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Teachers' Perceptions of New Mexico's Three-Tiered Licensure System

Sheryl M. Williams Stapleton

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**TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF NEW MEXICO'S
THREE-TIERED LICENSURE SYSTEM**

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my adopted father, Marco A. Romero, without whose encouragement I would never have attempted this work.

I dedicate this dissertation to my adopted mom, Frances Romero, for her constant help and support.

I dedicate this dissertation to my mom, Clementine, my husband, Ed, and my children, David, Veronica, and EJ, for their patience over the last five years.

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Finally, I will always be grateful for Marco and Frances's unwavering support of me, and I only wish that Marco were still here to celebrate with me.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study seeks to explore the question, “What has been the impact of New Mexico’s three-tiered Teacher licensure system?” This study uses the voices of the participants to present perspectives, which give value to practices and experiences in the classroom. The three-tiered licensure system provides a unique type of professional growth for teachers. The study looked at five school districts throughout the state of New Mexico.

Perceptions, opinions, and beliefs of participants over the course of fourteen months were documented and analyzed using a qualitative study design. Participants’ reflections, audio-recordings, and field notes from interviews and focus groups provided thick description necessary for phenomenological analysis. These participants provided their experiences and perceptions to assist in exploring the research question. Many beginning teachers learned to question and explore their unique classroom opportunities. Some veteran teachers reflected on their teaching in relationship to practice and theory. Implications from this research include a restructuring of reform efforts in New Mexico.

The focus groups and interviews provided rich narrative data that were used to explore influences of the three-tiered licensure system as a motivator for classroom practice and how it may contribute to productive educational reform.

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CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

During the last 30 or more years, education reformers in New Mexico and other states have attempted to address the low academic performance of students from ethnic minorities (e.g., Hispanics, Native Americans, African Americans) relative to that of White students. In the last 20 years, the federal government passed legislation aimed at correcting inequalities in student learning among different ethnic groups. Schools were characterized as in crisis and failing (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). In 1993, the National Center for Education Evaluation (NCEE) published the report, “A Nation at Risk,” which warned that the “educational formations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people” (p. 9). NCEE found major shortcomings in the nation’s educational system and made recommendations regarding curriculum, student performance, time in school, and the relationship between the K-12 system and higher education. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 incorporated many of these recommendations. As a result of NCLB, New Mexico responded with education reform legislation that put into place a three-tiered licensure system for teachers. This dissertation study focuses on the impact of the three-tier system on schools and student academic performance, including

- The use of professional development and salary increases to improve teachers’ competence and student learning, and
- The perceptions, opinions, and beliefs of teachers who have completed the three-tiered licensure system.

To comply with the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

(NCLB), the New Mexico legislature passed the New Mexico School Reform Bill of 2003 (22-2NMSA, 1978). The New Mexico reform bill promoted expanded mentoring programs for new teachers, improved professional development by requiring teachers to prepare individual dossiers as a requirement for licensure and advancement, and provided financial incentives to attract and retain quality teachers in every school district (Rivera, 2004). This bill also established the three-tiered licensure system to support quality, experienced teachers because a teacher's years of experience and educational background have been found to be strongly associated with teacher quality (Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997). According to education research, the most influential factor to student achievement is teacher quality (Goldhaber, 2006). Other research has shown that when teacher quality is measured by the degree to which teachers affect student learning, as indicated by student test score gains and principal evaluations, other reforms become possible, such as compensation reform. Basing teacher compensation on teacher effectiveness is an essential step in translating better assessment into teacher quality improvements (Holly, 2008). The state legislature established the three-tiered licensure system based on the expectation that improved teacher quality would increase students' learning (Rivera, 2004).

New Mexico's Public Education Department (PED) established a professional development framework for school districts. The New Mexico State Legislature created Reform Bill 212 of 2003, in part to fulfill this requirement. Under this legislation, teachers must demonstrate increased competency to qualify for grade advancements and significant salary increases. Also under this system, school-wide professional development activities must be coordinated with teachers' professional development plans. To be considered "highly qualified," New Mexico teachers must demonstrate the

following nine competencies annually as they progress through the three-tiered licensure system (Rivera, 2004, p. 4).

1. The teacher accurately demonstrates knowledge of the content area and approved curriculum.
2. The teacher appropriately utilizes a variety of teaching methods and resources for each area taught.
3. The teacher effectively utilizes student assessment techniques and procedures.
4. The teacher communicates with and obtains feedback from students in a manner that enhances student learning.
5. The teacher comprehends the principles of student growth, development, and learning, and applies them appropriately.
6. The teacher manages the educational setting in a manner that promotes positive student behavior and a safe and healthy environment.
7. The teacher recognizes student diversity and creates an atmosphere conducive to promotion of student involvement and self-concept.
8. The teacher demonstrates a willingness to examine and implement change, as appropriate.
9. The teacher works productively with colleagues, parents, and community members.

The New Mexico State law regarding the three-tiered salary system requires the Public Education Department to use an objective, uniform statewide standard of evaluation. The system emphasizes nine teaching competencies covering instruction, student learning and professional learning. Currently, the teachers are evaluated against these competencies.

Table 1

Evidence of Competence

STRAND A: Instruction	NM Teacher Competency I	NM Teacher Competency II	NM Teacher Competency V	
Independent Reviewer	Knowledge of Content & Curriculum	Teaching Methods & Resources	Assessment Techniques & Procedures	
STRAND B: Student Learning	NM Teacher Competency III	NM Teacher Competency IV	NM Teacher Competency VI	NM Teacher Competency VII
Independent Reviewer	Student Communication & Feedback	Knowledge of Student Growth & Development	Classroom Management & Environment	Student Diversity
STRAND C: Professional Learning	NM Teacher Competency VIII	NM Teacher Competency IX		
Independent Reviewer	Change Agent	Collaboration With Colleagues, Parents, & Community		
STRAND D: Verification			Advancement From level II Or III-A:	
School districts			Verification of PDD Authenticity	

(Public Education Department, 2012)

New teachers are considered level I teachers. They advance through the licensure system according to the following requirements (Rivera, 2004).

- To advance to level II, level I teachers must demonstrate to their principal through a dossier that they have met the nine key teaching competencies and participate in a mentoring program.

- To advance to level III, level II teachers must demonstrate that they have met the nine key teaching competencies at a higher level of professionalism. They must also have earned a master's degree or obtained National Board Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification.
- Level III teachers must demonstrate command of key teaching competencies at a high level of professionalism during their annual evaluation.
- Level III teachers must undertake greater responsibility and become instructional leaders.

To show they have completed the three-tiered system, teachers have to demonstrate that they have completed the competencies. Teachers must show a collection of evidence of teacher performance that is reviewed externally.

Table 2 demonstrates how Level I, II, and III licenses are defined and reviewed for satisfactory completion at each level. The dossier, as part of the three-tiered system, is the teachers' evidence of their ability, performance, and leadership against the three levels.

Table 2

An Overview of New Mexico's Three-Tiered Teacher Licensure System

Level I	Level II	Level III
Provisional Teacher	Professional Teacher	Master Teacher
\$30,000 minimum salary	\$40,000 minimum salary	\$50,000 minimum salary
Must participate in a beginning mentoring program		
Must have an annual evaluation	Must have an annual evaluation	Must have an annual evaluation
	Must have a master's degree or NBPTS certification before advancing to level III	
Must have 3 to 5 years of successful teaching experience at level I before advancing to level II	Must have 3 years of successful teaching experience at level II before advancing to level III	
Advances to level II by submitting a Professional Development Dossier (PDD)	May advance to level III by submitting a Professional Development Dossier (PDD)	

(New Mexico Office of Education Accountability, 2007)

For teachers to demonstrate completion of the three-tier system and the competencies, teachers must provide a collection of evidence of teacher performance.

This performance is reviewed externally. The following tables demonstrate how the level I, II, and III licenses are constructed and reviewed for satisfactory completion at each

level. The dossier, as part of the three-tiered system, is used to assess teachers' ability, performance, and leadership. Table 3 describes the various levels.

Table 3

The Three-Tiered System's Licensure Levels

Level	Description
Level I	A provisional license that gives a beginning teacher opportunity for additional preparation to be a quality teacher
Level II	A license for a fully qualified professional who is primarily responsible for ensuring that students meet and exceed department-adopted academic content and performance standards
Level III	A license for the highest level; for teachers that advance as instructional leaders in the teaching profession and undertake greater responsibilities such as curriculum development, peer intervention and mentoring
	Level I – Provisional teacher
	Level II – Professional teacher
	Level III – Master teacher

(New Mexico Public Education Department, 2012)

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover teachers' perceptions of, and opinions and attitudes about, the impact of the three-tiered licensure system on teachers, classroom instruction, and student learning. This research also focused on the system's impact on classroom instruction and student learning, as demonstrated by teachers who completed the three-tiered licensure training and became highly qualified. The participants in this study were elementary, middle, and high school teachers who completed level I, level II, or level III of the three-tiered licensure system. The study population comprised teachers

from throughout the state. However, most teachers came from the Rio Grande Corridor: Gadsden, Las Cruces, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Pojoaque school districts. In addition, there were individual teachers from Gallup, Grants, and Santa Rosa. These teachers worked with diverse student populations.

These high-quality opportunities are typically

- Focused on the learning and teaching of specific curriculum context;
- Organized around real problems of practice;
- Connected to teachers' work with children;
- Linked to analysis of teaching and student learning;
- Intensive, sustained, and continuous over time;
- Connected to teachers' collaborative work in professional learning communities; and,
- Integrated into school and classroom planning around curriculum instruction and assessment (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Such opportunities could include particular strategies for teaching specific curriculum, interspersed with opportunities for teachers to try things in the classroom, such as coaching and reflecting together on their experiences, as well as opportunities to analyze observations or videos of teaching or samples of student work, peer observation, or collaborative planning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Background

National

After the blue-ribbon National Commission for Excellence in Education wrote "A Nation at Risk" in the early eighties, United States education stakeholders began to realize that compared to other nations, the U.S. education system had problems (NCEE,

1983). This report concluded that the U.S. education system must be improved to close achievement gaps and raise achievement for all students so that every child can be prepared to succeed in the future and so that the nation can remain preeminent in the world economy. In 2001, the United States Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), a sweeping six-year reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. NCLB was developed with the goal of reducing differences in academic performance among students of different color, immigrant status, ethnicity, and wealth. The 1965 Act required schools to demonstrate measurable improvements in their students' academic performance. NCLB refined many provisions of the original act and required greater accountability (Peterson & West, 2003).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) plan was formulated as a result of the 1994 findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 1994) that only 13 percent of African American and 19 percent of Hispanic 4th graders scored at or above the proficient level on NAEP reading and mathematics tests, compared to 47 percent of White students (NCLB 2005). According to the NAEP (1994) results, 12th grade minority students were reading, on average, at the level of White 8th graders. In an effort to correct this gap, in 2002 the NCLB increased testing requirements and mandated annual assessments in reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school.

The directive called for test results to be separated by race and ethnicity and for schools to demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP). For schools that do not make AYP, the law prescribes interventions and sanctions. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law includes the provision for students in schools that do not demonstrate sufficient progress to transfer to better-performing schools. It also requires states to ensure that

every teacher is “highly qualified” and mandates reports to parents on school performance and teacher quality. Although the law set the nation on a more productive course and spurred many improvements, these efforts have been insufficient. Many children in every state are still not achieving according to high standards (National Conference of State Legislators, 2005).

Constitutionally and historically, states are responsible for public education and are accountable to their citizens for the results of public education. States are committed to improving learning for all students and closing the achievement gap (National Conference of State Legislators, 2005). This task force further emphasized testimony on specific issues related to concerns from states regarding the requirements and the role of standards-based reforms. For example, the U.S. Department of Education administrators allowed the state of Nebraska to use portfolios as an alternative to relying primarily on test results (Public Law 107-110, Section 111, part A, 2002). The state received approval because its constitution guaranteed local control over school accountability and because the state was able to demonstrate that the assessments were valid and reliable.

The concept that standards, accountability, teacher quality, and options for parents to move their students can close the achievement gap for minorities and children with disabilities did not begin with NCLB. It began two decades previously with “A Nation at Risk” (National Commission for Excellence in Education, 1983). During the 20-year period between “A Nation at Risk” and NCLB, every state increased graduation requirements, added tests of student achievement, and increased qualifications for teachers (National Conference of State Legislators, 2005). In addition, Congress urged the states and the federal government to set educational goals that require all students to meet challenging standards and attain proficiency in subject areas by the year 2000. The

effort to set standards gained momentum with the passage of Goals 2000 (National Conference of State Legislators, 2005), a federal directive based on the findings of “A Nation at Risk” (National Commission for Excellence in Education, 1983). Goals 2000 provided funding for states to develop standards and related assessments.

Other State Initiatives

Systemic reform initiatives in many states focus on teacher professional development (Cocoran, Shields, & Zucker, 1998). Researchers Darling-Hammond, Ancers, and Wichlerle Ort (2002) studied teacher professional development as a way to restructure schools and improve student performance in a classroom at Julia Richman High School. The student sample represented diversity in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and a full range of academic achievement. They analyzed data from years 1992–1994 and observed portfolio work, students’ classes, and academic areas.

These researchers identified the following factors of school restructuring that promoted school success: small school size, personalization of the curriculum, and performance assessment. They also noted that two structural features of restructuring enabled students to succeed: monitoring students’ success through assessments and linking curriculum to students’ own lives and interests. The flexible schedule and small classroom student loads helped students internalize the instruction, and the students used portfolios as learning experiences to engage in what Newman (1996) called *authentic achievement*. Teachers required students to communicate orally and in writing, solve problems, and make cogent presentations before an audience (Newman, 1996).

Based on the results of my study, teachers used professional development to enrich students’ lives and provide classroom instruction that promoted learning. The

study showed that the collaborative projects and professional development training resembled “high involvement” business organizations (Moluman, Lauler, & Moluman, 1992). In this type of environment, staff members are placed in groups with distributed expertise. These groups are responsible for problem analysis, decision-making, and the outcome of their work. The professional development resulted in creative system reforms, such as new organizational structures, major policy changes in system-level accountability and interdisciplinary instruction, and performance-based assessment of student learning.

New Mexico

Before each school year begins, the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) must provide school districts, legislators, and the governor with students’ test scores from the New Mexico Standards Based Assessment (NMSBA). This assessment measures students’ proficiency in reading, math, language arts, science, and at times, writing. Based on these test scores, 54.4% of the public schools in 2007 did not make adequate yearly progress as required by the 2001 NCLB legislation, and most were in some form of school improvement status (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).

Although the New Mexico school reform bill was passed in 2003, the percentage of schools not making adequate yearly progress is increasing. Some authors believe that school reform efforts fail to achieve their major goals because the school districts have not established adequate systems to insure sustainability (Brown & Spangler, 2006). Research on the relationship between classroom instruction and student achievement has consistently demonstrated that teachers make a greater difference on student achievement than any other school factor (Mohrman & Lauler, 1992). However, across the nation, many districts struggle to find and keep the quality teachers necessary for all students to

achieve at high levels. Students of an ineffective teacher will learn, on average, half a year's worth of material in one school year, and the students in the class of a very good teacher will learn a year and a half's worth of material (Hanushek, 1971). The calculation shows that the U.S. could close the gap between White students and minority students in academic performance of students (Gladwell, 2008).

A quality teacher is defined as a teacher who is highly qualified teaching in an environment that ensures that teachers have time for collaboration, collective planning, peer coaching, curriculum development and assessment, and jointly examining student work (Gladwell, 2008). Darling-Hammond stated that quality teachers provide meaningful and essential learning experiences and engage in instruction and assessment that require students to construct and organize knowledge, apply what they are learning, and present and defend their ideas, rather than focus on multiple-choice tasks (2000).

Research on teacher education and certification suggests that a variety of teacher experience and attributes appear to contribute to the effects that teachers have on student learning. Several aspects of teachers' qualifications have been found to bear some relationship to student achievement. These include teachers' general academic and verbal abilities; subject matter knowledge about teaching and learning as reflected in teacher education courses or preparation experiences, and teaching experiences (Darling Hammond, 2000). In fact, strong influences of teacher certification on student achievement in high school mathematics and science have shown to elicit greater gains when teachers have a major in the subject as opposed to those who do not (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000). Studies employing national, state, and other data sets have reported significant relationships between teacher education and certification measures and

student performance (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Letter, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2000).

A study of the Arizona Career-Ladder Programs found that, over time, participating teachers demonstrated an increased ability to create tools to assess student learning gains in their classrooms, to develop and evaluate pre-and post-tests, to define measurable outcomes, and to monitor student growth in relation to their action plans. Thus, the development and use of student learning evidence was associated with improvements in practice (Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, 2012).

The relationship between education, certification measures, and student performance has become an issue of major concern when it comes to initiatives to measure and improve teaching effectiveness. In New Mexico, the improvement of teaching effectiveness has emerged as a significant policy issue as pressures for improved student performance have intensified. Such initiatives will have the greatest payoff if they stimulate practices known to support student learning and are embedded in systems that also develop greater teaching competence (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Darling-Hammond (2012) emphasized valid evidence of teacher effectiveness based on multiple measures. The three-tiered system promotes contribution for classroom success, as well as criteria for accomplishments that all participating teachers can achieve. This system does not pit teachers against each other. Rather, teachers show evidence of student learning and achievement through evaluation (Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Several recent studies have demonstrated that student achievement does not increase when teachers are evaluated and rewarded based merely on whether they raise test scores (Fryer, 2011; Milanowski, Kimball, & White, 2013). An examination of a set of studies on standards-based teacher evaluations suggest that the more teachers'

classroom activities and behaviors reflect professional standards practice, the more effective they are in supporting student learning. Hassell (2002) concluded that tying teachers' advancement and compensation to their knowledge and skills, and then using an evaluation system that helps develop those skills, may ultimately produce more positive change in practice than evaluating teachers based primarily on student test scores.

The findings of a working group on teacher quality showed that “well prepared, high-quality teachers are essential if we are to ensure that all students achieve the high standards necessary to lead fulfilling lives and become productive citizens” (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2007). To develop and sustain successful high quality teachers, the integration of a performance-pay system was necessary and used as a larger coordinated strategy for improving teacher teaching and student learning (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2007).

Struggling schools in New Mexico are not improving as effectively or as rapidly as hoped when the three-tiered licensure system was created. For example, in 2005, 246 of New Mexico's public schools were in some form of restructuring due to students' low achievement and the widening achievement gap between ethnic minorities and White students (PED State Annual Report, 2005–2006). Legislators receive reports about low reading scores among younger children and teens. A high number of students are dropping out of school, and over 80% of students in the state qualify for free or reduced lunch. School administrators are concerned about their teachers' lack of skills and the cost of training them (PED Annual Report, 2005-2006), and the state spends millions annually for remedial courses for college freshmen (Winograd, 2007).

In 2011, 86.6% of New Mexico schools did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). However, for the 2012 school year, the New Mexico Public Education

Department requested and received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education to use a school grading system of a A–F, rather than AYP. The AYP says that students have to score proficient on the Standards Based Assessment (SBA), while the A–F system allows schools to get credit for student growth, even if that growth doesn't make the arbitrary AYP requirement, which is 100% of this school year. For 2012, 36% of the New Mexico schools received a grade of “D” or “F” (NM Public Education Department, 2013).

Many conditions in New Mexico contribute to New Mexico ranking the 3rd worst in the nation for dropouts—only Georgia and Nevada are worse. One condition is an overreaching culture of poverty; over 80% of students qualify for free and reduced priced meals, 50% are below the poverty level, and 10% of the students are homeless. Only 54% of New Mexico's students that enter the 9th grade make it to their senior year (Vazquez, 2009). The PED Annual Report for 2005–2006 pointed out that the assumption is made that high numbers of high poverty/high ethnic minority students translates to lower levels of student achievement. The graduation rate for the nation is 70%, while New Mexico's was 56% in 2006 and 54.1% in 2005 (The New Mexico Independent, June 26, 2009). In New Mexico, the school population ranges from 72% to 98% minority students (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2008).

Although the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) attempted to lay the groundwork for closing the achievement gap nationally, the achievement gap has widened for some student groups in New Mexico. More than half (58.5%) of New Mexico's public high school graduates who attend college take remedial courses in numeracy and literacy. In 2000, 67% of Native American students and 55% of Hispanics took college remedial classes, increasing to 71% and 58%, respectively, in 2006. In contrast, the percent of

black students required to take remedial courses dropped from 56% in 2000 to 54% in 2006 (Winograd, 2007). Over a five-year period, in spite of the implementation of NCLB and New Mexico's House Bill 212, the state's larger minority populations (i.e., Hispanics and Native Americans) still lagged behind White students. During the same period, the percentage of White students who took remedial courses decreased.

These findings prompted education leaders to examine major policy actions that target improved classroom learning. State lawmakers have responded by developing new legislation, at times without sufficient assessment of teachers' working conditions, their salary structure, or the professional development provided to them. This approach, however, is consistent with the manner in which the 2003 reform bill was developed, i.e., not based on school reform research but on legislators' personal ideas about school reform.

Those who wish to propose a new policy initiative for developing highly effective teachers will find little competition for time on the New Mexico legislative agenda (Kingdon, 2003). State policy makers are extremely concerned about the achievement of the state's public school students, and they are perplexed by the fact that although policy has been established for significant education improvements (e.g., developing highly qualified teachers, improving academic standards, increasing accountability requirements, and funding a better compensation system through the three-tiered licensure system), students' achievement scores continue to increase, but they are not significantly different from scores in 2005 or even 1992. In 2007, New Mexico's fourth-grade student average score in reading was 212, higher, but not significantly so, than the average score of 207 in 2005. The math scores showed similar results, with an average of 228 among fourth grade students, an increase from the average score of 224 in 2005

(NCES). The scores being compared were based on the same measurement tools. The most recent data showed that in 2011, the scores of 4th grade students in New Mexico was 233. This was lower than the average score of 230 in 2009 and was higher than the average score in 1992 (NAEP, 2011). As indicated by these data, achievement scores were higher before the federal No Child Left Behind Act and New Mexico's reform bill were signed into law.

Conditions are different than problems, but "conditions become defined as problems when we come to believe that we should do something about them" (Kingdon, 2003, p. 109). New Mexico legislators believe something should be done about student achievement and teacher performance. Based on the desire to increase student learning, legislators in New Mexico continued to push for legislation that would provide growth in student learning, such as the *High School Redesign* legislation passed in 2008. Although legislators are concerned about this issue, they are hindered by budgetary requirements for funding a new major reform initiative. As Kingdon (2003) noted, "budgetary considerations sometimes force items higher on the governmental agenda" (p. 105). In other cases, items may be removed from the legislative agenda due to cost.

The Center for Competency-Measured Education commended New Mexico's three-tiered licensure system for promoting improved teacher quality, for introducing requirements aligned with NCLB, and for making teacher quality a statewide issue (American Teacher, 2009). The basis of the statewide focus is ensuring that schools have the resources to help teachers improve instruction (Rivera, 2004). Policy makers consider improving teacher quality necessary for improving student achievement. In fact, a key requirement of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is that by 2006 all teachers were to have been highly qualified in the subjects they teach, a requirement that has produced both

negative and positive opinions from researchers, superintendents, principals, teachers, and parents. Highly qualified teachers are ones who must prove content knowledge for every academic subject they teach.

Dr. Veronica Garcia responded that since the implementation of the three-tiered licensure system, which has been in place since July 2004, New Mexico achieved the following milestones.

- For 2008, 94% of core classes in New Mexico were taught by highly qualified teachers, an increase over 2003 and 2004 when just 67% of core classes were taught by highly qualified teachers.
- New Mexico ranked third in the nation in percent change in average teachers' salaries from 1997–98 to 2007–08.
- New Mexico ranked 17th in the nation for its efforts to improve teaching. (Garcia, 2009). Garcia also noted that the three-tiered licensure system had met the legislature's intent to evaluate the teaching profession by shifting to a professional educator licensing and salary system.

The issue of how to improve the quality of teachers is one of the most controversial and emotionally charged issues in education reform (Porter-Magee, 2004). Teacher quality might be thought of as the bundle of personal traits, skills, and understandings an individual brings to teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Darling-Hammond explained that there are dispositions to teacher quality and that they could include the following:

- Support learning for all students,
- Teach in a fair and unbiased manner,
- Adapt instruction to help students succeed,
- Strive to continue to learn and improve, and

- Collaborate with other professionals and parents in the service of individual students and the school as a whole.

Darling-Hammond (2012) further expressed that strong teacher quality, which relates to high-quality instruction, can heighten the probability of effective teaching. To show effectiveness, initiatives must be developed that would identify, reward, and use teachers' skills and abilities. She stated that if teaching is to be effective, the policies that construct the learning environments and the teaching context must be addressed along with the qualities of individual teachers (p. 4).

Some education stakeholders are concerned that efforts to improve teacher quality in struggling schools indicate the belief that certain teachers are performing poorly (Porter-Magee, 2004). For example, in San Jose, California, the quality of a child's teacher often depended on where the child attended school. The more experienced and better-qualified teachers tended to gravitate to schools serving relatively affluent students, while the "downtown schools" serving low-income students tended to be left with newer teachers with fewer qualifications and less experience. These disparities helped exacerbate an achievement gap between students in the two groups of schools (The Aspen Institute, 2007). This has become a legitimate concern not only in the San Jose Unified School District but also in many urban districts. In fact, the foundational principle of NCLB is the idea that teacher quality is the most important school factor in student success.

Research also shows that the effects of teacher quality are cumulative (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In Dallas, researchers found that students assigned to effective teachers for three years in a row went from the 59th percentile in the 4th grade to the 76th percentile in the 6th grade. A group of students with similar characteristics, including

prior achievement, race, and income, who were assigned to less effective teachers lost ground over the same period; they went from the 60th percentile to the 42nd (The Aspen Institute, 2007).

In the 2002 U.S. *Secretary of Education Report Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge*, the secretary argued that teachers matter for student achievement but that teacher education and certification are not related to teacher effectiveness. The secretary claimed that researchers have found that some teachers are much more effective than others (2002). The secretary asserted that verbal ability and subject matter knowledge are the most important components of teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond & Young, 2002). In evaluating teacher evaluation, the authors define effective teachers as those who

- Understand subject matter deeply and flexibly;
- Connect what is to be learned to students' prior knowledge and experience;
- Create effective scaffolds and supports for learning;
- Use instructional strategies that help students draw conclusions, apply what they're learning, practice new skills, and monitor their own learning;
- Assess student learning continuously and adapt teaching to student needs; and
- Develop and effectively manage a collaborative classroom in which all students have membership (Darling-Hammond, Anrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012).

Darling-Hammond (2002) noted that teachers' participation in the National Board process supports their professional learning and stimulates changes in their practice. The New Mexico Standards-Based Teacher Evaluation System includes a dossier process that is modeled after the National Board Certification Portfolio. The Professional

Development Dossier (PDD) provides evidence of performance along the dimensions of instruction, student learning, and professional learning. Additionally, the New Mexico PDD demonstrates the need for a more systematic approach to building teacher effectiveness. For example, in *Gearing Up: Creating a Systemic Approach to Teacher Effectiveness* (2012), a recent task force of the National Association of State Boards of Education emphasized the importance of creating a more aligned system, beginning with recruitment and preparation and continuing through evaluation and career development, which is what the PDD is designed to do.

New Mexico's school reform legislation, House Bill (HB) 212 of 2003, established requirements and increased per pupil funding for school costs and teacher salaries. The legislation included measures intended to produce improvements in professional development and teacher quality through the three-tiered licensure system, with the aim of bringing New Mexico's teachers' income to a level comparable to that of other states in the region. HB 212 established mechanisms not only to reform New Mexico's educational system but also to create an environment of highly effective teachers in the state.

This reform legislation linked increased participation in professional development to student achievement through the use of a professional development dossier. The dossier is an organized collection of materials, including study groups, workshops, observation of lessons, and coaching in the classroom, that demonstrates a teacher's knowledge and classroom skills (Rivera, 2004). According to the Public Education Department, beginning in the spring of 2005 and through June of 2008, 5,188 teachers submitted a professional development dossier (PDD) and 4,700 teachers passed the review of the PDDs. A highly qualified teacher is defined by the contents of the dossier

and transcripts and not by observation of teacher effectiveness practices in the classroom. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future in 2005 conducted an early analysis of the New Mexico's three-tiered licensure system. At this presentation, Casey Mitchell, Winograd, and Ball (2005) emphasized that the benefits of the professional development dossier (PDD) were "The establishment of a legitimate approach to assessing teacher quality on a state-wide basis":

- Promotion of professional conversations among educators, and
- Improvements by teachers, albeit self reported, in instruction because of the experience of preparing their dossiers.

The purpose of that examination was to show what teachers say about student learning and to explain specific performance criteria that must be met for advancement to the next level of licensure: The report concluded that online submission proved to be effective and holds promise for efficient and timely data management. In addition, it was a manageable and effective assessment of teacher performance, based on the number of quality submissions. The final conclusion was the review process proved to be reliable between reviewers at the decision point of Meets/Does not meet, with a preliminary estimate of 92% for level II and 88% for level III. (Casey et al., 2005).

The dossier allows education leaders and evaluators to identify teachers who have deep content knowledge and pedagogical ability in the subjects they teach. With the reform bill's requirement for ongoing professional development, school administrators can help teachers better align content knowledge and skills with curriculum and classroom instruction. The professional development dossier allows teachers to demonstrate their participation in rigorous professional learning on appropriate instructional methods and the application of classroom assessment strategies (Rivera,

2004). By participating in a professional development system, such as the dossier, teachers can increase subject area knowledge and improve teaching practices (Rivera, 2004).

Teachers must undergo professional development designed to facilitate desired student outcomes (Cawelti, 1999). Research organizations and teachers unions recommend that more money and time be set aside for teachers' professional development activities (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Darling-Hammond (2007) stated that a highly skilled teaching force results from developing well-prepared teachers, from recruitment, from preparation, and from ongoing professional development. She linked what teachers do in the classroom with how they are prepared and assessed.

For example, the State of Michigan requires new teachers to complete 15 days of professional development over their first three years. In addition, new teachers, like experienced teachers, must complete five days of professional learning annually (Michigan Department of Education, 1997). Again, looking at the San Jose school districts, researchers (The Aspen Institute, 2007) found that credentials were not enough to raise the quality of the teaching force. Some newer teachers, they found, were better able to teach students from diverse backgrounds because they had been specifically trained in such methods. They found that many teachers have benefited from high-quality professional learning opportunities and mentoring programs (The Aspen Institute, 2007).

- Professional development activities have been the result of initiatives imposed by district-level decision makers. When these professional development opportunities happen to address a problem that a teacher has encountered they are very useful. Teachers believe that there is always room to improve. They believe that professional development activities need to be highly relevant to

their immediate conditions; teachers do not have time to waste. Good professional development should always be long term and embedded in the teaching context (Reback, 2010).

These high-quality opportunities are typically

- Focused on the learning and teaching of specific curriculum context,
- Organized around real problems of practice,
- Connected to teachers' work with children,
- Linked to analysis of teaching and student learning,
- Intensive, sustained, and continuous over time,
- Connected to teachers' collaborative work in professional learning communities, and
- Integrated into school and classroom planning around curriculum instruction and assessment (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Overall such opportunities could include particular strategies for teaching specific curriculum, interspersed with opportunities for teachers to try things in the classroom, such as coaching and reflecting together on their experiences, as well as opportunities to analyze observations or videos of teaching or samples of student work, peer observation, or collaborative planning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Through the use of the professional development dossier system, the three-tiered licensure legislation addresses the need for New Mexico Public schools to improve the quality of teachers. The legislators' expectation is that if teacher quality improves, student learning will improve. Exploring the relationship between these two factors, enhanced teacher professional development and improved student learning, was one of

the principal goals of this study. Specifically, the problem this research addressed is the perceived effect of the three-tiered licensure system on classroom instruction and student learning. My interest was to better understand teachers' perceptions, opinions, and attitudes of the impact of the three-tiered licensure system on teachers, classroom instruction, and student learning.

Purpose of Study

Education reform in New Mexico is a continuing process. A major objective of reform efforts is to increase adequate student performance by providing students access to highly qualified classroom teachers. House Bill 212 (2003) created a roadmap for an effective K–12 education system in New Mexico responsive to NCLB goals, the need to improve student achievement, and the need to recruit and retain a high-quality workforce.

Scope of Study

This study examined educational reform efforts in New Mexico, focusing on the effectiveness of the current three-tiered licensure system and how teachers perceive various aspects of the system. The research demonstrated how teachers' perceptions, ideas, beliefs, and opinions affect instruction. This research also intended identified practices that can provide direction for classroom instruction and student learning, as well as practices that may improve classroom instruction.

Other reports have been written regarding the three-tiered system, including a Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) joint evaluation with Office of Educational Accountability (OEA) and the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC). These reports addressed recruitment and retention issues and suggested further study into the links between advanced licensure and student academic performance (Winograd, 2009).

Conceptual Framework

Educational Reform is Achievable

One concept guiding this research study was my own belief that improvements in public education and advances toward educational reform are achievable through concerted efforts by state legislative and educational leaders, district administrators, and teachers. This belief is at the root of the New Mexico Educational Reform Act, House Bill 212 of 2003 (22-1-1-22-22-6 NMSA 1978), which states,

The Legislature finds that no education system can be sufficient for the education of all children unless it is founded on the sound principle that every child can learn and succeed, and the system must meet the needs of all children by recognizing that student success for every child is the fundamental goal. (p. 2)

Articulating these beliefs of the New Mexico legislature, the Act directed the adoption of a three-tiered licensure system that holds multiple stakeholders at various levels of the state's educational system accountable for strengthening teaching as a profession in New Mexico and enhancing the professional skills of teachers. This reform effort called for a high-quality teacher in every classroom and greater emphasis on strengthening the teacher profession. According to Abdal-Haqq (1996), the awareness is growing that educational reform is achievable. There is also an emerging consensus that meaningful reform will not occur until teachers are recognized as full partners in leading, defining, and implementing school improvement efforts (Boe & Gilford, 1992; Darling Hammond, 1998; Fessle & Ungaretti, 1994; Peixotto & Fager, 1999).

This research was based on the belief that improved teaching leads to improved student achievement in the context of a reform model that assigns maximum importance to teacher professional development and pay improvements. Studies suggest that teacher

quality is one of the greatest determinants of student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ferguson & Ladd, 1996; Rivkin, Hanushik, & Kain, 2005), which supports efforts by New Mexico policymakers to improve teacher quality, including improving the compensation schedule. Prior to the 2003 reform bill, New Mexico had one of the lowest rates of teacher salaries, adding to the problem that teachers already earn smaller salaries than comparably educated workers in other professions (Allegretto, Corcoran, & Mishel, 2004).

House Bill (HB) 212 was based in part on the idea that increases in teacher salaries will improve retention of high-quality teachers (Ferris & Winkler, 1986; Harris & Associates, 1995; Murmane & Olsen, 1990). Some researchers have found that across-the-board salary increases have a negligible effect on teacher retention and student performance (Ballou & Podgursky, 1996; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004), though others have linked higher salary compensation to improved teacher quality and student learning (Figlio, 1997; Loeb & Page, 2000). The three-tiered licensure system, with three pay levels, was based on this link between teacher compensation and teacher quality. This connects teacher compensation to progress in student learning (Odden & Kelly, 2002; Milanowski, 2003).

This process also provides opportunities for teachers to advance toward the high quality status, including mentoring and administrative responsibilities, accompanied by salary increases (Odden & Kelly, 1977). The desire for salary improvement should motivate teachers to participate in the three-tiered licensure system and to engage in the professional development dossier to enhance their professional skills. The reform bill redesigned the teacher compensation system, to be implemented over a nine-year period, with beginning teachers' salaries starting at \$30,000 per year and salary increments of

\$10,000 every three years up to an annual maximum of \$50,000. This research study was intended to demonstrate how teachers' perceptions, ideas, beliefs, and opinions are related to their instruction and participation in the three-tier system, as they described it.

Classroom Instruction Can be Improved

The three-tiered teacher licensure system (HB212, 2003, NMSA1978) requires teachers to demonstrate professional development through the dossier they submit for advancement to a higher grade and pay. The dossier should show that the teacher has learned techniques that are applicable in the classroom and the overall school environment. Indeed, one objective of professional development initiatives is for all teachers to participate, leading to overall school improvements (Abdal-Haqq, 1996). By passing legislation that connects salary increases to professional development, New Mexico state-level policy makers showed their dedication to improving teacher quality and making professional learning central to reform efforts. They further demonstrated this dedication by including pay incentives in HB 212. When these goals are accomplished, New Mexico's students will likely benefit (Goldhaber, 2006).

Increased Teacher Compensation Will Help Educational Reform

The system involves constant communication between major stakeholders, including administrators and entities representing the policymakers. This reform effort involves data gathering, standards for good teaching, teacher preparation, assessment of student learning, and the availability of high-quality professional development. Those who drafted the reform bill expected the three-tiered licensure system to increase retention of experienced teachers and to induce increased student learning. One concept that guided this research was that increased teacher compensation promotes educational reform. Teachers respond best and learning improves most when professional

development and teacher training are aligned with the demands of the new compensation system (Milanowski, 2003; Odden & Kelly, 2002; Stout, 1996; Community Training and Assistance Center, 2004).

Senechal (2010), in *The Most Daring Educational Reform of All*, pointed out that as long as there have been public schools, there have been reforms of public schools, and all too often they have insisted on sweeping changes. However, in recent years, vocal reforms are calling for 21st century skills throughout the K–12 curriculum. These skills include such broad concepts as creativity, innovation, problem solving, communication, collaboration teamwork, and critical thinking. These approaches are not new, but to policy makers and teachers, they ensure that content is not short-changed. The infusion of 21st century skills into all learning calls for an emphasis of not only teachers' direct involvement but also action by policy makers and a coalition of organization and corporate businesses (American Educator, 2010). Weingartner, in *A New Path Forward*, suggested that "if our goal is to truly transform our public education system, we must make sure that teachers have what they need to do a good job: tools, time and trust" (2010, p. 38).

As the struggle for reform continues, researchers, such as Ravitch, concluded that real reform will renew, not abandon, our neighborhood schools. As she watched the choice and accountability movements gain momentum across the nation, she concluded that curriculum and instruction were of primary importance.

Classroom instruction and teacher retention are products of teachers' salaries and the knowledge and skills represented through the required dossiers. School administrators are having increasing difficulty attracting new teachers and retaining the best teachers; both can be accomplished when school districts can guarantee teachers a salary

commensurate with their education, experience, and performance (Shanker, 1985).

Teacher retention can be a product of teacher salaries and the knowledge and skills represented through the required dossiers. One of the major arguments of the 2003 comprehensive public school reform legislation is a provision that states, “This legislation was intended to address a teacher shortage that had been identified in the late 1990’s and to enhance student achievement.” As a means of addressing both of these, the legislature created a three-tiered teacher licensure system (Winograd 2009). The legislature found that the teacher shortage in this country has affected the ability of New Mexico to compete for the best teachers and that, unless the state and school districts find ways to mentor beginning teachers and intervene with teachers while they still show promise, improve the job satisfaction of quality teachers, and elevate the teaching profession by shifting to a professional educator licensing and salary system, public schools will be unable to recruit and retain the highest quality teachers (HB 212 of 2003, NMSA 1978).

Since the legislation of the three-tiered licensure system, there has been growing interest in moving beyond traditional measures of teacher qualifications to evaluate teachers’ actual performance and effectiveness as a basis for licensing and compensation. The No Child Left Behind Commission is calling for moving beyond the designation of “highly qualified” to an assessment of whether teachers are “highly effective” based in part on student gains on tests (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The author mentioned that other measures of effectiveness include the National Board Certification. The New Mexico three-tiered system includes all of the effective measures except student gains on tests. The three-tiered system looks at good practice on the part of teachers and evidence of their skills and abilities. These include access to skilled colleagues and other resources

for learning. Over 90% of the nation's teachers report that their colleagues contribute to their teaching effectiveness (Midlife Foundation, 2009).

Research on professional development frequently underscores the importance of teachers working together to improve their collective practice (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2010). "Studies suggest that the more teachers are enabled to enact professional standards of practice in their classrooms, the more effective they are in supporting student learning," states Darling-Hammond (2010). With the certification of teachers, increased compensation, and teacher effectiveness, school districts across the country have looked at various types of compensation systems: merit pay plans, differential pay, and the single salary system. The merit pay plan has the potential to attract a different type of professional to the teaching force, and it is a system that can pressure teachers to improve or leave (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Merit pay rewards only teachers who actually produce results. While pay differentials are normally given to teachers who agree to work in remote setting and hard-to-staff schools, this method of salary payment can also be used to attract and retain new teachers (Loeb & Reininge, 2004).

The single-salary system is the type of system that exists in New Mexico with the three-tiered licensure system designed to retain and attract new teachers, keeping in mind that most New Mexico school districts do participate in collective bargaining negotiations. Teacher quality improvement is one of the intended purposes of the New Mexico three-tiered system.

Changes Are Needed

The final concept guiding this study was that policy-makers must consider all levels of New Mexico's educational system to create educational reform. As Senge (1999, p. 9) stated, "shared commitment to change develops only with collective

capability to build shared aspirations.” For reform to occur, all members of an organization must be made aware of core leadership issues (Fullan, 2001). In New Mexico, organizational leaders have developed and managed most education reforms efforts, rarely with participation by teachers, parents, and students. In the current reform effort, however the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) teachers’ union provide teachers with a vehicle for input.

The following figure demonstrates the reform concepts that make up education reform efforts when implementing the three-tiered licensure system. For example, the figure demonstrates that education reform through the three-tiered system teacher professional development occurs in conjunction with improved teacher compensation. The final outcome is to achieve improved classroom instruction, enhanced teaching quality, and improved student learning that comes from increased economic resources. Ultimately, all classrooms should have a diverse student and staff population. The same pattern applies if the education reform approach is viewed as starting with a diverse population of students and the need for economic resources.

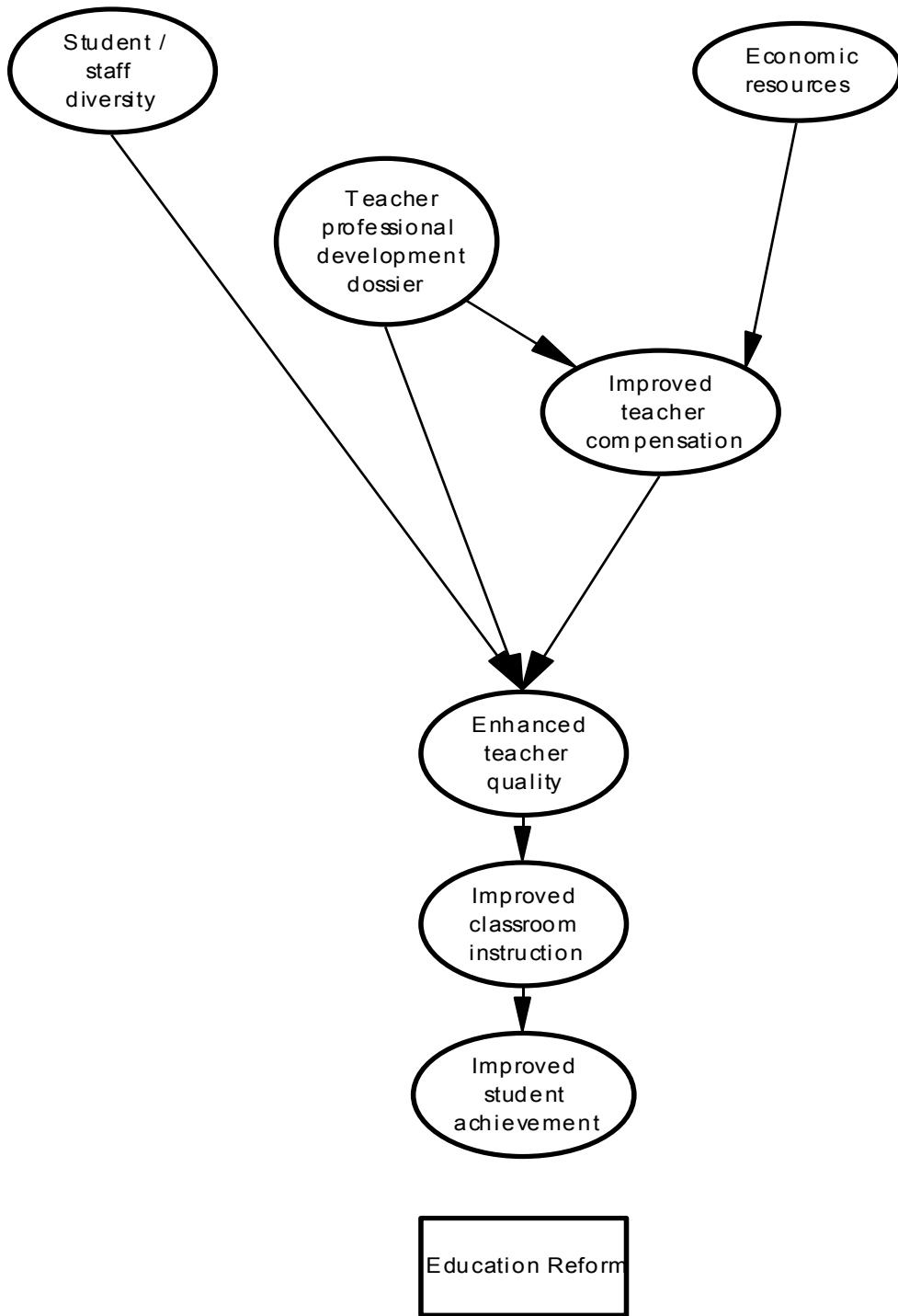


Figure 1. Flow chart for research on the three-tiered licensure system

Definitions

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The annual academic targets in reading and math and other indicators that the state, school districts, and schools must reach to be considered on track with the federally mandated goal of 100% proficiency by school year 2013-2014.

New Mexico House Bill 212. An act relating to public education, providing public school reforms, sanctions, rewards, licensure of certain school employees, and providing for improvement indicators and accountability.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. A six-year reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESLA) to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice.

School in Need of Improvement. A school that does not achieve AYP for two consecutive years and must use a portion of its Title 1 funds to provide "school choice" and must provide transportation for students whose families choose to send them to another school designated by the district.

Three-Tiered Licensure System. A system created in 2003 that requires licensees to demonstrate teaching efficiency and growth as they advance through certification and links teachers' licensure levels with guaranteed salary levels.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

The goal of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is to close or narrow the differences in achievement among American students. The U.S. Secretary of Education believed that the success of American democracy and our economic future depended on a society in which everyone is educated to their full potential. Therefore, the secretary convened a national summit on student achievement to create an incentive and discuss

whether expectations for students are sufficient for the U.S. to retain international preeminence (NCLB, 2007). In order to do so, local school districts would work to improve the quality of education for all students and to close the achievement gap. When we look back to the National Commission in Excellence in Education report “A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform” (1983), we see that the reform efforts that have taken place since that time were not only designed to enact effective measures of education but also to attain a high-quality education system. As reform efforts continued throughout the United States, goals became interconnected in that the level of student learning must increase and the gap between the achievement levels of White, affluent students and those of minority and economically disadvantaged students must be raised. The concept and the origins of reform that would close the gaps, provide high quality teachers, and promote better student learning in schools continued to 2001 with the introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act (Luce & Thompson, 2005).

Prior to NCLB and the introduction of the three-tiered licensure system, the New Mexico Legislature continually heard presentations from the Public Education Department (PED) and the New Mexico Office of Education Accountability (OEA, 2007) that New Mexico was consistently 46th/47th in the nation in teacher’s salaries. In an effort to improve public education in New Mexico and through reform efforts, the three-tiered licensure system was enacted with the clear goal of increasing performance levels of students and creating highly qualified teachers through compensatory methods. The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, with the aim of having all students be academically proficient, continues to provide the support for New Mexico's three-tiered licensure system (Luce & Thompson, 2005). The results of this study may help

understand the impact of the three-tiered licensure system on classrooms as perceived by teachers.

The following literature review discusses each issue central to this study and provides the historical context for state policy and issues related to teachers' professional development, enhanced teacher quality, improved classroom instruction, improved student learning, and individual issues related to teachers.

Research Question

This qualitative research study was designed to explore the following question: What are teachers' perceptions of the impact of New Mexico's three-tiered licensure system? Within this research question, I examined the following sub-questions: What is the impact of the three-tiered licensure system on teaching as perceived by teachers, and what are teachers' perceptions of their practices and the dossier process as they relate to student learning?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews pertinent literature related to each key aspect of this research study. The literature review focuses on how teacher development relates to student learning and success and on how legislation impacts teacher reform. This chapter identifies factors of teacher compensation and development that affect student learning and success. One priority of all schools nationally is ensuring that students understand what they need to do to reach their career aspirations. The literature on development and compensation focuses on teacher development in relation to student achievement and on the impact of legislation on teacher reform. In this context, teacher reform refers to changes in the educational system related to complexity of teaching, role of the teacher, and the teaching profession (Keichner & Koppich, 1997). This study describes some factors that impact student learning related to the relationship between teacher compensation and development to student achievement.

The U.S. Secretary of Education convened a national summit on student achievement to create an incentive and to discuss whether expectations for students are sufficient for the U.S. to retain its international preeminence (NCLB, 2007). As stated in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, “Parents deserve to know that their children are receiving a high quality education that will prepare them for life in a global economy” (p. 126). The New Mexico legislature took the same approach when it passed House Bill (HB) 212 of 2003, the public education reform bill. The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED), in response to HB 212, has as an objective to maintain high standards as the core of a successful education system. The New Mexico PED

created models to pool resources and to collaborate with partners on improving standards and assessments. Teachers must teach according to high standards if they are to provide high-quality, effective instruction that promotes student success.

Because New Mexico measures student performance against academic standards, schools must hold high expectations for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, economic status, or geographic location. School districts have diverse student populations, and to close the achievement gap, research, such as this study, is needed to help generate the perception that teachers prepare students for success based on their professional development and use of the dossier in the classrooms.

This chapter explores the premise held widely in educational literature that increases in student learning depend on both implementing legislation passed by the state legislature and in understanding the impact of the history of public education. An examination of literature about the finances and resources that impact student learning and school reform explores how finances often relate to positive student learning outcomes and to teacher development outcomes. In addition, this chapter provides a review of literature concerning public education and how this relationship impacts student success. Chapter 2 also provides a review of literature concerning reform practices, state policies, and teacher practices that promote student learning, as well as reviewing literature related to the relationship of finance, teacher compensation, and other resources related to school reform.

Reforming Public Education on a National Level

U.S. public education traces its development to the Puritan and Congregationalist religious schools in the 1600s. The first public school was established in 1635 in Boston, Massachusetts. Public education grew during the 17th and 18th centuries, including

education for some of the “common” people, rather than only the wealthy and privileged, as had been the case earlier. Teacher training and educational development theory spurred educational “reform” when educational academies were developed in the 1700s, such as Philadelphia’s Ben Franklin Academy of Learning. At that time, people began to realize that a nation must have an educated workforce for the nation to become industrialized and that training was needed to produce a skilled labor force and take advantage of new job opportunities. One important goal of educational academies was to provide a well-trained labor force for white collar jobs (Johnson, Collins, Dupruis, & Johansen, 1985).

In recognition that workers needed to be educated, the common school reforms in the 1800s focused on providing a free elementary education for all children who would eventually enable new U.S. industries to compete successfully with other countries. These early reforms were initiated in several states, including Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and New York. Not until later did reforms begin to emphasize the goals of uniting the society and preventing crime and poverty when states sought education reform for economic reasons that were more practical than the earlier goals of religious and charitable education intended for the wealthy but that excluded the children of the common people and the poor (Butts, 1978).

As public education expanded and teaching practices improved during this period of industrial development, the U.S. educational system concentrated on producing a skilled workforce (Morison, Commager, & Leuchtenburg, 1977). The waves of immigrants in the late 1700s and the 1800s not only increased the nation’s wealth but also prompted the nation to focus on education as the main strategy for accelerating the nation’s economic growth. For example, the World Fair in 1851, held in London,

demonstrated the result of the expanding U.S. public elementary education as it became more accessible to the working class. “One of the most popular exhibits at London’s 1851 world’s fair, especially its Crystal Palace, was the array of reapers, ranges, sewing machines and other ‘Yankee notions’ ” (Morison, Commager, & Leuchtenburg, 1977).

High school, as it is known today, did not come into existence until 1821 in Boston, though only boys could attend. Education for elementary and secondary students was not available to the general public until the beginning of the 20th century when policy makers began to realize that more practical and useful curricula were needed (MET Foundation, 2001).

At the higher education level, the first U.S. universities were intended to produce well-prepared Protestant ministers, and, thus, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and other early U.S. universities were originally religious schools and did not teach trades or skills outside of a religious vocation. As the nation’s industrial base expanded, the need for people with industrial knowledge and expertise also grew, particularly for the nation to compete with other nations. The creation of American public schools in the 18th century also prompted the creation of many small colleges and universities before the Civil War. The accompanying sharp increase in the professional and technical schools meant that as public schools advanced, more students advanced to a higher level of education (Butts, 1978).

Formal public education developed along two principal paths: religious and practical trade schools for agriculture, and apprenticeships with skilled craftsmen to train students for crafts. The first public elementary school in America was the Boston Latin School, a religious school established by John Cotton (1585-1652). It was supported by public funds and began without a formal building. It was established one year prior to

Harvard College, which was founded in 1636 by the Massachusetts Bay Colony (Butts, 1978).

The requirement for a free public education at the elementary level initiated the public education system. Most states started implementing reform strategies in the 1880s and 1890s, expanding educational standards to include responsibility and student academic achievement (Gates Foundation, 2010). This approach allowed states to mandate curriculum requirements and enforce their commitment to improving classroom instruction. By the turn of the 20th century, individual states had autonomous authority over public education in their states, which meant schools reflected educational values of their communities (Johnson, Collins, Dupuis, & Johansen, 1985). By the mid-20th century, every state had established a department of education and had enacted laws regulating funding, school personnel, attendance, and curriculum.

The federal government's involvement in efforts to improve student learning and success increased with the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. These two landmark statutes included requirements for expanding educational opportunities for poor children and for improving student learning in neglected academic subjects. For example, the 1965 education act alerted the country to the needs of minority and low-income students and required public schools to create opportunities for increased learning by all students. In addition, the 1974 Special Education Law guaranteed a free and appropriate education for disabled students. Title I and Title VII, two major federal programs, provided funding for reading and math programs for students with the greatest needs. Although the federal government has not directly intervened in education, its fiscal role has increased, and now federal funds account for 7 to 8% of all funding for elementary and secondary education. In

response to federal education reform legislation, states and municipalities have increased revenues to meet federal requirements regarding higher teacher pay and increased student learning.

In an ongoing effort to address educational needs of all students, the federal government passed the legislation that targeted educationally challenged students, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, both of which include provisions aimed at ending discrimination and allocating appropriate funding for minority students and students with language problems (Mondragón & Stapleton, 2005). Many federal requirements related to student success were tied to federal funds granted to states (West & Peterson, 2003).

As states looked to the federal government for additional funding to assist in educational reform measures, either by state education departments or the U.S. Department of Education, the federal government published reports on the performance of students and recommended strategies to increase learning, including the 1983 report “A Nation at Risk” (NCEE, 1983). The Goals 2000 reform efforts through the Educate America Act of 1994 also made recommendations on K–12 curriculum and educational needs.

The No Child Left Behind Act, the 2001 reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, implemented significant reforms aimed at satisfying needs of the lower-performing students that required major changes at state levels. In response, states across the nation, including New Mexico, developed their own reform efforts to provide equitable education opportunities and resources while tightening accountability requirements for student learning. One of New Mexico’s reform efforts is the three-tiered licensure system, established in New Mexico in 2003 for K–12 education.

Policy-makers nationally look to education research for help in doing a better job of educating students; and teachers, principals, and superintendents look to legislators for funding and changes in policies related to education. As Representative Rick Miera, chairman of NM House of Representatives Educational Committee, noted, “The ultimate beneficiaries of education reform must be the children in the classroom” (statement in Legislative Education Study Committee, summer 2005). One objective of reform efforts is to demonstrate with valid data how standards-based reform efforts are helping students meet achievement goals. For example, Goals 2000, a U.S. Department of Education project conducted at the American Institutes for Research, provides data for illustrating content standards and assessments (Goals 2000, 1994). The level to which schools utilized the Goals 2000 project to increase student learning through standards-based reform is reflected in the policy environment in which teachers operate and in the support that teachers receive to make their jobs fulfilling in the classroom.

The policy changes at the state level in response to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) resulted in states aligning their content standards with student learning, which are intended to give an accurate portrayal of what is taught over a full year (Shavelson & Dempsey-Atwood, 1976). This implies that helping teachers accurately describe the content of their instruction through professional development helps them strengthen student learning and improve their professional skills.

Wiley’s (1968, 1973) research presents an invaluable history of New Mexico’s educational system and presents an insightful description of reform in the 1970s. Equalization of funding for all public schools was adopted in 1974. Enacted by the New Mexico Legislature in 1974, the state’s current public school funding formula was

designed to distribute operational funds to local school districts. The formula has been changed 78 times since 1974. Wiley's research discusses the current education funding formula, which is based on an equalization of funding for all public schools adopted in 1972. His description of the current funding formula and how it came about shows how New Mexico's state politics affect the state's educational system.

The New Mexico legislature approves budget funding for education, and, over the years, education funding has totaled 46% to 50% of the state's yearly budget (Ball, 2002). The *Public School Finance Act* (22-8-17-25 NMSA) aimed to equalize taxpayers' financial obligations at all economic levels and to guarantee each New Mexico public school student equal access to programs and services, regardless of geographic location or local economic conditions. The concept of non-categorical funding is implemented in this funding act, allowing a school district to apply its allocations to meet its unique needs.

To help fulfill the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, New Mexico's legislators, with support of the governor and the State Department of Education, demonstrated their resolve to improve educational equity by requiring teachers to demonstrate increased competency as they progress through the three-tiered licensure system. Furthermore, the evaluation system within the three-tiered licensure system addresses the role of state and district leaders in training teachers to achieve highly qualified status and improve teacher compensation, and it requires examples of effective classroom instruction along with measures of increased student achievement.

The New Mexico 2003 education reform bill revised portions of the current laws on education, calling for major changes that impacted the educational system. The past neglect of New Mexico's public school system was highlighted when the Legislative

Education Study Committee began suggesting improvements not only to the governance structure but also to graduation requirements and teacher training programs, which ultimately led to the need for increased salaries for teachers. In addition to fiscal reforms to allocate resources equitably, the bill made changes to state and district accountability, local governance, teacher performance, student achievement measures, and high school graduation requirements. All reform measures in NM House Bill 212 of 2003 addressed NCLB accountability requirements. As Mondragón and Stapleton (2005) asserted, “Political impetus is a major force in determining the outcome of many of the reform measures” (p. 184).

With respect to the three-tiered licensure system, provisions in the 2003 New Mexico reform system address the same education goals as earlier reforms of 1923, 1974, 1986, and 2003. While developing the three-tiered licensure system, the legislature identified major elements necessary to reform public education in New Mexico, including the quantity of economic resources the state can devote to education and the equitable allocation of those resources to districts, regardless of ethnicity and local abundances of resources. The 2003 reform maintained the objective of equitable distribution of public funding of education. New Mexico’s *Public School Finance Act* of 1974, in particular, sought to correct years of funding and educational disparities among school districts (Mondragón & Stapleton, 2005).

Reform Efforts toward Student Success

Many national reforms began in response to program needs in special education and bilingual education. National education reform efforts have helped ensure that there is a path towards educational equity for all children. Federal reform policies are established based on the assumption that students connect the standards to assessment

programs. In many states, reform efforts are based on the idea that reform policies result in improved teaching, which then results in improved student learning (Loeb, Knapp, & Elfers, 2008). States, in particular, have made an investment to improve education through standards based on reform, leading them to develop their own standards that increase student learning.

Tyack and Cuban defined educational reform as “planned efforts to change schools in order to correct perceived social and educational problems” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 4). National school reform in the United States is not only a result of changes in political climate but also a result of changes in local and state agencies associated with education and activities by interested parties and groups seeking improvements in specific educational programs. National reforms dealing with equity, equality, performance, and accountability serve as the basis for many state reforms.

Demand for reform was created through national events, combined with the concept of a public education for all students, such as the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case in 1954, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1954, the Multicultural and Bilingual Education Act of 1968, and the Education of the Exceptional Child in 1974, as well as measures such as Title IX of the Educational Act of 1972, the “Nation at Risk” report of 1983, and Goals 2000. Despite criticisms (Darling-Hammond & Young, 2002; Jennings, 2003; Finn, Baker, & Betefenner, 2002), NCLB has shown considerable staying power.

Education policy makers in several states hold the belief that reform policies will improve teaching and, thereby, increase student learning (Loeb, Knapp, & Elfers, 2008). Studies consistently show that teacher expertise is one of the most important factors in determining student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Loewenberg-Ball, 1996). The

National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF; 1996) for the National Education Goals Panel in a joint report stated that professional development that links theory and practice creates discourse around problems of practice. This type of professional development is content-based and student-centered and engages teachers in an analysis of teaching. In turn, this supports that teacher learning necessary to engender student learning. Studies have shown that teachers who are prepared and certified both in their discipline and in teaching pedagogy are more highly rated by students and are more effective as educators than teachers without such preparation (Darling-Hammond & Loewenberg-Ball, 1996)

For example, Cohen and Hill (1997) found that when teachers have had extensive opportunities to learn in student curriculum workshops, their students' scores on state mathematics assessments were significantly higher than those of students whose teachers did not have the same opportunities. Cohen and Hill (1997) asserted that teachers' learning opportunities are improved when theory and practice are integrated, and they emphasized that a teacher's content knowledge supports a teacher's ability to communicate subject matter well.

States with the highest student test scores have long supported high quality teaching and teacher learning. For example, Minnesota, North Dakota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Maine, states that have repeatedly ranked at the top of the state distribution in student learning, have a long history of policies requiring increased professional standards (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1997). On the other hand, reform strategies that did not include substantial efforts to improve teaching have been much less successful in improving student learning. Learning did not increase in states that instituted new standards and tests in the 1980s but did not invest in teaching. For

example, policy makers in Georgia and South Carolina mandated tests for students and teachers but did not link these tests to emerging knowledge about teaching or to new learning standards. They also did not invest in improving schools of education or in ongoing professional development.

In a national study, Blasé and Blasé (2001) examined practices to support teacher learning by investigating 25 school leaders from a sample of public, Catholic, and independent schools. The study focused on the need to support standards-based reform and to include collaborative learning communities in teacher professional development, with the goal of identifying professional development initiatives that could contribute to teachers' learning and growth. The researchers concluded that teachers flourish when the principal supports their learning and growth (Blasé & Blasé, 1999, 2001). As a component of this study, the researchers explored how teachers made sense of their experiences and how practices were implemented in diverse school contexts, a topic explored by various researchers (Renyi, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2003; Johnson, 2004; Fullan, 2005). Darling-Hammond (1999) examined how school leaders made sense of promoting teacher learning and what practices they used to support teaching in different contexts. She found that the leaders supported transformational learning by supporting teaching in different contexts. By examining these issues, Darling-Hammond attempted to understand how school leaders increase student learning through supporting teachers. The results suggest that effective professional development for teachers not only provides growth for teachers in the classroom but also, through teacher collaboration and practice, increases student learning. Based on these results, Blasé and Blasé (2001) advocated for a collaborative approach to teacher learning.

Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) wrote, "Collaborative approaches provide access

to more relevant information and alternative perspectives, promote reflective practices, help develop a culture that supports learning and growth” (p. 76). Professional development for teachers should be embedded in and derived from practice, on-site and school-based, integrated with school reform processes, and sensitive to student learning needs (Blasé & Blasé, 2001). They encourage school leaders to design action plans that guide teachers to improve their teaching skills, leading to improved student learning.

In recent years, national efforts to improve education have focused on high-quality professional development and capacity-building opportunities for teachers. As teachers have received rigorous content materials and standards in classroom-based curricula and instruction, classroom instruction and student achievement have improved (Bland, 2004). The creation of sustained professional development programs for teachers and administrators have also contributed to improved teaching and learning (ASCD, 2008; Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006).

To undertake successful and sustainable reform, schools need to consider a number of strategies. Elementary school initiatives and early childhood education have been a primary focus for reform (ASCD, 2008). However, the overall structure of school reform requires renewed attention by stakeholders, including parents, students, policymakers, foundations, and business and community leaders.

The American Diploma Project (2004) stated that of high school graduates who enter college, less than half complete their degree and 53% take at least one remedial course in either English or math at some point during their college career. To demonstrate the importance of this problem in economic terms, the Alliance for Excellence in Education (2006) estimated that the U.S. loses more than \$3.7 billion per year because high school students are not learning basic skills needed for success in college and the

workforce. Those who do not complete high school “are much more likely than their peers who graduate to be unemployed, living in poverty, receiving public assistance, in prison, unhealthy, divorced, and ultimately single parents with children who drop out from high school themselves” (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006, p. i).

Nevertheless, other research shows that American schools have risen to the challenge to reform education. For example, recent reports state that the high school graduation rate is approximately 70–75% (Editorial Projects in Education, 2008; Green & Winters, 2006; Planty et al., 2008), though Black and Latino students graduate at much lower rates: 55% and 53–58%, respectively (Editorial Projects in Education, 2008; Greene & Winters, 2006). Soloman (2008) argued, however, that researchers often distort the graduation rate because they use a flawed calculation that may not account for students who transfer in and out of high school but who may ultimately graduate. According to Salomon (2008), the U.S. Census Bureau provides a more accurate graduation rate. The Bureau’s data indicate that in 2004, 87% of all 18- to 24-year-olds had completed high school.

Reforms that have been underway for five or more years have a greater impact on student achievement than reforms in place for less time (Herlihy & Quint, n.d.). To improve student success and align ongoing professional development to student learning, reformers will need to combine approaches that focus on increased student learning, improved instruction, and improved school-wide organization and structure (Schaunon & Bylsma, 2004). The strategies used by many school districts serve as reform models for other schools, including developing high expectations for all students and teachers, implementing a rigorous curriculum, focusing on providing relevant learning opportunities, employing ongoing and varied assessments, offering sustained professional

development for teachers, and establishing small, personalized learner environments that facilitate strong connections between students and teachers. As Schaunon and Bylsma (2004) described school reform efforts overall, “research indicates that there is no ‘magic bullet’ or a ‘one size fits all’ approach to school improvement” (p. 174).

Public School Finance and Student Success

A majority of the public prefers that education decisions be made locally, not at the state or federal level (Hochschild & Scott, 1998). Although local control of public education is considered a cherished ideal (Mondale & Patton, 2001), 57% of the public approves the expansion of the federal role in public education under No Child Left Behind (Phi Delta Kappan & the Gallup Organization, 2002). Education decision-making has become more centralized, and schools are more accountable than ever to national and state learning standards. As a result, school systems are increasingly affected by policies that align student learning to finances.

Finance reform through governance has been a contentious policy proposal for the past 30 years as local educational entities determined equality-minded school finance reform. In one case, attempted state financing reforms violated the state’s constitution (Shelly, 2007). Alabama, which relied heavily on local taxes to support schools, had a school finance policy of using funds from affluent districts to support less affluent districts. In 1991, a group of parents filed the *Harper vs. Hunt* lawsuit against the state of Alabama, arguing that the Alabama Legislature had crafted a plan that relied on redistributing existing funds from affluent districts to relatively poor districts. In 1993, Montgomery Circuit Judge Gene Reese ruled that the funding system was unconstitutional and mandated that any new system should fund school districts more equally. This attempt to provide equitable education opportunities through funding

policies changed public education in Alabama.

More recently, the School Finance Redesign Project (SFRP) examined research, policy analysis, and public engagement activities to discover how K–12 finances can be redesigned to support student performance more effectively. In this project, Hill (2008) examined the pressure educators feel to increase student learning and how they desire increased funding to support higher performance. Hanushek (1971) analyzed incentives for public school teachers and leaders and determined that few rewards are available for producing high levels of student learning and many rewards for work that does not promote student learning. He concluded that a performance-based accountability system would strengthen the link between funding and student learning (Hanushek, 1971).

In their School Finance Redesign Project of the Center on Reinventing Public Education working paper, Roza, Guin, and Davis (2008) stated that the American method for financing education conflicts with a single-minded focus on student learning. Their paper, “What is the Sum of the Parts,” (2008) promotes the idea that each level of government has its own priorities for school spending. Though the federal government typically regulates the use of its funds, Roza et al. explained that the rules for using funds established by one level of government may conflict with the rules and priorities established by other levels, such as the manner in which states and local districts fund basic school programs: Many states spend fewer state funds on schools that receive federal funds. As a result, schools that serve the most disadvantaged students end up serving the advantaged due to the criteria applied in allocating funding (Hill, 2008). To illustrate this issue, Roza et al. explained that the State of Texas allocates state funds in a manner that counters the federal government’s efforts to ensure that schools serving children from impoverished backgrounds receive extra funding.

Brewer and Smith (2007) also demonstrated how priorities of various levels of funding agencies could conflict. They pointed to California's fragmented governance, which works against the schools' efforts to adopt coherent approaches to teaching and learning and use educational funds effectively as part of an overall strategy to increase student learning. With schools receiving federal, state, and local funds, researchers and policy makers have difficulty learning which funding agency is responsible for student academic growth, and to what degree; this is especially true in large public city schools that receive funding from many sources (Kimbrough & Hill, 1981).

Public Education in New Mexico

Education in New Mexico began with the early Native Americans through storytelling, learning to survive in the environment, and practicing daily living. Instruction included language skill development, survival skills, and cultural knowledge. In the early 1750s, Spaniards educated their children through conversion to Christianity. Most colonial families tutored their own children, but Spanish religious leaders created public schools as directed by the King of Spain (Mondragón & Stapleton, 2005). When the area now known as New Mexico was dominated by Mexico (1540–1821), very few schools were established. Their purpose was to teach basic reading and writing. Each community had the burden of supporting its schools.

During the territorial period, the Mexican government mandated that public schools be established though funding was not available for all children to attend (Wanninga, 1942). The Catholic Church ran all the schools and provided religious teachers for them. These schools included Loretto Academy and St. Michael's College in Santa Fe (De Aragon, 1978). The Protestant and Catholic churches provided educational systems even after New Mexico became a territory of the United States (Foote, 1990).

When New Mexico became a state in 1912, education was a major component of the state constitution and, over time, created economic and physical stability (Walker, 1991).

Public education and New Mexico's children depend upon government leaders, legislators, and determined citizens for support and leadership. Analysis, assessment, vision, ingenuity, imagination, integrity, political finesse, and just "plain old hard work" in response to challenges might typify some of our heroes (Mondragón & Stapleton, 2005). Poverty, isolation, language, religion, politics, and leadership influenced public education in New Mexico (Gaddis, 2003). The support for public education and equitable financing thereof is a goal of the New Mexico legislature. The New Mexico constitution mandates that the legislature provide efficient and effective public schools for every eligible student in the state (Mondragón & Stapleton, 2005). Overall, the existing research presents a pattern of reform and changes in the educational system and connects them to the sociological, economic, and political forces that affect New Mexico's educational landscape.

The New Mexico First Town Hall Meeting in 1999 persuaded legislators, educators, and the New Mexico Public Education Department leaders that the state needed major reform in public education. "However, based on the belief that children are our first priority, the Town Hall states unequivocally that our public education system is inadequate" (Mondragón & Stapleton, 2005, p. 179). The New Mexico State Legislature appointed a task force in 2001 composed of teachers, educators, administrators, legislators, and business officials to devise a comprehensive educational reform bill to be considered by the 2002 legislative session (House Bill 212 of 2003 New Mexico State Legislature, section 22-1 through 22-22-6 NMSAL 197). The legislature passed an education reform bill in 2002; however, the Governor vetoed the legislation, stating that

it would cost too much to implement. The Legislative Education Study continued during the interim between the 2002 and 2003 legislative sessions to gather information and update the report from the task force. In 2003, with a new governor who strongly supported education, the legislature passed and the governor signed into law NM House Bill 212 of 2003.

Dossiers and Policies

Policymakers, recognizing that they have a responsibility to ensure equitable educational services to all children, must rely on the policymaking system to solve problems of inequity (Wise, 1979). New Mexico legislators, educational leaders, and teacher union representatives collaborated to design a system that would provide highly qualified teachers and increased student success. New Mexico legislators passed legislation requiring teachers to receive professional development training and to develop self-evaluation dossiers. New Mexico legislators expected these two requirements to result in increased student learning.

The drive to increase student learning is not unique to New Mexico. Many states have raised their academic standards and accepted the challenge of improving student learning. Some states use National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, often referred to as “the nation’s report card,” to indicate student achievement changes and compare progress across states. In some cases, NAEP results illustrate the disparities among states’ achievement assessments (Achieve, 2006). For example, in Tennessee, 88% of 4th graders scored at proficient level on state reading tests, but only 27% performed at proficient on NAEP. In Oklahoma, 86% of 4th graders were proficient in state tests, compared with 26% on NAEP. These differences fuel growing concerns that state standards do not match what students need to know and be able to do to succeed in

college and the workplace (Achieve, 2006).

The concept that teachers are *reflective practitioners*, which is at the core of the dossier process, is based on the idea that teachers have a “tactical knowledge base [developed] through ongoing inquiry and analysis” (Schön, 1983, 1987, p. 15).

According to this theory, teachers continuously rethink and reevaluate their values and practices. In this way, the concept of “reflective practitioners” is consistent with the concept that teachers are researchers (Myers & Haase, 1989). Teachers’ professionalism, as both reflective practitioners and researchers, serves as the most potent form of accountability for students’ competency and knowledge (Lieberman & Miller, 1991). Administrators following this concept will provide teachers with the time and support they need to research and understand how children learn and are, in turn, held accountable for providing teachers with tools they need for applying learning theories.

Although a district’s professional development plan will be influenced by multiple factors, including state academic standards, student achievement levels, and the district’s education vision, the national approach to professional development promotes the overarching belief that professional development supports student learning (Hassle, 2002). A district’s professional development plan, therefore, should support the district’s long-term student learning goals and staff learning goals. When the plan is aligned with these goals, teachers and instructional teams will be able to develop learning goals for individual students.

The federal government has examined the manner in which professional development can support classroom teachers. The U.S. Department of Education established the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development in 1996 to recognize schools and districts leading the nation in professional development.

Building upon successful experiences of others (Hassle, 2002), each awarded institution assessed student learning and teacher and skill competence by using some combination of peer review, portfolios, teacher discussions and focus groups, activity logs, and teacher surveys.

New Mexico's three-tiered licensure system supports professional development that connects a teacher's belief about his or her role in the education process with constructivist teaching practices. For example, teacher training may use role-playing activities to show connections among constructivist teaching practices, school-wide teacher learning, and student learning environments that teachers create. This is the same education reform concept that Becker and Riel (1999) studied.

The professional development dossier (PDD) promotes collaborative teaching and constructivist practices characterized by constructive peer criticism on classroom activities, and common beliefs among teachers about school goals and instructional activities, which may include sharing samples of student work and teachers encouraging one another to explore new ideas for instruction. This approach strengthens the connection between teachers' beliefs about their role and their instructional practices.

Effective Professional Development

The ability to fulfill the promise of quality education for all depends on a total restructuring of schools and on the knowledge of and commitment by practitioners to restructuring (Dilworth & Imig, 1995). One of the major goals of student performance and student achievement lies in the contribution of teachers' professional growth. Targeted professional development training creates opportunities for teachers to learn from colleagues, providing teachers with greater insights into how their instruction affects student learning (Geo 2012). Professional learning opportunities should also be

conceptualized as part of a career continuum that encourages teachers to gain and share expertise and creates avenues for such sharing to occur (Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Knapp and Glenn (1996) emphasized that “staff development is now clearly recognized as a critical need in most school districts—training in new instructional approaches” (p. 202). This new consensus calls for providing “collegial opportunities to learn that are linked to solving authentic problems defined by the gaps between goals for student achievement and actual student performance” (Halley & Valli, 1999, p. 127). New professional development models must address flaws of traditional practices, practices that are fragmented, unproductive, inefficient, unrelated to effective teaching, and lacking in intensity and follow up (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Corcoran, 1995; Guskey, 2000; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). Liberman (1995) further argued that educational experiences people want for students are denied to teachers: a wide array of learning opportunities that engage students in experiencing, creating, and solving real problems, using their own experiences, and working with others.

Despite considerable expenditures on professional development, resources are severely lacking to improve available opportunities for professional learning. The nation’s public schools can no longer rely on ineffective models for professional development. “Policymakers must understand that the most effective schools are institutions that are designed to be educative for their teachers” (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999, p. xiv). Although funding is important to professional development efforts, critical resources are not fiscal. For example, one missing resource with no fiscal impact is the common conviction that professional learning matters to instruction and student learning. Instead, education leaders seem to believe that changes in teachers’ practices result from changes in curriculum, standards, and assessments (Ball & Cohen, 1999).

Researchers are increasingly in agreement about the characteristics of effective professional development. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) summarized these characteristics as strategies that succeed in improving teaching:

- Designed to engage teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment observation, and reflection that illuminate the process of learning and development;
- Grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation that is participant driven;
- Collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators and a focus on teachers' communities of practice rather than on individual teachers;
- Connected to and derived from teachers' work with their students;
- Sustained, ongoing, intensive, and supported by modeling and coaching and the collective solving of specific problems of practice; and
- Connected to other aspects of school change.

These characteristics underscore the importance of a learning environment/school culture in which teachers develop common goals, share ideas, and work together to achieve established goals and increase student learning. "This kind of teaching and learning would require that teachers become serious learners in and around their practice profession, rather than amassing strategies and activities" (Ball & Cohen, 1999, p. 4). As such, effective professional development provides teachers with time for observation, practice, reading reflection, and dialogue with fellow teachers, and provides support for these practices at the district, state, and federal levels (Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Boss, 1999). Effective professional development is meaningful, coherent, rigorous, and sustained over the long term, and it fosters critical reflection by practitioners (Little, 1993; Norton & Gonzales, 1998; Renyi, 1996; Sparks & Hirsch, 1997). An education system in which

teachers have opportunities for continual learning is likely to produce greater student achievement, especially among students for whom education is the only pathway to survival and success (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Professional development is more effective when embedded in the reality of schools and teachers' work and designed with teacher input (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon). Professional development approaches that are guided by teacher input and that view teacher learning as continual and transformative make schools a better place for students and staff (Clair & Adger, 1999). When teachers participate in a community of learners, they have opportunities to network and share ideas with peers, which breaks down the isolation of the classroom and brings resources to support new teaching and learning models (Reil, 2000; Reil & Fulton, 1998).

Teacher Professional Development Improves Student Learning

The concept of education reform is the foundation of a national movement sweeping the United States and many other nations as the workforce changes. Education reform is a complex endeavor that requires, among other things, understanding factors that influence teacher practice and school culture. Factors such as teacher compensation, teacher quality, professional development, and student learning are components of New Mexico's educational reform movement, which intensified in 2003 with the passage of House Bill 212 of 2003 (22-1-122-22-6 NMSA 1978). These factors are addressed during teacher training on the professional development dossier (PDD) offered in school districts throughout New Mexico. For example, during PDD training provided by the Albuquerque Teachers Federation (ATF, 2001), teachers examined the relationships between different orientations towards teaching and the influences of school culture and teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices (personal interview with ATF Professional

Development Coordinator, 2011).

Teacher professional development has become a major focus of systemic reform initiatives (Corcoran, 1995; Corcoran, Shields, & Ficke, 1998). “Professional development is the process of improving staff skills and competencies needed to produce outstanding educational results for students” (Hassle, 2002). The relationship between features of professional development that have been identified in literature and the self-reported changes in teachers’ knowledge and skills have led to improved classroom teaching practices (Epstein, 1985). Professional development helps sustain changes in teaching practice over time, and it contributes to a shared professional culture in which teachers in a school or teachers who teach the same grade or subject develop a common understanding of instructional goals, methods, and solutions. Epstein (1985) further discussed the need for education reform that reveals how student learning depends on teacher performance and how improvements have been accomplished.

Another aspect of improved teaching and learning is a sustained professional development program for teachers and administrators (ASCD, 2008; Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006). Shannon and Bylsma argued “in current school reform initiatives, teacher professional development has not received the emphasis or resources some educational experts believe necessary” (2006, p. 97). Brand (2004) discussed several common strategies for high-quality professional development, including use of instructional coaches, team teaching, and common planning time. According to Brand, if there has been one consistent message about school reform, it is the need to provide teachers and school leaders with high-quality professional development and capacity-building opportunities to change and improve classroom instruction and student achievement.

Use of professional development as a tool for assisting teachers in the classroom has become very important. Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) asserted that the success of education reform hinges on the qualifications and effectiveness of teachers, which relates to Hiebert's et al. (1996) argument that professional development requires focus on both subject content knowledge and an understanding of how children learn. These two factors, they point out, are important elements in changing teaching practice, and education reform activities will succeed if they address both.

National Staff Development Council (NSDC, 2006) research on leadership indicates that skilled leaders establish policies and organizational structures to support improvement. Furthermore, its research indicates that the foundation for reform and restructuring initiatives is teacher professional development, with the goal of helping teachers gain new experiences, connect ideas, and develop new ideas for improving their teaching practices. The focus on professional development as the basis for reform initiatives relates to the need for highly effective teachers.

NCLB states, "It is time to raise the bar and allow all teachers to demonstrate their effectiveness in the classroom rather than just their qualifications for entering it" (NCLB, 2007, p. 47). As one approach to achieving this goal, NCLB requires school districts to provide teachers with professional development training that will help them enhance their teaching skills and, ultimately, increase student learning. The concept that the NCLB's purpose is not only to leave no child behind but also to ensure America's economic competitiveness internationally has prompted many states to consider changes in their educational systems.

Teacher Development and Teacher Performance

Changing one's practice in any professional field requires examining old and new

practices, making appropriate modifications, and learning to carry out new practices effectively (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). Senior teachers and principals are important in this process, and their opinions are crucial to shaping policy. Improving public schools is not a simple task but one that requires gradual change in significant ways based on clear principles (Foster, 2003). For example, the focus on professional development is based on the principle that students need highly effective teachers to improve academically, a principle espoused by NCLB.

Wenghinsky (2000) examined the relationship between teachers' training, teaching practices, and student achievement. Controlling for student characteristics and other school inputs, he found that eighth-grade students do better on the NAEP mathematics assessments when they have had teachers who engage them in more hands-on learning, emphasize higher-order thinking skills, and had more training in how to work with diverse student populations (a combined measure of training in cultural diversity, teaching limited English proficient students, and teaching students with special needs). This finding suggests that teachers who had more training in how to develop laboratory skills and engage in more hands-on learning do better on NAEP science assessments (Wenghinsky, 2000).

Using data aggregated at the district level, researchers reported significant relationships between teachers' scores on certification test and student performance. In a study of 900 Texas school districts, Ferguson (1991) reported that combined measures of teachers' professional development training, scores on state licensing examination, master's degrees, and experience accounted for a greater degree of variation on students' reading achievement and achievement gains in grades one through 11 than race and socioeconomic status. A similar study found that students in Texas schools with greater

proportions of certified teachers were more likely to pass the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), after controlling for students' socioeconomic and teacher experience (Fuller, 1998 & 2000). The differences were significant for Hispanic and lower income students (Fuller, 1998). Teacher qualifications often appear to have the greatest influence on what students learn and qualified teachers are unequally allocated to students by race, income, and location (Betts, Rueben, & Danenberg, 2000; Fetler, 1999; Geo, 2002). These studies provide further support for the theory that teachers' certification and training are related to student performance and student learning.

In a more recent study, Goddard, Goddard, and Tschannen-Moran (2007) reviewed the relationship between student learning and a theoretically driven measure of teacher collaboration for school improvement. The study population was 452 teachers and 2,536 fourth-grade students in a large urban school district. The results suggested that when teachers are given opportunities to collaborate on instruction, curriculum, and professional development, students demonstrate increased learning in mathematics and reading. These studies support Darling-Hammond's (1997) conclusion that

Teachers who are fully prepared and certified in both their discipline and in education are more highly rated and are more successful within the students than are teachers without preparation and those with greater training are more effective than those with less. (p. 10)

Teacher Quality and Student Learning

Many initiatives in recent years have relied on a presumed relationship between education-related factors and learning outcomes. As a result, educators and researchers have debated which school variables influence student achievement. Some research suggests that such factors as class size (Glass, Cahen, Smith, & Felby, 1982; Mosteller,

1995), teaching qualifications (Ferguson, 1991), and professional development have significant impact on student learning (National Education Goals Panel, 1998). In recent years, education reformers and policy-makers nationwide have emphasized the role of teacher quality in student learning. Legislators in more than 25 states have enacted legislation to improve teacher education, certification, and professional development (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Using a fifty-state survey of state case study analyses, policies, and National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) data, Darling-Hammond (2000) examined how teacher qualifications and other school inputs relate to student learning across the U.S. She sought to discover which school variables influence student learning. Darling-Hammond's (2000) study indicates that policies, teacher education, professional development, licensing, and teacher pay can make a difference in the qualifications and capacities that teachers bring to their work in the classroom, and her findings suggest that policy investments in teacher quality may be strongly related to student achievement improvements. Measures of teacher preparation and certification are most strongly correlated to student performance in reading and math, both before and after controlling for student poverty and language status (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Schools can make a difference in student learning, and the difference they make is mostly attributable to teachers (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). For example, studies (Sanders & Rivers, 1996) on the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System, and a similar database in Dallas, have shown that students assigned to several ineffective teachers in sequence had significantly lower learning gains than those assigned to several highly effective teachers in sequence. Other studies of teacher effectiveness also found that differences in teacher effectiveness determine differences in student learning. These

studies also note that African American students were twice as likely to be assigned to the most ineffective teachers as students of other ethnic groups, indicating a potential inequity in educational opportunities (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, Mc Portland, Mood, & Weinfell, 1966). This finding may indicate a strong bias in how students are assigned to teachers of differing effectiveness (Jordan et al., 1997).

Correlation between school reform and student learning has been discussed since the 1940s, where educators and policy makers have discussed the relationship between student learning and teachers' competence, as measured by academic ability, years of experience, subject matter knowledge, and teaching knowledge. While some studies show that teachers' verbal ability is related to student learning (Bowles & Levine, 1968; Coleman et al., 1966; Hanushek, 1971), others indicate that little or no relationship exists between teachers' measured intelligence and their students' learning (Schalock, 1979; Soar, Medley, & Coker, 1983).

However, teacher subject matter knowledge may have a greater influence on teacher effectiveness, with the performance level primarily based on the professional development and education background of the teachers. Druva and Anderson (1983) supported this concept. They found that students' achievement in science was positively correlated to teachers' backgrounds in education and science courses, as well as to their professional development training. Indeed, the number of courses taken in a subject area correlates to a teacher's performance. For example, Carroll (1975) found that a French language teachers' speaking skill significantly correlates to students' learning in speaking and listening to French. However, the number of methodology courses for a subject area a teacher took may be a better indicator of the teacher's effectiveness. In the National Longitudinal Study of Mathematical Abilities, Begle (1979) found that the number of

credits a teacher held in mathematics method courses was more strongly correlated to student performance than the number of credits in mathematics subject courses or other indicators of preparation. Monk (1994), too, found that a teacher's education coursework in mathematics and science resulted in a positive effect on student learning. Perkes (1967–1968) found that the teacher's number of credits in science coursework was not significantly related to student learning. However, he found that coursework in science education requiring problem-solving and applications of science knowledge strongly correlated to student learning.

In contrast to studies promoting correlation between teachers' subject knowledge and methodology coursework, Ferguson (1999) suggested that teacher licensing had a greater affect on student learning than any teacher-specific characteristics. He found that combined measures of teachers' expertise, scores on the licensing examination, master's degrees, and experience accounted for the greatest difference in students' reading and mathematics learning gains. These effects were so strong, and variations in teacher expertise so great, that after controlling for socioeconomic status, differences in teacher qualifications entirely accounted for the large disparity in learning between Black and White students. He also found that every additional dollar spent on more highly qualified teachers netted greater increases in student learning than did an equal amount spent on less instructionally focused uses. Greenwald, Hedges, and Laine (1996) also found spending on teacher education and training, teacher ability, and experience is strongly associated with student learning.

In a similar study, Strauss and Sawyer (1986) found average National Teacher Examination scores among North Carolina's teachers were a strong indicator of average school district test performance. Strauss and Sawyer (1986) concluded that improving

teacher quality would do more for students who are most at risk educationally (i.e., most likely to fail) than reducing the class size or improving the capital stock by any reasonable margin available to policy makers. Training in inquiry also helps teachers learn how to look at the world and how to use knowledge to reach diverse learners (Delpit, 1995). When teachers investigate the effects of their teaching on students' learning and study what others have learned, they become more sensitive to student diversity and more aware of what works in the classroom.

Findings from these studies indicate that teacher training and licensing strongly influence student learning and performance. The reform legislation in New Mexico espoused this belief and provides the resources and training that increase teacher knowledge, investment in teacher training, and experience levels. Although teacher quality as a variable appears to have a stronger impact on student learning than teacher salaries, the increases in a New Mexico teacher's salary depend on the teacher's quality, experience, and training. The legislature expected that as a result of increased teacher salary and professional development dossier training, student learning should improve in New Mexico.

Teacher Satisfaction in Student Success

Researchers have tracked student learning over time and confirmed what parents long have known, that the quality of a child's teacher can have lifelong consequences related to successful learning in school (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; McCaffrey, Lockwook, Loretx, & Hamilton, 2003). Teachers working together in a school and collaborating on professional development can contribute to increased student learning and teacher satisfaction (National Education Association, 2003). McLaughlin and Talbert (2001)

found that high school teachers who successfully engaged students in challenging academic work developed innovative practices, which is the goal of professional development. Additionally, in their study of school practice, Newman and Wehlage (1993) concluded that professional development for teachers is an important component of overall school improvement. They confirmed, “opportunities for teachers to collaborate and help one another achieve the intended purposes; and that teachers in these schools took not just individual responsibility but also collective responsibility for student learning” (p. 3).

In Johnson’s (2006) opinion, teachers expect to participate in professional development and training to increase their skills and realize the intrinsic rewards that come from watching students learn and succeed. However, students and teachers must produce results, and their success depends on will power, cooperation, and skill (Cohen & Ball, 1996). Lambert (1998b) asserted student success could be developed through use of collaborative skills. Collaboration through professional development is an option for improving education (Lyman, Ashby, & Tripses, 2005). This process, Lambert (1998b) noted, “requires a keen understanding of learning from a constructivist perspective” (p. 18). Indeed, training and professional development of teachers and administrators links teacher quality to student learning (Lyman, Ashby, & Tripses, 2005).

Becker and Riel (1999) asserted that instructional reform best succeeds when the practitioner culture recognizes the need for change and takes responsibility for creating that change. They sought to discover whether teachers who collaborate with peers in schools that support collaboration teach differently than do teachers who work in isolation. They emphasized teachers in collaborative organizations are more likely to

employ a constructivist pedagogy than they are to use knowledge transmission teaching models.

Hickey, Moore, and Pellegrino (2001) believed that active learning, coherence among learning activities, collective participation, and sustained professional development are likely to have positive impact on student learning. However, they cautioned that reforms promoting teaching and learning complex and abstract knowledge and skills have a stronger impact on students who are more advanced academically than on those who are less advanced, though disadvantaged students will benefit from education reforms.

Little (1981, 1986) suggested that continuous inquiry is necessary to transform the life of teachers, build curriculum, and improve instruction, and she advocated building a culture of support for professional development. The shift, she explained, not only helps develop programs for schools but also emphasizes development of teachers as individuals. Edelfelt and Lawrence (1975) found that before the 1950s, the education community concentrated on growth of teachers' colleges and focused on certifying and licensing teachers, but spent little effort thinking about teacher development, or "in-service education," as it was known at the time. The 1970s saw a change from staff development to professional development models that included "working with at least a portion of a staff over a period of time with the necessary support conditions" (Lieberman & Miller, 1979).

Teachers' Continuous Learning

Several states that have established comprehensive peer-review processes for teacher promotion, including California, are using professional development to change classrooms and increase student learning (Bradley, 1998). Nationally, education

reformers have begun to consider new professional development models (Becker & Riel, 1999). Although the need for staff development and professional development training has been long questioned, educational leaders are recognizing they are required for instructional improvements. Learning Forward (previously named National Staff Development Council) and the ASCD support this belief.

Many states and school districts are using online professional development to provide teacher development (Thomas, 2004) and help teachers meet students' academic needs. For example, the Tennessee Department of Education used No Child Left Behind funds to deliver ongoing, online professional development courses to teachers in remote areas. Baltimore County and Howard County schools in Maryland also provide online professional development courses to teachers.

Portfolios, or "dossiers," are a common method to document what teachers are doing to encourage self-growth, self-improvement, and professional development. Although they cannot replace traditional teacher and student evaluation methods, teachers can use portfolios to reflect on their own practices and knowledge, leading to self-improvements, and can use student portfolios to monitor student learning (Andrejko, 1998).

One principle of NCLB is that teachers should know what children need to learn and how to impart that knowledge. Teachers must demonstrate their ability to improve student learning through reliable measures of effectiveness. If a teacher cannot demonstrate student learning gains, he or she should receive professional development on strategies to improve student learning. NCLB requires states to show an annual increase in the percentage of teachers who participate in "high quality" professional development (Miles, Odden, Fermanich, & Archibald, 2004).

While districts have offered teacher development for many years in response to federal and state mandates (Lieberman & Miller, 1991), they were challenged to demonstrate how the professional development increased student achievement. Some scholars questioned whether student success is related to teacher quality resulting from professional development. However, research demonstrates that better teachers improve student learning and suggests that professional development can help school districts achieve educational goals (Miles et al., 2005). Odden, Archibald, Fermanick, and Gallagher (2002) suggested when school administrators differentiate professional development from school-level instruction, they then allot resources to professional development reforms that improve teaching practices and, thus, student learning. This approach takes two forms: teachers will receive individual professional development based on their needs and capacity, and all teachers will be involved to ensure widespread effects, both school wide and state wide (Burney, Corcoren, & Elnione, 2002; Garet et al., 2001).

Many teachers believe that having a strong professional community enables them to respond to diverse needs of students and uphold high standards for their performance. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) suggested strong and effective professional communities in high schools help “establish distinctive expectations for work and interactions with students” (p. 10). In such communities, teachers collaborate closely to “address the challenges of their student body and explore ways of improving practice to advance learning” (p. 63).

New Mexico’s three-tiered licensure system was designed to increase student achievement by recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers. The legislature’s expectation for the system was that by requiring teachers to demonstrate competencies

and establishing teacher evaluation processes, including professional development dossiers (PDD), the system would increase student achievement. The Legislature Finance Committee (LFC), Legislative Education Study Committee, and the Office of Education Accountability have studied the system, using student growth on the New Mexico Standards Based Assessment (NMSBA) to gauge its effectiveness. In particular, the study examined reading and math skills of students in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grade by teacher licensure level in most of the elementary schools in New Mexico.

The results of the study indicate that students who had teachers who had completed their level 3 licensure requirements made greater learning gains than students who did not. This finding is consistent with research that suggests that an effective way to improve the performance of the lowest achieving students is to improve the performance of the least effective teachers (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2009). School-level policies also can have a significant impact on student performance and teacher effectiveness affects student performance (Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Student Learning and Classroom Instruction

Education policy-makers promote successful teaching and learning when they focus on student learning, teacher learning, and teacher training. Teachers who understand subject matter deeply can help students create useful cognitive maps, relate ideas to one another, and address misconceptions. This kind of understanding provides a foundation for pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). With this level of understanding, teachers can demonstrate how ideas connect across fields and are applicable to everyday life. At the same time, effective teachers discover what students know and believe and determine how they might “hook into” new ideas.

The enormous challenges facing school districts throughout the nation are due to an increasingly complex society and a rapidly changing technology-based economy. Meeting these challenges requires skillful teaching and ongoing professional development. However, once these exist, a foundation for pedagogical content knowledge will develop in school districts (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Teacher Compensation

Recent research is now connecting teacher professional development not only to an opportunity for increased compensation but also to an evaluation system that benefits teachers and students. This continuous professional development based on the growth of individual teachers has now become the basis of a comprehensive teacher evaluation system (Reback, 2010). To achieve professionalism, new processes and new institutions and procedures, one must show what teachers want and what they get from collective bargaining: ultimately making gains in status, dignity, and a voice in professional matters and the compensation of a professional (Shanker, 1985). Financial incentives plans to restructure rewards and professional development require a fair and comprehensive evaluation process if they are to enhance teacher quality, particularly if they affect teachers' salaries and promotions (Epstein, 1985).

The complexity of teaching requires gathering of multiple measures to evaluate the effectiveness of that teaching. A report on the Los Angeles school district showed that tenure, effectiveness, and pay are major steps in developing good teaching and evaluation policies (Applegate & Beaudet, 2011). To develop and retain high quality teachers, policymakers must recognize that salaries teachers earn in the beginning and throughout their careers will determine which teachers will stay in the education system (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). For many years, teachers' compensation schedules in all public schools

were built around single schedules (Miller, 1985). Schedules were composed of a two-dimensional grid that tracked a teacher's years of service and formal education experiences. Under these schedules, education credits beyond the teacher's degree increased the teacher's salary, which could be substantial for experienced teachers.

In many ways, policy makers have questioned the power of money to attract and retain teachers and increase student learning. Practicing teachers claim they are in the profession for reasons other than money, mainly having to do with their intrinsic desire to teach (Bacharach, Lipsky, & Skedd, 1985). In spite of this, Larken (1985b) indicated that teachers often seek better paying jobs when moving from district to district, based on their personal goals and knowledge attainment. Not only do they want salary increases but also they want additional education and professional development training. However, unless more districts make efforts to align teachers' ongoing education with their actual classroom practice, pay increases are unlikely to benefit students (Stern, 1986). Students will benefit if substandard teaching is improved, whether by helping unsuccessful teachers upgrade their performance or by replacing them with other, more effective teachers, though evidence exists that principals weed out potentially unsuccessful teachers during the hiring process.

Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers in the 1980s, espoused tying teachers' salary compensation to their professionalism (Kahlenberg, 2007), and he promoted reforming education and re-energizing teacher unionism by connecting compensation to professional development as a strategy to attract and develop high quality teachers. Attracting and retaining the best teachers is increasingly difficult (Shanker, 1985). To accomplish this, Shanker noted that teachers must be guaranteed a salary commensurate with their education, experience, and performance. Improvements

in the quality of instruction can be reinforced by new approaches to teacher compensation. As such, teachers' salary and the knowledge and skills required for teachers to be a part of New Mexico's three-tiered salary system have strong influences on classroom instruction and student learning. Urbanski and Erskine (2000) pointed out that a compensation system that rewards teachers for training, experience, and professionalism should replace a standardized system of professional-level pay for all teachers. By tying compensation to collaborative relationships, professional development, peer evaluation, and student assessment results, such a system can improve instruction. This process resembles certification requirements established by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards and knowledge and skills-based pay systems. For their part, teacher unions are responsible for ensuring that salary increases are tied to contractual provisions by school districts and are supported by members of the unions.

Influencing achievement can be maximized when teacher qualification is used as a method of improving teacher effectiveness. A study conducted in North Carolina suggested that teachers were more effective if they completed preparation prior to entry, were certified in a specific field, possessed more than two years of teaching experience, and were National Board certified (Clotfetter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007). These very large effects suggest the importance of focusing on what teachers learned through their general education, preparation for teaching, and experience and professional learning opportunities, such as National Board certification (Darling-Hammond & Ducammun, 2010).

Although education for teachers can broaden teachers' knowledge and increase their understanding of basic principles related to students' learning, numerous studies have looked for statistical relationships between characteristics of teachers and student

performance. A compiled result from nearly 100 studies showed a non-significant positive relationship between student outcomes as measured by standardized tests and the extent of teachers' education. In contrast, student outcomes as a function of teachers' experience was positive in 53 of 92 studies, suggesting that student performance is more strongly related to teachers' experience and supporting salary increases based on seniority (Hanushek & Glem, 1981).

The overall focus of various compensation strategies is to promote not only meritorious performance of teaching responsibilities but also the instruction and student performance. This focus gives teachers new responsibilities, including participating in in-service programs, developing new curricula, supervising apprentice teachers, and collaborating in research (Shlechty, Jostin, & Hanes, 1985).

New Mexico's three-tiered salary system is based on the concept that the identification of better teachers depends on observations of the teaching process and a review of dossiers compiled by teachers to document their own accomplishments. Often, principals complete classroom observations in collaboration with other educators. A selection committee formed by the Public Education Department reviews all the evidence and evaluates teachers for acceptance into level II or III certification, with corresponding salary increases.

Teacher Beliefs and Effectiveness

Fullan (1993) argued that change is not a blueprint but, rather, a journey, which he characterized as a sequence of experiences that allow an individual to generate ideas and apply meaning to how things operate. He explained that individuals continually collect data and seek patterns and laws to help organize future experiences. However, as McKenzie (1993) noted, once people establish an idea in their minds, they begin to

screen out data that might create dissonance and evidence that questions the value of the idea.

A 10-year longitudinal study documented this journey of teacher development in relationship to institutional change and school (Bullough & Baughman, 1997). Their conclusions agreed with others who have studied this phenomenon extensively. For example, Boe and Gilford (1992) found that “improvements in teaching practices are very difficult to implement, particularly since research indicates that there is a strong tendency for teachers to emulate the teachers they observed as students” (p. 37). Therefore, an essential component of teacher development is developing, changing, strengthening, refining, or discarding beliefs (Borko & Butnam, 1995; Bullough & Baughman, 1997).

To facilitate this process, educators can establish and participate in communities of learners (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993; Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Gonzales, Bickett, Hupert, & Martin, 2001; Hollingsworth & Sockett, 1994) and engage in knowledge-building discourse. Accordingly, “if we want to have schools that produce experts, we need to have schools that support progressive knowledge-building discourse” (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993, p. 208). However, teachers are not equally committed to teaching and improving their practice (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993). What individual teachers believe about themselves and about teaching and learning can encourage or discourage development.

Researchers have expressed opinions through various studies concerning a relationship between professional learning communities and student learning, Thompson, Gregg & Niska (2004) stated that schools are working to become professional learning communities in the hope that learning will improve when adults commit themselves to

talking collaboratively about teaching and learning and then take action that will improve student learning. “The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability of school personnel to function as learning communities” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. xi).

According to Wood (2007), teachers’ learning in schools has been widely criticized by education reformers. The belief is that the quality of the education a student receives is directly correlated with the quality of the teacher. Quality teachers know how to engage students in the learning process and recognize ongoing professional learning is imperative to their work’s success (Wood, 2007). DuFour (2004) warned throughout his research that professional learning communities are not a guarantee of success and that they can easily succumb to failed educational reform unless an effective strategic plan is implemented.

Teachers believe that having time to collaborate is a catalyst for nurturing and sustaining a professional learning community. Using dossiers to determine improving student learning can complement strategies developed in teachers’ classrooms. Professional learning communities can assist in this process (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & May, 2006).

Based on teacher differences, “the challenge for teachers and those who work with them is to progressively overcome the blindness of belief, to confront the ways in which interpretations grounded in belief mask the educational possibilities residing in teaching situations” (Bullough & Baughman, 1997, p. 69). When a teacher’s fundamental beliefs are challenged, whatever the source of the challenge, teachers respond emotionally and, perhaps, cognitively, considering the challenge an attack on the self. A common initial reaction is to resist, even to engage in counter-factual self-deception.

Moreover, because belief systems are supported and encouraged by others, changing beliefs may require changing relationships, and these changes are also resisted (Bullough & Baughman, 1979).

Conclusion to Chapter 2

This chapter discussed a set of approaches for comparing teacher learning with student learning and described the complexities associated with promoting reform in education, as well as the knowledge base that teachers need to promote student achievement and elements of professional development or education necessary to ensure teachers become effective classroom practitioners. Furthermore, the chapter examined the effectiveness of professional development training and examined how it promotes teacher learning and student success.

The research on professional development shows that professional development, when delivered in settings that are conducive to learning, can have a positive impact on student learning (Wayne, Yoon, Lhu, Croen, & Garet, 2008). Various researchers have suggested professional development can be effective (see Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; Darling-Hammond & Ducommun, 1993).

Other researchers argued the opposite (see Spinger, Ballau, & Peng, 2008; Spinger et al., 2010). Despite lack of solid evidence in some studies, a consensus has been built on promising “best practices,” drawing on various bodies of theory and correlations from case study data.

This literature study also provided an historical overview of the topic from a national perspective. The research on teacher education, certification, and training includes rigorous studies on teacher qualifications and their relationship to student learning. The issues of highly qualified teachers, sufficiency of teacher compensation,

and attractiveness of the teaching profession have increased national, state, and local interest in tying teacher salaries to student learning. Demonstrated classroom performance of teachers is becoming tied to compensation and most often is used for key workforce policy that holds promise for reform. Many researchers suggested that teacher pay reforms can achieve policy objectives for improved education. In New Mexico, these reforms are embodied in the three-tiered licensure system.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The three-tiered licensure system has been in place for ten years. Education stakeholders have a responsibility to understand what effects, if any, this system is having on teacher quality, classroom practices, and, most importantly, student learning. Given the previous discussion on the impact of professional development on classroom practices and linkages between teacher compensation systems and teacher behavior, a study of teachers in the system may reveal the impact of the system on teaching and learning. This study examined teachers' perceptions of the impact of the three-tiered licensure system. The experiences and perceptions of teachers are invaluable to help understand this impact. One aim of this study was to conduct a thematic analysis of teachers' perceptions (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999) to discover whether the three-tiered system had provoked any changes in educational practice. Given the nature of the research question, qualitative research methodologies were most appropriate for the study. This chapter explains why qualitative research methods apply to this study; describes the research philosophy, positionality, mode of inquiry, context, setting, and participants; outlines data collection methods and analysis process; and addresses verification issues in qualitative studies.

This study was not intended to determine the cause and effect of past occurrences but explored an understanding of how the three-tiered licensure system was changing teacher instruction and student learning as perceived by teachers.

Research Question

This study intended to answer the question “What are teachers’ perceptions of the impact of the three-tiered licensure system?” For this research question, I examined two sub questions: the first addressing the perceptions of teachers of their teaching, and the second question addressing how teachers’ perceptions had an effect on student learning. For both sub questions, I looked at the following perspectives: teaching practice, comments on the dossier process and suggestions for improving the dossier, and impact of the three-tiered licensure system on teaching.

Research Philosophy

Though researchers have long debated the value of qualitative and quantitative inquiry (Gall, Gall, & Borg; 1999; Miles & Huberman; 1994; Patton, 1990), a qualitative methodology was most effective for this study. Straus and Cobin (1990) defined qualitative research as, “Any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures of other means of quantification” (p. 17). In quantitative research, the phenomenon under study is not driven by “an epistemological belief in objective reality” (Gall, Ball & Borg, 1999, p. 121). Qualitative research, on the other hand, requires “direct and personal contact with people under study in their own environments—getting close to people and situations being studied to personally understand the realities and minutiae of daily life” (Coffey & Alkenson, 1996, p. 48). Objectivity can limit the researcher’s openness to and understanding of the very nature of what he or she is studying, especially where emotions and sense-making are part of the phenomenon (Coffey & Alkenson, 1996). As Coffey and Alkenson (1996) indicated, closeness to the subject under study does not cause bias resulting in loss of perspective, just as distance from the subject does not guarantee objectivity. Rather, the guiding

epistemology is the belief that “behavior is best understood as it occurs without external constraints and control, and the situation concept is very important in understanding behavior” (McMillan, 2000, p. 253).

This study utilizes critical perspectives, examining a new approach that was put in place under the three-tiered system to solve the problems of low salaries, poor classroom instruction, low student achievement, and ineffective professional development in New Mexico schools, with the ultimate goal of guiding improvements in educational opportunities (Cook & Fine, 1997). Foster (2003) described the need to employ a critical paradigm when seeking change. The approach was intended to understand how the three-tiered licensure system is both helpful and problematic from teachers’ perspectives toward student learning and achievement, with the purpose of improving the three-tiered licensure system and how it is applied with teachers in regard to student learning. I employed a critical perspective to investigate teachers’ perspectives concerning the impact of the three-tiered licensure system on student learning.

Critical theory served as the philosophical framework for this study. Critical theory is an ideological perspective that determines how the research is conducted (Creswell, 1998). In particular, “a researcher should engage in inquiry with the expectation their work will be instrumental in bringing about change” (Schram, 2006, p. 45). As such, researchers conduct a legitimate investigation that motivates practitioners to transform programs.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, “the researcher becomes the main research instrument” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 6)—observing, questioning, and interacting with data sources. A qualitative study can be more in-depth than a quantitative study, requiring a

longer time frame as the researcher develops an interactive relationship with participants. The quantitative researcher's role is based on impartiality and detachment, but a qualitative researcher's role is based on personal involvement, partiality, and understanding (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The nature of this role allows the qualitative researcher to employ data collection methods that may not be available in purely quantitative studies.

By using many different sources or methods of gathering data (i.e., triangulation), the researcher can verify findings, clarify understanding, gain a more in-depth perspective of the occurrence, and strengthen the validity of the research findings. Qualitative researchers believe that because they are imbedded in the process, they have better and clearer access to the multiple perspectives than quantitative researchers who reach conclusions from data removed from the process (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As a qualitative researcher, I was able to collect and triangulate various forms of data to produce a clear picture of the issue.

Positionality of the Researcher

My positionality to the research was as an insider with prior teaching experience, a legislator who helped create the three-tiered licensure system, and an administrator who supervises teachers participating in professional development training. My many years of teaching give me insight into the complexities of teaching and learning. Furthermore, with my background as an educator, administrator, and district-level supervisor, I hold certain values and beliefs about how professional development impacts a teacher's ability to improve student achievement.

Although teaching techniques may have changed since I was a classroom teacher, my knowledge of new research into techniques that promote rigorous standards and

relevant instruction has increased. I espouse building a culture of support for professional development (Little, 1981), and I believe that a professional development dossier can enrich the work of teachers and foster student learning in New Mexico by causing the educator to engage in continuous inquiry, which is necessary to transform the life of teachers and build curriculum (Little, 1981). These perspectives were helpful to my study because I had personal insight as to the intent and purpose of the legislation and I could ask additional probing questions in the focus groups and interviews. This led to thoughts and ideas that the teachers may not have had before the interviews. The limitation to this was the fact that to the interviewee I am a legislator who helped to sponsor the legislation, and they maybe were hesitant to respond to the questions. At the same time, these teachers seemed very receptive to me as an educator.

I believe that the majority of teachers desire to improve learning for all students. I brought to this study knowledge gained through 25 years as an educator and 16 years as a legislator. My values, beliefs, and experiences as a classroom teacher, administrator, and legislator helped me develop the research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). However, my role as a legislator possibly affected the way teachers answered interview questions. In particular, they were possibly intimidated by my leadership role as the house majority whip. This role possibly defined my relationship with participants in this study (Creswell, 1998). The most significant difference between research participants and me was that I am no longer a classroom teacher but I am, instead, a public school administrator and a state legislator.

Overall, I was conscious of my participants and their positions as teachers and was careful to block out my preconceptions of the legislation. To address these conditions, I was engaged with participants as much as possible, particularly when asking

probing questions defining the participants' view of me as a researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Mode of Inquiry: Qualitative Research

The experiences and perceptions of practicing educators are invaluable for understanding the impact of the three-tiered licensure system on classroom instruction and student learning. A qualitative method of research was determined to be the most appropriate method for gaining this understanding. A specific aim was to discover, through thematic analysis of teacher perceptions (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999), whether the three-tiered licensure system had produced any changes in educational practices.

Qualitative research helps explore specific research questions because the design of a qualitative study consists of the problem, or issue, leading to the study, formulating the central purpose, and providing the research questions (Creswell, 1998). The qualitative research method of analyzing the information while focusing on participants' views enabled me to elicit expressive and persuasive responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Qualitative research, particularly phenomenological inquiry, uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand a phenomenon in a context specific setting. Logical positivism, or quantitative research, in contrast, uses experimental research methods and quantitative measures to test hypothetical generalizations. Each represents a different epistemology and requires a different inquiry paradigm. In this study, qualitative methods added depth to the study by providing insight, variety, and a rich picture of the phenomenon studied.

Verma and Mallick (1999) stated,

The results obtained through quantitative studies are not the only knowledge of

reality and all things do not exist in quantities lending themselves readily to measurement—here are many qualities, behaviors and events that cannot be measured because no tool or technique has been devised—as yet. (p. 4)

Additionally, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explained, the qualitative method is about the social nature of reality and the relationship between what is studied and the researcher, whereas quantitative methods study the relationship between variables and statistics. Quantitative questions ask why and compare data, while qualitative questions ask what and how (Creswell, 1998).

By using qualitative methods in the development of the interview, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the results, the scope of research was expanded. Qualitative methods were used to collect the data on experiences, feelings, and opinions (Verma & Mallick, 1999) in a manner not feasible using other methods (Catterall & Maclaran, 1997; Gibbs, 1997). Thus, by using qualitative research methods, this study could “depict reality as understood and experienced by others” (Krueger, 1998, p. 22). However, these same methodologies required me to set aside any prior theories or personal frameworks, which then allowed me to resist making guesses or preliminary, unsupported conclusions as a result of emerging situations (Kruger, 1998).

To understand how and why things happen as they do, researchers must develop an ability to theorize results through a process of identifying relationships (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999). According to McMillan (2000), qualitative research focuses on data collection in the natural setting, provides rich narrative descriptions to promote better understanding of behavior, uses process orientation allowing for conclusions that explain the reasons for results, employs inductive data analysis, relies on participant perspectives, and has an emergent, as opposed to a predetermined, design. Notably, the qualitative

researcher amends a prior assumption and, certainly, a prior conclusion.

This study followed the definition of the problem. The context, issues, and lessons learned from data analysis involved using one-to-one interviews and tape-recorded interviews. The nature of the research questions in this case demanded that the topics be explored in depth. By using a qualitative approach, I could elicit expressive and persuasive responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) to open-ended questions, which the research question required (Creswell, 1998). In qualitative research, the data ultimately gives significance and meaning to the data collection process. In this study, the process included reviewing and examining how teachers perceived the three-tiered licensure system, what their perceptions were of the impact of the three-tiered system on their classroom instruction and student learning, and what they believed to be the effectiveness of the dossier method of professional development.

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) noted that qualitative research employs an interpretive paradigm in which the world is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing. Qualitative researchers emphasize the importance of conducting research in a natural setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1980; Wilson, 1977). For qualitative research to be effective, the researcher must know the participants' perspectives subjectively and emphatically (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1980; Smith, 1983; Wilson, 1977).

Phenomenology

This study investigated teachers' experiences in the three-tiered system using a phenomenological research approach. The aim of phenomenological research is for subjects to describe fully their experiences (Giorgi, 1985). This approach is appropriate for studying teachers' experiences, perceptions, and opinions. This methodology provides

opportunities to gain a deep understanding of human experience. In this study, I used the phenomenological approach to understand the experiences and perceptions of 63 teachers from level I to level III concerning the three-tiered licensure system.

In contrast to other qualitative research approaches, a phenomenological approach requires the researcher to strive toward understanding the subjects' viewpoint and also to study objects of the subjects' experiences (Crotty, 1996). In other words, phenomenology studies both how people experience and what people experience (Crotty, 1996). Another important contribution of phenomenological research is its moral dimension. As Van Manen (1997) pointed out, "phenomenological research carries a moral force" (p. 12), which, when combined with Critical Theory, means that, as the researcher, I held the moral duty to understand the subjects' experiences and facilitate improvement in student achievement.

"Phenomenological researchers, particularly those of a descriptive bent, focus on what an experience means to persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a compressive description of it" (Shram, 2006, p. 98). I learned about subjects' behaviors, feelings, beliefs, and perceptions through interviews and focus interviews, and sought to convey meaning that describes the foundation of their experiences. This was possible by using a phenomenological approach to guide the research process and data analysis. According to Maston (1986), "Phenomenology is an empirical research tradition that was designed to answer questions about thinking and learning, especially for educational research." Furthermore, as Polkinghorne (1989) noted, the reader of a phenomenological study should come away with the feeling "I understand better what it is like to experience that" (p. 46).

As the researcher in this study, my background, knowledge and experience in the legislature enabled me to have a deep understanding of the teachers' experiences and present a rich understanding of how they believed the three-tiered licensure system had helped them improve in the classroom. The moral duty to understand the subjects forced me as the researcher to be self-reflective and build relationships with them.

In this study, the phenomenological approach of looking for the meaning of participants' experiences (Creswell, 1998) included the requirement that the researcher experiences the same conditions as the participants. Emphasis was on individual experiences, and since I hold experiences similar to those of participants of my study (Walker, 1998), I related to experiences and perceptions of each participant.

Site of Study

The New Mexico public school system has a diverse ethnic composition (Table 4). Early in New Mexico's education history, teaching large numbers of Native American students was the responsibility of the federal government, based upon treaties signed between 1728 and 1871 (Mondragón & Stapleton, 2005). This responsibility is still in effect.

Table 4

Student, School/District Characteristics for Public Schools in New Mexico

Student characteristics	School/district characteristics
Number enrolled: 326,758	Number of school districts: 89
Percent in Title 1 schools: 59.2%	Number of schools: 875
	Number of FTE teachers: 22,021
Racial/ethnic background	
White:	31.1%
Black:	2.5%
Hispanic:	54.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	1.3%
American Indian/Alaskan Native:	11.1%

(Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2007)

The achievement gap has not narrowed since the passage of NCLB and HB212, though overall achievement has increased. Additionally, Native American and Hispanic students tend to drop out of school at an alarming rate, with Native Americans exhibiting the second highest dropout rate in the state (Kitchens & Velasquez, 1998). New Mexico concentrates the graduation rates of students by subgroups rather than by the overall drop out rate.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) calculated the national graduation rate to be 73.2 percent in 2005 and 2006. The same report estimated the New Mexico graduation rate as 67.3 percent. However, the dropout rate among Hispanic students is higher than among any other group, as is the actual number of Hispanic students who drop out. In New Mexico, the school year 2008–2009 40th-day enrollment count by district and ethnicity showed that there were 329,845 students and 25,041

teachers. Ethnic minorities represented 71.2 percent of the total population. The White student population made up 28.9 percent of the state population. The Hispanic student population was at 56.1 percent, Blacks at 2.6 percent, Native Americans at 11.1 percent, and Asians at 1.4 percent (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2008).

Kitchens and Velasquez (1998) stated that the major reasons why students drop out are the teachers' lack of understanding of their culture and the lack of incentives to students. "The interactions that take place between students and teachers and among students are more central to student success than any method for teaching literacy or science or math" (Cummins, 1996). Students are empowered not only by studying about their own culture but also by exposure to different perspectives through a variety of pedagogical strategies (Nieto, 2004).

The need for teachers to review research and undergo more professional development on learning styles of the various cultures was apparent in the test scores of students in grades three through nine in the areas of reading, language arts, and mathematics. The results of the spring 2007 New Mexico Assessment Progress for all New Mexico students showed that White students generally attained higher scores than any group of minority students (NAEP, 2007).

Given the diversity of the student population, as well as the state's teacher population, the study population was an ethnically diverse group of teachers who participate in the three-tiered licensure system. Teachers who participated in the study by completing a screening document also represented the geographic diversity of New Mexico.

The five school districts were very diverse in population. Gadsden and Pojoaque are considered rural schools with a student population of 15,000 or less and a majority

minority student population of Hispanic students. The Las Cruces, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe public schools are urban school districts with a student population of over 25,000 students and a majority minority population of Hispanic students in all three districts. In this study participants were referred to as either Southern for Gadsden and Las Cruces, Central for Albuquerque, and Northern for Santa Fe and Pojoaque.

Research Participants

Interview subjects composed a diverse group of participants, forming a purposive sample of teacher participants. “All sampling will be done with some purpose in mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 199), in this case to show whether or not changes in practice, beliefs and participation in the three-tiered licensure system helped to increase learning. Using a listing provided by the Public Education Department, I selected participants in such a way as to ensure a balanced mix of participants for diversity, gender, and ethnicity (Patton, 2002).

A specific criterion for participant selection and involvement was teachers from across the state participating in the three-tiered licensure system in the elementary, middle, and high schools at the level I, level II, and level III licensure levels. Teachers were actively engaged in the professional development dossier system and were actively implementing strategies described in their professional development dossiers. According to the Public Education Department, from the beginning of spring 2005 through June, 2008, 3,635 teachers submitted PDDs to advance from level I to level II, with a passing rate of 90.8 percent (or 3,301 teachers), and 1,553 teachers submitted PDDs to advance from level II to level III, with passing rate of 90.1 percent, or 1,399 teachers. These data show that 5,188 teachers submitted a PDD and that 4,700 teachers passed.

The participants included a broad spectrum of K–12 teachers, both male and female teachers. The schools they represented included various New Mexico schools, including public schools and tribal and non-public schools not required to participate in the three-tiered licensure system.

Demographics of Questionnaire Participants

When invited through the questionnaire to participate in a focus group or interview, 71 teachers responded, but not all 71 were qualified as three-tiered teachers to participate. Two teachers who showed up decided that they did not want to participate, and the others were participating in the three-tiered system but had not completed the dossier. Of these, I contacted 65 respondents to participate and interviewed 63. Participants included representatives from high school (62%), middle school (24%), and elementary school (14%). Participants' self-reported ethnicity is provided in

Table 5, and their teaching assignments and degrees are presented in Table 6. In addition, 14% of participants taught specialized classes, such as special education, music, career technical education, physical education, early childhood, business, and family and consumer courses.

Table 5

Ethnic Composition of Participants (n = 63)

Ethnicity	Percentage
Non-Hispanic White	62%
Hispanic	34%
Native American	3%
African-American	1%

Table 6

Teaching Assignments and Credentials of Participants (n = 63)

Level	Percentage
Elementary	14%
Middle	24%
High	62%

Degree	Percentage
Bachelor's	14%
National Board Certificate	22%
Master's	64%

45 people responded for focus groups, but only 30 participated, in the groupings described in Table 8.

Data Sources and Analysis Tools

I created an electronic file that included: a completed personal data form; a copy of the screening document; notes on emerging themes; and transcripts, notes, and summaries of each interview or focus group discussions. Focus groups and interviews were the primary data source. Many of the categories, or construct patterns, identified in the initial analysis also emerged during reanalysis of the data. Thus, the secondary data sources added credibility to the emerging implications. The screening questionnaire (see Appendix D), for instance, was formulated to verify credibility, but similar constructs were investigated in selective construction of interview questions. Interview questions (see Appendix C) served to narrow, or focus on, “selective” (Strauss, 1987) constructs that emerged as primary data. “How did you go about the process of completing a dossier? How did you determine what to include in the dossier?” Table 7 identifies the data sources used in this research and their importance. All focus groups and interviewees were audio-taped.

Table 7

Analysis by Data Source

Data Source	Analysis Process	Use and Purpose
Focus groups	Open coding	Primary source of categories
Audio-taped conversations	Open Coding	Secondary sources for triangulation
Interviews	Selective coding	Primary source of categories
Screening document	Selective Coding	Secondary source of

categories

The screening document, interview, and focus group data analysis were focused on a selective and deeper examination of emergent patterns. The data sources varied to achieve “data triangulation,” which Patton (1980) defined as the use of a variety of data sources in a study (p. 108). In triangulation, data from one source support findings from another source and can aid in drawing conclusions.

Review of Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process occurred in several stages and required careful organization and safekeeping of the tapes, transcripts, and research journal. In this research study, all data were analyzed through a combination method of “open coding” (Strauss, 1987, p. 29–33), which entailed a search and identification of emerging categories. Identified patterns and themes formed the structure for data acquisition. Analysis of focus groups and individual interviews consisted of identifying responses related to the themes of autonomous, collaboration, and time.

After making clarifications in the transcripts, I coded the participants’ responses and categorized the topics and subtopics (as seen in Table 10). For example, the topic “Salary/Morale” included the subtopics “salary equity,” “affect on morale,” “resentment grandfathered in,” and “new teacher making the same as a 25-year veteran teacher.”

As I studied the results for unanswered questions and interesting subjects related to the dossier process and teacher participation, I encountered topics that produced emotional responses from participants, such as payment to the Public Education Department (PED) for submitting the dossier.

Interviews and the focus group discussions provided a formal method for teachers

to reflect on their experiences. Open-ended probing questions were meant to focus on the teachers' experiences and their professional growth and also to assist them in reflecting on their perceptions and beliefs about the dossier.

The probing questions were presented as follows.

- “How did you learn about the three-tier licensure system?”
- “Do you know others who have gone through the system?”
- “What changes have occurred in your teaching practice?”
- “Did your school or the state provide support directly to you?”
- “What was the nature of that support?”
- “Did you need to seek out support or was it easily accessible?”
- “Did others help you as you encountered these challenges?”
- “How did you feel as you faced the challenge(s)?”
- “When you succeeded in overcoming a challenge, what impact did that have for you?”
- “Did completing your dossier help motivate you in your classroom practice?”
- “Did the dossier process improve your knowledge of curriculum and teaching? If so, how?”
- “How do you feel overall about the three-tier licensure system and the dossier process as a professional development experience?”
- “Do you feel you are a better teacher as a result of completing the dossier process?” (Please elaborate)

One-on-one relationship with interviewees helped build trust. As Buraway (1991) noted, interviews yielded rich and detailed data about the teachers, teaching style, communicative skills, and how they explored new and innovative ways of teaching using

the dossier process. Data became “preconstructed theories and concepts of the participants, their meaning shaped by the concept of the interview” (Buraway, 1991, p.

4). The interview process became more structured during each interview so I could guide the interviews to a logical end. However, throughout interviews, questions were anchored in previous responses.

The focus groups represented a rich and complex source of data related to experiences and perceptions of teachers. Themes were noted as they were observed in more than one focus group interview.

Data Collection Methods

Collected data consisted of:

- field notes from focus group observation and responses,
- audio-taped conversations,
- responses from interviews, and
- recorded comments about teaching experiences in the three-tiered licensure system.

From interviews and focus groups, I attempted to use Holstein and Gubrium’s (1995) process to establish a jointly created story. Because participants and I were both involved in this process, the exchange led to a collaborative result. Therefore, as the interviewer, I was constantly aware of what I wanted the interview to accomplish and how that could be accomplished (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). After I conducted interviews, I transcribed them and searched for themes across the transcriptions. I used these themes to analyze and code responses.

Based on the review of literature, I determined that a focus group approach, along with interviews, would be the most dynamic way to gather critical data to understand the

research phenomenon because of its “explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights” (Morgan, 1997, p. 2). According to Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996), “A supportive and non evaluative environment must be established if the subjects are to participate honestly and freely” (p. 79). This implied that I needed to establish a climate of trust and rapport with research participants. This climate was particularly important to gathering quality data in this study because I, as the researcher, am associated with the three-tiered licensure legislation through the legislature.

As a participant in the research process, as is the case in a phenomenological approach, my first step was to scrutinize my self-reflection. For example, I adhered to true dialogue by attempting to remain flexible, primarily by asking questions during the course of interviews. I also tried to participate from a phenomenological stance, i.e., without preconceived notions and with a willingness to let the unexpected take place. The participants’ answers guided interviews and served as the basis for probing questions. The questions were open-ended to allow me to explore unanticipated ideas.

Pilot Interview

I conducted a pilot interview with three teachers, all of who completed the interview and focus group questions. Participants in the pilot were one middle and two high school teachers. One was a band teacher, another was a science teacher, and the third was a language arts teacher. One was a level II teacher and two were level III teachers with master’s degrees. Two were men, and one was a woman. The following statements reflected general impressions of the three-tiered licensure system.

- Dossier made me a better teacher.
- It impacted my time.
- I had to document my professionalism and pedagogy for a raise.

- It made me reflect on what I do every day.
- More notice and help is needed from administration.
- It helped me in the long run; [I'm] glad it's in place.
- Sharing lesson plans helped me in my practice.
- The challenge was a reflection of what I do every day.
- As a better teacher, you see improvement in students.

The results of the pilot created the opportunity to modify interview questions and include additional probing questions. For example, to the main question, "What support have you received in preparing your dossier? If so how helpful has that support been?" I was able to ask such probing questions as, "Did your school or the state provide support directly to you?" "What was the nature of that support?" "Did you need to seek out support or was it easily accessible?" I modified the questions to the pilot based on responses of the three participants. The pilot had many other questions that could be perceived as quantitative questions. I eliminated those questions.

The most consistent pilot findings regarded compensation and its relationship to a commitment to teaching. The dossier impacted pilot participants' teaching only because they felt that they learned from others in the training and that it helped to improve their teaching style.

Research Protocol

In order to learn which teachers had completed the three-tiered system, I sent a letter of request to the Public Education Department requesting identification of school districts with teachers who had completed the three-tiered system. The department provided a list, by district, showing how many teachers at a particular school had completed the process. I made an initial phone call to the superintendent of each district

located in the Rio Grande corridor, requesting permission to send the participant screening document to their schools. Many of the superintendents and principals agreed to send out the screening document to their teachers.

The screening documents asked whether teachers would be willing to volunteer to be interviewed or participate in a focus group regarding the three-tiered salary system. Each participant in a focus group or interview received a consent form (Appendix A). I sent a screening document by e-mail requesting participation in the focus group or interview, not to the entire 4,700 teachers whose names were sent to me but to five school districts whose administrators had responded after the first semester in which I made the request.

The process included:

1. Identifying potential recipients from a list provided by PED with only the list of schools and teachers, without names, who had completed or participated in the three-tiered system;
2. Contacting by phone superintendents or principals for permission to send screening documents to schools or school districts;
3. Sending an e-mail with the screening document;
4. Gaining permission to have teachers participate in either interviews or focus groups or both;
5. Gaining permission from interviewee after receiving the screening document back for a date and time for the interview or focus group;
6. Receiving the permission form to audio-tape the process signed by interviewee; and
7. Conducting interviews and focus groups.

The screening document included demographic information and identified teacher characteristics, such as the following:

- Level—primary, middle or secondary
- Type of school
- Regular vs. special ed.
 1. Classroom/non-classroom
 2. Content area
- Rural/urban
- Size of district
- Access to support to teachers.

Face-to-face interviews were scheduled to not last more than an hour. Once focus group interviews and interviews were completed, each participant received a letter thanking them for their participation.

Also, during data collection, I followed the phenomenological attitude of reduction. For example, I recorded participants' meanings in the manner they discussed them (Giorgi, 1985). I analyzed data for themes and then coded transcriptions and other data for these themes. Teacher responses were grouped into level I, II, and III teachers. The data collection grid (see Appendix B) helped organize the data.

After examining participants' reflections and opinions in a focus group, it became apparent that some teachers described similar experiences, even though teachers were from different schools and grade levels, as well as from different three-tiered levels. For example, participant A1 shared the same experience as participant C1, and participant D4 gave similar experiences as Diane and G5 in a completely different focus group and or

district. From these and others, tentative themes emerged from generated descriptions or statements to provide essential themes.

Forms of Data

Focus groups

The group interview is a qualitative data-gathering technique that relies on the systematic questioning of several individuals simultaneously in a formal or informal setting. This has been associated with the label of focus group (Fontana, 2002). In a group interview or focus study, the interviewer normally directs the inquiry and the interaction among the participants. Focus group interviews in this study were used in conjunction with other data-gathering techniques, such as asking additional probing questions to get a sense of the whole experience, writing the description of what was said or video-recorded, and then distinguishing three-tiered expressions from educational words or phrases. An example is working with students at decoding level, which involves teaching reading. I used this technique to put individual responses into context (Corcoran, 1974).

Focus groups are in-depth qualitative interviews generating data through the give and take of group discussions with a small number of carefully selected subjects. Using focus groups, the researcher learns participants' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and reactions in a manner that is not possible using other methods (Catterell & Maclaran, 1997; Gibbs, 1997). Because these are conducted in a group setting, focus groups provide opportunity for the researcher to understand what individuals think of others' perspectives and how they make meaning (Denzin, 1978; Ritzer, 1983). As such, focus groups elicit multiple views and emotional processes within a group context and allow the researcher to collect more data, and more comprehensive data, in a shorter period than

other interviewing techniques (Focus Group Questionnaire, Appendix C).

I used an existing mailing list from Public Education Department (PED) to recruit focus group members. Once I received the list from the PED, I sent an e-mail either to district superintendents or principals, requesting their permission to send the screening document and the letter requesting teacher participation in the study. The first five that responded in a timely manner were sent the information requesting permission to participate.

The invitation I sent to potential participants described the purpose of the focus group and asked interested individuals to respond with a notation containing the number of years of participation in the three-tiered licensure system and current grade level assignment. I reviewed responses and organized focus group participants into three distinct groupings (Table 4). Essential criterion for participation in the focus groups was that participants were involved in the dossier system. I concentrated on making sure study districts were diverse: rural and urban, large or small districts. Forty-five people responded for focus groups, but only 30 were eligible because some teachers who participated were teachers grandfathered into the system and could not answer many of the questions because they did not complete a dossier. Therefore, I excluded those teachers from the count.

Kleiber, who specializes in focus group research, noted that the ideal size for a focus group is seven to 12 participants and that the researcher needs to conduct a minimum of three focus groups (De Mairas & Lapan, 2004). In this study, I used five focus groups, with the following compositions.

Table 8

Focus Group Composition

Focus group	Number of participants	Level	Three-tiered licensure levels
1	5 teachers	3 elementary 1 middle 1 high	Level I, II, and III
2	5 teachers	1 elementary 1 middle 3 high	Level I, II, and III
3	7 teachers	2 elementary 2 middle 3 high	Level I, II, and III
4	7 teachers	2 elementary 2 middle 3 high	Level I, II, and III
5	5 teachers	1 elementary 2 middle 2 high	Level I, II, and III

Elementary, middle, and high school teachers were included in the same focus groups to achieve balance between the different school levels, as well as balance among three-tiered licensure levels.

The questionnaire, reviewed by the Internal Review Board (IRB) for clarity and appropriateness for this purpose, assisted me in gathering relevant demographic data on each participant's self-identified ethnicity and participation in the three-tiered licensure system. Each participant in a focus group was provided a name tag for identification purposes. Focus group and interviewees' questionnaires (Appendix C) asked participants about personal experiences, perceptions, and opinions of the three-tiered licensure system.

When planning and designing focus groups the researcher must be ever mindful of research questions (Mertens, 2005; de Mairas & Lapan, 2004; Creswell, 1998). Altogether, focus groups included 45 teachers who had participated in the dossier training. Participants possessing materials from professional development trainings provided those materials, which I used to elicit additional data and documentation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To help ensure a climate of trust and rapport, I greeted participants before asking each participant to fill out a screening document (Appendix D) and the necessary consent form (Appendix A). I audio taped the focus groups with a PZm microphone and transcribed the tapes following the sessions. I had an assistant who worked the tape recorder and took notes as I facilitated focus group discussions. The questions followed Spradley's (1979) guide. As a facilitator, I listened intently and drew all participants into the group, as well as tried to keep participants talking to each other, rather than only to me.

Interviews

Interviews are reactive situations of social interaction in which discussions about behavior and opinions are influenced by the interview process itself (Nardi, 2003). In the interviewing process, I developed and framed research questions in a manner that

provided flexibility and freedom to explore a phenomenon in depth. The research questions in my interviewing process identified the phenomenon to be studied. Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that the use of identifying interviews is one of the most effective sampling processes. Polkinghorne (1989) added that gathering information from depictions of experiences outside the context of the research, such as deceptions and self-reflection, is a critical point in a phenomenological study. This is a central role in collecting information while interviewing (Creswell, 1998).

I utilized the same procedure for interviews as I did for focus groups. Once teachers responded by e-mail or by phone agreeing to participate, I either phoned or e-mailed for a date and time to meet. I asked if they were willing to participate in a focus group or an interview or both. Interviews were a main source of data, along with the focus groups. I interviewed 33 teachers: 11 elementary school teachers, 11 middle school teachers, and 11 high school teachers. Each interview took 40 minutes to one hour. As the interviews progressed, questions were increasingly focused, in a form of constant comparative analysis (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993; Strauss, 1987). However, the interviews maintained a focus on the primary research question: “What are teachers' perceptions of the impact of New Mexico's three-tiered licensure system?” with sub questions on classroom instruction and student learning (Appendix C).

Based on the recommendations of Lincoln and Guba (1985), I used a constructivist approach for phrasing questions to allow for additional probing questions. Questions were designed to elicit complex and detailed answers. I also used non-leading prompts to encourage participants to feel at ease (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; McCracken, 1988; Creswell, 1998). I expected teachers to be eager to share their experiences and perceptions of the reform effort and to express why they believed reforms had, or had

not, benefited them as teachers. Teachers had the opportunity to tell their stories about their experiences and thoughts without interruption. Opened-ended questions (Morse & Richardson, 2002) provided time for participants to respond without interruption.

Interviews were audio taped and transcribed, after which transcriptions were shared with participants to make certain we agreed on what was conveyed.

Data Analysis

Data collection sources vary to permit “data triangulation,” which Patton (1980) defined as “the use of a variety of data sources in a study” (p. 108). Through triangulation, data from one source are compared to data from other sources, and all data are used to draw conclusions. Various data sources offer diverse ways to observe participants as they share their experiences. By collecting data from multiple sources and analyzing them, I sought to understand how participants viewed the three-tiered licensure system in New Mexico.

Data analysis included a search for common themes, including problematic themes. I was required to separate overlapping responses, i.e., answers covering parts of more than one question, while analyzing data, and I developed a plan for analysis based on key issues and key findings. While analyzing data, I attempted to identify statements or expressed ideas not fitting into the major themes emerging but that broadened my understanding of how the three-tiered salary system had affected participants.

I presented findings in a narrative summarizing results of focus groups and interviews. I attempted to synthesize meanings according to focus group and interview questions. Some of the meanings involved conditions or qualifications put forth by the participants.

The constant comparative method drove data analysis. This method is a process for determining categories of information leading to grounded theories and revealing themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). With this method, data analysis is a continuous process beginning during the data collection phase. The comparative method, as used in this study, is described in Table 9.

Table 9

The Comparative Method Applied to This Study

Activity	Researcher behavior
1. Collect data.	Record and transcribe interviews in which teachers share perceptions, opinions, and personal thoughts.
2. Identify key and recurrent activities for focus.	Analyze interviews for key issues and develop conceptual framework.
3. Review multiple patterns of focus in interviews and focus groups.	Review individual teachers' and focus group samples.
4. Write to describe and account for all focus categories and relationships.	Organize, describe, and interpret results, themes, and patterns of interviews. Record thoughts and perceptions from interviews and focus interviews. Examine key relationships and their influence on teachers' ideas about the three-tiered licensure system.
5. Engage in sampling, coding, and writing as analysis focuses on core categories.	Categorize role and themes in interviews. Identify examples and non-examples of conceptual framework categories.

Following interviews and focus group sessions, I transcribed and reviewed notes, using inductive analysis to sort data into meaningful categories describing or implying information about context. I documented how I developed provisional categories and sorted specific information into provisional categories. This documentation provided a conceptual framework for examining themes and theories that emerge from the data.

Various strategies described by Merriam (1988) ensured, or increased, reliability. First, this study's use of interviews and focus group sessions, with corresponding documentation, supplied multiple views of interactions and processes to allow for data triangulation. During interviews and focus groups, I reviewed data and emerging conclusions with participants to clarify and expand my interpretation of data. Overall, data analysis was a process for identifying patterns in responses relevant to the central theme of the study.

Coding

I developed a preliminary framework to categorize data at a general level. These categories included professional development processes, broad issues within the education system, teacher support and compensation, and teacher practices and ideologies. Initially, participants' comments were coded within these four categories. However, as data analysis continued, I needed to refine categories to reflect new themes emerging from data coding. During this stage of analysis, I organized related items into higher-order patterns, based on specific items, responses, themes, and ideas appearing in the data. (See Appendix E for a sample of interview coding.) Through this process, I identified particular ideas appearing repeatedly in the data, which indicated that a pattern existed. This also provided me the ability to identify statements or expressed ideas not fitting into identified themes but that were demonstrating diverse ideas, leading to a broader understanding of how the three-tiered licensure system had affected the participants and student learning.

Standards of rigor and quality

Creswell (1998) emphasized that qualitative researchers strive to understand the deep structure of knowledge that comes from visiting with participants in research and by

spending time in the field and obtaining detailed meanings. By using a pluralistic approach, rather than a fundamentalist position, researchers are able to choose specific legitimizing criteria, thus ensuring the robustness of their inquiries (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Tobin and Begley (2004) noted that goodness, trustworthiness, and authenticity are a part of the qualitative research process. To meet this standard and ensure the credibility and validity of this study, I used the following strategies proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985):

1. Written notes from interviews and focus groups provided an audit trail of data entered during the study to establish trustworthiness;
2. Triangulating data from multiple sources, along with an indication of times of data collection, enhanced trustworthiness; and
3. On occasion, I removed myself from the context being studied to review perceptions, insights, opinions, and analysis with fellow researchers.

Tobin and Begley (2004) asserted, “goodness and trustworthiness can be used to evaluate the robustness of naturalistic inquiry” (p. 388), and they emphasized the need for methodological rigor as part of a qualitative framework that contributes to advancement of knowledge. Morse (1990) explained that if the concept of rigor is rejected in qualitative research, then the scientific inquiry is rejected, which undermines the belief that qualitative research is a scientific process making a valued contribution.

Furthermore, Morse and Richardson (2002) noted that without rigor, the process by which researchers demonstrate competence (Oeoni et al., 1999), qualitative research may become fictional journalism.

To implement the concept of rigor, I acted as a researcher who is the instrument—rather than a researcher who uses an instrument (McCracken, 1988). To ensure the

credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of findings in this study, I shared and rechecked with participants the data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions throughout the study. By sharing these, I verified that I accurately understood teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and opinions as expressed in individual interviews and focus groups. I reported detailed descriptions so that those who consider using the findings could determine whether information and conclusions were transferable to their own settings. I also captured examples from transcriptions, the manner in which themes were coded, and the categories and indicators of themes.

I used data that support themes of this study to confirm findings, and I looked for both positive and negative examples and patterns in data. Thus, any interpretations of data were not a result of my imagination (Sparks, 2001) but were the result of careful data analysis. As Lincoln (2001) noted, the researcher should build a solid level of documentation by reporting completely and honestly all perspectives of the research. In this study, documenting interviews, including data from interviews and the patterns, themes, and categories, reinforced confirmability of the process and reliability of findings. The data analysis process was confirmed when all data on the teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and opinions were synthesized for meaning.

Finally, the dependability of findings involved including clear and direct statements from interviews. Having built a level of trust with participants to learn their thoughts and perceptions on the three-tiered licensure system, I provided a "rich-thick description of data" (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1995), which ensured that the process was traceable and clearly documented (Schwandt, 2001).

Limitations of the Study

Marshall and Rossman (2006) emphasized that limitations arise from the restrictions or limiting conditions of a study. In this study, primary data were expressed beliefs, opinions, and attitudes of teachers who participated in or completed the three-tiered licensure system. This suggests restricting participation by other teachers in the screening document, focus group sessions, or interviews. Inasmuch as I am a legislator who participated in passing legislation that created the three-tiered licensure system, I had to consider my own involvement during the analysis, although under the phenomenological stance, my intuition and interpretation were important factors when analyzing the data and searching for meaning (Barrett et al., 1985) because I was part of the experience under study (Ihde, 1986).

Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations establish boundaries imposed by the researcher (Glathorn & Joyner, 2003). The inclusion of elementary, middle, and high school teachers who had completed level I, II, and III of the three-tiered system created one boundary in this study, as did balancing for gender.

A total of 45 people responded for focus groups. A total of 15 individuals were three-tiered teachers, but did not complete a dossier. Because only 30 of the 45 had actually participated in the dossier process, I included the 30 who did the dossier. The 15 teachers excluded from focus groups were teachers who grandfathered in as three-tiered teachers into the system

Ethical Considerations

The personal nature of interviews and focus groups incurs basic ethical issues of any research or evaluation methods (Patton, 2002). Participants received and signed the

Informed Consent Form (Appendix A) before participating in any of the methods outlined in the study. They were informed their names would be kept confidential. I informed participants their participation was voluntary.

I applied for Internal Review Board approval for this study from Albuquerque Public Schools and the University of New Mexico, and I completed extensive training through Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Participants received and signed informed consent forms before participating in an interview or focus group. Participants were volunteers. Risks and benefits were explained to participants in the informed consent to participate form that they signed.

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) requires that any research conducted with Albuquerque Public School staff members be approved by their institutional review board (IRB). It is my understanding that APS is the only district in New Mexico requiring its own IRB. Interviews and focus groups were conducted in three school districts: a small, medium, and large district. The screening document was distributed statewide to all 89 school districts participating in the three-tiered licensure system. I heard from 12 school districts when the documents were sent out for permission and signature. Only five school districts returned the information in a timely manner. Seventy-eight respondents returned the screening document with the agreement to participate. At the conclusion of the research, only 63 participants actually participated in the process. All screening documents, focus groups, and interview field notes were shredded after the project's completion.

The initial questionnaire to all potential participants included the following questions:

- What level of teacher are you? level I, level II or level III.

- What is your range in age? 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s. 60s.
- Are you a new teacher or a veteran teacher?
- Are you a minority teacher?
- Did you get training on the professional development dossier (PDD)?
- Do you think the training was good or bad?
- Did you get a raise as a result of your involvement in the process?
- If so, approximately how much?
- What kind of school are you located at? A school in need of improvement,
- a school that met AYP?
- What is the makeup of your students?
- How would you rate your students?
- What impact did the three-tiered licensure system have on your experience as a classroom teacher?

Timeline for the Study

The study took approximately 14 months to complete. It began in Spring of 2010 with the development of the survey instrument and ended with the publication of the study and results.

Conclusion to Chapter 3

This chapter outlined the methods used to collect and analyze data in this research study. This chapter explained the methods utilized to obtain sufficient data to establish credible, reliable, and valid findings about the phenomenon under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Throughout the processes described here, I sought central themes while remaining open to ideas that diverged from those themes and how they related to the central research question.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

It's a systemic thing now. We are talking about a new way of thinking when we talk about education and reform. (Conrad, level II, middle school)

Overview

Study participants were active participants in the New Mexico three-tiered licensure system. Participants represented five school districts. Participants were invited through the questionnaire to participate in a focus group or interview. I sent a request to 600 teachers from an initial list of 4,700, asking if they would be willing to participate in the study, and 78 participants indicated their willingness. I was able to make contact with 65 participants to participate, and I interviewed 63.

The study was designed to enhance understanding of the impact the licensure system has had on teachers in the classroom. In this chapter, I present results from interviews and focus group discussions to uncover and examine common themes and patterns in perceptions, experiences, and beliefs of teachers who participated in the three-tiered salary system and professional development dossier (PDD) process.

These results comprise 14 months of research and describe the process and emerging patterns of interactions among interview and focus group participants. Results are presented as a narrative analysis of data gathered. Data describe the implementation process and participants' involvement in the system. Data also provide an understanding of teachers' experiences in different school districts.

Research participants appeared to be at ease during focus groups or individual

interviews, which were conducted in familiar settings: classrooms, conference rooms, or other school environments. Participants generally greeted me as they entered the rooms, interacted as they gathered and enjoyed available refreshments, completed various forms, and attached their name tags. Through their conversational narratives, level III teachers participating in the study employed a language of practice that supported and enriched ideas they communicated about the dossier. For example, when asked, “Can you tell me a story about the impact of the three-tiered salary system?” each participant had a story and much more to tell. Some stories were shared with passion, frustration, humor, and / or conviction. Their experiences were informative and related to distinct aspects of the three-tiered system and the process for completion. Lived experiences and expressive opinions and perceptions of participants revealed a collective pattern of emotions. Interviews and focus group protocols were treated as an event, which complemented the process of developing a form of rapport with participants.

After creating written narratives from discussion transcripts and from anecdotes in field notes, I fashioned drafts and stories that addressed themes that emerged from data, and I used writing to develop and understand teachers’ lived experiences, as expressed in interviews about the dossier. For example, I used statements and stories collected in field notes, as well as from the audio tapes of individual interviews and focus groups. In this regard, I wrote to describe participants’ experiences, tracking them as they were offered in interviews and focus groups. Analysis of transcripts demonstrated the depth and detail that emerged as participants discussed their experiences in terms of personal and professional meanings.

This chapter includes findings related to policy, process, and structure of the three-tiered salary system and then offers an overview of the dossier process with a

description of its application.

General Findings

This section presents data in response to focus group and interview questions. Although all gathered data are not recorded here, this section provides data from participants' comments as they relate to the research questions. Data related to specific themes will follow in subsequent sections.

The participants made a conscious effort to bring their experiences and understandings to an observable level through reflection and action. One topic that emerged from interviews was teachers, as participants, were willing to share their experiences, opinions, beliefs, and ideas related to the three-tiered licensure system. The impact their reflections could have upon future reform in education emerged as a main motivation for participants to be part of this research.

Responses generally began with a historical overview of how participants became involved in the three-tiered licensure system. As participants described involvement in the process, some noted difficulties and financial hardship, and others reflected on the ease of the process. Analysis of responses suggested connections between their desire to become highly qualified through the licensure system and need for additional pay increases. As participants identified aspects of the dossier process, many seemed to find much satisfaction in having met the goals of the system, whether they were a level I, II, or III classroom teacher. Some level III teachers, in particular, were excited to inform me that they not only had completed the level III requirements but also had completed the National Board Certification.

All participants expressed the fact the three-tiered system was a mandated requirement which they had to complete at their own expense. All participants reported

they had to seek out assistance and support, which was typically readily available.

Participants addressed the changing climate in public education since the introduction of the three-tiered licensure system in 2002. They explained all beginning teachers are required to participate if they want to continue teaching, veteran teachers were automatically waived into the process, and teachers who participated in the process have to acquire a master's degree or National Board Certification to advance from level II to level III.

Summary of Findings

I used emergent thematic coding of interview and focus group data. Participants' responses to interview questions created a tapestry of stories, images, and information, which emerged from the analysis of participants' narratives. The themes tell a rich, detailed, and complex story about the three-tiered system and teachers' involvement in the process. Overarching themes emerged from a focus group interview with level III teachers included perceptions about ways the three-tiered system influenced their teaching, knowledge and skills and that it created, the opportunity to become instructional leaders and master teachers with master's degrees and increased compensation. Participants who were level III teachers and had completed the dossier to move from level I to level II but took the National Boards to move from level II to level III felt the same way as the level III teachers who participated in the focus groups.

Another theme was a sense of strong relationship between teachers who completed the three-tiered system requirements and those who completed the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Level III teachers' were committed to the process as indicated by their willingness to pay the cost of participating in the dossier and, by so doing, earn increased compensation and an advanced degree. Through

teamwork, collaboration, and individual initiatives, some teachers became leaders and exhibited leadership skills after completing the dossier.

To examine various aspects of participants' responses, I developed a series of matrices. Some matrices examined the differences between responses by regular academic teachers and responses by teachers in specialized areas, such as fine arts, special education, or career technical education. Another matrix examined teachers' descriptions of fairness and supporting elements within the three-tiered system. Yet another matrix was a checklist of topics, concepts, and participants. The checklist provided additional familiarity with aspects of the participants' opinions and beliefs about the dossier. It also provided a visual picture of how information within themes clustered around items, school districts, the State Department of Education, or participants. While analyzing interview and focus group transcripts, I wrote narratives on each major idea. If a major idea was raised consistently over time, I identified it as a core theme.

Participants shared mixed feelings regarding the dossier process. Some participants felt that it was irrelevant, meaningless, and a waste of time, and that taking time to complete the dossier created hardships. The twenty-five participants who were not happy to participate in the dossier expressed it didn't influence their teaching but it gave a sense of job security. Feelings of frustration came mostly from participants moving from level II to level III who felt they were being asked to do one more thing. They saw it as a reward for teaching rather than as a tool for improving teaching. The negative perspectives were mainly expressed by participants who had a difficult time accessing the system to input required information for the dossier, as well as from participants who did not receive help or support. Others participants expressed a different

view, noting the dossier motivated and encouraged them to do more in their classroom.

Thirty-eight of the sixty-three participants spoke of rigor and enhancement opportunities in their classroom. Participants spoke of utilizing the standards and benchmarks in their lesson plans, classroom activities, and student portfolios. They mentioned that the dossier helped them examine their teaching techniques and create rubrics that influenced their teaching practice. Even though some participants viewed the dossier as not helpful for improving teaching, others saw the dossier as a link to the classroom and expressed the need to have quality teachers. Some participants mentioned the dossier process was a good tool for professional development. In general, those who liked and those who did not like the dossier agreed that it helped them examine what they were doing in the classroom.

Emerging Themes

Three overall themes emerged from this study: teacher perceptions of the relationship of the dossier process to improved student learning, the teacher perceptions of the influence of the dossier on their teaching practice, and teachers' experience with the dossier process. The general aspects of teacher perceptions in my study were mixed with satisfaction, lack of satisfaction, implementation, and growth of student learning as perceived by participants. Responses shared by participants suggested teachers had become more reflective of their practice, growing professionally as a result of the professional development dossier (PDD) and showing improved practices in the classroom. Alternatively, other responses revealed unsatisfactory perceptions of the process, as well as problems with implementation of the dossier. A summarization of participants' perceptions, beliefs, ideas, and opinions, as related to their descriptions of the dossier process, provided the outlying themes and patterns presented in table 11.

Table 10

Patterns and Themes in the Data

Theme	Topics / Issues
Salary / Morale	Salary equity Affect on morale Resentment Grandfathered in New teacher making the same as a 25-year veteran teacher
Affective / Emotions	Excitement Happy Frustration
Influence on Practice Procedures	Teaching styles link to student learning Technological disadvantage PED not responsive to phone calls Universities not responding to phone calls
Cost	Problem Not a problem Additional cost for not passing
Problems with Dossier Process	Waste of time Stimulated thoughtfulness Promoted analysis supporting evidence Working with other teachers Writing skills needed for dossier Value of dossier level I to level II, level II to level III Forced to be organized Level II to level II redundant Promote growth Lots of requirement for level I & level II
Information Available for PED	Not reflective of practice Lot of paperwork Sample materials
Assistance	School staff Outside organization Peers, wife, or husband Union Other teachers
Viewed as Prof. Development Trends	Valuable when assistance is provided Provided reflection Lack of assistance Stressful and frustrating Challenging Time consuming No help or support No district help Used vacation and weekend Rewarding School leadership - no assistance

Although these themes and patterns can be viewed as discrete topics, a careful analysis of the data indicates that participants wove these themes into a powerful mosaic that reflects the complexity of teaching under the three-tiered system. In this analysis, I use participants' own words to elaborate emerging themes.

The Influence of Dossier on Teacher Practice

Effect-outcomes

The three-tiered licensure system forced many teachers to become organized, specifically in their writing skills. Some participants complained that if they were an English classroom teacher, they would have had no problem completing the dossier. One participant discussed the issue of writing and explained that the process helped him to organize his lesson plans, portfolios, student work, and activities.

Participants in several of the focus groups spoke of resentment of teachers who were grandfathered in, as well as partnerships in which those same teachers, who were considered master teachers, assisted level I teachers, even though they had not participated in the dossier process. Furthermore, many of the participants spoke of more requirements for a level I teacher than for a level II or III teacher. (See Appendix F for the Professional Development Dossier strands.)

Participants spoke of the various strands and the opportunity to complete them in a timely manner. Level I teachers seemed to perceive available time for completion to be longer because new teachers have five years to complete the requirements for level I, compared to the three years for completing the requirements for levels II and III.

Participating in the dossier meant that I must complete my master's degree. It did help me be better able to explain to parents why I do the things I do. These are the assessments that I have done that makes best practice (Tammi, level III, high

school).

In the focus group discussions, 19 of 63 participants spoke of their improved practices as reflective practice and the belief that the dossier had helped them to become better teachers. A participant at an urban high school explained she enjoyed preparing the dossier and stated, “I am accustomed to prepare for accreditation because I came from a beauty college and I had good mentorship” (Anita, level II, high school).

Participants spoke of their reflective practice in different ways. One participant mentioned, “It helped me review and assess my teaching on paper. It made me be more aware of how I teach. I was able to see how my subjects connect to each other as an elementary teacher” (Gloria, level III, high school). Another (Eduardo, level I, elementary) stated, “It gave me an opportunity to reflect on my teaching and look at my teaching habits. I became more familiar with the strands and my classroom practice.” This participant discussed linkages he perceived as being critical to student learning by stating, “The dossier made me more aware of the competency strands and how well I have demonstrated them in my classroom.”

A participant (Patsy, level III, high school) stated she used the dossier as a step to seek her National Board Certification. She said, “The dossier helped me to prepare for the National Boards and it made me become more aware of who I am as a teacher. It shows you what you need to do and look at what is relevant to your content and instruction.”

The idea that reflective work matters manifested itself when participants were interviewed. For example, their body language, attitudes, and presentation of what they had done to put the dossier together were different. They presented a snapshot of their classroom practice with significant enthusiasm. One participant said, “The dossier made me more conscientious; it made me be aware of how I teach” (Lauro, level I, middle

school). A participant from a State Youth Detention Center school mentioned although “the three-tiered salary system made a person jump through hoops and red tape, it was all for teachers to be prepared and productive.” Finally, on the concept of affective effectiveness?, a high school teacher stated, “Yes, I am a better teacher. The process shows how effective I can be as a teacher. Some people are smart but cannot do anything in the classroom” (Janet, level III, high school).

Mentorship

Before turning in the dossier, 38 of 63 participants had a mentor, friend, family member, or a peer read and analyze their work. In support of this theme, participants noted the following:

I was struggling with one of the strands, and two of my fellow teachers read, suggested ideas, and made recommendations for editing. (Ricardo, level III, high school)

The expectation that I had to put into the dossier process was extra work, but these are expectations that should be in place in daily teaching. Teachers should be doing this naturally. (Thomas, male, level II, middle school)

The new teacher mentor program helped me, and the veteran teachers do help giving advice and support. (James, level III, middle school)

Participants also spoke of mentorship and collaboration as a major help in preparing for the dossier:

Without my mentor it would have been a challenge for me to collect the student work and to know what was appropriate to submit. (Eduardo, level III,

elementary)

I collaborated with other teachers after school, which helped me get organized. A full mentorship training was held at the district office for level I, level II and level III through the Human Resources Office. The district offered strand overview of the process. Every Wednesday I met for collaboration with teachers who taught in my content and we were offered support for the dossier from a mentor provided by the district. (Pat, level III, high school)

Improving Learning and Teaching

Increase student learning

A PDD comprises information that describes not only a teacher's ability but also students' performance. Participants described the challenges and struggles they faced while working on their dossiers. A participant (Teresa, level III, high school) from the southern part of the state discussed difficulties obtaining parents' signatures and blanket permission slips, and also difficulties randomly selecting students' assignments for inclusion and assignments that showed either growth or student struggles. This teacher noted, "I am not against the idea of how we reevaluate teachers. The activities encouraged peer pressure. Reviewing and analyzing student work encouraged teachers to continue growing. The idea of using students' work is good, and it forces growth."

When presented with the idea of student growth and achievement, most of the level I participants did not make the connection to classroom work. However, most level III participants stated their student proficiency levels increased due to the new ways in which they started teaching as a result of the dossier process. Christine (level II, high school) said, "I had strong support doing my dossier. I have become a better teacher, and

the dossier helped me understand how subjects connect to each other.” A participant from a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) school explained her experience was very positive and it gave her a chance to show what she could do in the classroom, as compared to simply explaining her knowledge. She stated, “The dossier actually gives the opportunity to express qualities of what you could do in the classroom” (Mary, level II, high school). She continued, “For example, the dossier keeps me on my feet. It lets me collect a wide range of display objectives. I look for essential skills as I analyze what activities I use to teach skills.” Another participant said, “We do things by second nature and don’t examine our practice. The dossier forces organization and allows me to apply differentiated instruction, which ultimately helps me to see student growth in the classroom.” A third participant noted, “The fact that I was collecting data on different activities based on performance helped me to see my students’ proficiency levels, because based on performance is harder” (Pat, level 11, high school).

In response to the question, “Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven’t yet talked about?” several participants adamantly stated that a mentorship component, such as peer mentoring, would improve the dossier process. Such a component, they noted, would add accountability for the content of their dossiers. Art, music, physical education, and vocational educational teachers were concerned they are often left out of the professional development training process, yet they are expected to be evaluated using the same data as a math, reading, or science teachers.

Finally, in response to a question regarding how the dossier system influenced teaching, a participant (James, level III, middle school) from a small school district pointed out, “It did not.” As he explained, teaching was a second career, and the dossier validated what he was doing. He further stated, “The salary system gave a different

perspective on how to teach and gave me a little more say.”

One participant in the group said, “It’s a shame if the governor dismantles it because it shows progress in multiple and more meaningful ways.” Other participants made comments along this theme, as follows:

I love the process to write and reflect on what I am doing. It was a rewarding experience. I want to be a support provider. It’s a learning process. It motivated me to make changes. I took pride in completing my dossier and the work that I did made me change my teaching practice. (Marisela, level II, middle school)

They want teachers to become highly qualified, to be equitable. Is this the best system? I do not know. It is tied to evaluation. The dossier was very helpful and beneficial. You are looking at student work, analyzing it well, looking at differentiated instruction. It made me more aware of student learning styles. (Alberto, level I, middle school)

The three-tiered has a general correlation with instruction and student learning. (Karen, level III, female, high school)

In the interview process, participants shared similar comments, both positive and negative, including the following:

The three-tiered licensure system promotes the concept of multiple measures of student learning, including measures of progress on classroom assessments aligned with student progress. This is based on practice and artifacts of teaching. (Mary, level II, high school).

One very motivated and excited participant from a small district stated,

It definitely helped motivate me in my classroom practice. I chose to look at a challenging kid that would not listen, would not learn. Instead of saying ‘they are a trouble maker,’ now I say ‘how can I better help that student?’ (Irma, level III, middle school)

Other participants commented as follows:

Reward of teaching is the student improvement and building confidence in students. (Janet, level III, high school)

The motivation is money, and it should not be about making the money but about making you a better teacher so your students can have growth. (Eduardo, level II, high school)

The original intent was to have a goal to become highly qualified. Whether it stayed on that track, I am not sure, but it has helped me increase my student learning. (Frank, level II, middle school)

I have always been one to be involved anyway. It gives me the motivation to be involved for the students to be an advocate for the students in the classroom. (Marco, level II, middle school)

I know there is a lot of negative, but if you go into it with that mindset, you will not do well. I took it as a learning experience. It is a great learning tool. You would be successful if you see the dossier as a learning tool and very rewarding for the teacher and the students. (Janet, level III, high school)

The most important thing is the teacher in the classroom. You have to have quality teachers who are rigorous and holding students to learning. (Brandy, level III, middle school)

It improved my knowledge of curriculum and teaching me to be aware of the different subject areas, how they all integrate with each other. More knowledge helped me help my students to learn. (Marco, level II, middle school)

The dossier reflected on my teaching, my teaching styles, and habits. I became more focused on the kids. I incorporated the benchmarks in the classroom based on the strands. (Ricardo, level III, high school)

Enhances teacher skills

The participants were generally ready to provide examples of how they dealt with the issue of student learning. These comments provided insight into the creative ability of participants to address difficult issues. During focus group interviews for middle, elementary, and high school teachers, one participant from a rural district explained teaching styles influence a student's learning habit. She noted, "Yes, how I do things in the classroom affects my students and the outcomes of the benchmarks a lot more. The strands were familiar to me and enabled me to increase my students' learning" (Lisett, level III, elementary school). Another participant from a rural district mentioned completing the dossier is

A way to see if teachers are capable. It is a check and balance system. It is a tool, not for improving teaching but as a reward for teaching. Three-tier is viewed as

how you get a raise in pay and how you go up. (Sara, level III, middle school)

However, most participants agreed with the idea that what teachers teach and what the standards say students should learn affects student success and academic progress. A participant included in her responses,

As a new teacher, I wish that NMSU had aligned our student teaching components with the three-tiered licensure. The university is not aligned with what the state is requesting. We as teachers are caught in the middle with road blocks on what the required standards are for teaching base on the strands.

(Marisela, Level 11, middle school)

When presented with the idea of student growth and achievement, participants did not make the connection to classroom work. Many of the participants stated their student proficiency levels increased due to new ways or enhanced ways in which they started teaching as a result of the dossier process. Here are statements in reference to changes in teaching styles:

I say, I was doing things different once I completed the dossier. It made me look back on my students' progress over time. (Pat, level II, high school)

I incorporated the strands more into my lessons and after doing level I and level II, I saw good reflection of what I do in the students' work. (Juan, Level 11, high school)

The dossier helped me reflect on my investment in student activities and, if I needed to change the way I teach. It was able to help me reveal my repetitiveness in my lessons. (Andrea, Level1, middle school)

Other participants criticized the PDD process. One participant (Martha, level II,

elementary teacher) stated that the challenges she encountered were time consuming and that the PDD did not help her students in the classroom. “I had to dedicate my vacation time to doing this, and it is mandatory in order to keep my job.” When asked, “What linkage do you see between student learning and the three-tier salary system?” she said, “Honestly, didn’t impact my teaching, but my security of a job.” A level II participant emphasized how stressful it was to complete the dossier:

Not beneficial to what I was doing in the classroom, no learning to what I was doing in the classroom, no learning experience. I am a kindergarten teacher, and the school district says I needed to complete dossier to move up. The strands did help me in the classroom with paper writing. It had no influence in teaching.

Doing it because I needed to get it done.

When asked, “What linkage do you see between student learning and the three-tier salary system?” a participant (Cheryl, level III, high school) from an urban school district noted:

It was an eye-opener. It made me more conscientious to look at student progress. It influenced my teaching to prove the child is growing and reaching goal and moving towards meeting standards. It very much motivated me in the classroom. It improved my knowledge of curriculum and teaching, made me be aware of the different subject areas, how they all integrate with each other. It influenced me to be a better teacher, feel more comfortable with fidelity and more knowledge.

During the focus group at one middle school, a participant explained that the three-tiered system, and especially writing the dossier, increased knowledge, which ultimately impacted students’ test scores and grades. They all agreed this gave them an opportunity to link students, staff members, parents, and administrators to enhance the

learning of students. One participant (Debbie, level II, high school) stated teachers “need to take it seriously and really follow the detailed instructions as they are written. The dossier could show how effective they could be as a teacher. Some people are smart but cannot do anything in the classroom.”

Rewarding

Many interview participants expressed similar views of collaborating, sharing, cooperating, and support. When asked, “What has been your experience with the dossier?” a participant (James, level III, middle school), working on a completing a master’s degree in administration responded,

I needed to move from the level II to level III teaching license, and it was interesting because I was not in the classroom at the time. I actually had a position called a Student Engagement Advisor (SEA), which helped with aiding the principal in any way as far as discipline. I actually had to go back in the classroom for one semester and work with that class to be able to complete my dossier. So for me it was quite a rewarding experience. I really enjoyed it.

Another participant (Francis, level II, middle school) mentioned he had to turn in different samples of students’ work, and the process made him look at differentiated instruction and how students learn. He learned how diverse students can be in their levels of learning. For example, he noted that

Students come to us from kinder, and by the time they reach 6th, 7th, and 8th grade, you have kids that are unfortunately still at the 1st and 2nd grade level. You have kids that are right where they need to be and some at the high school level. I think learning how to differentiate the learning styles of all these students help motivated me to get them where they need to be. The dossier helped me

show student growth and improvement. Displaying that student growth was exciting, whether they were low level, at level or high, it was exciting to see growth. I think the dossier process and the way it is laid out is very helpful, if it's not helping your teaching, something is wrong, because to me, it is what a teacher should be doing anyway.

When asked "Did completing the dossier help motivate you in the classroom practice?" a level III participant (Teresa, high school) felt participation in the dossier built motivation to be a teacher/leader.

It helped me to be someone who not just delegates, but supports and offers assistance. There are times when I have gone in and taught a sample lesson for a beginning teacher and have been able to hopefully guide them in the right direction. After becoming a teacher/leader and completing the dossier, I was very motivated to get in the classroom and support other teachers.

Another participant (Jorge, level III, middle school) expressed, "I am concerned that not enough teachers are going to be level III teachers, which is important. I believe the dossier helped me to be a better teacher and to be more accountable." Still another participant (Veronica, level II, middle school), when asked, "Did the dossier system improve your knowledge of curriculum in teaching?" responded,

Definitely. The curriculum, because with one of the strands you had to identify which benchmarks and state standards you are using. So at anytime, you are being held accountable for the standards you are teaching. The dossier process forces you to become knowledgeable, so it definitely helped me to become knowledgeable of the curriculum and the teaching methods.

A focus group participant (Veronica, level II, elementary school) ardently stated,

I don't think there is a linkage between student learning and the three-tiered salary system, but I think there is linkage to student learning and the dossier. I think the dossier itself helps a teacher to get better. Your knowledge of the curriculum grows; your knowledge of student learning grows; knowledge of looking for sample work that should be collected on a daily basis.

Another participant (Miguel, level II, high school) stated that the three-tiered system can be perceived as a five-year buffer to weed out bad teachers who cannot handle teaching, stating, "I think this is unfair because many teachers had their heart set on teaching, but due to the kind of stuff you have to go through, some of them gave up after the five years." In this particular focus group, every participant expressed the entry-level pay for teachers seeking a level I license should be increased. Another participant mentioned although it was busy work, she learned a lot and she taught her students and reviewed her classroom assignments against what she was doing in the dossier.

The focus group participants in this urban school district consisted of mostly level II and III teachers. They pointed out there is a correlation between teachers who complete the three-tiered license process and a higher level of instruction in the classroom.

Participants perceived more student learning takes place when the teacher is a level II or level III teacher.

Twenty-five of the participants shared they wished they had taken their National Boards instead of completing the three-tier salary system. Completing the National Board Certification, completing the master's degree, and participating in the three-tiered system by completing the dossier was extremely time consuming and expensive. What many of the participants did not realize was if they had completed the National Boards Certification, they would have automatically received a level III license, although the

master's degree would still be required. Instead, many of them did all three components. However, those who achieved the National Board Certification expressed gratification in being recognized as a master teacher or teacher/leader in their schools.

Improving teaching

A focus group within a large school district comprised nine participants, of which seven had completed the dossier. Participants Belinda and Diane stated they think critically about their methods and meet the needs of their students. Belinda mentioned,

We are teaching our students how to outline effective ways to reread text. How to decide whether it is valid or not and then use it. Standardized testing does not test creativity and problem solving, which I think are important areas to teach.

(Belinda, level III, high school)

Diane, in her discussion on thinking critically about methods that meet needs of her students, referred to the handout she provided for her students and stated,

The student handout guides students through two reflective writing activities: the first asks students to write about a topic or idea before reading, and the second asks the students to reflect on their initial thoughts after a reading with a dossier.

This was good for me to use in my dossier as a reflection and improvement of my students' work. (Diane, level 1, high school)

In this particular focus group, data indicated recognition that the participants depended upon a much larger system as they developed understanding of how the three-tiered system works. Accompanying this understanding was an acute awareness of the need to change traditional practice, especially in the context of their rural school setting. When the question was asked "What did you find most challenging about the dossier process?" the focus group responded with these responses.

Teresa: Overwhelming at first.

Probing question: Please tell me a little more about that.

Teresa: I had no direct support.

James: For me it was different. I had support from my principal.

Diane: It was frustrating,

Probing question: How?

Diane: The strands were very large, long time to load.

Ricardo: National Education Association helped me. I am a member of the union.

Question: How did you determine what to include in the dossier?

James: I focused on what the kids are doing in the classroom related to the strands and benchmarks.

Martha: I focused on proactive pedagogy.

Probing question: Meaning what?

Martha: Focus on students' creativity.

Teresa: I look at how well the students do problem-solving techniques in my language arts class and included their best work.

Diane: I followed the same techniques as Ricardo.

A level I teacher in the same focus group (Chris) spoke of digging into her years of work and analyzing her teaching with her peers, and also of receiving one-to-one mentoring support. Overall, when the probing question was asked, "Did the dossier system improve your knowledge of curriculum and teaching—if so, how?" at least five of seven participants noted they can reflect, analyze, and articulate their practice in professional terms.

One particular participant, a single mother, spoke of how she needed to borrow

money to submit the dossier, and another described the need to have a mentor at the school level for proof reading before submitting the dossier. This same participant described feeling as if submitting the dossier was a process of trial and error, explaining that writing the dossier could be very stressful for someone who is not a good writer. A level II teacher (Derick, level II, high school) mentioned that the dossier assesses a teacher's writing ability more than teaching ability, stating, "Some crappy teachers pass because they are good writers." Many of the level III teachers noted they had to actively seek any support they received for completing their dossiers, and any support for improving their teaching abilities was for personal satisfaction only.

Teaching reflection and awareness

Interviews and focus groups gave a richness to the efforts that New Mexico has put forward to align learning standards and teaching. The increased learning aspect of student performance in the classroom gave participants in this study the opportunity to develop high-quality practices and to demonstrate effectiveness in the classroom. The following quotes demonstrate a strong theme that teaching and learning had taken a different dimension. As one participant, (Teresa, level II, middle school) explained, "We teachers have to adapt our teaching style. We can't stand in front of the classroom and lecture like we were lectured to." With the introduction of Common Core Standards in New Mexico schools, an urban school participant mentioned,

We have to be able to articulate the common core to our parents. The dossier for me as a level I teacher gave me the opportunity to change my practice and a reason to use it as a tool for students to go to college. (Jack, level III, high school)

Another participant noted, "My best teaching experience was with other level III teachers collaborating and writing literary lesson plans together and all of us getting the

results on the short cycle assessments that our students had gains in reading” (Ed, level III, high school).

An elementary teacher, when asked the question on linkages, responded, “I would like to get all students on the same level of reading in my third grade class and the dossier helped me build my curriculum and work towards it” (Tom, level III, elementary school).

Other participants noted the following:

The dossier was a positive experience. It helped me assess how my students were progressing. (Ophelia, level I, middle school)

Having to do the dossier gave me the ability to conduct reviews on the specific strands and then apply it to my content and instruction. (Larry, level III, elementary)

The collection of the student’s work helped me organize the way I was teaching. (Alberto, level I, middle school)

The displaying of student growth was exciting, and it made me be more aware of student learning styles. (Marissa, level III, high school)

The strand A are meaningful units that I can use in the classroom in the future and strand B is all about learning. It helped me look closer at the child with social and emotional issues and concern. (Andrea, level II, elementary school)

The dossier is much more in depth, linked to student learning than the annual

evaluation. (Ricardo, male, level III, high school)

One teacher stated that three-tiered licensure requirements made him present evidence for everything he did in the classroom. He further explained he liked strand C because it involves collaborating with parents. He said, “I revamp my schedule to make it more efficient for my own professional development. I linked it with the core reading program and used it in my dossier for applying for level III” (Carlos, level III, high school).

The participants spoke of gaining skills to professionally articulate and named improved practices they exhibit every day, thus deepening their work as teachers. A middle school teacher commented after completing the dossier, “that reflection was one of the most valuable ‘reforms’ a teacher can undertake” (Steve, level II, middle school). When the question on linkages was asked, a participant (Diane, level I, high school) stressed, “It gave teachers an opportunity to reflect on student growth over time and provided different strategies, so it did help me, but it’s nothing different from what I normally do in the classroom.”

Teacher perceptions of overall meaning and outcomes of dossier process

In a focus group with elementary, middle, and high school teachers, one participant said, “It’s a shame if the Governor dismantles it because it shows progress in multiple and more meaningful ways” (Teresa, level III, high school). One participant noted the following. “It made me reflect on the teaching process. It made me adjust my teaching. However, I was exempted from level III after taking the National Boards” (Juan, Level III, high school). Another participant mentioned, “There was not enough security measures to make sure people are not sharing dossier. It’s a complete pain and waste of time” (Christine, level II, high school).

Participants shared what they observed around them regarding the three-tiered system, as well. One participant stated,

The three-tiered helped in the classroom, people who were not immersed in education left because their heart was not in it. APS is banking on the fact that teachers don't do it. APS doesn't pay if you do not pass. (Rhonda, level I middle school)

Another participant reflecting on the dossier process and outcomes stated that

Perhaps as a profession we do not let teachers think, do rubric with your class and use it in your dossier. It is an important tool to weed out people from level I to level II. I know that the displaying of student growth for me was exciting. (Cheryl, level III, high school)

Experience with Dossier Process

Struggling with how to best complete dossier

Participants strongly agreed the three-tiered system helped them improve their economic conditions by increasing their salaries by \$10,000 when advanced to a higher licensure level. As one participant from focus group 4 (James, level III, middle school) expressed, "The professional development experienced was a positive one, and it encouraged me to do a better job." This participant further stated, "Yes, I am a better teacher. It's a no brainer: write the document, get \$10,000 raise, get master's degree."

The participants spoke of discussions they heard in the teachers' lounge in regards to new teachers coming in and making the same amount of money as more experienced teachers. Some comments were negative, and others were positive. Examples follow.

My wonderful colleagues took me under their wings and mentored me while those same teachers had been teaching for years and I made the same salary as them. At

least they weren't bitter with me, but perhaps bitter at the district. (Jorge, level III, middle school)

Money is not the greatest thing. I teach because I love the kids. (Debbie, level II, high school)

It helped me to jump from level II to level III. I made a significant salary increase within 2–3 years. No raises since then. As a single parent, moving from rural area to Santa Fe was challenging. Getting a \$10,000 salary range made a huge difference to supporting my daughter. (Cheryl, level III, high school)

People who teach, teach regardless of the salary. (Rhonda, level I, middle school)

The impact of the three-tiered had on me was going from level II to level III. It helped me professionally, but financially, a \$10,000 increase was motivating. (Francis, level III, middle school)

I got my master's before I began teaching. Finally my master's is well worth something. (Miguel, level II, high school)

It is not reasonable, asking too much to pay, to turn it in. Three hundred, twenty dollars is too much. (Teresa, level III, high school)

I shared with a friend how to do it. I needed to stay on limit with words, kept

reusing. Paid the union \$50.00 to read dossier. (James, level III, middle school)

Some people were grandfathered in to get level III if they had a master's degree.

(Derick, level II, high school)

I had to pay because I was not a member of the union. I paid \$150. (Conrad, level II, middle school)

One level III teacher (Gloria, middle school), when asked, "How has the three-tiered salary system impeded you?" noted, "Very little motivation once I reached the top level. There was a goal. Now I am the goal, disheartening." One participant (Gary, level III, middle school) summed up this theme, stating, "I think we need to recognize the three-tiered system for what it is. It is a tool. The dossier piece helps us to do our jobs. It does help us to do our job better." Half of the participants in one focus group felt the process made them better teachers. Louise (level II, high school) mentioned, "The three tier made us think more thoroughly." A participant (Lisett, level III, elementary school) in a focus group of level II and III teachers from each school level stated, "The participation in the three-tier system is valuable professional development as it applied to me, specifically with differentiated instruction and the dossier forces organization."

In one of the urban school districts, most teachers found the three-tiered system very challenging. Many participants shared that participating in the dossier process took time away from teaching. Although district help was provided after school and sometimes teachers were offered full days of assistance, with pay, many teachers still did not pass the dossier review. In one school district, teachers seemed to have a strong support base. Focus group participants made the strong recommendation teachers be

given more than five years to achieve the level I license. Another major recommendation was teachers completing a level III should have to show more accountability.

During a focus group interview, Ofelia (level I, middle school) indicated she felt that she was jumping through hoops: “We had to write what they wanted to hear.” This particular teacher was a level II teacher who felt frustrated. Overall, the teachers in this district felt the resources and support from the district for completing the PDDs were helpful, though they stated that assistance needed to be more accessible. Data also revealed that teachers question and struggle with how to use aspects of the dossier within the existing classroom structure on a daily basis.

One of the emerging themes from two focus groups and interviews was the three-tiered process was viewed as professional development when assistance was provided. When asked, “Do you feel you are a better teacher as a result of completing the dossier process?” one participant (Ricardo, level III, high school) responded, “Nice to get it out of the way. Level III made an impact. Did a lot of lesson planning, doing what teachers were supposed to do, hands on activities.”

Impeding / challenges

During the focus groups, participants reported professional development was a means to extend learning. Participants stated using a variety of student work and displaying objectives helped them focus on analyzing what activities to use when teaching essential skills to students. In general, participants identified the PDD as a valuable tool for promoting growth and academic progress for not only teachers but also students. As one participant (Joe, level II, high school) noted, participation “in the dossier process does promote growth and enables one to become a three-tiered academic leader.” The participant also clarified many colleagues would make it to level II but choose not to

go on to level III due to the requirement of a master's degree. Another participant (Carmen, level II, high school) within the same focus group addressed the issue of honesty and integrity of writing the dossier, stating, "level II and III are redundant and should have more accountability." This particular participant, as well as 18 others throughout interviews and focus groups, complained many teachers paid to have their dossiers completed and there should be a place for an observation component. The following quotes expressed their concerns:

We needed it. It holds people accountable. It is not the perfect way for holding our profession accountable, but it's a step in that way. The teaching profession is not treated as a profession. The three-tiered system adds validity and helped me be more organized. An observation of me in the classroom would show more accountability. (Bijan, level III, High school)

I felt that I needed more time although I got it in the first time. I know teachers who pulled it together in two weeks. I wish I had more time for writing. PED had information but it was not offered for free. (Diane, level I, high school)

It's nice to have more money, nice to drive to work with a car that starts. I felt I was in college again, getting a senior essay done at St. John's College. Why do we have to do this? We went to college. (Kristina, level I, elementary)

I would rather have someone come in and observe me. Some people are smart, but cannot do anything in the classroom. (James, level III, high school)

Make the dossier part of the master's program with perhaps two extra courses and an observation component through video. It would show accountability and weed out some people. (Cheryl, level III, high school)

It was fresh and new. We really don't know what they were looking for. Writing about something is just a snap shot of who I am as a teacher. I know very good writers who may not be good teachers. We should have a section for observation in the classroom. (Ofelia, Level I, Middle School)

The participants in the first two focus groups strongly expressed desire for feedback and complained that the review process did not include feedback once a dossier was submitted. Here are some views mentioned by participants.

Because I worked with skilled professionals and because of the process I was introduced to different people. There should be a way to get feedback after it is evaluated. (Carmen level II, elementary)

The professional development experience is somewhat useful. It is still overly stressful because there is no feedback once the dossier is submitted. (Maria, level I, elementary)

I know someone whose dossier was thrown out for three grammatical errors. It was unfair for someone who is great with kids, encourages kids to learn and was at the danger of losing their job because they do not write well in essay form. At no time was this teacher given feedback on what she had submitted. That is wrong. (Carlos level II, elementary)

Make sure you know what you are doing. Start early, have everything in order.

Ask mentor to evaluate early and make sure you have a mentor because there is no feedback from PED. (Debbie, level II High School)

Furthermore, 14 participants wanted the state to change how the licensure system addresses teachers outside the core academic areas, such as music, art, physical education, and vocational education. The participants outside the core content areas and elective teachers shared the need for a revamping of the process as it relates to elective teachers. These narrative quotes show concerns of those who were not content teachers. For example, these four participants were teachers who taught physical education, art, music, and vocational education:

I had no one to mentor me or give me assistance on how I should complete the dossier using my curriculum. The strands do not provide the opportunity for me to share what I am doing in the classroom. (Kendall, level I, middle school, physical education)

A teacher must have knowledge of their curriculum and teaching and they must know their standards and benchmarks. I had to do this all by myself because no one knew what the career education benchmarks were to apply them and to know if I was answering the strands right. (Juan, level III, high school, vocational education)

The way I was thought to teach art is not the way I am told to do the dossier. (Lisa, level I, Middle School, art)

The Music standards are different and I am a good teacher, but we need to be looked at differently when they review our dossier in comparison to a language arts teacher. (Brandy, level III middle school, music)

In addition, data provided evidence of growing recognition teachers need to update their skills continually but indicated access to various levels of professional development in rural school districts was more difficult to obtain than in less rural areas. The professional development in rural school districts was difficult due to technical support and technological issues. Even so, participants spoke of eagerness to update their skills and increase their learning. “The professional development experience was a positive one. It encouraged me to do a better job, but I had to seek it out on my own” (Ricardo, level III, high school).

A participant from a rural school district in the southern part of the state spoke of being excited and eager to receive professional development training, but also of needing to travel to another school district that was bigger than his district because of technology:

Every time the district was providing training or teachers were using the Internet, the accessibility was not available, so working on the dossier at the school district became rather difficult at times. I love participating in the different levels of professional development that involved the dossier. The correlation of professional development with newer teachers forced us to do good work and moved up the different levels faster. We need a lot more in the rural schools.

Affective

Participants discussed the emotions they felt while completing the dossier. One participant mentioned:

I feel fortunate because I was so excited to share my work that I have been doing with the art teacher on integration of different things we are learning in social studies. When teachers work and plan together the product is much better.

(Jennifer, level II, middle school)

Another participant described his fascination with being able to submit a collaborative document as part of his dossier work. He explained he had students design their work by looking up information about their stories on the Internet:

I felt really good because I demonstrated how my students used the Internet to design and tell a story of countries and places they had not seen before. I was able to help my students create a picture in their mind. It is difficult for them to imagine, for instance, the landscape on the east coast. (Gary, level II, middle school)

Others spoke of the dossier helping them to dramatically change how their classroom was set up, such as by asking “How to raise the self-esteem of their students?” and “How to have their students use their imagination?” These comments provided insight into the creative ability of participants to address difficult issues. One participant noted, “To do my dossier, I had to look at my 4th graders of D level, C level, and B level students and try to get them to do something on the same level. That’s when it gets really hard” (Kristina, level, elementary). Another noted,

I did a PowerPoint presentation in my English class and then had the students to do their own PowerPoint. This is middle school, and it raised their self-esteem of my students because they fully participated in putting it together. I was happy for my students, but then, it had great difficulty to up load it and submit it to the PED. (Rachel, level II, high school)

Stress / concerns

A few of the level I teachers spoke of concern with deadlines and the possibility of losing their jobs. One elementary teacher said, “I missed a day during the SBA testing and took all sick leave days to put the finishing touches to make the deadline to turn it in.” Another mentioned,

Finding time to sit down and do it was difficult. There was a turn-around issue. I had to submit in February, get results back by April, and the state did not have enough reviewers. I was worried about turn-around time to get my license and get a contract for the next school year. (Sara, level III, middle school)

While being interviewed, one participant (Belinda, level III, high school), with tears in her eyes, explained how she got sick over completing the dossier. She mentioned, “I can make myself look great on paper, and nobody is checking on me.” She further explained, “I am a visual person, and there were no examples for me. I became super frustrated and with anxiety by looking at all the papers. It was completely overwhelming. If I was teaching English, it would have been easier.”

Regarding the impact of the three-tiered licensure system on teacher evaluations by principals, she mentioned, “Cheating, a principal can take it to another level if you don’t like a person.” When asked whether they had a story to tell regarding the three-tiered licensure system, a participant (Chris, level II, high school) spoke frankly about missing the SBA testing of his students. He explained it was very embarrassing to call-in to work, but he had to complete his dossier that particular day. He stated,

I had to put my tail between my legs and let my mentor coach and say I was not going to be at work that day. I had tons of coffee and finished my dossier and upload everything. If I did not take the day off, I probably wouldn’t have made

the deadline, and that's my story.

Another teacher tells a very different story about the process. In one of the interviews, a level III teacher (Teresa, male, level III, high school) noted,

I will be very frank with you, I know I will never tell you names, but I know teachers who made up the dossier and received their license. They first made it up like two weeks before it was due. They fabricated it. I know teachers who did not do everything in good faith, they pulled it together and made it look legitimate.

Motivating

Participants included statements regarding motivation in the context of getting additional support and noted extra help encouraged them to view the dossier differently. For some participants, the salary was a factor. Some were motivated by learning and sharing different components, and yet others were motivated by getting assistance.

The dossier motivated me to share with other teachers the work my students had done. I displayed the outside my room in the hall. (Cristina, level III, middle school)

After completing level II, I observed how my students were entering my classroom with different expectations. I changed the way I was teaching and it motivated me to continue and get my level III. (Lizeth, level III, elementary)

The professional development training I took helped me with the dossier, and I had a growing awareness of my students differing skills regarding math in my classroom. (Lauro, level III, middle school)

The dossier motivated me to take a computer class. I always thought this wasn't for me because I am too busy with my family and my job, but after having to do the dossier I now realized that there is a definite need for it in education. I was motivated to go back to school. I am one of those teachers who taught for a long time, retired, and then came back to teaching. (Roberto, level III, middle school)

Assistance and support

The theme *assistance* encompasses assistance not only within a school organization but also from outside organizations, families, friends, and spouses. Participants described a growing recognition of the need to have technical and administrative support. Participants in all focus groups spoke of the lack of support from principals and the Public Education Department but also of major support from union groups. There were about 15–20 teachers from rural, urban, small, and large districts who referred to themselves as knowledgeable and caring teachers, but they noted they needed support in reflecting on their practice. One interviewee stated,

I sometimes question myself about my writing skills and my practice; however, as I participated in the dossier from level I to level II, I realized that I had more knowledge and skills about teaching and learning than I thought I had. (Eduardo, level II, middle school)

Participants discussed the type of assistance provided. Participants emphasized support from the unions and, in the rural districts, from personnel who assisted with information on how to follow the process of completing the dossier. Participants provided numerous examples, both in focus groups and interviews. As participants provided examples, I observed nonverbal affirmation from other participants. Some participants discussed strong support, and others mentioned the lack of support. Typical comments

were as follows:

I feel fortunate to be a member of the union. I was able to receive helpful support realizing it was a daunting task and a big document. (Heather, level II, high school)

Principal very helpful, and a district staff was provided to answer questions or show us how to complete the forms. (Debbie, level I, middle school)

The school did provide mentorship, support was accessible, but did not use it. (Conrad, level II, middle school)

Teachers in rural school districts seemed to have less administrative support, in contrast to teachers in urban school districts with union personnel to provide constant support, whether in filling out forms or in reviewing the document before it was submitted for final evaluation by the PED. The following comments described the nature of the support participants received:

I had to seek out support. It was mostly accessible. Someone directed me to a website. It takes time. (George, level II to level II, elementary school)

No support, except for TeachNM.org. Other teachers were offering help. (Francis, level II to level III, middle school)

The school district offered a district staff who showed us the TeachNM website and gave us help in the computer lab. (Tamela, level I, elementary school)

It was a positive experience. Mentorship classes were helpful—lots of support.
(Rhonda, level I, middle school)

I had very little school support. I attended monthly meetings. Going to classes helped me overcome challenges. (Sharon, level III, high school)

School district provided support, no state support—just visit website. (Eduardo, level I, high school)

Support was held at district, and training was accessible. (James, level III, middle school)

My sister proofed everything. She is a Fine Arts teacher and helped me get my thoughts in order. It was really difficult because no one from my subject matter was going to be reading my dossier. I am a good teacher because I see it in my students. I am a Culinary Arts teacher. I showed students work. I was lucky. I kept a camera with audio and video of my work. My greatest challenge in the process was trying to see from my student work, the low achieving student and the high achieving student. It helped me complete the different levels in strand A, B and C. (Maria, level II, elementary)

Participants' challenges were neither very problematic nor simple. Most often, challenges were mostly frustrating. For example, one participant (Cristina, level I, middle school) explained that the mentor program had passed her around. She had to seek out support from senior teachers. She stated, "The mentor program was not structured, nor

organized. At the beginning it was haphazard, and I wanted to do it and get better at it. I had to sink or swim. The principal's lack of knowledge made it difficult." Although she felt challenged and frustrated due to no district support, this participant claimed the three-tiered license process provided lots of professional development and made her analyze student learning: "The dossier was more rigorous than I expected."

In reference to other challenges, another participant (Linda, level III, high school) noted that the TeachNM website was very complicated, not teacher friendly, and not accessible and the website was sometimes not up-to-date. She explained the dossier had not changed her teaching habits but getting her master's degree did, noting, "The master's helped me to do what I do every day." Other participants made the following comments regarding the assistance they received:

The first time I did not pass, worked with a program specialist, second time pass section B, not A and C. The third time I met with another program specialist who had a record of helping people pass. I did not add anything extra. I was deliberate and passed the other two strands. (Lisa, female, level I, middle school)

I had to analyze my work, had others look it over. Fortunately, the principal used to be a reader, and I received some help. (Martha, level II, elementary)

I had a workshop on strands and the competencies that address each strand. I analyzed in-depth into each strand, and my sister who is a teacher and was grandfathered in took a look on how to improve it. (Melissa, level I, elementary school)

Procedures

Study participants spoke of having major technological difficulties using the Public Education Department website. One participant (Angelica, level I, elementary school) mentioned, “You couldn’t confirm anything. You couldn’t look up submissions. The site did not acknowledge and would often freeze.” Another participant (Roberto, level III, middle school) pointed out uploading documents was very difficult and there was not an open window for months: “It was a very short window, with no guidelines, and the strands were very large and took a long time to load.” His final statement was, “Nowhere did it ask if you wanted to get your money back.”

Time

Many participants discussed how time consuming completing the dossier was when they started at the beginning of the year to meet a March deadline. One participant (Jackie, level II, elementary school) expressed, “It impeded me because it took away from my regular teaching. I had to put away stuff to do it.” James provided samples of very positive experiences with the dossier. He stated he had received strong support from his colleagues, as well as from district personnel. He mentioned support was easily accessible, noting,

I knew who to call, who to turn to. I knew the times of the meetings. I thought all I have to do is do my part. For me, my experience with the dossier was fine. My biggest worry was making sure I was working on the strands correctly. The challenge for me was time and being efficient with my planning. I think it definitely was helpful and beneficial. I learned so much about being organized and really looking at students’ work and analyzing it well.

Other statements from participants include the following:

Because of time constraint with family and work issues, I had to pay for an

extension. I had only three years to complete. (Charlene, level II, elementary)

The results not given back in a timely manner; the state never had enough reviewers. I had to spend a couple of hours on the phone. (Ophelia, level I, middle school)

The most difficulty was additional time required on regular job duties. Gathering documentation was not a challenge, but time was a factor. Took a few personal days to write the dossier. (Louise, level II, high school)

Accessibility

Participants also expressed an understanding of the critical need for greater access to technology to complete the dossier and submit it on time. What emerged was that limited access might have impeded participants' ability to address requirements of the three-tiered system. Fourteen of 18 participants commented the PED website often did not function and questioned how the submission process facilitated a greater use of on-time technology for reforming education. Twenty-five were from rural school districts or smaller school districts, and 26 participants expressed satisfaction. Twenty-one out of 63 participants spoke about the level of support from the state. When working on the site online for submitting, participants said there was no way to confirm the work was submitted and the site would freeze. One participant noted, "Having no one to talk to, I ended up paying twice. It took forever to upload. There was never an opportunity for confirmation" (Angelica, level II, elementary). As another participant noted, "The district provides information you need worked at website; sometimes the system was not accessible" (Lisett, level III, elementary). Other participants spoke of work they did in the classroom

that had dramatically changed student learning. One of the focus group participants (Alina, level III, elementary school) from a rural school district described how she was unable to submit a lesson she had taught:

I teach in a special education classroom, and some of my students cannot read cursive. They just can't read things I put on the board. In the past many would tell me, 'I can't do it'. But when I put the same information in a PowerPoint presentation this makes a big difference. It raises the self-esteem of my special education students because they can fully participate and understand what is expected of them. I wanted to submit this as part of my dossier and had the most difficult time doing so.

Participants were generally ready to provide examples of how they dealt with similar issues.

Participants in rural areas believed access to technology in rural school districts levels the playing field for teachers and students. However, with regard to on-line access, these participants articulated limited Internet access limited their opportunities to participate in the process. In addition, data provided understanding of teachers' growing recognition of the need not only to update their skills but also to have computer and technology skills for their students.

For rural school districts, engagement with technological tools energizes potential (Norton & Wilburg, 1998). Participants expressed strong agreement the Public Education Department's network needed to be ready to support teachers in their professional learning, particularly in regard to entering dossier materials, and technical support should be available at school districts. However, capitalizing on technology resources requires classroom professionals be able to employ resources fully. Just as schools have been

characterized as bastions sealed off from contact with the outside community (Chen & Armstrong, 2002), rural school districts face similar isolation because of geography and limited access to critical resources. Participants from rural school districts spoke of traditional isolation when they could not make contact with someone to see whether the PED's system was inoperative or whether their own Internet access was inoperative. As one participant (Brenda, level I, elementary school) noted, "No one would ever answer the phone at PED."

The success of the three-tiered salary system depends on resources and applications appropriate to participants' learning expectations and activities. Although participants from urban school districts had similar problems regarding access for submitting their PDDs, their difficulties were not as pronounced as the challenges for rural teachers. In spite of this finding, urban school districts may not have available Internet service more often than the rural school districts.

All participants reported using a variety of computer technologies to complete the dossier. For example, they included PowerPoint presentations in their dossiers and described using technologies for student projects, record keeping, student research, and remediation and enhancement in language arts, mathematics, and reading. Participants also reported using a variety of devices to present information to students and then to gather information to submit to the Public Education Department. Participants did not discuss discomfort with using technology but focused on their individual uses and how using technologies had, in some cases, transformed their pedagogy.

Participants, in their own way, struggled to develop and refine a more creative approach to incorporating modern learning tools to provide greater options for their students. One participant (Roberto, level II, elementary school) articulated this struggle

by stating, “The professional development dossier really made me think about how I teach in my classroom because I did not start out teaching this way. My students have a better chance at learning with my knowledge of the three-tier system.”

Promoted analysis—Internal analysis of one’s work

This process prompted the teachers to conduct analyses of their work and their students’ learning. Eight participants who were interviewed from a rural district spoke of picking apart their choices in regard to individualized instruction, meeting the diverse needs of their learners, and supporting the English Language Learners in their classrooms. Five participants, when discussing strand A of the dossier, mentioned that teachers write about their pedagogy and their instructional decision making as they analyze a 3–5 hour segment of teaching. An elementary school teacher level III stated, “The dossier helped me develop the ability to give multiple answers to my students to get them to grow in a particular skill or content area such as reading, math or science” (Jessica, level III, elementary school).

Overall Motivation

Motivation / compensation

In one of the focus groups, a participant responded that he was very happy to hear me say that the beginning salary was \$22,000 before the three-tiered salary system was implemented. He felt that the beginning salary, now at \$30,000, is too low. He pointed out that if a person compares the real estate in California to the entry level pay and compares the real estate in Santa Fe to the entry level pay, one would find it is very unbalanced. The participant further discussed the cost of real estate in Santa Fe is extremely high, but the pay for government employees is lower than that of California. He mentioned Santa Fe is a better place to live and raise a family.

Cost

A major factor for all participants participating was the \$300 payment created a hardship for some teachers. Some participants felt due to lack of support and resources by the Public Education Department, \$300 was too extreme. Half of the participants in a seven member focus group, however, were happy to pay the \$300 because they would receive a \$10,000 pay increase. Each participant shared emotional concerns regarding the cost. A focus group participant who came from Texas, but was a level II teacher attempting to go to level III, spoke of not passing one strand and having to pay an additional cost for not passing. She expressed she had a great deal of difficulty because she spoke a second language and did not have a support base. She echoed the sentiment of stress and frustration for participants who did not have barriers with a second language. This particular focus group spoke at length of no collaboration and no team work at their school. They felt as if the principal did not want them to get the salary increase because no matter what was asked of the principal, she had no answers.

Many of the interview participants spoke about their belief that they should not be paying to obtain a salary increase, especially when they had used a great deal of time to write various strands, create activities, and spend hours uploading the dossier content into the PED web site. One interview participant (Maria, level II, elementary school), when asked, "Please tell me a little about your experience preparing a dossier," responded, "I felt great when I completed the dossier, although I struggled to pay the \$300. I had to take steps beyond the principal to get my dossier approved."

Salary Equity

In nearly every interview and focus group, participants mentioned salary equity. Many teachers who participated in the dossier process felt that teachers grandfathered

into the three-tiered system should at least have completed one of the strands related to effective teaching. Most of the level II teachers and those teachers moving to level III expressed their concern when a teacher moves from level II to III and is not a beginning teacher, that teacher should not have to do the dossier if they have a master's degree. One participant (Aleitha, level II, high school) stated that the "focus should be on good reflection or habits. The focus should be on kids, standards, and benchmarks."

New teachers discussed the feeling of resentment by teachers who have been in the system for 25 years. A participant (Marissa, level III, high school) expressed that stress was significant because the veteran teachers were hostile and defensive, feeling new teachers should not be earning a similar salary as those with more years of experience. The participant noted, "The stress level was amazing when your colleagues are mad at you for not having 25 years and making the same salary." This same participant spoke of challenges to obtaining support because in her district the support was only provided for the level I and II teachers. While other teachers were receiving mentoring, she was very frustrated with the entire system. Some of the participants shared although they were grateful to have the three-tiered system in place to help them achieve an increase in salary, some teachers who grandfathered in saw problems and were angry, which created morale issues in departments and schools.

The following quotes depict the opinions of the participants regarding challenges, lack of help or support, and stress and frustration they encountered:

I felt it was forced. It was kind of a benefit for a \$10,000, but it was stressful with a nervous feeling. I had excitement for that large of a raise in a short amount of time. (Martha, level II, elementary)

It was a challenge finding the time to get it done. All work was done at home with a young baby. The difficulty was time consuming. (Lisett, level III, elementary)

The only impact it made for me was that my financial situation for my family became better. I did not gain much academically because I already had my master's. Everything I implemented came from the degree, not the dossier. My students are benefiting from me furthering my own education. (Dawn, level III, elementary)

I had to do level I and level II dossier, but I passed both and was going for the National Boards for level III at the same time. I had to wait 2 years to get my certification. My wife who is a teacher read and proofed my dossier before it was submitted. (Jennifer, level III, middle school)

There is no recognition for longevity. I have a BA + 45 making the same salary as a Masters pay scale. I have nineteen years experience. People with 5 years of experience are making the same amount of money as me. (Gary, level III, middle school)

I had no support, no information provided. It was stressful compiling information. When I finished I was very relieved. Everything was on-line. (Marrisa, level II, high school)

Conclusion to Chapter 4

Conceptual and organizational factors affect the success and effectiveness of the

three-tiered salary system. Learning provides multiple options for participants and their students but has little effect unless teachers, as a part of a broader community, engage in effective professional development (Coley, Cradler, & Engle, 1997; Silverstein, Frechtling, & Miyaoka, 2000). Overall, most participants expressed satisfaction with the three-tiered licensure system. Twenty-four of 63 spoke of improved practice in their classrooms, student growth, and increased reflection about their teaching practices. Others discussed professional growth resulting from completing and submitting the dossier.

From the targeted group of 63 individuals, opinions varied on student achievement. An important outcome for all who successfully completed the dossier was a \$10,000 dollars salary increase. The participants agreed their involvement in the professional development dossier provided the qualification to advance to a higher level of licensure under it: stress, resentment, concerns/problems, complaints, excitement, happy, weak, anger, frustration, and attitudes were by-products.

The participants also agreed their participation provided the qualification to advance to a higher level of licensure. Level III teachers, in particular, stated that the experience increased their professional expectations of themselves and their students. Most level II participants described various initiatives and activities they implemented to increase student learning. Level I teachers, however, did not focus on the impact of the licensure system on student learning and achievement. Rather, they focused on participating in the licensure system to keep their jobs and achieve the level I license.

Findings show the three-tiered licensure system helped some participants increase their effectiveness in working with different types of students with various learning styles and completing the dossiers strengthened their teaching skills and widened their content

knowledge. Additional findings showed participants who were happy with their participation in the system believed their students benefited through more engaging activities and increased sharing in the classroom, which ultimately impacted student learning.

The participants were told by their school districts that in order to maintain their licenses, they must complete the dossier. At the same time, they were aware that for each level of completion they would receive a salary increase. In some interviews and focus groups, participants mentioned the three-tiered licensure system would have been more effective for participants if it had stronger accountability requirements. Many of the findings throughout this study suggested that participants believed their main goal in the dossier process was to become a “highly qualified teacher” per requirements of NCLB. Findings revealed major challenges and drawbacks for teachers. Participants in rural school districts received very little support, and non-union members had to pay \$150 for assistance, compared to \$50 paid by union members.

Almost all participants stated the dossier process was rigorous and their participation increased their knowledge and skills in their content areas. There were mixed feelings and perceptions throughout. Ten participants stated the dossier process was rigorous and their participation increased their knowledge and skills in their content areas. Others complained of the lack of relevance to their work in the classroom. All participants realized if they did not meet performance standards, they would not be able to continue their employment as teachers. This created fear in level I participants, more so than for level II or III teachers, who were more interested in demonstrating their teaching qualities and improving job satisfaction.

The dossier gave participants the opportunity to explain their thought processes

online to the PED. Many became insightful and critical readers of their own work. They showed their work and improved practices in the classroom, how they kept their students engaged, and the value of their instruction. Participants became creative and energetic when implementing what they had learned in professional development trainings as improved practices in their classroom.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“I would say I am a better teacher. I think it has potential to make people better teachers. It needs some revision” (Clair, level III, high school).

Introduction

The three-tiered licensure system focuses on the full integration of learning skills to invigorate the teaching and learning process and to provide greater learning options for teachers and students. The professional development dossier (PDD) is a key component of the system and is a model for an examination of change in education reform. The dossier was established to develop expertise among classroom teachers who could act as master teachers in their schools. Through substantive collaboration with institutions of higher education, the Public Education Department (PED), unions, school districts, and a statewide professional development infrastructure, the dossier provides a means for teachers to become “highly qualified” and receive increased salary schedules. This qualitative research study sought to explore the question, “What has been the impact of the three-tiered licensure system?” This question was examined through the perspectives of a sample of 63 current teachers who participated in the licensure system.

Meaning of Findings

By carefully analyzing interviews and focus group transcripts, I was able to understand salient themes and factors identified in the literature that may affect the ways the system enhances teachers’ and students’ learning processes. Issues included the demand on teachers’ time, financial hardship, availability of resources, level of support, and access to learning tools. Participants, through their unique voices, addressed each of

these issues and shared ways the process did and did not enhance their teaching.

Participants included teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels; male and female teachers; and level I, level II, and level III teachers. Interview and focus group data produced a profile of committed educators struggling with how best to complete the dossier, enhance their teaching skills, and increase student learning in their classrooms. Participants held mixed perceptions of the three-tiered system but expressed an overall desire to complete the process. As participants sought solutions for completing the dossier and incorporating new perspectives in their classrooms, they were, in many cases, transforming their pedagogies and teaching styles. Some teachers described student growth and the creation of rich learning environments, but others described inadequate support and barriers to time and professional growth. Twenty-five of the participants perceived that there were mixed perceptions about the effect on student learning.

Comparison and Contributions of Findings to Current Research

Based on an analysis of the emerging themes, perceptions and classroom approaches were indeed changing for many participants. Chapter Two of this document captures much of the current thinking on the role of professional development, including a description of quality professional development, and identifies significant issues that must be overcome for the three-tiered licensure system to enhance learning options for students. Participants were aware that requirements of the three-tiered licensure system provided opportunities for professional growth. As one participant (Susan, level III, high school) noted, “I feel like my mind is almost exploding with knowledge. Using strategies that helped me reflect on what to do. The dossier makes you reflect and is relevant to what you do.”

Data from level I participants, when analyzed and compared with data from focus

groups of level II and level III participants, revealed implementing practices described in their dossiers and reflecting on classroom practices helped to change participants' beliefs in the system. However, some participants provided alternative opinions. As one participant (Angelica, level II, elementary school) noted,

In education our job is teaching children. We do not have time to show and display what we are doing in the classroom. Our primary job is teaching children, and here we have an additional thing to do. And, oh, by the way, in your spare time, you have to participate in the three-tiered system and show what you have always done in the classroom for \$10,000 dollars.

Other participants echoed the sentiment that participation in the three-tiered system was an activity that took time away from teaching. Many participants expressed this perspective, saying they took time off from work to complete and submit their dossiers.

Participants also expressed frustration with the demands of writing and of writing well. This theme was apparent in all the focus groups and was best summarized by the participant (Joe, level II, high school) who noted,

Well, I do not believe that doing the three-tier gets to the heart of what we are really trying to do. We are trying to educate children and making time to gather information, activities, and then submit them to PED. This process helps us analyze if we are teaching effectively.

Despite the few contradictory statements, five research participants were excited about their involvement with the three-tiered system, as characterized by one participant (Katrina, level II, elementary school) who noted, "I was very happy to be a part of the three-tiered system. It's been stressful, but it has changed my vision."

The research participants discussed barriers to participating in the three-tiered

system and the dossier, including inadequate support from district administrators and the Public Education Department (PED). Time for professional growth was another factor. By identifying these barriers, participants demonstrated their recognition that creating rich learning environments depends on a much larger system. Although the literature generally concludes teachers have largely operated in isolation, participants expressed they had begun to rely on each other for support and encouragement to complete the three-tiered system's requirements.

Participants echoed key conclusions noted in the literature that support the participants taking charge of their own professional development through the dossier process. Participants articulated numerous examples where they shared what they had learned with other participants as a result of completing requirements for levels I, II, and III. This practice provided a strong indication that there is a major need for teachers to support and mentor one another as they go through the process. This finding was important because it provides an avenue for sustaining the three-tiered system.

The stories provided by participants revealed the three-tiered system is used not only as a tool for teaching but also as a catalyst for invigorating the learning process of students. Their reflections about the dossier and its implementation in the classroom indicated many barriers that otherwise might go unnoticed. Some barriers were self-imposed by participants. However, participants were aware of the need to change traditional teaching practices. They recognized that participating in the three-tiered system provided opportunities for them as teachers to change the landscape of education in their school or district.

Another salient issue that emerged from data participant is reflected when participant Andrejko's (1998) comment dossiers are a common method used to document

what teachers are doing in the classroom and dossiers assist teachers and practitioners of education to become more aware of their beliefs about teaching and learning. Participants provided examples of changes in their practice in the classroom resulting from developing their dossiers. Although all participants who participated in the three-tiered system desired an increase in salary, most were also searching for assistance in engaging their students and meeting their needs.

Study results also suggest the change process was slow, and data collected during interviews and focus groups supported the notion that participants were taking a number of paths to achieve the goal of increased knowledge and skills in education. Level I participants were more apt to describe the three-tiered licensure process as a way of replacing traditional teaching practices. They described the materials, activities, photos, lesson plans, and PowerPoint presentations as a means to present content to students. In contrast, level II and level III participants focused on their acceptance of the three-tiered system as a fundamental tool that has invigorated the teaching and learning process. More research is needed to determine whether this pattern is pervasive on a larger scale throughout the three-tiered process.

The participants clearly addressed education and the three-tiered system as an enterprise, confirming current literature emerging from the writing of such researchers as Reil and Becker (2000). When the participants reported the hours and days taken for in-service training after school, days for entering the dossier materials into the PED system, and repeated fees if they did not pass the first time, they provided their input on how teachers should be expected to participate and how the process could be streamlined. Based on their comments, if participants added all of the time they spent participating in the three-tiered system, the resulting number of hours would be very high.

Danielson and McGreal (2000) emphasized that, when used appropriately, the evaluations of teachers should identify the delivery and content of teachers' knowledge and show how instructional strategies affect student learning. The dossier process as part of the three-tiered system identified the delivery and the professional behaviors of teachers in the classroom. Participants believed that if they were to receive feedback on how to improve performance and then receive professional development opportunities, their practices would better improve, which would ultimately affect student learning.

The dossier concept can be constituted as a demonstration of effective teaching practice by pinpointing skills that lead certain teachers to have a greater impact on student performance (Mathers, Oliva, & Laine, 2008). The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2007) pointed out research shows a link between effective teaching and student learning. The dossier as an evaluation of teacher performance and as presented by participants cannot point to specific student outcomes. However, based on participants' understanding of the dossier and their determination to explain their skills in the classroom, the majority of level III participants viewed the dossier as a resource for promoting their skills and student learning. On the other hand, most level I participants stated their desire to have formative feedback and to be informed of any areas of weaknesses. (There are two types of evaluations: formative and summative. Although both types of evaluations seek to measure performance, formative evaluation identifies ways to improve performance, and summative evaluation determines whether performance has sufficiently improved that a teacher may remain in his or her current position [Barrett, 1986].)

A major part of the dossier includes student work samples submitted to the Public Education Department (PED). Through the focus groups and interviews, participants

expressed how they examined their students' performance by using student work samples as a basis for a review of teacher practice. Mujis (2006) explained that the method of measuring the effect of instruction on student learning, including the analysis of student work samples, provides an insightful review of student learning results.

The argument presented by Winograd (2012) on the three-tiered system suggested that teacher evaluations should contain components to gauge whether teachers examined their students' performance through such measures as assessment data (Brandt, Oliva, Brown-Sims, & Hess 2007). However, one study found a large discrepancy between students' standardized reading scores and their reading levels. Price and Schwabacker (1993) suggested that student work samples may help to better identify which elements of teaching related more directly to increased student learning than standardized test scores (Mathers, Oliva, & Laine, 2008).

The majority of the level II participants spoke highly of having the opportunity to expand the dossier through the use of video-taping their improved practices in the classroom and submitting them as part of the dossier process. Although there has been limited research on how often teachers should be evaluated, Blunk (2007) suggested that video observation of teachers would be ideal. Alternatively, Mathers et al. (2008) stated that additional research and guidance are needed to determine and confirm the optimal frequency.

Implications and Recommendations

The research participants discussed change as both an individual and an organizational process, addressed a process for examining individual practice by providing numerous examples of alternative practices, and made frequent references to their professional learning, which was becoming embedded in their daily teaching. This

finding supports the belief that the participants were more likely to apply new instructional strategies if they received training while trying new ideas in their classroom (Joyce & Showers, 1982). Participants described the dossier as a professional practice that reinforced what they had learned. Interview and focus group data suggest that the three-tiered system is an improved practice for professional development. Given the numerous research studies on professional development dossiers, this research study confirms that participants highly valued their experiences as a way to extend their learning.

In the initial stages of the analysis, comments on the dossier were taken at face value. However, reanalysis of the participants' statements provided greater clarity about their perceptions of the dossier process. In their dialogues, participants expressed concerns that the requirement to complete the three-tiered system constituted excellence in the teaching and learning of students. However, participants were struggling with the new dossier concept as they balanced demands of external accountability with what they had internalized to be "effective" teaching and learning. In addition, the participants provided evidence they were moving toward using the dossier as a means of collaborating with colleagues in different tiers. In this regard, the findings of this research study align with conclusions of other researchers.

Practice Implications

Educators are the heart of educational reform. However, teachers typically have been excluded from significant policy discussions, and they have not been recognized as critical reformers (Futrell, 1994), thus decreasing the potential of current reform efforts to fundamentally transform teaching and learning. Any potential benefit could be short lived if a more supportive structure is not implemented. Currently, resources to assist

teachers and resource allocation priorities differ greatly among school districts.

Recommendations for Additional Research

1. Revisiting participants after several years could help determine the long-term effects of the dossier initiative on teachers.
2. Additional research is needed to determine whether or not the dossier process results in enhanced student learning, when measured by traditional achievement measures. Data could then be compared to evaluate the difference in student achievement and the quality of the learning experience, which would assist in determining which techniques or processes can improve student performance.
3. This study could be enhanced by including the students of the same participants in the study to determine differences in student–teacher perceptions of attitudes and opinions of teaching and learning, especially at the high school level. Students would be included in focus groups that matched the composition of the participant, such as having students assigned to classroom teachers participating in the focus groups.
4. Because this study was based on self-reported data from practicing teachers, further research could focus on analysis of data collected through direct observation using a standard protocol and analysis of teaching using the same artifacts and activities submitted in the dossier.
5. The PED and school districts should do an analysis of cost associated with the three-tiered system, with the goal of streamlining the cost to teachers who are required to demonstrate the competencies as part of teacher professional development training.

Implications for Improving the Three-Tiered System

The purpose of this research was to obtain the opinions, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of teachers who participated in the three-tiered system and explore what impact the process and system had on teachers' classroom instruction and student learning. Some participants in this study viewed the three-tiered system as a way to increase their salary and not necessarily as a way to improve student achievement. Future legislation, if any, should make clear the goals and objectives of the three-tiered system. Some participants thought the system was very confusing in regard to student achievement. Although many participants felt their classroom instruction helped improve student learning, their accomplishments in the classroom did not count towards the three-tiered system requirements because the most commonly used observable measurement of classroom instruction is the standards-based assessment. Many of the participants stated they had taught their students using the nine key teaching competencies, covering the areas of practice, instruction, student learning, and professional learning.

If the three-tiered system continues to be used to evaluate the progress of teachers, there should be a process in place to continue expectations at each level once teachers achieve those levels. The teachers grandfathered in to level III due to years of experience should have some type of evaluation process in place to use as benchmarks for various levels in the three-tiered system, and there should be a way to indicate whether teachers are providing quality instruction, particularly as correlated to students' achievement on test scores. From an ethical perspective, individuals participating in the three-tiered system should be told before hand that their licensure might tie to the success of their students in the classroom, not after the fact.

In order to improve teacher satisfaction, assess teacher effectiveness, and identify

student success, the Public Education Department will need to update the current nine competencies, and the legislature will need to reflect on updated research and new teaching elements as part of the three-tiered system, aligning the Common Core standards to academic and elective classes. As mentioned earlier, more emphasis must be placed on analyzing student work completed in the classrooms, observation of teacher portfolios in direct classroom instruction, and written reflections. Doing so would eliminate the concern that some teachers paid other people to complete their dossiers for them.

To truly assess teacher performance in the classroom using new and updated standards for core academic instruction, a revised version of the three-tiered system should address suggestions by the Gates Foundation: measures should include student achievement gains, classroom observation and teacher reflection, teacher pedagogical content knowledge, students' perception of classroom environment, and teachers' perceptions of working conditions and instructional support. Data from focus groups and interviews suggested one or more of these measures be included in the level III process. Some participants who achieved the National Board Certification and did not know they did not have to do both to get to level III were the ones who reflected strongly on classroom observation and teacher pedagogical content and knowledge.

Implications for New Mexico

The next critical component for continuing education improvements in New Mexico is collaboration with key partners. Teacher recruitment and retention are two aspects of the overall labor market for teachers. From the standpoint of districts and schools, future reform policies have a direct impact on their ability to fill the number of school teaching vacancies. Reform policies, together with current labor market conditions, have a direct impact on decisions of teachers or prospective teachers to

remain in or enter teaching.

Findings from this research study suggest the levels of salaries, benefits, and working conditions helped to determine the number of qualified teachers willing to teach at level, I, II or III. The three-tiered system has played a large role in the attractiveness of teaching relative to alternative occupations in New Mexico. However, unless the three-tiered system is critically assessed, the system may encourage some teachers to leave the profession. Given that compensation was stagnant in New Mexico prior to the three-tiered system, the three-tiered system may serve as a tool to increase the attractiveness of the profession.

Policy Recommendations and Justification

In 2007, the Office of Education Accountability, Legislative Education Study Committee, and Legislative Finance Committee conducted a joint evaluation of the three-tiered licensure system. The study examined the effectiveness of the three-tiered licensure system and found student achievement growth models and quality-added models should be used to recruit and retain teachers. The legislation clearly indicated that no education system can educate all children unless it is founded on the principle that every child can learn and succeed, and the system must meet needs of all children by recognizing student success for every child is the fundamental goal.

In regards to participants' complaints about the various fees that must be paid for initial participation in the three-tiered licensure system, as well as additional payment if they did not pass one or more parts of the dossier the first time, the Public Education Department (PED) could consider adjusting the cost, giving teachers a no-cost second opportunity to re-take a section

The 2007 examination found that monies in the educator licensure fund should be

subjected to an annual legislature appropriations and that Section 22-8-44 (B) NMSA1978 should be amended. The report also stated that considerations should be given to PED for necessary budget adjustment authority in the general appropriations act to cover the cost of PDD revenues if unexpected growth occurs in the number of teachers submitting licensure advancement applications. Although the PED agreed with recommendations to consider amending the aforementioned statutes, the educator licensure fund is yet to be subjected to annual legislature appropriations. In the same report, the PED agreed that professional development in New Mexico needs to be aligned with state policy goals and priorities and that a system for collecting information regarding how professional development funds were being spent is needed. Direct legislation and funding related to professional development has been reduced rather than increased, from both state and federal funds.

The three-tiered licensure system was designed to create a systematic plan for recruitment, preparation, mentoring, evaluation, professional development, and support for teachers or school leaders. If the three-tiered system is to be used as an ongoing systemic plan for recruiting and retaining school leaders, the PED and district administrators must assess their level of involvement in training teachers and in identifying teachers who desire to be school leaders.

In 2009, the Legislature Finance Committee published *A Study on the Program Evaluation of the Three-tiered Licensure System and the Achievement Gap*. The study was conducted by the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), the Legislative Study Committee (LESC), and the Office of Education Accountability (OEA). The review team analyzed assessment data and evaluated the impact of the three-tiered licensure system on student performance. This report states that the three-tiered system was designed to

increase student achievement by recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. The examination showed that in addition to the retaining of teachers, teachers at all licensure levels produced gains in student achievement. However, differences in student achievement between licensure levels were not significant (Public Education Department, Report # 09-08). When results were grouped by grade level, the differences in teacher performance between licensure levels were not substantial (Public Education Department Report # 09-08, p. 18).

One of the major emphases in the report was the concern about the high percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, which is an indicator of poverty, being placed in level I teachers' classrooms: there were more free and reduced lunch students in a classroom with a level I teacher than in classrooms with a level II teacher. The report pointed out that 20 of the 30 level I teachers statewide were working in schools where over 80 percent of the students were eligible for free and reduced lunch (Public Education Department Report # 09-08, p. 18). When data were grouped by socioeconomic status, differences in teacher performance between licensure levels were not substantial.

The intended purpose of this study was to assess the connections between the licensure levels of I, II, and III and to determine whether student achievement correlates to teacher level. However, factors outside the teachers' control also affect student performance. Teachers in my study shared their perceptions that students' achievement increased based on their participation in the three-tiered system. However, their main emphasis was whether or not their teaching style had improved and whether they become better teachers for participating. In my research study, 38 of the 63 teachers felt that the dossier had positive impact on their teaching ability and practices. The other 25 teachers

complained heavily that the dossier did nothing for them and that it was a waste of time.

Participants who felt the dossier improved their teaching ability commented based on their perceptions of how their students perform as a result of participants changing their teaching habits and styles. Some participants explained they emphasized deeper understanding in their lesson plans and activities after receiving dossier training with the unions, mentors, or district representatives. Other participants noted the process was meaningless and ineffective. Negative aspects of the dossier were the dossier processes took too much time, was costly, and used procedures out of their control. At the same time, some participants believed that the National Board Certification was a better avenue to proceed with the licensure process. Those participants initially were eager to participate in the dossier process, but when they encountered multiple problems with the process, they no longer believed the dossier was a tool to improve education. A revamping of the system by the PED is vital if the dossier is to be used to enhance teacher growth and student achievement.

Regarding variables noted in the 2009 LFC report, poverty, parents, race, and economic stability are major factors in the education of a child. According to the report, research clearly establishes that school level policies concerning teachers can have a significant impact on student performance. This finding addresses Sanders and Rivers' (1996) finding that teacher effectiveness is "the single biggest factor influencing gains in student learning."

Prior to the 2009 report, a 2007 joint evaluation by OED, LESC, and LFC addressed the recruitment and retention of teachers. The 2007 report further suggested a study be conducted to show the link between the advanced licensure system and performance. Also, in 2006, the LESC wrote a memo requiring information on the extent

to which the three-tiered system showed documentation of student performance.

The 2012 report *Effective Use of Student Test Data to Assess & Improve Teacher Evaluative* addressed student performance within teacher licensure levels and suggested that the state evaluation system was not screening teachers for their effectiveness in the classroom. The report pointed out that 50% of students taught by level I teachers achieved a year's worth of growth in math in 2012, compared to 52% of students of level III teachers (Public Education Department Report # 12-12). The 2012 report also stressed the fact that student performance has not improved, despite great investments in teacher pay (Public Education Department Report #12-12). The report suggested that one of the primary purposes of the licensure system is to ensure student success.

House Bill 212 of 2003 noted that the teacher shortage had affected the ability of New Mexico (NM) to compete for the best teachers and that unless the state and school districts found ways to mentor beginning teachers, intervene with teachers while they still show promise, improve job satisfaction of quality teachers, and elevate the teaching profession by shifting to a professional educator licensing and salary system, NM public schools would be unable to recruit and retain the highest quality teachers (Public Education Department Report # 09-08).

Dr. Veronica Garcia, former Secretary of Education, in her response to Manu Patel, Deputy Director, Legislative Finance Committee, noted in 2008, 94% of the core classes in New Mexico were taught by highly qualified teachers, an increase of 27% from 2004. She further stated New Mexico ranked 17th in the nation for improving teaching and New Mexico was now able to attract more highly qualified individuals. In 2009, the secretary pointed out that New Mexico had met legislators' intent to elevate the teaching profession by shifting to a professional licensing and salary system. The three-tiered

licensure system was effective in the acquisition and retention of highly-qualified teachers. Although the process to become highly qualified was very stressful and cumbersome for some participants, for 38 of participants, the dossier process was rewarding for most and gave teachers avenues to improve their practices.

This research study was conducted in rural and urban schools. The rural teachers had difficulties completing the dossier, including issues related to Internet connectivity and technological availability. Even greater was the feeling of being left to complete the process without support. Cost to submit the dossier again after failing one of the competency strands was a major factor. The teachers needed to resubmit their dossiers and pay an additional \$320.00. Yet, they participated, and although they resented having to do it, 37 of those same participants felt that it helped them become more reflective about their practices. The increased salary was a motivator for some, but not for all.

Most of these teachers had come into the system within the last ten years, and they were recruited to fill a teacher shortage problem in 2003. These teachers perceived themselves as becoming highly qualified, believing that the dossier had caused them to look at what they do in the classroom and improve on it. When asked, “What linkage do you see between student learning and the three-tier salary system?” the most frequent response was they became better at what they did. While other reports tied the three-tiered system to an evaluation process that was never linked based on test scores, my study gave the opinions, beliefs, and the perceptions of teachers. Some participants strongly stated the dossier did not improve their knowledge or their teaching but the National Boards Certification or the opportunity to achieve the master’s degree did. This finding indicates that the dossier, to some degree, helped improve teachers’ teaching in the classroom. Overall, the process is good but has room for improvement.

The research on portfolios by Athanases (1994) regarding portfolios relates to the content of the dossiers. The PED should keep the dossier but should revise the system to include a stronger mentorship component, more involvement with the process by school districts, and observations, with at least one observation unscheduled and a video observation of classroom activities. In addition the competencies should be revised to include current data and techniques, as well as the Common Core Standards.

This study showed that the challenges participants encountered affected their experience with the dossier system and it influenced their teaching. Study results indicate that the dossier was never intended to be a teacher evaluation system but that it required teachers to provide documentation of their improved practices. Using the dossier to evaluate teachers, however, would require major improvements and may not be possible without other forms of teacher assessment.

Conclusion to the Study

Teachers who served as study participants provided rich narrative data to explore whether the three-tiered licensure system had transformed classroom practice and contributed to productive educational reform. The research participants were committed teachers interested in improving the system, seeking solutions, and incorporating new tools into their classroom structures. Accompanying this was an awareness of the need to change traditional classroom practice. Participants focused on the search for validation for their classroom practices and made urgent recommendations for next steps. Participants depended upon a much larger system as they completed their dossiers.

The three-tiered system will continue to require technical assistance. The implementation of the professional development dossier will require ongoing professional development for all teachers. Similarly, grandfathered teachers should have

some kind of professional development attached to them within the first five years, and specific components of the dossier should be reviewed and changed with updated data or research.

The challenge that existed throughout this study was to encourage participants to be reflective of their classroom practice and provide evidence of improved practices. The context in which the three-tiered licensure system was developed and implemented ten years ago is no longer relevant due to changes in education, curriculum, economic conditions of the state, and the trend to evaluate teachers based on student performance. The State of New Mexico depended on the three-tiered system for the last ten years, and, in so doing, salary increases have dropped tremendously. Many policy makers were not willing to push for additional pay increase after the three-tiered system was implemented. As a legislator and majority whip of the New Mexico House of Representatives, sitting in leadership meetings and listening to policy leaders deciding only to support a one or two percent raise, or no raises, because the three-tiered system was implemented was sometimes very disheartening.

The process of the three-tiered system, including the dossier, has provided a high level of professionalism and accountability for teachers, and it deserves to be continued, though revised, and supported by the Public Education Department and school district administrators.

The three-tiered system, including the dossier, has provided an opportunity for teachers to review their teaching skills, although some teachers do not view the system as a necessary component to improve education. A highly skilled teaching force results from training well-prepared teachers, from recruitment, and through continuing preparation through ongoing professional development. Support for teacher learning needs to be part

of an integrated whole that promotes effectiveness during every stage of a teachers' career (Darling Hammond, 2012).

Ideally, states would create a tiered licensure system that licenses new teachers and recognizes accomplished teachers based on their demonstrated performance. New Mexico is an example of a state that has created such a system of both state performance assessments for licensure purposes and locally aligned evaluations for personnel purposes, with help of teacher association, teacher educators, and researchers. (Darling-Hammond, 2012, p. 6)

This study concerning the impact of the three-tiered licensure system demonstrates the Professional Development Dossier (PDD) encompasses tools that characterize good teaching. Findings indicated the PDD process should continue to be studied, used, and revised.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

I give my permission to audio taping of this interview with the understanding that the tape will be used for review by the doctoral student and then destroyed when the dissertation is complete. This information will be kept confidential. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

Print Subject's Name

Date

Subject's Signature

Date

Moderator's Signature

Date

Appendix B: Data Collection Grid

Research Questions & Subquestions	Explored through the use of this/these questions during data collection
<p>Research Question What has been your experience with the three-tiered licensure system?</p>	<p>Interview Question # 1 Focus Question # 2</p>
<p>Research & Probing Question What are your perceptions of how the three-tier licensure system has influenced your teaching practice?</p>	<p>Focus Question #2 Probing Question # 1, # 2 & # 3 Interview Question # 4</p>
<p>Subquestion – Instruction What Support have you received in preparing your dossier?</p>	<p>Interview question # 3. Focus group question # 3 Probing question # 1 & # 2</p>
<p>Research Question How did you feel about the requirements of the three-tier licensure system?</p>	<p>Interview Question # 7 Probing Question # 1 Focus Question # 1</p>
<p>Subquestion – Instruction What changes have occurred in your teaching practice?</p>	<p>Interview Question Probing # 2</p>
<p>Subquestion – Student Learning Please tell me if your experience with the dossier process has influenced student learning in your classroom?</p>	<p>Interview Question # 5 Focus Group Question # 4</p>
<p>Subquestion – Student Learning What linkage do you see between student learning and the three-tiered licensure?</p>	<p>Interview Question # 6 Probing Question # 5</p>
<p>Research Question Please describe sources of help you received during the time you were completing your dossier.</p>	<p>Focus Group Question # 3 Interview Question # 3</p>
<p>Research Question What suggestions would you make to improve the dossier process to help teachers?</p>	<p>Focus Group Question # 4 Interview Question # 6</p>

Appendix C: Focus Group Moderator Guide

I. Introduction - 10 minutes

Good Afternoon/Evening and welcome to our session.

Thank you for taking time to join our discussion of teachers' experiences with the dossier process of the Three-Tier Licensure system. I am Sheryl Williams Stapleton, a candidate for a doctoral degree with the University of New Mexico. Assisting me today is _____

_____.

I am trying to gain information about teacher's perceptions of the New Mexico's three-tier licensure system.

You were selected because you have all participated in the three-tier process. I am particularly interested in your views of the process and the services available that are designated to help you and how your participation in this process has had an effect on your classroom teaching.

There are no right or wrong answers, but rather different points of view reflecting different experiences. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said.

Before we begin, let me remind you of some general ground rules:

- We are on a first name basis.
- This is a research project and whatever you say is strictly confidential. No one other than myself will see your responses and they will be treated only in aggregate. No response will be tied in any way to an individual teacher. No other faculty or staff will be able to hear or see what you say. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.
- Please speak up so we all can hear you - only one person should speak at a time.
- I am tape recording this session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. Once I have looked at all the responses in aggregate, the tape will be destroyed.
- Keep in mind that I am just as interested in negative comments as positive comments - at times negative comments are very helpful.
- The session will last about an hour and 20 minutes. Please feel free to get up and stretch and use the restroom.

Let's begin by finding out some more about each other by going around the room one at a time. Please tell us your name and why you decided to complete a dossier. We'll be brief so that we don't run out of time.

II. Overview of the Three-tier Licensure Process - 40 minutes

A. Please tell me a little about your experience with the three-tier system.

Probes: (use only if the participants do not mention these topics)

- What was different about this experience?
- Was this experience much as you expected?
- How did you go about the process of completing a dossier?
- How did you determine what to include in the dossier?

B. What did you find most challenging about the dossier process?

Probes: (use only if the participants do not mention these topics)

- Please tell me a little more about that
- Please explain what that was challenging for you.
- Did others also find that challenging?

III. Sources of Help - 20 minutes.

Please describe any sources of help you received during the time you were completing your dossier.

Probes: (use only if the participants do not mention these topics)

- Did you seek help or was it offered to you?
- Please tell me more about that support.
- Was it helpful for you?
- Did others also use this form of support?

IV. Recommendations and Closeout - 10 minutes

What suggestions would you make to improve the dossier process to help teachers?

Is there anything that we haven't discussed that you would like to add?

Appendix D: Participant Screening Document

The following questionnaire is designed to gather information on teachers who have participated in the three-tiered licensure system. This is part of a research project to better understand teachers' perceptions of the system.

I am gathering preliminary information from a pool of teachers to randomly select teachers who are willing to participate in an interview or a focus group session. One of the greatest incentives for participating in this research is the opportunity to contribute to a body of knowledge that would give input in helping to develop future legislation that would not only impact but improve education in New Mexico both for completing this questionnaire and for your participation in either of these activities.

Please provide information in the following categories and return this to me via email:

1. What is your teaching level?

Elementary _____ Middle _____ High School _____

2. What is the type of school in which you are a teacher?

Public _____ Private _____

3. What type of teaching do you conduct?

Regular _____ Special Ed _____ Other _____
(please explain)

4. Do you conduct your teaching in a classroom or other environment?

Regular _____ Non-classroom _____

5. Do you have a special content area focus (e.g. reading, language arts, science, mathematics, social studies, music, art, other) or do you teach all subjects?

Special Content _____ (identify) All subjects _____
Other _____ (identify)

6. Do you teach in a rural or urban area?

Rural _____ Urban _____

7. What is the size of the district in which you teach?

Large _____ Medium _____ Small _____

8. What access do you have to support for advancement in your teaching profession?

Please circle the response that best fits your circumstance:

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
 No access Some access Adequate access Good access Exceptional access

9. How would you rate the quality of the support that you have received for advancement through the three-tiered licensure system?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
 Useless support Some support Adequate support Good support Exceptional support

10. Would you be willing to participate in an interview or a focus group session scheduled at your convenience?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please provide contact information below:

Name: _____ Day phone: _____

Email: _____ Evening phone: _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and I will be contacting you for completing this information and upon your selection for an interview or focus group as applicable.

Most sincerely,

Sheryl Williams Stapleton

Level-primary, middle

- a) Type of school
- b) Regular vs. Special ed
 - 1. Classroom/non-classroom
 - 2. Content area
- c) Rural/urban
- d) Size of district
- e) Access to support

1. Useless support _____

Helpful Support _____

2. Little support _____

Much Support _____

How many years of experience have you had teaching?

1 _____ 10 yrs _____ 10-15 yrs _____ 15-20 yrs _____ 20-30 yrs _____

You are in the age bracket of:

21-30 _____ 30-40 _____ 40-50 _____ 50-65 _____

Are you a native New Mexican? Yes _____ No _____

What nationality are you?

White _____ Hispanic _____ Black _____ Native American _____ Asian _____
Other _____

Do you speak any other language than English?

Appendix E: Sample Interview Coding

Coding Key

Salary and morale
 Influence on practice
 Cost
 Affective
 Assistance
 Professional development
 Time
 Info available from PED
 Trends

Excerpt from the Transcript

Let's begin with the first questions;

Question: Are you ready?

Answer: Yes, I am.

Question: What has been your experience with the dossier system?

Answer: I completed Level I to Level II and Level II to Level III.

Question: How did you learn about the dossier system?

Answer: I knew teachers who had completed the dossier.

Question: What support have you received in preparing your dossier? If so, how helpful has that support been?

Answer: With the 1st dossier, union goes through the stages. As a member of the union, I paid \$50.00 for information session and they provided helpful tips, a non-union person had to pay \$150.00.

Question: Did your school or the state provide support directly to you?

Answer: No

Question: Did you need to seek out support or was it easily accessible?

Answer: I received a letter outlining information sessions.

Question: What challenges did you encounter as you prepared your dossier and how did you deal with those challenges?

Answer: Knowing whether what you are writing is what they want to hear. You can pay the union and they read it and you give me feedback.

Question: Please tell me if your experience with dossier system has influenced your teaching?

Answer: Yes a little bit, especially from Level II to Level III. I feel like a more experienced teacher having done my dossier.

The next questions are regarding the Three-Tiered Licensure System in general;

Question: What information have you received regarding the Three-Tiered Salary System from your district or school?

Answer: I was given one sheet of paper on how it worked, everything else I looked up on my own.

Question: How has the Three-Tiered Salary System helped you or your colleagues in the classroom?

Answer: It allowed me to see things differently, "if it is not broken, do not fix it".

Question: How has the Three-Tiered Salary System impeded you?

Answer: No

Question: Can you tell me a story on the impact of the Three-Tiered Salary System?

Answer: Yes, I love these kinds of professional development. It is an instrument in looking at the practice; the Three-Tiered Salary System keeps me on my toes and helps me keep up to date with research.

Question: What linkage do you see between student learning and the Three-Tiered Salary System?

Answer: The linkage with experienced teachers between student learning and experienced teacher's help teachers' become better at what they do.

Question: How do you feel about the requirements of the dossier system and overall about the dossier system as a professional experience?

Answer: It is a good idea but can be manipulated as a development tool and as an assessment if we were required to do it, it would make an impact.

Question: Do you feel you are a better teacher as a result of completing the dossier process?

Answer: No, it came about from material collected when I was having difficulty.

Question: What would you tell others about the dossier system?

Answer: Figure out what you are going to assess.

Question: Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not yet talked about?

Answer: Dossier would improve from having mentorship, such as peer mentoring just so you are accountable for what you put on paper.

Thank you again for taking time to let me conduct the interview.

Question: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Answer: No

Appendix F: Three-Tiered Licensure Strands

Table 11

Professional Development Dossier – Strand A

I. Context	II. Introduction	III. Instructional Record	IV. Resources	V. Student Work	VI. Analysis of Student Achievement
<p>Describe your students & classroom context:</p> <p>Provide class information.</p> <p>Write brief description of range and growth in achievement levels for all students.</p> <p>List NM Student Performance Standards & Benchmarks.</p> <p>Provide any additional necessary information</p>	<p>Write brief Introduction of a 3-5 Consecutive hours of Instruction with one group of students:</p> <p>Knowledge & skills this instruction helped students learn.</p> <p>How segment fit with previous and continuing instruction.</p> <p>Integration of skills and content.</p> <p>Organization of educational setting.</p> <p>Differentiation of instruction.</p>	<p>Provide detailed description of your ongoing instruction.</p> <p>Two-column description: Left column – narrative description of events. Right column - explanation of reasoning and how activity was adapted.</p>	<p>Present the resources & materials you used:</p> <p>Collect examples of resources from Sections II & III of Instruction Strand.</p> <p>Label resources and arrange.</p> <p>Provide special instructions.</p>	<p>Show example of high achievement student work.</p> <p>Show example of mid-range achievement.</p> <p>Show example of low achievement student work.</p>	<p>Explain the ways the class demonstrated achievement.</p> <p>Criteria for determining different levels of achievement.</p> <p>How three students differed in achievement.</p> <p>How achievement was communicated to parents.</p> <p>How you took data into account for next segment of instruction.</p>

(Public Education Department, 2012)

Table 12

Professional Development Dossier – Strand B

<p>I. Student X: Examples of Work and Explanation</p> <p>Complete Student X's cover sheet.</p> <p>Prepare examples of student X's work.</p> <p>Explain student selection & work.</p>	<p>II. Student Y: Examples of Work and Explanation</p> <p>Complete Student Y's cover sheet.</p> <p>Prepare examples of Student Y's work.</p> <p>Explain Student selection & work.</p>
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(Public Education Department, 2012)

Table 13

Professional Development Dossier – Strand C

<p>I. Examining and Implementing Change in Teaching</p> <p>Explain area you investigated & what promoted you to do it.</p> <p>Explain resources you consulted, what you tried as result.</p> <p>Explain how your practice changed, your plans for future growth.</p> <p>Select up to 4 pieces of evidence of changes.</p> <p>Provide list of resources.</p>	<p>II. Collaboration</p> <p>Explain how you worked with colleagues, parents, & community members.</p> <p>Illustrate your explanation.</p>
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Appendix G: Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The information I am gathering is part of the research I am conducting to better understand teachers' perceptions of the three-tier licensure system.

-

All information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified in any manner.

I will ask you several questions and please feel free to discuss each question in depth. I am interested in both your direct experiences and your perceptions and feelings about those experiences.

Let's begin with the first question: *"What has been your experience with the three-tier licensure system?"*

Probing question(s): *"How did you learn about the three-tier licensure system?"*
"Do you know others who have gone through the system?"

Next question: *"What are your perceptions of how the three-tier licensure system has influenced your teaching practice?"*

Probing question(s): *"What changes have occurred in your teaching practice?"*

Next question: *"What support have you received in preparing your dossier? If so, how helpful has that support been?"*

Probing question(s): *"Did your school or the state provide support directly to you?"*
"What was the nature of that support?"
"Did you need to seek out support or was it easily accessible?"

Next question: *"What challenges did you encounter as you prepared your dossier and how did you deal with those challenges?"*

Probing question(s): *"Did others help you as you encountered these challenges?"*
"How did you feel as you faced the challenge(s)?"
"When you succeeded in overcoming a challenge, what impact did that have for you?"

Next question: *"Please tell me if your experience with the dossier process has influenced student learning in your classroom? If so, in what ways?"*

Probing question(s): *"Did completing your dossier help motivate you in your classroom practice?"*
"Did the dossier process improve your knowledge of curriculum and teaching?" If so, how?

The next questions are regarding the three-tiered system in general:

What information have you received regarding the three-tiered salary system from your district or school;?

How has the three-tiered salary system helped you or your colleagues in the classroom?

How has the three-tiered salary system impeded you?

Can you tell me a story of the impact of the three-tiered salary system that you have observed or experienced?

What linkage do you see between student learning and the three-tier salary system?

Last question: *"How do you feel about the requirements of the three-tiered licensure system?"*

Probing question(s): *"How do you feel overall about the three-tier licensure system and the dossier process as a professional development experience?"*
"Do you feel you are a better teacher as a result of completing the dossier process?" (please elaborate)
"What would you tell others about the dossier system?"

Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't yet talked about?

Thank you again for taking time to allow me to conduct this interview.

Appendix H: Purposive Sampling Grid

Demographic Characteristics

	Ethnicity					Age			Gender		School Size		Teaching Experience			
	His	NA	AA	Ang	O	21-35	35-50	50+	F	M	Rural	Urban	3-10	10-20	20-30	30+
P1																
P2																
P3																
P4																
P5																
P6																

Appendix I: Consent to Participate in Research

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Sheryl Williams Stapleton from the College of Education at the University of New Mexico. The results of this study will contribute to Ms. Stapleton's research project on the State three-tier salary system. You were identified as a possible volunteer in the study because you are a participant in the three-tier salary system and have moved from a level I to a level II or level III teacher.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study is designed to discover teachers' perceptions, opinions, and attitudes of the impact of the three-tier licensure system on teachers.

PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES

Teacher participants will receive a survey form to be filled out. The screening document will consist of ten questions.

The screening document will involve:

- 200 teachers at the elementary school level who are level I, level II, or level III
- 200 teachers from mid-school level who are level I, level II, or level III
- 200 teachers at the high school level who are level I, level II, or level III

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential risks or discomforts to participants.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

No benefits to the participants can be foreseen, except possibly for changes in the salary system which may result from this project, if authorized by the State Department of Education and the State Legislature. However, there will be benefits to society. The

information generated could be useful as a guide to the administration of the Albuquerque Public Schools for better management of the school system. Specifically, the results of the project will represent a sample of the reaction of teachers and principals to the mandates of the HB 212 school reform law. These results will bring out the degree of satisfaction or criticism of the teacher salary provisions of the law and give an indication of teacher morale. The results of the project will also show an approximate partial measure of the progress achieved toward improving student learning. Both sets of results will be valuable to the administration of Albuquerque Public Schools and districts across the state.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be shredded at the completion of the study.

All information will be only in the hands of the principal investigator, Sheryl Williams Stapleton and no other party. All surveys and interviews will be destroyed at the end of the study.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to participate in this study or not. It is a voluntary effort. You may withdraw at any time without any penalty whatsoever. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. There will be no incentives or rewards for participating in this study.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS AND REVIEW BOARD

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, please feel free to contact:

Sheryl Williams Stapleton. She can be reached at (505) 301-0705 or by email at Williams_sm@unm.edu.

If you have any other concerns or complaints, contact the Institutional Review Board at the University of New Mexico, 1777 Roma NE, Room 205, Albuquerque, NM 87131, (505) 277-2257 or toll free at 1-866-841-9018.

Appendix J: Consent to Participate in Research Interviews

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Sheryl Williams Stapleton from the College of Education at the University of New Mexico. The results of this study will contribute to Ms. Stapleton's research project on the State three-tier salary system. You were identified as a possible volunteer in the study because you are a participant in the three-tier salary system and have moved from a level I to a level II or level III teacher.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study is designed to discover teachers' perceptions, opinions, and attitudes of the impact of the three-tier licensure system on teachers, classroom instruction, and student learning.

PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES

Teacher participants will receive an interview form to be filled out. The interview will consist of six questions and 11 probing sub-questions.

The interview will involve:

- 11 teachers at the elementary school level who are level I, level II, or level III
- 11 teachers from mid-school level who are level I, level II, or level III
- 11 teachers at the high school level who are level I, level II, or level III

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential risks or discomforts to participants.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

No benefits to the participants can be foreseen, except possibly for changes in the salary system which may result from this project, if authorized by the State Department of

Education and the State Legislature. However, there will be benefits to society. The information generated could be useful as a guide to the administration of the Albuquerque Public Schools for better management of the school system. Specifically, the results of the project will represent a sample of the reaction of teachers and principals to the mandates of the HB 212 school reform law. These results will bring out the degree of satisfaction or criticism of the teacher salary provisions of the law and give an indication of teacher morale. The results of the project will also show an approximate partial measure of the progress achieved toward improving student learning. Both sets of results will be valuable to the administration of Albuquerque Public Schools and districts across the state.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be shredded at the completion of the study.

All information will be only in the hands of the principal investigator, Sheryl Williams Stapleton and no other party. All surveys and interviews will be destroyed at the end of the study.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to participate in this study or not. It is a voluntary effort. You may withdraw at any time without any penalty whatsoever. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. There will be no incentives or rewards for participating in this study.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS AND REVIEW BOARD

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, please feel free to contact:

Sheryl Williams Stapleton. She can be reached at (505) 301-0705 or by email at Williams_sm@unm.edu.

If you have any other concerns or complaints, contact the Institutional Review Board at the University of New Mexico, 1777 Roma NE, Room 205, Albuquerque, NM 87131, (505) 277-2257 or toll free at 1-866-841-9018.

Appendix K: Focus Group

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Sheryl Williams Stapleton from the College of Education at the University of New Mexico. The results of this study will contribute to Ms. Stapleton's research project on the State three-tier salary system. You were identified as a possible volunteer in the study because you are a participant in the three-tier salary system and have moved from a level I to a level II or level III teacher.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study is designed to answer the question “What are teachers’ perceptions of the impact of the three-tiered licensure system upon classroom instruction and learning?”

PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES

Teacher participants will participate in a focus group questionnaire. The focus group questionnaire will consist of seven questions and probing self questions.

The group will involve:

- 15 teachers at the elementary school level who are level I, level II, or level III
- 15 teachers from mid-school level who are level I, level II, or level III
- 15 teachers at the high school level who are level I, level II, or level III

There will be _____ questions for each participant in the focus group.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential risks or discomforts to participants.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

No benefits to the participants can be foreseen, except possibly for changes in the salary system which may result from this project, if authorized by the State Department of

Education and the State Legislature. However, there will be benefits to society. The information generated could be useful as a guide to the administration of the Albuquerque Public Schools for better management of the school system. Specifically, the results of the project will represent a sample of the reaction of teachers and principals to the mandates of the HB 212 school reform law. These results will bring out the degree of satisfaction or criticism of the teacher salary provisions of the law and give an indication of teacher morale. The results of the project will also show an approximate partial measure of the progress achieved toward improving student learning. Both sets of results will be valuable to the administration of Albuquerque Public Schools and districts across the state.

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