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## The Impact of Louisiana's COMPASS Teacher Evaluation System on Principals in one School District: A Case Study

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The Impact of Louisiana's COMPASS Teacher Evaluation System on Principals in One School District:  
A Case Study

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Educational Administration

by

David Paul Schexnaydre, Jr.

B.S., Louisiana State University, 2005  
M. Ed., University of New Orleans, 2010

May, 2016

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## **Dedication**

To my wife, Leanne, and our children, David and Julia. A life without you is no life at all. You are always the focus of my thoughts and heart. I love you more than you will ever know and I will always strive and aspire to be the husband and father that you deserve.

To my mother, Mary, and my father, David. Not only have you provided the foundation and opportunity for me to lead a happy life, but you have also provided the same for my children. The impact and influence from how you have lived your lives will live on forever in the generations after you. Just as a raindrop creates a ripple that can never be fully known, I hope you are always aware that your fingerprints are on all things positive that result from me, my children, my grandchildren, and all that come after them. Please consider the process and completion of this dissertation as a miniscule down payment on my eternal indebtedness to you.

I have no clue what I have done to deserve the blessings of having all of you in my life. I can only hope to live my life in a way that shows that depths of my love for you. With these blessings in mind, it is only fitting that I conclude my dedications with God, the Father Almighty. Although I've sometimes forgotten about Him, He has never forgotten about me.

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Although I mentioned many of them in the Dedication, I would like to further acknowledge my family - immediate, extended, and chosen - for their support in this process. While I would love nothing more than to claim sole responsibility for this accomplishment, I am fully aware that I am a product of my environment and my support system deserves just as much credit, if not more, than I do. The babysitting, meals, and emotional support I received from you were vital. And the money for tuition, that was important as well.

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## Table of Contents

Nomenclature and Abbreviations .....	ix
Abstract .....	x
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
National Focus on Teacher Evaluation.....	1
Statewide Efforts to Improve Education.....	1
Statewide Efforts to Reform Teacher Evaluation.....	2
Problem Statement .....	3
Purpose for Study .....	6
Research Questions .....	7
Organization of Study .....	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	8
Teacher Evaluation .....	8
Teacher Evaluation in Louisiana .....	12
Legislation .....	12
Development of COMPASS .....	12
Components of COMPASS .....	13
Classroom Observations in Teacher Evaluation .....	15
Framework for Teaching.....	15
Value-Added Measures .....	17
Evolving Role of the Principal.....	21
The Role of the Principal in Teacher Evaluation .....	23
Importance of Morale for School Personnel.....	26
The Impact of Change in an Educational Setting.....	28
Barriers to Successful Change.....	28
Tasks of Transition for Successful Implementation .....	30
Leadership for Change .....	32
Theoretical Framework .....	33

Organizational Behavior Perspective.....	33
Transformational Leadership .....	35
Transformational Leadership in Education .....	36
Transformational Leadership Framework and Dimensions of Practice.....	37
Transformational Leadership and Change.....	38
Summary .....	38
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	40
Qualitative Research .....	40
Case Study .....	40
Setting .....	41
Participants.....	43
Data Collection .....	46
Data Analysis .....	49
Procedures for Addressing Trustworthiness and Credibility .....	50
Triangulation .....	50
Clarification of Researcher Bias .....	51
Member Checking .....	52
Ethical Considerations .....	53
Chapter 4: Findings .....	54
The Effects of a State Department COMPAS Rollout that Participants Perceived as Weak .....	54
Mixed Perceptions on Level of Inter-Rater Reliability .....	58
Clarity, Effectiveness, and Validity of Student Learning Targets .....	65
Closing .....	67
School District's Central Office as External Policy Interpreter and Implementer .....	68
The Possibility of Inadvertently Creating Central Office Dependency .....	76
Closing .....	79
COMPASS as a Catalyst for the Intensification of Principals' Work .....	79
Closing .....	90
Conflicting Views on COMPASS' Impact on Teaching .....	91

Perceived Impact of VAM and SLTs on Improving Teaching .....	95
Closing .....	98
Interpersonal Opportunities and Challenges as a Result of COMPASS .....	98
Positive Changes in Relationships as a Result of Observations .....	98
The Negative Impact of SLTs on Relationships .....	102
The Varied Approaches and Results of Providing Support .....	104
Closing .....	109
Summary of Chapter Four .....	110
Chapter 5: Discussion .....	111
Discussion of Major Concepts.....	111
The Impact of Teacher Evaluation Reform at the School District Level .....	111
Room for Improvement in Inter-Rater Reliability and SLTs .....	113
Recommendations .....	115
Teacher Evaluation Reform as a Driver for Multiple Changes .....	117
Changes in Both Relationships and Instruction .....	118
Recommendations .....	120
Teacher Sensemaking to Improve Implementation and Support .....	121
Comfortable Collegiality to Improve Leadership and Learning .....	122
Summary of Discussion of Major Concepts .....	123
Interpretation of Findings to Address Research Questions .....	124
Research Question 1 .....	124
Research Question 2 .....	125
Research Question 3 .....	126
Implications .....	127
Limitations .....	130
Recommendations for Future Research .....	130
References .....	133
Appendix A .....	155
Appendix B .....	156



Appendix C .....	157
Appendix D .....	158
Appendix E .....	159
Appendix F .....	161
Appendix G .....	163
Appendix H .....	164
Vita .....	165

## **Nomenclature and Abbreviations**

**BESE:** Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

**CCSS:** Common Core State Standards

**CIS:** COMPASS Information System

**COMPASS:** Clear, Overall Measure of Performance to Analyze and Support Success

**DOE:** Department of Education

**IRR:** Inter-Rater Reliability

**LDOE:** Louisiana Department of Education

**MFP:** Minimum Foundation Program

**NCLB:** No Child Left Behind

**NCTQ:** National Council on Teacher Quality

**NTGS:** Non-Tested Grades and Subjects

**RTTT:** Race To The Top

**SLT:** Student Learning Target

**VAM:** Value-Added Measures

## **Abstract**

As teacher evaluation practices become increasingly high-stakes, principal observation has been made an important source of data in the evaluation process. Driven by the federal Race to the Top initiative, implementation of teacher evaluation systems has been rapid and questions remain about the preparedness of principals to successfully implement the new evaluation processes. The researcher conducted a qualitative case study that focuses on the implementation of the Louisiana Department of Education's COMPASS teacher evaluation system and its impacts on principals in one school district. Interviews were conducted with six principals, a focus group was held with the four members of the district central office that supervise and support these principals, and two more focus group were held with selected teachers from the schools of each of the participating principals. Viewed through the lens of Transformational Leadership, data was collected, transcribed, analyzed, and organized into themes in order to present a practical and real-life perspective on how the COMPASS mandate has impacted principals. Findings indicate that principals perceive that COMPASS was implemented too quickly and they have had to change several of their practices as a result. Additionally, principals believe their biggest success in implementing COMPASS was supporting teachers, while they believe their biggest challenge in implementing COMPASS to be setting student learning targets that are both reasonable and challenging, and aligning school practices with those set forth in the COMPASS Rubric. Implications of this research include practical knowledge for current principals and administrators, and a ground-level view for policy makers regarding how mandates and change impact principals, as well as scholars seeking to understand the change process.

*Keywords:* teacher evaluation, reform, policy, principals, change, leadership

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **National Focus on Teacher Evaluation**

The United States is currently in the midst of an unprecedented wave of reform regarding teacher evaluations (McGuinn, 2012; Mead, 2012; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2014; The New Teacher Project, 2013). Following the 2009 announcement of Race to the Top and its approximately \$5 billion in funds available for states who met the set criteria, teacher evaluation became a target of legislative sessions in several different states. Subsequently, 36 states and the District of Columbia have altered policies on teacher evaluation since 2009, according to The National Council on Teacher Quality (McGuinn, 2012; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2014). An increase has been observed in the amount of states that require annual teacher evaluations, and those incorporating student achievement, differentiated levels of performance, annual classroom observations, multiple observations each year, and performance-based tenure decisions (McGuinn, 2012; Mead, 2012). Among several other education initiatives, Louisiana saw legislative action aimed at teacher evaluation in both 2010 and 2012. In a 2014 report on teacher policy, published by the National Council on Teacher Quality, Louisiana received a grade of B, up from a C- in 2011. The only state to score higher than Louisiana was Florida, who received a B+ (2014). While some aspects of the report have been called into question (Fuller, 2014), no state saw a larger change in score in this two year time frame than Louisiana. While, the drastic change in score within a short time period is not necessarily indicative of improvement, it does point to the rapid development and implementation of the new teacher evaluation system, and makes the state an interesting setting to study how this rapid development and implementation of a new teacher evaluation system impacts principals.

### **Statewide Efforts To Improve Education**

In recent years Louisiana has seen rapid change in educational policy and approach. According to the news archives of the LDOE's website, in the past few years alone the department has adopted the

Common Core State Standards, changed school and district letter grade accountability systems, created a course choice program, expanded charter schools, altered the minimum foundation program (MFP), restructured the organization and governance of the state department of education, passed legislation creating mandatory early childhood education, and piloted and implemented a new teacher evaluation system. These reforms, though not all examined explicitly here, are part of the rapidly changing landscape of education in Louisiana. The rapidly changing landscape is important as it is the setting and context in which principals and schools are currently operating. Additionally, this context may have an impact on student achievement and the effectiveness of schools. Furthermore, research is needed to greater understand this quickly changing educational terrain, along with its intended and unintended consequences.

### **Statewide Efforts to Reform Teacher Evaluation**

The teacher evaluation system in Louisiana has undergone rapid changes in the past few years. In 2010, more than 98% of teachers in Louisiana were assigned the same rating, "Satisfactory", and in some districts, observations occurred only once every three years. As a result, the feedback given to teachers was not necessarily indicative of their individual performance, nor the performance of their students (Louisiana Department of Education, 2013d). While the evaluations of teachers indicated that the instruction being given to students was satisfactory, more than one-third of Louisiana students were not grade-level proficient, and only seven out of ten students graduated from high school on time (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012a). This disparity, coupled with the opportunity to compete for federal funds through the Race to the Top initiative, caused the state to focus on changing the way teachers were evaluated in Louisiana.

The perceived lack of rigor in teacher evaluation and professional development, in conjunction with the low academic performance of a large number of students, caused the state government to intervene. In the 2010 Regular Legislative Session, the Louisiana legislature passed House Bill no. 1033, which would lead to the creation of Act 54, which mandated a teacher evaluation system based in part on

a value-added model of student achievement. As a result of this legislation, the Louisiana Department of Education developed the COMPASS (Clear, Overall Measure of Performance to Analyze and Support Success) Teacher Evaluation System, drastically altering teacher evaluations in the state of Louisiana. COMPASS assigns teachers a numerical rating based on classroom observation and value-added measures based on student test scores. These two scores are then combined and the new policy ties the final teacher evaluation rating to teacher employment and compensation. While COMPASS is unique to Louisiana, it is part of a larger national trend regarding the evolution of teacher evaluation (Mead, 2012).

### **Problem Statement**

As part of a larger effort to improve student achievement, the teacher evaluation system in Louisiana was drastically changed and subsequently implemented between 2010 and 2012 (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012a; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2014). The new teacher evaluation system essentially changed the definition of effective teaching in Louisiana, and teachers deemed ineffective face possible sanctions related to pay, tenure, and continued employment (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012a).

While there has been general support for improving the quality of education, teacher evaluation reform has been met with opposition in several states (Georgia Researchers, 2012; Manning, 2013; Smith, 2014), including Louisiana (Dreilinger, 2013). In Louisiana, opponents of the new teacher evaluation system have argued that the rubric used for classroom observations is untested and invalid (Garland, 2012b), that value-added and student achievement scores are unreliable (Bausell, 2013; Louisiana department of Education, 2013b; Louisiana Federation of Teachers and School Employees, 2014), that merit pay has not been shown to improve student achievement (Murnane & Cohen, 1986; Springer et al., 2010), and some of these components should not be used for high-stakes teacher evaluations (Garland, 2012b; Ravitch, 2013).

Some educators in Louisiana immediately felt negative effects of the new teacher evaluation system such as the stresses of wrestling with setting formal student growth goals and struggling to align instructional practices against interpretations of a new instrument, while simultaneously being held accountable for their performance with consequential repercussions (Waller, 2012). On the national level, a survey of teachers found that teacher job satisfaction has declined to its lowest point in 25 years, plummeting from 2008 to 2012 (MetLife, 2012). Research has shown that morale can be negatively influenced by a number of factors, including change in policy, reduction of autonomy, increased accountability, reduction of influence on decision and policy-making, and changes in workplace routines (Evans, 2000). Teacher morale is important as it has been directly tied to student learning and achievement (Ellenberg, 1972; Lumsden, 1998; Miller, 1981).

On the surface these issues deal primarily with teachers, but on deeper level they impact students, schools, and communities. At the intersection of COMPASS and those it affects is the principal. Research shows principals have a significant impact on teacher morale (Adams, 1992; Blase, 1992; National Center for Education Statistics, 1997) as well as a significant impact on student achievement (Branch, 2013; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). However, principals report that their own responsibilities have changed so drastically in recent years that the job has become too complex (MetLife, 2012).

Research has identified several challenges that impact the principal as a result of implementing teacher evaluation systems. Among the challenges that implementation of teacher evaluation systems create for principals are cultivating buy-in and changing the climate and culture (Shakman, Breslow, Kochanek, Riordan, & Haferd, 2012; White, Cowhy, Stevens, & Spote, 2012), participating in and providing adequate training (Loup, Garland, Ellett, & Rugutt, 1996; Seyfarth, 2002), and managing time (NASSP, 2014). In addition, change implementation creates a conflict in the roles of the principal (Peterson, 2000) , and can create conflict in principal-teacher relationships (Castetter, 1996; Stronge, 2006). Furthermore, some principals may not be able to provide high-quality feedback to teachers

(Brandt, Mathers, Olivia, Brown-Sims, & Hess, 2007; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; O. Little, Goe, & Bell, 2009), which can undermine a foundational purpose of implementing new teacher evaluation systems: improving teaching. These challenges pose an immediate threat to successful implementation and can potentially undermine leadership in a school (Desimone, 2002; Halverson, Kelley, & Kimball, 2004; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002).

While the teacher evaluation system is as new to principals as it is to teachers, principals are faced with the task of supporting teachers and successfully leading schools through the implementation of the COMPASS teacher evaluation system. The implementation of COMPASS has changed teacher evaluation in Louisiana, and possibly as a byproduct, the role and functions of the principal. Despite their lack of experience with the new system, there is little room for principal error as new policies contain high-stakes consequences for the teachers they support and the schools they lead.

Principals are counted upon by teachers, schools, and communities to provide leadership and guidance. With respect to the implementation of COMPASS, principals are summoned to support teachers and guide schools even though they may have little experience or professional development regarding the challenges they are facing and the context they are operating within, as even their own roles and responsibilities change and evolve. However, time is valuable and the stakes are high as principals stand at the convergence of all of these factors and attempt to motivate and build capacity in teachers, increase student achievement, and effectively implement COMPASS.

The challenges faced by principals in implementing teacher evaluations can prove to be extremely important as implementation research has found that the level of change that actually occurs in school is determined by local actors, such as principals (Desimone, 2002; Halverson, Kelley, & Kimball, 2004; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). In order for COMPASS to serve its stated purpose in improving teacher practice and student achievement, principals must be supported in implementing COMPASS. Research on existing teacher evaluation systems identifies challenges that principals may face such as



changing climate and culture (Shakman et al., 2012), participating and providing training (Seyfarth, 2002), managing time (NASSP, 2014), conflicts in relationships (Stronge, 2006), and providing feedback (O. Little et al., 2009). However, what is not known is during the rapid implementation of a new, state-created, state-mandated teacher evaluation system, how principals perceive implementation, perceive themselves to be impacted during implementation, how principals adjust their practices and actions during implementation, and the perceived success and challenges that principals experience during implementation. This study examines the perceptions of principals during the quick implementation of Louisiana's COMPASS teacher evaluation system in order gain a ground-level understanding of exactly how policy impacts practice and how principals' adjusted their thoughts, actions, and affected those around them as a result of state-mandated change. Additionally, through this research, suggestions are made in order to assist principals in achieving successful implementation of new, state-created, and state-mandated teacher evaluation systems.

### **Purpose for Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand the perceived impact of the implementation of Louisiana's COMPASS teacher evaluation system and its impact on principals in one school district. This study aims to explore educator perceptions of how COMPASS was implemented and how its implementation has changed the role and functions of principals and how principals are adjusting their leadership practices, as they are charged with the task of implementing a new teacher evaluation system.

This study also aims to offer insights into the challenges encountered as a result of the state-mandated teacher evaluation system, as well as the successes and failures experienced during the implementation process. Principals are simultaneously implementing COMPASS as they are learning about it, all the while continuing to manage and operate schools that must continuously improve and produce greater achievement results. How principals adjust their leadership to encompass these

competing, evolving forces can tell us much about the consequences of such reforms- both intended and unintended.

### **Research Questions**

This study investigates the following research questions in order to understand the impact of Louisiana's COMPASS teacher evaluation system on principals: 1.) How do principals perceive the implementation of Louisiana's COMPASS teacher evaluation system? 2.) How have principals adjusted their practice due to the implementation of COMPASS? 3.) What are the perceived successes and challenges that principals have experienced during the implementation of COMPASS?

### **Organization of the Study**

This chapter presented background information for the study. More specifically, this chapter provided the purpose of the study, along with the research questions the study aims to answer, and some limitations of the study. Chapter Two presents a review of literature related to key topics and concepts that are relevant to teacher evaluation, school principalship, and the effects of change. In addition, Chapter Two contains a theoretical framework which identifies a fundamental collection of beliefs that guide and ground the study. Chapter Three describes the methodology for this qualitative case study. This includes the research design and details regarding data collection and analysis. Chapter Four presents the data collected through the methodology described in Chapter Three. Chapter Five presents an analysis and discussion of the findings, in addition to implications of this research and suggestions for future study.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This section of the proposal will review literature pertinent to the proposed study. A brief overview of the evolution of teacher evaluation is laid out and then followed by an overview of teacher evaluation in Louisiana beginning in 2010. COMPASS is then discussed in depth, from the legislation for which it was created, to the development of COMPASS and then its specific requirements and teacher rubric component. A review of literature for another component, value added, follows. The next topics covered are the role of the principal, morale, and change, all topics that are pertinent to the proposed research. This review of literature then closes with the theoretical framework, in which the theoretical basis the research is built upon is presented.

### **Teacher Evaluation**

The literature on the evolution of teacher evaluation breaks the evaluation of teachers into six general approaches: use of students' ratings of teachers, evaluation based on observations by supervisors, evaluation using an observation instrument, self-evaluation by teachers, evaluation based on gains shown by students on tests, and evaluation through specially designed "teaching tests" (Levin, 1979). COMPASS utilizes a combination of three of these six approaches; observation by supervisors, use of an observation instrument, and gains by students on tests. In COMPASS a teacher's evaluation is broken into two components: one component is based on an evaluation by a supervisor utilizing an observation instrument, and the second component is based on gains shown by students on tests.

The literature also defines two purposes for teacher evaluation: to function with human resource responsibilities such as assisting in decisions regarding hiring, retention, and promotion, and to function with teaching and learning responsibilities such as providing feedback in order to improve teaching (Levin, 1979). The evaluation process can serve either of these purposes, or both. As it pertains to the first reason, assisting in decisions regarding hiring, retention, and promotion, COMPASS is designed to give each teacher a final rating at the end of each school year. This rating determines whether a teacher retains

tenure, receives merit pay, and can also have an effect on job and teaching license retention. As it pertains to the second reason, providing feedback in order to improve teaching, COMPASS provides classroom teachers with feedback on their performance within the framework of the classroom observation rubric twice a school year.

Teacher evaluation originated in the late 1700's and early 1800's from the desire to make personnel decisions. Local governing bodies needed a way to determine and justify teacher retention and promotion (Clark, 1993). In this same vein, Peterson (1982) noted that the earliest teacher evaluations were viewed as a way for supervisors to justify the release of ineffective teachers. These evaluations were largely carried out subjectively by non-academic school personnel (Kennedy, 2012).

This began to shift during the Industrial Revolution. Teachers became more empowered to choose their place in education due to the fact that industry and population grew, creating more large, highly populated schools. More teachers were needed and more supervisors were needed to supervise the teachers. Along with this shift regarding personnel, there was a shift in knowledge. As curriculum in schools became more in-depth and rigorous, a greater need emerged for teachers with skills in specific subject areas, along with a need for supervisors with knowledge and expertise in content and instruction (Kennedy, 2012). Throughout the 1800's these supervisory roles began to become more specialized as it was realized that non-academic personnel did not have the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about teacher performance. This practice spread from the larger cities and diffused to smaller, rural areas (Tracy, 1995).

The early to mid 1900s saw teacher evaluation evolve, beginning with Frederick Taylor's scientific management, then to a focus on the individual needs of the teacher, and then the era of clinical supervision (Marzano, 2011). Taylor's scientific management approach was based on studying specific behaviors could lead to determining the most effective ways to carry out a task (Taylor, 1916). Following scientific management, the next approach focused on individual teacher needs and the principal being

more visible in the classroom during instructional time, as well as more involved in instructional decisions (Marzano, 2011). The focus on individual teachers then gave way to the clinical supervision approach. The cycle of clinical supervision was developed by a group of educators working with professor Morris Cogan who created a model that was published in a book by Robert Goldhammer in 1969, and followed up in another book written by Cogan in 1973 (Bruce, 1980).

The education landscape once again shifted with the release of the 1983 report, "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform." The report brought about an era of school reform that also began to change the way teachers were evaluated (Alexanderov, 1989). "A Nation at Risk" is considered a landmark moment in educational reform. The report was the product of the National Commission on Excellence in Education which was created by Secretary of Education T.H. Bell in 1981. The commission was directed to examine the quality of education in the United States (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In the introduction, the commission outlines the areas where special attention was given, and the first identified area was: "assessing the quality of teaching, and learning in our Nation's public and private schools, colleges, and universities" (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 7). The report called for a movement to update teacher evaluation in order to focus on staff development. This led to the creation of mentor and master teacher programs, career ladders, shared leadership programs, and differentiated evaluation programs (Alexanderov, 1989).

While "A Nation at Risk" brought the revision of current teacher evaluation practices to the surface, the watershed No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) thrust teacher evaluation into the spotlight once again. As gubernatorial control over education expanded (Fusarelli, 2005), accountability and assessment became mandated and teacher quality became a formal designation that teachers needed to meet set requirements to attain through successfully navigating the certification process and teaching in their area of training (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). NCLB required all students to be on grade-level in reading and math by 2014. This is where teachers and administrators began being held

accountable for student performance on standardized tests. Lack of progress on standardized tests could eventually lead to loss of employment and a school being taken over by the state department of education.

Teacher evaluation was further impacted by NCLB as it contained a requirement regarding the hiring of "highly qualified" teachers. Teachers needed to meet certain criteria such as a Bachelor's degree and certified background in the subject area that they taught in order to be labeled "highly qualified (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001)." In general, highly qualified status referred to teacher being certified, holding a bachelor's degree, and having demonstrated competence in subject knowledge and teaching practices (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006). While much of what was set forth by NCLB didn't have to do with formal teacher evaluation, it laid the groundwork for the focus on teacher quality that would come to be the center of teacher evaluation reform.

While the Bush administration's NCLB shined a spotlight on standardized test scores and began tying them to accountability measures, thereby making them high-stakes, the next grand-scale federal education policy that was introduced amplified the focus on high-stakes evaluation based on standardized testing. President Barack Obama's administration introduced Race to the Top in 2009. In order to be eligible for Race to the Top funds, states had to adopt value-added modeling in teacher evaluations (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Race to the Top (RTTT) is the federal grant program funded with \$4.35 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Race to the Top Program Executive Summary, 2009). RTTT allowed states to compete for portions of the \$4.35 billion through meeting the RTTT selection criteria. While there were several priorities laid out for RTTT, there were only two eligibility requirements: 1.) the state's application must be approved by the DOE, and 2.) the state must not have any barriers to linking data on student achievement or student growth to teachers and principals for evaluation purposes (Race to the Top Program Executive Summary, 2009). In order to link student achievement data to teacher and principal evaluations, Louisiana would need to alter its current evaluation system.

Louisiana submitted an application for Race to the Top and was a finalist in Phase One and Phase Two, ranking 11th out of 41 states in Phase One (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), and 13th out of 36 states in Phase Two (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). In December of 2011, Louisiana was awarded \$17.4 million after submitting an application for Phase Three of Race to the Top (Vanacore, 2011b). In order to apply for Race to the Top, Louisiana had to adopt value-added teacher assessment laws. In the Louisiana Race to the Top Phase Two application, the authors note that the state had "succeeded in passing one of the most comprehensive value-added teacher evaluation laws requiring annual, student-achievement based evaluations of all teachers and administrators (Louisiana Department of Education, 2010, pg. A-4).

### **Teacher Evaluation in Louisiana**

#### **Legislation**

In 2010 Louisiana legislators enacted Act 54, and in December of 2011 and April of 2012, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved revisions to BESE Bulletin 130: *Regulations for the Evaluation and Assessment of School Personnel* to align state policy with the new statute (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012a). Act 54 mandated for student growth measures to count for at least 50 percent of all educator evaluations, with professional practice measures making up the remaining 50 percent. The law also requires the evaluation process to be administered to teachers annually, instead of the previously mandated once every three years. BESE voted that the scoring standards would begin statewide with the 2012-2013 school year (Vanacore, 2011a).

#### **Development of COMPASS**

In compliance with the law, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) then aimed a collaborative effort at engaging educators across Louisiana through focus groups, workgroups, presentations, and pilot programs in an attempt to collectively develop and refine the new teacher evaluation system: COMPASS (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012a). Subsequently, a committee

consisting of 33 individuals was created in order to provide recommendations to BESE regarding standards of effectiveness for educators and student growth measures. The committee, known as the Advisory Committee on Educator Evaluation (ACEE), was made up of 50 percent practicing classroom teachers, along with representatives from educator unions and associations, parents, and BESE board members. (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012a). The LDOE also notes that in addition to ACEE, the development of COMPASS was formed by approximately 250 teachers through participation in work groups and focus groups, 2,600 educators through online surveys, and nearly 10,000 educators through ACT 54 briefings.

### **Components of COMPASS**

COMPASS is composed of two components: Professional Practice and Student Growth. Every teacher receives a score of 1.00 through 4.00 for both Professional Practice and Student Growth. Those numbers are then averaged together to determine the Final COMPASS Score, which is the teacher's final evaluation score. Each teacher's Final COMPASS Score falls between 1.00 and 4.00. This number is then taken to assign each teacher a Teacher Effectiveness Rating. The ratings are, from highest to lowest: Highly Effective (4.00 - 3.50), Effective: Proficient (3.49 - 2.50), Effective: Emerging (2.49 - 1.50), and Ineffective (1.49 - 0) (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012a).

While teachers who score in the effective range are rewarded, there are consequences for those who are ineffective. Act 1 mandates that districts recognize effectiveness in the classroom as measured by COMPASS and reward high performing teachers (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012b). Act 1 also mandates that teachers begin receiving merit pay based on their performance starting in the 2013-2014 school year, although many districts began awarding merit pay based on performance during the 2012-2013 school year (Tan, 2013). However, for any educator being rated Ineffective, Bulletin 130 mandates that an intensive assistance plan be developed by evaluators and evaluatees. The plan must be developed within 30 school days of the evaluation that resulted in the initiation of the plan. Failure to adhere to or



complete the plan requires that the local education agency (LEA) begin termination proceedings. In addition, Act 1 mandates that teachers who are rated as Ineffective are not eligible for a salary increase the following year. Within one calendar year the evaluatee must be formally re-evaluated, and if the teacher is again rated as Ineffective the local LEA has six months to initiate termination proceedings. It is noted in Act 54 that if a teacher is rated Ineffective for three years during initial certification or renewal process, the board shall not issue a new certificate unless evidence of effectiveness is received through appeal.

COMPASS utilizes a professional practice rubric for evaluators to evaluate classroom instruction and generate the professional practice score that factors into the every teacher's final evaluation score. The Louisiana Department of Education issued Bulletin 130: *Regulations for the Evaluation and Assessment of School Personnel* which mandates that the Professional Practice component include a minimum of one formal, announced observation, and at least one other informal, unannounced observation. These observations are to be conducted by the evaluator utilizing the statewide adopted teaching framework rubric as the instrument, and evaluators must conduct a post-conference with teachers to provide feedback after each observation.

During the 2011-2012 school year, the COMPASS Pilot Program piloted a teaching framework that would function as a rubric to score teacher classroom observations for the purpose of teacher evaluation. In January of 2012, John White took over as the state superintendent of education in Louisiana. Previous superintendent Paul Pastorek had decided upon and pilot-tested a teaching framework with 11 components. Upon his appointment and seeing the feedback from the pilot, Superintendent White scrapped the piloted framework, a framework developed by Dr. James H. Stronge, and replaced it with an abridged version of Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching (Vanacore, 2012a). Near the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year, the LDOE announced more changes to COMPASS. The LDOE established a two year "baseline period" (2015-2016), during which value-added data would not be required for use. Value-added data would continue to be provided to leaders and teachers, but it would not

be utilized in decision-making. Additionally, the "override" feature in which an "Ineffective" on either of the Professional Practice or Student Growth components of COMPASS would no longer result in an overall rating of Ineffective (Louisiana Department of Education, 2015b).

### **Classroom Observations in Teacher Evaluation**

Improving the quality of teaching has been identified as a vital component of increasing student achievement (Hattie, 2009). As it relates to the current wave of teacher evaluation reform, there is an emphasis on the role of the principal in improving teaching and learning (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015; Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008; Robinson, 2011). Subsequently, requiring principals to perform classroom observations with an observation instrument has become a standard practice (Goldring et al., 2015), as 44 states and Washington, D.C. require that classroom observations be included in teacher evaluation (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013). Louisiana has created the COMPASS Rubric to serve as the observation instrument that principals are required to utilize when performing classroom observations that are included in a teacher's evaluation.

### **The Framework for Teaching**

The Framework for Teaching is the basis for the COMPASS rubric. The Framework for Teaching was first published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) in 1996. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) compiled research while developing Praxis III: Classroom Performance Assessments, an evaluation based off of observations for the purpose of licensing, and this research was used to help develop the Framework for Teaching. The 1996 Edition consisted of four domains which contained 22 components, each broken down with indicators for four levels of performance: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished (Danielson Group, 2011).

The framework was revised in 2007, 2011, and then again in 2013. The 2011 revisions were driven by the fact that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation "Measures of Effective Teaching (MET)" research project selected the Framework for Teaching for the study. This required additional tools to aid

in the training of the MET's observers, and those tools were subsequently added to the framework. While there were no changes to the structure of the rubric, all domains, components, and elements remained, there were changes to the rubric language, the addition of critical attributes and possible examples for each level of performance of each component (Danielson Group, 2011). The 2013 revisions were driven by many states' adoption of the Common Core State Standards. Additions were made to the rubric language in seven components within two domains to bring the rubric and the Common Core State Standards into full alignment (Danielson Group, 2013).

While the Danielson Framework for Teaching consists of 22 components within four domains, Louisiana adopted just five of the framework's 22 components from three of the domains to comprise its professional practice rubric. The Louisiana Department of Education made the decision to utilize five components based on feedback they received from the COMPASS pilot, as some thought that the 11 components in the pilot rubric were too many (Vanacore, 2012b). However, the decision to use only the five components essentially means that Louisiana is evaluating teachers with an untested rubric. This decision has been met with opposition from teachers (Dreilinger, 2013) as well as Charlotte Danielson herself (Garland, 2012a). In her interview, Danielson said of using only five components, "I think it decreases accuracy. I think that's an almost certain consequence." Danielson went on to add, "It's never a good idea to use something for high stakes without working out the bugs." She then concluded, "I worry a lot [that] if we have systems that are high stakes and low rigor, we're going to end up with court cases (Garland, 2012a). Despite the concerns of Danielson, the COMPASS rubric, containing five of the 22 components from Danielson's Framework for Teaching, was implemented in Louisiana statewide for the 2012-2013 school year. According to the Louisiana Department of Education's initial COMPASS Implementation Report (Louisiana Department of Education, 2013a), teacher's observation ratings on the COMPASS rubric in the 2012-2013 school year resulted in 30% of teachers scoring Highly Effective, 62% of teachers scoring Effective: Proficient, 8% of teachers scoring Effective: Emerging, and 0% of teachers scoring Ineffective.

There has been much debate around the use of observation instruments for teacher evaluation (Goldring et al., 2015; Hallinger, Heck, & Murphy, 2014; Harris, Ingle, & Rutledge, 2014; Kimball & Milanowski, 2009). Some common problems that have been identified are the instruments measure a limited amount of teaching, the instruments provide limited information about students, they sometimes offer class averages which can be misleading, and they may provide only small amounts of information on how the teacher can improve (Lavigne & Good, 2015). Additionally, some research suggests that observation instruments tend to consistently rate most teachers as average, with few being high- or low-performing (Ruzek, Hafen, Hamre, & Pianta, 2014). Furthermore, research indicates that when observational instruments are used in conjunction with student achievement measures, only a few instruments correlate correctly with achievement (Polikoff, 2014). While the *Framework for Teaching* has been the subject of research studies that have generally found it to have correlations in identifying effective teaching when compared with other measures of teacher effectiveness (Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2010; MET, 2011; Milanowski, Kimball, & White, 2004), the COMPASS Rubric is specific to Louisiana and does not contain the entire framework that was researched. However, there have been studies examining other rubrics that are based partially on the *Framework for Teaching* (Daley & Kim, 2010; Schacter & Thum, 2004). These studies, similar to the research done on the entire framework, generally found that there was a correlation between teacher effectiveness on the rubric and other measures of teacher effectiveness.

### **Value-Added Measures**

Value-added, or value-added modeling (VAM), refers to the use of student scores on standardized tests to quantify teacher effectiveness. While the earliest work on education production is credited to James Coleman in the mid 1960's, the concept of a model to determine teacher influence on achievement was initially introduced by Eric Hanushek in the early 1970's. Hanushek created a quantitative model to attempt to account for the influence of school characteristics on achievement. The model accounted for various functions, including student educational output, student beginning achievement level, family

considerations, peer influences, and school inputs (Hanushek, 1971). Hanushek drew three main conclusions from his study: teaching experience and graduate education do not contribute to gains in student achievement scores, teacher and classroom compositions did not affect the achievement outcomes of Mexican-Americans, and the attempts to provide a set of measurable characteristics which schools could focus on in hiring and attempt to control in order to affect achievement did not produce clear answers.

While Coleman began the research on education productions and Hanushek introduced the idea of a model to account for teacher affect on achievement, it was William Sanders who published arguably the most seminal piece to the value-added, teacher evaluation literature. In November of 1996 the University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center published a research report by William Sanders and June Rivers that used data from two of Tennessee's larger metropolitan systems in order to estimate cumulative teacher effects (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). The study found that differences in student achievement were observed as a result of teacher sequence, the effects of teachers on student achievement are both additive and cumulative, lower achieving students are the first to benefit as teacher effectiveness increases, and that within the same quintile of teacher effectiveness, students of different ethnicities respond equivalently. From these works Dr. Sanders was tabbed to help develop the value-added methods used to evaluate teachers in Tennessee when the state began using VAM in the 1990s (Dillon, 2010).

In his initial research, Hanushek noted that one of the reasons research had been so slow on the relationship between educational inputs and outputs was due to the fact that there was no traditionally collected data set (Hanushek, 1971). While Sanders was able to conduct his initial research in Tennessee due to the creation and implementation of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS), this traditionally collected data set, which is required to conduct VAM, largely did not exist elsewhere. This limited the ability for VAM to spread to larger audiences. However, VAM began to spread widely after the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law was passed in 2002. NCLB required states to test in third

through eighth grade every year, which gave governing bodies large amounts of test data that could serve as the traditionally collected data set, or the inputs for VAM (Dillon, 2010).

Further research was conducted, and while no consensus has been reached on how exactly to quantitatively isolate for teacher impact on achievement, several other researchers published studies on possible models for making connections between teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Haunsek & Rivkin, 2010; Ishii & Rivkin, 2009; Jacob, Lefgren, & Sims, 2008; Murnane, 1975). Researchers continue to debate over the validity and reliability of the value-added methodology as the concept takes on an increasingly pertinent role in teacher evaluation (Goldhaber, 2008; Koretz, 2008; Lockwood, 2006; Rothstein, 2008).

Due to the requirements of Race to the Top, Louisiana recently adopted VAM for inclusion into its teacher evaluation system. In the 2010 Regular Legislative Session, the Louisiana legislature passed House Bill no. 1033, otherwise known as Act 54, which mandated a teacher evaluation system based in part on a value-added model of student achievement. Teachers who teach subjects that are tested on standardized tests receive a VAM score which counts as half of their overall teacher evaluation. Teachers in non-tested grades and subjects set two Student Learning Targets in which they set quantitative achievement goals for their classes. The teacher's level of achievement on these Student Learning Targets counts as half of their overall teacher evaluation. This setup makes it so that every teacher in Louisiana, regardless of grade or subject taught, receives half of their evaluation score based on a quantitative rating based on student learning (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012a).

As states continue to adopt VAM as a method of evaluating teachers, such as Louisiana has done, research continues to be conducted to determine the effectiveness and validity of VAM. Supporters of VAM point to research that indicates that VAM is more reliable than a classroom observation (Harris, 2012). Additionally, research indicates that multiple years of VAM data have been shown to be more consistent and accurate in determining teacher performance (Lipscomb, Teh, Gill, Chiang, & Owens,

2010); however, opponents will point out that some states, including Louisiana, don't use multiple years of VAM for each teacher's evaluation (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012a). Although there is no clear answer about VAM's reliability and place in teacher evaluations, states have continued to include VAM in teacher evaluations, despite the fact that concerns about VAM as a component in teacher evaluation has recently led some to debate in the courtroom (Lavigne & Good, 2015). While VAM scores are intended to be a component of teacher evaluation that deals only with a teacher's impact on the growth of their students, the principal does play a role. There are several factors within a principal's control that can have an effect on a teacher's VAM score. Everything from scheduling, time for department meetings, time for teacher planning, assignment of teaching duties, placement of students into classes, class sizes, allotment of resources, consideration of student in- and out-of-school-suspension time, to reservation of instructional time (pep rallies, fire drills, etc.), can be argued to have an effect on student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Murphy, 1994). For example, if a student is struggling in math, a principal may be able to pull the student out of an enrichment class, like band, and provide remediation to support the student in math. It is assumed this would help the VAM score of the math teacher, However, the band teacher whose class the student is missing receives has set a goal for proficiency in the band class, and now may have more difficulty meeting it. Another example would be that due to logistical constraints in the class schedule the principal has created, special education students are only able to attend one teacher's social studies class, as opposed to being evenly spread out amongst all social studies teachers, and they must all be enrolled in the same class period. It could be argued that the principal is increasing the opportunity for positive VAM scores for some teachers, while decreasing the opportunity for success of other teachers. These are just some of the factors the principal must take into account when making decisions.

There is also another role that the principal plays in the Student Growth component of COMPASS. For VAM teachers, the LDOE has allowed principals the discretion to essentially override the final VAM score for teachers falling within a certain percentile range. New policy revisions allow

COMPASS evaluators to consider both VAM and Student Learning Target data when calculating a teacher's final Student Growth score if that teacher's VAM score places them within the 21st to 79th percentile (Deshotels, 2013). This can place increased pressure on a principal to override results, and create ethical dilemmas for principals to navigate.

For teachers in non-tested subjects, principals must approve the achievement goals that teachers set as part of their Student Learning Targets. This can create difficulties for the principal in finding the balance between making teachers set high goals, but with the understanding that not reaching those goals could have high-stakes consequences for teachers. Principal-to-principal variation can also create a lack of equity in how principals handle the goal-setting with different teachers of different experience and ability levels. As previously noted, near the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year, the LDOE announced the establishment of a two year "baseline period" (2015-2016), during which value-added data would not be required for use. Value-added data would continue to be provided to leaders and teachers, but it would not be utilized in decision-making (Louisiana Department of Education, 2015b).

While teacher evaluation may be generally thought of as dealing primarily with classroom observations, the implementation of COMPASS tasked principals with managing changes to teacher evaluations in both classroom observations and the use of student achievement data. This highlights the importance of conducting research in order to determine how principals perceived the implementation of COMPASS, along with how they adjusted to its implementation and their perceived successes and challenges in implementation.

### **Evolving Role of the Principal**

Public education is currently changing at a rapid pace as federal and statewide mandates have drastically altered the terrain. As schools undergo these changes, the role of the principal and the responsibilities associated with the position have evolved as well. The role of the principal originally consisted as a student disciplinarian who managed the building, but that began to change in the 1970's



when principals also became responsible for instructional leadership (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). Historically, the principal's job performance was measured by and based upon the performance of the highest achieving students as well as the perception of the school (Brown, 2006; Herrington & Wills, 2005; Lynch, 2008). However, the role of the principal has changed over time and the corresponding responsibilities has come to include managing for results, managing personnel, technical knowledge, external leadership, norms and values, managing classroom instruction, and leadership and school culture (Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Lynch, 2008). All of these challenging responsibilities accumulate to create arguably the most difficult task facing the current principal: leading in a context where the culture is one of change (Fullan, 2001).

While the role of the principal has continuously evolved, it has arguably seen its most dramatic shift in the past 10 years, as the landscape was changed with the passing of NCLB and its focus on testing and accountability. A 2003 MetLife survey found that nearly nine in 10 principals believed the three most important priorities for principals were making sure the school is safe, encouraging teachers and students to do their best, and helping teachers to their jobs well (MetLife, 2003). Additionally, teachers, principals, and parents were all in agreement that keeping the school safe and encouraging students and teachers were the two most important aspects of the principal's job. In the same 2003 survey, principals said the three most important priorities for schools were motivation of students and faculty to achieve, school morale, and test scores.

In a possibly telling evolution, the most recent MetLife survey does not poll principals and teachers on the role or priorities of the principal, but rather surveys principals and teachers on what skills are most important for a principal to possess. Principals believed the three most important skills were using data about student performance to drive instruction, leading the development of strong teaching capacity across the school, and evaluating teacher effectiveness across multiple measures (MetLife, 2012). Further illustrating the change in the role of the principal and the shift from the previous principal priorities is the survey noting that principals ranked having strong operational skills, such as managing

facilities, schedules, budgets, etc. as the sixth most important skill out of the seven options given, ahead of only understanding how to use technology to improve instruction.

Principals have noticed this shift in role, particularly in the past five years. According to a 2012 survey, 69% of principals said their responsibilities are not very similar to their responsibilities five years ago (MetLife, 2012). In addition, the same survey found that 75% of principals believe the job has become too complex. As a result, half of principals feel under great stress several days a week or more, and job satisfaction has decreased to its lowest point in over a decade. Subsequently, a third of principals indicate they are likely to leave their job in pursuit of an alternate occupation (MetLife, 2012).

Principals feel that their job has changed considerably in the recent years, and this change combined with the already challenging nature of the position has made the job even more complex. By now having to implement a new teacher evaluation system, principals are being exposed to even more change and are seeing their jobs become increasingly more complex. This may create issues as principals are expected to lead and guide the teachers even though principals themselves are still trying to figure out their roles and the best ways to carry them out. As a result, principals are feeling great stress and considering leaving the position, which can only increase the difficulty of effectively implementing COMPASS.

### **The Role of the Principal in Teacher Evaluation**

According to Peterson (2000), "In current practice, accountability for educational results is the central responsibility and role of the principal" (p. 71). Principals are regarded by courts, arbitrators, and hearing panels as the person most responsible for evaluating teachers and making judgments about their performance (Acheson & Gall, 2003). While the responsibility for teacher evaluation clearly lies with the principal, the principal's role in teacher evaluations in this process is anything but simple. Evaluating teachers includes conducting formal evaluations, providing feedback on formal evaluations, conducting observations for the purpose of providing feedback, providing feedback in order to promote teacher

growth, managing logistics to make observation and analysis possible, providing professional development and training on effective instructional practices, creating formal and informal coaching and assistance plans for struggling teachers, and assisting teachers in finding appropriate instructional resources (Acheson & Gall, 2003; K. Peterson, 2000; K. Peterson & Peterson, 2005). Additionally, principals must identify designees to delegate similar responsibilities to, such as assistant principals or instructional coaches, ensure that they receive training, are carrying out their responsibilities, and monitor their feedback and evaluations for evidence of inter-rater reliability.

There is existing literature on the experiences of principals doing the work required by new teacher evaluation systems. This work largely focuses on principals experiences as instructional leaders, as one of the key drivers of new policies regarding teacher evaluation is research that connects the impact of the principal as an instructional leader on student achievement (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Pont et al., 2008; Robinson, 2011). The literature outlines factors principals are faced with, as well as principal perceptions of the process. Principals have identified many ways they are impacted by teacher evaluation (Rosa, 2011), including the evaluation instrument (Donaldson, 2009), guidance and training (Ashby & Krug, 1998), and consequences attached to evaluation (Donaldson, 2009; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009).

One major recurring theme in the literature is that of time. Principal experiences indicate that principals have seen a significant increase in the amount of time required to complete teacher evaluations (Kersten & Israel, 2005) and principals have reported giving up personal time to be able to finish all of the required evaluations (Halverson et al., 2004; McGrath, 2000), whether due to the evaluation process itself, or rather all of the other responsibilities that occupy a principal's time (Murphy, 1990). Some principals report the time challenge not only applying to the formal evaluation of a teacher, but also the collection of evidence of teacher effectiveness throughout the year (Halverson & Clifford, 2006).

Another major recurring theme in the literature is that of the increased complexity principals now report that they encounter when evaluating teachers. Legislative changes have altered teacher evaluation

from a process likely consisting of only a straight-forward, itemized checklists at the conclusion of a school year, to more intricate processes that take time, careful consideration and skill (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Kersten & Israel, 2005; K. Peterson, Wahlquist, Bone, Thompson, & Chatterton, 2001).

An embedded component of the complexity discussed above is that of a principal's instructional and subject matter knowledge (Nelson & Stassi, 2005; Stein & Nelson, 2003). Principals that lack confidence in their instructional knowledge and ability are likely to avoid engaging in meaningful and effective evaluative practices (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015). Further illustrating principals' feelings regarding their instructional ability, Hallinger (2005, p. 11) noted "research into administrative practice in schools had found an unmistakable pattern of practice whereby principals tended to avoid the instructional role..." This could largely be contributed to principals having less expertise in a given subject area than the teacher (Kimball & Milanowski, 2009), which makes matters increasingly difficult even when the principal has a strong desire to give effective instructional feedback (Barth, 1980; Hallinger, 2005; Marshall, 1996).

An additional challenge that new teacher evaluation systems force principals to face is that of addressing performance issues (Louisiana Department of Education, 2013d). However, this is an area where principals struggle (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015) and tend to avoid handling directly or formally, if at all (Cardno, 2007; Yariv, 2009).

According to Halverson et al.(2004), principal views on implementing teacher evaluation systems can vary greatly. While some principals view implementing evaluation systems as an opportunity to develop camaraderie or improve morale, some perceive it as a mandate that needs their attention or a new problem that creates time management issues. Principal ability can also have an effect on how principals view teacher evaluation. Stronger principals can view evaluation systems as constraining, while other principals appreciate the clarity and guidance through constraints that new systems can bring.

A survey of principals from a wide geographic sample indicated that they felt the support they received in using a variety of structures to improve instruction and assessment of learning was weak. This lead to principals feeling stressed as they were responsible for to raising student achievement, but without adequate support (Derrington, 2011).

Teacher evaluations asks the principal to fulfill roles as an instructional leader, judge of teacher performance, manager of quality control and personnel, and leader of professional development, among other things. This group of roles can sometimes consist of conflicting interests which may create difficult dynamics for the principal for navigate. A key area where conflicts may exist due to the multiplicity of a principals roles is in the relationship between teachers and the principal (Johnson, 1990; Lortie, 1975). When a principal has the role of teacher evaluator, it also comes with the dual roles of one who is responsible for providing support to help improve teacher performance and one who is responsible for moving to terminate the employment of low-performing teachers. This duality of roles may cause teachers to be hesitant in openly discussing their concerns and areas in the classroom where they feel they need improvement (Acheson & Gall, 2003). Dynamics such as these may undermine teacher evaluation as a tool for improvement and create distrust between teachers and principals. These factors can then ultimately influence another important factor in schools: morale.

### **The Importance of Morale for School Personnel**

While there is no one, clear-cut definition for exactly what morale is, the literature on morale generally refers to it as the feeling or attitude that a worker has regarding their job (Mendel, 1987; Washington, 1976). High teacher morale is generally considered to be positive and healthy for both individuals and school environments (Houchard, 2005; Hoy, 1987; Napier, 1966). In contrast, low teacher morale could lead to frustration, alienation, and a decrease in production from the teacher (Clough, 1989; Houchard, 2005; Mendel, 1987). There are a number of factors that influence morale of teachers including the meeting of basic individual needs, administrative support, working conditions, teacher

autonomy, teacher salary, teacher confidence, parent participation, and relationships with peers (Lunenburg, 1996; Maslow, 1970; Napier, 1966; Parks, 1983).

Research has shown that the principal is a very influential factor on the morale of teachers. Several principal actions, from controlling the work environment (Adams, 1992), to supporting teacher and providing autonomy (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997), to assisting teachers with student discipline (Blase, 1992) can have a substantial impact on teacher morale. This is important as teacher morale has been directly tied to student learning and achievement (Ellenberg, 1972; Lumsden, 1998; Miller, 1981). While the general belief is that teachers with higher morale are more satisfied (Rauf, 2013), Evans notes that job satisfaction and morale are different, even though they are both states of mind. She describes job satisfaction as based in the present, while morale is based on an anticipation of the future (2000).

Linda Evans has conducted extensive research on morale, including the effects of change on morale. Evans found that some key changes potentially affecting morale were change in policy, reduction of autonomy, increase of accountability, reduction of influence on decision and policy-making, and changing workplace habits and practices (2000). While the research was conducted in the United Kingdom, Evans (2000) notes that these are "typical of the kinds of changes that have been imposed upon education professionals in recent year throughout the developed world" (p. 179).

It is here that intersection occurs between COMPASS, the principal, teacher morale, teacher job satisfaction, and student achievement. COMPASS is something that must be navigated by teachers and principals together. Teachers must change their practices and are being held accountable like never before, and principals are expected to guide teachers through this process. However, the principals are just as unfamiliar with COMPASS as teachers are, which makes guiding and supporting teachers even more challenging. The circumstances created by COMPASS can lend themselves to decreased teacher morale and job satisfaction, which can be obstacles to effective teaching and student achievement. These factors

all converge to create a new and unfamiliar terrain that principals must successfully navigate for the good of teachers, students, schools, and communities. The newness and unfamiliarity ushered in through COMPASS signaled a wave of change, which is also an important contextual issue in this study.

### **The Impact of Change in an Educational Setting**

One of the main issues with educational change is that it creates a plethora of other issues, none of which are easily identified, explained, or solved. The issues are spread throughout the organization and exist in every facet and component, from hierarchy and governance structure, to habit and human emotion. If improperly managed, the demoralization, demotivation, and dissatisfaction that educational change can create ultimately undermines the whatever potential impact a change in practices might have (Evans, 2000). According to Bolman and Deal (2003),

Change undermines existing arrangements, creating ambiguity, confusion, and distrust. People no longer know what is expected or what to expect from others. Everyone may think someone else is in charge when, in fact, no one is (p. 374).

The arrival and implementation of COMPASS signaled an end to the professional way of life that teachers and administrators were accustomed to. More than just experiencing a change in policy and procedure, educators lost experience and confidence regarding some of their day-to-day professional practices, such as certain instructional practices, observational routines, formal goal setting, and evaluation methods. Unfortunately, everyone experienced this change at the same time, likely meaning that there were more questions and fewer answers than before.

### **Barriers to Successful Change**

Bolman and Deal have identified four main obstacles to effective organizational change: training, structure, conflict, and loss (Bolman & Deal, 2003). These four obstacles all present issues that must be addressed in their own appropriate manner in order for any change to take place. Bolman and Deal are not

alone in the discussion of these four barriers, as Evans (1996) touches on them as well. He notes that change challenges competence, creates confusion, causes conflict, and is a loss. Falling into these categories are most of the commonly referred to reasons for resistance to change such as fear, emotions, habits, motivation, process, and uncertainty. Subsequently, employees are experiencing two issues during the change process: fear of change, and lack of knowledge regarding making the change work (Fullan, 2001). In addition to the previously mentioned obstacles, Kotter (2012) identifies the eight mistakes that are common in the face of the obstacles that come with change: allowing complacency, failing to create a guiding coalition, underestimating and under-communicating the vision, permitting obstacles to block the vision, failing to create short-term wins, declaring victory too soon, and neglecting to anchor change in the culture. Furthermore, some research identifies ineffective change management from senior leaders, insufficient change management resourcing, resistance to change from employees, middle-management resistance, and poor communication as the top five barriers to change (Hiatt & Creasey, 2012).

While training would appear to be an obvious consideration for organizations undergoing change, whether it is due to monetary resources, human resources, or time limitations, it is often overlooked (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Kotter, 2012). The result is that employees feel ineffective and unprepared to carry out the tasks they are being asked to execute. They lack confidence and a sense of self-efficacy. Improper training ultimately leads to failure through one of two avenues: employees purposely fail to implement new directives, resulting to maintenance of previous practices, or they attempt the new directives, but fail due to lack of experience and skill (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Not only can employees feel their competence is being challenged by lack of training, but also by possibly seeing other employees excelling or becoming endorsed (Evans, 1996). Change can alter existing power hierarchies in an organization when new skills or leadership styles are suddenly preferred. In addition, the difficulty of the job in relation to the worker's skill can also become a restraining force in achievement of a goal (Coch & French, 2001). Even with training, Fullan (2001) notes that implementation causes a dip in performance



for all successful schools moving forward in the change process, as employees are forced to learn new skills and are not clear on exactly what needs to be done, when, and how.

The implementation of COMPASS not only altered the role, responsibilities, and day-to-day actions of principals, it also altered the skills principals need to effectively adjust to the new teacher evaluation system. Instead of evaluating teachers once a year on an itemized checklist aligned to their job description, principals now needed to develop a conceptual understanding of a new teacher performance rubric and be able to identify critical attributes and practice indicators during classroom observations in order to determine a teacher's score and next steps for professional growth. Subsequently, principals also needed to be able to identify resources and research best practices aligned with the new rubric in order to provide professional development and assist teachers in their growth and practice to master the performance indicators outlined in the new rubric. Principals also needed to be able to analyze student growth data in conjunction with data from both student and teacher performance with standardized testing in order to assist teachers in setting challenging yet attainable goals for Student Learning Targets. Principals also needed more technological ability than ever, as they were responsible for not only entering qualitative and quantitative data into an on-line database, but also for monitoring the data for teacher observations, SLTs, and final evaluation ratings. Additionally, principals needed to be able to multi-task and manage time more efficiently than they previously needed to, as COMPASS added all of the previously mentioned requirements (many of which require additional time to plan for beforehand), but did not eliminate any of the principal's previously held responsibilities within the school. As a result, principals are faced with not only organizational barriers to successful change, but also with barriers regarding their own skill sets and practices.

### **Tasks of Transition for Successful Implementation**

The changing of practices, habits, and values is not something that occurs quickly (Hall & Hord, 2010). In order to successfully move a school and teachers forward in the pursuit of new practices and

ideals outlined in a new evaluation system, a principal must ensure the proper steps are taken to ensure implementation. Robert Evans notes four tasks of implementation that leaders must assist teachers in for school change (1996). Prior to taking on the four tasks, however, Evans deems it necessary for school leaders to utilize Schein's approach of "unfreezing." "Unfreezing" refers to a leader lessening the fear of trying something new by introducing the fear of *not* trying (Schein, 1987). The key in this approach is the disconfirming of the faculty's perception of the situation, providing a different take on the change at hand. When presented with disconfirmations, the faculty could feel that not changing violates a shared ideal, increasing guilt and anxiety. While this alone will not motivate the change, it will decrease the fear and anxiety associated with trying (Evans, 1996).

School leaders then guide their faculty to successful implementation through the tasks of moving from loss to commitment, moving from old competence to new competence, moving from confusion to coherence, and moving from conflict to consensus. This process takes time, and if a leader attempts to skip some of the tasks or motivate the faculty to change by force, the likely result is the increasing of resistance and the retention of old values (Morgan, 1986).

To address the barriers to change several suggestions are made. Bolman and Deal (2003) caution against overlooking the personnel responsible for carrying out training and guiding the change. Also suggested is varying the types of training available along with providing a chance for employees to take an active role in the process of training and support. The training should also not just be introductory or beginners' training, but rather training that is continuous and can move employees to a level of mastery (Evans, 1996). Other practices noted by authors are providing arenas for venting conflict, providing employees with team building and coaching in order to developing new skills, creating ceremonies and opportunities to celebrate symbols, culture, and keep morale high, and to explicitly provide clarity as it pertains to expectations, governance, and structure (Bolman & Deal, 2003; R. Evans, 1996; Frangos, 1996). Furthermore, Coch and French (2001) suggest communicating the need for change to participants and encouraging them to participate in planning as an avenue to overcoming resistance to change.

While Evans proposed the four tasks for implementation and Bolman and Deal (2003) noted strategies for countering each of the four main barriers, John Kotter (2012) suggested an eight step process for leading change. Kotter's eight steps are establishing a sense of urgency, creating the guiding coalition, developing a change vision, communicating the vision for buy-in, empowering broad-based action, generating short-term wins, never letting up, and incorporating changes into the culture. These steps were reframed by Bolman and Deal in relation to the four barriers. Redefining the four main barriers as structural frame, human resource frame, political frame, and symbolic frame, alignment was found between several of Kotter's steps and Bolman and Deal's frames (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Ultimately, the authors and research on implementing change have determined that change can be successfully brought about by identifying barriers and addressing them appropriately (Hall & Hord, 2010). Principals in Louisiana had limited time to plan for the change process when implementing COMPASS, as principals received training from the LDOE roughly a week prior to teachers reporting to begin the 2012-2013 school year. The lack of time to plan for possible barriers and identify strategies for successful implementation could possibly be an additional obstacle for principals to overcome in effectively implementing COMPASS.

### **Leadership for Change**

While management can maintain the smooth running of an organization, leadership for change is what leads to success in significantly changing circumstances (Kotter, 2012). Some have come to the conclusion that change cannot be successfully reached with direct management as the only driver, as much management advice is non-actionable or contradictory (Argyris, 2000; Fullan, 2001). Whereas a manager reacts to jerkily to change with no ultimate vision, a leader for change makes change happen through envisioning change, showing others what is possible, and orchestrating the change at several levels (Ramsey, 2006). Leadership for change happens commonly on a daily basis as a change leader simultaneously guides the process and learns from the dynamics (Fullan, 2011). A change leader works through ambiguity and guides others through it, taking action while remaining aware of feedback and

doubting the knowledge that is being acted upon (Fullan, 2014; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006). A leader for change must be strategic, creative, and authentic (Bolman & Deal, 2003; R. Evans, 1996). These characteristics define leadership for change underneath the larger umbrella of transformational leadership, and manifest themselves frequently in the day-to-day pursuit of the vision and common goals set forth in achieving successful change (Burns, 1978). Leadership for change provides an important piece of the framework for the proposed study. Principals implementing COMPASS need to provide leadership for change as they navigate unfamiliar terrain on a daily basis, they must lead and learn on the fly while providing support for and guiding teachers.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Based on the literature previously reviewed in this chapter on transformational leadership and change, it is evident that the concepts are related. The uncertainty created by change can throw an organization into chaos, with the task of successfully leading the organization through change lies with the leader. Transformational leaders are not only capable of guiding the process, they meet the emotional needs of those within their organization as well. This can lead to a new, improved organization that creates in practice the ideals of the theory that the change was predicated upon in the first place. The proposed research aims to understand how the change brought about by COMPASS has impacted principals, as well as how principals have adjusted their leadership as a result of COMPASS. In attempting to understand how principals have been impacted and adjusted, transformational leadership provides a reasonable framework that can be linked to successfully implementing change (Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Transformational leadership in relation to implementing change, rooted in an organizational behavior perspective provides the framework for the proposed research.

### **Organizational Behavior Perspective**

The organizational behavior perspective assumes that people and organizations can prosper together within an appropriate context, making it arguably the most optimistic of all perspectives of

organization theory (Shafritz, Ott, & Jang, 2011). Furthermore, the inherent belief is that the organization and human behavior influence each other in a symbiotic relationship, as opposed to the organization being used to alter human behavior. According to Bolman and Deal (2003), the following four assumptions are the foundation of this perspective: (a) organizations exist to serve human needs; (b) organizations and people need each other; (c) one or both suffer when the fit between individual and organization is poor; and (d) both people and organizations benefit with a good fit. These assumptions point to the need for leaders who can appropriately align people and organizations. People need organizations for the extrinsic rewards and intrinsic satisfaction work can provide, and organizations need people for a reliable and stable labor pool and for the energy effort and talent that people bring to the organization (Jacobs, 2015).

According to Natemeyer and McMahon (2001), the key underlying components of organizational behavior perspective are (a) leadership, (b) motivation, (c) effects of the work environment, (d) power and influence, and (e) organizational change. Leadership refers to influencing the actions of others toward the accomplishment of a goal. Motivation refers to an understanding of human behavior that managers use to improve performance of human resources. Effects of the work environment refers to the effect that the organization and its surroundings has on its human resources. Power and influence refers to enablement of exercising influence over others. Organizational change refers to continually adapting to changes in order to keep organizations viable. In all of these areas the focus is on people in order to allow both employees and organizations to flourish together. In order for both schools and teachers to flourish together with the implementation of COMPASS, principals will need to be skilled in dealing with both human behavior and the effects of change.

The implementation of COMPASS impacted several of the key underlying concepts of organizational behavior perspective. Principals had to provide leadership in not only implementing the mandates set forth by COMPASS, but the roles of principals were changed, and principals were forced to provide leadership and guidance regarding factors they were not previously experienced with, such as the COMPASS Rubric and SLTs. Teacher evaluation impacts sociological concerns as well, including

motivation, status, professional identity, rewards and acknowledgement (Peterson & Peterson, 2005).

Teacher evaluation has also been said to make teachers feel powerless, contained within a subservient role (Lortie, 1975). Having no voice in the creation or implementation of COMPASS could have highlighted teachers' lack of power and influence.. All of these factors combine to create organizational challenges that may serve as obstacles to principals successfully implementing COMPASS.

### **Transformational Leadership**

Early leadership research emphasized two general, broadly defined behavior categories that are best described as relations-oriented behavior and task-oriented behavior (Bass, 1990). One category was made up of leaders who pursue a human relations approach and try to maintain friendly, supportive relations with their followers (Katz, 1950). The other category was made up of leaders who pursue goals and achievement through consideration for production (Blake, 1982). More recent research has identified these two different behaviors as concern for people and concern for production (Blake, 1982). There is research that indicates that the most effective leaders are leaders who are concerned for both people and production, while the least effective leaders are those who are focus on neither (Lambert, 1986). Furthermore, other research suggests that subordinates perceived that they were working in a more productive organization if their managers were concerned about both tasks and people (Bass, 1990; Daniel, 1985).

James Burns (1978) contends that while transactional leaders may get things done and achieve accomplishments through operation in terms of exchanging one thing for another (leaders who pursue goals through consideration for production), transformational leaders create profound changes by focusing on satisfying the needs of organizations and individuals via building capacity through engagement of the total person (leaders who pursue a human relations approach). Burns' Transformational Leadership Theory focuses on motivations and values in determining how a leader views power. It is idealistic and based in the belief that a transformational leader can lead followers to accomplish things

they never could before. The theory is transcendent in its views on social values and individual purpose. It stretches far beyond the basic needs of followers such as health and security. Burns defined transformational leadership between participants as "raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (Burns, 1978, p. 20).

The four elements of transformational leadership are individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (Bass, 1985). In order for leadership to be transformational and cause change in people, and subsequently organizations, leaders must have characteristics and behaviors that meet each of the four elements to a significant degree. Achieving this bodes well for leaders, followers, and organizations as research has indicated that transformational leadership characteristics has a positive correlation with performance outcomes at the individual, group, and organizational levels (Bass & Bass, 2008).

While Burns defined what transformational leadership is and what it breeds, others have attempted to define exactly what transformational leadership looks like. Research was then done in order to identify specific qualities and actions that constituted transformational leadership. Bass attempted to identify characteristics in such a way that they could be measured (1985). Following Bass, Yukl (1999) drew upon the theoretical strengths and conceptual weaknesses of transformational leadership and suggested strategies for transformational leaders including developing challenges and visions, tying those into strategies, and reaching the vision through small steps.

### **Transformational Leadership in Education**

It has been previously noted that there is research indicating that the most effective leaders are concerned for both people and production (Bass, 1985; Daniel, 1985; Lambert, 1986). While this duality of concern is at the center of transformational leadership, there is no globally accepted concept of transformational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1994). Leithwood and his colleagues are credited with constructing the most fully developed transformational leadership model for a school setting (Leithwood,

2006). This model identifies the nine dimensions of the concept of transformational leadership as creating vision, developing group goals, maintaining high performance expectations, modeling, providing individual support, providing intellectual stimulation, building a productive school culture, building structures for collaborations, and building good relations with parents (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

Leithwood and his colleagues have done extensive research on transformational leadership in schools (Leithwood et al., 1990; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1994, 2000, 2006; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 1996), and while the empirical evidence on the effects of transformational leadership in schools is small, the existing evidence does point to a positive correlation for this type of leadership and schools tasked with the process of undergoing significant change. While Transformational Leadership may presuppose organic change, as opposed to mandated change, Leithwood notes that the forces of change impacting schools and the implementation needed to effectively change schools require leadership values that Transformational leaders understand and practice (Leithwood et al., 1999). This existing evidence provides a crucial link between the importance of the study of transformational leadership and the implementation of COMPASS.

### **Transformational Leadership Framework and Dimensions of Practice**

Leithwood (1996) presents a developed model of transformational leadership, broken down into three categories, each containing three dimensions of practice, for a total of nine, each with specific leader behaviors identified. Upon conducting an analysis of 21 studies of specific dimensions of transformational leadership, it was determined that the nine dimensions either clearly provided evidence relevant to school settings, or could not be ruled out due to limited or ambiguous results (Leithwood et al., 1996). The three categories are setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization. The nine dimensions are building a shared vision, developing goal consensus, maintaining high performance expectations, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, modeling important values and practices, contingent reward, structuring, and culture building. While initially containing three



categories with nine dimensions of practice, a fourth category, improving the instructional program, containing four specific dimensions of practice (staffing the program, providing instructional support, monitoring school activity, and buffering staff from distractions) was later added (Leithwood & Sheashore-Louis, 2012).

### **Transformational Leadership Framework and Change**

The four categories of the transformational leadership framework indicate leadership practices that may allow for successful implementing of change. The categories of setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization and improving the instructional program align with much of the previously reviewed literature regarding change (Leithwood, 2006; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2012). In order to bring about successful change, leaders must address barriers through tasks for implementation (Bolman and Deal 2003, Kotter 2012). The categories and dimensions identified in the transformational leadership framework address what is required in order to successfully bring about change.

### **Summary**

This study is based on the belief that in order to successfully guide schools through the implementation of COMPASS, principals will need to be transformational leaders and change managers. This means that they can provide leadership that does two things: motivates employees in order to lead them to new heights, and navigates the complexities, obstacles, and unknowns of change (Bass, 1985; Fullan, 2001). In order to motivate employees to grow in an effort to reach new levels of practice, principals will have to be transformational leaders (Burns, 1978). In order to serve as an agent of change through the implementation of a mandate that drastically alters long-standing practices and habits, principals will have to be skilled in leadership for change (Fullan, 2011). The concept of deftly handling both human behavior and organizational behavior in order to lead to success for both people and the organization is rooted in organizational behavior perspective.

Principals in Louisiana are under pressure to successfully implement COMPASS.

Transformational leadership and change leadership in relation to implementing COMPASS must be researched to gain a greater understanding of how principals perceive and adjust to the implementation of mandated teacher evaluation reform.. A greater understanding of these approaches can improve existing practices and lead to greater success in implementation of mandated teacher evaluation reforms in the future.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **Qualitative Research**

Glense (2011, p. 1) states that qualitative research, “seeks to make sense of actions, narratives, and the ways in which they intersect.” In order to gain an understanding of COMPASS and how it impacted principals, research was conducted that allowed principals to share their experiences and explain how COMPASS has impacted teacher evaluations, principal leadership, and the role of the principal. Interviewing principals, the supervisors who manage, support, and evaluate principals, and the teachers who are managed and supported and evaluated by principals, allowed for more layers, greater depth, and to build a context for which to understand the impact of COMPASS. Qualitative research also allows the opportunity to see various perspectives and gain insight on the lived experiences of change. Through the construction of this qualitative case study, it is possible to gain a greater understanding of COMPASS through the eyes of those responsible for implementing and carrying out the everyday actions of COMPASS.

### **Case Study**

Creswell (2011) states that a case study is to explore an issues or problem using the case as a specific illustration. Yin (2009) describes case studies as meeting three conditions: a research question that attempts to answer "how" or "why", the investigator having no control over behavioral events, and a focus on a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life setting. In this research, the issue is the impact of high-stakes teacher evaluation on school principals and this is illustrated through the case of school principals in one Louisiana school district. Using a case study methodology allows for the investigation of the impacts of COMPASS within a real-life system and context. In addition, one of the strengths of case studies is they provide real contexts in which effects can be observed. This allows for the establishment of both causes and effects (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Furthermore, case studies are strong on

reality and while their results may not be completely able to be generalized, they can provide insights into similar situations and cases (Nisbet & Watt, 1984).

This case study, of how high-stake teacher evaluations impacts principals, is a single-case design. As noted by Nock, Michel, and Photos (2008, p. 337), "Single-case research designs are a diverse and powerful set of procedures useful for demonstrating causal relations." In addition, they add that single-case research designs "refer to those in which the phenomena of interest are studied using a single subject or small group of research subjects" (p. 337). The phenomenon in this research study is high-stakes teacher evaluation and the small group of research subjects, or unit of analysis, is the principals that are participants in the study. While the principals are the unit of analysis, multiple sources of data, not just data from the principals themselves, were collected and analyzed. Given the research questions and the aim of the researcher, the use of the case study is appropriate given its strengths and what it can be used to accomplish.

### **Setting**

The school district that serves as the setting for this study services a parish of approximately 52,000 residents, residing in 13 communities. The district is a suburban one that contains in full, but does not expand beyond, an entire parish in Louisiana. The school district was established in the late 1800s and as of currently consists of 15 schools with an enrollment of approximately 9,800 students. The percentage of school-age residents of the district that attend private school instead of public is lower than most districts in southeast Louisiana. All of the 15 schools in the school district were rated an "A" or "B" by the Louisiana Department of Education when School Performance Scores were released in the Fall of 2014. Of the six schools whose principals were included in this study, four schools were rated an "A" and two schools were rated a "B" (Louisiana Department of Education, 2015a). Ninety-three percent of school-aged children living within area attend the school district's public schools. The student population is 57.75% white, 36.32% black, 4.34% Hispanic, 1.21% Asian, and 0.39% American Indian. The school

district employs 845 teachers; 97.4% are certified, 96.3% are Highly Qualified, 26% hold advanced degrees, and 60 teachers are National Board Certified. The school district does not have a teacher's union. The school district currently carries a rating of "A" from the Louisiana Department of Education.

At the conclusion of the 2012-2013 school year, the Louisiana Department of Education released a COMPASS Implementation Report. The COMPASS Implementation Report broke down the metrics of all the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the state of Louisiana into three sections: Observation Completion, Student Learning Target (SLT) Completion, and Final Evaluation Completion (Louisiana Department of Education, 2013a).

In the Observation Completion section, the school district that serves as the setting for this study included 762 teachers in observation calculations. Of the 762 teachers included, 100% had an assigned evaluator, 100% had at least one observation completed, and 100% had at least two observations completed. In comparison, the state averages were 99% of teachers had an assigned evaluator, 98% had at least one observation completed, and 96% had at least two observations completed. The lowest percentages in the state attained by LEAs were 95% for having an assigned evaluator, 84% having at least one observation completed, and 63% of teachers having at least two observations completed.

In the SLT Completion section, the selected school district had 100% of teachers with at least two SLTs assigned to be rated, and 99.34% of teachers with at least two rated SLTs. In comparison, the state average was 95% of teachers with at least two SLTs assigned to be rated, and 88% of teachers with at least two rated SLTs. The lowest percentages in the state attained by LEAs were 70% with at least two SLTs assigned to be rated, and 47% of teachers with at least two rated SLTs.

In the Final Evaluation Completion section, the selected school district had 100% of teachers with an evaluation record submitted. In comparison, the state average was 74% of teachers with an evaluation record submitted. The COMPASS Implementation Report makes it clear that the selected school district fully implemented COMPASS with fidelity, as reports could not be completed and entered without

sufficient data to serve as evidence of the events. In order to determine how the implementation of COMPASS impacted principals and how principals adjusted, it is important that the participants in the study fully implemented COMPASS, rather than study a change mandate that was not implemented with fidelity or sabotaged.

### **Participants**

Creswell (2013) notes that purposeful sampling is used in qualitative studies, as participants are selected because "they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study." In addition, Schatzman and Strauss (1973) note that purposeful sampling becomes necessary due to practicality and is "shaped by the time the researcher has available to him, by his framework, by his starting and developing interests, and by any restrictions placed upon his observations by his hosts" (p. 39). Furthermore, Glaser (1978) states that purposeful sampling is "the calculated decision to sample a specific locale according to a preconceived but reasonable initial set of dimensions" (p. 37). This study focuses on how the implementation of COMPASS has impacted principals and how principals have adjusted. Therefore, principals who work in a school district where COMPASS was fully implemented with fidelity were selected in order to provide their first-hand experience and perceptions. In addition to the principal participants, the four employees who are responsible for the supervision of these principals were selected in order to provide their experiences in supporting the selected principals. Finally, six teachers who are employed at the school of the principal participants will be selected in order to provide their experiences in working for and being supported by the principal participant during the implementation of COMPASS. These teachers were employed at their current school, under the supervision of the principal participant, prior to COMPASS implementation, as well as during the first three years of COMPASS implementation. Within the pool of candidates that met the criteria for purposeful selection, random selection was used with possible, given the size of the district.

The six principals, two from high school, two from middle school, and two from elementary school, participated in one-on-one semi-structured interviews for the study. The six principals were chosen because of their experience as a principal at the same school before COMPASS and during the first year of COMPASS. This experience requirement ensures that principals will have encountered the implementation of COMPASS first hand. The principal interviews lasted approximately an hour and were held in the principal's offices at their respective schools. The interview protocol remained the same for all principal participants.

Table 1					
<i>Principal Participants</i>					
Participant	School	Years in Education	Years in Administration	Years as Principal of Current School	Gender
A	High School	29.5	14	8	Male
B	High School	15	10	5	Male
C	Middle School	17.5	9	4	Male
D	Middle School	20	14	5	Female
E	Elementary School	31	7	4	Female
F	Elementary School	26	18	10	Female

Four supervisors of principals participated in a focus group for the study. The four supervisors will be chosen because of their experience in supporting the principals participating in the study. This experience requirement ensures that supervisors worked with and observed the principals implementing COMPASS. The focus group lasted approximately an hour and we held in the Superintendent's office.

Table 2					
<i>Supervisor Participants</i>					
Participant	Title	Years in Education	Years in School-Level Administration	Years Supervising/Supporting Principals	Gender
G	Superintendent	39	6	26	Female

H	Assistant Superintendent	24	8	8	Female
I	Executive Director of Secondary Schools	18	9	2	Male
J	Executive Director of Elementary Schools	30	9	2	Female

Six teachers participated in a focus group for the study. Two focus groups were conducted, with the six teachers split into two groups of three. Each focus group consisted of one teacher from high school, one teacher from middle school, and one teacher from elementary school. The six teachers were chosen because of their experience working under the principals participating in the study the year prior to COMPASS implementation, as well as the three years since COMPASS implementation. Principal participants were asked to recommend two teachers to serve on this focus group, based on ability to communicate and contribute to this study. The researcher selected, at random, one of the participant principal's recommend teachers to participate. This experience requirement ensured that the teachers have worked with and observed the principals implementing COMPASS. The two focus groups each lasted approximately an hour, and were held at a school within the district that served as a central location for the participants. The interview protocol remained the same for both teacher focus groups.

Table 3					
<i>Teacher Participants</i>					
Participant	Level	Years Teaching	Years Teaching At Current School	Years Teaching At Current School Under Principal Participant	Gender
K	High School	20	20	8	Female
L	High School	13	13	5	Female
M	Middle School	10	7	4	Female
N	Middle School	19	19	5	Female



O	Elementary School	11	4	4	Female
P	Elementary School	8.5	8.5	4	Female

### **Data Collection**

In order to answer the research question, two data collection methods were utilized: (a) semi-structured interviews and (b) focus group interviews. One of the many purposes of the interview is to serve as a principal means of gathering data that has a direct relationship and with research objectives (Cohen et al., 2007). Semi-structured interviews are often used in research that deals with policy (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). A semi-structured interview allows the researcher to determine topics and content to be covered in advance, however it allows the researcher flexibility with questions, sequence, and wording (Kerlinger, 1970). Among the strengths of the semi-structured interview are an increase in comprehensiveness of data as well as a more systematic data collection (Patton, 2002). The semi-structured interviews were guided by an interview protocol created by the researcher. The interview protocol is carefully planned by the researcher identifying the variables attempting to be measured (Tuckman, 1972) and created open-ended items to supply the participants a frame of reference for providing their thoughts on the variables (Kerlinger, 1970). Once the interview protocol was developed for each group of participants, it stayed the same across all interviews and focus groups and was not changed.

A semi-structured interview was conducted with each of the six principals. The six principals consisted of two principals of high schools, two principals of middle schools, and two principals of elementary schools. The selection of six principals allowed for two principals from each level of schools in the school district (elementary, middle, and high). The participants were principals at their school the year COMPASS was implemented, as well as the year before the COMPASS was implemented. This allowed principals to explain their experiences and perspectives on teacher evaluation and principal

leadership pre- and post-COMPASS, as well as how principals are adjusting to any other changes that came as a result of the implementation of COMPASS. Principals were allowed to choose the date, time, and location of the interview. The researcher had three digital recording devices that recorded the audio of the entire interview. The interviews were transcribed at home by the researcher. Following transcription, the interview transcripts were sent to principals to ensure that transcriptions were an accurate representation of the interview. Participants were allowed the opportunity to submit feedback and revisions to the transcription. Upon receiving and reviewing their respective transcripts, no principal participants requested revisions or clarifications.

Aside from interviews, the other source of data collection the study was focus groups. Focus groups rely on members of a group to interact on a given topic in order to allow for a collective view instead of an individual one (Morgan, 1988). Focus groups can be useful for generating data from different subgroups of a population, gathering data on attitudes, values and opinions, and providing greater coverage of issues than would be possible in a survey (Cohen et al., 2007). Focus groups can also be beneficial for triangulating data with other forms of data collection, such as interviewing (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). In addition, Arksey and Knight (1999) note that "having more than one interviewee present can provide two versions of events - a cross-check - and one can complement the other with additional points, leading to a more complete and reliable record" (pg. 76).

A focus group was conducted with the district-level personnel that supervise and support the middle school principals. The personnel consisted of two participants who observed the principals pre- and post-COMPASS implementation, and two participants who were principals during the 2012-2013 school year, the first year of COMPASS implementation, and moved into positions in which they currently supervise the principals at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, which is the second year of COMPASS. Conducting a focus group with these participants allowed for interaction of the participants in a semi-structured-conversation targeting the topic of how COMPASS impacts principals. The focus group allows the researcher to gather qualitative data regarding the perceptions and opinions of

purposely selected individuals (Vaughn, 1996). The focus group participants were allowed to select the date, time, and location of the focus group, with the researcher serving as the coordinator. The researcher had three digital recording devices that recorded the audio of the entire focus group. The focus group was held in the Superintendent's office at the Central Office building. The interview was transcribed at home by the researcher. Following transcription, the interview transcripts were sent individually to the participants to ensure that the transcriptions were an accurate representation of the focus group. Participants were allowed the opportunity to submit feedback and revisions to the transcription. Upon receiving the transcript, none of the participants requested revisions or clarifications.

Another two focus groups were conducted with teachers who were employed at the schools under the supervision of the participating principals the year COMPASS was implemented, as well as the year before COMPASS was implemented. This allows for a different perspective on how the participating principals were impacted by and adjusted to COMPASS. As Gibbs (2007, p. 94) notes, "It is always possible to make mistakes in your interpretation and a different view on the situation can illuminate" and different perspectives on the same individuals can be useful "not to show that informants are lying or wrong, but to reveal new dimensions of social reality where people do not always act consistently."

The researcher choose the date, time, and location of the teacher focus groups. The researcher e-mailed all participants at least two weeks in advance and ask each participant for confirmation of participation. Upon receiving confirmation, the researcher e-mailed each participant a reminder prior to the focus group. The researcher had three digital recording devices that recorded the audio of the entire focus group. The interviews were transcribed at home by the researcher. Following transcription, the interview transcripts were sent individually to the participants to ensure that the transcriptions were an accurate representation of the focus group. Participants were allowed the opportunity to submit feedback and revisions to the transcription. Upon receiving the transcript, no teacher participants requested revisions or clarifications.

Aligned with the focus of this study, much of the protocols dealt with implementation. This proved challenging for some teacher participants to elaborate upon, as they experienced the implementation of COMPASS from more of a ground-level view than the supervisor and teacher participants. This is aligned with previous research indicating teachers understand policy primarily through only their own existing practices, beliefs, and knowledge (Spillane, 1998) as opposed to through a more political lens. As a result of the lack of teacher discussion regarding policy implementation, teachers may be underrepresented in quotations in appropriate sections of this study.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Cohen et al (2007), the analysis of qualitative data "involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data" and "making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories, and regularities" (p. 462). The core elements of qualitative data analysis are coding the data and combining the codes into broader categories or themes (Creswell, 2013). In analyzing and presenting the data, the researcher abided by the principle of *fitness for purpose*, the principle suggested by Cohen et al (2007). The researcher determined three purposes to be served by analyzing and presenting the data: (a) summarize and describe the perceptions of how principals in one school perceived the implementation of COMPASS, (b) summarize and describe how principals adjusted their practice due to the implementation of COMPASS, and (c) summarize and describe the perceived successes and challenges that principals have experienced due to the implementation of COMPASS.

Following the transcription of interviews and verification of their accuracy by participants, the researcher analyzed the transcripts in order to identify themes and patterns. The researcher adopted the analytic approach of relying on the theoretical propositions the study was designed upon. This allowed the researcher to focus on data that contributed to answering the research questions, and ignoring other data (Yin, 2009). The researcher began by reading each transcript twice without coding. This was done to create an understanding of the data as a whole prior to breaking the data into parts (Agar, 1980). The

researcher followed the process identified by Creswell (2013) as the central steps that researchers use when analyzing qualitative data. The researcher reduced the data collected from principal, supervisor, and teacher interviews into themes by creating codes and then condensing the codes. Once coding was complete and the codes were condensed into fewer categories, the researcher counted codes to determine how frequently they occurred (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher then analyzed the condensed codes in order to classify them into themes, or more general ideas that are made up of related ideas (Creswell, 2013). Within the identified themes, the researcher made comparisons between not only principal participants, but between principal participants and supervisor and teacher participants. Principal interviews were coded first, followed by the supervisor focus group and the teacher focus group. The comparing was an analytical step taken by the researcher in order to assist in going beyond surface-level understanding and reveal underlying complexities (Glesne 2011). In order to assist in the managing of data, the creation and managing of codes, and the retrieval of themes, the researcher utilized the Atlas.ti qualitative software as a tool, as Creswell identified several ways that qualitative computer software can facilitate the analysis of qualitative data (2013).

### **Procedures to Address Trustworthiness and Credibility**

#### **Triangulation**

Creswell (2013) notes that triangulation of information provides validity to a researcher's findings. For case studies, Yin (2009) suggests that using different sources of evidence is a major strength. Obtaining information from principals, their supervisors, and the teachers they supervise allows for the convergence of evidence. Having multiple sources of data illustrates the same central idea of how COMPASS impacts principals and how principals have adjusted to COMPASS allows for multiple perspectives and measures of the same phenomenon.

## **Clarification of Researcher Bias**

In order to validate the research it is suggested that the researcher explain any position, biases, or assumptions that may impact the research (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988). The researcher has been employed by the school district that serves as the setting for this research since 2005. It is the only school district in which the researcher has been employed. The researcher was a teacher for seven years, and has been employed as an assistant principal since May of 2012. The researcher's first year as an assistant principal was the 2012-2013 school year, which is also the first year that COMPASS was implemented. The researcher spent all seven years as a teacher under the old state evaluation system, and both years as an assistant principal under COMPASS. The researcher knows all participants and all participants know the researcher. The researcher did not include principal or teacher participants who the researcher has directly worked for or with.

Interviewing people that the researcher already knew was both a rewarding and challenging experience. While it was professionally beneficial to be able to interview people and gain insight to their thoughts, during the transcription process it became evident that participants were honest and not afraid to provide information about their thoughts and practices that placed certain ideas, policies, or groups of employees in a less than positive light. Additionally, interviewing the teachers was awkward for the researcher at times, as teachers openly discussed the practices of their administrators, some of who were participants in the study, and some who were not participants in the study, but that the researcher had relationships with. Likewise, in the supervisor interview, the supervisors openly discussed the practices of both administrators and teachers. While no specific individuals were named, the researcher was allowed insight into some supervisors' general views of principal and teacher performance, some of which were critical. As a result, during the coding process, the researcher needed to have a heightened level of awareness, focus, and deliberateness when determining which quotes would be used to illustrate a particular theme, as several of the quotes had negative connotations regarding both participants and non-participants in the research. However, the researcher did determine that the quotes which best illustrated

the theme in question would be used, regardless of what interpretations could be drawn from them. These thoughts were documented in the researcher's journal, and the researcher cross-checked quotes and themes in order to ensure that the most appropriate quotes were utilized to provide the description of the themes.

The researcher does have biases regarding the school district that serves as the setting of the study. The researcher believes that the school district is highly effective. The researcher also believes that the employees of the school district are generally very effective. In general, the researcher believes that both district and school administrators are effective.

The researcher does have biases regarding COMPASS. The researcher agrees with the idea of using a professional practice rubric to evaluate teachers. The researcher has questions with using a combination of rubric components that has not been field tested or researched. The researcher agrees with the process of teachers having one unannounced observation in addition to one announced observation. While the researcher agrees with the idea of teachers setting student learning targets, as well as the idea of giving teachers feedback on their performance in the form of value-added measures, the researcher has questions with consequential decisions being tied to these two methods. The researcher believes these two components should be used for teacher use and feedback only. In general, the researcher does believe that the implementation of COMPASS has improved teacher practice in the classroom. The researcher kept a reflective journal throughout the process of the conducting this research. The researcher analyzed the reflective journaling alongside the work being done for the study in order to ensure that none of the researcher's personal thoughts or biases were reflected in the research, and participants' views were represented accurately and objectively.

### **Member Checking**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) member checking "is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). At the conclusion of interviews the researcher transcribed the interviews

at home. The transcript was then sent to the participants via e-mail to allow the participants the opportunity to read the transcript and ensure that the participant and their ideas are represented accurately. Participants were able to submit feedback on their transcript to the researcher, who edited the transcript appropriately. No participants requested revisions or clarifications upon receiving their respective transcripts.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study prior to contacting any participants or the collection of any data in order to protect the human subjects (Creswell 2013). Participants were asked about their interest in participating and given the choice to accept or deny participation in the study. Participants were then given letters of consent to sign that articulated the process that would be followed, the data that would be collected, and possible risks if they chose to participate. Participants were assigned letters instead of having their actual names utilized in the study, and no participants had quotes directly tied to them in the study. In addition, the school district that serves as the setting is not identified by name. Participants only were required to provide basic demographic information, and only school district information that is important to the study is described. To further protect the confidentiality of participants, the research did not identify quotes in the study by the specific participant. No further analysis was done within participant groups, and the researcher used speech tags within the text when setting up quotations to indicate that quotes were from a different participant within a particular group.



## **Chapter Four: Findings**

This chapter contains the findings of the case study. The findings are organized by emergent themes as determined by the analysis of data across all participant groups. Some themes contain subheadings, and all themes are concluded with a brief closing. The data has been analyzed and presented in order to answer three main questions: (a) how do principals perceive the implementation of Louisiana's COMPASS teacher evaluation system, (b) how have principals adjusted their practice during the implementation of COMPASS, and (c) what are the perceived successes and challenges that principals have experienced during the implementation of COMPASS.

### **The Effects of a State Department COMPASS Rollout that Participants Perceived as Weak**

The Louisiana Department of Education rolled out COMPASS in the weeks prior to the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. In addition to disseminating COMPASS-related information and resources through newsletters and their website, the LDOE also traveled around the state conducting training sessions for personnel who would be evaluators under COMPASS. The COMPASS rollout and training was discussed frequently by both principals and supervisor participants, with the effects having an impact at both the district- and school-level.

Supervisors frequently discussed the quality of the training and how their perceived weakness of the training impacted their next steps and actions when preparing principals for COMPASS implementation. One supervisor summarized the training by saying, "The training session that the state provided was inadequate. It was inadequate for what we needed to do," while another added, "That was awful. That was the worst I've ever been through." Another supervisor elaborated in more detail regarding how the LDOE's rollout of COMPASS impacted next steps and process at the district level:

We had started working as a group when Act 1 passed. We had a different rubric then all of a sudden Charlotte Danielson comes out. So now we had to rewrite, we had started PEP (Professional Evaluation Plan), and then we had to go back in and rewrite, and then

we had this new rubric, and so here we're trying to get ahead of the game like we always do, so we could build the capacity, and then all of a sudden everything we had worked on we had to throw away and start again. And then they wait until right before school is starting to do this professional development.

The above quotes illustrate how the supervisors perceived the COMPASS training put on by the LDOE. Supervisors reference attempting to get "ahead of the game" in an effort to be able to have the time to build capacity in their principals in order to implement effectively. This perceived inadequacy of the LDOE's training by the supervisors began to drive their thinking and decision-making regarding how to prepare principals for COMPASS implementation. Supervisors explained that their initial reaction to learning about COMPASS was realizing that principals were going to need a great deal of support and direction. Principals had never seen the rubric and had no idea what an SLT was, but within two weeks of the training that the LDOE provided for the school district's administrators, principals would be utilizing both of these tools with teachers with tenure and merit pay tied to the results. One supervisor explained the central office's thinking following the LDOE training:

We recognized right away the work that needed to be done ... I initially thought, this is going to be a lot to learn, a lot to share with our principals, a lot for them to understand very quickly. They didn't even know what an SLT was, what the COMPASS Rubric was about, so we knew we had a lot of work to be done to build capacity for our administrators and teachers.

The quote above shows supervisor's thinking as a result of the LDOE training and serves as the groundwork for the several steps supervisors took in order to support principals. First, supervisors realized that principals would need support with learning the COMPASS Rubric. As a result, supervisors broke down the paragraphs in each COMPASS component to smaller, related chunks to make them easier for principals to read and digest. Trainings were then held in order to familiarize principals and assistant

principals in using and interpreting the COMPASS Rubric. In order to assist principals in presenting COMPASS to teachers, supervisors created the beginning of the year PowerPoint that explained COMPASS, primarily the process for observations, an explanation of the rubric, and the process with some guidelines for SLTs, and gave it to all principals to present with to their faculties during the first week back to work for teachers. To assist principals in navigating and submitting information into CIS (the LDOE's online database where principals input COMPASS-related information), the supervisors designated an employee in Human Resources with learning the CIS database, creating documents to help principals enter information into CIS step-by-step, and serving as an on-call resource and trouble-shooter when principals had questions about the online database. Supervisors viewed these steps as the beginning of attempting to build capacity in principals to enable them to implement COMPASS effectively.

Principals also referenced the inadequacy of the state's training and commended the central office in the thorough training and support they provided principals to help them successfully implement COMPASS. Principals specifically referenced being given a "canned" presentation at the beginning of the year to present to their faculties, having SLTs created for them in advance to share and set with teachers, having several sessions focused on the interpretation of the COMPASS rubric, and receiving detailed, timely, and specific support from human resources on navigating CIS and identifying pertinent timelines. One principal elaborated on the support from central office in light of the lack of support from the state:

The state was really funny at the beginning: we had no videos, then they started coming up with videos but they can only find, what, one or two? That was embarrassing. So the state was trying to support us but did not do a great job in supporting us, so once again, good thing we are in a district in which we don't make excuses. ... Like I say, we're blessed to be in a place that is extremely supportive. I mean, you could pick up the phone and you could call anybody in Central Office, from the Human Resources department, and ask questions, 'What do I click, I'm in CIS?'

The above quote provides insight into the lack of COMPASS training and resources initially provided by the LDOE. Additionally, the principal not only notes that the central office is supportive, but gives specific ways in which that support is manifested: knowing who to call for answers when having issues in CIS. This support is in direct relation to what the supervisors identified as areas that principals would need support and is a direct result of steps taken by the supervisors to support principals.

In light of the changes made by the state in light of the COMPASS pilot, and the quick turnaround from the announcement of the changes, to the LDOE training, to full implementation shortly after, supervisors and principals both believed that a transition period for the implementation of COMPASS would have been beneficial, especially due to the fact that the teacher evaluation system was not the only change being made by the LDOE. At the time of COMPASS introduction and implementation, the LDOE had also adopted the Common Core State Standards and was moving forward with full implementation of the standards for the 2012-2013 school year. Principals elaborated on their desire for a transition period, with one saying, "From a state's perspective, I wish people would learn what the word 'transition' means. They don't give you any time for transition," while another added, "It should have been more of a trial basis. It should have been a slower roll out. Then you come back to the table, provide feedback, and then you do the full implementation." When discussing implementation, one supervisor said, "An example of the State implementing something too fast, too soon, with too many other things going on at the same time, instead of a well-thought-out process that received input or got input from people who are actually doing something about it."

The above quotes illustrate supervisor and principal beliefs that neither they nor the LDOE were ready to immediately undergo full implementation of COMPASS. While supervisors and principals said they desired a transition period for implementation, they did not say that they were against implementation. This shows that they were not against COMPASS itself, they simply wanted time and support to be able to implement it effectively. Time and support, however, were two things that participants felt they were not given by the LDOE. The LDOE's training was held two weeks before the

school year began, the training was perceived by participants to be insufficient, and the amount of resources provided by the LDOE were minimal. The perception that the LDOE was not ready to implement is was supported by the fact that several of the resources that the LDOE discussed to assist in the implementation of COMPASS were not available at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. The video library, for example, was not launched until the summer of 2013, after the first year of implementation (Louisiana Department of Education, 2013c).

The steps taken by the supervisors to assist principals in implementing COMPASS appeared to be beneficial, but issues still were evident. Principals felt the LDOE's COMPASS training was unclear and the trainers from the LDOE were unable to provide clarity or guidance on several issues. Principals felt this lack of clarity and direction made their job and their responsibility to implement COMPASS significantly more complex. One principal explained this lack of clarity, noting, "We were only trained as trainers, and the trainers (from the LDOE) couldn't even answer the questions that we posed to them during the sessions, so there wasn't a clear vision to me to fully implement this." This complexity was most apparent in interpreting the COMPASS rubric and in setting SLTs. The supervisors anticipated this challenge, and took the steps of providing training for principals and assistant principals on the COMPASS Rubric along with creating SLTs for principals to use with teachers at their schools.

### **Mixed Perceptions on Level of Inter-Rater Reliability**

The steps taken in training principals and assistant principals on the COMPASS Rubric are particularly important when considering their role in establishing inter-rater reliability. Within the COMPASS framework, inter-rater reliability is important as the score a teacher receives from an evaluator is a determining factor in pay, tenure, and maintaining employment. Research indicates that several different factors can affect inter-rater reliability and inter-rater agreement (Graham, Milanowski, Miller, & Westat, 2012), one factor is which is rater training (Hoyt & Kerns, 1999). According to the perceptions of supervisor and principal participants in the LDOE's training, the quality of the training was

poor, creating an obstacle to achieving a high level of inter-rater reliability. When discussing the COMPASS rubric, principals continuously referred to the importance of inter-rater reliability. Principals detailed the steps they have taken with their administrative teams to reduce the amount of subjectivity and increase the consistency when interpreting the rubric and scoring observations. One principal elaborated on the steps taken to for inter-rater reliability:

Through all of our walk-arounds (observations), we have weekly meetings, a lot of times we look at the COMPASS observations, rubric data that we've collected through our walk-around observations. We'll watch Teaching Channel videos and rate them together so the language is the same ... Many of our conversations focus on those indicators.

Another principal added:

I just wanted to make sure administration was consistent and making sure me and my two other APs (assistant principals) were scoring the same way. We had a lot of conversations when it began. The AP and I get all our observations together, but first we would make sure we were looking at the same things ... I encourage my APs to at least do it two or three times with someone else so you can calculate if you're thinking the same. I think that was a concern of them; that you might not be as hard as me, so we want to make sure we're consistent with that.

The quotes above provide evidence for the steps principals have taken to attempt to ensure a high level of inter-rater reliability. It should be noted that principals describe having to seek outside resources, which may relate back to the quality of the LDOE's COMPASS training and resources. Additionally, these quotes provide an idea of the time principals utilized during the school day to work on creating inter-rater reliability. Furthermore, while principals discussed their progress and improvement in achieving inter-rater reliability within their administrative teams at their perspective schools, they were unable to offer any qualitative evidence or fact-based explanations to support this. Additionally, while

principals detailed how they attempted to create high levels of inter-rater reliability, none described a set, systematic approach that would constitute a training.

In detailing the steps taken to ensure inter-rater reliability among their administrative teams, principals noted that it was a constant process, but their perception was that they had generally been successful on developing consistency with their administrators at their schools. Regarding inter-rater reliability within her administrative team, one principal said, "We have a very strong administrative team. I think we're very consistent and we know what good teaching looks like." Most principals also believed they had improved every year since implementation. One principal said, "We have in this third year, we made some strides," while another principal added, "Through the years our language has gotten more consistent with each other." These quotes illustrate principal perceptions regarding their level of consistency and inter-rater reliability within their administrative teams. However, when discussing inter-rater reliability, no principals were able to provide any specific details, examples, or documentation of inter-rater reliability. This means when determining their level of inter-rater reliability, principals primarily relied upon their perceptions and the fact that they had taken steps to address it.

Principal perceptions of inter-rater reliability among their own administrative staffs become more interesting when compared with principals' perceptions of inter-rater reliability from school-to-school and across the district, as principals' perceptions were mixed. Some principals felt that interpretation varied from school-to-school. One principal noted: "I'm often concerned that we start to interpret and misinterpret at each school," while another principal discussed seeing differences in the way his administrative scores and the way the central office scores when they periodically go into schools and externally assess instruction, "I got a problem with it because our interpretation as an administrative team is sometimes different than external assessment of what they're seeing in the classroom." Others felt that the district as a whole had a high level of inter-rater reliability, with one principal saying:

I am currently comfortable when we're going to a district meeting, watch a video, and everybody in the Executive Staff, Curriculum and Instruction, and principals' meeting, we score that video the exact same. That has been a pleasure for me to watch in which we did something right, because nobody discusses it, nobody talks, and when we share our results we have the same results and type of feedback.

The above quotations illustrate principals' varied perceptions regarding inter-rater reliability. When discussing inter-rater reliability across the school district, principals' personal experiences served as their evidence for their beliefs. One principal noted an experience during an external observation conducted by Central Office revealed some differences in rubric interpretation and scoring, while another principal noted an experience in a principal's meeting where those present in the room scored a video the same. Both of these experiences are isolated events, yet principals drew inferences from them about the level of inter-rater reliability within the school district. Again, as previously discussed, it should be noted that there were very few examples in which principals' perceptions regarding inter-rater reliability were able to be supported with evidence. However, it should also be noted that the LDOE did not require, nor discuss, measures to ensure inter-rater reliability at the initial LDOE Compass training.

The lack of evidence behind principals' beliefs regarding inter-rater reliability are highlighted by the idea that principals' perceptions of inter-rater reliability were not consistent with the perceptions of supervisors and teachers. Even though supervisors referenced seeing some changes in teaching practice that are aligned with the rubric, they still felt principals needed improvement in utilizing the rubric. While supervisors believe principals have become more comfortable and proficient in their use of the rubric, there were still concerns about inter-rater reliability within administrative teams at schools, and within the district, from school-to-school. One supervisor observed:



Principal and administrators' definitions of what something rates as a four is still different across the board in the district, across the board at each individual school even, and I think, we still need to do a better job at getting calibrated.

Another supervisor expressed similar concern, noting the difference between alignment on ratings and alignment on process of conducting observations. While it was acknowledged that principals have made efforts to increase inter-rater reliability, it still is a large concern for supervisors:

Inter-rater reliability...I know they do learning walks together and, you know, observations together, but I think they're together on process more than they are on the rubric observations themselves.

The above quotes show supervisors' perceptions of the level of inter-rater reliability amongst principals and their administrative teams, which are in contrast with principals' beliefs. Supervisors note that principals and their assistants are together on process more than interpretation of the rubric. This is key as the interpretation of the rubric has a direct impact on teachers' ratings. While inter-rater reliability and interpretation of an observation instrument is a natural challenge in teacher evaluation (Graham et al., 2012), one supervisor attributed this gap in understanding between principals to the initial COMPASS training provided by the LDOE:

That (perceived lack of inter-rated reliability) goes back to the training that was provided by the state. You know, you all are probably too young to remember, but years ago, when we had LATAAP (the LDOE's now-discontinued formal induction program that evaluated new teachers) we went through rigorous training so that we would have comparability from one to another. The training session that the state provided (for COMPASS) was inadequate.

Another supervisor continued to elaborate on the difference between LATAAP training and COMPASS training, adding, "You had to go do a very intense training. You had to watch videos; you had to come out

reliable. This was nothing compared to that." While another supervisor added, "If you attended the session, you were certified when you left. And the sessions were terrible."

These quotes further illustrate not only the perception that the LDOE's training was lacking, but also the far-reaching effects of the training. Principals and supervisors leaving the LDOE training with many questions unanswered and different interpretations of the rubric could be obstacles to achieving a high level of inter-rater reliability. Even though supervisors provided sessions on the COMPASS Rubric for principals and assistant principals, there was still no formal process for ensuring inter-rater reliability or even identifying a level of inter-rater reliability. Additionally, due to the timing of the LDOE's training, creating a district-level training in time for the 2012-2013 school year, when principals and assistants began using the rubric to score teachers, was likely not feasible.

In addition to supervisor's concerns regarding inter-rater reliability, teachers also voiced their experiences with what they perceived to be a lack of consistency amongst principals and their assistants. Teachers were adamant that the score they would receive on their observations was heavily dependent upon who the observer was. Teachers observed variances between administrators in how they interpreted the rubric and how they were scored on the rubric, noting that teachers often compared their scores with one another, discussing which observer was assigned to them. Teachers reported having discussions with peers like, "This one observer always gives fours and threes and this other one never gives a four," or, "It's not fair. She likes you better." One teacher provided an example she observed that illustrated the lack of inter-rater reliability between administrators at the same school:

All the three administrators were together and they would ask us questions, and we would watch little scenarios from a video, and 'would you rate this a one or two or three or four,' and the principals, they would write down theirs and it was eye-opening to see when one gave a four and one is giving a two. So, like, okay, we want that one to observe us next time. And that was after three years of them doing the observations, so it all depends.

Another teacher added, "Yeah, I think that variation with the way principals, or the observers, are observing, that's a big problem for a lot of teachers."

The above quotes further provide evidence for the lack of inter-rater reliability among COMPASS evaluators. In this scenario, the lack of understanding of the COMPASS Rubric has made its way from the LDOE training to the school-level where it impacts teachers' perceptions of the validity of their observation scores. The teachers' belief that their score depends on their administrators undermines COMPASS as a tool to improve teaching practices, as teachers believe that their practices are not the main driving indicator of their score, but rather their evaluator is. The teachers' perceptions of the lack of inter-rater reliability amongst administrators holds implications in both practice and legality. As it pertains to practice, teachers may be less likely to honor the feedback of evaluators and attempt to change and improve their practice if they feel the feedback and evaluator are not credible. On a legal level, teachers may be able to take legal action to contest lower scores, especially teachers being scored as Ineffective, citing a lack of evidence regarding evaluator credibility, validity, and inter-rater reliability.

While teachers did question the level of inter-rater reliability amongst administrators, teachers did acknowledge that their principals took steps to build consistency between the administrators, such as doing observations in pairs or having open discussions with all administrators and teachers regarding how to interpret the rubric. One teacher observed, "One thing I really liked that they did at first, and I think they have done it this year, too, is that they would go in in pairs and observe. They were trying to become more consistent." This quote illustrates principals' efforts in addressing inter-rater reliability and teacher acknowledgment of those efforts. However, while teachers did like the idea of principals working to improve the level of inter-rater reliability, teachers still perceived there to be a large gap from administrator to administrator.

## **Clarity, Effectiveness, and Validity of Student Learning Targets**

The LDOE's COMPASS training was not limited to the COMPASS Rubric, as it also was a training for SLTs. While the conversation around the COMPASS Rubric and the level of inter-rater reliability impacts the Professional Practice half of a teacher's final evaluation score, their performance in Student Growth Measures provides the other half. Student Growth Measures originally consisted of VAM data and SLTs. VAM data would be provided by the LDOE for teachers in value-added subjects, and teachers in non-tested grades and subjects would set SLTs, but the LDOE announced in 2014 that all teachers would set SLTs, as VAM would be suspended for 2014 and 2015 due to there being no baseline data (Louisiana Department of Education, 2014).

According to principals, the SLTs presented challenges very early in the process of implementing COMPASS. Principals perceived a lack of clarity from the LDOE during the initial COMPASS training on what an SLT looked like, how they were to be worded and constructed, what constituted baseline data, and how to make informed decisions regarding setting growth goals based on baseline data. One principal shared, "The SLTs, there was a lot of confusion with that. What will an SLT look like? How do you set your goals?" while another principal explained, "Even though the state was providing the type of training I was imagining, because they were, they didn't seem very clear on a lot of things that I was imagining." The lack of clarity from the LDOE regarding SLTs was evident, and one supervisor noted that they anticipated the struggle for principals with SLTs, "We know they were going to struggle with thinking, 'Wow. Now two observations and we have to set these SLTs. ... We even started developing district SLTs so that that wouldn't be such a burden on the schools, too.'" Again, principals and supervisors were aligned in their belief that the LDOE's COMPASS training left them with unanswered questions.

The quotes from principals and supervisors indicate that anticipated challenges regarding SLTs following the LDOE training. The supervisors beginning to create SLTs to support principals is a result of the lack of LDOE preparation and readily-available resources. This lack of clarity and support from the

LDOE on SLTs was amplified as the results of SLTs carry consequences for teachers. The magnitude of this process for developing and setting SLTs is undermined by the above quotes, which illustrate that despite the high stakes teachers were facing, supervisors and principals left the LDOE training feeling that there were still many unanswered questions regarding SLTs.

In addition to their concerns regarding the basic process for developing and setting SLTs, another area principals discussed a lack of understanding in following the LDOE training was creating equity in SLTs between teachers of core subjects and teachers in enrichment subjects. Core subjects traditionally consist of math, language arts (reading, writing, literature, etc.), science and social studies, while enrichment subjects refer to other subjects such as band, choir, art, health, and physical education. One principal elaborated on the challenges created by having teachers in several different subjects all set SLTs:

I'm not a music teacher. I mean, I like listening to music but I don't know what it takes to go into teaching music or those pieces, so for me to say that ... for me to look at an SLT test, a pre or post-test or whatever, and say this is a good, rigorous assessment and this is what our kids would need ... for subjects areas like that, I'd be struggling.

Another principal went on to describe some possible effects of teachers setting SLTs in core classes as opposed to teachers setting SLTs in enrichment classes:

The toughest thing I still have difficulty with, with trying to determine the, like, complexity of SLTs and the tests that go along with them. ... Some of the biggest struggles that I have is deciding on SLTs for the subject areas that I am not very familiar with. .. Most of our enrichment teachers do very well in their SLTs; threes and fours. Most of our content teachers are -- if they've scored threes -- it's mostly twos and threes, which I think is a big disparity.

The above quotes further indicate the challenges principals face due to the fact that teachers are required to set SLTs. Principals describe a lack of knowledge in specific subject areas to truly assess the rigor of SLT assessments, as well as the disparity in results that may come as a byproduct of a principal's lack of knowledge in a particular subject area. These quotes also point to a lack of equity perceived by principals when working with teachers in creating, setting, and rating SLTs. The lack of principal knowledge in dealing with these SLT situations and aspects could have possibly been alleviated had the LDOE provided better preparation, training, and resources.

## **Closing**

The LDOE's COMPASS training, and its impact on both principals' and supervisors' practices and experiences with the COMPASS Rubric and SLTs, was a subject that both principals and supervisors discussed frequently, noting the perceived challenges they felt it created. Supervisors described how the training impacted and drove their next steps in preparing principals for COMPASS implementation, while principals explained the confusion and lack of clarity they felt at the conclusion of the training. This perceived lack of clarity for principals following the training could be a key contributing factor to the topic that had the greatest disparity among principals and their supervisors and teachers: inter-rater reliability in using the COMPASS Rubric. While principals detailed their time and effort in improving inter-rater reliability on the COMPASS rubric with their administrative staffs, both central office supervisors and teachers perceived there to be a very evident lack of consistency from one observer to another. Supervisors perceived that principals and their administrative teams were more together on process than actual interpretation of the rubric, while teachers felt very strongly that the score they would receive on their evaluation was tied directly to which evaluator they were assigned. As previously noted, research indicates that several different factors can affect inter-rater reliability and inter-rater agreement (Graham et al., 2012) such as rater training (Hoyt & Kerns, 1999), rater selection (Henry, Grimm, & Pianta, 2010), accountability for accurate rating (Penny, Johnson, & Gordon, 2000), rubric design (Heneman & Milanowski, 2003), type of rubric scale (Cronbach, Linn, Brennan, & Haertel, 1995), and

pilot programs and redesign (Linn & Baker, 1996). These factors of inter-rater reliability were all within the impact and influence of the LDOE and the COMPASS training the LDOE provided to participants. The impact of the LDOE's training was not limited to the COMPASS Rubric, however. Principals and supervisors both noted that the LDOE training impacted the implementation of SLTs as well. The lack of clarity and resources available for SLTs impacted supervisor, principal, and teacher beliefs and attitudes towards SLTs. Additionally, several issues were created around SLTs such as their development, rating, and equity amongst teachers and subjects. These issues have currently become amplified with the LDOE's suspension of VAM, meaning that SLTs account for half of every teacher's final evaluation rating.

### **School District's Central Office as External Policy Interpreter and Implementer**

The line between state policy and district policy, along with the district's interpretation and implementation of state policy, was frequently discussed across principals and supervisors, and even mentioned by teachers, although to a lesser extent. While there has been less research on central offices than schools, some have acknowledged that central offices have the potential to enable and enhance policy from state levels through providing instructional leadership, reorienting the organization, establishing policy coherence, and maintaining equity focus (Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008). Other research has suggested that the central office is critical to implementation (Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Huberman & Miles, 1984; Spillane, 1998), with implementation being a process in which central offices or school boards interpret and construct external policy to fit the local context (McLaughlin, 1987, 1990; Spillane, 1998). The impact and influence of the school district's central office was prevalent amongst all principals, with many being unable to distinguish between the difference between COMPASS requirement and central office requirements. Several aspects of the central office and its impact were discussed, with participants noting both positives and negatives. The frequency with which the central office was mentioned contributed to illustrating the central office's sizable impact on principals and its presence as a constant in the minds of principals and teachers.

The majority of principals' perceptions involving the central office as it relates to COMPASS implementation were positive. At the onset of COMPASS implementation, principals felt supported by the central office. One principal noted how having the support of the central office impacted her during COMPASS' implementation:

I'm in a place of support. ... I knew that we're going to have our ducks in a row. I was not concerned. I really was never concerned about being able to manage it because I know they're (central office) going to make it manageable for us. Any time we had a concern in the beginning, it was addressed. I really was not concerned about it.

Another principal added, "Overall, our district did an admirable job of presenting it (COMPASS) to us so that we can present it to our faculty and staff the best we could." The above quotes illustrate principal beliefs regarding the support created by the central office regarding COMPASS implementation. This is important as the central office is not only responsible for interpreting external policy, but also for determining exactly how implementation will be carried out and what implementation will look like. Principals feeling supported indicates that the central office's approach to implementation was clear and allowed principals with the opportunity to confidently implement with fidelity. Additionally, the quotes illustrate the trust principals have in the central office, as principals knew the central office would support them in implementation and principals were able to rely on central office in creating resources to assist in implementation. This trust and feeling of support is important for principals when contrasted with the lack of support they felt from the LDOE.

The central office's role in interpreting and implementing COMPASS, and the subsequent need to support principals, manifested itself in several different ways. One supervisor elaborated on the central office's role in interpreting and implementing state policy, "They (the LDOE staff) need to give us the information and allow us to build capacity, and we take control when we can, but we still have to work within their guidelines and parameters." This is essentially what the central office did, as they planned



trainings to familiarize principals and assistant principals in using and interpreting the COMPASS Rubric, created resources to assist principals in presenting COMPASS to teachers, developed SLTs for schools to use, and designated an employee to serve as the contact for assisting principals and assistant principals in navigating CIS. Additionally, the above quote implies a lack of confidence in the state to adequately prepare districts for implementation. Supervisors in central office imply they would rather interpret and implement as they see appropriate, as opposed to allowing that responsibility to the state. This approach is consistent with school districts playing the role of reorienting the organization to refine structures and processes to align with reform goals (Rorrer et al., 2008).

Principals generally praised the central office in their implementation of COMPASS, but were at times unable to clearly identify the difference between COMPASS requirements and the requirements of the central office. The line-blurring between COMPASS itself and COMPASS as presented and implemented by central office was illustrated through one participant's comments when discussing scoring on the COMPASS rubric as it relates to employee termination:

The problem is that I don't know if that's what COMPASS is -- if that's the law or if that's just what we say, the district says. I don't know; I haven't done any research on it. So is COMPASS saying you got to have a 1.5 (rating)? Is that what the state's saying, or is that what we're saying?

The above quote aids in showing the concept of the central office as the interpreter of external policy. There is a blurring of the line for principals between the actual COMPASS policies set forth by the LDOE and what the central office mandates as a result of the policies. While the particular instance in the quote above is indeed COMPASS policy, the idea of central office interpreting and then modifying policy is recurrent among principals, at times with evidence to support.

One example illustrating the difference between COMPASS and central office implementation of COMPASS is school central office came about as a result of the central office attempting to support

principals in the wake of the LDOE COMPASS training that let principals seeking clarity. As a result, the central office modified the layout of the COMPASS rubric by breaking each component down further into rows within the component. While the Danielson Framework and the COMPASS Rubric present the performance levels within each component as one paragraph, the central office broke the paragraphs up into smaller, related rows, while maintaining the original wording. On the actual copy of the COMPASS Rubric that administrators were initially given to use when conducting observations, there are check boxes on each of the district-created rows within the state-created components, allowing administrators to check off indicators within each component, theoretically putting the rubric in chunks and making it easier to interpret. While the use of this rubric is not mandatory, this was the COMPASS Rubric originally presented and disseminated to principals, making its use common practice. Participants had mixed views on whether the modifications made by Central Office were beneficial or created extra challenges. One participant in support of the modifications noted: "I like that (the modifications). I like having this," while another participant described presenting the COMPASS rubric in its modified form as:

I do not like the way we target ... in the little blocks as far as the indicators go. Because, to me, you have to overcome that with the teacher, 'Okay, we're going to have two checks on this...'

The above quotes provide evidence of the difference between state and central office interpretation and implementation, and the ground-level effects of implementation. While one principal believes it is a benefit, the other principal implies that checking the district-created rows within a given component is an obstacle in justifying ratings with a teacher. For example, teachers may see two rows out of three within a component checked as Effective: Proficient, yet the evaluator may give an overall score for that component of Effective: Emerging. For the principal in question, this modification has taken what was possibly a difficult task required by the state, and made it more challenging. This is an example of the unintended consequences of policy and the gap between policy makers and policy implementers (Fink, 2001, 2003). The other concept further illustrated is the difference in principals' perceptions of the

modifications set forth by the central office. One principal finds the particular modification beneficial, while another finds the modification to be an additional challenge to overcome.

Further illustrating the lack of clarity for principals between COMPASS as set forth by LDOE and COMPASS as set forth by the central office, when discussing challenges of implementation of COMPASS, principals frequently referred to having to spend so much time in classrooms, referring to the central office expectation that administrators provide feedback to every teacher every one to two weeks. One principal elaborated on this practice when discussing changes since the implementation of COMPASS, "Walk-around observations ... Everything we do is based on feedback from the rubric. It takes up a majority of your time." While principals did reference utilizing the COMPASS Rubric when performing these weekly observation, providing feedback every one to two weeks is not a component of COMPASS, as COMPASS only requires administrators to perform two observations a year for each teacher: a Formal Observation (Announced) and an Informal Observation (Unannounced), but rather a requirement created by the central office. One supervisor further explained this requirement:

And we went above and beyond with expectations about making sure that teachers got what they deserved as far as feedback and making it actionable for a teacher to know where to improve.

Following that statement, another supervisor replied, "But I don't know if COMPASS is actually driving that. I don't think COMPASS is driving that. I think it's the additional expectations from the district." To which the first supervisor replied:

I'm trying not to confuse our formative (weekly) observations with their (COMPASS) Formal and Informal because it's definitely the day-to-day observations, the many observations, that are impacting their daily practices more than just COMPASS.

The above quotes further shed light upon the blurring of the line between and the ground-level effects of the central office's interpretation and implementation of external policy. Supervisors reference

going "above and beyond" what is required in their expectations for principals, but also are unsure of the line between where COMPASS ends and central office interpretation and implementation begin. While one supervisor doesn't see COMPASS as the driver behind the observations, it should be noted that the weekly observation requirements for principals was not created until after COMPASS implementation, making COMPASS at least an indirect driver of this district practice. While this is not necessarily the central office's interpretation of COMPASS, it can be viewed as part of how they have chosen to implement.

There is room for debate regarding whether weekly observations are a result of COMPASS implementation, but an area where the central office's direct implementation of COMPASS clearly differs is in the requirement of post-conferences for Informal (Unannounced) Observations. While the LDOE mandates a post-conference with the teacher for the formal observation only, the central office has required that principals hold post-conferences with the teacher following both the formal observation and informal observation. Central office indicated this post-conference was necessary to ensure that teachers were being provided with feedback on their observations. As a possible illustration regarding the blurring of the line between state policy and district implementation, no principals discussed or alluded to being aware that conducting post-conference for Informal Observations is not a LDOE requirement of COMPASS, but rather a district requirement.

The idea of the disparity between the central office's interpretation and implementation of COMPASS alongside what is actually required by the LDOE is interesting as all of the identified key differences appear to serve the purpose of increasing what is required by the state policy. While some research on the gap between policy makers and policy implementers is more concerned with policy implementers sabotaging state education reforms (Fink, 2001), it appears from both principal and supervisor responses that the gap in question here is one where the district implementation aims to achieve a higher level of effectiveness than what is set forth by the state. This idea of increased responsibilities and high expectations from the central office was discussed by all participant groups.

Principals perceived the central office to hold expectations for principals than what principals perceived to be required by other school districts. This was referred to numerous times by principals, mostly in a positive manner, with one principal saying, "I do like having higher expectations for ourselves. It says something about us when we go to other places." However, there were some areas where principals perceived these higher expectations as a cause for concern, given that expectations may inadvertently have an effect on the scoring in the now high-stakes evaluations. As one principal noted, "I'm always afraid that we're too hard on ourselves."

In sync with the line of thinking espoused by the above quote, principals frequently compared their school district to other districts in the state of Louisiana. Principals particularly expressed this line of thinking when discussing expectations for teachers regarding being scored on the components of COMPASS (scoring on rubric and scoring of SLTs). Once principal said, "What are other places doing? If they've watered something down, I would prefer to join them than to make my teachers, that are greater than them, look bad on paper." Principals did not reference any specific data or evidence when making the inferences about other districts, although this was a common thought amongst principals.

The above quotes are important in light of the mechanisms created by COMPASS. Given that COMPASS assigns ratings to teachers and administrators that have bearing on pay, tenure, and employment, increasing the level of what is required of principals and teachers could, in theory, cause someone to lose wages or their job. Having high expectations of employees in general may be more of an abstract concept; however, rating a teacher more stringently than necessary or having teachers create SLTs that are more challenging than required are tangible acts that may have real consequences for those involved. These quotes also address the concept of school districts having varied interpretations and implementation of external policy. However, one role of the central office in implementing external policy is adapting the policy to meet local conditions (McLaughlin, 1987, 1990; Spillane, 1998). In a school district which has been rated by measures of the LDOE as high performing, the perceived higher expectations of principals may be seen as fitting local context.

The idea of higher expectations and the line between state policy and district implementation was discussed by teachers as well. When discussing SLTs, teachers referenced having an evaluator set their SLT, as opposed to setting their own SLT, and were not clear of the reasoning. During the SLT process, teachers reported experiences in which they perceived principals to be restricted in their autonomy by parameters set forth by the central office. When discussing the process of setting an SLT, one teacher said, "I'm guessing it was the district who set it. I don't think it was our principal who set it." When discussing the equity of SLTs for teachers across subjects, one teacher who thought her SLT was challenging said, "That was way challenging for those kids, so it was a true picture to meet these SLTs. So I don't know if the district would choose something different..." while another teacher who thought her SLT was easy said, "I don't know if it's on a district level, but the Core Knowledge we found was a very, very easy test. I had a child who failed but met that SLT because the tests were easy." When asked about how the easy SLT in question was set, the teacher replied, "They were set for me already."

The above quotes further illustrate the inability to identify the impacts of COMPASS implementation from central office's implementation. The teachers are unsure of both where the content of the SLTs came from and where the target scores of the SLTs came from. While they are unsure if the SLTs were set by the central office or the principal, but they don't make reference of setting the SLTs themselves. Subsequently, teachers perceived their principals to be middle men in the process, with the driver of the challenges met with SLTs either being the school district or the LDOE. While the LDOE identifies characteristics of strong SLTs as prioritizing content that is aligned to standards, requiring rigorous but reasonable expectations for student growth, and identifying a high-quality assessment to measure student progress, there are no percentage or qualitative benchmarks mandated for achievement of any of the performance levels (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012a), meaning any parameters teachers and principals operated within were put in place by the central office.

## **The Possibility of Inadvertently Creating Central Office Dependency**

The central office supervisors took several steps to support principals during the implementation of COMPASS. This support, however, may have created the unintended consequence of making principals dependent upon the central office. While supervisors did discuss creating SLTs for principals and teachers to use, they described this process as a support for principals as a direct response of the principals' concerns regarding SLTs following the LDOE's COMPASS training. Regarding the impact of SLTs, and a byproduct of the central office developing them for principals, one supervisor noted, "Their problem solving ability, their confidence in doing that (setting SLTs), I think, was compromised." The above quote provides an example that the impact that the central office's approach to implementation had on principals. The idea of the district's interpretation and implementation of COMPASS having an impact on principals was not lost on supervisors, as supervisors frequently referred to their influence when discussing the effects of COMPASS implementation on principals. Supervisors acknowledged that the high expectations and additional requirements set forth by the district's Central Office always have positive intentions, but can sometimes have unintended negative consequences. As one supervisor noted:

I think, you know, (principals) always concerned about the change and the support they were going to get. But in implementing any kind of change, we attempt to build confidence in the principals and reassure them of the support that we're going to give them. And so, of course, there's going to always be a concern but I think that we have built over the years that trust that the principals believe they're going to get the support they need for this. And sometimes we over do it, so that, you know, principals rely on us and are dependent upon us.

The above quotation shows not only the alignment between supervisors' beliefs and the previously discussed principals' perceptions regarding principals trusting the central office to support them, but also the idea that there is a line between support and over-support. The idea of the supervisors

possibly directing principals too much in an attempt to support and guide them was referenced frequently by the supervisors. When discussing the COMPASS rubric for leaders, one supervisor noted:

I think that they felt real supported through it. And when we met with them [principals] and talked about for their own rubric, 'So what are the evidences that would meet?' they had probably almost too much, that it became we (supervisors ) gave it all to you (principals) again.

Another supervisor questioned:

Maybe we support too much, maybe we direct too much, maybe we don't allow some autonomy, and it would be interesting to know how the principals feel about that. Do they feel too directed? [Principals would say] 'Yes, we're directed.' However, I think some of them appreciated the direction. And I don't know how much they know they appreciate the direction, neither, that if you pull that direction away, that's when you hear, 'Hold up, that means I need to think about this now'

To which another supervisor replied:

And I (principal) have to take responsibility, and I don't have a fall back person. But I don't know that they realize that.

These quotes deepen the idea that central office supervisors believe they may have over-supported principals during the implementation of COMPASS. A possible byproduct of this over-support is that principals become middle-men who follow directives and pass along guidelines without having to think about the underlying forces and consequences of their actions. There is also an implied idea that supervisors may not believe principals even realize their dependence upon the central office's direction, which brings into account the capacity of principals regarding interpretation and implementation. Adding to this theme, later, while discussing SLTs, the idea of the line between supporting principals and building



capacity during implementation was further illustrated during the discussion of SLTs, when one supervisor observed:

I think the SLTs in some way zapped the confidence of principals in really being able to assist, and maybe it was because of the over-support that we offered. It may have zapped the confidence in them being able to problem solve when something happened with an SLT and they wanted to assist the teacher. 'Is it okay if we do this?' (They felt they Always had to get permission from central office, and 'Central office, you were the ones that told us what to do. Now you fix it.'

The above quotes from the supervisors illustrate important ideas. The first idea is that of the line between guiding and directing. Supervisors want to guide principals to assist them and build capacity in them, but acknowledge that at times this guidance possibly crosses the line into directing them. However, supervisors also justify their possible direction of principals by noting that it's possible that principals appreciate the direction and may struggle without it. This leads to the second important idea, which is the ability and capacity of principals in interpreting and implementing policy. From the above quotes it can be implied that supervisors believe interpreting the policy and determining steps in implement the policy at the central office level, followed by deciding how to guide/direct principals in implementing the policy is the most effective approach. Additionally, supervisors understand the consequences of their guidance and possible over-support, noting that principals can be dependent upon the central office, to the point where they don't have to think about changes, but rather just act on the mandates they are given. An underlying belief illustrated here is the importance of the role of the central office in building capacity (Honig, 2003), and the need for district leadership as teachers and principals may not exhibit the characteristics necessary for effective schools (Wimpelberg, 1987). Despite the supervisor's beliefs about the unintended consequences of what they perceived as possible over-support, no principals referred to the central office as an obstacle in COMPASS implementation.

## **Closing**

Overall, the responses of principals when discussing the central office's interpretation and implementation of COMPASS were predominately positive. Principals believed that the central office provided them with support and were able to describe how central office assisted them throughout COMPASS implementation. The responses from principals that were mixed regarding the central office occurred when principals perceived the effects of the actions of central office in line with their own individual experiences. Principals who were comfortable with the rubric praised the central office's training and modifications, while principals who had struggles with the rubric pointed to central office's modification of the rubric or expectations for what indicates higher scores on the COMPASS rubric. Principals who had less concerns with SLTs noted that the central office provided support in providing the SLTs, while principals who faced challenges with SLTs noted that difficulty of the criteria set forth by the central office. Generally, principals were appreciative of support provided by central office, although there was mention of the perception that the central office can sometimes "over do it." As a possible result of this tendency to "over do it" principals sometimes had difficulty identifying how COMPASS impacted them, as opposed to identifying how the central office's interpretation and implementation of COMPASS impacted them.

### **COMPASS as a Catalyst for the Intensification of Principals' Work**

An emergent theme amongst all participants was that of the intensification of the principal's work. Work intensification was described by Gronn (2003) as "the new work of educational leaders: long hours, endless demands, punishing pace and continual frustration" (p. 68). Principals, supervisors, and teachers all believed that the amount of responsibilities for principals increased since the implementation of COMPASS, with many of the responsibilities being consequential and having timelines for completion. While principals struggled at times to make the distinction between specific ways COMPASS impacted them, as opposed to specific ways the Central Office's expectations has impacted them, principals were

able to communicate that COMPASS has altered the way principals utilize and manage their time. Most principals perceived that one of the biggest ways COMPASS impacted their time was by requiring two observations per teacher, per year. Additionally, the official reports for these observations must be entered into the LDOE's online database, CIS. Observations typically last an entire class period, anywhere from 45 to 90 minutes, however, as one principal explained:

The observation pieces, you know, it says requires an hour, but it probably takes, you know, let's just say two hours. By the time you compile your thoughts and everything like that, get it all answered, put all that stuff in the system -- you know, so that part of it is, it is time consuming. So that has affected a lot of my day.

The quote above evidences principals thoughts on how COMPASS impacts their use of time. While the only technical time required by COMPASS is completing the observation and entering it into CIS, the quote above points out tying what was observed to their interpretation of the rubric to determine a score takes time as well. Additionally, principals also referenced having to find outside resources to help in their interpretation of the rubric, which takes time as well.

At the beginning of COMPASS implementation, supervisors felt that principals were going to be impacted by COMPASS largely due to the new requirements set forth regarding performing two observations per teacher and hold conferences regarding the observations. As one supervisor noted:

My initial thoughts were that it was going to be too much because there were two observations as opposed to one observation that we were required to conduct. That in itself, along with a pre- conference and post-conference, made me think it was going to be a lot more difficult.

Despite the quote above, noting the anticipating the COMPASS requirements creating a concern about principals not having enough time, the district's central office determined that all principals would do a post-conference for both Formal Observations and Informal Observations, although COMPASS only

requires the post-conference after the Formal. This increase in requirements contributes to intensification, and supervisors acknowledged that this adds to the time principals spent on COMPASS-related responsibilities. However, despite concerns about time, supervisors thought that principals' initial fears about having enough time may have evolved since implementation. As one supervisor said:

I actually think they are - when they first heard two observations had that same reaction (concerned about time) and are now thinking, 'Oh, this isn't so bad. This has given me good information. Two observations is probably a good thing.'

The quote above shows the important idea of increasing effectiveness as a driver for intensification. While two observations may indeed be a good thing, and principals may realize its value, it is also another time-consuming requirement for principals and teachers to carry out. This possible downside is only referenced in the first part of the quote, indicating principals' possible thoughts of the past, but when discussing principals' possible current thoughts, the downside is forgotten as only the increase in information as a positive outcome is discussed. Another supervisor acknowledged that the amount of time required for observations and conferences could impact principals, while also noting that this is partially due to requirements set forth by the central office:

Also the pre- and post-conference, I think, makes a big difference, too, because it's not the traditional conference we used to hold before going into the classroom. This is more detailed, more formalized, along with the post-observation conference, as well. And we require it even for Informal Observations, even the state doesn't say you have to conduct it for Informal Observations, we do require some sort of post-observation along with that. So, that adds to their time as well.

These quotes illustrate that while supervisors acknowledge that principals have been impacted by COMPASS implementation, they have implemented additional responsibilities on top of what is required. Additionally, it is perceived that the additional requirements in place create positive effects, mainly,

improving teaching. While principals agreed that the two observations were generally a positive, then acknowledged that it did create some challenges. One principal noted, "You got to the put the whole, two observations, which I think is positive in on way. But knowing the size of our staff, it reduces your overall resources." Another principal elaborated further, noting that time was not only required to do the observations, but time was also required by the other components of the observations, such as conferences and paperwork:

Well, now every teacher has two observations. Before it was a cycle, some teachers only had one. Every teacher has a PGP (Professional Growth Plan), a Formal that goes along with a pre- and a post-, an Informal and a post-, you got to put it in the system (CIS), you got to put it in here, we go to send it to central office. Way too much to do. Way too much.

The above quotes further show the effects of COMPASS on the intensification of the work of the principal. As principals elaborate on the new requirements as a result on COMPASS, they contrast this with the prior evaluation system's requirements. Additionally, principals note other responsibilities that were in place before, but were not removed by the implementation of COMPASS, such as obtaining a Professional Growth Plan from each teacher. While these requirements are discussed, and are drivers for intensification, so is the process that principals must go through, such as entering information into CIS or sending documents to central office. The combination of adding responsibilities, increasing the amount of processes principals must go through as a result of these responsibilities, and keeping prior responsibilities in place is a key driver for the intensification of principals' work.

The addition of a post-conference for Informal Observations was not the only additional central office requirement that contributed to intensification. Another additional requirement, perhaps the most discussed by participants, is that every teacher should receive feedback from their observer either every week, or every other week, depending on the size of the school. This was referenced several times by

supervisors as having an impact on principals. One supervisor explained the possible effects, saying, "I think that kind of forces a principal to spend time in the classroom." This quote illustrates that supervisors again acknowledge that they are impacting the principals' time with the central office's requirements. Additionally, the word "forces" was used, possibly implying that principals were previously not spending enough time observing teachers in classrooms. One principal further clarified this point:

I think there has been a lot of changes in just the expectations of administrators with observations and feedback, so it's hard to really say that it was specifically COMPASS that has changed it. I mean, certainly four years ago (prior to COMPASS), the role as the administrator has changed greatly from what the expectations were. There was always an expectation that you spent 40% of your time within the classrooms. But it seems now we're spending a far greater amount of time in classrooms, but again, I can't attribute that to COMPASS. I attribute it more to other expectations about feedback for teachers.

These two quotes further give insight to the idea of COMPASS as a catalyst to intensification of the work of the principal. The principal references a previously held expectation of spending 40% of time in classrooms, but doesn't refer to any further specifics and doesn't elaborate on how much time was actually spent in classrooms. However, the principal does reference the amount of time being currently spent in classrooms as a change from the past. This is further illuminated by the supervisor's use of the word "force" when describing the new requirements for principals. While COMPASS does not mandate any feedback or observations for teachers other than the Informal Observation and the Formal Observation, it appears the central office used the implementation of COMPASS as in impetus for putting additional, yet related, requirements in place.

Both principals and teachers perceived that increased time spent in classrooms had a direct effect on principals. One principal elaborated on this sense of urgency and the domino effect of how spending more time in classrooms is a thin line between being positive and being negative:

I think you need to be out (of the office) if you really want to have implemented this (COMPASS) fully, and continue to be in classrooms and continue to handle discipline in a timely manner, because to me, you know, I go back to relationships. If administration wasn't able to process referrals in a timely manner, then it has a direct impact on school culture. Well, if you're tied up with certain things in addition to your other duties such as testing for three months, scheduling, you know, then that negatively impacts relationships you have with teachers. And if it negatively impacts relationships you have with teachers, all the positive that you had from the (post) conferences is lost because you can't process referrals in a week and a half.

The above quote illustrates not only what intensification looks like, but also possible negative byproducts of the increase in responsibilities for principals. The principal above references implementing COMPASS and spending more time in classrooms, while also naming other time consuming responsibilities that were in place prior to COMPASS and saw no decrease in the amount of time they require such as discipline, administering standardized testing, and scheduling. Principals were given no extra time to carry out the mandates of COMPASS, but still need to spend time on other responsibilities to maintain their level of performance in those areas. Being ineffective in any of these areas could lead to negative outcomes, such as a drop in morale or damaged relationships between administrators and teachers. Another principal, when discussed how the district expectation of providing feedback to teachers every week to two weeks, explained the idea of competing priorities and time restraints further:

The new practice, the pop-ins (weekly observations), have impacted a day. I just think, even though it's a good thing because it has forced us to try to get in there once every two weeks, I'll tell you, my job and the two administrators' job, specifically the two administrators in charge of discipline, it's virtually impossible for them to meet their goals.

The above quotes further illustrate the competing priorities that principals spend their time on during the school day and the intensification of principals' work. Principals frequently discussed how the central office requirement that they provide feedback to teachers every week to two weeks impacted them, using the words "impossible," "pressure," "tough," and "time consuming." One principal said, "Nothing has been removed from our plate, it's just been added," while another added, "There is no more time. So time does not exist, in regards to, if people put more burden on your plate, to assume that magically more time exists. There is no more time on this job." These quotes further illustrate not only the intensification of principals' work, but also the how the effects of that intensification has impacted principals. Principals described feeling pressure and that carrying out responsibilities was nearly impossible. The principal belief that responsibilities continued to be added to their load, combined with the perception that there was not enough time to carry out these responsibilities provides a description of how principals felt they were mentally and logistically impacted by this intensification. Consistent with previous research on principals and their use of time (R. Halverson et al., 2004; McGrath, 2000; Murphy, 1990), principals expressed their need to prioritize constantly throughout the day and the struggle to find the time to adequately handle all of their responsibilities. This prioritization was further illustrated by one principal who said, "Climate and environment is more important to me than being in a classroom once every two weeks. It will always be that way. So, we gotta sacrifice the pop-ins." Additionally, this quote also provides specifics on what principal prioritization looks like, as the principal describes sacrificing instructional responsibilities for managerial responsibilities in this particular case.

Teachers also felt that principals did not have enough time to do all that was required of them, and saw changes in how principals used their time. Teachers also perceived this change in available time to have an impact principals. One teacher noted:

I could never be a principal of a school, ever. They have really tough decisions to make and they're doing all these observations. I really feel they've been bogged down.



He has been bogged down with a lot of things and sometimes he's himself,  
and sometimes he's not.

Another teacher added:

We find the same thing with our principal over the last couple of years, and maybe,  
I don't know if it's COMPASS, but seems like she has a lot more going on. A lot.  
Whereas before I think she was freed up to do a lot more walking around.

Another teacher observed:

They are in classrooms non-stop, and so trying to finish up, and then at the end of the  
year with the post-observation conferences and end of the year conferences, and  
wrapping up with SLTs -- they were very stressed out doing that.

The above quotes further provide evidence of the intensification of the principals' work. Teachers reference an increased amount of decisions that principals must make, with an increased amount of responsibilities to carry out, and note that principals appear to be affected by these changes. Teachers also point out the change in principals before and after COMPASS implementation, noting that they have more going on, have less time to walk around and be visible, and appear to "bogged down" and "very stressed out." While the changes to the expectations for principals are not all a direct result of COMPASS requirements, COMPASS did increase principals' responsibilities and was the starting point of when the central office increased responsibilities as well.

In addition to the time spent in the classroom and the time spent in pre- and post-conference, principals and supervisors also discussed the impacts of principals entering all of the evaluation data into CIS. Supervisors acknowledged that entering the information into CIS was a big change for principals and required more time. The consensus among principals was that as a result of the time required to correctly input evaluation information into CIS, along with the rest of their daily responsibilities, they

were spending more time working, including more time after school hours in their offices and working more than ever at home. Principals felt the added after-hour work was inevitable, as inputting CIS data could be done without having teachers and students present in the building, and most of the responsibilities they felt the greatest sense of urgency to carry out, such as observing teachers, providing feedback, and handling discipline in a timely manner, could only be done when teachers and students were present. When asked about whether COMPASS impacted what a regular work day looks like, one principal responded:

I reflect on the time that I spend (on COMPASS-related responsibilities) and it's not during the school day. It's me at home in my bed with my laptop inputting that data. Why? Because the students are only here until 3 so I'll take home whatever I can to be an effective leader. ... And every click I'm doing the teachers have to do it first. So they have to go into the SLT and set it, then they have to go into the SLT and rate, and then after they tell me it's done, then I have to go in, then I have to accept it. Then I have to do this, then I have to do that, and then at the end of the day my boss gets to go on from the laptop in bed and make sure that I did.

The quote above further illustrates the intensification of the work of the principal as the principal describes having to prioritize what work they decide to do during the day, while knowing it cannot all be accomplished during their time at work and must be completed at home. While principals were required to observe teachers before, the changes how teachers are evaluated at the work that comes along with it has added to the workload of principals. The above quote also introduces the idea that the principals' supervisors in Central Office can monitor their progress, possibly putting additional pressure on principals to ensure that they are meeting deadlines. The principal mentioning the supervisor checking from a laptop in bed could have two possible meanings: that supervisors are extremely busy, too, and have to work at home as well, or that work-cycle never stops and principals can be monitored and receive feedback at any time. One principal even noted that this dynamic exists between himself and his assistant

principals, saying, "When you look at the computer now and the deadline exists, and you can see that you have a to-do list, and I can see it and (supervisor) can see it. I think it makes us a little bit more accountable that big brother is watching them." Supervisors also acknowledged the idea discussed by principals that some responsibilities could be done at home and some could not, and that principals had to prioritize. While it was perceived that principals try to do some paper-work-type responsibilities outside of the work day, that isn't always feasible, with discussing SLTs with a teacher as an example. One supervisor explained:

When you're trying to fool with SLTs, you know, meeting with teachers and setting SLT talks, I bet you that took a lot (of time). I know it took a lot of time for the principals at the beginning of the year to sit down with all their teachers and go through that, so I would think that at that time of the year you're spending less time in the classroom because you're spending time making sure all SLTs are done right and getting those into the system. You can't necessarily do that by yourself at home or work.

The above quote further shows intensification for principals. Supervisors acknowledged that there are several responsibilities that take a great amount of time, and it's not possible to complete it all during the school day. This creates a sense of urgency for principals to prioritize what can be done now and what can be done later. This sense of urgency is also heightened by the previously introduced idea of the idea that supervisors can monitor everything principals enter into CIS. This allows supervisors to monitor not only principals' progress and if they are entering information within a given time, but also to see what principals are entering, which allows supervisors to evaluate whether the quality of evaluations and SLTs is satisfactory. There were ramifications to this aspect as well, as one supervisor elaborated:

In a strange way, it's increased accountability for principals because thinking back to the way it used to be done, principals didn't turn in observations to Human Resources until the very end. So a principals really didn't have to check

with APs, and not that they couldn't, but again, going back to CIS and having that documented and everything. We can pull it up, HR can pull it up, the principal can pull it up for their APs, and it almost makes it that they're more accountable for what they're doing. I don't know if it increases the quality of what they're doing, but the accountability has definitely increased.

Supervisors explained liking the access to monitor CIS. The monitoring was not only deadlines and completion, but also for quality. Another supervisor continued to elaborate:

The access (to CIS) means reports can be run and we can compare and do different things than we did in the past. When teachers just had a written observation we could not do that. So, I think it gives us access across the district to knowing how effective teachers are and principals.

Supervisors and principals both understood how the supervisor having the ability to monitor principals' work in CIS could impact principals. One supervisor noted:

I think sometimes that does complicate the relationship because if I'm asking you in December, 'Hey, why didn't you get...' you're thinking, 'Wait, let me get this done. Why are you asking me right now?' and so that could potentially damage relationships because it's different from the way it was before.

One principal echoed this line of thinking:

There is more managerial things, as far as getting reports. I've always been where the goal was always December to finish the first round of observations, so that was nothing new to me when they started saying in COMPASS we could do that. So to get reminders that 90% of your people are done at Christmas, or something like that, it can become like, 'Okay, I know. You want it done, I'm going to have it done.' I know that's done for

everybody, but in some ways it's like it can be irritating, not that I would say it's irritating.

When elaborating on the supervisors monitoring progress, asking for updates, or requesting explanations for various items in CIS, one principal added:

The principals, we are going, 'Why are you making us do that? Why do you make us repeat things?' or 'Come on, man, why are you making us do that?'

The above quotes further illustrate the intensification for principals as not only did they see an increase in responsibilities, but they can also be monitored in their progress of completing tasks, holding them more accountable. This adds another dynamic to the increase in responsibilities, as principals know that if they don't meet the deadline on a certain task that their supervisor will immediately be aware. Furthermore, even if principals are meeting the deadlines, the supervisors will be aware of their progress in completing their tasks and responsibilities, creating the effect that principals are constantly being progress monitored. Principals expressed frustrations regarding the ability of supervisors to constantly monitor them and their progress. Additionally, principals must utilize some of their time in communicating with the supervisors regarding the progress and quality of principals' work. This dynamic only increases the sense of urgency for principals and highlights the importance on their use of their time and the intensification of their work, with a possible unintended consequence being that principals are less able to focus on the quality of their work.

## **Closing**

Principals noted that the amount of time they are required to spend conducting observations, writing up the results, and entering them into CIS is significantly greater than it was prior to COMPASS. This is in line with research that suggests principals are using more of their time on observations (Kersten & Israel, 2005), needing to use their personal time in order to finish everything required (Halverson et al., 2004; McGrath, 2000). While the time spent on COMPASS-related duties felt inordinate, the perceptions

of principals, teachers, and supervisors all indicated that the time spent was beneficial. Principals, however, did not only mention COMPASS-related duties when discussing time restraints. Several other factors were mentioned, such as creating and conducting professional development, handling discipline in a timely manner, conducting investigations, assisting teachers with the development of assessments, spending time with teachers on curriculum development and planning, administering mandated testing, and creating school schedules. None of these responsibilities were removed, lessened, or had their importance decreased in some way with the implementation of COMPASS, yet COMPASS and the central office's expectations for principals added on responsibilities that require principals' time to complete. In concurrence with principal perceptions, teachers also perceived that principals appeared to have more to do and less time to do it in. Teachers observed principals were not readily available to assist with issues that required their attention, such as discipline or working with students. Contributing to the issue of time was the fact that the school district required further COMPASS-related responsibilities that were not mandated by the LDOE, such as conducting a post-conference for Informal Observations.

### **Conflicting Views on COMPASS' Impact on Teaching**

According to the Louisiana Department of Education (2012a), one of the stated purposes of COMPASS is "supporting improved teacher practice" (pg. 1). However, participants had conflicting views regarding whether COMPASS achieved this goal. All participants acknowledged they had seen changes in teacher practice, but they differed in their perceptions of what caused these changes.

Principals perceived that teaching and learning has improved in their school since the implementation of COMPASS. In particular, principals described seeing more student-centered classrooms with deeper discussions. Principals mostly acknowledged that this change in practice was likely a result of the COMPASS Rubric. One principal elaborated:

One component (of the COMPASS Rubric): Questioning and Discussion. that one component right there has really changed the way, what's going on in the classroom, in a good way.

Another principal, when discussing whether COMPASS improved teaching, said:

In some areas, yes. Definitely with communication and collaboration of students.

Student-to-student conversations. We've seen significant growth in speaking in listening skills.

These quotes show the shifts in teaching and learning that principals have observed that principals can trace back to the COMPASS Rubric. Both principals, however, place disclaiming or limiting language in their responses, noting "one component" and "in some areas." This was consistent across principal responses, as they were willing to note that COMPASS, particularly the rubric, may have played a role in some class practices, but were not willing to say that COMPASS itself was responsible for improving teaching and learning. One principal said:

I think that COMPASS, added to the fact that what the district is doing, as far as literacy and finding these curriculums that we feel will challenge our students, I think COMPASS has played a part. Yeah, I do. Now, of course you know what our district does in professional development, so I think they played a big part.

While another principal added:

Generally speaking, good teaching is student-centered, how you engage your lessons when you're formally assessing throughout, high level questioning, holding the students accountable for work while managing the class. Those things were evident before COMPASS ever came out.

These quotations further illustrate principal beliefs that they have seen improvement in teaching practices since COMPASS implementation, but those shifts cannot be contributed to COMPASS alone. When discussing a change in instruction, a supervisor noted:

I do see that for the rubric itself, we are seeing some changes in instruction with student conversations, whether it be the little bitty kindergarteners all the way through the different grade levels. So we're seeing people focus more on engagement and what that looks like. It's not where it needs to be yet, but that is an area we worked on for a long before COMPASS and would never see it.

The supervisor quote is interesting alongside the principal quotes as it contrasts instruction practices pre- and post-COMPASS implementation. While principals note that COMPASS alone is not responsible for the shift, the supervisor notes that the changes seen since COMPASS are changes that were worked on prior to COMPASS. The implication here is that even though these areas were focuses prior to COMPASS, only since the implementation of COMPASS has there been a visible shift. This idea is further established by another supervisor who said:

They (teachers) were finally being held accountable to those things and that's what the biggest shift that I saw was. We've been saying for years, 'Oh, they missed an opportunity that could be a think-pair-share.' Well, now there's a reason for them to do it even more because they're being scored on it.

Another supervisor added, "I think the components that are used for COMPASS made me, for sure, and I hope others, understand why we have been doing the things that we have been doing all these years, as far as practice is concerned." These quotes further add emphasis to several ideas. The first idea is that teaching practices have improved since the implementation of COMPASS. Another idea is that while teachers were encouraged to implement some instructional practices prior to COMPASS, these practices are more evident now since the implementation of COMPASS. This ties into the final idea illustrated in



the quote, that the idea of scoring teachers on a rubric has provided the motivation teachers needed to change their instructional practices.

The perception that teaching practices changed since the implementation of COMPASS were not only held by principals and supervisors, but by teachers as well. Teachers also were aware of and observed the shift in their teaching practices since the implementation of COMPASS. While teachers frequently discussed the role of the COMPASS Rubric in their improvement, they discussed other factors as well. One teacher explicitly noted the rubric's role in improving teaching:

I think that it just gives us more to focus on with the Rubric. We can really look and it's all spelled out and it's just very extensive. It gives you a lot of areas that you can focus on and you're not going to be perfect on all of them every single time, so you always have that improvement you can continually strive for.

Another teacher noted that even with the COMPASS Rubric, having time and seeing success in students was a factor in improving teaching:

It takes time and I feel like now that it's been three years and I do think it's starting to show. I mean, teachers are starting to buy-in more. There's always going to be some teachers who are going to fight different changes and different initiatives, but I do think that a lot of teachers are starting to see some growth in the kids.

While both of these quotes show teachers' beliefs on their improved practices and the role of COMPASS is changing those practices, teachers also referenced the steps taken by their principals as a factor in their improved practices:

I think they're (principals) looking for more. I think they expect more. They don't want to see choral responses. They don't want to see us standing up there doing all the work because it's so much work to get kids to work on their own. It's way more planning and

way more thought and way more creativity on our parts, and they're expecting to see that now.

Another teacher elaborated further, explaining that COMPASS was not solely responsible and that school administrators played a role as well:

I wouldn't put it solely on COMPASS. I guess what I'm trying to say...I wouldn't just say, 'Oh, COMPASS is the reason we are doing this.' I would say that I am just thinking with experience, and with, honestly, the leadership we had at our school. It (instruction) was going to improve no matter what.

The above quotes add to the instructional changes that both principals and supervisors perceived to observe in classrooms since the implementation of COMPASS. However, while the principals noted that other factors were involved, and supervisors referenced teachers being held accountable, teachers elaborated on the specific drivers behind their change in practices. Teachers described a clearer focus, seeing success in students over time, and heightened expectations from administrators as drivers for their improved practices. It should be noted, however, that all of the factors referenced here can be directly related to the implementation of COMPASS. The clear focus teachers described came from the use of a rubric, the rubric has not been changed or modified since implementation, allowing for teacher growth and refinement, possibly leading to the perceived student growth, and the heightened expectations of principals are aligned with the practices in the COMPASS Rubric, which is the instrument principals use when evaluating teachers. While the degree to which COMPASS implementation is responsible for improved teaching is unknown, COMPASS appeared to mark the beginning of a change in instruction.

### **Perceived Impact of VAM and SLTs on Improving Teaching**

While all participants acknowledged to some degree that the COMPASS Rubric has played a role in a perceived improvement in teaching practices, all participants were also consistent in the belief that VAM and SLTs currently had no impact on teaching practices.

Principals expressed that they felt SLTs as designed and implemented did not have an impact on teaching practices or student learning. When discussing how the requirements of COMPASS have impacted teaching, one principal said, "The least effective to me is SLTs," while another principal elaborated on his thinking regarding SLTs:

I don't let the SLTs drive what we're doing in class. I've tried to let good teaching strategies drive what we're doing in class. I would say, 'no,' that part of it (SLTs) has not really changed a lot of my thought process.

One principal was more straightforward, saying, "I have issues with SLTs. I don't know why we need them," and another principal added, "I think SLTs are crazy. I really do." These quotes further illustrate not only principal beliefs regarding the ineffectiveness of SLTs, but also principals' thoughts on the SLTs and their approach to them. Principals express having negative thoughts regarding SLTs and explained their thinking on how they attempt to minimize their impact.

The idea that principals were decidedly against and unsupportive of SLTs is highlighted by the idea that principals supported SLTs in theory. Principals expressed the belief that setting quantifiable goals for student growth could be a positive for both teachers and students. When discussing SLTs principals referenced positives in that SLTs allowed for "goal setting," which principals viewed as positive, given that teachers did not set those types of goals before COMPASS. However, while principals showed general support for goal-setting, principals did not believe SLTs as currently constructed and implemented represented the goal-setting they positively viewed. One principal explained the disparity in principal beliefs between the idea of teachers setting goals and the SLT process as currently constructed:

SLTs, I thought have been flawed from the beginning and is still flawed from the fact that some teachers can make up their own and some teachers are based on a state assessment. However, I do think it is justified -- the central thing behind SLTs and measuring student

growth -- to me is justified, and that should be how you measure student growth. Once again, you're not doing it through the right process, you're not doing it through formative assessment. ... I still am not fully supportive of SLTs.

This quote begins to show the disparity between principals' dislike of SLTs and principals' support of having teachers set targets and measure student growth. While principals discussed these mixed views on SLTs, supervisors and teachers were consistent in their beliefs that SLTs had no positive impact on their practices or student learning. One teacher said, "SLTs, I don't think that is doing anything to improve teaching and learning. I don't think that did anything at all," while a supervisor noted:

I think the SLTs is even worse than we envisioned it in the beginning. I think the time when it was at its very lowest, was when it tied compensation to achievement of the SLTs because I don't think that that drives or motivates teachers to do better.

Another supervisor added, "We definitely don't see that it (SLTs) impacted student achievement. SLTs did not change whether or not students were achieving." These quotes illustrate the teachers' and supervisors' alignment with the principals in the belief that SLTs have not had a positive impact on improving teaching or learning. While many participants have noted that they don't believe SLTs have impacted student learning, the supervisor quote implies that supervisors have analyzed data that has served as evidence that student achievement has not improved, although it is not known what this data is, nor is it known how the effects of SLTs could be isolated for. It should also be noted that while participants didn't feel SLTs impacted student achievement, students needed to show some type of achievement for teachers to meet their SLTs. The implied idea here is that participants did not perceive the data from SLTs to be as valuable or reliable as other available student achievement data. What is not known is what variables in the SLT process led the participants to the belief that SLT student achievement data was not valuable. Additionally, the perceptions of principals, teachers, and supervisors that SLTs have no impact on improving teaching or student achievement are notable as it has been

previously discussed how large of a time commitment the process of developing, submitting, and rating SLTs has had on principals.

## **Closing**

The idea that COMPASS improved teaching received mixed results from participants. Generally, participants were willing to say that they have seen an increase of effective teaching practices that are aligned with the COMPASS Rubric since the implementation of COMPASS. However, participants also noted other factors that contributed to this improvement in instruction as well, such as leadership at the district and school level. Viewed in opposition to the instructional contributions of the COMPASS Rubric are SLTs. Only principals expressed support for the idea of teachers setting goals, however, all participants were strongly against SLTs as currently constructed and implemented, with all participants also believing SLTs had no positive effect on teaching or student achievement.

## **Interpersonal Opportunities and Challenges as a Result of COMPASS**

The idea that the relationships between principals and teachers have evolved since the implementation of COMPASS was a theme across all participants. In order for principals to have the conversations providing the feedback to teachers that the implementation of COMPASS requires, principals must have effective relational skills (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015). Principals repeatedly referred to relationships when discussing how COMPASS has impacted them.

## **Positive Changes in Relationships as a Result of Observations**

Most of the principal and teachers beliefs around how their relationships have changed since COMPASS implemented was positive. One principal observed, "I think if it (COMPASS) did anything (impacting relationships), it's forced us to have a closer relationship with the teachers," while another principal added, "We've become closer because I have to be in their rooms a lot more." Teachers shared this belief, noting that having the principal in her room more often was different than in the past, said, "I

never saw him in my room. So this was, I got to know him on a different level, I feel." These quotes illustrate the ideas that principals and teachers relationships have not only changed, but changed for the better since the implementation of COMPASS. Both principal and teacher participants acknowledge that principals are in rooms more often and perceived this increase in frequency of observations to be a catalyst for the improved relationships.

Teachers also believed that their closer relationships with principals and increased interactions discussing instruction caused them to judge principals differently. One teacher explained:

He came in to do my two observations but he also came in for a couple of other observations like pop-ins. Before this year I didn't think highly of him, and so I actually do think that he is a lot more capable than I gave him credit for before.

This quote not only illustrated the perceived improved relationships between principals and teachers, but also shows that these relationships can have an impact on teacher practice. A teacher who doesn't think highly of a principal's capability may be less likely to implement the principal's feedback, as opposed to how a teacher may interpret feedback from a principal the teachers believes is capable (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015; Stein & Nelson, 2003). Principals also perceived that their positive relationships with teachers assisted them in helping teachers improve their classroom practices. Principals noted that the frequent dialogue with teachers allowed both parties to be open and honest regarding teacher performance. One principal elaborated:

It probably helps build relationships more than it ever has, as far as the conferences go. Overall, the most positive impact to me, is the conference I'm in. ... I think those (conferences) have added the ability to build a positive relationship with teachers and administrative staff, and teachers feel they're supported ... I think for us, it's forcing teachers to reflect using the same rubric so that we have a common voice, common language, and then the conversations have been very good.

Adding to the idea of relationships allowing for more open communication, another principal added:

Truly saying, when I go into your classroom all the time this is what I'm seeing. This is what you need to do. Instead of saying, we're afraid of how the teacher might react or of the stronger personalities. And just be very honest with them, just say this is what needs to happen.

The above quotes provide evidence of principals' positive experiences in providing feedback to teachers as a result of closer relationships. The closer relationships are a result of both COMPASS, which requires two observations and one post-conference, and the central office's interpretation of COMPASS, which requires an additional post-conference, and the added expectation that principals provide feedback to teachers every two weeks.

However, despite the overall positive perceptions regarding principal-to-teacher relationships and its conduciveness to providing instructional feedback, some participants noted that these relationships may have had a negative impact on accurate evaluations. One principal explained, "The negative is that you're seeing them every day and you don't know if you're being as critical because you have developed that relationship," while another principal noted said:

I got to do the best with what I have and I can't just go around telling everybody they're a crappy teacher. You got to be able to sugar coat it a lot. You got to be able to get it because ultimately it's not what I know or what I could do; it's what I can get them to do. ... You know, you got to try to build, try to balance that with giving feedback that is constructive, not destructive because you need them to go into their classroom and you carry it out with the kids.

A supervisor also discussed this concept:

So they have, I think, compromised some things in order to maintain relationships with their teachers at a very positive level. I think maybe sometimes the feedback isn't completely accurate, according to the rubric, because of their perception of that teacher and the relationship they have with the teacher.

The above quotes further illustrate the possible effects that the relationships of teachers and principals may have on teaching practices. Principals acknowledged that the relationships may make them less critical, also noting that at times they may intentionally be less critical to maintain their working relationship with a teacher and keeping teachers motivated. The ideas illustrated through these quotes relate with the research regarding principals' interpersonal challenges in providing feedback (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015) that suggests while principals are aware that critical inquiry into teaching practices is important (Timperly & Alton-Lee, 2008), they may lack the skills necessary to break the "comfortable collegiality" they have developed with teachers (Lipman, 1997; Little & Curry, 2008).

Participants perceived COMPASS to impact relationships and feedback not only due to the increased frequency of observations, but also to the idea that the feedback discussed centered around a known instrument and common language. In this sense, the COMPASS Rubric has appeared to provide principals and teachers with a tool that allows for specific feedback, making providing feedback to teachers easier for principals. One principal noted:

It does give a more specific way to do that (provide feedback), so to me it's been a plus because they have a tool they can break out when they go in, you know they can be specific and we are somewhat on the same levels for what we're looking at.

The quote above further provides evidence for the idea that the COMPASS Rubric assisted principals and teachers in their conversations by giving them a "common language" regarding teaching practices. While principals still observed teachers and provided feedback under Louisiana's previous teacher evaluation model, the nature of the feedback provided differed in nature from what is required with the COMPASS



Rubric. One principal explained, "The old evaluation system was very general," while another principal added, "Before you had an observation rubric where it was just, you know, work whatever on as many indicators out of seven pieces that you could." However, unlike the observations under Louisiana's previous evaluation system, the COMPASS Rubric requires principals to assign a score to teachers, making the observation more consequential and requiring principals to justify that score to teachers. One supervisor elaborated on this point, saying:

Having a number associated with their observation, I think, that maybe forced people to work with teacher more on the actual observation itself. Wherein previous years, you probably didn't because the teachers still could be average, below average, but there's no number attached.

The above quote introduces that idea that while principals and teachers are reporting positive relationships with improved instruction as a result, the mutual knowledge that the principal will score the teacher on a rubric may be a driving factor for both parties to work together. Additionally, it should be noted that this idea was discussed by supervisors, but wasn't referenced by teachers and principals, as they focused on their time spent together and the conversations they had around feedback, primarily feedback associated with the COMPASS Rubric.

### **The Negative Impact of SLTs on Relationships**

While teachers and principals generally reported improved relationships and conversations as a result of the COMPASS Rubric and increased observations, their perceptions differed slightly when discussing SLTs. While principals noted that some teachers had negative attitudes towards SLTs, and principals described struggles with the SLTs themselves and the process surrounding them, principals did not perceive any impact on their relationships with teachers as a result of SLTs. In contrast with the beliefs of principals, however, teachers did notice some negative effects on their relationships with principals as a result of SLTs. When discussing SLTs, one teacher said:

Something that I know is negative at our school, about the relationships, we really couldn't pick the percentages. ... They made my percentages. It had to be just like a certain amount and it just didn't look like it on paper, so there's no possible way that my kids can do this. And the principals picked this number.

Another teacher added:

When I figured out my percentages and I brought it to them, (the principal was) like, 'No that's not going to work. We're going to have to make it go higher,' and I'm like, 'Okay, we can put what you want.'

The above quotes illustrate teacher perceptions of how SLTs negatively impacted their relationship with their principals. The act being perceived negatively by teachers in both of the quotes revolve around the idea that principals did not allow teachers to choose the goals they wanted to set. This perception ties back into the principal experiences of having struggles with SLTs. However, while the teachers discussed this as having an impact on relationships, principals categorized these types of scenarios as issues with process. This dynamic is possibly further illustrated by another teacher's experience:

My principal, they were saying this stuff came from the district that we needed to do like this some 80% thing (SLT goal) and blah, blah, blah and then we had to reach at least ... it is like, where is all of this coming from?

This quote further shows the dynamics around setting SLTs and why some perceive it has impacted relationships while other have not. In this case, the principal has told teachers that the central office mandated a certain percentage for SLTs. This may alleviate the principal, in his eyes and possibly the teachers' eyes, of responsibility regarding the setting of the SLT. While the central office did set SLT guidelines for some subjects, for some they did not. This may lead to the variance between principal and teacher perceptions regarding the impact of SLTs on relationships.

Like teachers, supervisors perceived that relationships were likely affected by SLTs, explaining "The SLT process has probably driven a little bit of a wedge between principals and teachers in some cases, and then with Central Office." Another supervisor went into more detail, elaborating thoughts on how not only SLTs may impact relationships, but how relationships may impact how a principal perceives an SLT:

The principals' desire to keep the relationships that they have with teachers has influenced what they have worked with teachers on as far as feedback and ratings of the SLTs because when they see a teacher who they assume is an effective teacher that is getting a low rating on an SLT, that principal goes into protection mode and, you know, so it becomes, 'What is wrong with the SLT?' Not what is wrong with the teacher.

The above quotes contribute to an interesting idea around SLTs and their impact on relationships. Teachers felt relationships with principals could be impacted by SLTs, as did supervisors. Principals, however, primarily discussed process and development as negatives of SLTs. Subsequently, an earlier quote illustrates a principal conveying the idea that central office has set the guidelines for the SLTs. An inference can be made here that principals used the central office's SLTs guidelines as a way to partially remove themselves for the negative social situation involving the perception of arbitrarily assigned performance levels.. Additionally, the supervisor quote illustrates that when principals did have issues with SLTs, like a teacher performing poorly, they were able to take issue with the central office, as they contributed to creating the SLT in the first place.

### **The Varied Approaches and Results of Providing Support**

Aside from the impact of the COMPASS Rubric or SLTs on relationships, providing support for teachers was a focus of discussion amongst the principals and teachers. In addition to the reported positive relationships between principals and teachers that were attributed to spending more time together, principals' focus on and efforts in supporting teachers could also have been a contributing factor.

Principals and teachers frequently mentioned this support, and while the supervisor group did briefly reference the principals support for teachers, it was not nearly to the extent that principals and teachers discussed it.

Principals expressed a sense of urgency when COMPASS was implemented in properly training and preparing teachers for the new teacher evaluation system. Principals detailed workshops, meetings, and one-on-one conferences in which they felt they provided support for teachers in interpreting the rubric, seeking out resources to help illustrate certain components of the rubric, setting SLTs, and providing general information regarding the changes in process and procedures that COMPASS created. One principal elaborated:

We started right out the gate -- once we got trained, once we knew what was coming -- training our teachers in the August PD, training them in small departments, watching videos, giving them the COMPASS Rubric in their hand at every single meeting, copies on top of copies, to make sure that we have the opportunity. We would underline, we would highlight, we would text mark the rubric, we would look at the real Charlotte Danielson (rubric) next to the district version.

The above quote provides examples for how principals supported teachers in learning the specifics of COMPASS. Principals detail the depth they went into with interpreting the rubric and working with teachers to help them build an understanding of what was expected from them.

While principals discussed ways they provided teachers support in learning the COMPASS components and requirements, they also discussed an emotional support that they provided for teachers. Principals felt that nurturing and supporting teachers during COMPASS implementation, while also communicating that part of the principal's role is to help and assist teachers was extremely important for teachers. One principal explained what these types of conversations looked like with teachers:

I just really try to encourage them. Giving them ideas of what other people that are in the same situation as them have done. Like, showing them, really giving suggestions of how people have gotten fours [on the observation rubric].

Another principal elaborated:

I tell teachers, 'I will come into your room. I will observe you for whatever you want me to observe you for, off the record.' ... Tell me what you want from me. I'm here to support you in this effort.

The above quotes further provide details regarding how principals felt they supported teachers. Principals explain providing support through encouragement, providing ideas and solutions, and taking efforts such as extra observations for teachers. Principals felt these efforts and approaches went a long way in supporting teachers, and subsequently, creating positive relationships.

Teachers also expressed the belief that the support felt from administration led to improved relationships between teachers and principals, although most teachers noted that their relationships with their principals were already positive. Teachers perceived their principals' actions in supporting teachers and guiding teachers in improving instruction to be genuine and sincere. One teacher said, "I like that they (principals) weren't just emailing you your observation. They wanted to discuss it. They wanted to talk about growth options. They wanted to support, so, I felt that." Another teacher added:

They've been very supportive. If people need help they'll hold special, volunteer period sessions and they'll help you out. They really hold your hand if you need it, and then if you're independent they'll let you do it on your own.

Another teacher discussed principal support, along with the idea of principals being supported by the district and how that transferred to teachers, saying, "With the training they (principals) received from the district, too, and the support that they received. It helps keep a calmness with all of us, and they are able

to transfer it to us." In addition to the previous quotes, the idea of principal attitude and approach to COMPASS was frequently addressed by teachers with one teacher adding, "That (principal's approach to COMPASS) gave me some comfort and reassurance," while another teacher said, "I think that my principal's attitude was important to me because it did guide how it (COMPASS) was received by the faculty." These quotes further provide evidence for how teachers perceived and reacted to principals' efforts to support. Teachers discuss specific steps principals took to support them, such as holding workshops when necessary, while also detailing the effort principals took in wanting to support teachers in improving their practice. Principals wanting to meet to discuss feedback, as opposed to simply sending via email, which could be interpreted as easier for principals but more of a going-through-the-motions approach, illustrate principals' sincerity in trying to simultaneously support teachers while also changing their practice to align to COMPASS.

Within this idea of providing support was the concept of principals showing support for teachers through subtle opposition of certain mandates and actions. One principal noted, "I spoke out against VAM specifically, " and "I still am not fully supportive of SLTs." Another principal elaborated further on this idea:

I find myself having to justify them (teachers) and having to stick up more for our teachers. ... However, I think the teachers see, appreciate that, and they feel like 'Okay, he's sticking up for us,' so that I can get more out of them.

These quotes show examples of how principals felt they provided support by speaking out in support of teachers. Principals explained that when they spoke out for teachers, whether it was against VAM, SLTs, or another component of COMPASS, that teachers noticed it and viewed it as a positive. Principals believed that this subsequently led to improved relationships. Teachers noted that they did observe principals verbally supporting them through the opposition of certain COMPASS requirements. One teacher said:

The year leading up to that (COMPASS) when all of this was just proposed legislation, he was very vocal about us speaking to our legislators and making sure our voices were heard. I don't know that he explicitly said it, but it was clear that he was not in favor of it. However, once it was put into effect, he's always, I mean not gung-ho, but supportive.

Another teacher added:

We were told about it. Nothing was hidden from us and that was the whole thing. You all know what's going on, you're educated people, this is what's about to come down. Read up on it, learn about it, contact your legislator ... It didn't look good on paper as to what they were about to do, and we all worked through it together as a team, and that's what she (principal) said, 'We're a team through this, and we're gonna get through it.'

The two above quotes illustrate how principals showed support for teachers by vocalizing opposition during the legislation of COMPASS. However, both quotes also end with the idea that once COMPASS was put into effect, principals supported teachers during implementation. One teacher explained how this dynamic worked out post-implementation, "I think that it actually works, though, because I think teachers feel like the principal is on their side." This quote illustrates a possible end-game for principals in how verbalizing their support for teachers through opposition of requirements that may negatively impact teachers becomes a positive for principal-teacher relationships. Through this technique, principals are able to remove themselves from the equation, allowing them to play the role of "messenger." The result is that principals can implement the policies that are required, while somewhat ensuring that they are not the target of teachers' frustration as a result of implementation.

While the overwhelming majority of responses indicated that teacher-principal relationships improved since COMPASS implementation, some participants did note some instances of negative impact. Teachers observed that some teachers exhibited negative feelings regarding their scores on observations, with one teacher elaborating:

I might sit with other people who have not done very well on their observations and they're talking about it and it's very negative. Then they end up hating on the observer and saying, 'Well, you know, she didn't say this and she didn't do this,' and whereas I really haven't seen that before when it was just regular observations, because everybody is thinking, 'Okay, I have this number now.' It's how it's looked at ... I find it's the ones who aren't doing as well, they're bickering about it and end up talking very badly about the administrators.

This quote illustrates a couple of different concepts. One idea presented is that the COMPASS requirement for scoring evaluations, as opposed to just providing feedback, can create a negative element between principals and teachers. This may undermine the idea that COMPASS is a tool for improving teacher practice, as it makes the observation consequential and evaluative. Another idea presented is the previously discussed perceived lack of inter-rater reliability and rubric interpretation. Teachers pointing out what administrators did or did not say, combined with other criticisms of the observer point to a lack of common understanding of the COMPASS Rubric between administrators and teachers, along with the idea another administrator possibly would have interpreted the teacher's performance more positively.

## **Closing**

Overall, there was a strong belief among participants that since the implementation of COMPASS, relationships between principals and teachers have improved. It may not be possible to tie the idea of improved relationships directly to COMPASS, as participants also referenced factors that are specific to the school district, however, it should be noted that these factors were not present prior to COMPASS implementation. The importance of positive relationships between principals and teachers is highlighted by the idea that it creates a positive climate, improved motivation, and is conducive to teachers receiving instructional feedback that improves teaching practices, all of which is relevant as these are factors of increasing student achievement.



### **Summary of Chapter Four**

This chapter identified and analyzed the themes that emerged from participants during the study. Participants discussed COMPASS and how its development, rollout, and implementation impacted principals, teachers, and supervisors. The greatest effects were felt in training, aligning school and district practices, adjusting teacher instruction, altering the work of the principal, and changing relationships.

In Chapter 5, the main research questions will be revisited and the information gleaned through the analysis of this data will be further discussed. In addition, implications drawn from the findings of this data, both for theory and practice, will also be discussed. Finally, recommendations will be suggested for future policy and research.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

This research was conducted in an effort to understand the impact of Louisiana's COMPASS teacher evaluation system on principals. This final chapter provides an analysis of the perceptions that participants have provided through the research process. The first section contains an analysis of major themes that emerged in participant interviews and focus groups. The second section contains an interpretation of the findings to address the three research questions at the center of this study. This section is followed by implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

### **Discussion of Major Concepts**

#### **The Impact of Teacher Evaluation Reform at the School District Level**

Louisiana's Race to the Top application for Phase 3 was signed by Louisiana State Superintendent of Education, John White on April 10, 2012 and by Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal on April 20, 2012 prior to being submitted to the United States Department of Education (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012c). For the Improving Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Based on Performance portion, the application states the following two actions: "Evaluate pilot implementation and consider feedback from districts to make adjustments to system, policy guidance and tools for statewide implementation as needed," and "Develop educator support and evaluation training modules and associated tools" (pg. 34). Both of these actions have a start date of July 2012, with an end date of "Ongoing" (pg. 34). The start dates of July 2012 are important as July of 2012 is the same month that the LDOE started providing their COMPASS training to administrators throughout the state of Louisiana. This further illustrates the short timeframe and quick turnaround time that the LDOE functioned within when rolling out COMPASS. Subsequently, this put pressure on school districts as they prepared to implement COMPASS in full for the 2012-2013 school year.

The above information further illustrates the rapid changes and lack of transition time that was referenced by participants in this study. Participants noted the lack of a thorough training that answered

their questions, addressed their concerns, and assisted in helping them build an in-depth understanding of COMPASS. Subsequently, this responsibility and the task of building capacity in administrators to assist them in COMPASS implementation ultimately fell upon central office supervisors, who were just learning about COMPASS themselves and had been trained in the same weakly-perceived LDOE COMPASS training as all other administrators.

The quick turnaround and poor training and support from the LDOE increased the emphasis on the central office as the interpreter and implementer of external policy. As a result, the school district's central office, and their interpretation and implementation of COMPASS, was heavily discussed by all principal, supervisor, and teacher participants. At times it was almost impossible to separate the impact of the central office from other components of the study. Principals discussed the central office through both positive and negative lenses. Principals praised the central office for their thoroughness and ability to provide principals with support; however, principals lamented the fact that at times they were micro-managed and felt as if the central office was applying pressure to them while continuously monitoring their progress and results. At times, principals were even unsure of the LDOE's requirements for COMPASS as opposed to the central office's requirements for COMPASS. The supervisors in central office appeared to be at least somewhat aware of this, as they frequently discussed their possible straddling of the line between supporting principals to build capacity and over-directing them, possibly leaving them to feel a loss of autonomy. Teachers provided support for some of the principals' perceptions, as teachers noted at times they were unsure of where certain COMPASS-related directives were coming from, believing that the principals were possibly nothing more than a middle man in the process. While principals participating in the study did verbalize some frustrations with the central office, an overall analysis identifies principals to be largely supportive of the central office and appreciative of its support.

According to Mac Iver and Farley (2003), early research on the school district central office was focused on effective schools research and its critics. Despite criticisms of central offices for school

districts, several researchers (Crandall, 1984; Eubanks & Levine, 1983; Fullan, 1985) argued that the central office is critical in improving schools, while Wimpelberg (1987) claimed there was a need for district leadership as most teachers and principals did not exhibit the characteristics necessary for effective schools. Although principals had criticisms of the school district's central office, principals relied heavily on them for guidance in implementing COMPASS. While principals did identify challenges and stresses in implementing COMPASS, principals largely perceived themselves to be successful in implementation, with the teaching and learning at their schools to be better now than prior to COMPASS implementation. Principals attributed this improvement more to the school district's central office than to the implementation of COMPASS.

### **Room for Improvement in Inter-Rater Reliability and SLTs**

When detailing specifics regarding the central office's interpretation and implementation of COMPASS, teacher observations with the COMPASS Rubric and SLTs were two of the most widely-discussed requirements. These components are where the implementation of COMPASS had the biggest day-to-day impact on principals. The COMPASS rubric also provides the topic that had the greatest disparity in perceptions among participants. While principals detailed their time and effort in improving inter-rater reliability on the COMPASS rubric with their administrative staffs, both central office supervisors and teachers perceived there to be a very evident lack of consistency from one observer to another. Supervisors perceived that principals and their administrative teams were more together on process than actual interpretation of the rubric, while teachers felt very strongly that the score they would receive on their evaluation was tied directly to which evaluator they were assigned.

Research indicates that several different factors can affect inter-rater reliability and inter-rater agreement (Graham et al., 2012). These factors consist of rater training (Hoyt & Kerns, 1999), rater selection (Henry et al., 2010), accountability for accurate rating (Penny et al., 2000), rubric design (Heneman & Milanowski, 2003), type of rubric scale (Cronbach et al., 1995), and pilot programs and

redesign (Linn & Baker, 1996). Considering these factors in light of participant perceptions of the LDOE's COMPASS training, several factors become evident. The LDOE was responsible for developing and conducting the rater training, designing the rubric, determining the type of rubric scale, and conducting the pilot program and any subsequent redesign. The previously discussed rater training was determined by participants to be poor in quality. The rubric designed by the LDOE, the COMPASS Rubric, which was developed from Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*, was criticized by Danielson herself (Garland, 2012b). The pilot program consisted of a pilot on a different rubric than the current one, and according to the timelines set forth in Louisiana's Race to the Top application for Phase 3, the state began training administrators on COMPASS during the same month they began looking at pilot feedback and redesigning COMPASS. All of these factors come together to contribute to the lack of inter-rater reliability expressed by some participants.

In addition to the COMPASS rubric, SLTs were discussed at great length by participants as well. Principal perceptions centered around the fact that some of the SLTs were mandated by the school district and those tests were perceived to be extremely difficult. Supervisors acknowledged the challenges created by SLTs, but also felt principals tended to assign blame to the tests, as opposed to the teacher, when SLTs results were low. Teachers appreciated the support that principals showed in dealing with SLTs, but felt that SLTs varied in fairness. Principals largely took issue with the LDOE for mandating a student-growth measure being tied into teacher's final evaluation score, but seemed torn between appreciating the guidance the school district's central office provided in developing and monitoring SLTs, and feeling pressured due to the school district requiring certain SLTs for certain teachers based on certain tests in which students must score with certain ranges. These factors are highlighted when also considering the poor quality of the LDOE's COMPASS training, combined with the lack of resources that were available for school districts to successfully implement SLTs. The importance of these obstacles is magnified with the fact that SLTs factor into teacher pay and retention, along with the knowledge that there is still significant mixed research indicating whether or not student growth measures (e.g., SLTs and VAM) have

been proven to be statistically sound measures of determining a teacher's effectiveness (Goldhaber, 2008; Koretz, 2008; Lockwood, 2006; Rothstein, 2008).

## **Recommendations**

While there is much to be desired on the part of the state department in regards to reform implementation, primarily, piloting the exact version of the policy being implemented and providing time for transition, that is outside the scope of this research. Despite the obstacles that participants perceive they faced as a result of implementing COMPASS, participants generally felt as if they had experienced success during implementation. Within the lens of the organizational behavior perspective, both people (principals and teachers) and the organization (school district) prospered (implemented COMPASS with perceived improved results) together. However, concerns remain and there is opportunity for improvement. The main areas identified for improvement by the researcher are increasing communication between the central office and employees and improving inter-rater reliability.

There were several instances of participant responses which indicated a lack of communication between central office supervisors and principals. In addition, there were instances in which the supervisors in central office wondered about the thoughts and perceptions of the principals. This points to a lack of communication between the principals and the central office, in addition to a lack of feedback to the central office supervisors regarding their performance in supporting principals. To address this concern, the researcher suggests a focus on joint work. Joint work refers to a focus on specific activities of value between participants in assistance relationships (e.g., central office supervisor and principal) (Honig, 2012). Joint work would call for central office supervisors to work more closely in schools with principals for an extended period of time during which the focus is on specific tasks that are important and must be conducted, such as performing classroom observations with the COMPASS rubric, entering results into CIS, or sitting with teachers and determining appropriate goals for SLTs. In contrast to joint work are supervisory relationships where central office supervisors make requirements of principals and

then primarily monitor and evaluate principals' progress (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991). Joint work between central office supervisors and the principals they support would increase communication, providing the central office supervisors with feedback while simultaneously allowing them first-hand experience with principals carrying out job responsibilities. This would allow central office supervisors a greater understanding as they determine the appropriate amount of guidance and support for principals, while also creating an increase in meaningful dialogue between the principal and the central office supervisor. In line with research literature, step five of Kotter's (2012) change stages is to remove or alter structure, procedures that support the old ways; however, principals perceived that nothing was removed from their responsibilities under the old teacher evaluation system. A commitment to joint work would increase communication between principals and supervisors, while providing the supervisors the first-hand knowledge to be able to determine which current school district requirements of principals are satisfactory and need no attention, which requirements are needed, but may need to be revised, and which are ineffective, obsolete, or redundant and can be removed.

This lack of communication also manifested itself during the discussion regarding inter-rater reliability. Principals did not indicate inter-rater reliability to be a major concern, yet both supervisors and teachers believed that inter-rater reliability was lacking. In conjunction with an increase in communication, which would make principals aware of these contradictory perceptions, the researcher suggests the school district implement the Frame-of-Reference Training identified by the Center for Educator Compensation Reform (2012). The training consists of 1.) providing a process overview to give the observers the big picture, 2.) explaining the rating dimensions, 3.) helping raters identify and put aside their own biases, 4.) explaining common rater errors to be aware of and avoid, 5.) describing the process for decision-making, 6.) having observers practice observing and recording evidence; discussing feedback and providing feedback to observers, 7.) having observers practice connecting evidence recorded from the observation to performance dimensions, 8.) having observers practice interpreting the rubrics, and 9.) concluding with a "certification exercise" in which evaluators must match the ratings of videos or actual

observations in order to be allowed to do assessments in the field. The researchers suggests that the training be conducted annually, requiring a minimum of 75% absolute agreement to be met by observers to be able to conduct COMPASS evaluations. The level of 75% absolute agreement is derived by research suggesting values from 75% to 90% indicate an acceptable level of agreement (Graham et al., 2012; Hartmann, 1977; Stemler, 2004). In the event that administrators don't pass the certification test, the district would have the authority to set additional measures in place to assist them, such as additional training sessions or conducting joint observations with a certified trainer, allowing for retests until either certification is achieved or the district determines other appropriate measures in accordance with policy and procedure.

### **Teacher Evaluation Reform as a Driver for Multiple Changes**

Participants across all groups discussed at length the changes experienced since the implementation of COMPASS. While some changes could be directly contributed to COMPASS implementation, some changes came as domino effects with their origin less clear. What was clear, however, is that participants viewed very little to be the same as it was prior to COMPASS implementation.

Principals noted that the amount of time they are required to spend conducting observations, writing up the results, and entering them into CIS is significantly greater than it was prior to COMPASS. This is in line with research that suggests principals are using more of their time on observations (Kersten & Israel, 2005), needing to use their personal time in order to finish everything required (Halverson et al., 2004; McGrath, 2000). While the time spent on COMPASS-related duties felt inordinate, the perceptions of principals, teachers, and supervisors all indicated that the time spent was beneficial. Principals, however, did not only mention COMPASS-related duties when discussing time restraints. Several other previously present factors were mentioned, such as creating and conducting professional development, handling discipline in a timely manner, conducting investigations, assisting teachers with the



development of assessments, spending time with teachers on curriculum development and planning, administering mandated testing, and creating school schedules. While none of these responsibilities are new at the school level, they continued to occupy and require principals' time in conjunction with the time that is now required from new responsibilities. In concurrence with principal perceptions, teachers also perceived that principals appeared to have more to do and less time to do it in. Teachers observed principals were not readily available to assist with issues that required their attention, such as discipline or working with students. Contributing to the issue of time was the fact that the school district required further COMPASS-related responsibilities that were not mandated by the LDOE, such as conducting a post-conference for Informal Observations. The lack of time referred to by principals implies that the principal believes that there is always something else more important that needs to be done (Donaldson, 2013). This is in alignment with the belief expressed by participants regarding the intensification of the principals' work.

### **Changes in Both Relationships and Instruction**

In addition to changes regarding principals' time and responsibilities, principals and teachers noted that they perceived a change in their relationships with each as a result of COMPASS. While principals and teachers were consistent in their belief that their relationships were positive, principals did wonder if their relationships with teachers and the large amounts of time spent with teachers in their classrooms, combined with the frequency of feedback provided, created a bias in how they viewed the effectiveness of a teacher's instructional practices. Likewise, supervisors did not necessarily feel that COMPASS impacted the relationship between principals and teachers, but rather the relationships between principals and teachers impacted COMPASS, or rather, how the principals rated teachers on evaluations with the COMPASS rubric, or interpreted the quality of SLTs. This is in line with current research (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015) that suggests while principals are aware that critical inquiry into teaching practices is important (Timperly & Alton-Lee, 2008), they may not possess the skills to

necessary to break the "comfortable collegiality" they have developed with teachers (Lipman, 1997; Little & Curry, 2008).

Another factor contributing to the positive relationships that principals and teachers reported is the principals' focus on supporting teachers. Principals talked at length about their belief in supporting teachers since the implementation of COMPASS. Principals detailed creating professional development sessions, holding special workshops, meeting with teachers in a one-on-one setting, and seeking out additional resources from outside of their schools to help support teachers. Likewise, teachers reported feeling very supported by principals in the time period since COMPASS has been implemented. Supervisors also noted that principals were required to observe in classrooms either weekly or bi-weekly in order to provide support for teachers in the form of actionable feedback to teachers, aligned with the COMPASS rubric. The amount of support principals provided for teachers is important as there is research indicating that the support of educational leaders has a positive effect on the implementation of new initiatives, such as COMPASS (Coburn, 2006; Honig, 2012; Spillane et al., 2002b). While all participants felt that principals supported teachers and attempted to build capacity in them in the time period since COMPASS has been implemented, an analysis of the data indicates that teachers and principals still have room for improvement, and principals must continue to support teachers in their growth.

While participants felt COMPASS ushered in many changes, one change that COMPASS was meant to create was a change in the quality of teaching and learning. Principals perceived that teaching and learning had improved in their schools since COMPASS was implemented, primarily mentioning the focus on the COMPASS Rubric, although principals stopped short of crediting COMPASS as being a catalyst for improvement. Likewise, teachers also felt that their teaching had improved since the implementation of COMPASS. Supervisors, however, noted that they noticed no significant change in the quality of teachers' instruction, with exception of observing more student-to-student conversation. The fact that those primarily based in schools (principals and teachers) and those primarily based out of

schools (supervisors) had different perceptions regarding the improvement and evolvement of teaching and learning within the previous three years points to a gap in beliefs and understandings between principals and teachers and supervisors. Supervisors frequently referred to their desire for principals to become instructional leaders as opposed to building managers. Principals also referenced the idea of being an instructional leader, although the perception of whether a principal actually perceived themselves to be an instruction leader or not varied depending on the participant. Despite the common language and use of the concept of the instructional leader, there was a lack of specifics discussed by participants about what they believed that term to mean, what the daily practices of an instructional leader looked like, and the gap between being instructional leaders and where principals were currently operating. According to Honig (2012), "Research on educational leadership has underscored the importance of principals operating as instructional leaders, the value of intensive job-embedded professional development to help them build their capacity for such work, and support from central offices as integral to the process" (p. 734). While there is general agreement that instructional leadership involves principals working with teachers to improve the quality of their instructional practices, definitions of instructional leadership vary (Honig, 2012; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Murphy, 1990). This variance in definitions, and the lack of specificity and clarity that comes with variance, is a possible contributor to the difference in perceptions from supervisors to principals regarding principals' status as instructional leaders. In order to successfully align principals with the role of the instructional leader, the school district must provide structure and clarity regarding the formal roles and duties of instructional leaders, as opposed to building managers (Bolman & Deal, 2003). The misalignment in beliefs of current principals' practices between principals and supervisors indicates that this has not been done clearly enough.

## **Recommendations**

Participants reported several changes since the implementation of COMPASS. Primary among these changes were the intensification of the role of the principal, the positive change in principal-teacher

relationships, and the shift in teaching practices. While these areas were generally considered positives among the participants, there is room for improvement. The changes discussed all primarily occur at the school level. Research indicates that the principal is one of the most important factors in the school setting (Acheson & Gall, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; K. Peterson & Peterson, 2005). Additionally, the principal is also at the center of this research. Subsequently, it is the belief of the researcher that in order to best lead schools through changes as a result of implementation, the principal should be the focus of improvement efforts and suggested recommendations. As a result, the researcher's recommendations focus on sensemaking and comfortable collegiality.

### **Teacher Sensemaking to Improve Implementation and Support**

Teacher sensemaking, how they come to understand and enact instructional policy, is impacted by several factors, including knowledge, context, and connections (Coburn, 2005; Spillane et al., 2002b). Subsequently, principals play a role in how teachers interpret and implement policy (Coburn, 2005; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002a). This connection highlights the importance of the role that the principal plays at the school level in the implementation of policy. The amount of support principals provided for teachers is important as there is research indicating that the support of educational leaders has a positive effect on the implementation of new initiatives, such as COMPASS (Coburn, 2006; Honig, 2012; Spillane et al., 2002b). While all participants felt that principals supported teachers and attempted to build capacity in them in the time period since COMPASS has been implemented, an analysis of the data indicates that teachers and principals still have room for improvement, and principals must continue to support teachers in their growth.

Throughout the course of the study there were areas in which evidence of sensemaking was clear, along with areas in which there appeared to be a void in sensemaking. Teachers detailed principals' efforts in helping them understand and interpret the COMPASS Rubric. Principals held workshops, conducted additional "off the record" observations, met with teachers to discuss feedback, and found additional

resources, all in an attempt to assist teachers in the shifting of their practices to align with the COMPASS Rubric. However, in contrast, some teachers reported being unaware of who developed their SLTs, who set the instructional targets, and what the policy was regarding who had authority to make such determinations. Additionally, this same concept was also observed at times with principals. Principals detailed the steps taken by the central office to assist them in implementing COMPASS and its components, but at times principals expressed a lack of clarity in the actual requirements of COMPASS and the school district's requirements.

In conjunction with the previously mentioned increase in communication, this would be addressed by having principals differentiate their leadership in order to better support teachers. According to Brezicha, Bergmark, and Mitra, (2015) an understanding of teachers' individual and social sensemaking of reforms can supplement transformational leadership and distributed leadership to understand how principals can differentiate their leadership to support teachers in school reform. Principals can support teachers in their implementation of new practices by establishing time for teacher collaboration and reflection (Spillane et al., 2002b), cultivating a cooperative environment (Tschannen-Moran, 2001), and encouraging teacher participation in the decision-making at the school level (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). If principals are able to provide individualized supports in order to develop individual teachers, this differentiated leadership will allow for teachers to be guided and assisted as they continue to grow and evolve in aligning their practices with what is required by COMPASS (Brezicha et al., 2015). Additionally, having the central office follow this same framework in differentiating for principals would likely have positive effects as well.

### **Comfortable Collegiality to Improve Leadership and Learning**

The idea of "comfortable collegiality," the concept that a principal-teacher relationship may cause principals to avoid critically addressing a teacher's instructional issues, was mentioned by participants throughout the study. Principals referenced this being an issue for them both consciously and

subconsciously, while supervisors implicitly identified it as an intentional act. In order to address instructional issues, trust is a key factor, and research indicates principals' ability to deal with perceived poor teacher performance as a key indicator of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015). While positive relationships with teachers are important, it is imperative that principals build trust with teachers and are able to address performance concerns, as this ability to address performance concerns is crucial in improving the quality of teaching, the most significant lever in increasing student achievement (Hattie, 2009).

A suggestion for addressing the issue of comfortable collegiality is for principals to adopt and utilize the Argyris and Schön model of interpersonal effectiveness (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1996). The model consists of six skills for effective interaction, each skill being associated with a five-step progression. The skills integrate concern for both task and relationship (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015) aligning it with the values at the center of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Daniel, 1985; Lambert, 1986). Having principals utilize and self-reflect on the model of interpersonal effectiveness, which Le Fevre (2015) refers to as the basis of Open to Learning Conversations (OTLC), would allow for principals to determine their own habits and practices in conversations about learning with teachers. According to Le Fevre (2015), "Leaders who can build trust through daily interactions that reflect OTL values are more likely to bring about improvement" (p. 87). Subsequently, principals would have knowledge of which of the skills they need to focus on for improvement. Principals improving in OTLC would provide principals with knowledge of which skills they need to focus on for self-improvement, which can ultimately result in the principal creating instructional improvement.

### **Summary of Discussion of Major Concepts**

This section provided an analysis of the major concepts that emerged from an analysis of emergent themes discovered during the research. The researcher furthered the discussion of these concepts, identifying data from all participants. Following the discussion, the researcher made

recommendations for addressing what was found during data analysis. The next section will address the findings in relation to the research questions that this study aims to answer.

### **Interpretation of Findings to Address Research Questions**

This section will provide answers to the research questions that are at the center of this study. The researcher will present the three questions in order, each followed by the conclusion the researcher has come to for each through the analysis and interpretation of data provided by the participants in this study.

#### **Research Question 1: How do principals perceive the implementation of Louisiana's COMPASS teacher evaluation system?**

One can imply from an analysis of information obtained from principals that they perceived the implementation of Louisiana's COMPASS teacher evaluation system to be done too quickly. Principals repeatedly noted that the training from the LDOE was done only days before teachers reported for the 2012-2013 school year. Principals expressed concern that the version of COMPASS that was implemented from the 2012-2013 was not piloted. Principals felt there were little to no resources to help them interpret the COMPASS rubric and develop SLTs. Principals also noted that there was no feedback or best practices identified from the original COMPASS pilot to help guide them through this process. Principals noted that the LDOE began creating resources as time went on, but those resources were most needed prior to implementation, when principals still had no experience to refer to and all information regarding COMPASS was only theoretical, as COMPASS had never been put into application. Principals repeatedly referred back to the training provided by the LDOE and the lack of clarity, information, and resources that they came away with. Principals explained that the training provided by the LDOE added to their confusion and sent the message to them that even the state was not fully ready to implement COMPASS. Principals expressed concern about how COMPASS would impact their daily practices, and wondered how they would guide and support teachers through a process with components they were unfamiliar with. Additionally, principals said they felt a heightened level of pressure due to that the fact

that at the time of implementation teacher tenure and merit pay were tied to evaluation scores. Many principals believed that the factor which gave them the most confidence in the belief that they would be able to successfully implement COMPASS was the trust that the school district's central office would provide them with the necessary level of support and guidance. While most principals were not opposed to a new teacher evaluation system, and have expressed positivity regarding some components of COMPASS, principals felt the implementation was done too quickly.

## **Research Question 2: How have principals adjusted their practices due to the implementation of COMPASS?**

Principals perceived that they have adjusted several of their practices due to the implementation of COMPASS. Principals explained having to utilize their time during the school day differently than prior to the implementation of COMPASS. Principals detailed the amount of time needed to meet the COMPASS-required observations, and pre- and post-conferences. Principals altered their practices by taking home most work that did not require the students or teacher to be present. Additionally, principals referred to putting more of a focus on professional development for their teachers and administrative staffs. The focus of these professional development workshops was primarily identified as either the COMPASS rubric or SLTs. Principals also felt that they began to call on others to prepare the professional development in order to build capacity in others. Principals also explained that they spent significantly more time in classrooms now, even outside of COMPASS-required observations, but this is a requirement of the school district's central office, not COMPASS. However, this requirement of providing classroom feedback outside of evaluation-related observations was not put into place until after COMPASS was implemented. Overall, as a result of the implementation of COMPASS, principals generally are spending more time in classrooms, more time providing teachers with feedback, more time working with teachers on goal-setting, more time completing and inputting evaluation data; however, they are struggling to find the time to perform routine management-type duties, including, but not limited to,



handling discipline in a timely manner, working with students, and working with and building relationships with teachers that they do not evaluate.

**Research Question 3: What are the perceived successes and challenges that principals have experienced during the implementation of COMPASS?**

Principals perceived their success in implementing COMPASS to be supporting teachers. Principals detailed providing professional development for teachers to help them understand the COMPASS rubric, observing the teachers put the rubric into practice, and providing support and feedback throughout the process, enabling teachers to change their professional practices to meet the criteria contained in the COMPASS rubric. It should be noted that teachers agreed and felt that principals did provide them with support during the implementation of COMPASS.

Principals perceived their biggest challenges in implementing COMPASS to be setting SLTs that are challenging but realistically attainable using an instrument that is rigorous and valid, along with aligning all aspects of the school with the appropriate components of COMPASS. Principals perceived that teachers were aligned with the COMPASS rubric in their teaching practices, however, principals found it a key challenge to align their previously held beliefs about instruction, their school resources, the district expectations and practices, and all of their school's stakeholders with the COMPASS rubric, SLTs, and the COMPASS leader rubric. Principals also perceived a great challenge in finding the time to do all that they felt was required by their jobs since in the implementation of COMPASS. It should be noted that while principals did verbalize the need to continue working to improve inter-rater reliability, they did not feel it was one of their bigger challenges. However, supervisors and teachers both perceived inter-rater reliability to be the greatest challenge for principals.

## **Implications**

This study was conducted to determine how the implementation of Louisiana's COMPASS teacher evaluation system impacts principals. The results of this study lead to implications for practitioners and policy makers, as well as theoretical implications.

An implication for practice is that communication and collaboration are vital for leaders during implementation. Principals, supervisors, and teachers had similar views on many topics, but when it came to the specifics of certain topics, their perceptions varied greatly. This was particularly true when discussing inter-rater reliability, a key component in implementing COMPASS. Principals did perceive inter-rater reliability as an area of which they need to continue to improve; however, principals largely conveyed the attitude of continuous improvement for most areas that were discussed. Furthermore, no principals verbalized that their supervisor had discussed inter-rater reliability with them, though the supervisors all touched upon it as an area of concern, as did teachers. This underscores the importance of communication and collaboration. While the school district and principals have taken steps to increase the level of inter-rater reliability, such as rating videos together, going on learning walks with supervisors, principals, and assistant principals all included, and conducting professional development sessions with all administrators, inter-rater reliability is still a concern. Principals should continue to work on collaborating and participating in tasks that will increase the level of inter-rater reliability, but they must also seek to communicate with supervisors and teachers in order to determine their progress and perceived level of performance.

Increasing the level of inter-rater reliability is vital not only because it impacts the success of COMPASS, but also because some researchers have advocated for the level of inter-rater reliability to be even higher for evaluation purposes than the level that is generally acceptable for research purposes (Hays & Reviki, 2005; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Furthermore, there appears to be no evidence that exists that would be able to indicate what the current level of inter-rater reliability is. Within the lack of inter-

rater reliability also lies the issue that the practices that evaluators observe in classroom, and subsequently what they rate teachers on the rubric, directly drive the feedback that teachers are provided on their instructional practices. This indicates that a lack of inter-rater reliability not only impacts the final evaluation score, and subsequently tenure and merit pay, but also the consistency and quality of feedback provided to teachers to improve their instructional practices. These consequences highlight the importance of improving collaboration and communication, in concurrence with rater training, in order to increase the level of inter-rater reliability.

An implication for policy is that policy that is intended to change the actions and habits of practitioners should be thoroughly piloted and then implemented once feedback has been received, adjustments have been made, and resources and guidance are readily available to those whose daily work is being impacted by the policy. A repeated theme of all research participants was that clarity and resources were not developed prior to implementation. Furthermore, the lack of clarity and resources poses a threat to successful implementation, as practitioners may all begin with different levels of understanding, which may be difficult to correct later in the process. The connection here is that principals and supervisors repeatedly discussed the lack of resources provided by the state at the implementation training, specifically resources designed to assist with interpretation and scoring of the COMPASS rubric. Now, three years later, inter-rater reliability is perceived to be a challenge. It can be assumed that a likely contributor to the lack of inter-rater reliability is the lack of further resources or guidance provided by the LDOE, which led to principals forming their own interpretations of what the language in the rubric would manifest itself into classroom practices.

Principals believe that they would have benefitted greatly by piloting the actual version of COMPASS that was implemented, providing feedback, listening to the feedback of others, revising the policy appropriately, and then re-piloting. This process acknowledges that implementation is difficult, others are doing it with varying levels of success, and collaboration among those leading the

implementation allows leaders to learn from the experiences of others. This idea of "learning about implementation during implementation" provides leaders with an implementation strategy (Fullan, 2011).

The theoretical framework that this study was built upon provided a common thread that ran throughout the data that was provided by the participants and analyzed by the researcher. Regarding Organizational Behavior Theory, the researcher found several examples of data illustrating that both the organization and people within it were in a prospering, symbiotic relationship. Participants frequently referenced supporting one another and building capacity in personnel. As a possible result, the organization has experienced success by several different metrics. Participants also referenced having professional and personal needs met by the organization as those within it. While there were examples of participants referencing frustrations or negative aspects of the organization, those did not appear to be due to a poor fit, and participants also referenced understanding the positive aspects of the factors that they were less than satisfied with.

Several dimensions of Leithwood's Transformational Leadership in Education were implicit throughout the data provided by participants. Leithwood's four categories of transformational leadership are setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and improving the instructional program (Leithwood & Sheashore-Louis, 2012). The categories of setting direction, developing people, and improving the instructional program were heavily mentioned by participants. While improving the instructional program was most frequently mentioned across all participant groups, principals and teachers focused almost exclusively on this category, along with that of developing people, while setting direction was most discussed by the supervisor groups. This warrants mentioning as having principals and teachers take more ownership of some of the dimensions of setting direction may help them develop and improve the instructional program, while decreasing some of the dependency previously discussed in this study.

## **Limitations**

The main limitation of this study is that the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. However, generalizability is not the main concern of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Instead, the focus is on deepening understanding of an issue, and the meanings made by readers from the information gathered may be applicable to some other setting and subject (Glesne, 2011). Regardless, principals may use the information found within the study in order develop a greater understanding of the impact that the implementation of new teacher evaluation systems may have.

Another limitation of this study is the time period in which it occurs. The school year prior to the implementation of COMPASS was the 2011-2012 school year. COMPASS was implemented for the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. The interviews for this study were conducted from May to July of 2015, meaning that principals already had completed nearly three full school years under COMPASS. This means participants being interviewed are making recollections from a period that spans approximately three years. Participants also may currently have different opinions of how principals were impacted as opposed to their opinions earlier in implementation. According to Yin, one of the weaknesses of interviews is that there can be inaccuracies due to poor recall (2009), however, the impact of COMPASS is likely still being felt, and the participants are sharing their perceptions based on their full experience of the implementation of COMPASS. In addition, principals who were in the same position and setting prior to and after the implementation of COMPASS is one of the selection criteria for participants.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was designed to understand how principals in one school district perceived themselves to be impacted by the implementation of Louisiana's COMPASS teacher evaluation system. While there have been prior studies on teacher evaluation, more than half of the states in the United States have altered policies on teacher evaluation since 2009 (McGuinn, 2012; Mead, 2012; National Council on

Teacher Quality, 2014; The New Teacher Project, 2013), so research is required to illuminate the effects of this trend in teacher evaluation policy. During the process of answering the research questions at the center of this study, other reoccurring questions emerged, underscoring the importance of further research.

One emergent question that requires further study is the role and impact of a school district's central office during teacher evaluation reform. Throughout the study, several principal and teacher participants were unsure of where the teacher evaluation policy ended and where the school district's policies began. Simply put, the state creates the policy, the schools implement, but what happens in the "middle" at the central office level has a large impact on what the final product looks like. During this study, principals largely viewed the central office's efforts positively, although negatives were also discussed. Likewise, the supervisors in central office verbalized internal debate regarding the line between supporting principals and directing them, with no clear conclusion. There has been research on the role of central offices (Honig, 2012; Mac Iver & Farley, 2003), but further research is required on the role of central office during implementation of state-mandated initiatives that are ultimately implemented at the school level by school personnel. Additionally, research which assess the perceptions of central office and school leader implementation with correlations to the perceived quality of training provided by the LDOE. More specifically, this research sheds light on the need for research regarding the quality of reform implementation at the school level in conjunction with the quality of training at the state level and amount of time provided for transition. Several participants in this research indicated the quality of the LDOE's training and the lack of transition time as key factors in their implementation, warranting further research about the impact of these factors.

Another emergent question that requires further study is that of inter-rater reliability in high-stakes teacher evaluation. While inter-rater reliability was a frequent topic, at no point did there appear to be any evidence that a statistical level of inter-rater reliability was known. The effort to increase inter-rater reliability was evident, however, there appears to be no indicator in place to monitor progress or

improvement in inter-rater reliability, other than the beliefs and perceptions of evaluators and those being evaluated. Furthermore, while school districts and schools continue to work to improve inter-rater reliability, the state department, who mandated the scoring on a rubric, has no certification course for evaluators, nor any suggestions of the level of inter-rater reliability required for implementation or of how to monitor inter-rater reliability. Although research has been conducted on inter-rater reliability and teacher evaluation (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Jiminez, 2014; Kauchak et al, 1985; Medley & Coker, 1987; Peterson, 2000; Stodolsky, 1984) , much of the research focuses on previously field-tested and studied frameworks or instruments, but Louisiana's instrument is a state-made adaption from a larger framework. More specifically, this research highlights the gap in the literature regarding inter-rater reliability in teacher evaluation observations at the school level when utilizing instructional observation rubrics created at the state level. Participants referred to the LDOE using a modified rubric, and the lack of training and resources that comes with it, as a key factor in the level of inter-rater reliability for observations. When reforming teacher evaluation in order to improve teacher instructional practice, it is imperative to know whether the origin of and research-base of a rubric is a factor in improving teaching.

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## Appendix A

### **Research Title: “The Impact of Louisiana's COMPASS Teacher Evaluation System on Principals in One School District: A Case Study”**

Recruitment script to be emailed to participants:

In recent years Louisiana has seen rapid change in educational policy and approach. Among those changes is the implementation of COMPASS for the 2012-2013 school year. Being that teacher evaluation reform is a topic impacting several states, the implementation and impacts of COMPASS requires further study.

In order to explore the implementation of COMPASS and its impact, I am recruiting participants to participate in interviews for a research study. Due to your position within your school system, you have been identified as a possible participant. Your experiences with COMPASS, its implementation, and its impacts can teach stakeholders a great deal about the teacher evaluation reform.

I would like to you participate in a single interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. If you would like to participate in this study, please email me at [DSchexnaydre@gmail.com](mailto:DSchexnaydre@gmail.com)

Thanks,

David Schexnaydre, Jr

## Appendix B



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New Orleans, LA 70148

Dear Participant:

This study (directed by Brian R. Beabout, Ph.D. and David Schexnaydre, Jr.) involves research on the implementation of COMPASS in one school district. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in 1 interview lasting approximately 60 minutes.

Your participation will be kept confidential and your real name (and the name of your school) will not be used in any publications created from this research. Participation in this study is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

It is likely that this research will benefit you by prompting you to think about the implementation of COMPASS its impact. We intend this study to be used to create practical knowledge for school administrators, inform leader preparation programs of the challenges principals face regarding COMPASS, and to create a ground-level view of the impacts of teacher evaluation reform for policy makers. Your insights are essential to providing the information needed.

To maximize confidentiality, neither your name nor your school's name will be used in any the publications resulting from this research. Interview will be audio recorded and will be kept secure and will only be accessible by David Schexnaydre. If you have any questions about this particular study, please contact David Schexnaydre at (985) 210-9237 or [dschexnaydre@gmail.com](mailto:dschexnaydre@gmail.com). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon (280-3990) at the University of New Orleans.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant (print name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher (print name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant (sign)                      date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher (sign)                      date

## Appendix C



THE UNIVERSITY of  
NEW ORLEANS

Brian R. Beabout, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Education  
[bbeabout@uno.edu](mailto:bbeabout@uno.edu)  
phone: 504.280.7388 / fax: 504.280.6348

348-F Education Bldg.  
University of New Orleans  
2000 Lakeshore Drive  
New Orleans, LA 70148

Dear Participant:

This study (directed by Brian R. Beabout, Ph.D. and David Schexnaydre, Jr.) involves research on the implementation of COMPASS in one school district. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in 1 focus group interview lasting approximately 60 minutes.

While the other focus group participants will be present, and therefore be aware of your participation, your participation will be kept confidential and your real name (and the name of your school) will not be used in any publications created from this research. Participation in this study is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

It is likely that this research will benefit you by prompting you to think about the implementation of COMPASS its impact. We intend this study to be used to create practical knowledge for school administrators, inform leader preparation programs of the challenges principals face regarding COMPASS, and to create a ground-level view of the impacts of teacher evaluation reform for policy makers. Your insights are essential to providing the information needed.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant (print name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher (print name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant (sign)      date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher (sign)      date



## Appendix D

### **Interview Questions for Principals**

1. What was your initial reaction to/initial thoughts about COMPASS?
2. What are your current thoughts about COMPASS? How has your view of COMPASS changed?
3. Has COMPASS impacted your daily practices? If so, how?
4. Has COMPASS impacted the complexity of your job? If so, How?
5. Has COMPASS impacted how you work with teachers?
6. Has COMPASS impacted your relationship with teachers?
7. Has COMPASS impacted the way you work with your administrative team?
8. Has COMPASS impacted the way you work with your supervisors?
9. Has COMPASS impacted your thoughts on what effective teaching is?
10. Has COMPASS improved the quality of teaching and learning in your school?
11. Have SLTs/VAM impacted you in any way?
12. What has been the biggest change for you from before COMPASS to now?
13. What have been your successes in implementing COMPASS?
14. What have been your challenges in implementing COMPASS?
15. Do you have suggestions on how to improve COMPASS or its implementation?

## Appendix E

### **Interview Questions for Supervisor Focus Group**

1. What was your initial reaction to/thoughts about COMPASS?
2. What do you remember about your principals' initial reactions?
3. How have your thoughts changed?
4. Do you think your principals' thoughts have changed? How?
5. Has COMPASS impacted the daily practices of principals? How/Why?
6. Has COMPASS made the job of the principal more complex? How/Why?
7. Has COMPASS impacted the way principals work with their teachers?
8. Has COMPASS impacted principals' relationships with their teachers?
9. Has COMPASS impacted your relationships with principals?
10. Has COMPASS impacted the way principals work with their administrative staffs?
11. Has COMPASS impacted the way you work with principals?
12. Has COMPASS impacted principals' thoughts on what effective teaching is?
13. Has COMPASS improved the quality of teaching and learning in schools? What are your thoughts  
and what do you think your principals thoughts are?
14. Have SLTs/VAM impacted principals in any way?
15. Are there any other changes you've noticed in your principals as a result of COMPASS?

16. What do you think the biggest change has been for your principals? What do you think they would say it is?
17. What has been your principals' biggest success in implementing COMPASS? Would principals agree?
18. What has been your principals' biggest challenge in implementing COMPASS? Would principals agree?
19. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve COMPASS itself? What do you think your principals would say?
20. Do you have suggestions on how the implementation of COMPASS could have been improved? What do you think your principals would say?

## Appendix F

### **Interview Questions for Teacher Focus Group**

1. What was your initial reaction to COMPASS?
2. What was your principal's initial reaction/view of COMPASS?
3. Has your view of COMPASS changed from your initial thoughts?
4. Has your principal's view of COMPASS changed/evolved from their initial views?
5. Has COMPASS what you see your principal doing on a daily basis?
6. Has COMPASS impacted the way principals lead/provide professional development for teachers?
7. Has COMPASS impacted teachers' relationships with principals?
8. Has COMPASS impacted teachers' thoughts on what effective teaching is?
9. Has COMPASS impacted your principal's thoughts on what effective teaching is?
10. Has COMPASS improved the quality of teaching and learning in your school?
11. Have SLTs/VAM impacted you? Have they impacted your principal, or changed the way your principal does anything?
12. What is one criticism you've heard teachers have about your principal?
13. Are there any other changes in your principal that you have noticed as a result of COMPASS?
14. What has been your principal's biggest success in implementing COMPASS?
15. What has been your principal's biggest challenge in implementing COMPASS?

16. Do you have suggestions on how to improve COMPASS or its implementation? How would this impact your principal?

Appendix G

**University Committee for the Protection  
of Human Subjects in Research  
University of New Orleans**

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*Campus Correspondence*

**Principal Investigator:** Brian R. Beabout

**Co-Investigator:** David Schexnaydre, Jr

**Date:** April 30, 2015

**Protocol Title:** The Impact of Louisiana's COMPASS Teacher Evaluation System on  
Principals in One School District: A Case Study

**IRB#:** 06Apr15

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures are compliant with the University of New Orleans and federal guidelines. The above referenced human subjects protocol has been reviewed and approved using expedited procedures (under 45 CFR 46.116(a) category (7).

Approval is only valid for one year from the approval date. Any changes to the procedures or protocols must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Use the IRB number listed on this letter in all future correspondence regarding this proposal.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project!

Sincerely,



Robert D. Laird, Ph.D., Chair  
UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

## Appendix H

### Initial Coding Scheme:

Building Capacity  
Change  
CIS  
Clarity  
Collaboration  
COMPASS Rubric  
Complexity  
Components of COMPASS  
District Expectations  
Downplaying COMPASS  
Emotions  
Implementation  
Improving Teaching  
Instructional Leadership  
Inter-rater Reliability  
Merit Pay  
Morale  
Non-COMPASS Responsibilities  
Professional Development  
Progression  
Relationships  
Resources  
School Levels (High, Middle, Elem)  
Scoring with rubric  
Self-Efficacy with Rubric  
SLTs  
Support for Administrators  
Supporting Teachers  
Teacher Employment  
Time  
Training (District)  
Training (State)

## Vita

The author was born in Metairie, Louisiana. He obtained his Bachelor's degree in Secondary English Education from Louisiana State University in 2005. He obtained his Master of Education degree in Educational Administration from the University of New Orleans in 2010. He joined the University of New Orleans Ph.D. program in 2010 to obtain his Ph.D. in Educational Administration.