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District Response to USB64: Focus on Compliance  
or Improved Student Learning

Patrick Edward Flanagan

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

Sterling Clinton Hilton, Chair  
Pamela Rust Hallam  
David McKay Boren  
A. LeGrand Richards

Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations  
Brigham Young University

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## ABSTRACT

### District Response to USB64: Focus on Compliance or Improved Student Learning

Patrick Edward Flanagan  
Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations, BYU  
Doctor of Education

Using the professional literature surrounding change knowledge, this study assesses Utah public school districts' response to Utah Senate Bill 64 (USB64) that was passed in 2012. USB64 required school districts to ensure that principals were evaluating teacher performance through the use of a chosen evaluation tool. The chosen evaluation tool needed to include evaluation rubrics tied to the state teacher standards. USB64 was passed with the intent to improve classroom instruction and thereby improve student learning in Utah schools. Utah school districts complied with USB64 requirements and timelines. Districts successfully identified and adopted observation tools that principals could use to assess teacher effectiveness. Once these tools were identified, districts provided training to principals covering the Utah Effective Teaching Standard Indicators so those principals could demonstrate understanding of how to use the observation tools to evaluate teacher performance. Districts then ensured principals were certified to conduct classroom observations using the relevant observation tool, a requirement set out within USB64 required in USB64, to conduct classroom observations using the adopted tool. Finally, districts successfully created systems to make sure the required number of observations were completed on time by each administrator for all teachers in all school locations. Thirteen district administrators who were responsible for their district's implementation of USB64 were interviewed for this study. Districts of all sizes were represented. Analysis of these interviews found that district implementation efforts were driven by a compliance-based approach to the legislation rather than an attempt to improve the system of learning for students. One common reason for this approach is it is an effective coping strategy that district leaders have used to balance district-initiated improvement efforts and annual state-mandated legislation like USB64.

Keywords: compliance, system change, professional development, accountability

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## DESCRIPTION OF DISSERTATION STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

This dissertation, *District Response to USB64: Focus on Compliance or Improved Student Learning*, is a hybrid dissertation approved by Brigham Young University's David O. McKay School of Education. The hybrid dissertation focuses on producing a journal-ready manuscript. As a result, the final product has fewer chapters than the traditional dissertation format and focuses on the presentation of the scholarly manuscript as the centerpiece. Following the journal manuscript are appendices that include an extended review of literature, a methodological section sufficient for the requirements of an institutional review board, an example of the consent form used for each district administrator who was interviewed, an example of the script used to identify district administrators who would participate in the research interviews, and the IRB approval letter giving approval to conduct this research.

The target journal for my dissertation is *Educational Administration Quarterly* (EAQ). The target audience of EAQ is the educational leaders who are involved in affecting the policies and practices of K-12 educational organizations.

## Introduction

### Utah Senate Bill 64: Timeline, Requirements, and History

In 2012, the Utah legislature passed Utah Senate Bill 64 (USB64). The stated goal was to effect change in how “we manage our personnel in Public Education in order to drive greater academic results in our schools” (Osmond, 2012; Utah Administrative Code, 2018). The purpose of the bill was to require school districts to conduct more consistent and reliable classroom observations on all educators. Districts were required to adopt an evaluation tool tied to Utah’s effective teaching standards, with which principals could evaluate teacher performance. These evaluations were meant to give principals better tools for holding educators accountable to the goal of working toward instructional improvements. Necessary clarifications on the dismissal process were also outlined to help districts terminate poor-performing educators. To ensure that district leaders were able to comply with the bill, legislators stipulated three requirements within USB64:

1. Adopt an observation tool that reflected the newly adopted Utah Effective Teaching Standards and Indicators (UETSI).
2. Ensure all building principals be certified to conduct classroom observations.
3. Ensure regular observations are conducted on all classroom teachers.

Districts were granted three years to train their principals, pilot their selected assessment tools, and conduct the required classroom observations in order to be in full compliance by the 2015-2016 school year. The interviews conducted in this study were performed two full school years after the required implementation of USB64 requirements occurred.

USB64 is one of many educational bills that were passed between 1997 and 2015. In 2015, during the Utah legislative session, the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) was asked

to prepare a policy and program report. To prepare the report, the USBE was to look at the previous 15 years of policies and programs that had been implemented by the state's public education system and summarize the results of those implementations. The USBE found that the largest percentage of annual funds set aside for public education were tied to costs associated with personnel. For this reason, the majority of legislative bills focused on education, including USB64, are written to address changes that would impact the people (educators) working within the public education sector. The report found that, from 1997 to 2015, 1,539 education-related bills had been proposed. Between 1997 and 2012, USB64 was the 75th education-related piece of legislation that was passed (Utah Education Policy Center, 2015).

In 1999, Hess coined the phrase "policy churn." Elmore summarized this phrase in an attempt to further explain what Hess was referring to when he wrote:

Relatively unstable political factions advance new 'reforms' as ways of satisfying their electoral constituencies, pausing only long enough to take credit for having acted, and quickly moving on to new reforms, with no attention to the institutionalization or implementation of previous reforms. (Elmore, 2000, p. 19)

Politicians find their rewards in the initiation and enactment of reform and not in the implementation of reform. While describing the relationship between reform legislation and teaching practice, Elmore cites Cuban's (1984) metaphor of an ocean during a storm:

The surface is agitated and turbulent, while the ocean floor is calm and serene (if a bit murky). Policy churns dramatically, creating the appearance of major changes, calculated to reinforce the symbolic rewards of action for policy makers and to cement the logic of confidence in the institutions, while deep below the surface, life goes on largely uninterrupted. (Elmore, 2000, p. 19)

Reform efforts, driven by legislation geared toward quick wins, can become distractions to the educational system, which may lead to a premature change of direction or forced abandonment of what is already in place. Educational leaders are warned that maintaining “focus over time is the single hardest thing to do in managing at any level from a school to a national education system” (Harris, 2011, p. 632).

Just as public figures focusing on quick political wins will not lead to successful education reforms, districts that respond to reform legislation with the sole intent of being compliant with the mandated reform efforts may not be successful in their endeavors. A compliance approach ensures adherence to mandated legislation takes place to avoid penalties. Merely focusing on compliance to reform legislation is a reactionary response that can be likened to window dressing. It makes reform actions taken by districts appear to lawmakers as being effective in producing the desired effect; however, in the long run, this approach may not lead to the desired effect on improved student learning in the classroom. A compliance approach uses fear of negative repercussions as a driving factor rather than tying the reform effort to the educator’s strong desire to improve student learning.

### **USB64’s Place in United States Educational Legislative History**

There are parallels when looking at the education-related legislative history of Utah and that of the United States. Recognizing and describing these parallels help to better understand the drive and motivation of USB64. The United States spends more per pupil on education than any other country, and yet the United States has one of the most uneven distributions of education attainment, with large gaps between high and low performers (Fullan, 2010). The public education system in the United States has historically relied on legislative mandates and policy initiatives to achieve school improvements with the ultimate goal of closing those gaps (Fullan,

2006). Sustainable school reform requires more than legislated mandates. Countless school reform efforts have been driven by compliance rather than having student learning at their foundation. This shift in effort from improvement to compliance ignores concepts such as change theory that are necessary to deliver the sustainable change in practice that will deliver the desired outcomes of educational improvement (Cooper et al., 2004).

Efforts taken to reform education have historically had some built-in stumbling blocks. Policymakers far from the classroom create reform efforts that are driven by compliance. These reform efforts lean on district and school leaders to lead these reform initiatives without buy-in or guidance. State legislators rely largely on leadership at the district level to understand, plan for, and eventually direct the implementation of reform legislation. In short, legislators are relying on district leaders who tend to be products of the organizations they lead. A large percentage of district leaders are former classroom teachers or building principals. The leaders found in districts and schools have a different professional experience vis-a-vis education reform than do most state-level policymakers. When district leaders are not included in the creation of the reform initiatives, the level of buy-in these local leaders have will suffer. This lack of buy-in leads to district leaders who will not have the requisite belief in a reform initiative to come remotely close to successfully enacting the envisioned, legislated change. This need to include educators in the creation of reform efforts is further supported by Fullan and Quinn (2016) when they wrote that “if the programs in question are sound, they can result in some gains in the short run, but because teachers have not been engaged in shaping the ideas or strategy the innovation wanes due to lack of ownership” (p. 26). Of course, this all takes place in a high-stakes political landscape where consequences of failure at a district level can impact future support from state-level policymakers.

This study focuses on district implementation efforts related to USB64. What efforts did districts take to implement this legislation? What change knowledge components were evident in those efforts? What challenges did district leaders face in their efforts to fully implement this legislation? The responses to these questions, provided by district educational leaders in this study, shed light on the elements of change knowledge that were used by district leaders when responding to the requirements of USB64.

### **Phases of Education Reform**

To appreciate the districts' responses to USB64, a review of the phases of a successful education reform process will be helpful. Sustainable reform, in practice, takes time. Skipping necessary steps may create a sense of progress but will never lead to the desired outcomes (Kotter, 2007). Fullan outlines that a sustainable reform effort is driven by the following three phases: the initiation phase, the implementation phase, and the institutionalization phase. The ultimate goal of these phases is to institutionalize the practices required by the legislated reform, also known as the institutionalization of the new practice. These new practices become adopted and routine for all who are expected to adopt them (Fullan, 2006, 2016).

The first phase—the initiation phase—should be completed with the end goal of full adoption in mind. Successful leaders develop a plan guided by the idea of what their organization will look like once their reform efforts have reached the institutionalized phase. Leaders should avoid the temptation to begin by implementing reforms before developing a strategic plan, as this is a mistake (Adelman & Taylor, 2003).

The second phase—the implementation phase—shifts from planning to putting the prepared plans into practice. All schools within the targeted education system should be required to participate for the plan to be successful (Elmore, 2000). Implementing reform plans in all

schools requires time, hard work, patience, and persistence to stay focused on the reform effort goals that should have been clearly articulated during the first phase, the initiation phase. With the end goal in mind, leaders should also plan for distractions during this phase. There may even be influence from key leaders at other levels of an organization to shift focus from a long-term reform effort toward a “quick win” in order to produce political capital. Anticipating distractions and planning for them is what education leaders need to do when leading a reform effort. Harris (2011) discussed this potential of distractions and political influence: “One way to do this is to accept that distractions will occur and to attempt to understand the perspectives and motivations of those who are supporting them” (Harris, 2011, p. 632).

The third phase of a reform effort is the institutionalization phase, or when a reform initiative should reach full adoption with plans and resources in place to support the new practices. It is expected to see some overlap between this phase and the implementation phase. Arrival at this stage of reform is not marked by a single event; rather, it is one that is demonstrated over time by the implementation of the changed practices. Kotter (2007) defined the arrival moment of change:

Change sticks when it becomes ‘the way to do things around here,’ when it seeps into the bloodstream of the corporate body. Until new behaviors are rooted in social norms and shared value, they are subject to degradation as soon as the pressure for change is removed. (p. 8)

### **Change Knowledge Components**

There are multiple existing frameworks depicting the essential elements of change in the body of research. Fullan’s whole system change framework is important in identifying the specific actions districts would take during the phases of the change process. Kotter’s work on

capturing hearts and minds for sustainable reform efforts is used in this paper to better understand the actions taken by districts as they responded to USB64. Together, Fullan's and Kotter's work on the change process offers insight into how district leaders can best navigate reform efforts through each phase of the process leading to institutionalization.

The best method of planning for, implementing, and institutionalizing reforms is known as change knowledge. The components of change knowledge act as a roadmap that reform leaders can follow to successfully progress through the three phases of education reform. These components fall into one of two categories. First, a clear plan of action is the category of change knowledge that addresses the "how" and "when" of a reform effort. Second, change theory is the category of change knowledge that addresses the "why" of a reform effort. Education leaders leverage a combination of these two categories (Clear Plan of Action & Change Theory) of change knowledge to shape human behavior to the desired outcomes.

### ***Clear Plan of Action***

A clear plan of action, as it relates to change theory, should focus on the improvement of an educational system. A clear plan of action consists of the elements listed below. These elements are inspired by Fullan's Whole System Change Framework (Fullan, 2010):

- limited strategic targets,
- professional development,
- a system for monitoring progress,
- a system for accountability, and
- a system to ensure resource allocation.

**Limit Strategic Targets.** As often as possible, leaders should limit the strategic targets of reform efforts in both number and scope. At any one time during the various phases of reform,

no more than two to four strategic targets aimed at improving teaching and/or learning for all students should be included in a clear plan of action (Honig et al., 2010; Levin & Fullan, 2008). Adopting too many strategic targets overloads both the system supported the reform efforts as well as the system those reform efforts are trying to create, ensuring that lasting change cannot be attained (Fullan, 2010). Limiting the quantity of targets permits educators and administrators within an educational system to focus on a more manageable, and thus achievable, set of goals. This allows for a more thorough response from those called upon to carry out the reform initiatives.

**Professional Development.** Purpose-driven professional development often leads to an increase in the collective capacity of the educators within an organization. Learning opportunities need to be ongoing in order to gradually build the capacity of those involved. When training is provided in the proper context, an educator's knowledge and commitment will increase. Fullan (2002) describes how in-context learning is a more effective approach to professional development:

Learning in context establishes conditions conducive to continual development, including opportunities to learn from others on the job, the daily fostering of current and future leaders, the selective retention of good ideas and best practices, and the explicit monitoring of performance. (p. 20)

When professional development is a one-time event, fails to increase an educator's capacity to do their job, or is not offered in context, commitment to the learning presented decreases. Similarly, when a system's reform efforts are simply driven by a desire to be in compliance, professional development will fail to play a pivotal part in the clear plan of action.

**Progress Monitoring System.** A clear plan of action requires a system to monitor progress if the reform initiative goal is to ever be reached. Leaders must be able to leverage predetermined points to assess how well reform efforts are progressing towards the identified changes set out by those legislating the education-related reform. These points of progress keep district leaders and personnel focused on achieving growth toward the new practice. (Florida Department of Education, 2013; Fullan, 2010; Harris, 2011; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011). Whatever it looks like, the system created to monitor progress should include communication between state, district, and school levels. Successful education leaders avoid using the data collected solely to confront educators who are ineffectively implementing the reform. This will lead to a culture of finger-pointing that will not result in arriving at the desired change (Kirtman & Fullan, 2016). These systems should facilitate communication in non-threatening, supportive ways and should not use criticism, judgment, or fear as motivators when evaluating the points of progress that were determined to be integral to both the monitoring system creation and the reform efforts overall (Elmore, 2000).

**System of Accountability.** An accountability system, in its simplest form, facilitates a district's ability to hold all involved with the reform efforts accountable for carrying out individual responsibilities within the role they play (Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2006; Harris, 2010; Honig et al., 2010). In order to achieve the desired results, accountability is one of the only ways that progress can be tracked that can also, if carried out effectively, inspire and encourage all involved with the system. Fullan (2006) presented a perspective on how positive pressure could be used to overcome motivation issues related to reform efforts:

A key part of the focus on results is the evolution of positive pressure. An emphasis on accountability by itself produces negative pressure: pressure that doesn't motivate and

that doesn't get to capacity building. Positive pressure is pressure that does motivate, that is palpably fair and reasonable and does come accompanied by resources for capacity building. (p. 9)

**Resource Allocation.** Finally, a clear plan of action will include some system that organizes and allocates district and school resources. Public education funds are limited and therefore must be used effectively. To that end, resource allocation systems should be created at every level of an educational organization, ensuring that resources are correctly allocated within a single school building while also being correctly allocated within and between districts. Resources include money, time, personnel, political capital, and collective talent, just to name a few. A system for resource management can also help cancel out the noise of distractions that keep an organization from achieving the desired reform. Leaders must consider and compare the required resources to carry out a reform initiative and strategically align their available resources in order to support each element of the clear plan of action (David, 2009; Elmore, 2004; Leithwood et al., 1998; Levin & Fullan, 2008; Loacker, 1986).

### ***Change Theory Components***

The most successful reform efforts include a focus on behavioral change. Changing the behavior of educators can be achieved by appealing to the analytical and emotional aspects those educators might face throughout the phases of the reform initiative (Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Kotter, 2007). Appealing to the analytical and emotional aspects of behavioral change is the essence of change theory. While reform initiatives might seem more abstract in nature, especially when it comes to changing behavior, change theory utilizes a few concrete practices that appeal to the hearts and minds of educators. The following are actions that education leaders use to

capture the heart and minds of the educators they lead. These are inspired by Kotter's theoretical framework on change:

- creation of a clear connection between the reform efforts and the core vision of the organization by appealing to the heart and mind of educators,
- utilization of distributive leadership,
- effective use of clear communication techniques, and
- celebration of short-term wins.

**Appealing to an Educator's Heart and Mind.** Leaders of reform efforts should intentionally appeal to the emotions and logic of those involved in a reform effort. This appeal to the heart (emotions) and mind (logic) inspires educators to take action—actions that are effective in creating behavioral changes. Fullan (2006) narrowed the behavioral change aspect of change theory even further:

If you take any hundred or so books on change, the message all boils down to one word: motivation. If one's theory of action does not motivate people to put in the effort - individually and collectively - that is necessary to get results, improvement is not possible. (p. 8)

An appeal to an educator's heart helps to produce an emotional connection to a reform initiative, a connection that helps reform leaders create a sense of fulfillment as those educators go on to contribute to something greater than themselves. This can be a strong motivator that, if created successfully, will keep educators engaged in the long process of a reform initiative.

By appealing to the heart and mind, education leaders will be able to motivate those within their educational systems. On top of garnering the needed motivation, leaders can use these appeals to also help educators understand the logical relationship between the reform effort

and the vision of their organization. This is especially true of appeals to the mind of educators, as appealing to the mind can establish the logical rationale some might need in order to see the reform efforts as ultimately sensible, if not educationally justified (Copeland, 2003; Fullan, 2010; Hallinger, 2003; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Kotter, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2008).

**Distributed Leadership.** Distributed leadership is another practice leaders should utilize in their efforts to appeal to the hearts and minds of their educators. This is done by creating a coalition of stakeholders, each major group of which taking on varied roles within the reform effort. In building this coalition, leaders should take care to make sure it is made up of a variety of the relevant stakeholders so that as this coalition helps to lead the change process, feelings of motivation are created as educators recognize the personal benefits being generated by their role in the change (Gill, 2002; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Kotter, 2007; Leithwood et al., 1998; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011). This coalition should include members who are not part of a traditional district administration (Kotter, 2007).

**Clear Communication.** Regular and clear communication is an essential part of any leader's plans for appealing to hearts and minds. "Without credible communication, and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of the troops are never captured" (Kotter, 2007, p. 6). A major part of the message will deliberately include the tie between a reform effort and an organization's vision. This logical connection makes a case for change that is morally compelling to educators. To that end, a key message that needs to be communicated in word and action is that because an educational organization exists to improve student learning, the reform initiatives being attempted will do the same.

**Celebrations.** Leaders appeal to the hearts and minds of educators when they ensure celebrations of short-term wins. Reaching these key milestones will validate an educator's

performance and acquisition of skills, producing a sense of valued contribution and success towards the desired outcome (Fullan, 2010; Sparks, 2002). Kotter (2007) described these celebrations in terms of momentum:

Real transformation takes time, and a renewal effort risks losing momentum if there are no short-term goals to meet and celebrate. Most people won't go on the long march unless they see compelling evidence in 12 to 24 months that the journey is producing expected results. Without short-term wins, too many people give up or actively join the ranks of those people who have been resisting change. (p. 7)

In celebrating small successes along the way, leaders are able to inspire those first fragile steps of progress to become a strong march of encouragement for the organization to go the distance required for the desired reform practice to become common practice (Kotter, 2007).

### **Statement of the Problem**

USB64 requires evaluation of teacher instructional quality. Efforts were made to include educators when this legislation was written; however, USB64 is a state-mandated, top-down reform measure. Historically, top-down education reform measures have not led to lasting change and are met with resistance or half-hearted compliance. Utah lawmakers passed USB64 and relied heavily on district administrative support for its implementation. USB64 has provided an opportunity to analyze the efforts that Utah public school districts utilized in order to implement USB64, as well as see how those efforts were aligned with change theory and change knowledge components.

### **Research Questions**

The focus of this study is to assess a major education reform effort in Utah, USB64. This assessment is identifying change knowledge elements that are evident in the rollout efforts made

by Utah public school districts. The research questions that drove this study looked specifically at how districts implemented USB64:

1. What efforts did districts take to implement the initiatives of USB64?
2. What change knowledge components were evident in those efforts?
3. What challenges did districts face in implementing the requirements of USB64?

### **Method**

The research questions for this study (See Appendix A) were determined to be best answered through interviews with district administrators who were tasked with overseeing the implementation of USB64. It was not deemed necessary or practical to interview administrators from all 41 school districts in Utah. As a result, a sample of districts was identified based on district size, geographic location, and accessibility granted by districts. The sampling frame was stratified by size to ensure all district sizes were included in the sample taken for the study.

### **Sampling**

This qualitative study considered all 41 Utah school districts stratified by the size of the student populations they serve. A purposive sample was used to select districts within each size according to the researcher's connectivity or access to a particular district. Because state education funding is distributed based on student population, districts with larger student populations may have more resources with which to implement USB64. Therefore, to ensure that all sizes of districts were represented in the sample, sample selection was stratified by three district sizes. Large districts were defined as districts serving more than 13,000 students; medium districts were defined as serving between 7,000–13,000 students; and small districts were defined as serving less than 7,000 students (see Table 1). Thirteen districts (six large, three medium, four

small) participated in the study. These 13 districts represent 58% of the 652,348 public school students in the state.

The next step in the sampling process identified the district administrator in each selected district who had primary responsibility for implementing the requirements of USB64. If multiple district administrators shared this responsibility, all were invited to participate in the study. A total of 15 district administrators were interviewed. Because the researcher had working relationships with the Human Resource Directors from around the state, these professional relationships were leveraged to identify the appropriate district administrator to interview, to facilitate an introduction to those administrators, and to help in encouraging them to participate in the study. Once the district administrators were identified, phone calls were made by the researcher to introduce the purpose of the study, explain the interview process, and invite each administrator to participate in the study. Only one district administrator declined to participate. Another similar-sized district was randomly selected, contacted, and further agreed to participate.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected during a 45–60-minute, semi-structured interview with administrators from each of the participating districts. After receiving IRB approval from BYU (see Appendix F), I began each interview by obtaining informed consent from each participant. All interviews were conducted by phone, and all were recorded for later transcription. During the interview, district administrators responded to questions asking them to describe their district's USB64 implementation efforts and the change process. Questions were also asked about their perception of how these district efforts influenced their school principals' capacity to evaluate teachers effectively. Questions were also asked about their perception of how the principal's practice of teacher evaluations had been impacted. When appropriate, follow-up questions were

asked throughout the interview to probe for deeper meaning and understanding of previous responses. The interviews for all 13 participating districts took place between the months of June and December 2017.

### **Data Analysis**

The recorded interviews were transcribed and imported into NVivo (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2014). The researcher used thematic analysis to code the data. The transcripts were read many times during the open coding process to identify etic nodes relating to change-knowledge. At the same time, emic nodes began to emerge that related to participants' experiences. Nodes with a threshold of 60% of respondents were considered for generating themes that captured the districts' implementation efforts. Axial coding was used to discover any relation or patterns that might have existed between the size of a district and the resulting themes. Finally, selective coding was done to synthesize the major themes and answer the guiding research questions. District administrators in this study will be identified by their district size (L – large, M – medium, or S – small) and a research-assigned, single-digit identifier, e.g., L3 refers to the third large district and S1 refers to the first small district.

### **Findings**

The three research questions used in this study are focused on discovering what actions district leaders took because of USB64, identifying what change knowledge components were leveraged by district leaders in those efforts, and what challenges districts faced when attempting to implement USB64's requirements.

### **Clear Plan of Action**

Analysis of the district interviews gave insight into the elements of a clear plan of action that districts used to carry out USB64 requirements. Consistently present in the interviews were

descriptions of professional development efforts to train their principals. Equally present in responses were descriptions of how district administrators accounted for the required principal certification as well as how monitoring principal progress of required teacher evaluations was conducted. Consistently missing from district administrator conversations was the discussion of resource allocation needed to support principals as they strove to meet the new requirements.

### ***Professional Development and Accountability System Implemented***

USB64 required districts to select an observation tool that incorporated the UETSI, to have administrators trained and then certified to ensure all required classroom observations are completed each year.

The initial professional development efforts reported during the interviews directly related to both the research questions as well as the idea that compliance dictates reform efforts more often than actual change. All 13 districts (100%) in this study discussed providing professional development for their principals, which led to these principals being certified to conduct teacher evaluations, as required by USB64. The following description from a district administrator of the initial professional development efforts offered to principals is representative of what most other districts described:

Well, what we first did was we looked at the formative tools that we use. We provided additional training for clarity to the process so it's easier for our principals to explain to teachers how the evaluation system works, what the components are um we're working with H.R. to bring a greater level of clarity and specificity. The next thing we did was to go over the teacher standards from the state. We then created our own success criteria and our own set of observation criteria to be put into Observer Tab that then all administrators use for a formative tool. During the training, all of our principals were certified.

Principals can now drop by a classroom and can just do a quick drop-in and say, 'Hey, I saw these things, thanks so much, that's awesome!' And any administrator can use it more consistently. (S2)

The comments from S2 are reflective of comments made by other district leaders, indicating that leaders clearly understood the need to include elements of a clear plan of action. Professional development for principals was provided, a monitoring system was in place to ensure principals received the required training, and a system of accountability was put into place to both assess principals and ensure those principals were certified to conduct classroom observations. Missing from S2's description, and most other districts, are discussion points that show any connection between the efforts made to comply with USB64 and improving student learning or appealing to the hearts of principals. The absence of these important elements may indicate a lack of belief that USB64 was a worthwhile reform initiative in the first place.

Districts also described their ongoing professional development efforts meant to support USB64. The continuing professional development opportunities described by the district administrators did not differ in content or focus from the training provided to principals when they first rolled out the initial USB64 training. Eleven of the 13 districts (85%) described the professional development that was offered as a one-time event, generally taking place in a large meeting of administrators before the start of the school year. Here is how one district administrator described the training required of new principals or of principles that need to be certified:

Well, each year we have yearly training for our principals during the summer on evaluation. Not only do we go over the processes of evaluation, but we also refresh them

on the rubrics, standards, and those expectations. We have the rater certification obviously that they have all gone through. (L5)

In the interviews, district leaders described professional development that focused on certifying principals to conduct teacher classroom observations and assuring the required observations were completed. District administrators described the professional development that they planned and provided with confidence that USB64 requirements were being met. Missing from district administrator comments was a discussion around the impact they hoped their professional development efforts would have on student learning.

Five districts mentioned the possibility of using already-existing principal meetings to provide ongoing USB64 training. These monthly meetings were mentioned as a possible venue to discuss teacher evaluation or possible future training to support USB64 efforts. At the time of the interviews, none of the five districts had provided USB64 training during the monthly meeting or had any specific plans in place to do additional training for their principals.

All 13 districts have made state- or district-created support materials available for principals to refer to after their certification training. These training materials were focused on helping principals use the evaluation tool and report the progress being made on the required evaluations. One district administrator described the types of materials focused on the mechanics of classroom observations that are available for principals to utilize: “We have a CTIPS dashboard we call it and we have a tab on that dashboard for resources and it has everything they need to know, manuals and instructions and examples of things and links” (M2).

### ***Professional Development: No Connection to Student Learning***

A theme in each district’s approach to professional development as it relates to USB64 appeared. The two consistent elements that emerged in the descriptions of the district’s approach

to professional development were in the content of the professional development (training on an observation tool to certify principals) and the frequency (one-time training event usually held in the summer) at which these training sessions were offered.

The other responses gathered in the district administrator interviews also did nothing to describe efforts as being focused on improved student learning. Following is a typical response from a district leader describing their efforts:

It was like a 3-day training that they had to go to. And they take the certification test and have to pass it to prove that they are highly qualified or whatever the designation might be. We made sure that they are qualified to administer evaluations for teachers. So, for the last two years, we haven't done much with helping our principals other than making sure that they have been to that. (S3)

The focus and infrequency of the professional development in this district was a common theme in the other districts interviewed, pointing heavily towards reform efforts being focused solely on compliance rather than on actual, institutionalized change.

### ***Monitoring System***

District leaders were successful at creating a district-level check to ensure required annual teacher evaluations were completed. Ten of the 13 district leaders (77%) described the processes created to ensure their principals complete the required number of observations at the required times throughout the year. A district leader described their process in the following way:

We do have our observation tracker tool, which the executive director over that school is monitoring. More in terms of frequency. If they are getting enough observations in. We haven't really monitored their number of effectiveness vs. highly effectiveness or not effectiveness

in that way, just more in terms of quantity. Making sure they are getting out in their buildings. (M4)

### ***Resource Allocation: Missing***

Resources can be defined as money, personnel, time, and materials. There was little discussion about how districts reallocated their resources to meet USB64 requirements. One of 13 (8%) district administrators discussed setting aside additional funds specifically for support of USB64 efforts. Two of the 13 (15%) district administrators discussed the need for more administrators because of the additional time that would be required to complete all required teacher evaluations. Nine of the 13 (69%) mentioned that their principals, who are already short on time, would not have the time required to complete all evaluations. None of the nine districts who discussed time being an issue discussed a solution to this resource shortage.

### **Missing Efforts to Appeal to Heart and Mind**

Analysis of the district interviews gave insight into aspects of change knowledge that were absent. Consistently absent were the three heart and mind elements of change theory that would morally appeal to their principal's educational philosophy.

### ***Distributed Leadership: Missing***

During the interviews, 7 of the 13 districts (69%) discussed their district having a Joint Educator Evaluation Committee (JEECA), as required by USB64. District administrators indicated that these committees were tasked with the charge of helping guide the USB64 rollout efforts. Only two of the 13 districts (15%) discussed holding regular JEEC meetings on a regular basis. One district administrator replied when asked about JEEC meetings, "Oh, yes, we have an educator evaluation committee, but it has been a while since we have actually met to discuss anything" (S3).

***Heart and Mind Communication: Missing***

The frequency and focus of communication related to USB64 suggest a compliance-based approach that didn't exceed the basic requirements of the legislated reform.

Communication to principals from district administrators was consistently focused on the compliance aspect of USB64; consistently absent in these conversations was any mention of connecting the reform efforts to a higher purpose that would appeal to the hearts of the principals. Districts communicated the need for their principals to be certified and for an accounting to be made of the classroom observations that were required annually. Descriptions of district efforts after the initial push to implement USB64 further support the idea that the district's communications relied heavily on a compliance-based approach to USB64 (see Table 2). Interview responses show that 85% of the districts described the ongoing professional development efforts as one-time annual events, only requiring those principals needing state certification to attend (see Table 3). One administrator's response that is part of this pattern explained the efforts they had made: "We have made a substantial effort into that. All our administrators are certified. We haven't done as much training as past years, we had done in previous years" (M1).

The actions that were taken by district leaders in complying with USB64, as described within their own interviews, not only paint a picture of basic compliance but also speak to a minimal compliance approach. Eight of the 13 district (61%) administrators described why they elected a compliance-based approach to USB64: "So, you know that legislation comes and legislation goes in the state. They implement this and take away that" (L2). A district administrator from a medium-sized district explained, "That's probably the hardest for me and

it's not what the district has done, it's just that we've taken a step in one direction and then the direction of the state or the legislative body has kept changing” (M1).

Another district administrator also explains:

We feel like we are pretty much there, we have just got a few smaller things to take care of were hoping that by next year we are...if the darn state would stop changing some of its laws and requirements you know. (M2)

Another district leader explains, “So I made a conscious decision to slow those aspects down and pull back and make it work for [my district] as opposed to making [my district] work for the state model” (M3). Finally, this administrator explains,

I honestly feel like we minimally comply (speaking of state mandates) and then do what is best for our district. And the alignment of the plan we made sure we were covering all of our bases. So that we were complying but then aligning it to what we thought was best for teachers and kids. (M3)

During the conducted interviews, district administrators did not indicate if these frank feelings regarding minimal compliance were shared with principals in their communications. If this was done, it is doubtful it would be admitted during the interview. It is not a far stretch to surmise that, even if not explicitly stated, the raw feelings felt by these district administrators with regards to minimal USB64 compliance were present to some degree in communications surrounding USB64 with their principals.

### ***Heart and Mind Celebrations: Missing***

Another element of change theory that was absent from district leaders’ interviews about their USB64 efforts was celebrating short- or long-term wins as a way to win the hearts and minds of their principals. Five of the 13 districts (38%) discussed ways that had been used to

celebrate USB64 efforts/achievements made by their principals. These discussions were in reference to efforts made when USB64 rollouts were new. One district administrator talked of ongoing and continued celebration efforts to keep her principals engaged.

### **Districts Faced Challenges Implementing USB64**

Over the course of the interviews, all 13 of the district leaders discussed challenges that they faced as efforts were made to comply with the legislation. There were three challenges that district leaders consistently brought up in the interviews (see Table 4):

- the challenge of competing initiatives,
- the challenge of principals' lack of time, and
- the challenge of giving honest evaluations.

### ***Challenge of Limited Strategic Targets***

The challenge that most often emerged was that of competing attentions and distractions. District leaders consistently discussed the education reform efforts unique to their own district. The data shows that 11 of the 13 districts (85%) interviewed had district-specific initiatives outside of USB64 on which their principals were expected to focus. District leaders communicated that they recognized their district could only focus on a limited number of initiatives (strategic targets), and they placed a higher level of importance on these district-specific initiatives (strategic targets) compared to ones passed down from the state. One district leader recognized the timing of this new mandate and alluded to the attention USB64 would take away from their focus on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):

We really put a lot of emphasis on the professional learning community. It came down from our board and it had to be implemented district-wide and it was roughly the same

time frame that we were implementing the brand-new evaluation system. So those two were kind of coinciding with each other as far as implementation at the same time. (M1)

Another district leader acknowledged the impact USB64 had on the already existing reform initiatives when he said,

There are always other district initiatives that we're being asked to participate in. There are always things that I don't want to say detract but that's the only word that comes to mind, distract us from each other and some might say that USB64 itself was a distraction from other things. (L3)

### ***Challenge of Principals' Lack of Time***

The second most discussed concern was the feeling that the classroom observation requirements of USB64 would place additional stress on principals who were already stretched thin. The following comment typifies the concern that administrators voiced regarding duties required of principals compared with the time available in a typical workday. One district administrator pointed out what they felt to be their principals' biggest challenge related to the required classroom observations:

Time, you know there is a lot put on a principal and I think that we have asked them to make this a priority, they need to be visible and be in classrooms. They need to find a way to eliminate or delegate some of the other pieces. Even then, they are in the classrooms more, my teachers are saying that they are in the classrooms more. But then they say they sit down afterward, and it takes an hour or more to align their notes to the standards, to do the initial rating and those things, so they continually tell me that there just isn't enough time to make this totally effective or valid. Time is probably their biggest challenge. (M3)

District administrators recognized the additional time commitment that carrying out all of the required evaluations would take. Nine of the 13 district leaders (69%) discussed how the lack of time keeps their principals from being able to fully grow into their roles as classroom-teacher evaluators. Following are quotes from three different sized districts, all lamenting the lack of time.

When you get a turnover like we have at 25%, you always have 25% of your staff that's provisional status who needs at least two evaluations a year. Plus, your rotation of the three-year evaluation. So, I know a principal of the high schools has 22 evaluations they have to do this year. So, he just doesn't have time to do it (S1).

Another district administrator pointed out,

There was no extra time or resources or money things like that given. The state did their best to provide us with training opportunities and things but again every time you have one of those (state mandate) it comes at the expense of something else. (L3)

On the same topic of time, another district administrator adds,

I think what they don't feel like they're prepared to do is spend the amount of time that's required to do it well. So, I think, do they have kind of the skill and knowledge, yes. But do they have the time? No. (L1)

### ***Challenge of Giving Honest Evaluations***

Five of the 13 district administrators (38%) discussed fear of giving honest evaluations as being a challenge. The leaders of rural school districts, which tend to be the smaller-sized school districts, consistently discussed their principals' fear of conducting honest performance evaluations resulting from the dynamics of living in a rural community. One district administrator described the difficulty of what is being asked of rural principals:

One of the challenges that our principals have is being involved in the community. Is that their teachers go to church with them uh they see them at ball games, their kids play together and there is lots of family ties that even though our principals are, four of the five are from outside of [the county], I would say 75% of our teaching staff grew up and graduated from [these] County schools. And so, the family roots are broad and deep. So that, there's an intimidation factor that comes in the evaluation and I think our principals, depending on their personalities, feel that pressure. And so, they're a little bit inconsistent in applying the evaluation tool. (S1)

Another rural district leader described it this way:

We are small enough that everything is personal, we have eight schools total (six elementary, one middle school, and one high school) about just under 6,000 students so it is small enough that yeah you run into people. You can have them in your neighborhood, your church religious congregation, and you have to be able to look them in the eye then too. (S2)

## **Discussion**

### **Compliance Approach to USB64**

The stated goal of USB64 was to better manage personnel in Utah's public education system to drive greater academic results in Utah schools. The bill's stated goal is aligned with what Fullan refers to as the "technical-core," i.e., the focus on improvement of classroom instruction for improved student learning. State education leaders relied on punishments tied to an educator's employment as the driving factor to incentivize and deliver the USB64 sought-after reform effort results. Harris (2011) warned education leaders about the need to approach a reform effort with the right driver:

One of the ‘wrong drivers’ is an over-reliance on external accountability to deliver results. While punitive forces may work initially, evidence suggests that high performing systems balance pressure and support; they empower people to perform while holding them accountable for performance. (p. 625)

To improve the instruction in Utah classrooms, legislators initially included a provision in USB64 that tied educators’ pay to their performance. There are some who ascribe to the belief that leveraging a teacher’s compensation to affect their performance incentivizes teachers to perform at a higher level. Tying pay to performance is not a new idea and is somewhat controversial among teachers. Early conversations between lawmakers and state education leaders surrounding performance pay may have contributed to the compliance-based approach districts described in their interviews. While the final version of USB64 did not include teacher performance pay, building principals and classroom teachers statewide would have had their thoughts/beliefs regarding USB64 influenced by the heated discussions surrounding performance pay that played out all the way from the state-level to classroom-level conversations between teachers and principals.

The structure of the education system in Utah (state-level education leaders, district-level leaders, and school-level leaders) played a key role in the way USB64 was presented. State education leaders relied on district leaders in the 41 school districts to communicate to their school principals how they would carry out the reform implementation efforts in their districts. The personal beliefs and background of each district leader would have influenced their approach to the rollout and implementation of USB64. These dynamics would have influenced the way USB64 was presented by district leaders to principals. Spillane’s (1996) assessment of

why districts matter when it comes to reform efforts is enlightening and very applicable. The following is a list of his three main reasons:

1. District leaders control and provide the opportunities their practitioners (building principals) are provided to learn state policy.
2. District practices and resources shape the messaging of state reform efforts to the practitioners (school principals).
3. District leaders' personal education beliefs have a great influence on the reform effort message.

Over the course of the interviews for this study, a pattern of responses from district leaders emerged that was indicative of a compliance-based approach to USB64. This compliance-based approach to implementing USB64 is a substantial impediment to achieving the intended goal of improving student learning through better classroom instruction. Fullan (2006) warned about a focus on anything that doesn't lead to improvements in classroom instruction: "The failure, I think, is that the strategy lacks a focus on what needs to change in instructional practice and, equally important, what it will take to bring about these changes in classrooms across the districts" (p. 5).

It makes sense that during the initial stages of USB64 implementation, the focus of district leaders would be on compliance with the newly passed legislation. Districts needed to make sure their principals were certified to conduct classroom observations and were familiar with the observation tool. District leaders naturally needed to ensure that their principals understood who needed to be evaluated, how many times the evaluations needed to take place, and when the requisite observations needed to be completed. It is relevant that the districts selected to participate in the study missed the opportunity to make an explicit structural

connection between their USB64 efforts and the bill's stated goal of improved student learning. The interviews revealed that the district's implementation of USB64 did not progress past the initial phase of compliance.

District leaders discussed aspects of change theory when they approached plans on how to appeal to the hearts and minds of their principals. They discussed concepts such as distributed leadership, clear communication, and celebrating successes. Upon closer inspection of the responses on how these change theory elements were discussed and the frequency with which they were brought up, the responses seem to indicate that these discussions were at a more superficial level and not directly utilized to capture the hearts and minds of their principals.

Let us first consider the way in which distributive leadership was discussed in the administrator's responses. Sixty-nine percent of district administrators spoke of a Joint Educator Evaluation Committee (JEEC). These committees were meant to give a variety of education stakeholders a seat at the table to help form the evaluation process and practices. These committees existed on paper but likely had a limited influence on a district's efforts to maintain principal capacity when fulfilling USB64 requirements over time since the JEEC did not hold regular meetings after initial implementation plans were established.

Communication described by district administrators to their principals when it comes to USB64 showed little discussion about ways districts attempted to communicate a connection of a greater moral charge to improve student learning. The absence of a moral appeal to improving student learning hints at a lack of belief by district leaders that USB64 was a reform effort that would improve teacher performance and student learning.

Finally, not many district administrators discussed how they celebrated principal success centered around USB64. Those who did describe celebration efforts could only describe

celebrations that occurred when they first started implementation. Only one district administrator discussed the fact that celebrations continued throughout the reform efforts as a way to keep her principals motivated.

The way in which district administrators discussed the continued USB64 efforts two years after the required implementation date was also significant. District administrators did not discuss their USB64 efforts in terms of progression/phases toward an end goal. District administrators discussed the initial efforts to prepare, train and certify their principals. None discussed the greater impact they hoped to achieve on principal capacity and student learning as a result of their USB64 efforts. The absence of these discussions on maintaining a long-term focus on this reform effort demonstrates the possibility that district leaders did not have a strong belief in what could be accomplished through USB64 from the beginning.

The ramifications of the districts' incomplete, compliance-based approach meant that the capacity of principals in these districts to use the classroom observation data to build their teacher's capacity and become more effective teachers was never developed. The observations were completed, tracked, and marked off to be in compliance with USB64. Based on the interviews, the observations were not used in a way that would allow principals to use them in a way that would lead to improved student learning.

### **Evident Change Knowledge Elements**

The systemic reactions in practice that were discussed in the interviews offer additional support for this paper's finding that districts took a compliance-based approach to USB64. The interview script (Appendix A) included questions prompting district leaders to discuss lasting changes in their districts that resulted from their USB64 efforts. The following are changes that were made because of USB64 and that several years later had been adopted, or institutionalized,

into practice by building principals and district leadership. What became apparent when analyzing the responses about change in practice was that the elements of change knowledge leveraged by district leaders were those that would ensure the district could demonstrate compliance, mainly the system for progress monitoring, the system for accountability, and professional development.

District leaders ensured that the built-in accountability measures of USB64 were part of their rollout efforts, recognizing that the accountability measures greatly increased their ability to demonstrate compliance with USB64 requirements. This focus on compliance is important, as the districts are required to comply with the bill, but it lacks the foundation of administrator buy-in, which hurts the chances that reform efforts will successfully reach the institutionalized phase. The only institutionalized accountability systems that district administrators described during interviews were ones meant to track principal certification, measure the number of completed observations, and track observations to ensure they were completed within the required timeline.

This limitation of being solely focused on compliance also became a major part of the progress monitoring systems established by the USB64 reform efforts. District leaders discussed that the only monitoring systems that were created as part of the reform efforts were designed to track individual principals and whether they had performed the required evaluations of their faculty. As one would expect, there were variations between districts on how these monitoring systems functioned. Despite the differences in how observations were tracked, the goal was the same, to make sure required classroom observations were completed in accordance with predetermined due dates. Supervisors of school principals were given the responsibility to ensure required observations were completed by the predetermined date.

A system for monitoring efforts and accounting for results are essential elements of change theory; however, without appealing to the hearts of their principals through an intentional connection with accountability to improved student learning, districts stopped short of bringing about the improvement in student learning. Solely attending to the monitoring and accountability aspects of a reform initiative ignores the more important elements of change knowledge and ultimately will not lead to sustainable efforts that lead to the institutionalized changes called for by USB64. Fullan (2010) warns of what will happen if there is an over-emphasis on accountability:

The placement of accountability as front and center is understandable given the concerns of politics and the public (and the dismal performance of the system over the years), but it will not get the intended results even with better data and incentives. (p. 27)

Minimal compliance, as evidenced by districts focusing on principal certification and ensuring required observations are completed and recorded, seems to be the coping strategy adopted by district leaders in order to deal with USB64, as well as with the sheer volume of other reform efforts mandated by Utah's elected officials.

Professional development is another important element of change knowledge used by education leaders to build the capacity of their educators if it is continuous and ongoing and if expectations of the reform effort are identified, learned, and implemented. The literature on change knowledge draws a strong connection between successful reform efforts and professional development. Harris (2011) states, "However well-intentioned or well-funded the approach to system reform may be; it will be destined to fail without serious attention to building the capacity for change" (p. 626). The ideal approach is one where the learning is a joint effort and happens continuously over time.

District leaders in this study consistently discussed the professional development efforts they made to prepare their principals for the requirements of USB64. Interview responses paint a picture of a district approach that was top-down and was focused on the compliance measures of USB64 rather than on actual change. It makes sense that during the initial stages of USB64 implementation, the professional development focus from district leaders would be on compliance with the newly passed legislation. Descriptions of districts' professional development efforts focused heavily on teaching the observation tool to administrators and giving opportunities to practice using the tool. An assessment of a principal's ability to use the adopted observation tool was also conducted during the certification process. Districts effectively used professional development training to ensure their principals understood which teachers to evaluate, how many times the evaluations needed to take place, and when the required observations needed to be completed. These professional development sessions allowed district leaders to certify their principals and outline expectations of their use of the observation tool and the classroom observations they perform. Table 2 details a breakdown of the professional development sessions and which sections of those sessions each district shared with the others.

It is relevant that districts selected to participate in this study missed the opportunity to make an explicit structural connection between the USB64 professional development efforts and the improvement of student learning. The interviews revealed that the district's professional development on USB64 did not progress past the top-down, initial phase that solely focused on compliance. The professional development approach districts implemented was incomplete and stopped short of connecting the teacher evaluations to how principals would leverage the evaluations for improving student learning.

During professional development sessions, the district's adopted observation tool was introduced, and principals were trained to use the tool. Principals were taught the UETSI standards that had recently been adopted and then required their principals to go through a certification process. Once certified, principals were deemed qualified to use the adopted tool to perform classroom observations of their teachers. Districts did describe ongoing professional development targeted at new principals and principals who would be required to recertify. This ongoing training was to make sure they continued to stay compliant with the principal certification requirement of USB64. None of the districts discussed plans for ongoing professional development that would build upon the initial principal certification training they were required to provide. Districts fell short of capitalizing on the potential to effect lasting change to classroom instructional practices by neglecting to provide ongoing professional development that built principals' capacity to use the teacher evaluations to improve and expand teacher instructional capacity, which could lead to improved student learning.

### **Challenges Related to Implementing USB64**

All district administrators interviewed were asked to discuss the challenges they faced as a district in their efforts to fully implement USB64 as outlined in the passed legislation. There were two common challenges that emerged amongst all districts regardless of size or geographic location. A third common challenge amongst districts in more rural parts of Utah emerged that was absent in the larger metropolitan districts. Table 3 shows how many districts of each group experienced these challenges.

### ***Competing Initiatives***

Over the course of the interviews, each district leader discussed organic school reform initiatives already in play when USB64 was legislated into law. District leaders explained that

because USB64 is a state mandate, efforts to comply with the legislation would ultimately take focus away from district-specific reform efforts, thereby increasing the risk that these district-specific efforts might become ineffective and unfinished. When speaking of their own district initiatives, district leaders discussed their use of distributed leadership strategies, i.e., including key actors in the development of their reform initiatives. USB64 was viewed by district leaders as another mandate by state leadership without input from key educators.

It appears that district leaders prioritized district-specific reform initiatives over the state-mandated legislation. Prioritizing efforts that originated from those who are seen as understanding the needs of the district over lawmakers who are distant and not familiar with district needs is an understandable explanation for the minimal compliance approach that was described by district leaders in the interviews. A compliance-based approach to USB64 likely allowed districts to continue to focus and prioritize their own reform initiatives already in place while satisfying the legal requirements of USB64.

### ***Lack of Time***

District leaders regularly spoke of time being a constraint to fully implementing the requirements of USB64. The legislation would require increased classroom observations with all teachers in the school regardless of provisional or licensure status. The sentiment that building principals are stretched thin and struggle with time constraints in accomplishing all their duties was shared by district leaders during the interviews regardless of district size. District leaders recognized what Fullan and Kirtman (2019) expressed when discussing the approach principals are forced to take when adequate resources are not provided to allow for complete and thorough evaluations: “Too often, the evaluation of teachers becomes a compliance process, and the time

taken to write long evaluations limits or eliminates the time for effectively coaching teachers and staff in ways that produce immediate and sustainable results in the classroom” (p. 65).

With a minimal compliance approach to carrying out USB64, districts are able to continue with their current pattern of time management for their principals. If a district were to take more than a compliance approach to USB64, discussion about restructuring resources to allow principals to tend to the new USB64 requirements would have been present in the efforts described by the interviewed administrators.

### ***Small Districts in Rural Utah***

Assessing the effectiveness of a teacher’s performance, as required by USB64, is experienced differently for rural district principals as compared to metropolitan district principals. Multiple times rural district leaders described a feeling of fear experienced by their principals when needing to assess their teachers. Rural district administrators described their principal’s concerns on how teacher evaluations might negatively impact their principal’s standing in their communities.

USB64 outlined what would take place if a teacher did not meet certain performance benchmarks. The inability for a teacher to meet the prescribed benchmarks would mark the start of due process, giving the educator a certain number of days to either make the required improvement or be terminated. Seventy-five percent of rural district administrators cited “fear” in honestly evaluating teacher performance as a challenge to fully implementing USB64. Unlike metropolitan district administrators, administrators in rural districts tend to live within the communities in which they work. The relationships they have with their teachers are not merely defined through their employment. These relationships can often include family, religious, and neighborhood ties. District administrators voiced concern over the impact performance

evaluations might have when they would now be so directly tied to a teacher's employment. The compliance-based approach rural district administrators implemented allowed them to focus on the safe and easy measures that aligned their schools with the requirements of USB64 without pushing their principals into uncomfortable professional or social situations.

### **Next Steps**

To move beyond a compliance-based approach, the literature on change knowledge is clear on what state and district education leaders could have done. The following is a list of actions that, if key state and district education leaders had taken during the initial reform efforts or moved to take now, could have aligned reform efforts to the stated end goal of USB64, that of increased student learning:

1. Avoid overreliance on the wrong driver for a reform effort. Focus on support and not punishment.
2. Make explicit connections between reform and student learning.
3. Provide professional development that moves principals beyond mere compliance.
4. Use a distributed leadership approach when planning for implementation.

Districts need to be intentional in making explicit connections between required principal evaluations and the impacts those evaluations have on the classroom. Doing so can build a morally compelling reason for USB64 that helps to enlist the hearts of principals to the cause. "It's been said that someone who has a 'why' can endure any 'how'; few things are more important than a purpose that is regarded as profound and morally compelling" (Sparks, 2002, p. 41). Fullan (2010) also reminds us of the need to connect reform efforts to improve instruction which will lead to higher student learning. Fullan refers to this as closing the learning gap.

Closing the learning gap and improving student learning is at the heart of an educator's moral purpose.

This focus on closing the learning gap and appealing to the heart of principals should extend into the professional development sessions provided in relation to the reform efforts. Providing the initial required principal certification training was a necessary first step; however, districts should shoot for a higher goal than mere compliance. Planning for job-embedded, authentic professional development would help a district move beyond compliance and build each principal's capacity to consistently identify elements of quality classroom instruction. Additionally, by focusing these trainings on improving teachers' capacities to teach, you aim the professional development towards the heart of an educator's moral purpose. Professional development of this nature isn't simply a repeat of the required certification training every few years. Effective professional development will build upon the previous training and allow for principal input along the way. For the goal of USB64 to be realized, principals need to be able to precisely discuss observation results with teachers in a way that builds teacher capacity, and this is only accomplished if districts move beyond the compliance-based mentality they adopted during USB64 implementation.

District leaders described their response to developing USB64 rollout plans at the district level in ways that reflect a top-down approach which is reflective of a compliance-based attitude. At the outset, districts would have done well to leverage an element of change knowledge of distributed leadership. Including groups of employees who are impacted by the legislative requirements allows for multiple perspectives and a more robust discussion at the outset that can help avoid potential reform pitfalls. Marsh (2000) explains that teachers and principals are more supportive of policies if they have helped design them or have participated in their development

in a substantive way. Thus, districts that provide educators with real influence over issues that are important to them enhance the potential buy-in and trust among key actors needed to enact change.

### **Implications for Policymakers**

The results of this study have implications for state- and district-level policymakers. Information in this study will assist state and district leaders tasked with planning and implementing school reform initiatives.

At the state level, the findings in this study may serve as a cautionary tale. Passed legislation can miss the intended mark when districts do not have ownership. Policymakers should look beyond compliance as they work with state and district leaders to improve the education system of the state. An approach to policy that makes a lasting impact requires all levels of the education system to be represented in a policy's inception, planning, and implementation. The participants and roles of the state, district, school, and classroom should be considered essential if sustainable, lasting improvements to student learning are to be made. A partnership between key stakeholders at all levels is a necessary element to creating a united front that could pave the way for reform legislation that is meaningful and sustainable.

At the district level, the results of this study provide an important insight into policy. To achieve desired success in reform efforts, district leaders need to attend to each element of change knowledge. When capturing the hearts and minds of educators is ignored, the reform effort will not be sustainable, and efforts will not bring about the desired change. Just as state-level policymakers should include key stakeholders, a leader at the district level should not leave out key stakeholders when creating policy. Not involving key stakeholders, like school leaders and teachers, can be tempting for results-oriented district policymakers. It is enticing to cut these

key stakeholders out of the process in hopes of hastening the implementation of the change, but such actions seriously compromise the impact of the desired reform efforts. Including key stakeholders in a meaningful way paves the way for a change in policy to take root and become institutional practice.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The scope of this study was on the three research questions. This study does not attempt to ascertain the impact nor evaluate the effectiveness of district USB64 implementation efforts on student learning. In this study, the method of data collection chosen was through interviews. The interviews conducted with district administrators tasked with leading out USB64 reform efforts took place four years after the passage of USB64 in 2012. It is possible that some details relating to the early implementation of USB64 could have been forgotten by the interviewees; however, the passage of time allowed them to gain perspective and have experience relating to institutionalized changes that resulted from USB64.

There are further areas that could be pursued that are related to this study. It would be interesting to see if USB64 efforts yielded direct effects on school performance as measured by increased student learning. Additionally, it would be interesting to see if the rates of teacher non-renewals due to poor teacher performance were impacted by the USB64 efforts of districts.

### **Conclusion**

USB64 was legislated with the goal of improving classroom instruction and thereby improving student learning in Utah schools. This study of district implementation gives us a look back at what districts did in the subsequent years after USB64's passage. This study found that Utah school districts complied with USB64 requirements and timelines. There are indicators of institutionalized practices that have become routine because of USB64 efforts, such as

principals' use of state-approved teacher observation tools for teacher performance evaluations. In addition to this use of approved tools, districts also continue to require their principals to be certified to conduct classroom observations. Certification is preceded by a one-time training to administrators needing to certify. In these trainings, principals are taught how to use their district's evaluation tool that is tied to the UETSI. Finally, districts continue to monitor the number of observations completed on time by each administrator for all teachers in all school locations to ensure compliance with USB64 requirements.

The impact of USB64 is evidenced in the institutionalized practices of Utah districts. This study found that the driving factor in district USB64 efforts was one of compliance rather than an attempt to improve the teacher classroom performance that would enhance the system of learning for students. "Many of the changes intended to improve education outcomes have simply not delivered, leaving many of the basic features of schooling unaltered" (Harris, 2010, p. 197). A different approach must be taken if a significant change is ever to be realized in educational practice. This study emphasizes the need for all levels of education leadership (state, district, school, and classroom) to work collaboratively if successful reform practices are to become realized. The inclusion of contributors from all educational levels in each phase of the reform is key in impacting teacher quality. State education leaders and policymakers should not expect to use annual legislative decrees to mandate improved educational practice into existence. When looking back on the district's response to USB64, a strong lesson is evident; relying on compliance alone to evaluate teachers will not lead to improved classroom instruction.

Policy change at the state- or district-level that leads to sustainable reform requires an understanding of (a) change knowledge components and (b) leveraging change theory, all while patiently progressing through the phases of change. In short, influencing lasting change takes

intentionality and time. Skipping necessary steps may create the illusion of speed but will never lead to the desired outcomes (Kotter, 2007). Ultimately, a successful reform effort will lead to the institutionalization of the new effective practice. This new practice becomes adopted and routine for all who are expected to adopt said practices (Fullan, 2006, 2016).

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## Tables

**Table 1**

*Utah School District Stratified by Size, Number Districts, and Number of District Administrators Interviewed in Each District*

	District Size	# of Districts	Administrators per District
Large-sized Districts	> 13,000 students	5	1
Medium-sized Districts	7,000-13,000 students	4	1
Small-sized Districts	< 7,000 students	4	1

**Table 2**

*District Focus of Professional Development in Preparing for USB64*

USB64 PD District Actions	Large Districts n=5	Medium Districts n=4	Small Districts n=4
Unpack UETSI Standards	4(80%)	2(50%)	3(75%)
Train on Evaluation Tools	5(100%)	4(100%)	4(100%)
Principal Certification	4(80%)	4(100%)	4(100%)
Support Materials Provided	5(100%)	4(100%)	4(100%)
Recording Completed	5(100%)	4(100%)	4(100%)
Evaluations	5(100%)	4(100%)	4(100%)

**Table 3***Frequency of District USB64 Professional Development*

USB64 PD Frequency District Actions	Large Districts n=5	Medium Districts n=4	Small Districts n=4
Offered Annually	5(100%)	3(75%)	3(75%)
Offered Ongoing	2(40%)	2(50%)	1(25%)

**Table 4***Challenges to District Implementation of USB64*

District Challenges	Large Districts n=5	Medium Districts n=4	Small Districts n=4
District Initiatives	4(80%)	3(75%)	4(100%)
Lack of Time	5(100%)	2(50%)	2(50%)
Fear of Community Impact (Rural Districts)	1(20%)	1(25%)	3(75%)

## APPENDIX A

### Instruments

#### Interview Questions

Research Question 1: What efforts are district instructional leaders making to develop the capacity of school principals to evaluate teacher instructional quality?

Drilling down questions if necessary:

1. Describe what those efforts look like and sound like.
2. Over what time period did this happen?
3. From your perspective, how would you describe your district's plan for preparing principals for the evaluation of teachers based on the new teacher effectiveness standards.
4. What role did you play in the development of your district's plan?
5. What supports and/or resources were provided for you during the planning phase?
6. What supports and/or resources were provided for your principals as they implement the plan?
7. How has your district assessed the principal's ability to effectively evaluate teacher performance?
8. During this same period of time, were there other district initiatives that you and school principals were being asked to participate in?
9. Did the district consider ways for principals to communicate or problem solve their unique issues during the implementation of the district plan? In what ways?
10. Was there consideration from district leadership for ongoing monitoring of principal progress in evaluating teacher instructional quality?

11. What would your district do if a principal were struggling with the *evaluation of teachers*?

Research question 2: What change knowledge principles are manifested in these efforts?

Research question 3: What impact have district efforts had on principal capacity?

Drilling down questions if necessary:

1. Do principals in your district feel adequately prepared to fairly, accurately, and reliably evaluate their faculty based on the new teacher effectiveness standards? Explain.
2. How has your district's preparation efforts impacted principal's evaluation practice?
3. How do principals feel about their experience with those efforts?
4. What challenges do principals continue to face in evaluating instructional quality?
5. What challenges are principals currently facing when evaluating teacher performance?
6. As you reflect on your district's plan to this point, what would you do differently or wish your district would do differently?
7. What did the district do that is helpful for principals as they evaluate teacher performance?
8. Is the district offering ongoing training? How do principals benefit from it?

## APPENDIX B

### Review of Literature

There have been many respected scholars and leaders of education who have studied the impacts that school-level systems affecting principals and teachers have had on student learning. The key relationship that exists between district-level systems and school-level principals has not enjoyed the same level of scrutiny. Sparks (2002) recognized this important connection between district- and school-level systems when he referred to it as the “gold nugget,” and yet often-ignored relationship within our educational system. Sparks points out that the “interconnectedness of all parts of the educational enterprise means classrooms, schools, and the school district are tied together in a web of relationships where decisions and actions in any part affect other parts and the system as a whole” (Sparks, 2002, p. 39).

With the passing of USB64 in 2012, one of the natural consequences was the opportunity to study the often-ignored relationship between district-level systems and school-level leadership. The bill required that the performance of every Utah-certified classroom teacher be evaluated by using a new set of teacher standards. The responsibility to make sure this happened fell to district leaders, who were to ensure that their school principals were prepared and certified to evaluate their teachers’ performance (Osmond, 2012) according to these new standards. As a result of this mandate, some important questions were raised that became the foundation of this research paper. What did district leaders do to prepare their principals to carry out the requirements of USB64? Did districts create new systems or rely on systems already in place to facilitate the needed principal support that would lead to successful implementation as defined by state leaders?

In this literature review, the following will be discussed:

- successful reform efforts,
- elements that make up an effective system, the educational benefits derived from an effective district-level system,
- challenges that can disrupt the support from district-level systems to principals, and
- the district leadership's role in building the capacity of their school-level principals.

### **Successful Educational Reform Efforts**

Successful reform efforts that generate the type of increase in student learning that is envisioned by education leaders and policymakers require a change from the traditional “mandated reform” approach. Fullan (2006) articulates that successful change efforts ultimately lead to what is known as the institutionalization of the new practices. The new practices become adopted and routine for all who are expected to adopt them.

### ***Phases of Educational Reform***

Kotter (2007) warns education leaders that the reform process takes time and that skipping necessary steps will only create the illusion of speed but will never lead to the desired outcomes. Kotter goes on to say, “the most general lesson to be learned from the more successful cases is that the change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time” (Kotter, 2007, p.3). Not only is the success of each phase dependent upon the success of the prior phase, but each phase will require different strategies.

Fullan (2006) describes phases of the change process that can be a more effective alternative to the mandated reform approach. Education reform efforts become uncertain when these phases for change “are not considered as foundational for facilitating change efforts” (Fullan, 2016, p. 25). A successful reform effort is driven by three phases that Fullan named the

initiation phase, the implementation phase, and the institutionalization phase. The ultimate goal of these phases of change is the institutionalization of the desired reform practices.

### ***Initiation Phase***

The first phase is one of planning and needs to be done with the end goal in mind. Proper planning will ensure a successful launch of the reform effort. One of the fundamental errors that leaders make is implementing changes before sufficiently considering steps of foundational planning as part of their implementation (Adelman & Taylor, 2003). A successful reform effort will identify what the change will look like once the organization has reached the institutionalized phase. With the end in mind, a plan utilizing backward design can then be used.

The success of the reform effort hinges on the ability of the change leaders to clearly articulate a shared vision for the reform initiative. Elmore (2000) warns that if policy is the sole focus of education leaders as they attempt to articulate a shared vision to the initiative's affected stakeholders, those leaders are unlikely to create a sense of buy-in in their districts. Policy on its own will unlikely lead to desired reform outcomes. A coherent message needs to be the foundational link all reform efforts have with the originating policy. That message should elucidate the purposes and the practices that the reform efforts will lead to the outcome of the reform. Sparks (2002) further clarifies the concept of a clear vision when he explains that a compelling vision alone will not bring about the desired change. Successful reform efforts need a "detailed mission statement that describes what the organization will look like when operating at its ideal best to accomplish its declared purpose" (Sparks, 2002, p. 41).

Linking the reform efforts to the organization's purpose not only provides clarity to the overall vision of an initiative but also provides a much-needed sense of urgency, which is critical during all three phases: "[A sense of urgency] is essential because just getting a transformation

program started requires the aggressive cooperation of many individuals. Without motivation, people won't help, and the effort goes nowhere" (Kotter, 2007, p. 3).

As education organizations articulate the vision and plan for communicating expectations, it is key that the expectation of participation by all elements of the organization be part of the conversation: "In system wide improvement, schools don't get to choose whether they participate or not. Participation is a condition of being in the system" (Elmore, 2000, p. 35).

### ***Implementation Phase***

The second phase of a reform effort should shift focus to putting the desired reform actions into practice and supporting the implementation of the plans made during the initiation phase. It is imperative that the same level of focus and care given to the initiation phase is given to the implementation phase.

Successfully leading an education system through the implementation phase will require administrators to have a dogged persistence in order to remain focused on the reform effort goals that were clearly articulated during the initiation phase. Harris (2011) reminds us of the persistence required to effect lasting change in education:

High performing education systems did not improve overnight; there were no quick fixes and no shortcuts. They invested heavily in the hard, unglamorous work of improving teaching and learning and they did this year in and year out, in order to secure their lasting gains in performance. (Harris, 2011, p. 633)

This phase takes time. It is one where focused, ongoing, and individualized professional development plays a key role in building the collective capacity of the organization. Harris (2011) further clarifies this aspect of the implementation phase:

What is needed is a clear implementation strategy for those new ideas and the capacity to secure productive change, whatever obstacles there may be. Without deliberate, purposeful, and targeted capacity building, any attempt at implementation, is likely to flounder leaving behind it the rhetoric rather than the reality of change. (p. 626)

As education leaders strive to build their own capacity so that they can lead the reform effort and provide relevant learning experiences for their teachers, a culture of learning will permeate throughout the organization. In his work, Fullan (2010) talks about the importance of creating “cultures for learning” (p. 12) which underscores the importance of professionals learning from each other and being collectively committed to improvement.

Education leaders should plan to celebrate measurable successes along the way to keep key stakeholders engaged in the reform process. Kotter (2007) warns that after a few years, leaders may be tempted to declare the reform effort a success at the first sign of performance improvement. Kotter (2007) goes on to explain that this can be detrimental to the reform effort, “until changes sink deeply into a company’s culture, a process that can take five to ten years, new approaches are fragile and subject to regression” (p. 8).

Institutionalized changes in practice will not happen quickly. The need for shared leadership can be better appreciated when reflecting on the amount of time true change takes. Over time, the changes in personnel that naturally occur within an education system could lead to the demise of a needed reform effort, especially if a single individual in the system was charged with carrying out the reform. We are reminded that a sustainable reform effort is the responsibility of many. Leadership distribution and development are antidotes to the time requirement: “Sustainability depends on many leaders - thus, the qualities of leadership must be attainable by many, not just a few” (Fullan, 2002, p. 20).

Due to the length of time that successful reform efforts require, education leaders should plan for distractions during this phase. It has been noted that education leaders, ranging from individual schools to national education leaders, must be intentional in their efforts to remain focused on a reform initiative. Keeping an education organization focused over a long period of time is not easy (Levin, 2010). Naturally, when a reform effort might take as long as ten years, there is a risk that the leaders and stakeholders of the reform efforts will lose focus and have their attention drift and lock onto a newer and shinier policy change. As has already been noted, policy leaders at the state level can be tempted to shift focus from a long-term reform effort that will lead to improved student learning toward a “quick win” that will produce political capital. Harris (2011) explained how this potential to lose focus could be addressed:

The imperative is to maintain focus and direction, to remain resolute in the face of shifting priorities, political needs or new pressures. One way to do this is to accept that distractions will occur and to attempt to understand the perspectives and motivations of those who are supporting them. (p. 632)

### ***Institutionalization Phase***

It is typical for aspects of the implementation phase and the institutionalization phase to overlap as an education organization makes the desired progress on a reform effort. The institutionalization phase of a reform effort begins when the reform efforts begin to be successfully implemented and become standard practice. This phase is one that will not occur overnight but will take time. It can take up to ten years of sustained focus for change to become a permanent, standard practice. Arrival and progress through this phase is not marked by a single event; rather, it is one that is demonstrated over time by the implementation of the changed

practice. Once the outlined change practices become standard practice, an organization will know that they are beginning the final phase of the change process:

Change sticks when it becomes ‘the way to do things around here,’ when it seeps into the bloodstream of the corporate body. Until new behaviors are rooted in social norms and shared value, they are subject to degradation as soon as the pressure for change is removed. (Kotter, 2007, p. 8)

### **Change Knowledge Components**

Change knowledge (i.e., the best practices of initiating and implementing change) is supported by a large body of research. In this body of research, researchers have described how the components of change knowledge can give district leaders a variety of insights into the best ways to navigate reform efforts. These components can act as a roadmap for successful progression through the three phases of reform. Change knowledge components fall into one of two categories: a clear plan of action and change theory that leads to shaping human behavior for the desired outcome.

#### ***Clear Plan of Action***

Harris (2011) studied an education system in Wales, and her findings are applicable to this study. She refers to Wales’ system as a tri-level education system whose individual parts make up the whole of the system for that country. The three levels are identified as the country, the region, and the school levels. All three levels of this country’s education system work synchronously towards strategic targets for the overall benefit of student achievement.

In the U.S., public education is structured a little differently because public education is a responsibility placed upon each state. Despite this difference, there is a parallel tri-level education system that is found in Utah and in many other states. At the state level, there exists an

office of education that drives policy to ensure educational quality across the state. The state office influences districts through legislation, policy development, outlining approved curriculum, and detailing the various acceptable performance standards to which teachers and administrators are held. The next level within the tri-level system of education is that of the district office. One of the main functions of the district office is to ensure schools comply with state educational regulations. The districts and their elected school boards provide direction to the schools in their area by providing strategic targets and policies that support the needs of the communities in which they serve. Finally, the school level of the tri-level system ensures that all state, district, and school-level expectations are implemented. All three levels play an important role in providing quality instruction that facilitates student learning. Independently, any one level of an education system cannot enjoy the same level of achievement that all three working together are able to accomplish. Sparks (2002) describes a successful school system as one that is interconnected and working together toward a common purpose.

The impact an organization's interconnected systems have on the performance of educators at any level of the system is tremendous. Despite the quality of the educator that works within the organization, a poor system will always be more influential on the organizational performance than that alone of a single quality educator: "Every system is designed to produce the results it gets" (Sparks, 2002, p. 38). We know that a successful system is one where the individual parts of the organization work together for a common purpose (Fullan, 2010).

Sparks (2002) underscores the role systems played in reform efforts when he said, "if you put a good person in a bad system, the system wins every time" (p. 38). How would one define an education system? One way is to define the system by its purpose. An education system's purpose is to promote the technical core of student learning. Assurance that limited targets are

aligned to the system's purpose; education leaders will more selectively approach the types of reform initiatives that will have lasting results on the system. To that end, the efforts of these systems of education need to promote the improved quality of its teachers in order to affect student learning. Unless reform efforts can change what teachers do in classrooms, the student learning outcomes are unlikely to change: "Securing lasting educational improvement therefore is primarily, but not exclusively, a case of improving teaching and learning" (Harris, 2011, p. 626).

A clear plan of action is the intentional and careful designing of a reform initiative plan prior to that plan's rollout and implementation. To develop a clear plan of action, educational leaders leverage their understanding of their system. A clear plan of action will consist of a system to identify strategic targets, a system to monitor progress, a system for accountability, and a system to marshal resources.

**Strategic Targets.** The number of reform efforts an organization is involved in should, at any one time, be focused and limited. Harris (2011) points to the need for change leaders to prioritize the number of initiatives to effectively build the required capacity necessary for the change to be institutionalized. Organizations should limit reform efforts to no more than two to four at a time when attempting to influence student learning (Levin & Fullan, 2008). Adopting too many strategic targets will overload the system, and lasting change won't be attained (Fullan, 2010).

In addition to being limited in quantity, strategic targets should also be limited in scope. Fullan (2010), while highlighting the needed changes made in the public school system in Ontario, Canada, highlighted an important action where they "focused on a small number of ambitious goals" (p. 34).

Education leaders of organizations at the state- and district-level should ensure that the limited reform initiatives are targeted at the core of education: “Rather, central office transformation goes right to the heart of practice—what people in central offices actually do day in and day out—to help improve teaching and learning for all students” (Honig et al., 2010, p. iv).

High performing educational organizations tend to focus on a small number of ambitious goals and build the capacity to deliver them (Fullan, 2010; Levin, 2010). These goals should be clearly related to the improvement of professional practice in order to improve student learning.

**Professional Learning.** Successful education leaders recognize the importance of continual learning by those they lead and for themselves: “We must fundamentally re-design schools as places where both adults and young people learn” (Elmore, 2000, p. 36). A purposeful and planned element of continual learning will lead to the increased collective capacity of the educators within the organization. Fullan (2010) described the outcomes of this increased collective capacity:

The power of collective capacity is what enables ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things for two reasons: One is that knowledge about effective practice becomes more widely available and accessible on a daily basis. The second reason is more powerful still—working together generates commitment. Moral purpose when it stares you in the face through students and your peers working together to make lives and society better, is palpable, indeed virtually irresistible. The collective motivational well seems bottomless. The speed of effective change increases exponentially. (p. 633)

Professional development for educators that is part of the culture is an element that leads to the desired synergy of the system needed for sustainable change in practice. Learning

opportunities need to be ongoing and not a one-time event. Professional learning opportunities should be offered in the proper context of the profession. According to Fullan (2002):

Learning in context has the greatest potential payoff because it is more specific, situational, and social (it develops shared and collective knowledge and commitments). This kind of learning is designed to improve the organization and its social and moral context. Learning in context also establishes conditions conducive to continual development, including opportunities to learn from others on the job, the daily fostering of current and future leaders, the selective retention of good ideas and best practices, and the explicit monitoring of performance. (p. 20)

**Monitoring Progress.** A system for monitoring progress needs to be created, or at the very least planned for, so that the progress an organization is making toward successfully implementing reform efforts and the desired change in practices can be monitored:

No matter how good a job one does of initially selecting a change strategy and tactics, something unexpected eventually will occur during implementation. Only by carefully monitoring the process can one identify the unexpected in a timely fashion and react to it. (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008, p. 9)

This monitoring element should take into account the predetermined data points used to assess the overall progress an organization has made toward implementing the identified change. These predetermined points of data will help keep the focus on the growth being made toward changed practice (Florida Department of Education, 2013; Fullan, 2010; Harris, 2011; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011).

Communication between all levels of a system of education is an integral part of the monitoring element. Those in the figurative trenches of the reform initiative will have important

feedback on efforts that will help change leaders adapt to the on-the-ground realities. This information is used to adapt and refocus efforts to ensure that the overall stated goal of a reform initiative remains the focus of the efforts being required by the change leaders: “Successful leaders don’t mind when naysayers rock the boat. In fact, doubters sometimes have important points. Leaders look for ways to address those concerns” (Fullan, 2002, p. 18). Education leaders will value the culture of authentic and safe, free-flowing communication:

Administrators—both system-level and school-level—are routinely engaged in direct observation of practice in schools and classrooms; they have mastered ways of talking about practice that allows for non-threatening support, criticism, and judgment. Such systems also create multiple avenues of interaction among classrooms and schools, as well as between schools and their broader environment, always focusing on the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. (Elmore, 2000, p. 32)

The free-flowing communication Elmore mentioned allows for change leaders to dial in on what efforts are helping the system to inch closer to the desired improvement and make needed adjustments.

**Accountability.** As change leaders focus on building the capacity of those they lead, a level of individual and collective accountability is needed to ensure that the momentum of reform efforts continues to build: “Capacity building, with a focus on results is crucial” (Fullan, 2006, p. 8). The focus on results is key but should be carried out in a way that inspires and encourages all involved:

A key part of the focus on results is the evolution of positive pressure. An emphasis on accountability by itself produces negative pressure: pressure that doesn’t motivate and that doesn’t get to capacity building. Positive pressure is pressure that does motivate, that

is palpably fair and reasonable and does come accompanied by resources for capacity building. (Fullan, 2006, p. 9)

Accountability is a two-way street. If change leaders are monitoring the results of those they lead, then those being led should expect a level of reciprocity in return:

The exercise of authority requires reciprocity of accountability and capacity: If the formal authority of my role requires that I hold you accountable for some action or outcome, then I have an equal and complementary responsibility to assure that you have the capacity to do what I am asking you to do. (Elmore, 2000, p. 21)

A reform effort will not be successful if those carrying out the reform effort do not have the capacity to lead the initiative. Recognizing the importance of collective accountability, education leaders will have planned for an element of accountability at all levels. The accountability element will be used to hold all involved with the reform effort accountable for carrying out individual responsibilities within the role they play in the reform effort (Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2006; Harris, 2011; Honig et al., 2010).

**Resource Management.** Education systems have many resources at their disposal, and if managed correctly, those resources can be effectively used to focus efforts on the targeted reform while canceling out the noise of distractions that will keep the organization from achieving the desired change in practice. Change leaders must consider the required resources to carry out the reform effort and strategically align those resources in order to support each element of the clear plan of action (David, 2009; Elmore, 2004; Leithwood et al., 1998; Levin & Fullan, 2008; Loacker, 1986). Resources available to the organization can come in the form of personnel, time, funding, experience, and other organizational support elements.

### *Appealing to Hearts and Minds*

A successful reform initiative recognizes the importance of changing the hearts and minds of the stakeholders involved in the reform effort. Targeted efforts need to be made on the necessary behavioral changes a reform initiative might need by appealing to the analytical and emotional aspects of change that educators will face throughout the phases of the reform (Kotter, 2007; Kotter & Cohen, 2002).

Leaders should intentionally appeal to the emotions of those involved in a reform effort. This appeal to the heart inspires educators to take action that will create behavioral changes:

If you take any hundred or so books on change, the message all boils down to one word: motivation. If one's theory of action does not motivate people to put in the effort - individually and collectively - that is necessary to get results, improvement is not possible. (Fullan, 2006, p. 8)

Successful change leaders should also appeal to the minds of those involved in a reform effort. Change leaders help educators understand the logical relationship between the reform effort and the central purpose of an education system, that of improving student learning. Something that can help the efforts of reform leaders to appeal to the minds of those involved in the initiative is the creation of a logical rationale or explanation of benefits that articulate sensibility (Copeland, 2003; Fullan, 2010; Hallinger, 2003; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Kotter, 2007; Leithwood et al., 1998).

**Appealing to Hearts and Minds Through Distributive Leadership.** When discussing how reform efforts that include school improvement become ultimately successful, Elmore (2000) makes it clear what type of leadership is required to achieve said success:

One does not ‘control’ improvement processes so much as one guides them and provides direction for them, since most of the knowledge required for improvement must inevitably reside in the people who deliver instruction, not in the people who manage them. (p. 14)

Educational leaders who hope to be successful need to create a guiding coalition of individuals that is made up of a mix of the relevant stakeholders (Adelman & Taylor, 2003; Fullan, 2010; Honig et al., 2010; Levin & Fullan, 2008; Sugai & Horner, 2009), that will lead the change process from start to finish. This is identified as what is most successful in building the heart and mind support described by Kotter and Cohen (2002).

Creating a coalition of stakeholders with varied roles in the reform effort helps to create the combined motivation that will be needed to carry the reform effort through the three phases of change. Adelman and Taylor (2003) explain that motivation stems from the “realization that working together is essential in accomplishing the vision; it comes from the realization that system changes are essential to working together effectively. And maintaining motivation for working together comes from valuing each partner’s assets and contributions” (p. 6). The guiding coalition will purposefully plan behavioral changes to align with the desired outcome. The hope is that through this coalition’s efforts, a feeling of motivation that helps educators recognize the personal benefit of their role in the change (Gill, 2002; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Kotter, 2007; Leithwood et al., 1998; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011).

The act of distributing actual leadership responsibilities to those various groups who make up the guiding coalition is what appeals to the minds of reform participants. “The guiding coalition includes members who are not part of senior management, it tends to operate outside of the normal hierarchy by definition” (Kotter, 2007, p. 5). Elmore (2000) sheds further light on the

benefits of distributed leadership, “large scale improvement requires a relatively complex kind of cooperation among people in diverse roles performing diverse functions. This kind of cooperation requires understanding that learning grows out of differences in expertise rather than differences in formal authority” (p. 21).

Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) further this idea of participation and how it relates to the concept of buy-in at the teacher level by saying that “considerable research has demonstrated that, in general, participation leads to commitment, not merely compliance” (p. 6). A link between school reform and participation of teachers in what Elmore (2000) calls “extended roles” leads to higher levels of commitment and satisfaction. Educators working in extended roles are required “to acquire knowledge and solve problems in groups and networks as opposed to individually” (p. 18). Those expected to participate in the reform effort need to see their interests are represented through stakeholder representation. Distributed leadership across the various stakeholder groups throughout the phases of change will increase the likelihood a logical connection will be made for each of the stakeholder groups.

**Appealing to Hearts and Minds Through Clear Communication.** Direct articulation of how a reform effort fits in with the overall vision of the organization lays the foundation for a logical belief in the actions that will be required: “Without credible communication, and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of the troops are never captured” (Kotter, 2007, p. 6). Clearly articulating the vision and purpose of the change is done in order to create a context that leads to sustainable change (Gill, 2002; Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Educators being asked to buy into a reform effort require authentic communication. Change leaders cannot expect to take a casual role and be able to capture the minds of those they are leading. The “do as I say not as I do” approach to communication is not effective: “Communication comes in both words and deeds, and the latter

are often the most powerful form. Nothing undermines change more than behavior by important individuals that is inconsistent with their words” (Kotter, 2007, p. 6).

Clearly communicating alignment of the reform efforts to the education system’s vision will inspire feelings of motivation among those called upon to act. Sparks (2002) describes the importance of a vision by explaining that it leads to the creation of something new. Further, he explains that “the power of a vision brings about creation, we are bringing things into reality that are valued by us. Vitality comes when we move in the direction of what we truly want to bring into reality” (Sparks, 2002, p. 40). A clearly communicated tie between a reform effort and an organization’s vision will make a case for change that will be morally compelling to educators. Educators that have a shared belief in a morally compelling purpose are a powerful influence on a reform initiative: “It’s been said that someone who has a ‘why’ can endure any ‘how’; few things are more important than a purpose that is regarded as profound and morally compelling.” (Sparks, 2002, p. 41)

Clearly articulating that improvement efforts are aligned with student learning confirms the message to educators that the reform efforts exist for a single, focused purpose. This message of a single overarching purpose resonates with educators who work closely with students. Those who pursued a career in education did so to pass along valued information to future students. Not only does the single purpose of reform efforts speak to the logic/mind of an educator, but it will inspire a healthy sense of urgency among all intimately involved with the reform effort. Establishing a sense of urgency “is essential because just getting a transformation program started requires the aggressive cooperation of many individuals. Without motivation, people won’t help, and the effort goes nowhere” (Kotter, 2007, p. 3).

### **Appealing to Hearts and Minds Through Celebration of Short-Term Wins.**

Successful educational leaders do not merely hope for short-term wins. They identify key benchmarks that mark progress toward the end goal. Celebrations should be conducted when data points from monitoring systems indicate predetermined benchmarks have been reached. Kotter (2007) following explains the tie between celebrating short term wins and successful reform initiatives:

Real transformation takes time, and a renewal effort risks losing momentum if there are not short-term goals to meet and celebrate. Most people won't go on the long march unless they see compelling evidence in 12 to 24 months that the journey is producing expected results. Without short-term wins, too many people give up or actively join the ranks of those people who have been resisting change. (p. 7)

Celebrating short-term wins creates an individual and collective commitment to the overall purpose of the reform effort. Collective commitment leads to feelings of increased motivation which helps to drive reform efforts forward:

When it becomes clear to people that major change will take a long time, urgency levels can drop. Commitments to produce short-term wins help keep the urgency level up and force detailed analytical thinking that can clarify or revise visions. (Kotter, 2007, p. 8)

Collective commitment can be built by planning for incentives to be used to help validate an educator's performance or the acquisition of skills, producing a sense of valued contribution and success towards a particular desired outcome (Fullan, 2010; Sparks, 2002). Planning for short-term wins will be required to inspire a sense of collective commitment, ultimately leading to the level of motivation required to progress through the later phases of the change process.

Building collective commitment can be done when incentives are used to help validate an educator's performance or the acquisition of skills, producing a sense of valued contribution and success towards a particular desired outcome (Fullan, 2010; Sparks, 2002).

## **Challenges to Reform Efforts**

### ***Try to Change Too Rapidly***

The system of public education in the U.S. has a long history of large-scale reform failures that have been carried out with reckless speed in the hope of scaling up the reform far quickly. The tendency to push for rapid change is, in part, influenced by the political system's emphasis on short-term wins. Immediate gains in achievement are often fueled by a strong political imperative where timescales are much shorter than those required for deep, sustainable change (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). The desire for a quick return on investment can often be traced back to a desire for political gain. This driving motivation for political gain has been the catalyst for many reform efforts that were introduced before evidence had been collected indicating that the proposed reform effort was wanted or would make a difference in student learning. We are warned that "results reach a plateau when speed matters more than substance" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 14).

The desire for change can be motivated by the need for change itself. A political figure, who is always at risk of being replaced at the end of an election cycle, is able to hold up a reform effort that they initiated as proof of having made progress during their time in office. The number of bills based on political gain creates what is known as the "policy churn" (Hess, 1999).

Hess (1999) warns of the negative repercussions to reform efforts in a school district when adequate attention is not allowed for one reform before districts are required to shift focus on a new reform: "A wealth of research on school reform suggests that reforms fail because of

inadequate implementation, planning, and coordination, precisely the problems that result from policy churn” (p. 7).

A politician finds his/her rewards in the initiation and enactment of the reform and not in the implementation. Reelection cycles are relatively short when compared to the time it takes to effect lasting change. The political capital that can be gained from speedy reform efforts that fit nicely into a reelection cycle can later be leveraged as a reason to vote for the politician when they are up for reelection. The practice of pushing through speedy reform efforts for political gain can result in “change overload,” which will sap energy and motivation from the education system as well as introducing contradictions and distractions into the already ongoing reform initiatives (Cheng & Walker, 2008). This practice of reform for political gain has also been referred to as the “conveyor belt” of new initiatives that “keeps moving accompanied by the inevitable peaks and troughs associated with quick, ill thought through or superficial change” (Harris, 2011, p. 625). Lasting change that improves student learning is difficult in the best of circumstances. Education reform attempts fail when the focus is to primarily score political points and not to actually address the technical core of education.

### ***Mandates as Incentives***

Another area where reform efforts can meet a premature death and not accomplish what was initially planned is when the incorrect driver is used as motivation for those expected to carry out the change. Lasting change that positively impacts student learning cannot rely on mandates, punishments, or structural changes to the education system.

Leaders who rely on using mandates as an incentive will not succeed. Education reform efforts that are rooted in the legislative decree are simplistic in approach and are doomed to fail. Elmore (2004) was even more explicit in discounting a mandate as an effective source of change:

The development of systematic knowledge about and related to large scale instructional improvement requires a change in the prevailing culture of administration and teaching in schools. Cultures do not change by mandate: they change by the specific displacement of existing norms, structures and processes by others; the process of cultural change depends fundamentally on modeling new values and behavior that you expect to displace the existing ones. (p. 11)

Leaders need to avoid using punishments as the main motivator if there is hope that the reform will be sustainable. An over-reliance on punishments might produce a feeling of accountability within the system but will fail to inspire and offer the support needed to motivate all involved with the change long term: “Improvement is much more likely in systems that are supported rather than punished and where there is a concerted effort to support and motivate educators rather than rely on simple accountability measures to ratchet up their performance” (Harris, 2011).

### ***Focus on Structures and Not Student Learning***

The structure of how our public education system is set up can become an impediment to reform efforts targeted at improving student learning. In the 1970s, the public education system embraced a model known as “loose coupling” (Weick, 1976). This model encourages important decisions that are made impacting student learning at the classroom level to be made by the classroom teacher. A consequence of the loose coupling model is the practice of isolation between classroom teachers and their building administrators.

In a loose coupling model, the role of the administrative leader is to shield the classroom teacher from outside influences so that classroom teachers can remain focused on student learning. A building administrator’s direct involvement in classroom instruction took a back seat

to the managing of the school's structures and processes surrounding classroom instruction (Elmore, 2000).

The frequency of isolated classroom practice is a result of loose coupling that ends up preserving less effective classroom instructional practices. This can hinder reform efforts that are aimed at improved practice. Individual teacher knowledge of how students should be taught, what they should be taught, how to demonstrate that knowledge, and how to evaluate the competency level of the student is relatively weak and uncertain when compared with the overall body of knowledge. Teachers in isolation rely on a high degree of individual judgment. Elmore describes why a focus on educational structures hinders reform efforts:

The institutional theory of loose-coupling explains a great deal about the strengths and pathologies of the existing structure of public education. It explains why, for example, most innovation in schools, and the most durable innovations, occur in the structures that surround teaching and learning, and only weakly and idiosyncratically in the actual processes of teaching and learning. Most innovation is about maintaining the logic of confidence between the public and the schools, not about changing the conditions of teaching and learning for actual teachers and students. The theory of loose-coupling explains why schools continue to promote structures and to engage in practices that research and experience suggest are manifestly not productive for the learning of certain students. They include extraordinarily large high schools that create anonymous and disengaging environments for learning; rigid tracking systems that exclude large numbers of students from serious academic work; athletic programs that keep large numbers of students from participation in extracurricular activities; grouping practices in elementary school classrooms that provide less stimulation for struggling learners; special programs

that remove students from regular instruction in the name of remediation, instructional aide programs that are sometimes little more than public employment programs for community members; and site-based governance structures that engage in decision making about everything except the conditions of teaching and learning. (Elmore, 2000, p. 6)

### ***Implementation Process***

The desire to improve public education has been the catalyst for countless reform initiatives. Many initiatives have inspired education leaders to quickly adopt a vision and lead the charge toward increased student learning. Another stumbling block that will trip up efforts is when education leaders fail to plan for the actual efforts required to realize a change in practice. Harris (2011) further described this seemingly foundationless push by education leaders that is far too common:

Much has been written about educational change and the need to do things differently to achieve better outcomes. There has been far less to say on exactly how to make things work and far less commentary on the hard and much less exciting hard slog of implementation. (p. 626)

Implementation of a reform effort is much less glamorous than the initial excitement at the outset of a reform effort:

It is no longer sufficient to have the correct change-initiative agenda or the best ideas for innovation or transformation – it is imperative that there is a compelling and effective means of implementing them. Vision may be important, but so is the much less glorious work of looking after all the details that make things work. (Harris, 2011, p. 625)

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## APPENDIX C

### Extended Methods

#### Setting

In 2012, the Utah State Legislature passed Utah Senate Bill 64 (USB64). The stated goal was to change how “we manage our personnel in Public Education in order to drive greater academic results in our schools” (Osmond, 2012; Utah Administrative Code, 2018). The belief and assumption behind USB64 were that with added accountability from school administrators (Osmond, 2011), improved student academic results would follow. Using the new adopted teacher state standards, the Utah State Legislature passed USB64 in order to require districts to hold principals accountable for effectively evaluating the quality of teacher instruction (Osmond, 2011).

To formalize the evaluation process, school districts were required to adopt a valid and reliable evaluation tool with which principals would evaluate teacher performance. A focus was placed on educators working toward instructional improvements and for educators to be held accountable through regular observations and performance evaluations. Outside of the evaluation requirement, USB64 was passed so that dismissal procedures could be clarified and outlined in order to help districts to terminate poor performing teachers. The USBE made districts primarily responsible for implementing USB64. Districts were granted three years to pilot their selected assessment tools and make other necessary changes in order to become fully compliant with USB64 by the 2015-2016 school year. District leaders played a key role in the implementation of USB64. They were to develop the plan that would lead to their principals acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively evaluate the instructional quality of teachers based on these new expectations required by the state.

For this study, I gathered information regarding what district efforts were used to prepare administrators so that I could then compare those actions with change knowledge components. Learning what district leaders did to implement USB64, in relation to change knowledge elements, helped in determining the likelihood of whether district actions could lead to meaningful and sustainable change. Did USB64 produce systemic and sustainable improvement to the public education system as had been hoped for at the outset? In this study, I seek to answer that very question.

### **Participants**

The target population for this study was comprised of the district administrators responsible for USB64 implementation efforts in the state of Utah. Due to the variations in district size and available resources for implementation of USB64, it was deemed necessary to stratify the sampling frame by size in order to ensure that all sizes of districts were included in the sample. This qualitative study used a purposive sampling of Utah school districts stratified by size based on student population. The next step in the sampling process identified the district administrator in each selected district who had primary responsibility for implementing the requirements of USB64. If multiple district administrators shared this responsibility, all were invited to participate in the study.

The sampling frame for stage one of the selection process included all 41 districts in the state of Utah. Districts were stratified by size: small, medium, or large. A purposive sample was used to select districts within each size category according to my access to each particular district. Five large-sized districts, four medium-sized districts, and four small-sized districts were selected, totaling 13 districts of 41 in the state of Utah.

## **Framework**

This is an organizational and sociological behavior study within the context of education leadership. These behaviors combined can facilitate long lasting change. Sociological behaviors exhibited by educational leadership within an educational organization are crafted to support and facilitate strategic behavioral outcomes. The educational organization is structured to create a context in which these behaviors may be acquired and sustained. Behaviors that foster the acquisition of desired, sustainable skills have emerged from the literature, providing a vehicle of analysis by which actions and behaviors of education leaders can be evaluated. There are consistent patterns that contribute to successful behavioral change. These patterns, and the change that can be created by utilizing said patterns, are aligned with change theory in more ways than one. Change theory explores ways of thinking about the relationship of a system's parts from and how those parts interact to impact the collective behaviors of the entire system. System changes also consider how a system, as a whole, interacts and forms relationships with its environment. Change knowledge as is referenced in this study exists within the theoretical framework of change theory as it relates to systems.

Individual and collective capacity building are resources for system change. The individual and collective capacity is supported through structured collaboration and systemic processes. These processes support behavior changes that produce systemic change rather than a singular change, which offers sustainability of reform efforts.

These patterns are predominantly focused on the classroom teacher and on the area of building individual and collective capacity. Fewer studies have been done looking at the influence district leaders have on building a principal's capacity. This gap in the literature became evident as the literature was examined. Leaders at every level of an educational system

recognize that building the capacity of principles, teachers, and other leaders at all levels whether it be at the state, district, school, or in the classroom, is important for the improvement of student achievement. The information I cover in this research study is essential for state leaders, district leaders and school level leaders who seek to make lasting changes to their institutions and organizations.

### **Approach**

Any district-level administrator who was assigned to roll out USB64 implementations was eligible to be a potential respondent. Since districts were tasked with the implementation of USB64, this study considers the district perspective rather than the classroom, school administration, or USBE level perspectives. Conducting interviews to collect data was the most logical approach for the qualitative nature of the study. Interviews also allowed a process in which district administrators could freely share their recollection of the district efforts they led with the purpose of preparing principals for USB64 requirements.

From previous professional work, I had working relationships with Human Resource Directors around the state. I leveraged these professional relationships in order to (a) identify the appropriate district administrators to interview, (b) to facilitate an introduction to the administrator, and (c) to help in encouraging them to participate in the study. Once the district administrators were identified, I called each of them so I could introduce the purpose of the study, explain the interview process, and invite them to participate in the study. Only one district administrator declined to participate in the study. Another district administrator from a similar-sized district was randomly selected, contacted, and later agreed to participate. A total of 13 districts were represented by the administrators who agreed to participate in this study. All data were collected during one-on-one interview sessions with each participating district

administrator. Each interview began by obtaining informed consent from the present participant. Interviews were conducted via phone and were recorded for later transcription. During the approximately 45-minute, semi-structured interview, district administrators responded to a variety of interview questions involving their recollections of the efforts they led and organized as their districts prepared principals to effectively evaluate teachers' classroom performances. Interview questions stemmed from the following research questions:

- What efforts are district instructional leaders making to develop the capacity of school principals to evaluate teacher instructional quality?
- What change-knowledge principles are manifested in these efforts?
- What impact have district efforts had on principal capacity?

### **Resource Design**

Interviews were the best way to collect district administrators' recollections of the efforts they led to implement USB64. Surveys were considered a method to gather such information; however, after analysis of the types of questions that would adequately probe with depth and breadth necessary to capture authentic and accurate information, I determined that surveys would be insufficient in seeking the type of information needed for this study. Probing questions, better facilitated through the interview process, allows for adequate opportunity to clarify and probe deeper into areas that would improve the quality of data collection (Patton, 2002). To that end, interviewing participants with probing questions allows for a more dynamic interaction, facilitating targeted, follow-up questions during the authentic conversations.

The primary purpose of the interview questions was to explore what district efforts had been used to implement USB64 requirements. This episodic interview approach (Flick, 2000) allowed participants to recall concrete events and situations as it related to the efforts they

directed. Flick (2000) referred to this approach where the interviewer guides candidates through a process in which they support the retrieval of information via a structured procedural format. This allows me, as the researcher, to scaffold the interview process in such a way that I can support the respondent in adequately recalling experiences.

### **Possible Data Sources: Exclusion of Relationship Questions**

This is an exploratory study. It has been nine years since USB64 was passed and five years since districts were expected to have it fully implemented. District leaders were able to identify specific efforts they led to prepare for USB64 despite the years of separation from the initial compliance timeline. I focused on asking “what” questions about implementation instead of relationship questions between variables. Hence, there are no hypotheses. Questions were not used to attempt to determine whether USB64 was successfully implemented or what impact USB64 has had on schools, on teacher quality, on student learning, or any other aspect of the education system.

This study can inform state and district leaders of the best practices in leading out a reform effort. Legislation can miss its intended mark when districts do not have buy-in. Policymakers should look beyond compliance as they work with state and district leaders to improve the education system of the state. An approach to policy that makes lasting impact requires all levels of the education system. The participants and roles of the state, district, school, and classroom should be considered essential if sustainable lasting changes are to be made. A partnership between key stakeholders at all levels is a necessary element to a united front that would pave the way for reform legislation that is meaningful and sustainable.

### **Possible Targeted Audiences: District-Level Leadership**

One might argue that teachers are the best target audience for this research since given that USB64 was ultimately targeted at improving student learning. Teachers were and continue to be impacted by USB64 the most, but they do not have the insight needed to discuss the specific measures the district took to implement USB64. State-level leadership mandated the requirements of USB64, but they were not in a position to discuss the answers sought out by this research. School-level principals could have been interviewed but would have generated data centered upon their perception of district efforts rather than data on the efforts. Only district administrators could have the insight into the behind the scenes efforts of districts as USB64 implementation efforts were prepared. I determined that interviewing district leadership, especially those leaders directly involved with implementing USB64 in the sampled districts, would generate data centered upon specific actions taken to implement USB64 leading to the ability to link actions to change knowledge components.

### **Change Knowledge**

Change knowledge is key to sustained reform efforts that lead to change in institutional practice. The role that change knowledge plays in reform efforts is not frequently addressed and not well understood. This research sought to identify the prerequisite knowledge districts had as they worked through the implementation process.

### **Analysis**

All interviews were conducted, transcribed, and imported into NVivo (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2014). All transcripts were read multiple times during the open coding process to ensure accuracy of pre-established (etic) nodes relating to change knowledge, as well as the newly emerged (emic) nodes relating to participants' experiences. Nodes with a threshold of

60% of respondents were considered for generating themes that captured the districts' implementation efforts.

Thematic analysis was used for coding data. An etic approach with predetermined themes and categories was used to identify change knowledge components that respondents described through the interview process. An emic approach was utilized as emerging themes became evident.

Axial coding was used to discover any relationship or patterns that might exist between the size of a district and the resulting themes. Finally, selective coding was done to synthesize the major themes and answer the guiding research questions.

During the final analysis process, several themes emerged as a result of district efforts and evidence of change-knowledge components based on a threshold or the inverted threshold of 60% in areas of a resulting theme and district size. This analysis was the window I used to look through when describing district efforts and their relationship or lack of relationship to change knowledge components.

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## APPENDIX D

### Consent Form

#### Consent to Be a Research Subject

##### **Introduction**

This research study is being conducted by Patrick Flanagan and Karen Johnson, doctoral students at Brigham Young University, to determine what Utah school district leaders are doing to implement Utah Senate Bill 64 (USB64). Utah's new teacher evaluation system.

##### **Procedures**

If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:

- You will be interviewed for approximately 45-60 minutes about your district's efforts to implement USB64.
- The interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements.
- The interview will take place either by phone, SKYPE, or at a time and location convenient for you.
- The researcher may contact you later to clarify your interview answers for approximately 5-15 minutes.
- Total time commitment will be 45-75 minutes.

##### **Risks/Discomforts**

You may feel some discomfort in providing candid answers in the interview.

##### **Benefits**

There will be no direct benefits to you. It is hoped, however, that through your participation researchers will understand the steps district leaders took to prepare principals for the implementation of USB64. This knowledge could help state and district educational leaders with future educational initiatives.

##### **Confidentiality**

You are guaranteed confidentiality. No identifying information will be included in any written reports or published findings. Once the audio recording is safely unloaded to NVIVO, the original recording will be deleted from the recording device. The research data will be kept on password-protected computers that only researchers will access. At the conclusion of the study, all identifying information will be removed and the data will be kept in the researcher's locked office.

##### **Compensation**

You will receive a \$25 gift card to Amazon.com for your participation.

##### **Participation**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate.

**Questions about the Research**

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Patrick Flanagan at (801) 824-9963 for further information.

**Questions about your Rights as Research Participants**

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant contact IRB Administrator at (801) 422-1461; A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, [irb@byu.edu](mailto:irb@byu.edu).

Statement of Consent

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX E

## Recruiting Scripts

## Recruiting Materials

IRB Part H

Principals will receive a personalized phone call or email as a first contact.

- Script for phone call or text for email:
  - Dear (Principal),
 

My name is [REDACTED] I'm a school principal in [REDACTED] District and a doctoral student at BYU. I am part of a research study that is examining districts' efforts to implement Utah Senate Bill 64. We are interested in learning about the principal's perspective about their district's efforts to build their capacity to evaluate teachers with the new teacher standards. You have been randomly selected to participate in the study which consists of a 30-45 minute interview with me via SKYPE. If you participate, we would like to thank you for taking time to participate by offering a \$25 gift card to Amazon.com. I would greatly appreciate it if you would let me know with a quick reply to this email if you are willing to be one of our interviewees. If you are, please include a contact phone number in your reply email so we can arrange an interview.

District administrators will receive a personalized phone call or email as a first contact.

- Script for phone call or text for email:
  - Dear (District Administrator),
 

My name is Patrick Flanagan. I'm a district administrator in [REDACTED] District and a doctoral student at BYU. I am part of a research study that is examining districts' efforts to implement Utah Senate Bill 64. We are interested in learning about your district's efforts to build principals' capacity to evaluate teachers with the new teacher standards. You have been selected to participate in the study because you have been directly involved in your district's efforts to implement this legislation. Participation in the study consists of a 30-45 minute interview with me via SKYPE. If you participate, we would like to thank you for taking time to participate by offering a \$25 gift card to Amazon.com. I would greatly appreciate it if you would let me know with a quick reply to this email if you are willing to be one of our interviewees. If you are, please include a contact phone number in your reply email so we can arrange an interview.



## APPENDIX F

**Approval for Conducting Study**

Institutional Review Board  
for Human Subjects



Brigham Young University  
A-285 ASB Provo, Utah 84602  
(801) 422-3841 / Fax: (801) 422-0620

January 5, 2017

Patrick Flanagan  
[REDACTED]

Re: Implementing Utah Senate Bill 64 and Building Principal Capacity

Dear Patrick Flanagan

This is to inform you that Brigham Young University's IRB has approved the above research study.

The approval period is from 1-5-2017 to 1-4-2018. Your study number is X16391. Please be sure to reference this number in any correspondence with the IRB.

Continued approval is conditional upon your compliance with the following requirements.

1. A copy of the 'Informed Consent Document' approved as of 1-5-2017 is enclosed. No other consent form should be used. It must be signed by each subject prior to initiation of any protocol procedures. In addition, each subject must be given a copy of the signed consent form.
2. All protocol amendments and changes to approved research must be submitted to the IRB and not be implemented until approved by the IRB.
3. The enclosed recruitment advertisement has been approved. Advertisements, letters, Internet postings and any other media for subject recruitment must be submitted to IRB and approved prior to use.
4. A few months before this date we will send out a continuing review form. There will only be two reminders. Please fill this form out in a timely manner to ensure that there is not a lapse in your approval.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sandee Aina".

Robert Ridge, PhD, Chair  
Sandee Aina, MPA, Administrator  
Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects