is takes up or rejects the narrative of a particular Discourse, or social practices accepted by a group, culture, or political institution (Davies and Harre, 1990). In such contexts, meanings are constructed and reconstructed by participants in these narratives, and individuals are continually shaped and reshaped by these discourses. There can be two types of positioning: "interactive" positioning is when another person or institution positions an individual, whereas "reflexive" positioning is when a person positions or repositions him or herself. Recognizing that individuals participate in multiple discourses, positioning theory allows for recognition of the contradictory positionings that one individual may take up, and in doing so provides opportunity for learning from those contradictions. Positioning, then, is embedded within the narratives of our daily lives, though we are often unaware of our positionings or positioning forces.

Awareness is at the core of identity and agency as individuals respond to interactive positionings or make decisions regarding reflexive positioning. Holland et. al. (2001) define "positional identity" as the ways in which people perceive their position in real contexts,

including their access to resources, participation in events, and opportunity to be heard. Taking up

a constructivist position, Holland et. al. suggest that individuals tend to "improvise," not as an

exception, but more commonly than may be assumed as they respond to "contradictory

discourses" (p. 17). For instance, a student may acknowledge that literacy plays a role in his or

future life, yet feel that placement in an "Intervention" class denigrates his or her capabilities as a

reader or learner. Thus, the student may find ways outside of the prescribed curriculum or

pedagogy to validate his or her capabilities, or to indicate that this "Intervention" is not necessary.

It is this improvisation that Bourdieu characterizes as agency (Holland et. al.).

Stanton Wortham (2006) suggests that the development of identities must be examined

on three levels: sociohistorical, local, and event level. In order to make sense of my own teacher

identity or learn about the identities of my students, I must consider the policy environment that

led up to Race to the Top's implementation, the ways in which policy has been interpreted and

enacted in my own district and school, as well as specific moments in professional development

sessions and English Language Acquisition or Reading classes. Wortham also draws on

Foucault's critique on this sort of classification of students, cautioning those who seek to

illuminate identities.

> No matter how good our ethnographic information, we cannot write a rule book for
> interpreting signs of identity. Instead of identifying an individual unambiguously, signs
> come to identify people only when participants and analysts infer relevant context and
> establish which of various possible identities is being enacted or described (p. 32).

Because this autoethnography consists of my personal teacher narrative, there is certainly the risk

that I make hasty assumptions about my own identity; in order to prevent this, I continually pose

questions, pausing repeatedly throughout my narrative to reflect on the intersection of policy and

classroom. Certainly there is an even greater risk that I make false assumptions about my students

as I present their voices in the context of my teacher narrative. While I do seek to use my

"insider" position as their teacher, I also limit my analysis of their words to common themes, or in

other words, themes that became apparent multiple times as I examined their reflections and the stories I accumulated while working in their school over the course of three and a half years. I similarly situate them within the context of these "Intervention" classes, as well as within the greater context of this policy environment.

As a teacher in this particular school, I perceived my building and district leadership as attempting to convey specific messages about how learning works and what academic success means. For my part, I absorbed and interpreted this Discourse through the lens of my prior and current experiences as a learner, educator, and education researcher, considering what this meant for my classes, my curricula, and my students. The Discourse of my school was heavily characterized by the language of standardization and assessment, but these were not the only salient themes. Like any other school, ours was constantly striving for universal proficiency as measured by the state standardized assessments. The goal of demonstrating growth stems from the ways in which we are being evaluated each year by the Colorado Department of Education. CDE, in turn, is under pressure to comply with both No Child Left Behind, as well as the new promises made in the state's Race to the Top applications. Both federal initiatives have the effect of positioning our school in competition with other schools in terms of demonstrating adequate growth and achievement on tests, just as our nation's schools are seen as competing with schools around the world in a race to produce a competitive workforce.

As I interpreted my district and school's discourse, I realized that our ongoing struggle to reach this goal led to a dominant Discourse of Intervention. Thus, the Discourse of Market Economics led to the Discourse of Competition, which, in turn, led to the Discourse of Achievement and Growth, and finally the Discourse of Intervention.
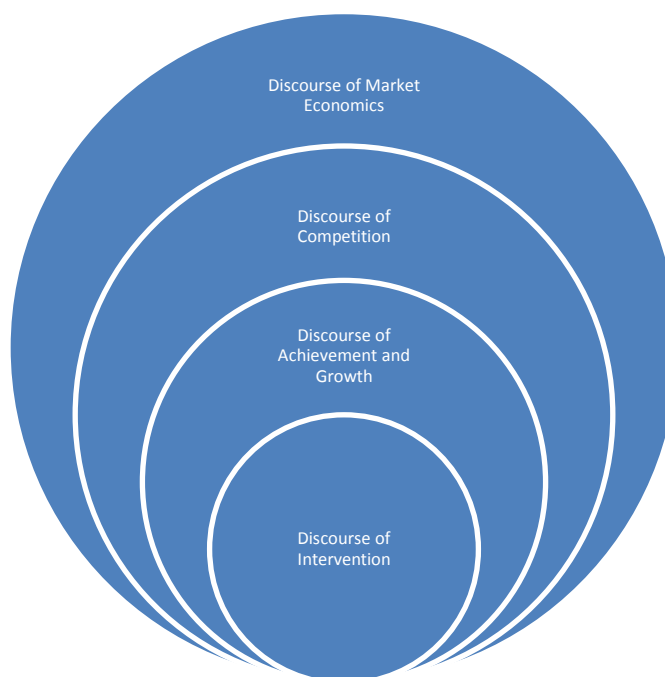
Figure P-2. Layers of Discourse

This theme of Intervention pervaded our professional development sessions, influenced our educator evaluation processes, and served as a catalyst for a variety of committees and a district-wide effort to develop uniform systems for identifying and placing students in what were deemed to be appropriate Intervention programs. In the 2012 version of School District 27J's Reading and Math Assessment Intervention Guide, the district defines its standards for instruction:

> We believe that all students are entitled to the time, focus, and intensity of instruction and behavior so that they will become owners of their thinking and learning. The framework for instruction is identified in the *Seven Strategies for Formative Assessment.* The 27J Intervention Guide outlines the use of data to inform instruction in Tiers 3 and 4.

Tier 4 Individualized programming for students in instruction / behavior.

Tier 3 Intervention involving such time, focus, and intensity in instruction/behavior that it is delivered in addition to the general classroom in Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction.

Tier 2 Scaffolding of instruction/behavior for individuals or groups of students that can be accomplished in the general classroom.

Tier 1 The high quality instruction/behavior expectations found in the general classroom.
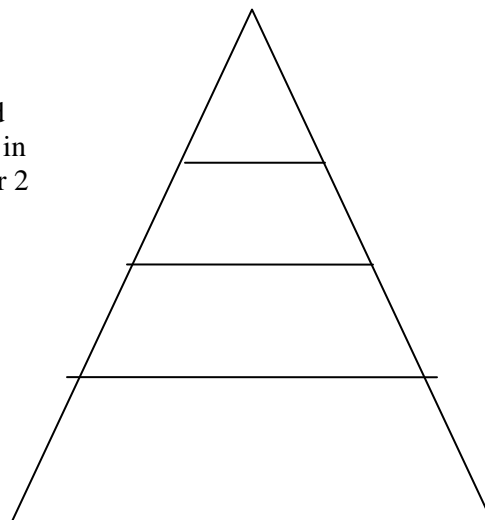
Figure P-3. School District 27J Instructional Model

I was first introduced to the Instructional Model during the district's orientation and New Teacher Network program and reminded of it during other professional development sessions throughout my three and a half years in the district. This Instructional Model, with its emphasis on Intervention, guided district and building leadership in the development of systems, decision-making regarding curriculum, as well as the placement of students in classes, particularly Intervention classes. Within this Discourse, we as educators, and most particularly Interventionists, needed to get our students to demonstrate higher rates of growth. The Discourse of my school and district clearly paralleled between the discourse of Race to the Top and its supporters, who frequently lamented the shameful state of our nation's performance on international assessments. Throughout the study, I capitalize "Intervention," recognizing this as one of Gee's (2008) dominant Discourses.

The pressure of these federal initiatives has weighed on me not merely because of the expectations dealt out, but because of the complexity of each individual student. When students' voices do not align with the ideals of academic achievement as defined by No Child Left Behind and now Race to the Top, ethical questions arise. How does current education policy and reform

position me as an intervention teacher? How have I come to understand my positioning in relation to current education policy and reforms? How do the Discourses of reform shape my work with students? In what ways does my story make visible the effects of national and local policies on teachers and students? What lessons does my story hold for educators and policymakers? As I began to recognize the shifting nature of my role as a teacher, I sought a framework that I could use to understand the complex relationships between policy, school leadership, educator, and students.

Autoethnography as Research Design

To illustrate my sensemaking processes against this background, I have designed a study that utilizes autoethnography as a medium for sharing and critically examining my teacher positioning and the ways in which I subsequently attempted to position my students. The first component, ethnography, entails the study and description of a specific culture with an eye towards the members' "perceptions of everyday experiences" (van Manen, 1990, p. 177, 178; Gorlewski, 2011). For an ethnography, the researcher immerses him or herself in the cultural context over an extended period of time, engaging in qualitative methods of data collection, such as observation and interview, to understand the culture of this context. Some ethnographies seek to provide "thick description," which entails deeper interpretations and analyses than members of the social group being studied may be able to "confirm or validate" (van Manen, 1990, p. 178). For this study, I capitalize on my three and a half years as a teacher in this school and utilize my observations and reflections to generate an ethnography of the culture of this school, and more specifically, my own classroom with a specific focus on my growing understanding of policy and its positioning effects on my school, myself, and my students.

Autoethnography, then, reveals the positioning of the researcher in the ethnographic context. Ellis (1999) depicts autoethnography as weaving together inward thought processes and outward sensemaking of social worlds. Polkinghorne (1991) writes that stories about oneself serve as a basis for "personal identity and self-understanding" (p. 136). According to Spry (2001), autoethnographies "express more fully the interactional textures occurring between self, other, and contexts in ethnographic research" (p. 708). Further, such stories can serve as a tool which aids in the "emancipation" from Grand Narratives and Master Myths (Spry, 2001; Denzin, 2006). In this autoethnography, I have distinguished my inward narrative from my outward sensemaking by italicizing my internal narrative. The non-italicized reflections reveal my efforts to make sense of my narrative and the ways in which my school, my students, and I respond to policy's positioning power.

Autoethnography can take on varied forms, ranging from loose identification of the researcher's role in the research process to full-fledged autoethnography, where the researcher's story is the axis of the study (Anderson, 2006). More importantly, autoethnographies range from personal, evocative narratives to a more reflexive, analytical form of autoethnography, or "critical" autoethnography (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002; Anderson, 2006). In order to reveal my positioning, as well as the positioning of my students, in relation to the culture of competition, I use Anderson's brand of critical autoethnography.

Critical ethnography draws on critical theory, which stresses relations of power, issues of domination, and the importance of emancipation (van Manen, 1990). Critical autoethnography, then, refers to a self-reflective brand of critical ethnography, where the researcher explores and analyzes his or her own context, experiences, and perceptions. In order to engage in this type of research, I must first of all be a full member in the research context that I am researching (Anderson, 2006). Next I must approach my study with "reflexivity," continually considering my relationship between this context, other participants, and the situation I am studying. As I write

my teacher narrative, my feelings and thoughts regarding the social world I am investigating must be visible, yet I must also incorporate the voices of others from this setting. Ultimately, I need to demonstrate a connection between my personal narrative and the broader social issue in my analysis.

My autoethnography functions as the overarching scheme of this dissertation, and my primary research method is narrative analysis. I use my teacher narrative to introduce the school and district imposed pressure which led me to trace this pressure's roots back to the policy level. My narrative pauses for several pages so that I can engage in a basic form of critical policy analysis before returning to my teacher narrative and the ways in which I found myself responding to these policies. My narrative continues on to detail several types of student resistance, which I vividly recall as shocking yet enlightening moments, which fed into my own resistance. As I conclude this portion of my narrative, I lead into a thematic analysis of the discourse of policymakers and students for a closer examination of the points of apparent coherence or dissonance. In the end, I use my autoethnographic reflections as a framework for making sense of the implications of my teacher narrative and its situatedness within this specific policy context.

Narrative Analysis as Research Method

As I contemplated my situation and my desire to explore policy's intersection with my own experiences, I recalled a text from one of my qualitative research courses that depicted the possibilities of teacher inquiry. I have always been captivated by the power of stories as a means for understanding our world; it was a logical progression to perceive narrative's potential for making sense of my experiences in this teacher position.

Social scientists have established narrative as a foundational research method for understanding human activities, motivations, relationships, and other complex characteristics of human experience (Polkinghorne, 1988; Bruner, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For this reason, narratives are now widely used in education studies. For instance, throughout the course of a research project pertaining to her students and their literacy development, Clandinin realized that her students "were much more than test scores. Their lives were filled with complexities, with hopes, with dreams, with wishes, and with intentions" (p. xxiv, xxv). Donald Polkinghorne (1988) emphasizes that all human sensemaking occurs in the context of narratives; narratives, therefore, are essential to any study seeking to draw meaning from human experiences. For individuals, narrative provides a medium "to construe what they are and where they are headed" (p. 14). Bruner (2002) explains that we not only construe ourselves, but that we continually reconstruct these construals (p. 64). Throughout this study, I found myself examining my situation, my perspectives, my students' perspectives in light of the current policy environment, asking numerous questions that led me to greater depth of understanding. My aim is to present a narrative that serves as a foundation for conversations that result in a greater awareness, which in turn can serve as a platform for agency.

Narrative writing requires the synthesis of a number of events which are consequential to the purpose of the telling. Borrowing Mandler's (1984) four tiers of knowledge structures, Polkinghorne (1991) stresses schematically organized knowledge, a "part-whole or Gestalt organization" where one draws together the meaning of separate events and their relationship as a unified whole (p. 137, 138). Narratives "operate as a schematic structuring of temporal events" (p.138). Once a narrative has depicted the setting, it transitions into a series of episodes, which reveal the event, the character and his or her reaction to the events, as well as the character's goal-setting processes. As these events, or episodes, are synthesized in the narrative, their relationship

to the whole story becomes evident. Polkinghorne refers to this synthesizing process as "emplotment," which aids in the discovery of a "theme" (p. 141).

To reveal the political situatedness of my evolving teacher position, I selected telling segments of my personal teacher narrative, which highlight the expectations my building and district leadership convey to me and my colleagues, as well as the response of my students to the expectations I relay to them. As I recounted these experiences, I contextualized my narrative within the current political environment with a particular eye to the way it has been interpreted within my school and district. At the same time, I highlighted some of the tensions between these agendas and the realities of my current classroom where I work primarily with students from Mexican immigrant families.

A reader can examine the events of my narrative as a whole, observing as I wrestle with the values of capitalist culture as it has been applied to schooling, and how it positions me along with my students. Capitalist culture is driven by consumer desires for product and a company's desire for profit, so when market values are applied to schooling, students are essentially assigned value based on how they may potentially participate in the economy. In order to assess students' potential worth, criteria, or standards, are shaped to meet the demands of our 21st century economy, with its apparent need to compete on a global scale. Assessments are redesigned to correspond with these new standards. Those who fail to meet the prescribed levels of proficiency suffer the threat of losing in this "race" to compete, and contribute to the failure of the nation to compete internationally. Throughout my time in this school, I often felt the weight of this demand to compete, to ensure that my students would not contribute to this mass epidemic of failure. Coming from diverse backgrounds, many struggled to make the exponential amount of progress necessary to earn a "proficient" score.

Data Collection and Analysis of Reflective Teacher Narrative Vignettes

In order to make sense of 1) the ways in which my district and ultimately policymakers positioned me, and 2) the pushback I experienced in my classroom, I began recording reflective vignettes, which revealed episodes of my own teacher positioning, as well as episodes of student resistance. I depicted my memories of these experiences in an electronic journal, labeling them for later identification and potential use in my autoethnography.

1. The Drive to Compete
2. Intervening to Close the Achievement Gap
3. Data for Decision-Making
4. *7 Strategies of Assessment for Learning*
5. Professional Development
6. "Help!"
7. "I don't need Intervention!"
8. "I want to use my home language!"
9. Students' Diverse Values
10. Intervention Lifers
11. Recollections from Pennsylvania Position
12. Possible introduction
13. Becoming aware of my positioning and attempts to resist/re-position myself

As I recalled additional experiences, I added scenes to a category or additional categories to my original list. In order to synthesize these vignettes in a coherent fashion, I developed a multi-layered timeline detailing the events in my 1) classroom, 2) school, 3) district, as well as at the 4) policy level over the course of my three and a half years in this school. I began organizing events semester-by-semester, working to align the four levels in ways that created a depth of perspective, which I could tap in my autoethnography. (See Appendix A.)

Yet I needed more than a chronological timeline in order to portray the evolution of my sensemaking. I contemplated the progression of my understanding of these experiences in my Colorado school, the forces that impacted my positioning, my students' resistance or re-positioning in light of these positioning forces, and the implications of these findings. The components of this sensemaking timeline became my chapter titles. (See Appendix B.)

Ch. 1 *Why do I feel so different here? Intervention as a district/school model*
Ch. 2 *Where is this coming from? Making sense of policy and school frameworks*
Ch. 3 *Why don't my students buy into this? Making sense of student resistance*
Ch. 4 *How do my students' perspectives compare to policymakers' perspectives? Recognizing positive versus negative positioning*
Ch. 5 *What does it mean to be an "Intervention" teacher in a globally competitive context? Implications: Awareness as a starting point for agency*

As I depicted the experiences where my school and district positioned me in Chapter 1, I began with a chronological account of my *Read 180* experiences, then transitioned to a chronological account of events from my English Language Acquisition classes. In Chapter 2, I continued my narrative after introducing Race to the Top's implementation at the federal and state levels, providing several vignettes that reveal my perceptions of my district's implementation of Race to the Top. In the following chapter, I incorporated vignettes that revealed several types of student resistance, drawing upon exceptionally vivid or shocking memories that continued to trouble me weeks and even months thereafter. Rereading these episodes of student resistance reminded me that I, too, was participating in some forms of resistance, and I added examples of these to my collection of vignettes as well.

The themes of my vignettes and the sensemaking questions aided in the development of critical reflections throughout, as well as the analysis in the implications chapter. I used themes characterizing the pressures my district and school placed upon me to trace their roots back to the Discourses emanating from recent policy initiatives. I similarly worked to understand the themes of resistance and what positioning forces my students and I were attempting to resist, as well as possible reasons for these efforts to re-position ourselves. Analysis of these positioning and re-positioning processes led to a discussion of positive possibilities in the current policy environment.

Critical Policy Analysis as a Research Method

In chapter 2, I utilized my teacher lens to step back and examine the most current education policy initiatives which I believe are profoundly impacting my school and district. To unpack the racing metaphor that has become so prevalent and accepted in the grand narrative of education and has manifested itself in Race to the Top and ensuing reform initiatives, I borrowed from Stephen Ball's (1994) three-pronged framework of evaluating education policy. First, Ball has adopted critical policy analysis's aim to pursue "justice, equality, and individual freedom" and "examine the moral order of reform" (p. 2). In this paper, I sought to uncover the problematic nature of applying market principles to education. Ball has also applied a post-structural frame for analyzing the Discourse that characterizes the social institutions being studied. Throughout my study and particularly in Chapter 2, I revealed the language of Race to the Top as it unfolded at the federal, state, and local levels. Finally, Ball has utilized the techniques of critical ethnography to examine discourse in the context of a local context, which provides a uniquely powerful lens for understanding and critiquing a larger historical struggle. My depiction of the Race to the Top's ensuing policies capitalizes on my "insider" position as a teacher within this school over the course of three and a half years, revealing its implication for a real school, teacher, and classroom. The description in this chapter reveals the connection between economics and the institution of schooling with an emphasis on the danger of transferring the principles of economics to a human service.

As I seek to unpack the meaning and implications of the voices behind the policies, I am borrowing Jacqueline Edmondson's (2004) critical policy questions:

- Where has the policy come from? What are the social, political, and historical aspects of the policies?
- Who are the policymakers? What are the values of the policymakers? Why was the policy initiated?
- What are the consequences of the policy?
- Who benefits from the policy? Who is left out? (p. 5).

These questions helped me to understand the forces behind the positioning, as well as its consequences.

Data Collection and Analysis of Policy

With the objective of understanding Race to the Top's goals and general implications for students, I began my research by searching the United States Department of Education's Race to the Top website, examining the Executive Summary, as well as a variety of announcements and press releases. I also conducted additional searches using Race to the Top as my search term. In order to provide background on the policy window, I also examined the Executive Summary of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, as well as the A Nation at Risk: The Imperative of Educational Reform report. To understand how Colorado interpreted Race to the Top's guidelines, as well as how much the state has invested in corresponding reforms, I began examining announcements and documents on the Colorado Department of Education's website. I also conducted searches using Colorado and Race to the Top as key search terms. I also referred back to the United States Department of Education's website for documents pertaining specifically to Colorado.

After mapping out 1) the components of Race to the Top, 2) the policy history that created the necessary policy window, and 3) Colorado's efforts to participate in each successive round of Race to the Top, I utilized my narrative as a springboard for critical reflection on my perceptions of Race to the Top's positioning power in my district, school, and classroom. Then in Chapter 5, the implications chapter, I analyzed Race to the Top more comprehensively, drawing upon Ball (1994) and Edmondson (2004). I examined the ways in which the Discourse of Race to the Top effectively infiltrated this local district and school, and even my own classroom, as well

as the ways in which it negatively positioned my students and myself as their teacher. Finally, I offered several suggestions regarding possibilities for positive positioning in spite of the negative policy context, encouraging teachers to view themselves as capable of impacting policy from the ground up.

Thematic Analysis of Discourse as a Research Method

Although I did not use a formal brand of Critical Discourse Analysis, which focuses on discrete pieces of dialogue or speech, I borrowed from its critical lens as I examine the ways in which 1) policymakers' Discourse positions "Intervention" teachers and learners, 2) state/local leadership's Discourse echoes these positionings, and 3) my students' Discourse may or may not embrace parts of this positioning.

Wilhelm and Smith (2002) explain that we can use critical theory to understand our own positioning, its consequences, and the potential for repositioning. Critical Discourse Analysis can be used to examine the Discourses that policymakers, educators, and students take up, and who is positioned or re-positions themselves in response to these Discourses. In his discussion of Critical Discourse Analysis, Norman Fairclough (1995) writes:

> I have presented CDA above as a form of critical research which seeks to understand how contemporary capitalism in some respects enables but in other respects prevents or limits human well-being and flourishing, with a view to overcoming or mitigating these obstacles or limits (p. 11).

In his collection of writings, Fairclough explains that ideology, such as the ideology behind the development of a globally competitive workforce, resides in "discursive events" (p. 57). At the institutional level, Fairclough suggests that a school's features, including its discourse, are determined by the "social formations," such as the relationship between schools and the economy, while actions in the school are determined by "institutional factors." As I reflected on

the Discourse I was hearing in my school and district, I saw evidence of policy as it descended upon us from the federal and state levels.

Recalling the question that plagued me during the CSAP assembly and the voices of resistance, I wondered what students might say in response to these initiatives to better prepare them for entry into our contemporary workforce. In order to give them voice, I decided to make our Career Research Unit a highly reflexive experience, with numerous opportunities to reflect on their thoughts regarding education and career preparation. I would obtain consent to use these reflections as data in a thematic study. As I discussed this study with a committee member, I realized that I would learn more about my students' interactive and reflexive positioning if I juxtaposed their words with the words of policymakers, and perhaps school leadership as well.

Why Student Voice?

Many other studies have shown how much insight educators and even policymakers can gain from creating opportunities for adults to hear student voices. In one case, Dutro, Kazemi, and Balf (2004) used student voices to reveal the thinking behind students' writing practices. "These children's experiences demonstrate how identity and social and cultural resources impact students' successes and struggles as they negotiate the writing demands of the classroom and the state" (p. 2).The student voice in Kathleen Collins' "Discursive Positioning in a Fifth-Grade Writing Lesson: Making of a Bad, Bad Boy" (2010) illuminated how a "deficit" perspective of ability misrepresented a young student. In this narrative, an elementary school teacher positioned a student as a "bad boy," silencing him when he tried to re-position himself as "not doing nothing wrong" (p. 15). In *Confronting Racism, Poverty, and Power: Classroom Strategies to Change the World* (2004), Catherine Compton-Lilly positioned her students as ethnographers who tracked their understandings of literacy and the literacy education, empowering them to resist common

misconceptions about minorities and literacy deficits. Mitra and Gross (2009) took the notion of student voice to another level, revealing the power of student voice in addressing areas of conflict, calming tensions, and ultimately contributing to school reform. At the most basic level, students had the opportunity to be heard. At the next level, students had the opportunity to actually collaborate with adults in their school environment. At its highest tier, students made real contributions to school reform.

I hoped to gain some insights on what students value and consider how these values relate to the ways in which policymakers and school leadership seek to position them. As I contemplated some of the new Race to the Top inspired requirements, I decided that this Career Research Unit might provide some great opportunities for my English language acquisition students to reflect on their ideas about education and careers.

The Context

Our high school is located roughly twenty minutes northeast of Denver in a town of roughly 33,502 (Brighton, CO, 2011). The town is more of a "bedroom community," as many people commute to Denver or various suburbs for work. Over 40% of our population is Hispanic because a number of families have moved from Mexico to this area over the years to work on farms. Many have put down roots, and other families, sometimes relatives of those who have settled in the area, continue to immigrate into the area. Since I began teaching English Language Acquisition at this school, my English Language Acquisition classes have consisted almost entirely of students from these Spanish speaking immigrant families.

The English language learners in my classes were students who recently scored Non English Proficient and Limited English Proficient on our Colorado English Language Acquisition (CELA) proficiency assessments. During this school year, my English language acquisition

students were all from Mexican immigrant families. While most of the students who participated in this study were successfully passing their high school classes, they also evidenced struggles with the English language acquisition process. As the table below reveals, several students came to me after spending time in other American schools, yet their CELA test scores indicated that they seemed to be "stuck." Some received minimal or no sheltered English instruction to support their development, instead being thrown into mainstream classes for every subject. Two were also placed in developmental reading classes in hopes of increasing their rate of literacy development. Since I experienced a great deal of interpersonal interaction with these students, I could clearly see the strengths that they brought to the classroom, and not merely their struggles. Within the chart below I have included a few details regarding their education in the United States and their current level of English proficiency.

Students Who Participated in the Study

Table P-2. Descriptions of Participating Students

Paul	• *Came to my class as a junior after attending other local schools since the spring of his eighth grade year.* • *Was a Level I English Language Learner.* • *Was a high school senior at the time of the study (spring, 2011).* • *Successfully completed high school with the assistance of bilingual paraprofessionals.*
Eliza	• *Came to my class in October of her junior year, the year of the study.* • *Was a newcomer to the United States.* • *Was a Level I English Language Learner.* • *Has been academically proactive and very successful in her classes with the assistance of bilingual paraprofessionals.*
Emma	• *Came to my classroom her freshman year, the year of the study after attending a local middle school without English Language Acquisition classes.* • *Was a Level I English language learner.* • *Has passed most classes with the assistance of bilingual paraprofessionals.*

Christina	*Was placed in my class during her freshman year in addition to a* Read 180 *class, the same year as this study.* *Was placed in my Level II class where I placed her in a more advanced (essentially Level III) group.* *Had come to the United States in her elementary years, but was placed in* Read 180 *instead of English classes in middle school.* *Has been able to pass the vast majority of her classes at the middle and high school levels.*
Angela	*Was placed in my class during her junior year, the year prior to this study.* *Had attended local schools since middle school but had not received sheltered English Language Acquisition instruction until her sophomore year.* *Successfully completed all of her classes and graduated at the end of the year that this study was conducted.*
Stephanie	*Was placed in my class during her sophomore year, the year of the study.* *Had attended local schools since the fifth grade without sheltered English instruction. Had been placed in Read 180 during middle school and her freshman year of high school.* *Has demonstrated tremendous growth in her literacy skills, but has had somewhat spotty success in her classes.*

Data Collection and Analysis of Student Discourse

Before we began our career research unit, I explained to the students that I would be doing a study for one of my university classes, and that I needed some volunteers to allow me to copy their reflections and record their group discussions. Throughout the unit I gave students guiding questions to help them reflect on the various career unit activities. I made certain the students understood that, even if they participated, they could stop participating at any time, and that all students would be doing the same activities, even if they did not consent to me using their reflections in my paper. I gave all of my English Language Acquisition students a parental consent letter in Spanish and English and asked them to return it to school with "yes" or "no" checked and the letter signed by their parents. Six students--three from my level I, and three from my level II class--agreed to participate in the project.

I began our Career Research Unit with a story of a young person who pursued his or her goals, and used this as a springboard for students to reflect on their own goals. Each week for the space of four weeks, I brought in guest speakers who talked about careers in law enforcement, nursing, building construction, and government service. Then as a starting point for career research, the students took one or two interest surveys on *CollegeinColorado*'s website. For the research project, they chose one of these careers—or a different career if none of these seemed appealing—and began conducting some basic research on this career using *CollegeinColorado* and *Occupational Outlook*. The students were given notecatchers to walk them through data collection, then webs and example paragraphs to guide them through the transformation from notes into coherent paragraphs with citations of their sources. In the final steps, they edited their work, created Works Cited pages, and placed their paragraphs on a poster that they would use to present this career to the class. Towards the end of the unit, we read *What Makes a Community* (2006), read "Outsource It" (2006), and watched a video on outsourcing to try and understand how individuals and careers fit into these contexts. At the end, they completed a final reflection on their experiences with this career research unit.

After each unit activity, my students engaged in written reflections, and sometimes small group discussion related to their written reflection and guided by questions I gave them. For this study, I photocopied the reflections of the three participating students from each of my two English Language Acquisition classes. My fourth period participants were uncomfortable with the idea of recording their discussions, so I asked them to write down their opinions on the discussion question sheet instead. My sixth period class permitted me to record them, but they too wanted to write their answers and use their writing to help them know what to say into the microphone.

Once I obtained consent forms from my students, I found that six students, three from each class, were willing to participate in the study. I photocopied each of their reflections and returned original copies to the students. I then typed up their handwritten responses so that I could

more easily search for themes, using pseudonyms to identify who said what. I used a simple color

scheme to code for the following themes:

- Helping others
- Family
- Community
- Money
- Competing for better job opportunities
- The role of education
- Pride

At this point I began grouping sentences from their reflections in charts based on common

themes. I took the four most prominent themes and used them to group the excerpts from my

student reflections. These groupings provided a focus for each of my critical reflections on the

what my students valued in relation to education and career preparation, which aided in my

understanding of their self-positioning. These themes also provided insights into possibilities for

the positive positioning of "Intervention" students in a negative policy context.

Data Collection and Analysis of Policymaker and School Leadership Discourse

In order to compare my students' words with those creating and implementing policy, I

began my exploration of policymakers' words by revisiting the Executive Summary of Race to

the Top. This led me to search for speeches by its key proponents, President Obama and Secretary

of Education, Arne Duncan, which revealed how they were presenting RTTT to educators and the

general public. To better understand Colorado's investment in the competition and corresponding

reforms, I examined Colorado's second Colorado's second Race to the Top application, the

Colorado Department of Education's press releases, and recent legislation. For documentation of

my school district's interpretation of these reforms, I explored our school district's website for

documents that might reveal the district's values regarding competition, career preparation, or

Intervention.

I began searching the Executive Summary of Race to the Top, as well as these other

documents for themes that represented the underlying ideology, bolding phrases such as "enhance

our competitiveness" and "more challenging standards." I began my list of themes with quotes

regarding:

- The importance of education
- Rationale for job preparation
- The importance of being competitive
- Our status as "behind"
- How crucial skill development is to students' success
- How career training can provide hope for our nation's future

I contemplated the apparent parallels and points of dissonance as I juxtaposed these quotes

against my students' words and decided to condense the first two categories into the latter four.

As I found additional examples of these themes, I bolded these within the documents, then copied

and pasted them into charts with other quotes evidencing similar themes. Initially I simply placed

all of the quotes in charts. I then went back and narrowed the examples to a few that represented

the theme across the federal, state and local levels of design and implementation. The final

themes are presented and discussed in Chapter 4.

Juxtaposing the Voices of Policymakers and Students

  The juxtaposition of the student and policymaker voices provides a uniquely powerful opportunity to illuminate perspectives that are rarely heard in the policy arena. I began with the words of policymakers, revealing one of the salient themes in Race to the Top, provided a brief discussion of the implications of these words, and then presented several excerpts from my students' reflections, centering around a theme that was in some way parallel, yet in another sense deeply contrastive. I deciphered this incongruity before progressing to yet another prevalent theme and continuing to weave back and forth between policymaker and student voices.

  I returned briefly to my teacher narrative before I segued into a discussion of the implications of my autoethnography.

Chapter 1

Why do I feel so different here? Intervention as a district/school model

Positioning and shifting definitions of "learning"

As I thumbed through my students' Memory Books, I was struck by their openness and honesty.

"I will never forget the day my parents' told us that they were getting a divorce."

"I wish my family still had game night like we did when we were little."

Their self-made books were rich texts, full of pictures, artifacts, poetry, and personal narratives, revealing not just moments in their lives, but values. It was easy to see what they enjoyed, what they cared about, and what they hoped for in the future, or in their ideal world. Although it took several weeks to read through each one after I came home from school or my own graduate classes, I treasured the lessons I learned about these students whom I had taught for eight months.

This was one of numerous meaningful activities I felt my Pennsylvania students engaged in during my time as a teacher in Pennsylvania. In this context, my supervisor explained the core requirements, shared a few ideas, and then allowed me considerable leeway in terms of unit design and daily activities. In spite of my youth and minimal experience, I felt that my she, along with other colleagues in this setting, respected and valued my professional experience; furthermore, my administration did not mandate specific methods or even materials, which seemed to indicate a trust in my professional judgment. For the most part, my students seemed to respond positively, both in the English classroom as we used our curriculum to explore and

analyze the world, and as an English as a Second Language teacher, where I attempted to provide my students with resources that would serve as a foundation for proactively negotiating their English-speaking school environment and greater community. Relatively content with the ways in which I was able to work with my students, education policy was not on my radar.

When I moved to Colorado several years later, I was called to interview in January of 2009 for a high school roughly twenty minutes northeast of Denver.

After the assistant principal conducted an informal interview, she took me on a tour of the high school, literally beaming with pride about this wonderful school. She led me into the classroom where I would teach Read 180, *a 90-minute reading Intervention developed by Scholastic specifically for secondary students. The goal was to combine whole class, small group, and computer-based instruction with a bit of self-directed silent reading time using self-selected books from the* Read 180 *library. "See, the last teacher really didn't buy into the idea that high school students can still learn how to read," she explained. Prior to the interview, I did a bit of research; teacher comments indicated that* Read 180 *was "better" than other programs, in that it utilized multiple elements as opposed to relying upon one and allowed students to make choices about their silent reading materials. This encouraged me, and I felt confident that, after my rich experiences in Pennsylvania, I could help these students to strengthen their reading skills. I was even optimistic that they would find reading enjoyable.*

My optimism quickly faded. Many of the students did not want to read, which left me scrambling to find a way to motivate them. I suddenly felt a level of responsibility I did not recall feeling in my Pennsylvania teaching positions. This was the first time I perceived that my students' literacy skills were deemed "deficient." Even as an English as a Second Language teacher, I had never felt so pressured to ensure my students' achievement. In my previous context, our ESL department did not base its exit criteria on grade level proficiency, although we did utilize a standardized test, along with grades and our personal knowledge of these students. I,

much like my colleagues, believed that English language learners could function effectively in a mainstream classroom even if their English language proficiency was not on grade level.

In my new school context, I was also more hemmed in by a scripted curriculum, though my supervising principal did allow me to employ literature circles in an effort to encourage my non-readers to read in the context of a small group. Our district leadership made it quite clear that Read 180 *was selected because it was a research-proven method for literacy education. With scant wiggle room, I adhered to the core pieces of the curriculum, attempting to "sell" them as worthwhile to this skeptical cluster of ninth through twelfth graders. For the next few months, my class shrank. Several students lost credit due to nonattendance. Among those who remained, a handful participated, while a couple continued to resist. One student, aggravated that I would not let him watch videos in Youtube, finally stormed out of the room. Another argued with me over what books he would read. I did not exactly feel like a raging success as the year drew to a close.*

In the fall of 2009, I was hired on full-time and received yet another grand tour of the school, this time by the building principal himself. His tone was just as proud as the assistant principal's was eight months earlier. As he guided me along with the other new hires through the building, he pointed to all of the renovations, including the spacious library and skylight-style windows that brightened the upstairs hallway. He paused in the central lobby area where the high school's heritage was preserved in a series of displays and photos, stressing the importance of the school's past traditions. Of course, my perspective was less "Pollyanna" after my challenging spring semester in Read 180.

This same principal inaugurated the new school year with a presentation of slides on the Colorado State Assessment Plan (CSAP). Together our staff looked at reading, writing and math scores for ninth and tenth graders. Our principal emphasized the growth our students demonstrated on   the most recent test, as opposed to single data points from the most recent tests. He paused from time to time to point out all of the areas in which we had bested our rival

school. His tone was always one of distinct pride in our school. It was definitely a verbal pat on the back for us as teachers, but it also came with a strong reminder that there were areas in which we still needed to improve, and that our newly revamped teacher evaluation system would now be looking at this data. After a semester of wrestling with resistant students, the thought of my evaluations hinging upon student growth was a bit nerve-wracking.

During this time we were told to look up our students' most recent CSAP scores and identify three students who would most likely struggle. These students and their test scores would be a focal point of our individual professional growth plans. Coming into this school as an Intervention teacher who would teach a combination of English Language Acquisition and Read 180 classes, I did not expect my students to have scored proficient, but as I scrolled through my class lists and recorded their scores in a chart, the list of "unsatisfactories" began to feel like a large storm cloud looming overhead. How could I possibly pick just three? And if I picked the lowest of the "unsatisfactories," what were the odds I could actually get these students on a viable trajectory towards grade level proficiency when that target was forever rising upwards?

CSAP, the Colorado Student Assessment Program, was used to assess students from third through tenth grade in Mathematics, Reading, Writing, and now Science as well. While CSAP has been utilized as the state-wide standardized measure of student learning since the mid-nineties, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 instructed the Colorado Department of Education to position schools in very specific ways according to the results of these tests. The CSAP assessments were designed to measure the effectiveness of schools as defined by the state standards. NLCB raised the stakes, leaving schools with lagging scores scrambling to catch up in a designated time frame or undergo significant Interventions. While our school was not the lowest scoring in the area, the heavy emphasis on achievement indicated that we needed to improve, and this fed into our investment in Intervention systems. For the first time in my teaching career, I felt

pressured to "teach to the test." The pressure was exacerbated by the complexity of each individual student I taught.

Although I was not familiar with Davies and Harre's (1990) "positioning theory" at this point, I sensed a shift in my teacher positioning. While my first school positioned me in a way that enabled me to view my students as whole people, my new school's emphasis on test data made it difficult to continue viewing my students in this way. In the past I used test scores as one of several measures to determine placement for English language learners, yet I never viewed test results as so central to school structures or daily decisions, nor did I ever define a learner so exclusively according to his or her scores. This sensed shift in my positioning led to an awakening of what Mills (1959) refers to as my "sociological imagination;" after several years of feeling unscathed by No Child Left Behind, I could now see this piece of legislation reaching directly into my building, influencing expectations imposed directly upon myself, categorized as an "Intervention" teacher, and my students, who were categorized as needing "Intervention."

Experiencing "outsider" status

My position evolved from the previous year, from Reading Teacher to Intervention Teacher. In addition to a section of Read 180, *I was given a section of English Language Acquisition, as well as two sections of Transitional English. At this time, there did not seem to be a clear vision for the ELA program: I found myself in a class with all levels of English language learners, ranging from monolingual Spanish speakers, to students who were quite close to grade level in terms of their English language proficiency. There were several sets of dated textbooks, which I attempted to use. After several weeks of attempting to work with four different textbooks during a single, 47 minute class period, I streamlined by utilizing a newcomer book and a second textbook that fell in the middle range for secondary English language learners. The Transitional*

English course had no curriculum and no textbooks to speak of, and so I borrowed books from other departments and began to develop what I thought would be a high-interest curriculum that would help bridge the gap between English Language Acquisition and grade level English courses. I enjoyed this element of design, as it afforded me the chance to gauge my students and make instructional decisions with their interests in mind.

In this setting, my students were almost entirely Hispanic, primarily first and second generation Mexican immigrants. This was a sharp contrast to my previous position, where my English language students were from countries such as South Korea, Russia, Kazakhstan, China, Ghana, Cote d'Voire, Rwanda, and Estonia. My new students were warm and fun-loving, in many ways acting much like a large, extended family as they interacted within the space of my classroom. Yet in this new position, I was now the minority, and Spanish was the dominant language. As a result, my students were inclined to speak in their home language, which posed a challenge for me as I attempted to encourage the use of English. But more perplexing, particularly in light of the expectations of my building leadership, I also found it difficult to get my students to complete assignments at home, and sometimes even in class. Although I had taught English as a Second Language for four and a half years prior, the dynamics were so different that I might as well have been in my first year as an English language teacher--or my first year altogether.

Keenly aware of the pressure to raise my students' test scores, I felt a high level of responsibility to deeply engage my students in English language learning. In my previous school setting, I took for granted the students' investment in this acquisition process (Norton Peirce, 1995). Now I was struggling to gain student buy-in of English speaking activities, as well as reading or writing assignments. As I became the "outsider" for the first time in my teaching career, I was unsure of how to relate to a class of students who appeared to share a culture and language in a way that looked much like an extended family. In the ensuing months, I felt that I

needed to gain their trust and win their hearts, or they would not invest in this English language

learning process.

Meeting the world of Intervention

As I sat through New Teacher Network and other professional development sessions, I

realized that I was not alone in my quest to help students "catch up." In fact, our district's

instructional model actually centered around differentiation and Intervention. At the bottom level

was general classroom instruction. The next tier entailed accommodations and modifications in

the regular classroom. Our building addressed this level of Intervention repeatedly through

professional development sessions. For particularly concerning issues, our administration

formed committees such as the Writing Committee and the English Language Acquisition Team.

The third tier of Intervention, then, referred to supplemental Interventions, such as Read 180 and

Avid, a program designed to help motivated yet struggling students work towards their goal of

attending college. The uppermost tier referred to core class replacements, such as Reading

Strategies or English Language Acquisition I. These were the least common but were available to

students for whom mainstream classes might not be appropriate.

Within weeks of joining this high school staff, I found myself on the Writing Committee

and Problem Solving Team. The former was developed in an effort to overturn the school's low

writing scores, promoting and guiding staff in a particular method for writing. At the time I

joined, the team worked to develop a school-wide formula for writing, which we repeatedly

promoted through several professional development sessions. As we began to receive complaints

that our colleagues already understood this writing strategy and did not need additional

professional development on this topic, we developed and conducted one session on the

integration of creative writing across the curriculum before the Writing Committee disappeared altogether.

During my first year, the Problem Solving Team was in its initial phase, and we worked together to determine what steps would be taken when a member of our staff indicated that a student was not responding to the Interventions his or her teachers were already using. Once we settled on a sequence of procedures, we began examining a student that I identified. I became hopeful that some of my struggling students would be examined by a competent team of educators who would be able to develop an individualized, supportive plan, much like the Instructional Support Teams I worked with in my previous position. Unfortunately, a series of administrative turnovers led to the perpetual recreation of this committee until it was no longer focused on individual students, but rather on our systems instead. The advising principal behind this movement explained that our systems must be organized first, and with the vast number of failing students, it was literally impossible to examine the cases of individual students. My literacy coach and I struggled with this decision and decided we would continue our own efforts to support individual students.

It became clear that the Discourse of Intervention was the driving force behind the structures and systems and virtually every committee school leadership created. In the three and a half years that I worked in this setting, the emphasis on Intervention never lessened; if anything, it grew more organized, more deliberate, and from where I stood, more intense, both at district and building levels. Students would be more closely tracked, and the dilemma of students not receiving appropriate Interventions would disappear. The role of "Interventionists" such as myself was becoming more clearly defined just as the definition of students needing Intervention was becoming clearer.

As I became more aware of the dominance of Interventionist Discourse, it struck me that my title, "Intervention Teacher," did not merely encompass my roles as both English Language

Acquisition and Reading teacher. It actually implied something more than a simple broadening of my position; it implied that both *Read 180* students and English language learners were in need of Intervention (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Oshler, and Ortiz, 2010). While I was fully aware that my students failed to score "proficient" on the state reading and/or English proficiency assessments, I did not consider English language learners to be in need of Intervention unless they seemed to struggle in their development of English. Now all English language learners, regardless of their rate of development, were deemed "Intervention" students.

Learning, career preparation, and fiscal responsibility

After several months of wrestling with my awkward schedule, dated materials, and reluctant students, our building principal made an announcement that hit the pit of my stomach. "The state of Colorado will be cutting $10 million from our district's budget...We will be forced to cut the equivalent of nine positions next year." I later learned that roughly 120 positions across the district would be cut. Although tenured teachers had little to fear, at least for the present, the morale across the building plummeted. Cuts meant a loss of colleagues and rising class sizes, yet nothing in this depressing fiscal crunch would be accepted as an excuse for not raising test scores, or essentially doing more with less.

I was struck by our Global Ends Statement (2009): "District 27J exists so that students have the knowledge and skills for present and future success, with results justifying the expenditure of resources." It was no wonder we were expected to stretch our dollars, and essentially, ourselves as educators. Furthermore, our Superintendent wrote in the 2009 community report, "We have been honored to receive the prestigious Colorado State Finance Award for fiscal stewardship. And we are proud to say that we continually strive for $1.15 in value for every $1 invested in our school district." (School District 27J, 2009, p.13). It was

almost as though the district were simply another business, only the products were children. The emphasis on getting the most for bottom dollar struck me as ironic in a time when education was under the weight of national criticism.

I walked on pins and needles as talks of impending cuts continued, knowing that I was among the four most recent hires in the building. As we talked with an assistant principal about plans for the following year, he hesitated to say too much, indicating that my job was not certain. In February, teachers and staff were called down to the principal's office and informed that they would need to begin looking for another position for the fall. Eventually, a colleague who seemed privy to the cuts discreetly informed me that my job was safe. My morale, however, changed little.

In the midst of such fiscal turmoil, I was surprised when our Director of Career and Technical Education spoke to our staff regarding a new mandate from the Colorado Department of Education: Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP, 2011). The presentation was a brief summary of the expectation that schools now develop plans for every secondary student demonstrating the exploration of career choices and guidance through the process of investigating what academic choices would help them follow a path towards this career. At our high school, each core department, with the exception of Math, would be responsible for one or two year's worth of ICAPs. A part of me was intrigued with the idea of giving students time to explore career ideas. Perhaps this opportunity would be more meaningful to my students than so many of the abstract or foreign concepts mandated by our state standards. Yet the pressure to move through so much curriculum content seemed to overshadow this new mandate, and how would my students be ready to compete in a global economy if they did not make significant progress towards proficiency? I was under significant pressure as a new member of the district, not to mention an "Intervention" teacher who needed her students to demonstrate above average growth, regardless of their background, motivation, or circumstances. I already felt that I was sacrificing opportunities for in-depth inquiries and creativity to meet the demands of my

program, and now I needed to wear the additional hat of career preparation. In the shadow of

three years' worth of projected budget cuts, I struggled to search for a compromise.

It was around this time that I overheard someone speaking of Race to the Top.

"...Yeah, apparently there's some incentive money, but you sell your soul for it..."

I do not remember the exact moment when it hit me that so much of the pressure I sensed

in this school stemmed from school and district's failure to meet the standards established by

Colorado, as per No Child Left Behind. What puzzled me was, why, when so many schools were

already struggling to meet the expectations laid out by No Child Left Behind ten years earlier and

school districts were reeling from massive budget cuts, would a new administration try to impose

another litany of guidelines, albeit through a different strategy? Why did the Obama

administration, after several decades of education reform, think that Race to the Top was more

apt to turn around America's failing schools and help revive the economy? Then again, every

administration has its own set of beliefs regarding the fresh, new approach it can bring to

America's faltering education system.

As a teacher, I was so bogged down in the day-to-day demands of teaching, there was

little time to consider policy and its implications. What were the implications of this new

program? Would these changes honestly prepare our students for the "global economy" as their

advocates claimed? These thoughts were interrupted by lesson planning as another school year

approached.

Resolving "deficits" with the perfect formula

In the fall of 2010, I was recruited to the English Language Acquisition support team,

which designed professional development opportunities for teachers to learn how to better

support English language learners in their mainstream classes. Our building principal took

charge of this particular committee, recruiting members from a variety of departments and launching our efforts by having us read a book he believed would provide us with a formula for effectively supporting our English learners: Promoting Academic Achievement Among English Learners *(Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010). Its authors map out the territory, so to speak, providing input on the role of home language, literacy instruction, oral language development, academic instruction, school and district systems, as well as culture and family.*

It is not clear whether or not our principal bought into the notion regarding the value of first language instruction or the authors' recommendations regarding sheltered English language development, as he recently eradicated the Spanish for Native Speakers courses and scaled back the overall English Language Acquisition program. The principles he embraced most enthusiastically were Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), which the text mentions briefly, citing a single study with "modest" findings (p. 91). Why, then, choose this book and purchase it for the entire English Language Acquisition team? As I reflect now, the appeal of this book is obvious, as the demands of Race to the Top merged with those of No Child Left Behind. When your school or district is failing to meet Annual Yearly Progress, and a significant portion of this failure is among your bilingual population, the words "academic achievement" and "English learners" is quite appealing. Furthermore, Goldenberg and Coleman base their findings strictly on studies backed by what is deemed to be "hard" data, a must for schools in this data-driven policy environment.

At the district level, Read 180 *was actually part of a broader literacy initiative: the district was beginning to develop a Reading and Mathematics Intervention Guide. This effort sprang out of a concern that students were sliding through the cracks, which prevented our district from demonstrating desired levels of proficiency. Literacy, Language Arts, and Special Education teachers from across the district were brought together to share their insights on the guide's components and design. The completed Intervention Guide detailed the role of the*

Problem Solving Team, procedures for Progress Monitoring, assessments approved for diagnosis and placement in "Intervention" classes, programs approved for these Interventions, and Reading, Mathematics, and English Language Acquisition Flowcharts with criteria for determining placement. Read 180 *was retained as the core reading Intervention for students who could demonstrate adequate phonological awareness. At this time, the district purchased rights to* Boost *and* Blitz *in order to more effectively service secondary students who could not demonstrate the minimal literacy skills required for* Read 180. *The elementary schools had their own comparable set of programs and assessment tools.*

The Reading portion of this guide was developed during my first full year in the district by a team of teachers and district leadership, particularly those directly involved in reading assessment and instruction. Our district's literacy TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment) presented the Reading Flowchart to me and other Reading and Basic English teachers the following fall. When our school hired one of our English teachers to serve as a Literacy Coach towards the end of my second full year, she immediately began consulting these flowcharts as a guide for assessment and placement in all of our "Intervention" classes, drawing the Basic English and Reading teachers (several of whom were also Special Education teachers) into the placement process.

I was more involved in the development of the English Language Acquisition Flowchart, which was developed during my second full year. Since our district had cut our district ELA TOSA position, our Literacy and Curriculum & Instruction TOSAs wanted our input regarding criteria for the various levels of our new curriculum. One of our goals was to determine how the ELA Flow Chart would feed into the Reading Flow Chart. This way we could ensure the integration of our departments and prevent "gaps" in our system of "Intervention." This time, English language acquisition teachers were pulled from across the district to give input on the development process. The curriculum materials were pre-selected by the district, so the teachers

gave input primarily on cutoff scores and corresponding placement. We, as secondary teachers,

were already using some of the curriculum materials. At the high school level, we were given

Inside the U.S.A. *as a newcomer text and* The Edge: Fundamentals *for students who were no*

longer newcomers but still classified as "Limited English Proficiency" students. What we were

not familiar with were two additional levels of The Edge, *which we were given the following year.*

27J School District

Please see progress monitoring guidelines located within the *Approved Reading Intervention Programs* pages within this guide.

High School – Tier 3 Reading Assessment and Intervention Flowchart

Tier 3 is in addition to General Ed Language Arts/English Courses. In order to close the achievement gap, Tier 3 research-proven programs must be implemented with fidelity and with high quality instruction.
Approved Tier 3 Intervention Programs: Read 180, System 44, Really Great Reading (Phonics Boost/Phonics Blitz), 6 Minute Solutions

Intended for ALL students who score: NWEA Reading Score of 1st – 35th percentile *and/or* Unsatisfactory or Partially Proficient on T-CAP (Including *ANY* ILP 1 & SPED) If a student is a second language learner, begin using the ELP flowchart (located in this guide.)

NWEA Reading 1st – 12th percentile and Between 0- 400 Lexile level

Give 1 minute BRI Oral Reading Fluency Test for the score to enter into the grouping matrix. **AND**
Beginning & Advanced Diagnostic Decoding Survey (Phonics Boost)
If **Significant or Severe** Continue
If **Needs Further Testing** administer the **Pre-Reading Skills Diagnostic Survey** – Student needs to begin Boost with extra work in phonemic awareness.

If **Mild** or **Moderate needs**

Phonics Boost
Class Size of 3-12 (depending upon severity of need) and a flexible class period of 45 – 60 minutes.

Phonics Blitz
Class Size of 12- 15 and a flexible class period of 45 – 60 minutes.
6 Minute Solutions can be used in conjunction with Phonics Blitz to build oral reading fluency

If Students Score...

NWEA Reading 13th – 35th %tile AND Lexile level of 400+ Or ILP 1 status with NWEA above 35%tile.

If *1 minute* grade level BRI Oral Reading Fluency check is **Intensive 0-121** administer the Beginning and Advanced Diagnostic Decoding Survey.

If **Significant, Mild** or **Moderate** enter above flowchart.
☼
If **Strong Decoders** or **Slow Reading Rate with Strong Decoding Skills** continue to the right

If *1 minute* grade level BRI Oral Reading Fluency check is **Above 122**

If additional diagnostic information is needed, administer the CORE Phoneme Segmentation and CORE Phonics Survey

If CORE Vocabulary Screening is **0-14 Intensive** then time and focused instruction in vocabulary will be necessary.

If **15-22 strategic** then some additional vocabulary instruction needed.

AND

CORE Reading Maze Comprehension Test
0-33 Intensive/Strategic

If CORE Vocabulary Screening is **0-14 Intensive** then time and focused instruction in vocabulary will be necessary.

If **15-22 Strategic** then some additional vocabulary instruction needed.

AND

CORE Reading Maze Comprehension Test
0-33 Intensive/Strategic.

If further diagnostic information is needed on comprehension skills, administer the full BRI, including all sections.

Read 180
90 minute block of 15 - 18 students or 45 minute period of 15 students.

6 Minute Solutions can be used in conjunction with Read 180 skills to build oral reading

Read 180
90 minute block of 15 - 18 students or 45 minute block of 15 students.

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Figure 1-1. Reading Assessment and Intervention Flowchart

27J District

6th – 12th Grade ELP (English Language Proficiency) Flowchart

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Give Home Language Survey

^If yes= administer the CELA Place Test:

^If score is **Fluent** on the CELA Place Test and other assessments proceed with General Education Plan

^If no = Does not qualify for ELL Services proceed with General Education Plan

^If score is (Approaching Proficient or Non-Proficient) on the CELA Place Test continue with

^If score is **Fluent** on the CELA Place Test and other assessments are not on grade level, proceed to appropriate grade level Reading and Math Assessment and Intervention Flowchart.

Use CELApro scores from the Spring.

Listening	1 or 2
Speaking	1 or 2
Reading	1 – 4
Writing	1 – 4

Listening	3
Speaking	3
Reading	1 – 4
Writing	1 – 4

And

a Lexile score is below 600

Listening	4
Speaking	4
Reading	1 – 3
Writing	1 – 3

And

a Lexile score at or above 600

Listening	4
Speaking	4
Reading	4
Writing	4

And

a Lexile score above 600

- Tier 4 –Core Replacement
  - Give Program placement test or use NWEA for Lexile levels:

Middle School	High School
If a newcomer use **Inside the USA** for 1 year	If a newcomer use Inside the USA for 1 semester and Fundamentals for 1 semester
If not a newcomer: Lexile between BR-550 use **Inside** Level A for 1 year	If not a newcomer: Lexile between BR-650 use **Edge** Fundamentals for 1 year

In addition to regular education classes follow the below Tier 3 Chart using **Inside** or **Edge**

Give program placement test or use NWEA for Lexile levels:

Middle School - **Inside**	High School - **Edge**
Lexile BR-550 student should be in Level A	Lexile 500-950 student should be in Level A
Lexile 400-650 student should be in Level B	Lexile 750-1075 Student should be in Level B
Lexile 500-750 student should be in Level C	

If a more appropriate placement for student is Read 180, proceed to Reading Intervention Flowchart for accurate data guides. If the Flowchart places students in Boost/Blitz - continue in this box until student is appropriate for 180 w/ L book support.

In addition to regular education classes follow the Tier 3 Reading and Math Assessment and Intervention Flowchart

Tiers 1 and 2: Regular education classes with sheltered English Instructional support

Above scenarios are to be used as a guide. Most students will be placed according to the flowchart. Final programming decisions should be made using current data and affective needs of students.
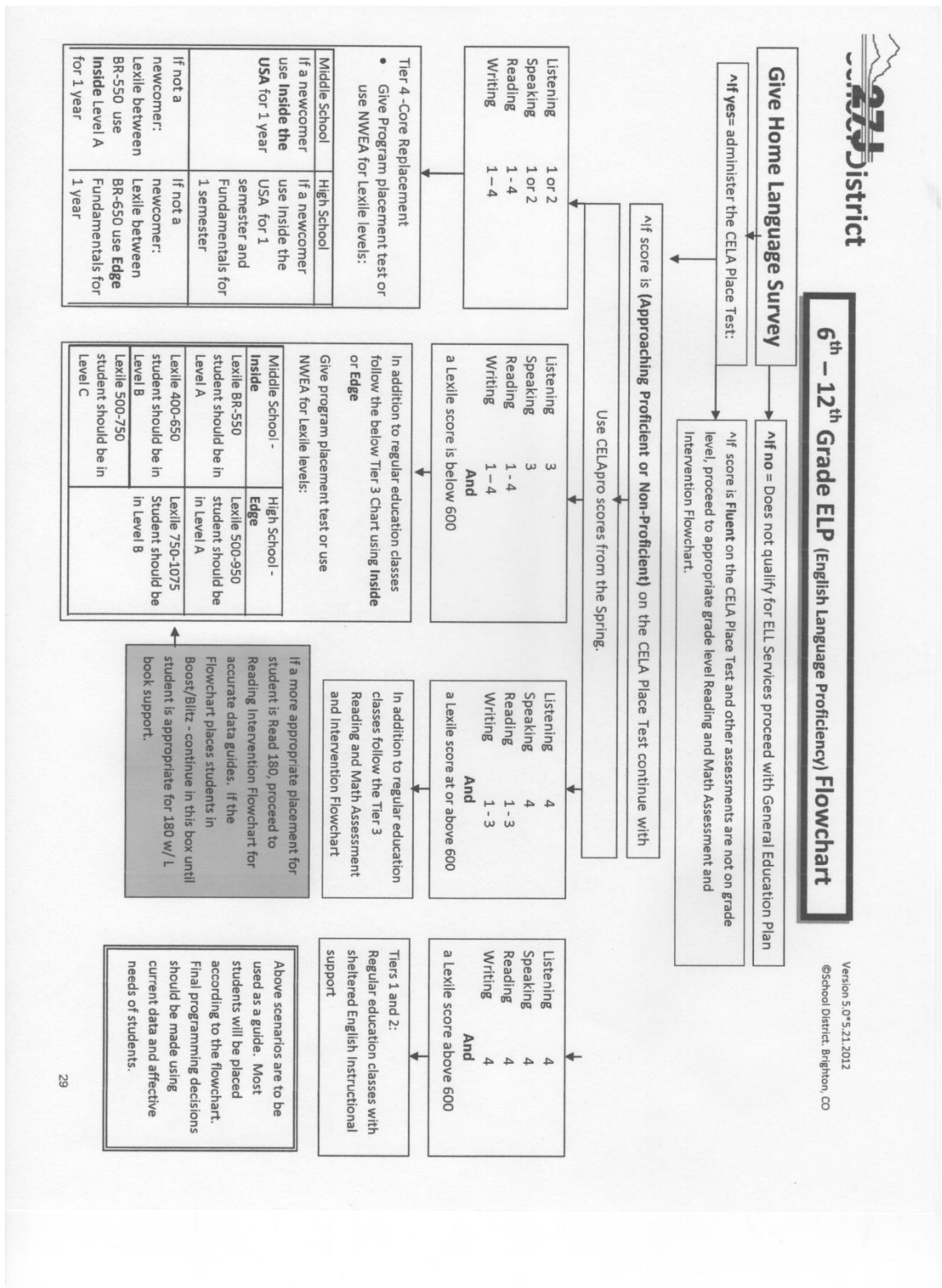
29

Figure 1-2. English Language Proficiency Flowchart

The images of these flowcharts create a strong sense of order, implying that the district has a clear vision for its Intervention systems. Both flowcharts revolve around standardized testing tools, and in some cases, additional diagnostic assessments. Each lists precise cutoff scores and percentiles and corresponding Interventions, as well as a clear direction in which each student should progress.

These flowcharts bear similarities to a medical plan, which begin with diagnostic assessments of the students' ailments. Once the results of these diagnostics are in, the literacy doctors prescribe and administer treatments that their supervisors have selected based on empirical research in the field of English literacy development. These doctors must also monitor their students' progress, using the flowchart as a guide to determine next steps in the treatment plan. The ultimate goal, of course, is to cure their students, eradicating the need for such treatments.

Our district's reaction to our low test scores was to push for formulaic solutions, which would be implemented with the utmost rigor and efficiency. The only viable solutions were those verified as effective by empirical research, as though all learning can be measured quantitatively and all variables impacting a student can be controlled (Ravitch, 2010). All students needed to be held to the same type and level of standards, regardless of their interests and ambitions, and to reach these levels in the most optimal time frame possible. It was as though schools were now required to operate on the same principles as a business.

In some ways, these systems were reassuring after a year and a half of seemingly haphazard placement of students in English Language Acquisition and *Read 180* classes. The flowcharts provided greater clarity regarding when and where to place students. Yet everyone who taught Intervention classes recognized that some students tested into these classes yet seemed to stagnate after making a certain amount of progress (as defined by the program) or to never make progress at all, while many simply did not want to be placed in these classes. In a

number of these cases, data points could easily become a student's or even a teacher's worst

nightmare rather than an impetus for growth.

While President Obama has granted waivers which have excused many states from some

of No Child Left Behind's stringent requirements regarding testing and achievement, Race to the

Top has actually reinforced the demand for high stakes testing and changed all of the standards,

redesigning the high pressure environment that pushed so many schools to ramp up their

Intervention programs. In order to obtain approval of their waiver applications, states were

required to commit to particular changes that correspond with Race to the Top's core

requirements, which included longitudinal data systems and turn-around of low-performing

schools. Now teachers are under even greater pressure to foster student growth as many states are

now connecting student test data to their professional evaluations.

Chapter 2

Where is this coming from? Making sense of policy and school frameworks.

It was the spring of 2012--a year since the first CSAP assembly. Once again I was ushering my students into the gymnasium for the pep talk on the state test, now being referred to as TCAP (Transitional Colorado Assessment Program). While the announcements and reminders were quite similar to those from the year before, one new feature was the awarding of the "Torch of Knowledge." As our building principal announced that our school had beaten our rival school on the previous year's CSAP tests, the principal from the defeated school appeared to present our principal with this trophy. We had won the "Torch of Knowledge;" now it was time to prepare for the next set of exams so that our principal would not have to suffer this same humiliation. I imagine the other principal used a similar tactic with his student body.

Our district's effort to incentivize student investment in the test was strikingly similar to the federal government's effort to incentivize state investment in the type of reforms the United States Department of Education desired under Secretary Arne Duncan. Duncan's track record in Chicago was compelling, and a majority of the states attempted to fall in step with the his formula for education reform.

The Aims of Race to the Top

America will not succeed in the 21st century unless we do a far better job of educating our sons and daughters… And the race starts today. I am issuing a challenge to our nation's governors and school boards, principals and teachers, businesses and non-profits, parents and students: if you set and enforce rigorous and challenging standards and assessments; if you put outstanding teachers at the front of the classroom; if you turn

around failing schools – your state can win a Race to the Top grant that will not only help students outcompete workers around the world, but let them fulfill their God-given potential.

President Barack Obama

July 24, 2009

President Obama's words appear noble, much like any other presidential speech regarding education. He personalizes the message with familial terms while appeasing those incensed with the apparent failure of our schools by calling for higher standards. His words appeal to the widespread concern regarding the nation's financial woes. To bring his point home, he invokes the name of the Almighty in a gesture of compassion towards all God's children who deserve a future. After forty years of failed education reforms, Race to the Top finally provides a viable solution.

The competitive grants from Race to the Top have been widely criticized from both ends of the political spectrum, ranging from conservatives who see this initiative as top-down bureaucratic control at the expense of local control (Lips, 2010; MacInnis, 2009), to teachers' unions that vehemently oppose the push to tie teacher evaluations to students' standardized test results. Others question the sustainability of a program initiated by a one-time grant or states' capacity or intentions of enforcing all that they have promised (Smarick, 2010). Supporters like Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, however, believe the betterment of American education and the closing of the achievement gap hinges on high quality teachers, college and career oriented standards, as well as data driven instruction (Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010). Therefore, schools should operate on a model similar to that of successful businesses in a competitive market.

The philosophy behind Race to the Top echoes the concern of A Nation at Risk, that America's students are falling behind academically and putting themselves and their nation "at

risk" of falling behind in the global economy (Neef, 1998). Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, Arne Duncan, represented the administration's position as the competitive program was presented: "Today, our standards are too low and the results on international tests show it. Worse yet, we see the signals in the international economy as more and more engineers, doctors, and science and math Ph.D.s come from abroad" (2009). Race to the Top is a response to this concern, or perhaps even a reaction, pushing states to ensure college and career readiness by implementing more uniform college and career-oriented standards, developing data systems for measuring growth and reflecting on pedagogical practice, hiring and retaining high quality educators, and revolutionizing low-achieving schools.

Once submitted to the Race to the Top judges, each state's plan for education reform was evaluated with the following section criteria:

- "State Success Factors" mandated the development of a "reform agenda," the attainment of local buy-in, the creation of capacity for implementation, and the demonstration of gains in achievement (125 points).

- "Standards and Assessments" required states to plan (Round 1) and adopt (Round 2) common standards and assessments which better prepare students for the twenty-first century (70 points).

- Data Systems to Support Instruction asked states to develop data systems to track students' progress over time and to ensure that these systems are readily accessible to educators for instructional decision making (47 points).

- "Great Teachers and Leaders" called for high quality educator preparation and support, improved evaluation systems, as well as equitable "distribution of effective teachers" (138 points).

- "Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools" stated that states must provide research -proven Interventions for failing schools (50 points).

- "General Selection Criteria" recommended that states commit to adequate funding and other conditions necessary for the above reforms, as well as the creation and maintenance of charter schools" (55 points).

States were encouraged to prioritize "comprehensive reform" involving many of its Local Education Agencies (LEAs), investment in science, math, technology, and engineering programs, early learning outcomes," and "longitudinal data systems."

All of Race to the Top's required components are viewed as a part of the road to economic recovery at a time when the United States is feeling the heat of its economic competitors. It is no wonder the discourse of the Executive Summary of Race to the Top (2009) uses the words "stimulate the economy," "invest in critical sectors," "supporting investments," "innovative strategies," "improved results," "system capacity," and "productivity and effectiveness" (p. 2).

Capitalist culture has been impacting education in the United States since the development of the market economy in the late 1700s and early 1800s when it led to the development of the "common school" (Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001). At this time, it was commonly believed that "…in order to succeed in the new market economy, students would have to learn to appreciate the values of work, determination, and achievement" (p. 100). In this respect, the thinking behind education reform has not changed significantly. However, the forces behind Race to the Top are more complex than the simple "hard work" philosophy.

Rapid technical developments ranging from computers and telecommunications to biotechnology have created a demand for knowledge among far more workers than were necessary during the industrial revolution (Neef, 1998). "Enterprise growth today depends on innovation, and innovation depends on knowledge" (p. 3). Stevens (1998) identifies information technology as the catalyst for transforming knowledge into a "market commodity," which is foundational to economic growth. In this context, the most valuable skill is the capacity to

continually learn new skills, particularly as production began to meet increasingly specific

varieties of consumer desires (Stevens, 1998; Gee, Hull, and Lankshear, 1996). Workers no

longer follow rote instructions; instead, they are taking on increased responsibility for thinking

and making decisions. This shift in perspectives corresponds with the changing value of a

university education from a luxury in the late 1800s, to desirable a few decades later, to virtually

a necessity in more recent decades, particularly for entrance into the middle class (Drucker,

1998). "…the unskilled in the first world are on their way to becoming marginalized" (Thurow,

1998, p. 208).

The demand for knowledge has heightened significantly in recent decades, particularly

since A Nation at Risk directed attention to the rise of the United States' economic competitors

and education's role in causing as well as potentially solving or at least proactively negotiating

the problem of international competition (Gabbard, 2000). "Regardless of the specific complaints

against the schools, the demands of the global economy now drive U.S. educational discourse" (p.

xvii). This is evidenced in the first objective of the Race to the Top program, which explicitly

requires states to adopt "standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and

the workplace and to *compete in the global economy*." The Discourse of Competition warns us, if

America's future workforce is to compete with China and India's, we as a nation must raise our

standards, reform struggling schools, and ensure that our students have the most qualified,

competent, and dynamic teachers we can find. Concerns regarding student performance and

career readiness have increased because of the number of lower level positions corporations are

now outsourcing to nations with lower costs of living. There are certainly a myriad of questions

regarding the direction that outsourcing will continue to take American companies, driven by the

perpetual desire of consumers to access a spectrum of commodities at the lowest prices.

At a surface level, Race to the Top is an incentive program intended to jump start reform

throughout participating states, and particularly some of the lowest performing schools. Beneath

the surface, however, lies the ambition of rescuing the United States from long-term economic

downfall.

Colorado Joins the Race

As states searched for ways to negotiate the current economic recession, Race to the Top

promised a tempting portion of $4 billion for education. Colorado was one of forty states to

participate in Round One. From the start of the competition, the Colorado Department of

Education (CDE) demonstrated great zeal in its quest for this new federal incentive, with

numerous meetings to discuss the components of the application and how each part might be

implemented.

> So far, 650 teachers, business leaders, students, and others have taken part in those
> sessions, their input bolstered by the views of national experts such as Kate Walsh, the
> president of the National Council on Teacher Quality, a research organization in
> Washington (Klein, 2009).

CDE also felt it was important to negotiate with the teachers' union rather than trample on the

very people who would be implementing each component. CDE formed four committees to deal

with each of the primary components of the application requirements:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools (Executive Summary, 2009, p. 2).

Desired outcomes included increased proficiency and graduation rates, as well as college

enrollment and workforce readiness.

As the Colorado Race to the Top team presented their plans to the panel of judges who

had reviewed their application, they stressed their own credentials, along with their history of

reform, which they claimed to be the perfect foundation for the necessary Race to the Top reforms (Colorado Department of Education, 2010; United States Department of Education, 2010). Their presentation also emphasized the importance of collaborating with local education agencies and building trust while addressing "tough" issues. The team highlighted "SchoolView" as the data platform that would serve as a tool for increasing access to accountability information, which they suggested, along with the Education Accountability Act of 2009, situated Colorado as a national leader in education reform and accountability. Education Commissioner Dwight Jones depicted his a "Unit of Turnaround" within the Colorado Department of Education. Furthermore, the state committed to teacher evaluations "based at least 50% upon student growth" (p. 23).

After their presentation, the panel of judges plied the Colorado team with questions regarding the claims and apparent gaps in their application. A number of these questions asked for clarification on their goals, plans for implementation, and potential for effectiveness (United States Department of Education, 2010). One question dealt specifically with "challenges" the state has encountered regarding the growth of English language learners. Another critiqued the softer tone of "recourse language" than their "reform language." Other questions pertained to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), SchoolView, accountability for non-tested subjects, inconsistencies of alternative certification programs, and money available for education. The Colorado team consistently responded with comments regarding systems which were already in place, as well as the potential of using certain districts as models. One judge also asked what the team would do if they did not receive the grant money from Race to the Top, to which the team responded, "Win or lose, we are pursuing private sector resources."

The monetary incentive could not have been more timely. All of this planning took place as districts across the state braced for budget cuts totaling 260 million dollars and thousands of teacher and education worker layoffs (Zelinger, 2010). At this time, the Colorado Department of Education drafted its summary of its Race to the Top projects and corresponding $377 million

budget. The plan featured figures like $21.5 million for state-level capacity building, $24.4 million for an "integrated data platform," $67.8 million for teacher evaluation systems, $8.2 million to promote AP exams, and $24.5 million to support Teach for America in low performing schools (Colorado Department of Education, 2010). One tenth of the total was designated for actual implementation of the Colorado Race to the Top plan, and $41 million was designated for turning around low-performing schools.

Their high level investment did not pay off in this initial round, as Colorado was among the 38 states that lost to Delaware and Tennessee (United States Department of Education, 2010). Determined to increase their score and earn a more competitive ranking, Colorado's Race to the Top team carefully studied the winning states' applications and applied to compete with 38 other states in Round Two. The criteria for Rounds One and Two were virtually identical, except for the expectation that Round Two applicants were already implementing the new common core standards.

As the team compiled its ideas prior to the second round of application submissions, it was decided that standards across the state were not adequately "aligned for career and college readiness;" educators lacked ready access to the data platforms necessary to inform instruction; insufficient opportunities were provided for professional development and support for teachers and principals; inadequate attention had been devoted to the "lowest performing schools;" and there was no "comprehensive" system for sharing "best practices" (Colorado Department of Education, 2010). Strategies for resolving these shortcomings echoed the requirements of Race to the Top's requirements.

The RTTT team emphasized their desire to retain key features from the initial application, including professional development opportunities and support for the implementation of the forthcoming college and career oriented. The notion of support was also stressed with

regard to the lowest performing schools. Additionally, the team was concerned that the data made available to educators be accessible and easy to use. The team, which exudes much pride in the painstakingly developed Colorado Growth Model, expressed the importance of educator evaluations being based on student growth. Finally, the team identified innovation and cross-district collaboration as application components that would remain in the second application.

In their second application presentation, the Colorado team reminded the judges of their history of legislation, as well as the new additions. They provided a number of colorful visuals and diagrams illustrating the alignment of Colorado reforms with Race to the Top, Local Education Agency support and participation, and the establishment of comprehensive systems to ensure educator effectiveness. The team also identified the state's role in the implementation process. Once again, they highlighted SchoolView as a space for displaying schools' growth and keeping them accountable.

In this second round, Colorado requested $175 million, including 34.3 million for SchoolView implementation, 25.8 million for school turnaround, 20.7 million for standards and data systems, 19.3 million assessment materials, 18.3 million for "developing a pipeline of effective educators" (p. 19), 13.5 million for implementation, 12.6 million for teacher evaluation systems, 11.2 million for the educator effectiveness unit, 8.2 million for Colorado Legacy Schools, 6.9 million for school leadership academy, and 5 million for "drop out prevention & student re-engagement" (Colorado Department of Education, 2010, p. 18).

During the Question & Answer session (United States Department of Education, 2010), Colorado Department of Education's RTTT team fielded a number of questions pertaining to their efforts towards capacity building and plans for implementation of the various promised reforms. The questions targeted what the panel of judges believed to be gaps in the written application and 30 minute oral presentation granted to the team as finalists in Phase 2. One of the first questions referred to the low percentage (5%) of union representative signatures on the

application. CDE's representatives responded that, although their unions did not sign the

document, they verbally assented to supporting the implementation of the Race to the Top

reforms if the moneys were indeed awarded to Colorado. Several of the other questions requested

additional detail on communication and implementation with Local Education Agencies. Various

members of the Colorado Race to the Top team responded with further details on their plans. The

judges also critiqued Colorado's history of ineffective reforms, as well as its history of local

control. Colorado's representatives stressed their dedication to "minority and low income schools"

and to the dissemination of ideas that are working. The team acknowledged its heritage of local

control but pointed towards its work to "develop content collaboratives with representatives from

different regions," utilize the Colorado Growth Model to evaluate the effectiveness, and deploy

regional teams to provide assistance. With specific regard to districts' freedom to develop teacher

evaluations, the Colorado team explained that the state set standards about the quality of the

evaluations that districts would develop, underscoring the importance of allowing schools to

"pioneer." A similar response was given to a question regarding standards-based curricula, as

Colorado reiterated its emphasis on local control, though the team did commit to incentivizing

"quality" lesson plans. This pattern of judges' concern regarding local control extended into the

issue of school turnaround, to which Colorado's team responded with the district's right to choose

the type of turnaround measure to be implemented. The final question pertained to the integration

of STEM across the state, which resulted in an explanation of integration with the Common Core,

as well as the identification of key investors.

Although the state committed to the required changes including updated, nationalized

standards and revised teacher evaluation systems, Colorado did not even make the top 10, each of

which received millions of the stimulus money allotted for the competition. This time Colorado

was bested by New York, Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, Maryland and Massachussett, Rhode

Island, and Hawaii, all of whom won tens of millions of dollars to implement their reforms

(United States Department of Education, 2010). In spite of the results, districts across Colorado are revamping their teacher evaluation systems, developing Individual Career and Academic Plans for secondary students, and preparing for the new set of national standards aimed at fostering college and career readiness in high school graduates.

In Round Three, the United States Department of Education accepted applications from seven persistent states, all of which were awarded a portion of the designated $200 million. Colorado, one of the seven, received $17.9 million, a rather small sum in comparison with the hundreds of millions which was being cut from districts across the state during the time of the competition (Engdahl, 2011). Our district received $40,000, which was earmarked specifically for teacher evaluation changes over the course of the next four years (School District 27J, 2012).

Making Sense of My School's Interpretation of Race to the Top

We have been honored to receive the prestigious Colorado State Finance Award for fiscal stewardship. And we are proud to say that we continually strive for $1.15 in value for every $1 invested in our school district.

School District 27J Community Report, 2009

From where I stood as an Intervention teacher in this Denver suburb, my local district was every bit the "eager beaver" Colorado had proven to be in the RTTT competition. It seemed that Race to the Top had barely been implemented before our district sent our Career and Technical Education Coordinator to our building in order to present the new Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) mandate from the Colorado Department of Education (2011). Around this same time, our building and union leadership spoke to us about the forthcoming changes in the teacher evaluation process. Our union representatives assured us that they were proactively participating in its development in order to ensure that evaluations would reflect the best interest of us, the teaching staff. Meanwhile, our district began to develop systems to provide us all with

access to longitudinal data on our students. We were introduced to the Colorado Growth Model and provided with a database, Alpine, where we could access this information on our students to inform our instruction. This data was seen as both the results of our efforts, as well as information that teachers must use to inform instructional decisions. The following year, members of our district's administrative team informed the English language acquisition teachers of their similarly proactive role in the development of the new state standards for education. I struggled to process so many changes in such a short time frame.

Career Preparation: the new priority

My initial response to the ICAP mandate was positive. So often I felt that it was a struggle to encourage students to invest in our curriculum. Perhaps if they felt that a part of their high school career was devoted to career exploration, they would perceive that school was providing space for them to explore their own interests. In preparation for the required implementation date, our building delegated core subject areas to conduct students through various parts of the ICAP process. As we began the trial phase, the English department took responsibility for our freshmen and seniors, while Science and Social Studies took on our sophomore and juniors, respectively. A website entitled College in Colorado *was developed and devoted specifically to this ICAP initiative. Each secondary student was to register, and then schools were to guide everyone through interest surveys, career exploration, and eventually college and scholarship exploration as well. Our district hired a temporary staff member to begin implementation. The following year, an Language Arts teacher was granted a semester off in order to further develop implementation plans specific to our building. However, as an English language acquisition teacher, I taught students from all grades. When I asked how to handle these unique demographics, I was told that it was up to our department.*

Since I was the only English language acquisition teacher, I began brainstorming for an entire career research unit. However, recognizing the tremendous pressure to accelerate my students through our ELA curriculum, I decided not to implement the unit until after the state standardized testing was finished. With the weight of testing temporarily off my shoulders, I felt that this unit might afford me an opportunity to gather student input on what really mattered to them as students in terms of their career ambitions and the ways in which education did or did not play a role in career preparation. Since College in Colorado *was developed for this very purpose, I created a research process that utilized its Career Interest Survey and pathways for exploring a career. To broaden my students' perspective of the career planning process, I invited guest speakers from a variety of fields, and I included readings that encouraged students to think about the notion of pursuing their own goals, participating in a community, and considering the global nature of our workforce.*

The Career Interest Survey and short stories on young people struggling to identify their personal goals and dreams served as effective springboards for the exploration process. My students listened attentively to the guest speakers who came to our classes. They responded thoughtfully to the readings on community and outsourcing and seemed to enjoy discussing their reflections. They were enthusiastic about exploring a career that was interesting to them at this point in their lives. When they presented the final product of their career research, a poster, to the class, I sensed a feeling of pride that they could speak as an expert on this particular field and even answer questions that their classmates posed after their presentation.

Name_____   Career Interest Survey: Results & Reflection

1. Go to www.collegeincolorado.org
2. Click on "Career Planning" near the top.
3. Click on "Learn About Yourself."
4. Then choose "Interest Profiler."
5. Your Account Name is: birthday (041195) + student ID number
6. Your Password is: first initial, last initial and birthday (lh041195)
7. Take the quiz.

What did the results of the quiz say?

8. Now go back to "Learn About Yourself."
9. Choose "Career Cluster Survey." Take this quiz.

What kinds of jobs does it say you might like?

Reflection: What did you learn about yourself when you took these quizzes? Do you think they were correct? Do they really show jobs you would like? Explain your thinking.

If you have time, you may look at information under interesting careers.

Figure 2-1. Career Unit: Interest Survey

Name _____   A *Beauty of a Plan:* Career Research Unit

VOCABULARY: Write each word in Spanish. Use a dictionary if you need one.

English	Spanish
Goal	
Influence	
Plan	
Design	
Earn	
Prove	

SETTING: Describe the 2 important settings in this story.

Hair Salon	Shop Class at school

CHARACTERS: What are the characters opinions about Shelia's shop class projects?

Shelia's Opinion in the Beginning	Grandma's Opinion in the Beginning
Shelia's Opinion at the end	Grandma's Opinion at the end

Does Shelia change her opinion because of how her grandma feels at the beginning?

PLOT: Write the important events on these pages.

Pg. 3 First, Shelia finishes
Pg. 6 Next, Shelia goes to
Pg. 10, 11 Later, Shelia talks to
Pg. 12, 13 Then, her grandma says
Pg. 14-17 So, Shelia makes a plan to
Pg. 18-22 After this, she asks her class to
Pg. 29 Finally, her grandma sees

In the diagram below, write

Shelia's goals that are *different* from my goals	*Similar* goals that Shelia and I both have	Goals I have that are *different* from Shelia's

REFLECTION: Write a paragraph reflection on how similar or different your goals are from Shelia's. Who may influence your goals?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Figure 2-2. Career Unit: Reading Handout

Name_____   **Outsourcing Reading and Reflection Letter**

Everyone: Read the sentence under the title. What does "outsource" mean?

Outsourcing is when an American company_____

_____

Question 1 (pg. 194, paragraph 2): What are some American companies doing?

Question 2 (pg 195, pargraph 1): What does "Global Workplace" mean?

Question 3 (pg. 195, paragraph 2): How did the Texas company change?

Question 4 (pg 196, paragraph 1 and 2): Why are American companies giving people in different countries jobs?

Question 5 (pg. 196, paragraph 3): What is good about outsourcing?

Question 6 (pg. 196, paragraph 4 and 5): What is bad about outsourcing?

Reflection: Look at questions 5 and 7. DO YOU THINK outsourcing is good, bad, or both good and bad? Write a letter to a newspaper telling your opinion. Will outsourcing affect your life when you start a career?

Dear Editor,

    I think outsourcing is (good/bad/both good and bad) because_____

_____

_____

_____

I think outsourcing (will/will not) affect me when I look for a job because_____

_____

_____

_____

                                                                    Sincerely,

*affect=afectar   _____

                                                                    (your name)

Figure 2-3. Career Unit: Outsourcing Handout

As I planned the unit, I recognized its potential for helping teachers like myself to understand how students perceived school in relation to the notion of career planning. In order to get students thinking and talking reflectively about these topics, I developed reflection questions for the students to respond to after participating in all of the different parts of the Career Research Unit. At this point, I obtained permission from my university, our school district, my students, and their parents to use consenting students' reflections as part of a formal study in which I would examine their words and look for themes that might indicate ways in which their perspectives aligned or did not align with that of policymakers or school leadership.

After teaching this unit, I was enthusiastic about the Individual Career and Academic Plan and could see the positive potential of this Race to the Top reform. Students often seemed to evidence a disconnect between classes and the real world, and this seemed like an opportunity to create a bridge. My students found the research project, readings, and speakers to be interesting and relevant. In their reflections, a number of students acknowledged the connection between school and career preparation--even students who did not seem to have the level of investment that some of their classmates did. This discrepancy left me with questions. Why would students acknowledge the connection but not invest wholeheartedly in their classes?

The Discourse behind Race to the Top illuminates its aims to position all students as capable future workers in the twenty-first century, and the ICAP program certainly seemed to correspond with that aim. My students, on the surface level, seemed to respond quite positively, as is detailed in Chapter 4. And yet my observations and conversations with students during the previous two and a half years would not permit me to accept its seemingly positive impact without questions.

Negotiating conflicting messages

In many ways, my second year (2010-2011) at this high school was a relief after the chaos of the first year in English language acquisition. I was now teaching two sections of English language acquisition classes, and Transitional English had disappeared. In its place I was given ELA Lab, a class devoted to homework and study skills, specifically for English language learners. I still faced some mixing of levels, as I taught two Level II students in a class with Level I learners, and my Level II included several students whose proficiency levels exceeded the level of the materials in the provided curriculum, sometimes by more than one level. For these students, I sought out materials, trying to keep their learning experiences parallel, but appropriately challenging. Although I was to follow the new curriculum closely, The Edge *did not feel quite as scripted as* Read 180*, in that it provided a fairly comprehensive library of resources from which we, as teachers, could pull from and augment where we saw fit.*

Still, the pressure was on for me, of course, under tremendous pressure to demonstrate growth, yet not being provided with appropriate materials in order to do so. My anxieties heightened one morning as I met with my building's literacy coach and our district's literacy coordinator to discuss scheduling for the following year.

"Our goal is to get through Inside the U.S.A. *in the fall and* Edge Fundamentals *in the spring."*

I opened to the beginning of the latter textbook. "So the kids start with this type of reading in January," I flipped to the back of the book, "and we want them to get to this level of reading in one semester?"

"That was our plan to increase their proficiency levels as quickly as possible."

I could feel the panic rising in my chest. My Level I students had only completed five of the ten units in the book which introduced a variety of basic, introductory English vocabulary and

sentence structures in the first semester. The book which we were to use the following semester

contained six units with roughly thirty lessons each. Was it possible to complete 180 lessons in

one semester with students who had just moved to the United States a few months earlier?

> *I was disheartened as I realized just how far behind my students were. I spoke with my*
>
> *department coordinator shortly thereafter, asking how I could possibly meet the ICAP*
>
> *requirements and what I ought to prioritize. "The curriculum should probably come first," she*
>
> *replied. As a result, I scaled back my plans for college research, allotting 30 minutes a week for*
>
> *several weeks so that there would still be ample time to work through an additional unit of our*
>
> *ELA textbooks.*

I was stunned by the irony of my positioning. The pressure to provide Interventions that served to raise test scores was so relentless that I was struggling to find a way to meet the career exploration requirements, even though this was supposedly so central to the new legislation growing out of the Race to the Top competition. I knew that, as my students' "proficient" classmates were exploring colleges and careers, my students would not be afforded the same opportunity unless they progressed through their curriculum more quickly--or I simply chose to put the curriculum aside in spite of what I was told to do. I already felt that I was sacrificing opportunities for creativity and deeper inquiry in order to progress quickly through this curriculum, and now I could not offer my students the same opportunities for career exploration. In spite of all its claims, Race to the Top did not seem to position my students as potential capable "winners" in this race to prepare for 21st century careers (Collins & Valente, 2010).

Enter "Deficit" positioning

In the weeks following I felt the intensity of the pressure to demonstrate growth more acutely than I had with any other Intervention initiatives.

As I served on various committees, I soaked in the evolving nature of our systems, particularly as they related to "Intervention." While the Problem-Solving Team initially developed a process to address individual student concerns, new leadership drew the focus from individual to system level concerns. As the leading principal explained, with several hundred students struggling to pass multiple classes each semester and our process for identifying and placing students in Intervention courses still under construction, it was simply not feasible or practical to examine individual situations. Around this time, our building hired a literacy coach. While she hoped that there would be opportunities to really focus on individuals, she found herself deeply mired in the data required for placement according to the district's new Literacy, Math, and English Language Acquisition flow charts. Certainly the large number of students who fell into this category influenced the school's overall potential for reaching the desired proficiency levels and graduation rates.

As our Problem Solving Team discussed our forthcoming need for math Interventions, our math department representative explained:

 "I have a theory as to why so many of our kids aren't really ready for Geometry and Algebra II when they come to the high school. I think it is the push to accelerate most kids—They are pushing so many kids through Algebra I and Geometry at the middle school who don't completely understand it, and then they are not truly ready for the higher level math, even though they have already taken the prerequisite classes."

It was difficult to wrap my mind around these numbers, and I was reminded of a presentation where our building principal presented an overview of our high school's goals and

frameworks for education. This comprehensive model for education stressed the goals of increasing graduation rates from 87% to 95%, raising average SAT score to 22 (an "elite" score), obtaining one year's growth in every student, and helping teachers "acquire knowledge and skills to utilize the Instructional Model with the intentions of making conscious choices on behalf of the students" (School District 2J, 2011). My students, with their developing English or reading proficiency, needed to contribute to these impressive gains through the exponential increase in their own achievement. Furthermore, I, as their "Intervention" teacher, needed to engage in "best practices" in order to ensure that these gains were possible. The expectation was that of rapid achievement, with no space for sub-proficiency or other types of learning goals, particularly for those still striving for proficiency.

On every front, I was presented with the importance of growth on the part of both teacher and student. I certainly wanted my students to grow, though my definition of growth was not confined to test results. Yet I could not stop worrying; what if some of my students continued to struggle—even when I was utilizing the prescribed best practices? One of our assistant principals made it quite clear that failure was a school-wide phenomenon, so I was not alone in my worrying. How could I get my students to "grow" in the ways defined by Race to the Top? How could my entire school ensure this on a large scale when our struggles seemed to be so widespread?

The creators of Race to the Top believed that examining student growth is a more reliable way of measuring student achievement than focusing on single data points. What its proponents failed to address is how different tests, say from sixth to seventh grade, or ninth to tenth grade, can viably measure growth. Furthermore, states were pressured to accept what have become known as The Common Core Standards, in order to ensure uniformity of academic "rigor" across the states, leaving no space for diversity of academic or life goals and making its encouragement for states and educators to be "innovative" sound rather hollow.

Perpetual training, professional distrust

These goals led to an atmosphere of perpetual training. In some cases, I was on the receiving end, attending sessions on the Read 180 program, Literacy Academy, English Language Acquisition training funded by a special grant, and a number of other professional development sessions. I also took on leadership roles in some professional development, including sessions on specific writing strategies and English language acquisition strategies. Additionally, I assisted the Problem Solving Team in developing and presenting our plans for this special level of Intervention.

To ensure that Interventions were being offered throughout the school, regardless of the class, our district invested heavily in Seven Strategies for Assessment for Learning *(Chappui, 2009), published by Educational Testing Services, a guide to clear learning targets, assessment for learning, and reflection. Our progress through this text was slow, as our building, and perhaps district leadership, seemed to feel that we hadn't quite mastered the concept of "learning targets." Our administrators promised to "pop in" from time to time in order to ensure our compliance with "strategy one;" one time, a group of district leaders came through the building and took pictures of our learning targets. It was not until my third year that any of our professional development sessions broached the topic of reflection, which was one of the latter chapters in the book. To their credit, our building leadership has often drawn its teachers into leadership roles during these professional development sessions.*

During my second (2010-2011) and third full year (2011-2012) in this school, the teacher evaluation system changed. We were not required to keep a log of lessons and artifacts, and principals were encouraged to drop in at any time as opposed to scheduling a formal visit in advance. Since my supervisor was our building principal, he seemed to have little time to visit my class. Towards the end of my second year, he dropped in during the final week of school. My

students were quietly working on reflections of their learning experiences. He sat for perhaps

fifteen minutes or so, then rushed off to his next destination. When I opened my log the following

day, I discovered a note stating that my objectives were not posted. I actually had posted my

objectives that day and quickly responded, clearly identifying what those objectives were.

Concerned that my principal felt I was not adhering to district expectations, I made a mental note

to make these more obvious by creating colorful, labeled cards for each class's objectives.

These pressures to demonstrate achievement, specifically growth, led to the de-professionalization of the profession, where educators can never be fully trusted and must always be subjected to trainings based on the latest popular theory in education, touted as "research proven." Research and data trump the wisdom a real teacher who works day in and day out with group of students can provide from years of experience--or even relevant coursework (Giroux, 2012)--resulting in commercial curricula for "Intervention" teachers (Shannon, 1982). Teachers are subjected to an unending stream of reforms, as each new administration believes it has found a formula that no veteran or novice teacher has previously been able to conceive. Race to the Top also pushed states to eradicate tenure for educators.

For all of its claims to be a new program, Race to the Top did not eradicate the pressure to "teach to the test;" if anything, these pressures were escalating during the course of the three years I taught full-time in this school. No longer were schools solely responsible for the progress of students; teachers would now be singled out if their students failed to make what was deemed to be an appropriate amount of progress, regardless of what happened during their prior years of schooling, regardless of what all transpired in their lives outside of school, and regardless of a student's level of investment or family's priorities. The seemingly impossible task of closing the achievement gaps was now compounded by career exploration and career readiness standards as well. For many teachers in our building, this meant dealing with data, Interventions, and ICAPs

for 150-180 students. For Intervention teachers, this meant that we could not fail in our use of all the resources to help students catch up.

Whereas No Child Left Behind placed the onus for proficiency on schools, Race to the Top has transferred responsibility to individual teachers. Although it speaks to collaboration with local business or colleges, the notion of collaborative efforts between multiple teachers, counselors, bilingual paraprofessionals, administrators, parents, and students does not seem to be of great concern to its designers. Aside from previous test scores, a student's history does not need to be examined. Observations, reflections, and personal conferences are no longer sufficient measures of a teacher's effectiveness; school leadership must look at the students' rate of growth as assessed by the standardized test.

This lack of trust was compounded by the demoralization of sizable budget cuts. That this litany of new policy was enacted as education budgets across the nation were slashed demonstrated a lack of concern for both teachers and students. Hundreds of professional educators lost their jobs; others suffered from frozen or reduced salaries or benefits. Class sizes increased. Even when funds were available to build a much-needed new facility, there remained a lack of resources to staff a new school. Those teachers who were about to lose their jobs sat in our midst. And yet there was no mention of funding to support this mandate; it was simply an additional expectation added to our plate. It seemed that policymakers either felt that we were already paid sufficiently to account for this additional requirement, or they felt that the additional requirement would not create extra demands--or perhaps they simply did not care about their policy's impact on teachers.

Across the nation, educators have rallied against various aspects or results of the reforms. to protest. Just last month, Chicago teachers coordinated a protest involving roughly 7,000 to oppose the closing of over 50 of the city's neighborhood schools (Resnikoff, 2013). A few months ago, between 4,000 and 5,000 Hawaiian teachers gathered outside their capitol to protest their

inadequate pay and the new teacher evaluation systems (Kalani, 2013). In 2011, the United States

experienced its first recorded principal protest, coordinated by 658 school administrators in the

state of New York (Winerip, 2011). Among its participants were several prominent state figures.

> Mr. Kaplan, who runs one of the highest-achieving schools in the state, has been evaluating teachers since the education commissioner was a teenager. No matter. He is required by Nassau County officials to attend 10 training sessions, as is Carol   Burris, the principal of South Side High School here, who was named the 2010 Educator of the Year by the School Administrators Association of New York State.

> "It's education by humiliation," Mr. Kaplan said. "I've never seen teachers and principals so degraded."

Administrators expressed that the reforms were simply "slapped" together. One compared the

initiative to a tornado tearing through a junkyard, yet expecting a Mercedes in the end.

These protests resonated with me as I grappled with my own situation. As an Intervention

teacher in this Colorado school, I found it difficult to meet two of the most fundamental

requirements policymakers had laid down for me as a teacher of developing readers and English

language learners: accelerated progress through a curriculum "proven" to improve test scores, as

well as college and career exploration. What concerned me even more were the ways that I

conveyed learning to my students as I carried the weight of all these pressures.

Chapter 3

Why don't my students buy into this? Making sense of student resistance.

As I grappled with the expectations conveyed to me by school and district leadership who interpreted current policy, I was, each day, interacting with my students in light of these expectations. While some students seemed to comply, at least on some level, I repeatedly encountered resistance to Intervention throughout my three and a half years of work with English language learners and "struggling" readers. Several types of resistance stood out to me as I reminisced: resistance because of the negative stigma associated with Intervention classes; resistance due to the lack of space in schools for students' home language; resistance because of the disconnect between personal goals and the realities of school; and resistance due to the determinate possibilities for students entrapped in a never ending stream of Interventions.

Supporting learners as positive positioning

When I began teaching at this Colorado school, I felt confident in my ability to work with English language learners, including those who struggled to develop proficiency or to negotiate school in general. My confidence stemmed from a number of positive memories, particularly of one-on-one, teacher to student interactions I experienced in Pennsylvania.

When I taught tenth grade English, I distinctly remember spending extra time with two students from my seventh period class. One simply struggled with his writing, and we began to meet after school to develop his character analysis essay. What began as a disorganized, stressful venture evolved into a thoughtful, articulate paper, and this student was able to walk out with pride in his finished product. The other was actually a former English language acquisition

student. This student was not quite as enthusiastic about being successful, and as a young teacher, I tried a tough love approach, working to develop a strong rapport that would enable me to push him to make an investment in my class. I recall a day when he brought in a finished copy of an essay; I was startled when he gave it to me.

"I thought you were gonna kill me if I didn't bring it," he replied with a smile.

I laughed, as I realized how I'd hounded him earlier in the week.

This student also participated in some extra tutoring, and at one point, I gave him an alternate book that did not conflict with his religious beliefs.

I felt similarly confident when I transitioned into the English as a Second Language department where I did a great deal of individualized work with students, particularly those who had exited the sheltered ESL classes and were now being monitored as they juggled a full schedule of mainstream classes. In this setting, I encountered a spectrum of proficiency levels. One student, a high school senior from Ghana, had recently been adopted along with his younger brother by an uncle living in our community. As I read his essays, I was impressed with his articulation of ideas, and we talked about some of the ways in which British English differed from American English. His uncle was a university professor who was able to provide additional support at home. Another student had come with his family from Rwanda at the age of six, towards the end of the genocide. I also worked with his sister as a tenth grade English student and knew his older brother, a close friend of my own brother. In talking with our head ESL teacher, I learned that he, along with his family, had received appropriate emotional support upon entering our district. He was a quiet student, and his teachers were rather worried about him. He was not a student we would typically have worked with in ESL, but since he was struggling, we wanted to be sure that we had not made a mistake in exiting him years earlier. We classified him as a "monitor" student, and I began to look through his files, visit a couple of his classes, and work with him to find out what might help him to be more successful in school. I

began working with him not only on his assignments, but on organization so that he would be better able to keep track of everything for his classes. Although he did not openly thank me, he was quietly cooperative and pleasant as we worked to find ways for him to be successful in school. At the end of the year I was told I would be relocated to one of our elementary buildings where there was an urgent need, so I was not able to follow-up on his progress.

As I reflect upon these experiences, I realize that these are the experiences that pushed me to augment my English/Language Arts certification with English as a Second Language, and later Reading as well. While I loved to help students see the worlds opened up by reading and the power of written communication, I also loved to help students build confidence in themselves as readers and writers in ways that would serve as a solid foundation for future opportunities. I did not orient myself according to their test scores; they were simply individual students from varied backgrounds. Of course, policy tends to avoid issues such as "confidence building," which cannot be reduced to hard data.

Voices of resistance: I am capable!

When I first entered the Read 180 classroom in my new Colorado school in January of 2009, the assistant principal mentioned that there were some "ornery seniors," but that they just needed someone who cared and believed that they could succeed. Feeling confident in my prior experiences, I began the semester with enthusiasm.

My enthusiasm quickly gave way to a furrowed brow. Although I don't remember how many students responded when I taught lessons from the textbook, I vividly recall that a number of the students seemed to be "fake reading"--and their book logs remained empty after each twenty-minute session of silent reading. The Read 180 *curriculum was completely new to me, but this did not seem to matter, as each daily lesson was completely scripted. I knew the program was*

expensive and that I needed to continue to use the materials, but after a couple weeks of "fake

reading," I asked one of our assistant principals if I could try literature circles. Familiar with this

method and confident that I would still find time to work in the textbook, she readily agreed.

As I contemplated how to group students, I looked at my student lexile scores, the

measure that Read 180 *claims to use in order to place students at appropriate levels in the*

computer program and to encourage students to choose appropriately challenging books. Then I

selected three books that seemed to correspond with their approximate lexile levels and assigned

each of the students to groups accordingly. I generated weekly handouts with assigned page

numbers and corresponding questions, hoping that clear goals would help my distracted students

to focus.

The hole in my plan became evident as I passed books out to the group with the lowest

lexile range.

"This is a baby's book! I'm not reading this!"

The disgusted student was a senior from one of our many Latino families. He was already

being subjected to a 90 minute, developmental reading class every day of his final year of high

school, and now I was handing him a book with barely the thickness of a coloring book. Although

the topic was certainly not childish, there was no explanation I could provide that would make

him feel positive about reading this book, and so I promised that he would be able to self-select

his next book as long as he kept up with the literature circle readings. Throughout the semester,

this student would periodically try to argue with me about some of the class requirements.

Perhaps it was the close proximity of graduation that motivated him to persevere through this

book and later a book of his own choosing in order to finish out the year and earn his diploma.

Although the other students did not necessarily argue with me, I encountered various

forms of resistance. A few students simply did not attend, or attended so sporadically that they

soon lost credit for the class. Others came but would not read. When this continued, I resorted to

disciplinary action, moving students from the comfortable reading chairs in the reading alcove back to the desks where I could see them. One day, a frustrated "fake" reader did not want to move. When I insisted, he returned to his seat and put his head down on his desk in defeat. No reading occurred that day. Thankfully, he did not hold a grudge and returned to his usual humorous self, asking me how I was doing and joking with me from time to time. The following year, he would periodically drop by my classroom to say "hello" or joke, and yet I was never very successful at getting him to read that semester.

In the fall of 2009, my new Read 180 *group included a larger number of more compliant students who seemed willing to read the books and participate in discussions. At this time, I moved to a classroom where the previous teacher had displayed a large Read 180 sign above the door, a place the entire school population could see as they passed by. My new reading class immediately begged me, "Miss, please take that sign down!" Although they seemed less resistant than my previous group, they were mortified by the stigma of taking a reading class, particularly at the high school level. To them, it publicly implied that they were bad readers.*

This class included quiet dissenters, "fake readers," and Miguel, who felt that he should have been exited after his previous year in Read 180. *At times, his frustration would flair up, but most of the time he simply tried to prove himself, trying to be the first to finish reading an article and calling out answers to show how well he understood. And yet when he took each successive lexile test (the Scholastic Read Inventory), his scores did not seem to improve significantly. Aware of how exasperating this was for him, I asked if he was really trying when he took the test, or if he felt that perhaps he may have rushed through it without carefully answering the questions.*

"I think I rushed to much," he responded as he looked at the scores.

Miguel chose to retake the test, but by the year's end he was still not quite caught up with the prescribed level of proficiency for his grade. All this student wanted was to be perceived as

capable, but because our building was under so much pressure to raise test scores, he was assigned to the same reading Intervention for an additional year. I warned our new Literacy Coach that he would undoubtedly be disappointed and possibly upset about this decision. The next fall, I contacted his new Read 180 teacher and informed him of the dynamics as well. Trapped by the mandates of our district's Literacy Flow Chart, this teacher tried to compromise with Miguel, allowing him to participate for just half of the 90 minute block and then do other assignments during the remaining time.

The next year was also challenging, but nothing prepared me for the dynamics of my Read 180 class during the fall of 2011. The preceding spring I had worked with our Literacy Coach, Special Education and Language Arts teachers to place our ninth and tenth graders, as well as our English language learners in the appropriate English and supportive classes. Because it was the very end of the year, we found ourselves placing students whom we had never been able to speak to regarding their schedules. Students had already signed up for classes under the guidance of our counselors, and now we were changing their schedules based on their standardized test scores and, for the incoming tenth graders, the observations of their teachers.

I had scarcely introduced myself to this new group and given an overview of how Read 180 works when I realized how desperately some of my students wanted to escape this class.

"Miss, how can I get out of this class?"

"Man, I thought I was better than this."

"I already took this in middle school!"

My efforts to convey the class as beneficial for any student dealing the difficult textbooks fell on deaf ears. No amount of persuasion could convince three of the young ladies in this class to see this placement as anything more than an indication of their weaknesses in the realm of reading. I found myself even more stressed than I had felt during that first semester as these girls acted out in an effort to avoid the requirements of the Read 180 *program. I, the person who*

apparently held them captive in this embarrassing place, became their enemy. I was caught, like I

had been the first year with the disgruntled senior, between the perceived need to equip these

students with vocabulary and reading strategies that could potentially help them with high

school, college, or life, and their embarrassment at being classified as needing Intervention in the

first place.

Every year, I encountered students who exhibited an acute, and oftentimes uncomfortable awareness of their "Deficit" positioning. They knew that they had been classified as lacking certain skills or knowledge, and many resisted this positioning. For some, this awareness fed into a feverish determination to improve their reading skills and raise their test scores. For others, this outrageous placement was cause for avoidance, absences, or verbalized frustrations. Beneath this frustration and all of these efforts, I realized, was a deep desire to be viewed as capable. To enter into a high school setting and be placed in a developmental reading class questioned their identity as capable high school students (Erickson, 1987; Wortham, 2006).

In a policy environment that places a premium on rugged individualism, as well as rigor and efficiency, there seems to be no space for students who do not seem to fit into this "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" mold. Bauman (2004) goes so far as to suggest that those who cannot contribute to our economy amount to castoffs, the waste of our modern society. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, has already declared American schools to be an utter failure in comparison to other comparably advanced nations, so where does this leave a high school student taking *Read 180*? What could a student possibly amount to in a globally competitive economy without the math skills of an engineer or the grammatical correctness of a news anchor? Does this positioning have the strongest potential for developing confident, successful young adults?

Voices of resistance: This is my language! This is my culture!

After my initial semester in Read 180, my position was complicated by the addition of several English Language Acquisition classes. While two of these were "transitional" level classes for students who had not been placed in ELA but were not ready for grade-level Language Arts classes, only one was considered an ELA class. In this class I had a full range of proficiency levels and several sets of dated textbooks. As I grappled with how to handle the diversity of English language proficiency, I quickly discovered several significant challenges.

While the English language learners in my Pennsylvania setting had come from an array of countries, the ELLs in my Colorado setting came almost entirely from Mexican immigrant families, and as a result, they bonded in ways that I had not previously witnessed or experienced. As a new teacher in this context, I felt that I had to prove myself. Although they did not literally question me, I sensed the questions that must have been playing in their minds.

"Who is this lady? Is she on our side? Does she care about us? What will she do if we test her limits?"

Certainly almost any class can put a teacher to the test, and I had experienced this in other settings. Still, I felt that none of my previous experiences or education courses, undergraduate or graduate, had adequately prepared me for this.

For the first time in my professional teaching career, I felt like the minority in the classroom. It was difficult not to feel like an outsider as I began that first year. Although I had taken several Spanish classes in high school, it had been over a decade since I had utilized the language, and I discovered that my knowledge did not help me to understand many of the everyday conversations of Latino teenagers. It only seemed to help as I tried to help some of my monolingual Spanish-speaking students.

I was nervous as I attempted to encourage my students to speak in English, afraid that someone might accuse me of being racist even though it was my job to teach English. When I did rally the courage to say something, student often responded:

"But Miss, I was just explaining!"

I recognized that this was sometimes the case, but I also could see that they took advantage of that excuse to socialize, which often pulled them off task. Well aware that I was responsible for their growth in English, I continued to grapple with how I could encourage students to use English without making them feel that I was dismissing the importance of their home language. One day a student responded somewhat differently:

"But Miss, this is the only place where I can speak Spanish!"

His words struck me. For a vast majority of the school day, our English language learners had to speak English. Because most of our ELL population consisted of students from Mexican immigrant families, they saw my classroom as a safe place to use their home language. His comment caused me to think about the possibilities for Spanish in my classroom. Could it be used as a tool to support English language development? Certainly there was a great deal of research supporting bilingual education; I had just been so fearful of the expectations I had to negotiate as their ELA teacher that I was anxious about my students not getting adequate practice with English. I knew many of them stopped speaking English as soon as they stepped outside their classrooms.

At the same time I struggled with my students' tendencies to talk over me as well as one another. How could students hear my directions or understand what I was modeling if they interrupted me? How could I ensure that everyone could have the opportunity to speak if they would not let their classmates finish uttering a thought before jumping in with their own explanations? As I talked with the ELA teacher from one of our feeder middle schools, she explained that this was the communication style a number of Mexican immigrant families use in

their homes. Clearly, my students needed opportunities to communicate with one another. The question was how to get them to use their desire for communication in ways that supported their learning.

As I grappled with language preferences and communication styles, I also sought to understand why it was so difficult to get my students to turn in assignments. I noticed that many students were unlikely to complete or turn in anything that had to be done at home, which led me to cut back on the amount of work I asked them to do outside of class, but in the back of my mind I could not escape the concern that I was shortchanging students who were willing to do homework and would have done superbly with greater challenges. And of course there were the ever-looming test scores. How could I foster rapid rates of growth if I did not provide opportunities for students to extend their learning beyond the 47 minutes they spent in class each day?

As I reflected on my students' desire to speak Spanish in my classroom, I contemplated how many hours a day they had to use English. Those who needed minimal developmental or supportive classes were able to sign up for Spanish for Native Speaker courses and even progress to A.P. level courses. This program was extremely popular and led to a number of students obtaining college credits for their Spanish proficiency until it was eradicated in the 2012-2013 school year. However, students who had to take supportive classes or repeat courses they had failed were unlikely to have the space in their schedule for these Spanish classes. Aside from working with bilingual paraprofessionals, their entire school day was conducted in English.

From a functionalist perspective, this dosage of English was vitally important as educational and career opportunities would most likely be offered in this "de facto" official language. Had there been no practical reason for my students to develop English, I would not have been employed as their English Language Acquisition teacher. Yet from a critical perspective, students were being forced to leave their language, a core component of their culture,

at the door of the classroom because of the pressure to raise test scores and enhance students preparedness for college and careers despite the fact that native language development can actually support and enrich development in another language (Cummins, 2001; Espinoza-Herold, 2002).

Voices of resistance: These are my values!

At one point I was trying to help a senior catch up in my classes so that he would be able to graduate on time. But when I tried to get him to stay after school so we could work on some missing assignments, he stated that he had to watch his little sibling after school because his mom had to work. I began to see this as a common expectation in Latino families, who prioritize family and subsequently charge their teenage children with the care of younger siblings. I also had a student who was making promising growth and participating with great enthusiasm in Read 180 and English Language Acquisition, *yet she nearly lost credit for one of these classes due to attendance. When I spoke with her about her absences, she explained that sometimes her mother needed her assistance because she did not speak English. These values are certainly legitimate and worthy of transmitting, and yet they seemed to clash with the expectations that schools convey and enforce.*

During my 2010-2011 school year, I was working with a student who had just exited my ELA class and now had ELA Lab, a study skills and homework support class for English language learners. Each week I asked these students to look up their grades and determine what it would take to raise their grades in classes where they were struggling. As I talked with him one week about a class where he had a "D," I tried to appeal to a deeper motivation for him to invest in the class.

"What are you planning to do when you graduate?" I asked.

"Miss, I'm gonna be a painter. I already work with my dad."

I paused. Perhaps this was why he was not completing all of his assignments outside of school. What could I say that would encourage this student to spend a little more time on his assignments, or to be interested in raising a "D" up to a "C" in a couple of his classes? He already had a career plan, and it did not require geometry or history or biology. It did not seem to require the understanding of what have been deemed to be great literary works. This conversation was testament to the fact that the promise of a better career does not always give students a concrete reason to pour more energy into their education. In this case, school did not seem even remotely related to his goals. As I spoke with another student the following year, I encountered a similar obstacle as I tried to appeal to the idea of pleasing his parents.

"My parents are just happy that I only have one 'F,'" he responded.

I was stumped. Nothing in my teacher training or professional developments had taught me how to respond to this. How could I deal with the pressure to help this student accelerate towards proficiency or to successfully complete his high school classes when his parents were satisfied with performance that our school, state, and nation deemed to be failure?

Certainly there were many parents who sincerely cared about their child's success, as was evident when I called one couple regarding their son's grades and recent absences. The student of concern was a shy freshman who struggled to find the confidence to ask for help. Throughout the year I had continually encouraged him to ask for help, particularly in his science class. I always followed up with him when I felt he was falling behind in my class as well. However, at this point in the year I was concerned that a classmate was having a negative influence on him, compounding his battle to finish his ninth grade classes. From the moment we contacted his parents, they did not even wait a day to become involved. Within minutes they were in our building, asking what they could do to help their son be more successful in school. I explained that I was concerned with the influence of a friend, and that I thought this was why he

had missed a couple of classes recently. As our bilingual paraprofessional began explaining how he had not come back to school after one of his empty periods, his parents became angry.

"What do you mean 'empty classes?' You mean he is just walking around the building?"

After the first round of budget cuts, our school could no longer afford to staff adequate study halls or electives, and freshmen, with the most years to catch up on credits, were often given one or more empty periods so that upperclassmen could be prioritized in the selection of electives.

"You can make him stay after school and sweep the floors! He is going to come to class, and he will do his work!"

This student, quite humbled by his parents' indignant outrage, stood misty-eyed in the hallway. I turned to him:

"I know you are upset, but your parents really care about you. They want you to be successful, and they feel that what you are doing now is not allowing you to be successful."

With his parents support, he stepped up his effort as we finished the school year, but he also confided in me that he was going to attend a different school the following year. Our high school just did not seem to fit his needs or learning style. He and another struggling student asked me on a couple of different occasions what I knew about online school; both of them seemed to feel that peer influences could be a real obstacle to finishing high school.

These conversations caused me to question the ways in which I felt obliged imbue my students with the values our school, education as a whole, and policymakers prioritize. Formal schooling is of utmost importance; education received in the context of family, church, or even a work place seems less so. Because formal schooling is so essential in our "knowledge economy" (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996) our youth must take appropriately academic courses, earn good grades, and demonstrate competence on standardized tests. So what does it mean when a parents are satisfied that their child "only has one F" as a tenth grader? Are the parents wrong? Is a

mother wrong for asking her daughter to miss school so that the student can translate for her at the doctor's office? Is a student wrong for feeling that he doesn't "fit in" at his traditional public high school? It is one thing to provide students with opportunities and support, but is it feasible or more importantly, ethical, for policymakers and educators to coerce a students and their families into embracing a different set of values?

Voices of resistance: This is my life!

Perhaps one of the most troubling forms of resistance I recall was from a student who not only complied, but consistently gave his best effort. This student, like so many of my students in this school, seemed to be an "Intervention lifer," partly due to my own actions.

I initially had this student in Read 180 *in the spring of 2009, but when I observed his discomfort with spoken English, I inquired about placement in English language acquisition. One of our assistant principals placed him in my ELA class the following semester to see if anything I did might help him. As I conversed with a our bilingual paraprofessional who had actually worked with him and his family since his was in middle school, she expressed a real concern that something was wrong. I began to research his background and discovered that he had actually been in our district since elementary school.*

In an effort to find out why he seemed "stuck," I brought his name to our Problem Solving Team. Together we gathered teacher input and test data, and had one of our bilingual paraprofessionals who knew the family call home to gather additional insights. Our psychologist conducted some testing. We discovered two factors that were probably contributing to his ability to process and function in school. From this point on he was placed in several Intervention classes, including reading Intervention, math Intervention, English language acquisition, and a career preparation class. In the context of my class, he one of my most diligent workers. While

some of his classmates tended to socialize and wander off task, he was consistently focused. As

long as he understood what was necessary, he turned in quality, thoughtful work. But perhaps the

most encouraging change I saw was an increasing socialization with his peers. He kept his

grades up and obtained all of the necessary credits an entire semester early.

Although this student seemed to be successful in these classes, he <u>repeatedly</u> went to his

counselor and requested to be removed from these Intervention classes. He had also expressed an

interest in art, so I encouraged our team to ensure he had the opportunity to take art in his junior

or senior year. Yet throughout his remaining years in high school we kept him in supportive

classes, never once giving him the opportunity to take an art class.

While a number of my students, including this last one, worked extremely hard to

progress through high school, my heart and conscience could not ignore the signs and voices of

resistance against the ways in which I felt obliged to position them. The irony was that I had

always recognized the importance of supporting students, which was, in theory, the focus of my

position in this Colorado high school. Now I felt powerful forces positioning me, the Intervention

teacher, as well as my students according to their apparent "deficit." Where I had once viewed

English language learners as perfectly capable, and in many ways advantaged as they developed

fluency in two (or more) languages, their bilingualism now seemed to be a liability-unless they

could reach the accepted grade level standard of proficiency.

Where No Child Left Behind had defined success against a baseline of reading and math

standards, Race to the Top sought to redefine success according to what the government deems to

be necessary skills in the twenty-first century. In theory, states were to develop their own

reforms; in reality, states were expected to embrace "Common Core Standards," which are

promised to ensure college and career readiness. The objective appears to be national standards

under the ruse of state level decision-making. Enforcing these expectations, the Obama

administration effectively asserted that the nation's school children and youth should adopt the

same set of values regarding career readiness, where a potsecondary education is a must. The accountability begun under No Child Left Behind is extended and complicated by the "college and career readiness" emphasis of Race to the Top.

As I reflected on the varied forms of resistance I encountered in my classroom, I found myself questioning my efforts to align my students' goals and values with those of the policies conveyed through district and building leadership, and ultimately myself, the "Intervention" teacher. What did it mean when my students resisted these expectations? It certainly seemed that it was my job to eradicate the resistance, either by convincing my students that the values of Race to the Top were superior to their own, or simply by imposing these values regardless of the dissonance they created.

These questions contributed to my own growing resistance to the ways in which language and literacy development were being defined, and the ways in which these definitions were impacting our positionings as "Intervention" teacher and students.

From day one in English Language Acquisition, I struggled with students' desire to speak Spanish. The principal's Powerpoint presentations of student test scores, with his array of graphs and numbers, remained fresh in my mind. I struggled as students seemed to digress and chitchat in Spanish while I was trying to engage them in an English discussion of a topic. They were forever cracking jokes, and I did not feel a party to them. Something clicked one day as a student explained why he wanted to speak Spanish, and this seemed to precipitate a change in my feelings towards the use of Spanish in my English classes. I actually began to use Spanish with my level I students at times when I saw that they needed clarification, and I turned their desks to allow for more effective group work, which I discovered that this class used very effectively. I saw them translating for one another as they read stories and articles, or working to make sense of assignment guidelines. Spanish had become a supportive system, all the while allowing students to use their home language in a setting that so often restricted them to the use of English. It was

not that we were not using English; we were using Spanish to support English development, and ultimately to support learning.

When I took on this position, I was somewhat familiar with the work of Cummins (2001) on the value of bilingual education. Deep down, I knew how these students valued their home language. The pressure to have my students' demonstrate impressive growth in English proficiency on multiple standardized tests created a fear that I had to overcome before I could push back with the positive potential of welcoming my students' home language. As my principal stressed English language acquisition strategies in all classrooms, engaging me and several other Linguistically Diverse certified teachers in the planning of a series of professional development sessions on these strategies, I began to encourage Spanish in ways that both supported learning and made students feel that I valued this piece of their home culture.

At the same time, I wanted so very much to exit some of my Read 180 *students whose reading scores were just a little shy of grade level proficiency, particularly in the final year when I had students who had felt blindsided by this placement and trapped in an Intervention that they felt they did not need. During this time, my primary ally was our Literacy Coach; I repeatedly spoke with her regarding these discontented students. She promised to have heart-to-heart conversations with these girls, who were so indignant with me for asking them to follow* Read 180's *prescribed format. She agreed that one of our students was definitely borderline and could probably exit the following semester. She tried to strike deals with the other two in an effort to get them to invest with the hope of exiting in a semester or two.*

Recalling my past experiences with curriculum development, I began jotting down ideas for a reading strategies class that would sound more like college and career preparation than remediation. I generated a list of ideas and sent this to my Literacy Coach. She expressed interest in my ideas and went so far as to share our idea with the district's Literacy TOSA, who responded immediately with "No, you need to figure out why Read 180 *is not working for all students." After*

my literacy coach informed me of this decision, we continued our in-depth discussions about the lack of buy-in among some of our students. "I've noticed that students from Vikan come in eager to take Read 180 *because they really believe it will help them to become successful students, but our other students seem to come in with a really negative attitude." We talked about the idea of trying to foster a positive aura around the our reading Intervention program. After contemplating our situation, she shared another idea with our team of* Read 180 *teachers. "What if we used the* Read 180 *text to introduce strategies, and then have our students bring in their other textbooks in order to practice applying these strategies?" She asked us if we would mind experimenting with this sort of process prior to the end of the year to see if this adaptation might work.*

Although I was disheartened by district leadership's response, I reminded myself that my Literacy Coach had fully supported my idea. Looking back on this dialogue and ensuing efforts to "try out" her compromise with the district, I realized that, at the heart of our attempts to prevent students from feeling that they were negatively positioned, we were resisting the district's unquestioning acceptance of *Read 180* as the only viable solution for students who tested at a certain level of sub-proficiency. Furthermore, our collaboration strengthened our efforts to resist negative positioning on behalf of our students. While I remained somewhat skeptical of *Read 180*'s capacity to aid all students, our Literacy Coach attempted to infuse the program with optimism in a way that encouraged me to contemplate positive possibilities in what felt like an unreasonably narrow framework for supporting students.

This was also the year that our district Literacy TOSA informed me just how quickly my students needed to progress through the curriculum. A later conversation with my coordinator confirmed my suspicion that I had to prioritize the curriculum over the new Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) mandate. Dissatisfied with the possibility of my students missing out on an opportunity made available to their peers, I carved out several 30-minute openings in our schedule during the final weeks of school to engage my students in college research which would

culminate in a student-generated brochure on a specific college program that they find

appealing. Although I did not have the time to incorporate guest speakers, additional readings, or

a series of reflections, I was encouraged by students' responses to the mini-research projects,

which were similarly positive.

While I was wary of career readiness as the sole focus of schooling, I was enthusiastic about the possibility of allowing students to explore their interests and to contemplate their future, particularly as high school students. I had always viewed education as the expanding of one's horizons, and it was certainly possible that this type of exploration might expand the horizon of possibilities, illuminating areas of interest that a student might not have contemplated in the past. It had been my impression that ICAPs were intended to help prepare all students, and yet my English Language Acquisition students did not seem to factor into the thought processes of district or building leadership as they worked to meet this new mandate. While the Career and Technical Education director suggested that it was up to our department how we met ICAP requirements in the context of a mixed-grade classroom, both Literacy TOSA and department coordinator stressed the importance of progressing through the curriculum. Unwilling to allow my students to miss out on opportunities that every other student experienced, I attempted to find a compromise that would not detract from the "almighty" curriculum.

As I puzzled over my own positioning, I recognized that these resistant behaviors and words signaled a desire to be perceived in different ways, for the students' values to be recognized within the context of their school.

Chapter 4

How do my students' perspectives compare to policymakers' perspectives? Recognizing positive versus negative positioning.

As a mediator of policymakers' intensions, I sought to make sense of this apparent dissonance by examining the words of my students and policymakers. In order to formally collect my students' thoughts on education with specific regard to career preparation, I obtained consent to use their written or spoken reflections on the various elements of our Career Research Unit. To learn about the values of our current policymakers, I began reading documents regarding Race to the Top, as well as the speeches of policymakers. To locate evidence of local beliefs, I read school district documents. As I examined these artifacts, I searched for common themes that might reflect the values or responses to the values underlying Race to the Top. When I juxtaposed the words of my participating students with the language of policymakers, I discovered that, although their voices exhibit some agreement at a surface level, the underlying motivations are strikingly different.

According to the policymakers, "We are behind."

On Tuesday we released a study comparing kids in the U.S. to students around the world. Some of the results are disturbing. Compared to their peers in other countries, our students are stagnating. Students have not made gains in science or reading.

...Today, 30 percent of our children, or about 1.2 million students a year fail to complete high school on time. Only two-thirds of those who do graduate go on to any form of college.

-Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, From Compliance to Innovation August 2009

At the root of Race to the Top is the notion that American students fail to keep up with their international peers in many developing countries. Such a view clearly emphasizes comparisons using international academic assessment measures, as well as rates of high school graduation and postsecondary training. As I examined the speeches of Arne Duncan, *RTTT'*s architect, I found his Discourse full of negative language, such as "disturbing", "stagnating", "not made gains", "lag behind", "outperform", "troubling", "fail to complete", and "only two-thirds" (Duncan, 2009; Duncan, 2011). His Discourse positions schools, teachers, and students as deficient in comparison with our international competitors. Such deficit positioning creates the need to "regain the position" of competitive status. Students seemed less concerned with comparisons.

The students express, "I can pursue my dreams."

(Misspellings, etc. reflect the actual writing of the students.)

"The important first is finish high school and plan a major future and work in a job for and continued the college for more opportunities in this country for my family and my self." Paul

"I think everything in my Future is very important, because is part of my life. I think For me is important Finish the high school, obtain a Family, Finish the college and have the profesion, working and a take a happy life." Eliza

"I want to get more oportunities for my future and finish high school. After that go to the collage (college) and get a career, that's my goal for my future…education and good careers its like one thing." Emma

"A career is what makes you be somebody I (in) your future life. In my own life I want to be a Registered Nurse & Graduate from high school because I want to have a better life then what i do now." Stephanie

At a glance, my students' goals correspond with the aims of Race to the Top. Their words evidenced a recognition that education plays a role in career preparation. All spoke of finishing

school, and most mentioned college as well. School is "important" if you want to "be somebody," if you want "opportunities," a "future" or a "happy life." The most outstanding difference between the language of policymakers and students? My students appeared to believe that they are capable of academic and occupational success. They did not seem to be aware that American schools have been deemed a failure in comparison with schools abroad, or that their school may not have offered "adequate" college or career preparation.

According to the policymakers, "We need to compete. Therefore, we need to be efficient."

"I am confident that by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. That's our goal. That's our goal. (Applause.) That's how we'll out-educate other countries. That's how we'll out-compete with other countries tomorrow. That's how we'll win the future for the United States of America."

President Obama at Miami Central High School

"And it's the competitive nature of this initiative that we believe helps make it so effective. We laid out a few key criteria and said if you meet these tests, we'll reward you by helping you reform your schools…"

President Obama at Graham Road School

"The award of Phase 3 funds, which was based on the state's Phase 2 application, recognizes the excellent and hard work of all of the individuals who helped draft the state's reform agenda and provides much needed financial support to maintain and accelerate momentum on the state's reform effort."

Colorado Education Commissioner Robert Hammond, 2011

"District ____exists so that students have the knowledge and skills for present and future success, with results justifying the expenditure of resources.

"Students achieve academic excellence.

1. *The graduation/completer rate will increase by 2% per year until 95% is attained, at which point it will not drop lower.*
2. *The district's average composite ACT score will increase by .5 points per year until the score reaches 22, at which point it will not drop lower.*
3. *Students with continuous enrollment during an academic year will achieve one year's academic growth each year in grades 1 - 10, in reading, writing and math."*

School District 27J Global Ends Statement, 2013

It is clear that President Obama believes the United States has lost its status as world-class educators, and that this status must be regained. As a result, we are compelled to reform our systems in ways that enable us to compete with other countries. This spirit of competition is what will drive our next phase of reform initiatives, and we will see that competition is the most effective model for enacting change. States will be motivated by the incentives of winning, whereas they might otherwise remain complacent with the status quo. The desire to win has the power to inspire the rigor and innovation necessary to reverse the deficit positioning of a school, state, or national education system. Our building principal similarly embraced the belief that competition would motivate a body of students to perform well on the state tests, encouraging our student body to compete with a rival school to win "the torch of knowledge," an award to be presented at the next year's assembly by the rival school's principal.

Although some critics have suggested that Race to the Top does not necessarily inspire genuine reform, Colorado seemed intent not only on following through with its promised initiatives, but on doing so with maximum efficiency. This is perhaps the reason I saw evidence of RTTT entering and influencing the systems in my district and building so soon after the competition was enacted. Our district similarly urged a rapid raid of improvement towards higher test scores and graduation rates. At this level I also discovered a theme of fiscal efficiency, which struck particularly hard as the state began cutting millions from school districts across the state. We as educators were expected to do more with less money and in a shorter space of time.

This sense of urgency to compete seemed to stem from our nation's focus on the economy, a focus that seemed foreign to my students.

The students express, "I don't necessarily base my decisions on global competition."

"I think outsourcing is both good and bad because some companies move to other county and people lost jobs here, both (but) in other country people get more jobs." Emma

"In my opinion I think (outsourcing) is both good & bad, Good but only For Americans because they have things cheaply & lower price & Bad because Indian & Philippines only get paid $2.00 a day." Angela

"I think outsourcing will not affect my when I look for a job because I thik (think) have my own business." Eliza

"I think outsourcing will not affect me when I look for a job because I want to work this the government and government never move to other country." Emma

"I think outsourcing will not affect me when I look for a job because I can go and look for a job in another country." Christina

"I think outsourcing will affect me when I look for a job because what if i look for a job & I get it but 2 or 3 years later it moves to China, I cant go all the way over there and not see my family no more, so that now it would affect me." Stephanie

"Everyone is connected in some way, there many jobs given & lost." Angela

Anticipating that at least some high school students were not familiar with the notion of job competition, particularly on a global scale with today's tendency towards outsourcing, I presented my students with both a video and a corresponding article on outsourcing. A number of their reflections revealed some acknowledgement that outsourcing has both positives and negative effects. When I asked a more personal reflection question, I was not surprised when few students felt that outsourcing was likely to impact them personally. What did surprise me were some of the reasons students felt that they did not need to worry about the exodus of jobs: a privately owned business or government job would never go overseas--or, as a member of an immigrant family, it was conceivable that one could simply move to another country to find work. They seem both confident and creative in their responses.

According to the policymakers, "Certain skills are essential."

"Priority 2: Competitive Preference Priority -- Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). (15 points, all or nothing)

To meet this priority, the State's application must have a high-quality plan to address the need to (i) offer a rigorous course of study in mathematics, the sciences, technology, and engineering; (ii) cooperate with industry experts, museums, universities, research centers, or other STEM-capable community partners to prepare and assist teachers in integrating STEM content across grades and disciplines, in promoting effective and relevant instruction, and in offering applied learning opportunities for students; and (iii) prepare more students for advanced study and careers in the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics, including by addressing the needs of underrepresented groups and of women and girls in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

-The Executive Summary of Race to the Top

"STEM-EC is a dynamic group of committed business leaders, educators, and community advocates working to better connect industry and the K-16 academic community in efforts to graduate more students with the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills needed to meet the needs of Colorado's science and technology employers."

-STEM, Colorado

As China and India churn out engineers, the United States feels its status as a technological superpower diminishing. Without a technologically advanced workforce, the United States has little chance of regaining its economic status; therefore, a premium is placed on skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Race to the Top hopefuls like Colorado submitted detailed plans mapping out networks of schools, businesses, and other organizations that will enable them to build capacity for the implementation of STEM programs across the state. Colorado's second RTTT application earmarked $2 million for related initiatives. These initiatives are deemed essential in our quest to regain our competitive status as an economic, technological superpower, and on a local scale, to turn around low performing schools which are holding us back in terms of workforce potential.

The students express, "Skill development is important for me to become equipped to meet my personal goals."

"If I choose this career (in forensic anthropology), I will need job training at a high school and I need a special program in the school For anthropologist." Eliza

"If a person wannt be a police officer needs to finish high school and go to a academy, to get a sertificate (certificate)." Emma

"I will need job training at how to make designes with a nail polish on your hands and how to put nails and paint them." Christina

"I will need job training at _____ high school or at a college, and you know how bad I am willing to go to CU (Colorado University) the college of my dreams!" "Taking the class of CNA here (at the high school) and having you to help & support is gonna helpe me prepare for this class…it was important to finish high school of they wanted to be somebody in life." Stephanie

Once again, my students' responses correspond with policymakers on the surface level as they acknowledge the value of skill development. They mention completion of high school as a prerequisite to additional training or college. What the students do not speak of is a hierarchy of skills that will give them a competitive edge on their peers, let alone an advantage in relation to workers around the world. Perhaps it should not be surprising that these high school students did not seem aware of the priority policymakers give to mathematics, science, and technology. Instead they focused on their own personal interests and goals, describing the training that they believed would help them along this trajectory of their own choosing.

According to the policymakers, "The economy depends on our system of education."

"The president-elect views education as both a moral obligation and an economic imperative. In the face of rising global competition, we know that education is the critical, some would say the only road to economic security."

-Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Confirmation Hearing, January 19, 2009

"Job creation is the top priority for this administration. We need to create a globally competitive workforce to ensure a strong Colorado economy," said Garcia. "Accomplishing this is no small or simple matter, but it is critical and the most important education goal for this administration."

-Colorado Lt. Governor Joe Garcia April 28, 2011

Much of the Discourse surrounding Race to the Top reveals a belief that education is tied in a foundational way to economics. While this notion is not new, the quest to find solutions to economic crises is particularly urgent as the United States watches China and India gain power while struggling to improve its own job market. This urgency fuels the pressure to reform education in a way that will stimulate the economy. Consequently, Race to the Top extended the metaphor of racing to compete economically into the realm of education. From this economic perspective, participation in and contribution to our nation's or state's economy is the primary goal of education. Our education system must adequately equip students with skills relevant in the 21st century.

The students express, "Career development provides a foundation for me to support my family and help others."

"I think what this job is pretty nice Because you can help's to persons or you family and the job is good." Paul

"In my list (of what is important for my future) I include my family because I think that this is necessary to me so each day I can remember that my family can be proud of me also so can my little nices (nieces) and nefews (nephews) can see the example that I'm giving to them. Also I need support from other people including my family." Christina

"I think about my parent there will be a stage they will be needing the same help, & I want to help them like they did when I was little. Now I thing (think) Is my responsibility to take care of them & other people. I think it might be easy if I have my parents support...." Angela

"And I think like achieving my goals and get to meet my academic carrer (career), work hard to beat and one day I can help other people." Eliza

"I learn about myself I wanna work something to help people in problems or teaching kids." Emma

"Nurses help other people & that's what I like to do too." Stephanie

While competition seems absent from my students' reflections, one of the strongest themes pertains to supporting family and helping others. As officials at the federal and state level scramble to develop reform initiatives aimed at increasing the rigor of students' educational experiences to measure up to international competitors, the students in my study appear to be motivated by a desire to care for people, most particularly, their own families. On the one hand, their willingness to invest in career preparation stems from a desire to provide for their future families, and for some, to set an example for younger family members. At the same time, they seem to share the hope that their skills will enable them to serve members of their communities.

Policymakers see students as the workforce of the future, capable of restoring the economy with a heightened level of career readiness appropriate to the twenty-first century. Students, on the other hand, were motivated by far more personal reasons, regardless of the aims of policymakers. While the language of policy emphasizes deficits and a need to catch up, the language of students seems full of optimism regarding their own futures and the ways in which they hope to support their families and positively participate in their community.

Juxtaposing these voices shed light on some of the tension I encountered as I conveyed the expectations mandated through policy in my classroom with real students. Although these six students certainly did not represent the perspective of all classmates, they clearly presented some ways in which the values of individual students may differ from the values behind the policies that so significantly impacted the educational opportunities and structures made available to them. This perspective was certainly a step towards proactive negotiation of Race to the Top, and yet I continued to puzzle through a number of questions.

Chapter 5

What does it mean to be an Intervention teacher in a globally competitive context? Implications: Awareness as a starting point for agency.

Making Sense of My Shifting Teacher Positioning

Although I was not initially aware of positioning as a theoretical framework for reflexive sensemaking during my first years as a teacher, I held certain beliefs regarding teaching and learning. If someone were to ask me to explain my teaching philosophy before my transition from Pennsylvania to Colorado, I would have stressed the importance of getting to know students and using this knowledge as a foundation for actively engaging my students as learners. I perceived my role to be that of a mentor or coach who created opportunities for students to explore and understand their world through texts, rather than some sort of sage who simply conveyed knowledge through the medium of lecture, assigned readings, and study guides. Furthermore, I saw myself as a collaborator with resource teachers, such as a Special Education teacher or Reading Specialist, so that all of my students would have appropriate types of scaffolding to allow for the fullest possible engagement in these reading and writing opportunities.

When I became an English as a Second Language teacher, I became more conscious of my own role as a resource for students who were adapting to a new language and environment. In this position I still stressed the importance of knowing students well, yet I also was concerned with the affective experiences of students as they went through various stages of language development and acculturation. I observed great diversity within the English as a Second Language classroom, not only in terms of language and culture, but educational orientation as well, recognizing that some students acclimated more easily to our school system, while others

found it more challenging to negotiate. Either way, I saw myself in a position to help students develop a toolbox of strategies for actively engaging with their new school and community.

When I began teaching in Colorado, I struggled to maintain a student-centered view of learning . From the first professional development session on, I was encouraged to look at my students through the lens of their test scores. Our district firmed up its system of Intervention with the Literacy and English Language Acquisition Flowcharts so that we could be more consistent in our delineation of students who needed certain Interventions. All Interventions were required to be district approved, which is why I was not permitted to develop my own reading curriculum for students who were not making progress or were upset by their placement in *Read 180*. These programs were selected because they were deemed to be research proven; quantified data trumped the experience and observations of teachers like myself who spent multiple hours a day, 180 days of the year, with real students. While I previously viewed my students, however diverse, as capable of engaging in exploration and critical thinking, in this Colorado context I found myself far more focused on the gaps between their test scores and the designated proficiency levels for their grade levels. Although I held out hopes that the Individual Career and Academic Plans would create a space for some form of exploration, these hopes were squelched by the higher priority of students making dramatic gains towards proficiency.

As I struggled to hold tight to my prior philosophy of education against the pressure to treat my students as patients needing an intense dose of literacy Intervention, I realized that my students were not the only ones who wanted to resist this type of positioning. Just as I preferred to view my students as capable, I also wanted to be viewed as a capable teacher. When I became aware of positioning theory as a tool for reflexive, contextual sensing making, I recognized that I was resisting the ways in which current policy was interpreted by my district and imbued upon me and my students. This resistance was rooted in my discomfort with the status quo and my desire to subvert the negative or deficit positioning of "Intervention" teachers and students. In

doing so, I was attempting to redefine our identities as teachers and learners in a dynamic way that allowed space for our improvisation, rather than confining us to static , disempowered roles.

My awareness began with a critical eye to competitive values that seem to drive the rhetoric of Race to the Top and its enactment in my state and local school district.

Behind the Discourse of "Competition"

As I depict these stages of awareness, my autoethnography illuminates the intersection of policy and real classrooms, and the ways in which "we are spoken by policies, we take up positions constructed for us within policies" (Ball, 1994, p. 22). Yet we, as educators, are not always conscious of the ways in which policy positions us--or the ways in which we position our students as we respond to policy's positioning power. According to Norman Fairclough (2010), we as humans are "typically unaware" of the ways in which we perceive the world, or the "ideological representations" which shape our words (p. 42). Shields, Bishop, and Mazawi (2005) remind us of Bourdieu's "habitus," which suggests that these epistemologies are so embedded in our ways of being and living that we often accept them as normal. I believe that this is why there seems to be so little questioning of proposed policies pertaining to education outside of teachers' unions.

The more that I reflected on the pressure I felt within my Colorado school, the new requirements that seemed to be streaming down from the state, and the pushback I continually experienced as I worked with my "Intervention" students, it became clear that the values of these new reforms did not always align with my values or my students' values. For this reason, I needed to critically examine our positioning in light of these intersections of policy, teacher, and learner, or we would continue to feel disempowered. With the litany of reforms our state governments have churned out in response to Race to the Top and its predecessor, No Child Left Behind, it is

essential for all educators to be cognizant of the ways in which ideology influences the policymaking process, and what that means for schools, classrooms, teachers, and students so that we can proactively negotiate these forces.

This type of sensemaking required Mills' (1959) sociological imagination. Putting my own story and reflections on paper gave me an opportunity to explore the greater context of these policies and the values of the people who support or accept these policies as not only viable, but necessary for schools, through my own "Intervention" teacher lens. While I was not surprised that our nation's economic status played a part in the way schools were perceived, I was taken aback by the cutthroat values of our market economy reaching into my district, school, and classroom. Although our economy is more of a mixed economy, the market is still a central aspect of its structure. This aspect of our economy hinges on the notion that competition leads to better products at better prices for its consumers.. Businesses search for ways to produce the products in highest demand at the lowest possible cost. These principles lead to the prioritization of productivity, efficiency, and utility. The demands of this market economy also lead to the placement of high premiums on certain types of knowledge. President Obama and Secretary Duncan clearly expressed faith in the application of these principles in the sphere of education as they promoted Race to the Top. As my reflections led me to research, I recognized that the acceptance of market values in education stems from a "functionalist" perspective, whereas concerns regarding market principles in social institutions emanate from a "critical" perspective.

From a functionalist perspective, an economic focus is appropriate for students who will at some point need to enter the workforce as with viable skills. In *The World is Flat,* Thomas Friedman (2007) identifies the ways upcoming generations can engage in this exciting new market. This brand of optimism postulates that even outsourcing will not be a concern if we create an appropriately educated labor force. Our economic salvation lies in our efforts to equip students to engage in their rapidly evolving world. Even at the local level, the notion of equipping

students for careers in the contemporary world seems not only plausible, but essential. Schools and individual educators often identify with the charge to prepare students to enter college programs or the workforce itself and feel that they are failing when students do not appear to be adequately equipped in the final stages of their secondary education. This is the reason our state adopted legislation regarding Individual Career and Academic Plans. From my vantage point, the idea of encouraging students to consider these aspects of their future sounded promising, yet it was not clear how the current curriculum allowed space for such exploration. More questions plagued me as I learned that the Common Core Standards would decrease the amount of literature students would be exposed to, particularly at the high school, but even to a large extent in the early elementary grades. Information is now more valuable than literature because of its utility in our economy. A third grade teacher I recently spoke to mentioned that her district was requiring her to "have conversations" with her students about careers. This push to prepare elementary students for careers evidences the lengths our policymakers are willing to go to prepare a competitive workforce for the future.

Still, policymakers and even some educators would argue that competition has a number of merits (Giroux, 2012). Competition pushes athletes to eat healthy, practice diligently, and develop themselves to their peak potential. Competition drives researchers to develop treatments for previously incurable diseases or to find more sustainable, environmentally friendly ways of producing energy. Competition *can* encourage a third grader to learn her math facts or a high school junior to apply for a university scholarship (Ravitch, 2010). It *can* encourage a fifth grade class to create an in-depth, historical map of the original colonies or a college debate team to broaden and deepen its knowledge base. However, a critical perspective problematizes this competitive mentality (Kohn, 1986) and its roots in economics.

Critical theories enable us to step back from our realities and look at our "social practices" through a critical lens to "evaluate the underlying purposes, assess intended and

unintended effects, and see alternative visions and ways of doing things," as well as understand

our positioning, what this means, and the potential for repositioning (Wilhelm & Smith, 2002, p.

13, 14). One of our responsibilities, as critical educators and researchers, is to identify who

defines success and failure, and to evaluate and negotiate the consequences of these definitions

(McDermott & Varenne, 1998). Under No Child Left Behind, basic literacy was the baseline for

defining "success;" Race to the Top has added career readiness to this definition.

As I recalled my experiences in this Colorado school, I recognized that, although my

district and building leadership frequently spoke in positive terms, such as "winning" and "best

practices" in scenarios like our CSAP assembly, winning entails competition. What motivates

competition? Comparisons. Our nation competes with other nations. Schools compete with other

schools, just as our principal encouraged our student body to compete against our rival school, as

well as to best other neighboring schools. And ultimately, students are thought to compete against

one another, particularly as they prepare to exit high school and enter college or the workforce. In

Successful Failure, McDermott and Varenne (1998) explain, "The problem, of course, is that not

all individuals in the United States get to go where some others go: Everyone can race; only one

can win" (p. 4). While we appeared to be winning in comparison to nearby schools, we were not

winning against the mandated Annual Yearly Progress requirements. In order to "win" in this

greater context, we as a district and as a high school needed to improve in a measurable way

because out test scores categorized us as a failing, or losing school.

As I unpack the words of policymakers, it is clear that a particular ideology underlies

their Discourse. Fairclough (2010) identifies this ideology as neo-liberalism. "It has involved a

restructuring of relations between the economic, political, and social domains, including the

extension of markets into social domains such as education, and focusing the role of state and

government on strengthening markets and competitiveness" (p. 11). Concepts such as a

"knowledge economy" and "global economy" contribute to the dominance of this neo-liberal

discourse. Within our government, there is bi-partisan acknowledgement of the direct impact of global markets on our way of life, and a need to equip students with knowledge and skills which are pertinent in the 21st century. This perceived reality is "discourse driven," resulting in its infiltration into a variety of social spheres like education. The neoliberal Discourse of Market Economics filters down to the Discourse of Competition, the Discourse of Standards and Assessment, to the Discourse of Intervention.
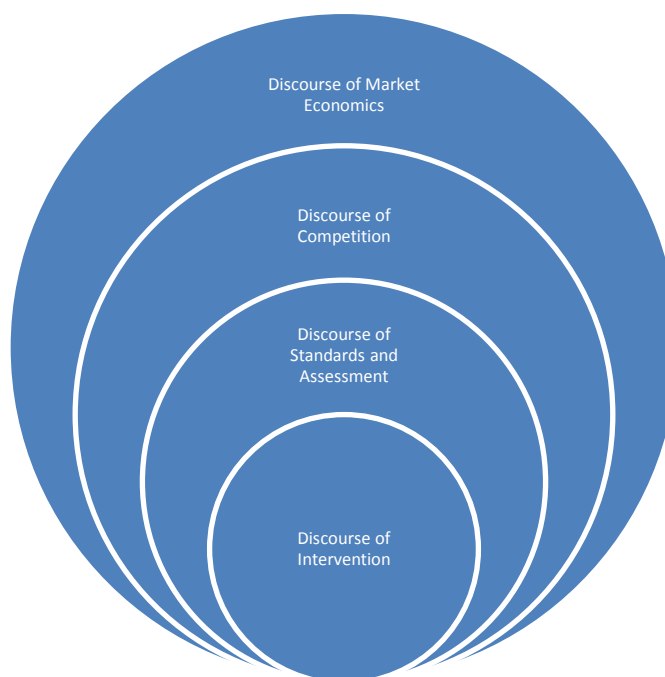

Figure 5.1 Layers of Discourse

The Discourse of Intervention pervaded the speeches of Race to the Top's architect, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. While our district was concerned specifically with the achievement of English language learners and developing readers, Duncan was concerned with our nation's faltering status on international achievement tests, as well as graduation and college completion rates. Necessary Interventions included college and career oriented standards and assessments, revamped evaluation systems for educators, longitudinal data systems for tracking progress and informing educators' decisions, and specified reforms for failing schools. Without

such reforms, we ran the risk of leaving our nation in the embarrassing position of "failure" on international achievement tests. And of course the greater danger was that our economy would continue to limp along with an inadequately prepared workforce.

Throughout my three and a half years in this Colorado school, the Discourse of Intervention was at the heart of the Instructional Model, resulting in its pervasiveness in New Teacher Network trainings as well as many professional development sessions. The Discourse of Intervention was the rationale for the development of Literacy and English Language Acquisition Flowcharts, which would guide our decisions regarding student placement, materials selection, and daily instruction. Intervention was also the theme of several professional committees in our building. Both my *Read 180* and English Language Acquisition classes were considered Intervention classes, and I was required to participate in additional professional development regarding these types of Interventions in spite of my academic training and prior experience.

This Discourse of Intervention is embedded in the Discourse of Standards and Assessment. Race to the Top called states to adopt the Common Core Standards in order to ensure both college and career readiness among graduates, as well as uniformity of academic standards across the states. These standards discarded what its creators deemed to be unnecessary for the nation's future workforce and replaced it with what they believe has the greatest utility in the twenty-first century. As a result, Race to the Top required states to adopt assessments that measure the attainment of Common Core Standards. The pressure to prepare students for such tests remains, and in some ways intensified, as educators have attempted to adapt to these new expectations.

For several years, our district and building leadership repeatedly conducted professional development, and oftentimes follow-up assignments, which stressed the importance of clear learning objectives and corresponded with state standards. Furthermore, these same administrators and leaders required our freshman, sophomores, special education students,

English language learners, and developing readers to participate in additional reading assessments beyond the state reading, math, and English language learner assessments. They stressed the reciprocal relationship of data as it was used to inform decisions regarding systems and daily instruction, while the objective of systems and daily instruction was to raise standardized test scores across the district and among particular groups that constituted an "achievement gap."

The Discourse of Standards and Assessment, then, is embedded within the Discourse of Competition. While the notion of competing both academically and economically, or the connection between competitive schools and competitive workforce is not new, the Secretary Duncan and President Obama' unwavering faith that competitive values will turn America's schools around has resulted in the most comprehensive competition for educational funding in the nation's history. 80% of the states accepted the challenge, proving that competition for funding can motivate a state to propose and enact reforms. Participating states such as Colorado acted upon the promises they included in their Race to the Top applications, seeking to prove a high level of commitment in order to win the promised millions for school reform.

Our school leadership also seemed to embrace this notion that competition motivates as they attempted to encourage students to do well on the upcoming state assessments. Professional development sessions were similarly used to motivate teachers to increase the school's standing in terms of CSAP scores, graduation rates, and ACT scores, including specific goals for each. Competition was used in an effort to motivate a student body to perform well on standardized tests. Another form of competition was even fostered among individual students who were required to take additional mathematics and reading assessments, record and graph their growth, comparing each score to the ideal score for their grade level.

All of these Discourses were embedded within the Discourse of Market Economics, which was a fundamental driving force behind Race to the Top, a component of the 2009 stimulus bill. Its language included a variety of business terms, such as "investment," "system

capacity," and "effectiveness" and explicitly referred to education as a "critical sector" of the economy. Additionally, it articulated its purpose in preparing students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy" (Executive Summary, 2009, p. 2). These values fueled the push for states to adopt the Common Core Standards, which aim to equip students with twenty-first century skills.

From my vantage point as an "Intervention" teacher," I began to understand that Race to the Top viewed education's role to be one of service to the market economy where our national leaders desired the best educated workforce. Much like No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top has reinforced the belief that learning can be quantified, with certain types of knowledge carrying a greater value in the market. These reforms seem less concerned with serving individual students, particularly those who might not be able to make what has been deemed to be a valuable contribution to the market economy. Zygmunt Bauman (2004) depicts these people as a part of the "waste" of economic progress. "...the litmus test of a 'good society' was workplaces for all and a productive role for everyone" (p. 11). Students who fall under this umbrella can easily slide through the cracks in our school system because of the drive to ensure that the United States is at the top of the economic food chain. This sense mixed messages about the equality of opportunities and no guarantee whatsoever of equitable outcomes. Those who fail to meet the required standards are viewed as deficient and in need of academic triage. Furthermore, difference is equated with deficiency.

An examination of these Discourses reveal how even policies intending to help "inadequate" schools are apt to pathologize these schools instead (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005). Deficit thinking is the impetus behind No Child Left Behind, as well as Race to the Top. The very language of No Child Left Behind's title suggests that those not achieving a certain standard of proficiency are "behind" and in need of catching up to their proficient peers. The Executive Summary states, "President Bush emphasized his deep belief in our public schools, but

an even greater concern that 'too many of our neediest children are being left behind,' despite the nearly $200 billion in Federal spending since the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)." President Bush points to our past failures to help "needy" children be successful in our schools and uses this as a rationale for the reforms mandated under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. For English language learners, the primary need is English language knowledge and skills. According to No Child Left Behind, this can be resolved by providing English language instruction and support where:

- ELLs need English proficiency in order to meet the same standards, and
- English Language Acquisition programs must be developed or leave these students at a greater risk for failure.

Although its intent was to help children who are at an educational "deficit," No Child Left Behind has left educators nationwide scrambling and struggling to help children meet these standards. Schools with large percentages of failing students are overwhelmed instead of supported. In some cases, schools have been desperate enough to cheat (Ravitch, 2010).

Race to the Top speaks more broadly to the inadequacies of American education in a broad sense, comparing our system to that of our international competitors. "Now, this idea, that today education and economic growth are tightly linked, stems from the recognition that the job market has changed profoundly. In a knowledge-based global economy, countries that out-educate us will out-compete us" (Duncan, 2011). In Race to the Top, it is not simply individual students who are falling behind; we as a nation are falling behind our competitors in the industrialized, technologically advanced world. Duncan continued, "You can invest smartly in developing and scaling the most innovative tools and techniques to advance and accelerate student learning." The solution is to make investments in education as we do in business ventures or the stock market. Race to the Top has demanded globally competitive standards, data systems

for measuring growth, revamped teacher evaluation systems, and the transformation of low-achieving schools. From the small space of my Intervention classroom, I shouldered the weight of these initiatives as Colorado, or more specifically, my district enacted them, searching for ways to increase my students' proficiency in English and provide them opportunities for college and career exploration.

In their fixation with competing and serving the market economy, the Race to the Top reforms positioned my English Language Acquisition and Reading students as needing to close apparent "gaps" with extraordinary efficiency, or risk being classified as a "failure.". The competitive model fails to recognize that many students, particularly as they approach adulthood, may not have the intrinsic desire to Race to the Top because they do not position or perceive themselves as participating in any kind of race. Sometimes policies position students as "failures" without really understanding their family background, culture, values, or goals, perhaps because those are understandings that only personal contact can bring.

> Where competition on level playing fields is upheld as a cultural model both of the way the world is and of the way it should be, getting unfair advantage is what makes sense for people to do…Democracy, it would seem, is about starting equally and ending unequally as quickly as possible" (Varenne, Goldman, & McDermott, 1998, p. 108).

True to our economic mentality, Race to the Top's values imply that the competitive framework that drives market forces has the capacity to resolve what ails American schools, when in fact each individual student's perspective, goals, decisions, and investment in education may be impacted by far stronger forces, such as family, peers, and media.

How has this win/lose framework managed to infiltrated our education system? Ball reminds us of the According to Ball (1994), there is often a point of confusion between the application of *structures* of business to education versus the application of its *values*, which are not necessarily appropriate or beneficial to those impacted. While the market seems to offer the promise of opportunity for the ordinary person on Main Street, it also bears Wall Street qualities

that can be rather cutthroat and unforgiving. Furthermore, we tend to forget that our market is not truly "free" of government control when in fact our government is very much entangled in our economy, often time with Wall Street's consent when the government seems to protect the interests of massive corporations. These aspects of market style competition seem to go unnoticed as President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan have conveyed undaunted belief that competition is the panacea for what ails schools across the nation and have entertained no questions regarding its possible risks.

My own experiences, however, led me to believe that their panacea was fraught with risks rooted in the deficit positioning of our schools.

> Deficit thinking, a prevalent viewpoint in educational circles, compares everyone to a dominant norm, and if the individual does not measure up, he or she must be fixed, or healed, as in the medical model of treatment. There is the assumption that the learner needs to be changed (Sparks, 2002).

When we examine the speeches by our current Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, we see that he takes up a Discourse which positions the United States' educational system as behind our international competitors. Our students "lag behind" while students in these other nations "outperform" us. Rather than demonstrating growth in the wake of previous reforms, our nation's schools have "stagnated." According to Duncan and Obama, this "deficit" positioning of our schools is not acceptable. This "deficit" Discourse is the impetus behind Race to the Top, just as similar concerns have served as the driving force behind previous reforms. Such positioning has significant consequences which start at the systemic level and extend into local settings, impacting individual teachers and students. The impact on "Intervention" teachers and students are of particular concern.

How policy positions "Intervention" teachers

As an "Intervention" teacher, it was my job to "Intervene" on behalf of my students, who were not yet at grade level proficiency. This Discourse of deficiency is difficult to deconstruct because of its acceptance as normal at the policy and institutional levels, justified because it is seen as the foundation to solving itself (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005). Russel Bishop (2005) explains this sense of urgency among New Zealand teachers of native Maori students as a result of self positioning "within a discourse of deficiencies" where students are not capable of solving their own problems—not capable of self "agency" (p. 76). Similarly, our district perceived our developing readers and English learners through the lens of deficiency and determined that we could "fix" these students with our carefully crafted flow chart and research proven Intervention programs.

Deficit Positioning and Reactionary Reform

Education policy today evidences an overwhelming fear of falling behind in the international race to be an-or perhaps *the*-economic superpower. In its quest to restore American schools, and more importantly, the nation's economy to its competitive status, Race to the Top urged states to develop not one, but several types of reform, and to do so immediately. Diane Ravitch (2010) explains that this drive for reform is not a new phenomenon:

> For the past century…a wide vanity of reformers and reform movements have offered their own diagnoses and cures. With the best of intentions, reformers have sought to correct deficiencies by introducing new pedagogical techniques, new ways of organizing classrooms, new technologies, new tests, new incentives, and new ways to govern schools (p. 224).

 Although these reformer were intent on improving education for U.S. students, the result has been a perpetual churning of ideas and subsequent changes in schools. Every reformer would

certainly like to claim success, but the success of a reform is incredibly difficult to measure because of the complexity of each reform, the diversity of locations in which each is implemented, the myriad of variables that factor into every child's education, and the limitations of a test score or data point to convey success versus failure. The continuing efforts to fix America's schools, however, suggest that more than five decades worth of reforms have not yet successfully closed "the achievement gap" for many students. In spite of this track record, Race to the Top demanded a quick turnaround on states' applications, in which states needed to demonstrate plans and broad-based support for implementation. Race to the Top authors certainly placed substantial confidence in their reform agenda and the capacity of states to map out their strategies with great efficiency. Ball (1994) writes that it is left up to school leadership and teachers to sort out the implications of these reforms "and at organization and classroom level develop interpretations and practices which engage seriously with the changes and their consequences for working relationships and for teaching and learning" (p. 13). This provides us with ample reasons to scrutinize the program as its impact filters into local schools and classrooms.

As I learned about each of the Race to the Top inspired reforms, I was struck by the timing; the state had announced $260 million budget cuts for education, which would result in $10 million in our moderate-sized district (Engdahl, 2010). Yet the reforms were enacted with great urgency, revealing Colorado's fear of losing in this "Race to the Top." Our school clearly feared the consequences of not adhering to these new mandates. Individual Career and Academic Plans were to be developed the following school year, to be universally implemented thereafter. Our teacher evaluation system would be different that very next school year, and plans were unfolding to negotiate the forthcoming eradication of teacher tenure. During my third year, a transitional form of the standardized test was given to make way for the new tests, which would be based on the Common Core Standards. With every new mandate, I saw district, and often

building leadership making an effort to be proactive, even participate in the development of the new reforms, rather than wait passively to be told what to do. To a degree, I admired their efforts to be forward thinking, and yet I was concerned with the speed with which such changes were enacted. How were the architects of Race to the Top so very certain that their formulas for reform would work for the diverse array of schools and districts that compose each state's education system? Why was there no period of trial, evaluation, or reflection?

I was expected to respond to each new mandate with an attitude of acceptance and cooperation. When Individual Career and Academic Plans became a requirement, I immediately began planning a Career Research Unit. When I was told that I needed to ensure my students' rapid progress through the curriculum, I scaled back my Career Research plans. When my administrator mentioned that he did not see my objectives on the board, I worked to make my objectives more obvious to anyone entering my room. When the evaluation system changed and student assessment became a key factor in this process, I went above and beyond in my documentation, providing numerous artifacts to demonstrate the quality of my instruction and corresponding assessments. There was no space for me to question these mandates; I was required to respond each time another reform made its way into my school. The district's fear of being deemed a failure relayed to my building administrations and then to me, as a teacher. As I reflected on my responses to these mandates, I came to understand how policy was positioning me as my district and building leadership interpreted these reforms.

Deficit Positioning and Top-Down Control

Although the competition claims to give states and Local Education Agencies some level of flexibility for implementation, Race to the Top is attempting to control many aspects of education at the state and local level. This top-down style of management reflects the ways in

which our government often seeks to control our market economy in ways that are believed to be advantageous to our strength as a nation. Perceiving education's potential for strengthening our nation's status, the federal government has become increasingly involved in education in recent decades. Ball (1994) explains that, although education policies do not necessarily control the finite details of teacher decisions or classroom activities, they do impact the environment and "the range of options available" (p. 19). Top-down control began with federal mandates. Participating states' applications needed to meet the criteria of the contest's guidelines in order to be considered for the monetary reward. States were obliged to promise to welcome or increase school choice, connect student test scores to teacher accountability, and intervene in continually low-performing schools, effectively increasing their control over local education agencies, which in turn seek to control teachers and their classrooms. Ball explains that states are able to distance themselves from the problems of individual districts and schools, whereas schools and teachers are left with the bulk of the responsibility for making sense of the complex and often times incoherent characteristics of these reforms. "Not only does the teacher lose control over classroom planning decisions, but will be monitored, judged, and compared by criteria elsewhere" (p. 61). While a teacher in a successful or winning school may be treated with respect for these results, a similarly competent teacher in a failing school or an Intervention classroom full of non-proficient students is positioned as deficient, in need of further professional development, scripted curricula, or removal from the teaching profession.

> At West Side…The teachers were well aware that whatever approaches had been used earlier to teach the students and make them display their knowledge, they had proven insufficient. There was a sense of emergency, if not desperation, as new and more or less experimental approaches got tried, whatever the likelihood that they would prove successful. Something had to be done (Varenne, Goldman, and McDermott, 1998, p. 122).

For many teachers, such as the staff at West Side, the quest for solutions seems unending.

In my Pennsylvania school I was buffered by our school's high percentage of "proficient" test scores. When I transitioned to this Colorado school, the need to make Annual Yearly Progress governed the decision-making regarding systems, curriculum, and pedagogy. Our school, although more successful on the CSAP assessments than some of the neighboring high schools, was not meeting all of its requirements. Before our school or district could reach NCLB's standards, Race to the Top redefined success once again. Our leaders quickly jumped on board, adapting or developing the necessary Intervention systems and aligning professional development accordingly, including strategies for English language learners and *Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning* (Chappuis, 2009).

My district's efforts to meet these requirements left me feeling that my professional knowledge and experience were not valued. I was asked to follow the Read 180 curriculum with its specific schedule and scripted instructions, leaving little room for a my own professional discretion. While my English Language Acquisition curriculum allowed me to make some decisions, I was obligated to follow its sequence with efficiency. Our professional development centered around research proven best practices, some of which were revisited repeatedly when our administrative team felt that we as a staff were not satisfactorily adhering to the prescribed pedagogy. In spite of my credentials and prior experience, I was required to attend a "Literacy Academy" and English Language Acquisition training. While my Pennsylvania school deferred to the English as a Second Language teachers to create complete schedules for English language learners, my Colorado school taught me that my recommendations were secondary to the authority of hard data, and final decisions regarding students' English and "Intervention" classes came down to the word of an administrator or the Literacy Coach.

At the heart of this top-down control is the continual emphasis on accountability and testing.

Deficit Positioning and the race towards proficiency

Competition demands criteria and a means of measuring achievement against those criteria. Therefore, a competitive model of education places a high priority on assessment tools, such as standardized tests and statistics regarding high school graduation, remediation at colleges, or college completion. Consequently, Race to the Top reinforced No Child Left Behind's culture of testing and accountability. In *Death and Life of Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*, Diane Ravitch (2010) explains that testing under No Child Left Behind focused narrowly on literacy and math instead of encouraging schools to develop a broad, rich curriculum for developing thoughtful, democratic citizens. Although Race to the Top heralds itself as a broadening beyond the narrow focus of No Child Left Behind, its push for states to embrace the Common Core Standards denotes another brand of narrowness. Ravitch gives several examples of districts that implemented test-centered reforms. In these cases, the emphasis on testing pushed many teachers to focus on test preparation at the expense of actual curriculum; districts were pressured to inflate test scores by lowering benchmark scores; schools that struggled to compete were closed; and teachers who disagreed with the new style of management were removed from their positions Varenne, Goldman, and McDermott (1999) elucidate the prominence of this phenomenon:

> The success of a school can be evaluated only in terms of the success of the children…The metaphorical journey that started with a child growing and adults lovingly in attendance has been transformed into adults anxiously measuring how far the child has journeyed and arguing endlessly about why there is not more progress to show (p. 107).

Schools and educators are positioned as cogs in a machine designed to produced students who can demonstrate proficiency in the prescribed areas. Under Race to the Top, the brunt of the responsibility falls upon the shoulders of teachers.

At my Colorado school, decision-making revolved heavily around data, or more specifically, standardized test scores. As a faculty, we were reminded of these scores every August before each school year began. During my second and third years as a full-time teacher, our building principal used a professional development session to present our school's goals, which specified precise numbers regarding improvement on the state assessments, ACT (American College Testing), and graduation rates. In an effort to attain the desired test scores, our school and greater district developed extensive systems to ensure our students were placed in appropriate "Intervention" classes. In fact, Intervention was central to the district's instructional model. We needed proficient scores if we were to compete more effectively.

In my previous school I used test scores in conjunction with other information, such as grades from previous years in the student's home country, conversations with the student's family, input from other teachers, and our own observations, in order to place students in an appropriate levels of English as a Second Language classes. As an English, or Language Arts teacher, I also used test scores to help make sense of why certain students seemed to struggle in some way, yet I also tried to make myself aware of other possible factors, such as a student trying to juggle lives between two different homes. In my Colorado school, I wrestled with the centrality of test data, particularly as it was used to categorize students. At times I encountered students who did not seem to benefit from a particular Intervention, yet because one of our flowcharts indicated that this was the appropriate placement for the student, the student was retained in this class, regardless of the stagnation or frustration that the student experienced, and irrespective of the student's success in other classes. When I attempted to resist *Read 180* on behalf of my students and develop an alternative reading program, my proposal was quickly shot down with a response indicating that we needed to find a way to make the *Read 180*, which had been "validated" through quantifiable research..

Race to the Top added college and career readiness to No Child Left Behind's accountability measures.

Deficit positioning and a 21st century workforce

Concerned with our students' inadequate showing on international assessments, Race to the Top has pressured states into developing standards and programs that foster career readiness programs that will generate graduates with the capacity to compete in the context of a global economy. The fact that Race to the Top was a part of President Obama's stimulus bill is testament to the belief that these reforms could contribute to the revival of a struggling economy. Within this context, a premium has been placed on skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Yet Ha Joon Chang (2011) suggests that education is no guarantee of economic prosperity. For instance, one might ask why, when the percentage of high school and college degrees earned is significantly higher than it was in the 1950s, does our economy seem to be lagging at the present time? How will preparing our youth for engineering degrees support our economy's growth when large corporations can hire a Chinese or Indian engineer for a fraction of the cost?

While equipping students with 21st century skills sounds like a worthy goal, this emphasis runs the risk of devaluing other types of learning and pushing career preparation through the entire education system, regardless of age. Patrick Shannon (2002) gives an example of an 8-year old who is already being inculcated with career vocabulary and concepts to promote career readiness (p. 67-71). The cautionary tale demonstrates to us just how far the drive to make our nation competitive reaches. At what point do we stop allowing children to be children and begin forcing them to map out their future? Age 15? 12? 8? In *Reading Don't Fix No Chevy,* Wilhelm and Smith (2002) discover that the boys in their study talk a great deal about the future

as they contemplate their goals for schooling. The problem with this future orientation is that 1) teens are not currently living in the future—they are living in the present tense; 2) knowing that objectives are far off, students are more likely to procrastinate their investment in schooling; 3) teachers focus on the way their students need to be in the distant future as opposed to who they are at the time they are actually in their classrooms; and 4) it is difficult to promise rewards or give warnings because the effects are not immediate (p. 66, 67). Furthermore, teachers in schools under close surveillance because of lagging test scores are often preoccupied with test preparations with little spare time for workforce preparation, let alone time for exploration, enrichment, and developing democratic citizenship (Wagner, 2010). Kohn (2002) further problematizes the notion of "work" in our nation's classrooms, explaining that the metaphor attempts to equate school experience with preparation for real work that is expected to produce results instead of focusing on learning for learning's sake.

When the Individual Career and Academic Plans were first introduced, I felt that this initiative held positive potential for students to explore their interests and future possibilities. The Career Research Unit seemed to be a success, with students enjoying the career research, as well as the readings and speakers. It seemed to bridge school to the real world with an emphasis on their own possible future. At the same time, I wondered how some of their interests would be perceived by the minds behind Race to the Top, as students expressed an interest in cosmetology or carpentry. Would they be deemed less valuable than a classmate who expressed interest in cardiology? After all, these sorts of values are stamped on occupations. Race to the Top certainly fostered an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

Equally concerning was the pressure that forced me to limit the college research I hoped to do in the second year of ICAP implementation. Because my students were not at the prescribed level of proficiency, we were forced to prioritize the curriculum which our district believed to be the perfect prescription for higher test scores. I found myself in the ironic position of neglecting

what Race to the Top proclaimed to be its central goal: college and career readiness. While I did not wish to replace possibilities for developing caring, democratic citizens with broad perspective of our world, I also did not want my students to miss an opportunity that their fellow classmates would have.

When learning and schools are redefined and re-positioned by market values, administrators are forced to think competitively about their schools.

Deficit positioning and the quest to best others

If competition is applied to all levels of education, schools essentially fight to obtain or retain students, driving school leadership to convey messages of superiority to the public much like commercials do to sell products and services (Giroux, 2002). The logic behind this advertising is schools in a competitive setting need to attract academically motivated students so that each school will be able to compete on standardized tests. A school's leadership knows that the community and the state government will be judging their school, and low test results could ultimately result in the removal of staff or the closing of the facility and reopening under different management, regardless of the needs or backgrounds of the students enrolled. So a school with many minority students from low income families that struggles to raise its test scores may be punished even if they are implementing all of the required reforms. To make matters more complex, the school may also lose funding as it loses students to nearby charter schools. Ravitch (2010) questions why our system does not encourage mutual collaboration and support between schools instead of forcing them to best one another, creating a winner and a loser. How helpful is a "losing" school to a community? Why is the policy for the state not about stepping in and *helping* the struggling school instead of shutting its doors and firing teachers who may have been working very hard to help their students?

As a teacher of students who have not scored "proficient" on our state standardized tests, I wondered how my students would interpret the assembly detailed in the Prologue, with its emphasis on besting neighboring schools, particularly our in-district rival high school. Was it possible that this goal might actually motivate my students to do their best on these tests? Having already negotiated a variety of resistance, I was rather skeptical. How would a competition motivate students, who were already categorized as "not proficient," to improve their test scores? Was motivation even an issue for some of them? What of students who were motivated to do well without the push to compete, but still struggled to obtain a "competitive" score? More importantly, was the push to compete honestly an effort to improve the chances for individual students, particularly English language learners or "struggling" readers, to be successful on an individual level--or was it simply an effort to improve the image and status of the school?

I thought of Jorge, looking at me with his pleading eyes, hoping that I would give in and help him with his reading assessment. What did the "Torch of Knowledge" mean to him? Most likely, he did not understand the point of it. If he did, what was the likelihood that the notion of beating our rival school would drive him to earn a better test score? I thought of the student who was a painted with his dad. What impact would this competition have on him? He did not need a higher test score in order to obtain the job that he currently desired. And what of the students who entertained ambitions that required postsecondary training? Would the idea of winning in a competition motivate them? Their reflections indicated that they were concerned with their personal interests, as well as the ability to support their future families and contribute to their communities.

How policy positions "Intervention" students

In my position, students' deficits were carefully diagnosed, and necessary research-supported Interventions were prescribed and implemented. Such positioning feels paradoxical for students—being expected to demonstrate competence, yet being classified as needing Intervention in the first place.

"This is a baby's book!"

"I want to be a car painter."

"This is the only place I can speak Spanish!"

"I thought I was better than this."

My students' voices evidenced an awareness of their deficit positioning. They recognized that classes like *Read 180* were outside of the norm, and that this indicated that they were not meeting the required standards in that subject. Their voices revealed a desire to not be categorized as lacking, to not be set apart from other students. When I unpacked the feelings behind my students' voices, I saw that they resisted this deficit positioning because they felt that their goals, their competencies, their culture, and ultimately their identities were being devalued. As an Intervention teacher, I felt caught between the district's desire to see them "catch up" and my students' embarrassment and frustration over being positioned in this way.

How standardized tests position "Intervention" students

At the root of deficit positioning lies the standardized test. In *The Life and Death of the Great American Education System,* Diane Ravitch (2010) blames standardized tests for the narrowing of curricula in schools, and the fixation with developmental math and reading classes. Under No Child Left Behind, testing was initially only mandated for these subjects, and therefore

the evaluative eye of the state government honed in on apparent deficiencies in these areas, resulting in heightened pressure on districts that struggle in these areas. Like No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top has pressured schools with standardized tests, which are now being revamped to account for college and career readiness, resulting in another wave of Interventions. This atmosphere of Intervention was then imbued on students. Students who took the English language acquisition test or were scheduled into reading Interventions knew why they were placed in these classes: they failed to score proficient and were deemed behind their grade-level peers.

The result of such competitive comparison is negative, or "deficit" positioning of American schools, teachers, and students. According to Manyak and Dantas (2010), deficit positioning occurs when we look at students and their families with "narrowness, presumption, and judgment" because they "differ from 'mainstream' standards (p. 8). McDermott and Varenne (1998) give us an example:

> Adam could not be disabled on his own. He needed others to recognize, document, remediate a disability that had to be made 'his.' More important, without a culturally well-organized apparatus identifying a certain percentage of American children as officially Learning Disabled, Adam could simply have been what he was, namely, a person who learned differently or on a different schedule than others (p. 26, 27).

As policymakers make broad, sweeping critiques of schools and their students based on a narrow set of test scores, they are overlooking the diverse array of individuals that compose the classes and schools they are berating. They fail to see the shortsightedness in labeling every student who has yet to earn "proficient" scores as "deficient." Kathleen Collins and Joseph Valente (2010) presents a strong case against Race to the Top's positioning of "disabled" students, arguing that the notion of "racing" inevitably creates "losers" out of those deemed "not able" by a standardized test. Manyak and Dantas (2010) explain,

> Within education, learning is frequently pictured as a largely cognitive process that takes place within the heads of individual learners. However, sociocultural theorists have

>stressed the ways that people acquire knowledge, skills, and identitie through participation in historically, culturally, and socially constituted practices (p. 9).

Testing is used as a measure of students' capabilities because it is the simplest type of measurement, but the reality is, students' capabilities extend into realms that cannot be measured by multiple choice questions or categorized with numbers and percentages.

I recall the Read 180 student who was so indignant when I gave him a "baby's book" to read. His standardized test scores categorized him as a first grade reader, although he was a senior in high school at this time. While the both assessment and curriculum claimed to "cure" this student's deficiency, his outrage at this deficit positioning made the effectiveness of the Intervention questionable. Rather than feeling empowered by the opportunity to strengthen his reading skills with an interesting text, he felt humiliated by the implication of its skinny binding.

I remember the student who I recommended to our Problem Solving Team. His test scores hinted at a stagnation in English literacy development, and I wanted to ensure that we provided adequate support. It did not occur to me that filling his schedule with Interventions would prevent him from taking self-selected electives, or that he would become extremely frustrated by this apparent overdose of supportive classes, attempting to re-position himself as capable of mainstream classes instead.

How English language proficiency positions students

English literacy is thought to be at the core of achievement and growth in all other areas, which puts educators in a position of asking linguistically diverse students to suspend use of their home language(s) in order to practice English. For these students, standardized tests treat bilingualism or a lack of proficiency in the target language as a "liability" instead of an asset (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). To catch up, many students, such as the Mexican immigrant students

who made up most of my classes, "have to learn at *higher* rates than their peers in the years following the transition to elementary school…If they learn at lower rates, then they will finish the race even farther behind" (Crosnoe, 2006, p. 77, 78). Subsequently, Race to the Top positions English language learners as "losers," failing to recognize English language acquisition as a normal process for anyone who speaks another home language. Under tremendous pressure to help English language learners progress towards proficiency, educators like myself hone in on achievement measures and attempt to respond quickly when progress seems insufficient or slow. In the flurry of evaluating student progress, Jim Cummins (2001) explains that oftentimes educators misunderstand the difference between social and academic fluency in English language learners. Believing social fluency indicates that students should also be academically fluent, students are often administered psychological testing and categorized as "disabled" or needing Intervention, when in fact a student has simply not had adequate time to develop higher, more abstract levels of English. Furthermore, students who are categorized as English language learners are expected to achieve proficiency in spite of the fact that this requires them to make gains at a higher rate than their monolingual peers (Crosnoe, 2006). One fundamental dilemma with this perspective is the evidence that demonstrates language learners need five to seven years to develop academic proficiency in another language (Cummins, 2001). Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, and Ortiz (2010) discuss the problem of the disproportionate representation of minority students in special education programs. One belief leading to justification of this tendency is the assumption that the socioeconomic status of many minority families contributes to lower levels of achievement. Cummins (2001) also suggests that there is a lack of understanding regarding the benefits of bilingual education or the use of one's home language. Scribner and Reyes (1999) call for an alternative view of assessment which recognizes the complexity of language acquisition with an optimistic view towards competence and the value of bilingualism.

When I responded to my students' use of Spanish by encouraging them to practice English more, I encountered a great deal of resistance, often in the form of continued use of Spanish. Oftentimes their conversations appeared to subvert the curriculum, focusing instead on their social lives or topics they found humorous, and I felt obliged to redirect them. At times, they articulated their resistance in English. "Miss, I was just explaining!" they often responded, which I sensed was true some of the time, yet I struggled to view Spanish as an asset with the weight of the pressure on us to demonstrate our students' achievement in English. "Miss, this is the only place I can speak Spanish!" The powerful desire to speak Spanish stemmed from the students' cultural identity and the bond they felt with fellow students who shared their culture.

How differing values position "Intervention" students

These misunderstandings regarding language acquisition hint at the larger problem of ignoring and misconstruing the values of students and their families. As we continue to examine neoliberal discourse surrounding education, we see that our economic system places a higher value on particular types of knowledge and a lesser value on others, implying that students who have certain types of knowledge are more valuable to our nation's workforce than many of their peers. Neo-liberalism's view of equality is to implant the same types of knowledge and skills in all students, regardless of their background, values, or interests. According to Shields, Bishop, and Mazawi (2005), education is one of the primary agencies that defines, "through educators' discursive practices, what constitutes official or legitimate knowledge" (p. 7). This official knowledge is spelled out in academic standards, which are measured through school achievement and test performance. Individual students, schools, and districts are compared to one another; those who meet the standards are "winners," whereas those who fail to meet the standards are

"losers." Sparks (2002) articulates the type of "deficit" positioning English language learners

often experience.

> Deficit thinking, a prevalent viewpoint in educational circles, compares everyone to a
> dominant norm, and if the individual does not measure up, he or she must be fixed, or
> healed, as in the medical model of treatment...Cultural deficits are attributed to
> differences in language, ethnic values, and lifestyle that create barriers to assimilating
> into the dominant culture (p. 10).

The more students are labeled and this labeling is accepted, "the 'patient' suffering the

'pathology' also begins to internalize the definitions" (9). The emphasis is on what these students

are not capable of, as determined by testing.

It is not surprising that Intervention provokes resistance or students re-positioning.

According to Pulido (2008) and Espinoza-Herold (2003), much resistance is a result of

education's attempts to assimilate students of diverse cultures into a particular or dominant way of

thinking about learning, as well as what is valued knowledge. Espinoza-Herold attributes the

failure of Latino students to conflicting visions of success: oftentimes education requires these

students to "assimilate" to the culture of schooling, as opposed to accepting Latino beliefs and

culture (p. 15). She borrows Bordieu and Passerson's (1977) notion of "cultural capital"—or

"knowledge, skills, and cultural background" which are passed down through family or

community. The deficit categorization of Latino students or English language learners in general,

stems from the devaluing of students' cultural capital, such as the students whom Espinoza-

Herold (2003) identifies in her study.

> Latino students, immigrant or American born (voluntary or involuntary), enter our public
> schools with high aspirations and the desire to pursue the 'American dream.' When they
> affirm their own definition of educational success and their own view of the 'American
> dream,' their voices are often dismissed or ignored (p. 15).

Gorlewski (2011) observes that "working-class students" appear to resist school activities that

they feel belittle or deny "working-class identity" (p. 15). Similarly, Pulido's study (2008) study

found that "students resist the 'dead time' of school, where interpersonal relationships are reduced

to the imperative ideologies of the market " (p. 22). Manyak and Dantas (2010) identify a distinct difference in the responsibility of the family versus the school, that is, that family is responsible for moral education, whereas schools are responsible for academic education. Educators and schools tend to perceive this apparent lack of commitment to academics as a deficit among Mexican families. When students resist Interventions, teachers are positioned as needing to find a way to reposition students to align their goals with those of policymakers. This poses the ethical dilemma of forcing values on young people.

While my students were expressing their interest in nursing, forensic anthropology, or cosmetology, district and school leadership were urging me to increase the rate with which I pushed my students through the curriculum. While my students were speaking of their desire to help others and care for their families, I wrestled with a sense of obligation to help them improve their test scores, even though I believed that test scores revealed so little about their true potential. According to their test scores, my six students were not winners in the Race to the Top, yet each of them, as we can see in their quotes, seemed to have a mentality that hinted at their potential of becoming a successful adult, able and willing to contribute positively to their community.

Many of my students exhibited excellent interpersonal skills, and the students in this particular study exhibited a strong sense of compassion and desire to help others. Three of these six students who participated in my thematic study have since successfully graduated from high school, and at least two are pursuing higher education in spite of their levels of proficiency. Unfortunately, interpersonal skills and compassion are not quantifiable, and are not valued in a strict, market model of education.

Resistance, repositioning and spaces for agency

For those attempting to enforce No Child Left Behind and now Race to the Top reforms, resistance appears to be a negative and an obstacle to progress. However, as we uncover the deficit positioning that accompanies these reforms, resistance begins to make more sense. Could it be that resistance is a sign of attempted re-positioning?

When students or teachers attempt to re-position themselves in ways that better align with their values, they are acting as agents rather than subjects simply being positioned by powerful forces. "Lois McNay (2000) defines agency as the 'ability to act in an unexpected fashion or to institute new and unanticipated modes of behavior" (Gorlewski, 2011, p. 198). To counter the deficit positioning my students and I experienced, we would have to find spaces for agency. According to Giroux (1997), the enactment of human agency through resistance requires us to become aware of "historical and objective societal forces" that have impacted us and what about ourselves that we want to change (p. 80). For Varenne and McDermott (1998) the structure is America's framework of success and failure. In their words,

> ...if child-centered explanations of either success or failure are really parts of the justification and rationalization of the workings of this structure, then, of course, any suggestion about the direction reform should take must point at this structure rather than at the child (p. 142).

We must further recognize that American education's categorization of students who are "disabled" or "behind" is not "natural," but rather "cultural." We must examine" the institutions or forces that define success versus failure, how and why students are classified as such, and what the consequences are of these categorizations (McDermott & Varenne, 1998, p. 5).

Gorlewski (2011) suggests that resistance to these structures can "be achieved through dialogic pedagogies that build an understanding of resisting and power through critical theory..." (p. xx). An awareness of ideology is essential to critical literacy. When connected to "the notion of struggle," ideology uncovers "relationships among power, meaning, and interest" and can serve

as a medium for either domination or agency (Giroux, 1997, p. 75, 76). Bakhtin explains that individuals are capable of 1) "ideological becoming," 2) "valid ideas," and 3) participation in genuine dialogue surrounding varied perspectives (Gorlewski, 2011, p. 130, 131). Furthermore, Varenne and McDermott (1998) suggest that people can resist the forces of institutions, and "inflect the history of their most local conditions" (p. 132). Sparks (2002) asserts that the capacity to identify one's own reality and make sense of it provides the foundation for resistance tools that can lead toward "cultural autonomy while attaining economic and political equality" (p. 22, 23).

A starting point for agency is awareness of our context and our positioning within that context.

Positively positioning teachers

Although I was distinctly aware of the ways in which my students resisted these positionings throughout my three and a half years in this school, I was less conscious of my own growing resistance to the ways in which policy was positioning me. As I became more aware of my positioning, I realized that my discomfort was growing into a desire to resist, or re-position myself. My greatest desires were 1) to be viewed as a competent, professional educator, 2) to be afforded substantive opportunities to work collaboratively rather than competitively, and 3) to be heard by administration, and ultimately, policymakers who have positioned me. The teachers in Haas Dyson's (1997) study similarly indicated that their job satisfaction stemmed primarily from: 1) the connection they felt they had with the children they taught, 2) the space they felt the school created for teacher agency, and 3) the time allotted for collaboration with fellow colleagues. While I felt that I was able to develop connections with my students because of my close contact with them throughout each week, I needed to work harder to find spaces for agency and collaboration. How could I possibly engage policy?

Forever on the receiving end of reform, educators as a body of professionals is one of the most widely criticized in the United States. Policymaking may entail some degree of "token" representation of educators, but the vast majority have little, if any, voice in the policymaking process. In *Understanding and Applying Critical Policy Study: Reading Educators Advocating for Change,* Jacqueline Edmondson (2004) shares the accounts of three educators who acted as agents, effectively re-positioning themselves as teachers, along with their students, in ways that resisted contemporary education policy. Each story concludes with advice for teachers seeking to proactively engage policy, such as:

- Recognize the values inherent in any given policy (p. 38).
- Attend to the contradictions in policies (p. 39).
- Work locally, beginning in your own classrooms and schools (p. 56).
- Connect your policy study with other educators (p. 72).

Edmondson encourages teachers to model a respect for differences, create spaces for dialogue regarding policy, and aid in the development of new identities surrounding literacy education.

The process of writing, gathering, rereading, and reflecting on my experiences in this school served as a foundation for making sense of my teacher position. These reflective accounts led me to ask questions, which encouraged me to engage in an in-depth inquiry of Race to the Top, as well as the ways in which Colorado and local leadership went about implementing the subsequent reforms. This greater awareness provided perspective on the ways in which I was implementing curriculum, and how this curriculum, in turn, positioned my students.

I capitalized on opportunities to collaborate with my Literacy Coach as I became increasingly aware of Race to the Top's impact on my school and my own students in particular. This collaboration aided in the sensemaking processes as I was able to share my reflection and hear the reflective thoughts of this colleague. Finding a fellow educator who shared my concerns gave me a stronger foundation for agency.

As my awareness of my students' positioning increased and I was able to share concerns and exchange ideas with my Literacy Coach, I discovered that I was already attempting to engage in several forms of resistance. I resisted the pressure to make my classroom an English-only environment, instead creating a space for Spanish as an asset, rather than a liability. I resisted the pressure to ignore the Individual Career and Academic Plan requirement for my students, carving out a block of time each week for a month to engage my students in college exploration. I also attempted to resist *Read 180'*s narrow definition of literacy by developing an alternative idea for reading instruction.

While I may not have affected change at the systemic level, I found that I could engage in dialogue with individual colleagues as I made sense of policy as it was interpreted by district and school leadership, or the resistance I encountered in my classroom. Furthermore, I was able to engage in this research study, which enacted my "sociological imagination" and helped me to make sense of my positioning in our current context of education reforms. And most importantly, I began to recognize ways in which I created space for students to re-position themselves.

Positively positioning students

Student resistance has been one of my greatest teachers, as it taught me to question and in some ways, to resist deficit positionings alongside my students. Cummins (2001) writes that educators can either "empower" or "disable" students (p. 178); teachers can engage in pedagogy that either adds or subtracts language and culture. When teachers participate "in a system that privileges and legitimates particular knowledge forms and practices, teachers engage in what Bordieu calls *symbolic violence"* (Gorlewski, 2011, p. 130). We as educators often respond to students' "disinterest" or "resistance" with efforts towards "maintaining order or control" (Giroux, 1997, p. 123), especially in this age of accountability where our own careers are on the

line. In the past, teachers have been able to "close the door" in order to resist top-down control, but today's accountability measures have diminished teachers' capacity for making autonomous decisions regarding their own classrooms and students (Gorlewski, 2011, p. 63). With this brand of pedagogy, "student voice is reduced to the immediacy of its performance, existing as something to be measured, administered, registered, and controlled" (Giroux, 1997, p. 124).

I believe that this is why we as conscientious educators must work to reposition our schools, ourselves, and our students in positive, empowering ways, broadening the scope of what is valued knowledge. "As Lankshear and McLaren summarize, the intent of critical literacy is a 'rewriting' of the world in which people's 'interests, identities, and legitimate aspirations are more fully present and are present more equally" (Compton-Lilly, 2004, p. 5). Espinoza-Herold, 2003) suggests that we can foster successful schools by valuing language and culture, setting high expectations, providing staff development and sharing, as well as encouraging parent involvement (p. 143). Scribner and Reyes (1999) offer a similar model for success, encouraging schools to 1) involve parents to foster a sense of belonging, 2) institute a system of shared governance, 3) educate teachers in ways of developing culturally sensitive pedagogy, and 4) generate advocacy-oriented assessment which is responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity (192-207).

According to Fairclough (2010), these power relations reside in Discourse, which provide us with a medium for either reproduction of the same, or transformation. Change will only be possible when educators first work to understand the perspectives "of those most affected by those constructions: Latino students themselves" (Espinoza-Herold, 2003, p. 137), creating a space for the positive potential of resistance, a space for "liberatory learning and social justice" (Gorlewski, 2011, p. 205). For any student, this requires us to consider every student's strengths, not just those of students who score "proficient" on the state exams.

Nel Noddings (2006) argues that changing our education standards is not the answer to improving students' chances of success. Such a view does not consider the whole child. Instead we must discover what interests our students and develop curriculum that corresponds with their interests, rather than foisting upon them information that so many are unlikely to use. Vocational education should be granted higher status, and not presumed to be a program with lower standards. Communities of learners center around the belief "that all children can succeed," not merely students in college-preparatory classes (Scribner & Reyes, 1999, p. 190). Valuing students' identity, strengths, home language, and culture plays an integral role in establishing a culture of caring and communities of learners (Paredes Scribner, 1999; Espinoza-Herold, 2003). This mentality calls for high expectations and focus on success instead of deficiencies.

A starting point for empowering students to act as agents of their own learning is inquiry based learning (Campano, 2007; Beach & Myers, 2001). In his fifth grade classroom, Campano used inquiry to unpack the personal stories of students, empowering them to "generate literacy practices from their own experiences" (p .7). As students participated in inquiry, they gave voice to their stories, allowing them to make sense of their identities and to develop new perspectives of their world, much like my own experience in generating this autoethnography. Campano refers to this space for inquiry as "the second classroom," which extends beyond the mandated curriculum and "occurs during the margins and in between periods of the school day" (p. 39). This form of learning can be even more powerful when conducted in the context of a community of learners (Campano, 2007; Haas Dyson, 1997). Here the students are able to give their stories voice, to make sense of their inquiries together, to discover similarities, as well as to grapple with the meaning of differences. This sense of community runs in stark contrast to the individualized nature of education in our competitive culture.

One of my English Language Acquisition classes also demonstrated the power of one's home language to positively position students in my classroom. Rather than use it as an excuse to

veer off topic, many of my students in the Level I and II groups consistently used Spanish to support one another as they made sense of readings, questions, and assignment guidelines. They slipped back and forth between Spanish and English, using their home language to support the "official" language of their school. The more that I saw how they were using their home language as a supportive tool, I recognize that I could be a tool for creating a community of learners. In fact, I began using my basic knowledge of Spanish to clarify things for the Level I students, attempting to more effectively engage in this community myself. As I listened to students speak about the Spanish for Native Speakers classes our school offered through my third year in the school, I began to genuinely grasp how vital home language is to my students' identity.

In my search for positives that contrasted with the resistance I recounted earlier, I recalled our Career Research Unit. My students expressed enthusiasm regarding the opportunity to explore a field that interested them. Our guest speakers brought the real world into the classroom, avoiding the common disconnect students feel when school learning does not seem to relate to their lives outside of the classroom. As students began their research, reflecting on what they learned from speakers, class readings, and their own research, they began to take ownership of what they learned. The final project included a poster and presentation, and the students demonstrated noticeable pride in these products and their ability to teach their classmates about the career they researched. At one point, I asked my students to write a letter to a family member or friend to share what they were learning, and why this career intrigued them. My hope was to engage families in this unit experience.

Futhermore, my collaboration with our Literacy Coach provided a better foundation for advocacy on behalf of our students. We both cared deeply for our students and made a genuine effort to hear the voices of these students. As we grappled with the way our district instructed us to implement Interventions, we searched for ways to positively position our students in this complex of Interventions.

Had I not been so fearful of the ways in which I felt Race to the Top, along with No Child Left Behind negatively positioned me, the Intervention teacher, as well as my students, I might have been more conscious of the ways that personal connections, ownership, and home language seemed to positively position them. Although these may seem small compared with the force of the global market economy and our government's aspirations to develop a competitive workforce, these reflections are evidence of positive possibilities in a "deficit" obsessed context. As I consider these student responses in light of our current policy environment, I realize that, at the government level, there is no space for the voices or preferences of students. Yet, the rigidity of policy's mandates does not necessarily preclude a teacher's ability to give students voice, and in doing so, to positively position them.

We cannot afford to be unaware of the ways in which policy positions us or we, in turn, position our students. The voices of our students remind us of the damaging impact of deficit positioning, yet they also remind us that even students who are negatively positioned by policy, or more specifically by educators' enactment of policy in their classrooms, students may reposition themselves by resisting or by simply creating their own definitions of success. Our response as educators is crucial, as we have the ability to reinforce or reverse students' negative positionings and to encourage or repress students' positive positionings. Only when we educate ourselves with regard our current policy environment and listen to the voices of our students can we exert ourselves and enable our students to act, not as pawns in a powerful political game, but as agents of our own positionings.

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Appendix A

Chronological Timeline of My Tenure at Brighton High School

Policy	District	School	Classroom
Spring 2009 Schools continuing to try and meet demands of NLCB, avoid penalization	Read 180 had been brought to the district to try and resolve reading deficiencies		**Read 180:** Highly scripted curriculum; double period; Kids not reading I assigned books for several weeks to try and get kids "back on track." Various forms of resistance: nonattendance, acting up, "This is a baby's book!"
Fall 2009	Read 180 Training	Launching year with presentation of standardized test scores Professional goals centering around three struggling students Writing Committee had developed a scripted format for teaching writing across the disciplines in our building (PEA)	**English Language Acquisition**: All different levels mixed together; I had monolingual Spanish speakers in a room with students who could have been level II or III, as well as students who could probably could have handled the work in an English class on their grade level.
November 2009 *Race to the Top* introduced **January 2010**	District was developing a literacy flow chart to ensure appropriate placement of students in reading and math interventions	Problem Solving Team being	I was permitted to have 2 "transitional" English classes for students who were

Colorado applies to RTTT. Colorado Senate passed SB 09-256 required secondary schools to provide Individual Career and Academic Plans for all students Concurrent Enrollment in Public High School and College Bill (HB 09-1319) Education Accountability Act (SB 09-163) Preparation Program Effectiveness Bill (SB 10-36) **March 2010** Round 1 winners announced **April 2010** Colorado Senate pass SB 191 eradicating teacher tenure **May 2010** Colorado submitted Round 2 application	Literacy Academy District began developing English language acquisition flow chart to ensure appropriate placement of students in English language acquisition and mainstream English classes. I was asked to attend sessions to provide input. Flowcharts finalized	developed to address issue of kids falling through cracks **$10 million budget cut for the district forecasted. The equivalent of 9 teacher positions would have to be cut. (I was new and thought I might lose my job.)** The basic concept of an ICAP is presented by the Director of Career and Technical Education The eradication of tenure is forecasted by the teacher's union. Teacher evaluations would change the following year. Team of teachers from Special Education, English,	not in ELA but struggled with mainstream English classes. Curriculum development left entirely up to me for Transitional English, but I had to borrow resources. Some kids were signed up for "Lab" and were to do homework, but others were to actually have an English class. Some of those who were to take it as an English class already had a mainstream English class, which created additional confusion as to why they had been placed there. "I want to use Spanish;" struggling with Latino's tendency to talk over one another--also... How do I get students to do homework? Strong community in the classroom--use of Spanish to unify Discovery that some students have been in local schools since middle or even elementary grades but have not reached proficiency Question of other factors interfering with language development

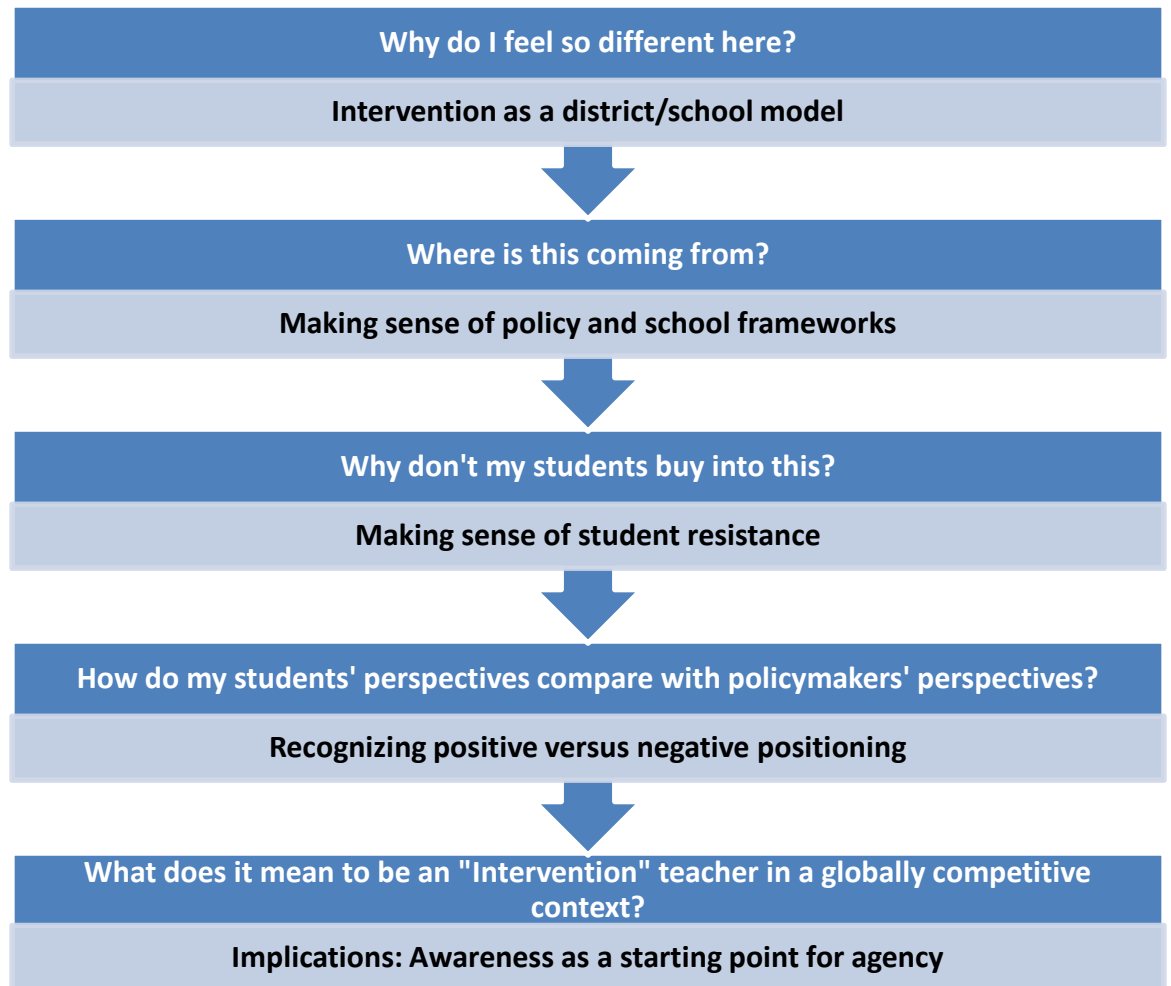|			
August 2010 Round 2 winners announced		English Language Acquisition, as well as literacy coach used flow chart and excel tables of student test scores in order to place students in appropriate reading and English language acquisition "intervention" classes.	Bring one of these students to the Problem Solving Team; collect data from teachers, family, student, psychologist tests student and diagnoses; Develops IEP, places in additional interventions
Fall 2010			**Read 180:** More resistance from other Read 180 students. Searching for ways to encourage students to invest. This is the class where Miguel, who had already taken the class, wanted so badly to prove himself to be a capable reading. Also some conflict between white student who felt Hispanic students were being disrespectful by talking while the teacher was talking. It was a struggle to lessen this tension.
	Additional budget cuts, but less severe, fewer staffing cuts.	Launching year with presentation of standardized test scores again Development of the English language acquisition committee, since our English language learners needed to make additional progress. The building principal headed the	**English Language Acquisition:** Transitional English was taken away, perhaps because i t was believed that the English department already provided supportive classes (Basic English) for grades 9-11, or

		team and included faculty from as many departments as possible. The goal was to develop professional development opportunities to train the staff in ways of serving English language learners in mainstream classrooms. I was a part of this team.	perhaps because of the disorganized way in which it was implemented in the previous year. Two levels of English Language Acquisition were offered (I and II). I was given an entire curriculum appropriate to a Level I or Level II. However, I found that a number of my students were actually at a higher level than the materials the district had given us, and so once again I borrowed materials from other departments in order to more appropriately challenge these students. Once again, the levels in my classes were mixed, forcing me to use different materials and to run back and forth between groups.
Spring 2011		One English teacher granted a semester off in order to develop ICAP guidelines for the building.	
		CSAP Assembly-- assembly designed to motivate students to try their best on the state standardized tests	This year, the school gave me a Lab (and an added section during the spring), which my colleague and I developed into

During the spring of this school year, I tried to follow the ICAP mandate by having my student hear guest speakers from several fields, read about related topics, and |

	ELA Training		conduct research on a career. I integrated a number of individual and group reflections, which I used as data for me classroom study, to better understand my students' perspectives on education and career preparation.

Read 180:

I had a couple of students who had me for nearly half of the school day: a period of English language acquisition, a period of Read 180, and a period of Lab. When one of these students saw ELA in her schedule, she came in to talk with me.

"Miss, I was born here. I don't hardly speak Spanish. Do I really need to be in ELA?"

I promised to make an inquiry. I was told that, because someone in her family spoke Spanish in her home, she had to be tested for her English proficiency until she scored proficient. At this point, I asked the Problem Solving Team if we could explore her situation. Our Psychologist |
| | | Launching year with presentation of standardized test scores | |

			discovered that she had been classified with an IEP in elementary school, but that it had been dismissed in fifth grade. Her records noted that teachers had continued to modify work for her. So now the high school was looking at her English language proficiency scores and saying that she needed English language acquisition resources. Our psychologist suggested that, instead of trying to get her re-classified, we simply try to provide some additional support, such as the Special Education resource room.
Fall 2011	Reduction in Professional Development Days (furlough days) due to budget reductions. PD limited primarily to staff meetings.	Teachers now teaching 6 classes both semester. No study halls or hall monitors. Students have open periods with class. A number, including many freshman, had more than one open period.	**English Language Acquisition-**This was the first year that I was granted ELA I, II, and III. However, levels I and II were combined in the same class period, so once again, I juggled curricula and ran between groups throughout each class period.
November 2011 Colorado resubmits Round 2 application for Round 3			This year, the district also provided 2 additional levels of curricula, this time more appropriate for the higher proficiency

			levels.
December 2011 Colorado wins $17 million from Round 3			**Read 180:** Time allotment reduced to a single period, most likely to allow more time for participating students to obtain credits necessary for graduation.
Spring 2012	In an informal meeting, our district TOSA informed me that my students should be completing the entire ELA text in the space of a single year, while the Level I students ought to be completing the entire Newcomer book as well as the Level I text in the space of their first year.	Another CSAP assembly	Several students who had been placed in the class without their foreknowledge or consent, resisted in a variety of ways--nonattendance, avoiding work, trying to argue with the teacher about the assignments "I thought I was better than this." "I already took this in middle school." I had our literacy coach do a more detailed evaluation of their reading as a basis for a heart to heart on why they were in the class or what they needed to do in order to be able to exit. Amazingly, some of my more compliant students were actually multi-year veterans of Read 180. For some students, Read 180 did seem to correlate with a noticeable rise in their reading skills as measured by the Read 180 or NWEA

			assessment measures. For others, it seemed to make little difference.
		Restructuring-- merging ELA with English, shifting of teachers (Who can teach multiple subjects?) Science teacher moves to music in order to save a non-tenured teacher's job.	

Appendix B

Timeline of Stages of Awareness

Why do I feel so different here?

Intervention as a district/school model

Where is this coming from?

Making sense of policy and school frameworks

Why don't my students buy into this?

Making sense of student resistance

How do my students' perspectives compare with policymakers' perspectives?

Recognizing positive versus negative positioning

What does it mean to be an "Intervention" teacher in a globally competitive context?

Implications: Awareness as a starting point for agency

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CERTIFICATIONS

Colorado Department of Education, *7-12 English, K-12 ESL, K-12 Reading*

SELECT POSTSECONDARY EXPERIENCE:

English Adjunct, *Colorado Christian University*	Jan. 2013-Present
English/Developmental Studies Adjunct, *Front Range Community College*	Aug. 2012-Present
Supervisor of Preservice English Teachers, *The Pennsylvania State University*	Aug. 2004-May 2007
Online English Adjunct, *Liberty University*	Oct. 2006-March 2007, Feb.2009-Oct. 2009
ESL Adjunct, *Penn State Intensive English Communication Program*	Aug. 2005-Dec. 2005

SELECT K-12 TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

Intervention Teacher, *Brighton High School, Brighton, CO*	Jan. 2009-May 2012
6th Grade Teacher, *Young Scholars Charter School, State College, PA*	Aug. 2007-June 2008
ESL Teacher, *State College Area School District, State College, PA*	March 2003-June 2007

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS:

Cone, L. (2007). "Resilience in Russian Immigrant Stories: An Alternative to Deficiency Models." *Forum for Qualitative Social Research.* http://www.qualitative-research.net.

Cone, L. (2007, April 21). Valued Literacies: A Russian Couple's Perspectives of Education in the Former Soviet Union and Central Pennsylvania. Presented at Penn TESOL East, Penn State Abington.

Hernbloom, L. (2012, November 17). *The Influence of Leadership on Learning*. Discussant for paper session at the Annual Convention of The University Council for Educational Administration, Denver, CO.