View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk

brought to you by CORE

provided by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst

University of Massachusetts Amherst

ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst

Doctoral Dissertations

Dissertations and Theses

March 2019

EXAMINING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AMONG STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION AGENCIES IN THE RESULTS DRIVEN ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS

Anne Louise Thompson Granfield

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Thompson Granfield, Anne Louise, "EXAMINING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AMONG STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION AGENCIES IN THE RESULTS DRIVEN ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS" (2019). *Doctoral Dissertations*. 1496.
https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/1496

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations and Theses at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.

Examining Stakeholder Engagement Among State Special Education Agencies in the Results Driven Accountability Process

A Dissertation Presented

by

ANNE LOUISE THOMPSON GRANFIELD

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

February 2019

College of Education

© Copyright by Anne Louise Thompson Granfield 2019
All Rights Reserved

Examining Stakeholder Engagement Among State Special Education Agencies in the Results Driven Accountability Process

A Dissertation Presented

By

ANNE LOUISE THOMPSON GRANFIELD

Approved as to style and content by:

_____
Mary Lynn Boscardin, Chair

_____
Elizabeth McEneaney, Member

_____
Robert Marx, Member

_____
Jennifer Randall
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
College of Education

DEDICATION

To my parents, Anna Laura and Larry Thompson, and my late husband, Jim Granfield, whose values on life gave me the foundation to travel this path.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I want to thank for walking this path with me:

- To my advisor, Dr. Mary Lynn Boscardin, who was my shepherd when I most needed shepherding,
- To my committee members, Dr. Elizabeth McEneaney and Dr. Robert Marx, who cheered me on when I most needed perseverance,
- To the myriad of family members, friends and colleagues whose tolerance, encouragement, and support provided me the temperament to persist and stay the course over the many years of this arduous work, and
- To the two very special individuals in my life that have been the alpha and omega to this accomplishment. Because of their compassionate spirits, I was able to embark on and bring closure to this journey.

To all of you, your many acts of love, kindness and support made a difference..., in fact they were the difference.

ABSTRACT

EXAMINING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AMONG STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION AGENCIES IN THE RESULTS DRIVEN ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS

FEBRUARY 2019

ANNE LOUISE THOMPSON GRANFIELD, B.S., INDIANA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, INDIANA

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT, STORRS

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Dr. Mary Lynn Boscardin

This qualitative study is designed to investigate how state special education agencies (SEAs) implement the policy tool of engaging stakeholders to respond to the federal expectations of improving results for students with disabilities through their State Systemic Improvement Plans (SSIPs). The traditional top-down, authoritarian roles of SEAs have not adequately met the stakeholder policy expectations at the local level. With federal policy pressuring SEAs to deliver on local education outcomes, stakeholder engagement has become an operation reporting expectation in SSIPs. Both federal policy and the engagement and collaboration literature informed this study. This deductive qualitative research study employed thematic analysis to extract key concepts from SSIPs to dissect stakeholder engagement used by 50 SEAs. The findings revealed SEA's use of influence, representation, communication, directionality and supports to involve stakeholders in the development of the SSIPs. SEAs engaged a breadth of stakeholders by providing a context for the work, informing and teaching skills for more effective engagement, and offering guidance and making the work more manageable for the stakeholders. A state leadership structure for stakeholder engagement emerged from this investigation. The framework incorporates: (a) a breadth of stakeholders that are both

representative and authentic, (b) a means of support that encourages, maintains and sustains stakeholder understanding of and engagement in the work, and (c) lateral and collaborative interactions for the creation of ideas and decisions that allow for genuine and influential stakeholder voices.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

ABSTRACT vi

LIST OF TABLES xi

LIST OF FIGURES xii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS xiii

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION 1
    - State Systemic Improvement Plans (SSIP) 2
    - Stakeholder Engagement 3
    - Purpose of the Study 6
    - Significance 8

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE 11
    - SEA Behavior on Policy Implementation 13
    - Policy Tools 14
    - Stakeholder Engagement in Policy Implementation 17
    - Rationale for Engagement 18
    - Literature Reviews 19
    - Representativeness 20
    - Preparedness 22
    - Leadership 22
    - Communication 23
    - Interaction 24
    - Significance of the Study 34

3. METHODOLOGY 36
    - Research Questions 36
    - Research Design 37
        - Rationale 38
        - Thematic Analysis 38
    - Role of the Researcher 41
    - Methodology 43
        - Documents 45
        - Data Collection 46
        - Data Analysis Plan 47
            - Stage 1: Code Preparation 49

Stage II: Data Collection....54
Stage III: Data Analysis....55
Establishing Trustworthiness....56
Delimitations and Assumptions....60
Summary....62

4. FINDINGS....64
Research Question 1: Description of Stakeholder Engagement in the SSIPs....65
Representation....66
Breadth....67
Affiliation....71
Other Findings....79
Rationale....81
Valued Contributions....83
Support....84
Informed and Skilled....85
Provide Context....85
Make Examination More Manageable....86
Assist Ease of Viewing and Analysis....87
Purposeful Directions and Parameters....88
Communication....90
Means of Communicating....91
Purpose of Communications....92
Transparency....94
Influence....94
Stakeholder Behavior....95
Nature of the Work and Its Use....98
Research Question 2: Interactions between Stakeholders and SEAs Within Sections of the SSIPs....101
Interactions....101
Confluence of Communication Exchange and Influence....102
Directionality....103
Analysis by SSIP Component....108
SSIPs in General....109
SSIP-Data Analysis Component....110
SSIP- Infrastructure Analysis Component....110
SSIP-SIMR Identification Component....111
SSIP-Improvement Strategy Identification Component....112
SSIP-Theory of Action Development Component....112
Summary....113

5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH....116
Research Question 1: Description of Stakeholder Engagement....116
Representation....117
Support....123

Communication....125
Influence....126
Research Question 2: Interactions Within Sections of the SSIP....130
Interactions....130
Lateral Interactions....132
Collaborative Interaction....135
Understanding Directionality of Communication Exchanges Within the SSIP....136
Value of the Exchange....136
Communication Exchanges Within the SSIP Components....138
Leadership for SEA Engagement with Stakeholders in Accountability Planning....141
Leading for Stakeholder Engagement....146
Convening with Stakeholders....146
Supporting Stakeholders....148
Engaging with Stakeholders....149
Limitations....150
Further Considerations....151
Conclusion and Implications for Future Research....152

APPENDICES

A. EXPERT INFORMATION AND TRUSTWORTHINESS ACTIONS BY EXPERTS....156
B. 'A PRIORI' CODING AND DESCRIPTION....158
C. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE STATE SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENT PLANS....161
D. CODE BOOK AND DESCRIPTION BASED ON EXPERT FEEDBACK....163
E. REVIEWER'S CODE BOOK....167
F. TEMPLATE FOR DATA ANALYSIS-ALIGNMENT WITH RESEARCH QUESTIONS (RQ)....177
G. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT THEMES AND FEATURES....179
H. LITERATURE THEMES CORRESPONDING TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND CODING FRAMEWORK....180

BIBLIOGRAPHY....183

LIST OF TABLES

Page

Table 2.1 Tools of Policy Implementation 17

Table 2.2 Levels of Engagement Literature Review 27

Table 2.3 Features of Stakeholder Engagement as Summarized from the Literature 33

Table 3.1 Approaches to Thematic Analysis 40

Table 3.2 Steps of Research Study 48

Table 3.3 Quantitative and Qualitative Criteria for Assessing Research Quality and Rigor 57

Table 3.4 Application of Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) Table for 'Establishing Trustworthiness During Each Phase of Thematic Analysis'.....58

Table 3.5 Application of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) Criteria for Establishing Trustworthiness 59

Table 4.1 Themes of Stakeholder Engagement in the Phase I SSIPs 66

Table 4.2 Descriptors of Stakeholders 67

Table 4.3 Nuanced Selection of Stakeholders 71

Table 4.4 Rationales for Stakeholder Involvement 81

Table 4.5 Purposes and Examples Extracted from the SSIPS 84

Table 4.6 Features of Support as Coded in SSIPs 89

Table 4.7 Engagement of Stakeholders as Coded in SSIPs 95

Table 4.8 SEA Actions with Stakeholders' Work to Influence the SSIP….....99

Table 4.9 Interactions: Levels of Communication and Influence 102

Table 4.10 Directional Interactions 103

Table 4.11 Directionality of Communication Exchanges 106

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

Figure 5.1 Unilateral Interaction 134

Figure 5.2 Bilateral Interactions A and B 135

Figure 5.3 Collaborative Interaction 136

Figure 5.4 Findings in Relationship to Literature Review 142

Figure 5.5 Findings in Relationship to Literature Review and OSEP Expectations 143

Figure 5.6 Leadership Structure for SEA Engagement with Stakeholders 145

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Word
AEA	Area Education Agency
AK	Alaska
AL	Alabama
ALSDE	Alabama State Department of Education
APR	Annual Performance Report
AZ	Arizona
BSE	Bureau of Special Education
CA	California
CIS	Computer Information System
CO	Colorado
CPS	Chicago Public Schools
CT	Connecticut
DDOE	Delaware Department of Education
DE	Delaware
DROP OUT	Drop Out
DSC	Division of State Colleges
ECSE	Early Childhood Special Education
EED	Department of Education and Early Development
EHA	Education of the Handicapped Act
EIS	Early Intervention Service
ELL	English Language Learner

ESE	Elementary and Secondary Education
ESS	Exceptional Student Services
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
FL	Florida
FLDOE	Florida Department of Education
GA	Georgia
GRADS 360	Grantee Records and Assistance Database System
HFAA	Hawai'i Families as Allies
HI	Hawai’i
IA	Iowa
ID	Idaho
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IDOE	Indiana Department of Education
IICST	Idaho Interagency Council on Secondary Transition
IL	Illinois
IN	Indiana
ISAC	Illinois State Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities
ISBE	Illinois State Board of Education
ISDE	Idaho State Department of Education
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IHE	Institution of Higher Education
IRP	Internal Review Board

KS	Kansas
KY	Kentucky
KYCASE	Kentucky Council Administrators of Special Education
LA	Louisiana
LbC	Leading by Convening
LD	Learning Disabilities
LDAF	Learning Disabilities Association of Florida
LDOE	Louisiana Department of Education
LEA	Local Education Agency
MA	Massachusetts
MDE	Maryland Department of Education
ME	Maine
MD	Maryland
MI	Michigan
MN	Minnesota
MO	Missouri
MPRRC	Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center
MS	Mississippi
MSRRC	Mid-South Regional Resource Center
NC	North Carolina
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NCRRC	North Central Regional Resource Center
NCSI	National Center for Systemic Improvement

ND	North Dakota
NDCEL	North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders
NECAP	New England Common Assessment Program
NERRC	Northeast Regional Resource Center
NJDOE	New Jersey Department of Education
OEC	Office for Exceptional Children
OH	Ohio
OK	Oklahoma
OR	Oregon
OSDES-SES	Oklahoma State Department of Education - Special Education Services
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
OSPI	Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
PA	Pennsylvania
PDSA	Plan, Do, Study, Act
PD/TA	Professional Development/Technical Assistance
PPT	PowerPoint
PTAC	Parent Technical Assistance Center
PTIC	Parent Training and Information Center
RDA	Results Driven Accountability
RI	Rhode Island
RRCP	Regional Resource Center Program
SICC	State Interagency Coordinating Council
SAC	State Advisory Committee (also SAP, SEAC, SEAP) State Advisory Council (also SAP, SEAC, SEAP)

SAFAR	Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric
SAP	State Advisory Panel (also SAC)
SC	South Carolina
SD	South Dakota
SEA	State Education Agency
SEAC	Special Education Advisory Committee (also SAC, SAP)
SEAP	Special Education Advisory Panel (also SAC, SAP, SEAC)
SEDC	State Educators Director's Conference
SERRC	South East Regional Resource Center
SETF	Special Education Task Force
SIMR	State Identified Measurable Results
SPP	State Performance Plan
SSIP	State Systemic Improvement Plan
SWD	Students with Disabilities
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TCISC	Texas Continuous Improvement Steering Committee
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TN	Tennessee
TX	Texas
USDOE	United States Department of Education
USOE	Utah State Office of Education
UT	Utah
VA	Virginia

VT	Vermont
WA	Washington
WASED	Wyoming Association of Special Education Directors
WI	Wisconsin
WRRC	Western Regional Resource Center
WV	West Virginia
WY	Wyoming

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Federal policy shifts, spurred on by A Nation at Risk's (1983) indictment on public education, have placed a greater responsibility and pressure on state education agencies (SEA) to be more accountable for local education agencies' (LEA) achievements. Prior to this time, state education agencies primarily have served a monitoring and enforcement role, applying sanctions to local education agencies (LEAs) for lack of adherence to policy (Conley, 2003; Elmore, 1979; James, 1991). The actions of teachers, administrators and specifically the SEA were not adequate in actualizing the changes to resolve the problems for which education policies had been written (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; McLaughlin, 1987). Therefore, the direction of federal policy began to shift to that of outcomes, accountability and standards –based reform.

This shift was evidenced by the revisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1994 called Improving America's Schools Act, again in 2001 with the No Child Left Behind Act, (NCLB) of 2001, and continued in 2015's reauthorization yielding Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). In special education, this was evidenced with the reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 and 2004. As a result, greater pressure was placed on SEAs to positively influence policy outcomes at the local level (Fusarelli, 2002; Swanson & Stevenson, 2002), in addition to policy implementation (Conley, 2003; Malen & Muncy, 2000).

Yet, for the past ten years until 2015 when ESEA was reauthorized as ESSA, with limited improvement in results and Congress' inaction to reauthorize the less than effective ESEA and IDEA educational policies, the executive branch of government through the United States Department of Education (USDOE), engaged in policy and regulatory changes to help ameliorate

this situation. Race to the Top grants in 2009, the ESEA flexibility waiver application in 2012, in July 2012, the introduction of a federal special education accountability initiative, and the myriad of policy letters issued that were treated as regulations, were efforts to continue pressuring SEAs to be accountable for student performance. These strategies were designed to improve results where legislation had been previously unsuccessful. The provision of federal grants was predicated on states' use of rigorous curriculum standards, teacher evaluation systems linked to student improvement, and assessments designed to capture student progress in the curriculum. Required improvement plans were described to focus attention on the performance of subgroups of students, (including students with disabilities), evidence-based practices to be utilized to improve results, and the involvement of stakeholders in the planning process. The reauthorization of ESSA in 2015 continued to expect state oversight for student results at the local level, but shifted focus to state developed curriculum standards and assessments with a strong focus on engaging stakeholders (ESSA, 2015).

State Systemic Improvement Plans (SSIP)

In 2012, for the first time in history, SEAs were required by the USDOE, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), to develop a plan designed to improve the outcomes of education for students with disabilities in academic achievement, graduation rates, or post-secondary outcomes. The leadership role and authority given to the SEAs was to develop a State Performance Report (SPP) and report on its progress through an Annual Performance Plan (APR). Of the 17 components of those reports, Indicator 17, also referred to as the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), was a plan for systemic change to improve student outcomes. The OSEP identified several components and expectations on which states would be evaluated during the development and reporting of this plan (U.S. Department of Education,

Office of Special Education, 2014). One expectation was the pervasive engagement of stakeholders in the plan's development.

This three-phase SSIP, was to be developed and implemented over a 6-year period from 2013-2018. States submitted the first phase of the plan to OSEP in April of 2015, Phase II in April 2016 and Phase III by April 2017. Phase I was to focus on the collection and analysis of data and other information and the identification of evidence-based practices. Phase II was an implementation plan to enhance and/or build the State's infrastructure. Phase III was a report on progress, evaluation of the plan's implementation, and revisions based on that information.

In Phase I, the OSEP expected states' plans to be measurable, contain targets that increase from baseline year to year 6 of the plan, and address student achievement, graduation rates, or post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities ages 3-21. The five components the SSIP-Phase I plan were to address 1) data analysis to identify root causes for low student outcomes; 2) the identification of a state identified measurable result based on this analysis, 3) infrastructure analysis to improve the state system for instituting and sustaining the needed change to improve the outcome, 4) coherent improvement strategies to address the outcome, and 5) a theory of action to guide the work. OSEP expected states to involve stakeholders in the plan's development and to describe the stakeholder engagement that occurred within each of these five components of the state's plan (Part B phase I evaluation tool, 2014).

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement in special education has always been an expectation of the IDEA. Having stakeholders as critical partners in planning, development, and implementation of the IDEA requirements has been recognized and promoted by Congress in its legislation and OSEP in its funding allocations and supports to states. Yet, during the past 20 years, state

department of education staff members, state directors of special education, and OSEP funded technical assistance providers to SEAs indicate that SEA staff have not engaged stakeholders in genuine or meaningful ways to garner the value that such authentic engagement can offer to states' work (N. O'Hara, personal communication, April 7, 2015; M.A. Mieczkowski, personal communication, October 2015; J. Cashman, personal communication, fall 2016). The involvement of stakeholders in educational work has been described at times and in some circumstances as shallow (Cashman, Linehan, Purcell, Rosser, Schultz, & Salski, 2014); and, falling short, a real struggle (Man & Hofmann, 2017).

Parent and school staff involvement in the individualized evaluation and planning process for a child's special education services through the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) has been a statutory requirement since IDEA was first authorized in 1975 (Education of the Handicapped Act, 1975). LEA staff member participation was strengthened and other agencies' representation (i.e., private school personnel, vocational agency personnel, etc.) were added in subsequent reauthorizations of Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA) and IDEA. Most recently, IDEA requires a state advisory panel with membership comprised of parents of children with disabilities; individuals with disabilities; teachers; representatives of institutions of higher education that prepare special education and related services personnel; state and local education officials, including officials who carry out activities for students with disabilities that are homeless; administrators of programs for children with disabilities; representatives of other State agencies involved in the financing or delivery of related services to children with disabilities; representatives of private schools and public charter schools; at least one representative of a vocational, community or business organizations concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities; a representative from the State child welfare agency

responsible for foster care; and, representatives from the State juvenile and adult corrections agencies to provide the state with policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the State (TITLE I, B, 612, a, 21 of the IDEA, 2004). The IDEA also authorizes extensive funding to state, regional and national parent and community training and information centers designed to assist families of children with disabilities and provides funds that the US DOE has historically invested in stakeholders through the IDEA Partnership, a group of over 50 national organizations technical assistance providers and organizations and agencies at the state and local level to improve outcomes for students with disabilities through shared work and learning.

With all the federal requirements for stakeholder engagement in the work of SEAs, OSEP and the public have few opportunities to ascertain the extent to which this is occurring. One of the few and most transparent means for OSEP and the public to be made aware of the involvement of stakeholders in the work of the SEA is through publicly posted written reports from SEAs. The one specific document which specifically reports on stakeholder engagement is the combined document referred to as the State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR). One specific chapter of this report, Indicator 17-State Systemic Improvement Plan, has extensive requirements for SEAs to engage and annually report on stakeholder engagement in the planning, development, implementation, and oversight of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP).

Stakeholder engagement in special education at the SEA level often occurs as a result of requirements of Congress or guidance from the USDOE, OSEP. For example, the SEA is required to establish and maintain an advisory panel of prescribed stakeholders, for “the purpose of providing policy guidance [to the State] with respect to special education and related services

for children with disabilities …" by performing required duties of "… advise … on unmet needs … comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed …, advise … in developing evaluations and reporting on data …, developing corrective action plans … developing and implementing policies …" (TITLE I, B, 612, a, 21 of the IDEA, 2004).

An example of guidance on engaging stakeholders which OSEP provided to SEAs dates back to 2005 when OSEP issued memorandum 05-12 outlining expectations for SEAs to include 'broad input' from stakeholders in the development of the SPP and to disseminate the SPP to the public. For the SPP/APR submissions since 2015, SEAs are required to "…identify the mechanism for soliciting broad stakeholder input on the State's targets in the SPP/APR and the development and implementation of new Indicator 17…" and, "As noted in the conference report to HR 1350, it is Congress' expectation that targets will be developed with broad stakeholder input and will be disseminated to the public." (M. Musgrove, personal communication to states, December 23, 2014, p. 2).

IDEA has recognized the importance of SEAs engaging stakeholders to implement the statutory requirements of the IDEA and OSEP implementing strategies in which states are encouraged to engage stakeholders in meaningful ways. The question at this time is determining the form of states' roles and the degree to which states are partnering with stakeholders in order for states to achieve the outcomes intended by those statutes. SEA partnerships with stakeholders are a viable strategy for SEAs to address states' inadequacy to introduce initiatives that address LEA outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of undertaking this study is to provide the education field with greater insight into stakeholder engagement occurring within SEA improvement planning that is

designed to achieve improved outcomes for students with disabilities. Collaborations among people and organizations described in the business, education, and other social systems' literature are believed to be essential to success in solving the issues confronting these systems (Bradshaw, 1999; Honig, 2006; Miller, 2008; Jochim & May, 2010; Yip, Ernst, & Campbell, 2011). Identification of engagement skills, such as partnering, collaboration, and networking are noteworthy skill sets as these skills provide SEAs with additional tools to respond to the pressures placed on its role to achieve student outcomes not otherwise in their immediate, direct sphere of influence. Examination of these skill sets is needed at the state level in special education (Linehan, 2010).

The guidance provided by OSEP expects states to engage stakeholders in its development and implementation of the three phase, 6 year State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities (OSEP, personal communication to Regional Resource Center Programs, November 25, 2014). Additionally, OSEP indicates that states need to determine if the stakeholder group selected by the SEA would change throughout the development and implemenation depending on the task. OSEP prescribed for states to include multiple internal and external stakeholders throughout Phase I (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education, 2014). Minimally, the expectation was:

> …to see representatives from local educational agencies (LEAs) and the State Advisory Panel for the IDEA Part B SSIP, and early intervention service (EIS) programs and providers and the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) for the IDEA Part C SSIP. We would also expect to see representatives of: parents of children with disabilities, parent advocacy groups, and other State and local agencies that pay for, provide, or collaborate on IDEA services and issues. Finally, the State should include

stakeholders with expertise on the issues to be discussed for both the IDEA Part B and C SSIPs. (U.S. Department of Education, 2014)

The purpose of this study is to examine how states throughout the United States are describing stakeholder engagement during the development of Phase I of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). The study is designed to examine how State Education Agencies (SEAs) in the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I report the membership and selection of stakeholders, the nature of the interactions between the stakeholders and the state, and the arrangements constructed by the state to facilitate stakeholder engagement during the development of Phase I.

Significance

Congress and the US DOE have explicitly identified stakeholder engagement as a critical feature of educational legislation to improve student outcomes under ESEA and IDEA. Most recently the ESSA, the most recent reauthorization of ESEA, has articulated explicit expectations for stakeholders to be involved in the implementation to improve the performance of all students, including the specific subgroup of students with disabilities. There is an increasing emphasis on stakeholder engagement in implementation of education policy (Cashman et al., 2014; King, 2016; Council of Chief State School Officers, 2016), and a depth of literature espousing the importance of stakeholder engagement for improved outcomes. The results of this study, therefore, have an increasing degree of importance to inform future citizens and policymakers as to the parameters and role of stakeholder engagement in public policy implementation

More significant to this study is the fact that engaging stakeholders has been an expectation of IDEA since it was conceived in 1975 and has expanded over the years of its implementation. The history of stakeholder involvement in IDEA dates back to its initial passage

in 1975 in which parents and other key educational personnel were to be integrally involved in the development of a child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Under the IDEA, other stakeholders in the special education field are expected to advise the state department in its implementation of the law through the establishment of a State Advisory Panel. Most recently, OSEP has required states to develop improvement plans that are to incorporate a variety of stakeholders in the development, design, evaluation, and implementation of a state plan to achieve results for students with disabilities as anticipated by the IDEA. As OSEP continues and increases emphasis on stakeholder engagement and on the evaluation of states on this aspect of improvement planning, OSEP and states will benefit from information on the depth or level of engagement of stakeholder engagement. This study will also provide states and OSEP with insight to various types of engagement that may be utilized by others in their future work.

Of additional significance is data generated about the value which stakeholders place on engagement in the SSIPs and the contributions made by various groups. Studying the large numbers of individuals and organizations that have participated in the development of the SSIPs will lead to an understanding about the interest people, other than special education state staff, have in this process and the expectations for what it is intended to accomplish. This study will provide a consistent language that can be used to inform how states work with stakeholders and refer to their engagement with stakeholders in future efforts and written documentation and assist in illuminating how stakeholder engagement is occurring among people from organizations and with the SEAs in efforts to achieve outcomes of significance when educating students with disabilities.

Collaborative relationships are recognized as an important component to solving complex issues like those that contribute to improving achievement, graduation rates, and other important

educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Creating partnerships with stakeholders and working collaboratively are some of the important interventions that help to solve complex challenges like those facing educators of students with disabilities (Bradshaw, 1999; Honig, 2006; Jochim & May, 2010; Miller, 2008; Yip, Ernst & Campbell, 2011). In addition to engaging other social service agencies, cities and towns, Bradshaw (1999) suggests that locally developed partnerships between and among schools, departments of education, parent organizations, and other state government agencies associated with child welfare and education are some of the many sources of support needed to address such complex problems.

By gaining increased understanding of how states contribute to improving student outcomes, federal and state agencies will add valuable resources that elicit a positive impact as Congress anticipated in its crafting of the IDEA policy. Illuminating specifics about the people, their roles and nature of their engagement will assist federal and state government agencies in determining when and how to institute stakeholder engagement as a tool to improve educational policy outcomes for students with disabilities.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

State departments of education are being held increasingly accountable for student outcomes than at any prior period in history, as evidenced in the shifts in policy expectations (i.e., ESEA, 2002; ESSA, 2015; IDEA, 2004) since a Nation at Risk in 1983. For SEAs, this is a shift from the traditional top-down, authoritarian roles of an SEA such as compliance monitoring and enforcement actions (Conley, 2003; Elmore, 1979; James, 1991) as was evident in the policy focus of IDEA prior to 2004, to one more focused on improving results for students with disabilities (IDEA, 2004). Such a problem as improving the success of students with disabilities in schools and community, is a complex educational and social dilemma for which different forms of policy tools are needed.

Educational monitoring and enforcement policy tools have not adequately met the expectations of policy intentions at the local level (D. Delisle & M. Yudin, personal communication to Chief State School Officers, May 21, 2014; Perie, Park, & Klau, 2007). The pressure is on state personnel to shift focus from application of sanctions to achieve policy outcomes to identifying different applications and alternative uses of policy tools to create change at the level of student outcomes. One of the tools that has been used by state education agencies when addressing school reform to improve student outcomes is the engagement of stakeholders (Halliday, 2016; Linehan, 2010; Man & Hofmann, 2017), yet there is little evidence in the special education research literature of the examination of the use of this strategy to address the complex challenge of achieving improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

Researchers contend that problems within our communities are “messy” or “thorny” (Jochim & May, 2010, pp. 303-304), “wicked’’ (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p.167; Williams, 2002,

p. 104); and “entwined” (Bradshaw, 1999, p. 39). Conklin (2005) describes a “wicked problem” (p. 1) as fraught with dynamics of “social complexity” (p.1). According to Conklin, social complexity increases as the numbers of individuals involved in the problem increases, thus creating increased diversity among parties which affects the effectiveness of communication in addressing the issue. Certainly, the number of members of an IEP team and the variety of their roles defines such social complexity in special education. Improving results for students with disabilities could be described as a “wicked issue” (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 167; Williams, 2002, p. 104) for which IDEA has been enacted to address.

Williams suggests solving such wicked problems transcend organizations or are “cross-boundary in nature” (Williams, 2002, p.105) requiring inter- rather than intra-organizational capabilities. He highlights from government reports the need for civil servants to be better able to work across organizational boundaries with mindsets more focused on partnerships than competitiveness. Conklin coined the term “collective intelligence” (p.1) to describe such a coming together that is important to addressing a problem in which all have a stake and an influence in solving that problem. Several other researchers similarly recognized the value of bringing groups together to address such thorny issues (Bradshaw, 1999; Conklin, 2005; Honig, 2006; Jochim & May, 2010).

Public administration literature since the late 1980’s announced a change in the model of how states operate, from that of government to governance shifting from the traditional, hierarchical, centralized command to ones that are more networked among private, public and nonprofit groups at local, regional, state and national levels (Blomgren Bingham, Nabatchi, & O’Leary, 2005; Tollefson, Zito, & Gale, 2012). These networked groups, coined as “issue networks” (Bland & Abaidoo-Asiedu, 2016) or described as “horizontal networks” (Blomgren Bingham, Nabatchi, & O’Leary, 2005), engage stakeholders from special interest groups, as

well as expert groups.

In addition to the value of cross organizational work to address problems, Williams (2002) quoting a British government report, recognizes,

… "new skills and capacities are essential, particularly strategic capacities, and skills in listening, negotiation, leadership through influence, partnership working, performance management and evaluation"… (Williams, p.113).

Williams also identified competencies for organizing and governing to include collaboration, partnership and networking.

An assumption of this study is that SEAs need to engage stakeholders in improvement planning to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. The SEA action being investigated is the SEA's approaches to involving stakeholders utilizing engagement techniques that contribute to improvement planning designed to elicit improved student outcomes. Therefore, this study draws on the literature from the fields of public administration, policy implementation, collaboration and engagement, and organizational management on boundary spanning, to ascertain answers to the research questions concerning the functions, outcomes and collaboration of SEA engagement with stakeholders as a policy tool for the implementation of IDEA to improve the educational outcomes of students with disabilities.

SEA Behavior on Policy Implementation

Of interest to this study's literature review is the array of strategies that states have available to them when implementing policy, and how these instruments have changed over time as a result of the limited impact of their success on the intended policy outcomes to be achieved. An examination of state's expectations of their role and tools to employ in policy implementation are reviewed.

Researchers have argued how actors and contextual variables throughout the policy chain from development to practice mediate policy affecting its outcomes. From the politics that illuminate an issue through the development and passage of policy by federal or state policymakers, to the individuals charged with supporting the implementation of the policy, whether they are state officials, quasi-government organizations, LEA administrators, or teachers in the classroom, the outcomes of policy can be substantially modified from its intended purpose. These influences create a gap in actualization of what policymakers intend and what actually happens in practice. The extent to which the outcomes of the policy's intention are actualized has been suggested to be mitigated "not [by] positions in hierarchies but mutual dependence and the cooperation or conflict that it engenders….and on the actions and resources that help to narrow or increase that distance" (Cohen, Moffit, & Goldin, 2007, p. 525). Policy tools are such actions and resources that can be employed to address the gap between policy and practice (Cohen et al., 2007). These instruments can be thought of as "mechanisms that translate substantive policy goals into concrete actions" (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987, p. 133).

Policy Tools

The term 'instrument' such as 'policy instruments' as used in this paper, is defined by Merriam-Webster (2018) as, "a) a means whereby something is achieved, performed, or furthered; or b) one used by another as a means or aid". A tool, such as 'policy tool' as used in this paper, is defined by Merriam-Webster (2018) as "a means to an end". Policy tools and instruments are used throughout the literature to describe the means governments use to achieve policy goals (Linder & Peters, 1989) and are used throughout all stages of the policy to practice process (Policy Design Lab, 2017). Vedung's definition as noted in Bemelmans-Videc, Rist, and Vedung (1998) describe these tools as techniques or strategies for wielding

power to effect change. Rallis, Rossman, Cobb, Reagan, and Kuntz (2008), Hannaway and Woodroffe (2003), and Cohen and Hill (2001) provide descriptions of actions that can be identified as instruments specifically used for policy implementation in schools.

Linder and Peters (1989) review of the history of policy instruments to achieve policy goals suggests a variety of classification schemes for identifying policy tools have been attempted up to that point in time. Around this same time Salamon (1989) offered an analysis of tools which was expanded upon by Bemelmans-Videc et al. (1998), which simplistically, yet elegantly classify policy tools as "carrots, sticks and sermons" (p. 1). Their contribution incorporates the array of tools used throughout a broad historical context of governing and as a comparative study of the uses in governments throughout the world.

As evidenced in the historical literature, the tools of government to enact policy can take on many forms. As Rallis and colleagues (2008) suggest procedures "represent one choice among many of how to achieve the goals of a policy" (p. 3). Hannaway and Woodruffe (2003) concur that there are many possibilities of policy tools available to impact change. They identify two more recent categories of instruments in use in education since the movement from 'government to governance' occurred in the late 1980's, those that address 'government failure' and those that address administrative accountability. Similarly, to prior scholars, they offer suggestions of specific tools. Vouchers, tax credits, and charter schools are ones that incentivize a more market driven strategy to achieve education policy when other government tools have been less successful. Administrative tools such as 'accountability and alternative teacher compensation systems' are forms of incentives to encourage effort.

With this study's focus on education, a more frequently cited categorizations of policy implementation strategies in the educational public policy literature is that offered by McDonnell and Elmore (1987). They introduced four categories of instruments into the

lexicon of policy analysis and research: mandates, inducements, capacity-building, and system-changing. Cohen et al. (2007) produced more specific tools in their examination of the evolution of the implementation of Title I from its inception through the 1970's and its subsequent reauthorization as No Child Left Behind. These instruments or strategies to promote the policy's implementation included such things as the allocation of money, use of incentives, withholding of funds, assistance to improve a practitioner's capabilities, providing occasional oversight of implementation and allowing flexibility in spending. They identify these as keeping with McDonnell and Elmore's (1987) concept of policy instruments, "the mechanisms that translate substantive policy goals…into actions" (p. 134).

The descriptions of Rallis and colleagues (2008) in their chapter on perspectives of dynamic schools and the other *P's of policy-programs, procedures and practices* are noteworthy as well when identifying policy tools to affect change. They identified programs and procedures as helpful in implementing educational policy. They described programs or initiatives as mechanisms to "help realize the policies' intent" (p. 3), such as including learning disabled students in regular classrooms as an inclusion initiative to implement the IDEA policy. Similarly, Cohen and Hill (2001) identified policy instruments used in educational contexts as assessments, frameworks, and guidance documents, which are descriptive of Rallis and co-authors' (2008) procedures and practices.

The recent expectation placed on states by the federal government for engaging stakeholders in the implementation of the IDEA, ESSA and for purposes of this study, the SSIP, situates stakeholder engagement as a tool of government. Bemelmans-Videc et al., (1998) have argued that "the degree citizens influence'' (p. x) policy implementation is one of several criteria for 'good governance". Alok Disa (2012) in an article on the implementation of environmental policy specifically argued for stakeholder engagement as a policy tool. Clearly,

stakeholder engagement can be utilized as a government strategy for wielding power to effect change (Bemelmans-Videc et al., 1998) and be viewed as an instrument to achieve policy goals (Linder & Peters, 1989, Rallis et al., 2008). Table 1 offers a comparison of various tools used in policy implementation as discussed in the literature.

Table 2.1

Tools of Policy Implementation

	Incentives	**Mandates**	**Support**
Bemelmans-Videc, Rist, & Vedung (1998)	Carrots	Sticks	Sermons
Cohen & Hill (2001)			assessments, frameworks, and guidance documents
Cohen, Moffit, & Goldin (2007)	the allocation of money, use of incentives, and allowing flexibility in spending, withholding of funds		assistance to improve a practitioner's capabilities, providing occasional oversight of implementation
McDonnell & Elmore (1987)	inducements	mandates	capacity-building and system-changing
Rallis, Rosman, Cobb, Reagan, & Kuntz (2008)		procedures	programs, practices
Salamon (1993)	grants-in-aid, loan guarantees, tax expenditures, government corporations	direct government, regulations	
Alok Dias (2012)		stakeholder engagement	

Table 2.1

Stakeholder Engagement in Policy Implementation

A variety of descriptors are used to generally refer to the interaction of individuals from various walks of life to collectively address an issue. Whether referred to as stakeholder engagement (Man & Hofmann, 2017), authentic engagement (Cashman et al., 2014),

constituency engagement (Hirota & Jacobwitz, 2007), civic engagement (Block, 2005), community-based collaboration (Hogue, 1993), stakeholder involvement, or simply collaboration, the literature abounds with references to the value and attributes of this action to address the concerns being confronted. The scholarship highlights purposes for engaging stakeholders (why); types of stakeholders engaged in work (who); the functions or roles of stakeholders (what); characteristics of the process of engagement (how) and the behavior of the organizing body (e.g., government agency) in the process of engaging stakeholders. The people, the process and the rationale for stakeholder engagement are explored in various fields of work, including the realm of public policy implementation, although scholarship on stakeholder engagement in special education state policy implementation has only recently become evident.

Rationale for Engagement

Citizen involvement has been identified as one of several elements of 'good governance' through citizens' influence on the process of policy development and implementation (Salamon,1989). Educational policy implementation literature attribute stakeholder engagement as a crucial factor for achieving intended outcomes. Government agencies, such as state departments of education, intentionally include stakeholders in governing as these individuals' participation, consultation and information influence policy development and implementation (Salamon, 1989). The research literature in education has illuminated the capacity of state agencies to influence local education agencies' results (Cohen, 1990; Hamman & Lane, 2004; McDermott, 2006; Spillane, 2005). State education agencies when addressing school reform to improve student outcomes identify the engagement of stakeholders (Halliday, 2016; Linehan, 2010; Man & Hofmann, 2017). The recent expectations for stakeholder involvement in the development of ESSA waivers and improvement plans, and the IDEA State Systemic

Improvement Plans, are examples of government support for the benefits of engaging stakeholders in policy work. But it is not only at the state level that participation from multiple groups is recognized as beneficial. The National Education Association (NEA) in a 2013 policy brief on school restructuring argued that successful school turnarounds occurred where administration valued and engaged stakeholders as part of the change. They cited multiple examples of successes in schools that engaged stakeholders in decision-making and implementation of the effort. Another example from the school turnaround literature by Trujillow and Renee (2013) similarly valued stakeholder engagement in which they recommended the involvement of school staff, parents and others in the community to do the work of improving persistently failing schools.

Literature Review

Borden and Perkins (1999), in a review of the collaboration literature, identified multiple areas of the scholarship that are salient to people from various perspectives engaged together in work: 1) characteristics primary to inter-organizational relations; 2) descriptions of partnership arrangements; 3) strategies for addressing challenges and difficulties; 4) influences to the collaborative process; and 5) recommendation for group work to develop strong problem-solving relationships. While their findings were targeted to informing the work of the Extension Service, the self-assessment tool that resulted from their literature review could be applied to informing groups generally on the effectiveness of collaborative groups. Differently than Borden and Perkins' (1999) audience, Mallery, Ganachari, Fernandez, Smeeding, Robinson, Moon, Lavallee, and Siegal's (2012) synopsis was conducted to inform public policy implementation in the healthcare and related fields. Mallery and colleagues' (2012) extensive literature review and interview of experts in the field revealed characteristics of engagement. These included: 1)

specific groups of stakeholders that are engaged in the work; 2) motivations for involving stakeholders and for being involved; 3) points where stakeholders can contribute; and, 4) strategies for preparing stakeholders to be engaged. Each of these literature reviews highlighted the importance of selecting appropriate stakeholders for the work being addressed. The presence of an issue of interest around which to engage stakeholders and one that was of importance to the stakeholder was critical to successfully recruiting participants to the work.

Representativeness

Further analysis of the literature also illuminates a focus on representativeness and preparedness of stakeholders in policy development and implementation (Hirota & Jacobwitz, 2007; Man & Hofmann, 2017; Nordmeyer, 2005). Hirota and Jacobwitz's (2007) grounded theory analysis of interviews, observations and artifact reviews of collaborative groups in NY's education community resulted in a paradigm matrix representing stages of progress in policy development that influence effectiveness and sustainability. They identified the representativeness of stakeholders as a critical feature contributing to the success of systemic change. Man and Hofmann, (2017), like Hirota and Jacobwitz (2007), recommended "casting a wider net" (p.1) to encourage increased numbers of stakeholders to be engaged in the work at hand. Several authors distinguished between internal and external stakeholders as being noteworthy when identifying those to engage in work (Mallery, et al., 2012; Nordmeyer, 2017). Internal stakeholders may be individuals that are most closely engaged with the management of the work (Cashman et al., 2014; Nordmeyer, 2017;) or may be those who are in the organization and affected by or involved in the decision-making process (Mallery et al., 2012). External stakeholders would include those from other organizations (Mallery et al., 2012). A broadening of constituency groups represented in the work increases the awareness of individuals to the

issue and increases the legitimacy of the work being addressed (Hirota & Jacobwitz, 2007; Nordmeyer, 2017) while contributing to 'buy-in' to the issue (Rowan, Camburn & Barnes, 2004). Nordmeyer (2017) in her consulting work with Fortune 500 companies also suggests that stakeholder involvement reduces the stakeholders' distrust of the process or outcome and increases their commitment to the work.

Engaging a variety of voices also contributes to the usefulness of the work (Block, 2005, Mallery et al., 2012, Man & Hofmann, 2017). Research in the health field identified a broad array of contributors to collaborative work comprised of consumers, professionals, researchers, policymakers and payers, business/industry and non-government organizations (Mallery et al., 2012). Block (2005) emphasizes the importance of working across boundaries which recognizes the value that diversity of experiences brings to addressing a problem.

Many representative groups broaden this voice. Groups' membership can be expanded through a variety of means such as assuring focus on topics of interest (Man & Hofmann, 2017; Mallery et al., 2012), or using existing networks or relationships to invite others (Block, 2005; Man & Hofmann, 2017). Also, requiring representation from specific groups extends the membership as is often mandated by federal policy (Salamon, 1989). The ESSA requires states, for purposes of developing improvement plans, to engage with school district personnel, civil rights organizations, parents, and stakeholders who represent the interests of vulnerable populations, specifically children with disabilities and English language learners. Similarly, the federal government directed Cashman and colleagues (2014) to engage families, practitioners, administrators and policymakers from 50 national organizations to address the implementation of the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA.

Preparedness

Preparedness of stakeholders to engage in work has been identified as a critical feature in stakeholder engagement as it builds skills for engagement, develops trust and promotes success of the work (Hirota & Jacobwitz; 2007; Mallery et al., 2012). Capacity building can occur prior to or during engagement in the work as it contributes to participants feeling of worth and value (Mallery et al., 2012). Man and Hofmann (2017) found in their examination of 50 state education agencies websites and interviews with representatives from 15 of these states that initial communication to help participants understand the jargon and expectations of what is being discussed, and that identifies participants interests with the work promotes effective engagement.

Leadership

Leadership styles that foster engagement surfaces as an explicit topic in the literature (Block, 2005; Cashman et al., 2014; Hogue, 1993; Gajda, 2004). Block (2005), as well as Cashman and colleagues (2014), speak of leadership with a strong focus on how groups are brought together through the questions asked, the environment established and the collective commitment to the work. Block refers to these as the work of 'engagement centered leaders', while Cashman and co-authors (2014) call this 'authentic engagement' through the leadership strategy of 'convening'. Both emphasize the importance of the act of engagement in addressing a challenging issue that requires work across organizations. Other leadership styles within the engagement literature are associated to the type of interaction occurring among the members of the group. For example, Gajda (2004), who builds on Hogue's (1993) levels of engagement, and similar to Hogue, addresses leadership in her rubric, identifies different forms of leadership throughout the levels of engagement employed to address an issue. Examples of leadership styles

include flexible, facilitative, autonomous, shared and hierarchical (Gajda, 2005; Hogue 1993). In addition, Hogue (1993) references effective leaders of community collaborations needing to:

- understand and develop interconnecting systems for clear communication, trust building and the sharing of human and fiscal resources;
- respect the value of each partner, and the degree to which organizations can be flexible;
- recognize that some activities will be dropped in order to collaborate;
- have the ability to seek resources;
- know how to recruit the right people; and
- have the ability to seek resources that include human, financial, and political support.

Peterson (1991) provided cornerstones for the operation of Interagency Collaboration under Part H (PL99-457, 20USC Sec 1476(b)) of the IDEA for coordinating services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. She offered the following guidance for a leadership style for the national implementation of Part H: One that promotes cooperative effort, collaborative involvement and implementation across agencies among the Lead Agency for Part H and the Interagency Coordinating Council as established in the law.

Communication

Another finding in the literature is the presence and importance of frequent and useful communication with stakeholders. Man and Hofmann (2017) identified the need for transparency in state agencies responsible for ESSA to communicate with stakeholders such that their contributions are documented and clarified as to how that input was utilized. Communication that is clear and open with established means for communicating between meetings was also noted (Borden & Perkins, 1999). Mallery and colleagues' (2012) findings identified ways of communicating with stakeholders before, during and after engagement through the use of

technologies such as social networks, social medias, online platforms, etc. Man and Hofmann's (2017) work also identified the need to effectively share information with stakeholders during meetings by eliminating jargon and providing a synthesis of the volumes of information appropriate to the meeting that doesn't limit discussion of ideas to just choices to be made by stakeholders.

Interaction

Several frameworks to structure, examine, and evaluate various aspects of the engagement process are evident in the literature. Throughout this scholarship discussion and research focuses on how interaction of stakeholders is put into practice and assessed (Borden & Perkins, 1999; Cashman et al., 2014; Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, & Tollefson, 2006; Gajda, 2005). Hogue (1993) provides a foundation for further work by other scholars based on the concept of "community collaboration" (p.iii), as "the process by which citizens, agencies, organizations, and businesses make formal, sustained commitments to work together to accomplish a shared vision" (p. iii).

Hogue's (1993) work was developed with the Chandler Center for Community Leadership, a collaboration of the Oregon Commission on Children and Families, Oregon State University Extension Service and Central Oregon Community College. through interviews with communities in Oregon and other states, evaluation of collaborations and research from a variety of institutions and organizations throughout the country. She offers a range of associations by which people can link together to work on an issue. These choices include networking, cooperation or alliance, coordination or partnership, coalition, and collaboration. Each of these types of linkages describe a different relationship among people working together toward a shared vision. The categories capture engagement based on the degree to which participants

within the group share or integrate their work. Bailey and Koney (as cited in Frey et al., 2006) identified somewhat similar categories of cooperation, coordination, collaboration and coadunation (i.e., union of dissimilar groups). Peterson (1991), identified fewer although similar concepts including cooperation, coordination and collaboration for her guidance addressing Part H of the IDEA on engagement among state agencies and stakeholder groups on behalf of infants and toddlers with disabilities. Gajda (2004) and Frey and colleagues (2006) built upon Hogue's (1993) scholarship by developing a rubric and scale, respectively, for examining engagement within and among groups. Frey and his collaborators (2006) added coordination and coalition for development of their in-depth assessment instrument which was used to examine collaboration of one school district's efforts over multiple years of stakeholder engagement. Frey and colleagues (2006) performed various statistical processes over a four-year period of use to establish a .8 reliability for the scale, although on a small sample of cases, and contend construct-based validity based on its consistency with 'scholarly research and theory, and by demonstrating the scale's ability to detect change'. Despite this, they suggest further large-scale studies are needed to strengthen the scale's validity. Gajda's (2004) Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR) was developed using collaboration theory and for use as a component of a program evaluation of a Safe School/Healthy Student Initiative to examine relative strengths of collaboration efforts over time. Borden and Perkins (1999) developed a self-assessment, similarly to Gajda (2004) from the collaboration literature, for use in program evaluation to assess the change in collaboration at the school district level. This checklist was designed to measure multiple agency interactions using networking, cooperation, partnering, and merging to unification parameters as levels of engagement.

Table 2.2 provides an overview for comparison of the various frameworks of engagement identified in the literature. The levels are strikingly similar in their sequence and naming conventions, although the depth of detail in their descriptions vary. While several of these frameworks were developed for use in the education arena (Frey et al., 2006; Gajda, 2004), Peterson (1991) and Cashman and co-authors (2014) were the only ones to engage stakeholders at the state level in special education policy implementation. Peterson's work provided parameters for engagement to the infant and toddler community implementing the IDEA, although this conceptual piece was written over 25 years ago.

As noted previously, and as mentioned in Peterson's (1991) article, federal policy and government oversight expects stakeholder engagement. OSEP has recently funded work specifically focused on engaging stakeholders in special education policy implementation through the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI), a federal technical assistance center to SEAs. The NCIS has involved stakeholders in product development by designing rubrics based on previous work by Cashman and her colleagues (2014). These rubrics were specifically designed to be used by states in the development and implementation of the SSIP to increase stakeholder engagement and active participation on topics related to state level special education improvement planning such as building support through data, creating active engagement, coalescing around evidence-based practices and engaging stakeholders in evaluation. As identified in the literature reviewed above regarding assessments and frameworks for stakeholder engagement, similar levels of engagement are found in the Cashman and colleagues (2014) work (i.e., informing, networking, collaborating, transforming). What is unique about the work of Cashman and her collaborators' blueprint is the development and application of these descriptors of levels of stakeholder engagement specifically within the

Table 2.2

Levels of Engagement Literature Review (Adapted from Cashman et al., (2014), Frey et al., (2006), Gajda (2004), Hogue (1993), and Peterson (1991))

Frey, et al. (2006)	Gajda (2004)	Hogue (1993)	Peterson (1991)	Cashman et al. (2014)	Bailey & Koney (2000)
Coexistence State of agencies before any type of engagement					
Networking	**Networking**	**Networking**		**Informing**	
Aware of organization	Purpose- create a web of communication	Purpose- Dialogue and common understanding		Sharing or disseminating information with others who care about the issue.	
Loosely defined roles	P-Identify and create a base of support	P-Clearinghouse for information			
Little communication	P-explore interests	P- Create base of support			
All decisions are made independently	Strategies & Tasks-loose of no structure	Structure-Nonhierarchical			
	S&T-flexible roles not defined	S-Loose/flexible links			
	S&T-Few if any defined tasks	S-Roles loosely defined			
	Leadership & Decision-making-non-hierarchical	S-Communication is primary link among members			
	L&D-flexible	Process-Low key leadership			
	L&D-minimal or no group decision making	Pro-Minimal decision making			
	Interpersonal & Communication - communication among all members infrequent or absent	Pro-Little conflict			
	I&C- Very little interpersonal conflict	Pro-Informal Communication			
Cooperation	**Cooperating**	**Cooperative/ Alliance**	**Cooperation**	**Networking**	**Cooperation**
Provide information to each other	Purpose-work Together to ensure tasks are done	Purpose-Match needs and provide coordination	Facilitating each other's activities	Asking others what they think about this issue and listening to what they say.	

Somewhat defined roles	P-leverage or raise money	P-Limit duplication of services	Offer general support, give information, or provide endorsement of each other's activities.		
Formal communication	P-identify mutual needs, but maintain separate identities	P-Ensure tasks are done	Offer general support, give information, or provide endorsement of each other's programs or for specific issues that are being addressed.		
All decisions are made independently	Strategies & Tasks-Member links are advisory	Structure-Central body of people as communication hub	Decisions are autonomous.		
	S&T-minimal structure	S-Semi-formal links	Each agency pursues its own goals and plans as determined internally.		
	S&T-some strategies and tasks identified	S-Roles somewhat defined			
	Leadership & Decision-making-nonhierarchical, decisions tend to be low stakes	S-Links are advisory			
	L&D-facilitative leaders, usually voluntary	S-Little or no new financial resources			
	L&D-several people from "go-to" hub	Process-Facilitative leaders			
	Interpersonal & communication among members clear, but it may be informal	Pro-Complex decision making			
	I&C-minimal interpersonal conflict	Pro-Some conflict			
	I&C-some degree of personal commitment and investment	Pro-Formal communication within the central group			
Coordination	**Partnering**	**Coordination**	**Coordination**	**Collaborating**	**Coordination**
Share information and resources	Purpose-share resources to address common issues	Purpose-Share resources to address common issues	Two or more agencies synchronize their activities to promote compatible schedules, events, services, or other kinds of work that contribute to the achievement of each agency's individual mission and goals.	Engaging people in trying to do something of value and working together around the issue	

Defined roles	P-organizations remain autonomous but support something new	P-Merge resource base to create something new	
Frequent communication	P-to reach mutual goals together	Structure-Central body of people consists of decision makers	While the services may be coordinated, agencies still remain relatively autonomous from each other.
Some shared decision making	Strategies & Tasks-strategies and tasks are developed and maintained	S-Links formalized	When agencies work together on some common task, it is typically on a short-term basis (e.g., joint conference)., but other agency business is not affected by these joint activities.
	S&T- central body of people	S Roles defined -	
	S&T- central body of people have specific tasks	S-Group leverages/raises money	
	Leadership & Decision-making autonomous leadership L&T-alliance members share equally in the decision making L&T-decision making mechanisms are in place Interpersonal & Communication-communication system and formal information channels developed I&C- some interpersonal conflict I&C-evidence of problem solving and productivity	Process-Autonomous leadership but focus is on issue Pro-Group decision making in central and subgroups Pro-Communication is frequent and clear	

Coalition Share ideas and resources	**Coalition** Purpose-Share ideas and be willing to pull resources from existing systems
Frequent and prioritized communication	P-Develop commitment for a minimum of three years

All members have a vote in decision making

Structure-All members involved in decision making

S-Links formal with written agreement

S-Roles and time defined

S-Group develops new resources and joint budget

Process-Shared leadership

Pro-Decision making formal with all members

Pro-Communication is common and prioritized

Collaboration	Merging	Collaboration	Collaboration	Transformation	Collaboration
Members belong to one system	Purpose-merge resources to create or support something new	Purpose-Accomplish shared vision and impact benchmarks	A much more intensive and continuous interaction among agencies involving joint commitment and joint activity.	Doing things the partnership way (leading by convening, working cross-stakeholders, sharing leadership, building consensus)	
Frequent communication is characterized by mutual trust	P-extract money from existing systems/members	P-Build interdependent system to address issues and opportunities	Guided by a common plan and set of implementation strategies designed and approved by all agencies involved.		
Consensus is reached on all decisions	P-commitment for a long period of time to achieve short and long-term outcomes	Structure-Consensus used in shared decision making	Some agency autonomy is relinquished in the interest of accomplishing identified interagency objectives.		

		Representatives from all agencies work together in joint planning and decision making.
Strategies & Tasks-formal structures to support strategies and tasks is apparent	S-Links are formal and written in work assignments	All participants have defined roles in some aspects of implementation according to a common plan.
S&T-specific and complex strategies and tasks identified	S-Roles, time and evaluation formalized	May involve changes in each agency's internal policies to fit the goals of the interagency team.
S&T-committees and subcommittees formed	S-Resources and joint budgets are developed	May have to adapt some of its own operating rules and regulations to accommodate the plans and agreements of the group
Leadership & Decision making-strong, visible leadership	Process-Leadership high, trust level high, productivity high	May have to contribute some of its own resources to support collective activities.
L&T-sharing and delegation of roles and responsibilities	Pro-Ideas and decisions equally shared	
L&T- leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths	Pro-Highly developed communication systems	
Interpersonal & communication is clear, frequent, prioritized		
I&C-possibility of interpersonal conflict high		
I&C-high degree of problem solving and productivity		

I&C-high degree of commitment and investment		
Unifying		**Coadunation**
Purpose-unification or acquisition to form a single structure P-relinquishment of autonomy to support surviving system		Complete unification
Strategies & Tasks-highly formal, legally complex S&T-permanent reorganization of strategies and tasks		
Leadership & Decision-making central, typically hierarchical leadership L&T- leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths Interpersonal & communication is clear, frequent, prioritized, formal and informal		
I&C- possibility of interpersonal conflict very high		

realm of special education at the local, state, and national levels regarding infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. Additionally, extensive stakeholder engagement was employed through the IDEA Partnership in the initial development of the framework. Current and continuing application and development of the blueprint are occurring within special education policy implementation at the local, state, and national levels.

Of significance in this literature review, until recently, there has been no research conducted in the area of stakeholder engagement at the SEA level in special education. In 2015 OSEP engaged the NCSI to review states' State Systemic Improvement Plans-Phase I for OSEP's annual summary report on all states' submissions of the State Performance Report. This

researcher served on the coordinating team for the analysis of these reports. Stakeholder engagement in the design of a state's SSIP, among other elements of the report, was examined to some extent in this broad analysis and was found to be occurring primarily at the levels in which information was disseminated to and/or gathered from stakeholders. There were fewer instances identified in which more engaged levels of interaction, such as sharing of ideas and collective decision-making, occurred (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education, 2015). Over the three years of analysis, the reports reflected a slight shift toward more engagement of stakeholders and SEA staff working together on the issues over time. While these analyses were conducted without substantial rigor within or across the years of analysis, techniques were in place to increase the likelihood of interrater reliability in the first two years with the third year of the reports scrutinized for inter-rater reliability which was found to be between .72 and 1.0 across items and raters tested. Additionally, all three years based the analysis of stakeholder engagement using Cashman and co-authors' (2014) levels of interaction: informing, networking, collaborating, transforming.

Regardless of the terminology used, or the field in which the articles are written, each present a description of types of involvement that stakeholders have with each other, with the organizing agency and with the issue at hand.

The literature highlights a variety of features of stakeholder engagement and may be summarized into five categories of interest: representativeness, preparedness, leadership, communication and interactions. Each of these categories are comprised of several sub-features identified in the literature. A summary of the literature is illustrated in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3

Features of Stakeholder Engagement as Summarized from the Literature

Feature	Definition	Sub feature	Literature

Representativeness	The individuals and groups participating in the work	• Internal • External • Casting the net • Organizations • People Titles • Rationale	Hirota & Jacobwitz, 2007, Man & Hofmann, 2017, Nordmeyer, 2005, Block, 2005; Salamon, 1989
Preparedness	Having skills or information in advance of the work that is helpful	• Skills to engage • Knowledge of SSIP content • Info about others • Rationale	Hirota & Jacobwitz, 2007; Mallery et al., 2012
Leadership	Traits and actions of people or agency that leads the work	• Flexibility • Shared • Questions asked • Environment established • Respect for participant • Recruit participants	Block, 2005; Cashman et al., 2014; Hogue, 1993; Gajda, 2004
Communication	Manner and types of information provided and received among participants	• Frequency • Type • Timing • Transparency	Man and Hofmann, 2017; Borden & Perkins, 1999; Mallery et al., (2012)
Interactions	Associations made between and among participants during the work	• Coexistence • Communication • Cooperation • Coordination • Coalition • Collaboration • Coadunation	Borden & Perkins, 1999; Cashman et al., 2014; Frey, Lohmeier, Lee & Tollefson, 2006; Gajda, 2005; Peterson, 1991

Significance of this Study

With so many different features from which one could examine stakeholder engagement, this study is conceptually framed within the convergence of SEA's role as intermediaries of policy to practice, with stakeholder engagement serving as an SEA policy tool, within an improvement planning process designed to improve student outcomes. SEAs serve as the

convening authority of stakeholders whose role and policy tools are expected to support the improvement of student outcomes. Pairing individuals at the SEA with stakeholders that hold divergent expertise around the issue, have similar general expectations as the SEA for improved outcomes, and serve at levels of practice that influence improvement is just the beginning of effective improvement planning. Scholarship indicates that the representativeness, preparedness and selection of stakeholders is important (Mallery et al., 2012; Hirota & Jacobwtiz, 2007; Man & Hofmann, 2017), as are the structures to facilitate participants' involvement (Mallery et al., 2012; Block, 2005) and the nature of the leadership provided and engagement developed throughout the improvement planning process (Borden & Perkins, 1999; Frey et al., 2006; Gajda, 2004; Cashman et al., 2014; Peterson, 1991; Hogue, 1993).

The literature indicates the usefulness of stakeholders, yet SEA engagement of stakeholders in special education planning has not been sufficient (Cashman et al., 2014; Man & Hofmann, 2017). Therefore, identifying who these players are in the SSIP process and the manner in which SEAs are involving them in planning, decision-making, and evaluation is of interest. The most effective way of doing this is using a qualitative approach.

In sum the above conditions and a dearth of research provide a rationale for this inquiry into SEAs' engagement of stakeholders in improvement planning. With pressure placed on SEAs to improve student outcomes and engage stakeholders to assist in this effort, research in to the phenomenon of stakeholder engagement is relevant and needed. SEAs have limited funds and need to apply policy tools wisely. The results of this study may contribute to better understanding of stakeholder engagement in policy implementation and promote further understanding of ways to study and apply the findings in future state efforts.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine of how State Education Agencies (SEAs) engage stakeholders in special education improvement planning. Specifically, the State Systemic Improvement Plans (SSIP) Phase I of the 50 states, required for submission by the U.S Department of Education (USDOE), Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), were reviewed to study the membership, selection, and preparedness of stakeholders for the work, the nature of the interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA, and the arrangements constructed by the SEA to facilitate stakeholder engagement. The proposed methodology for the study is discussed in this chapter. Beginning with a restatement of the research questions, the chapter then proceeds to layout the description of the research design with rationale based on content or thematic analysis as a method from a pragmatic philosophical viewpoint of the researcher. Next is the role of the researcher, followed by a detailed methodology section. The methodology section of this chapter includes the sampling procedures, that incorporates the target population and process for managing the sample. Also discussed in this section are the data collection procedures as a component of the data analysis plan. Subsequent is a discussion of trustworthiness of the methodology and the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Research Questions

The study is designed to examine of how State Education Agencies (SEAs) in the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I report the membership, selection and preparedness of stakeholders for the work, the nature of the interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA, and the arrangements constructed by the SEA to facilitate stakeholder engagement.

RQ1: How do State Education Agencies (SEAs) in the five sections of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I represent/describe stakeholder engagement?

RQ1a. Who are the stakeholders that are involved and how are they selected and prepared for the work?

RQ1b: How are interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA represented/described?

RQ1c: What is the nature and range of interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA with regard to SEA leadership, decision-making processes and authority of the stakeholders, and communication between the SEA and stakeholders about the work?

RQ2: How do State Education Agencies (SEAs) actions as represented in the five sections of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I relate to the range of interaction between the stakeholders and the SEA?

RQ2a: How do SEAs' range of interactions with stakeholders vary across components of the SSIP?

RQ2b: How does the range of stakeholder interactions with the SEA vary among SEAs?

Research Design

The purpose of the study was to investigate how State Education Agencies (SEAs) engage stakeholders in special education improvement planning. As the topic of stakeholder engagement already has an established theory base, the use of a qualitative descriptive study employing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with 'a priori' theoretical stances (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was appropriate (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The study used a pragmatic paradigm (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) given its intent to search for practical responses to questions that are of interest and value to the field. The researcher in this study collected relevant information from archival government documents using literature-based, expert generated, and emergent coding themes to generate the findings.

Rationale

Several conditions exist that support a study that investigates stakeholder engagement; 1) federal USDOE requirements for stakeholder involvement through reporting, 2) increasing expectations to incorporate stakeholders shifting from the framework of 'government to governance', 3) limited research in stakeholder involvement, and 4) increases in funds supporting stakeholder engagement. Each of these conditions contribute to a the reconceptualizing of stakeholder roles in the creation and evaluation of state policies that support special education programs and services.

Of the current literature examined on stakeholder engagement, special education stakeholder engagement in policy implementation is not investigated. IDEA requires and USDOE expect SEAs to utilize stakeholders in the SSIP development in meaningful ways. These pressures on SEAs and the resources expended to involve stakeholders are an impetus to better understand how engagement is occurring in the process of SSIP development and implementation.

Thematic analysis as a qualitative method assumes that groupings or themes of information may emerge from the data or, specifically in the case of this study's research design, be used to frame the understanding of the data (California State University, 2017). Additionally, the intent of this type of design is to identify or illuminate patterns or themes about the topic for a better understanding of its nature.

Thematic Analysis

This qualitative descriptive study (Sandelowski, 2000) used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) within the broader approach of content analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative methodology (Boyatzis, 1998) that searches for themes across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and as used in this study is similar to qualitative content analysis in which the data collection and data analysis will inform each other (Sandelowski, 2000). Thematic analysis and content analysis

are appropriate approaches for use on topics where there are ‘a priori’ theoretical stances to be used throughout the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As the work of stakeholder engagement has a theory base already established in the literature, a thematic or directed content analytic approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was an appropriate methodology for this study. Thematic analysis, like qualitative content analysis, also lends itself to the interpretation of print material (Kondracki, Wellman, & Amundson, 2002), which was the unit of analysis for this inquiry, and therefore thematic analysis was selected for this inquiry.

Archival historical data in the form of state government reports, were examined and analyzed for this study. Written public government records which are meant for public consumption can serve as valuable stand-alone sources for studying a phenomenon of interest (Teddlie & Tashakorri, 2009) and are an appropriate source for qualitative descriptive studies, such as this one (Sandelowski, 2000).

Given that the field has a more general understanding of what thematic analysis is about, the research design for this study was developed from various sources (Bowen, 2009; Braun & Clarke, 2005; Brooks, McCluskey, Turley, & King, 2015; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; King, 2017; Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). See Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Approaches to Thematic Analysis

Author: **Approach of this Study**	**Boyatzis (1998)**	**Braun and Clark (2006)**	**Crabtree and Miller (1992)**	**King (2017)** **Brooks et al (2015)**	**Ritchie and Spencer (1994)**	**Bowen (2009)**
Method/Process name: **Approach of this Study**	**Thematic Analysis**	**Thematic Analysis**	**Template Analysis**	**Template Analysis**	**Thematic Analysis**	**Document Analysis**
Stage I: Preparation						
Code Creation: During this stage, codes will begin to be developed from a priori themes from the literature and other viable codes identified in a subset of the documents being reviewed in the study. Case information will be additionally collected. 1. **A priori codes:** identify codes in the literature on group engagement. 2. **Familiarization:** Review/code subset to identify other viable codes or subcodes that were not identified *a priori*. 3. **Case Information:** Collect descriptive information to inform analysis	1. Seeing- information gathering- 2. Doing it reliably	1. familiarize self by reading all of the data and taking notes on themes and ideas 2. generating initial codes	A priori codes based on theoretical understandings and reading of the text	1. Template or code defined a prior or based on preliminary scanning of the material Consider selecting a subset for review 2. Preliminary coding 3.Organize into Themes	1. familiarization- become familiar with the data in order to identify thematic framework 2. identifying thematic framework	1. Skimming: Content analysis- first pass review for pertinent data
4. **Code Book Development:** Following these initial steps with the subset, develop a code book. 5. **Expert Input**: Receive feedback from experts 6. **Revisions:** Revise codebook	3. Developing codes		Enter text into computer, print out to prepare for coding. Create Code book /template.	4. Define initial coding template		
Stage II- Collection						
7. **Coding:** Code full data set, with alterations to code book occurring along the way, if deemed appropriate.			Code text on paper or via computer.	5. Apply template to data 6. Finalize and apply to full data set	3. Indexing	2. Reading- thematic analysis
Stage III-Analysis						
8. **Theme Identification:** Examine codes for themes	4. Interpreting the information and themes in the context of a theory or conceptual framework.	3. Searching for Themes- do all of the texts hold to the theme, do some need to be removed,	Sort or read through codes to identify themes.	2. Assembling text	4. charting	3. Interpreting
9. **Code and Theme Coherence**: Examine codes for coherence of the pattern within the theme and examine the themes for coherence across the data set. 10. **Theme Analysis**: explain what is interesting about the data within the theme and why		4. Reviewing Themes- coherent, consistent and distinctive 5. Defining and naming themes			5. mapping and interpretation	

Role of the Researcher

The researcher, a graduate student pursing a doctorate in educational policy, research and leadership, spent 12 years completing coursework as requirements for her degree. The researcher has held a special education prek-12 teaching license and administrator's license in general education with an endorsement in special education administration. Over her career she has taught students who have displayed a variety of disabilities in Virginia and Connecticut schools, and served in special and general education administrative positions in Connecticut. For ten years, the researcher served as special education staff in the Connecticut State Department of Education, and five years as the Bureau Chief of Special Education which held the authority, in addition to other state level responsibilities in special education, as state director of special education for oversight of the implementation of the IDEA- Part B requirements.

Prior to this study, in addition to the above relevant experiences, the researcher was employed by the Mid-South Regional Resource Center at the University of Kentucky, one of the technical assistance centers funded by the OSEP to assist states in the implementation of the IDEA, including the development of Phase I SSIP, and referred to in this report as the Regional Resource Center Programs (RRCP). During this employment, the researcher co-facilitated and presented at SEA and stakeholder meetings for one state's development of its Phase I SSIP. Additionally, the researcher was the lead author for that state's Phase I SSIP. Also, the researcher provided training to the states in the Mid-South Regional Resource Center geographic on the development of the Phase I SSIP.

Prior to and during the course of this study, the researcher has worked for and continues to be employed by WestEd, the fiduciary for the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI), an OSEP funded technical assistance center. The NCSI's purpose is to assist states in the development and implementation of their State Systemic Improvement Plans (SSIP), Phases II

and III. The researcher serves on the team within the NCIS that is involved with stakeholder engagement in the development for states' SSIP Phase II and III. Additionally, this researcher has served as the lead researcher for NCSI's annual analysis of the SSIP, including Phase I, II and III SSIPs, an activity conducted as part of NCSI's grant award from OSEP.

The researcher's numerous affiliations with the OSEP technical assistance centers, specifically funded to address the SSIP, can be seen as a detriment to the study, as they can introduce personal believes and influences that could compromise the integrity of the findings. Therefore, the researcher, in addition to disclosure about her affiliations, has incorporated several other features into this study to reduce the possibility of bias that would reduce the trustworthiness of the study.

Given the funding source under which the researcher conducted some of her work, the researcher and her employer assured she had total control and authority of the materials, processes and outcomes of the research and at no time did OSEP nor staff of NCSI or WestEd have any voice or authority over the methodology, data analysis or preparation and submission of this document. This research study was also disclosed to WestEd to assure there was no conflict of interest.

The researcher was entirely responsible for the collection and analysis of data. Prior to coding, the researcher conducted a pilot using input from experts in the selection of the pilot states, and the use of a priori codes based on personal communications with experts in SSIP stakeholder engagement, and a literature review of stakeholder engagement. Prior to the coding of the SSIPs, an expanded pool of experts provided input into the code book. During the data analysis phase of the study expert review was engaged to examine the additional codes that arose during the coding and themes that were identified as a result. NVivo software was used during the coding phase of the study and assisted in the analysis process as well.

Lastly, this study did not need approval of the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Institutional Review Board (IRB) nor the WestEd's Institutional Review Board as the research was conducted using publicly available documents which did not meet the requirements for IRB approval of human subject research. While these affiliations could be viewed as detrimental, they also offer credibility to the study, given the researcher's knowledge and skills with the SSIP and the engagement of stakeholders in the SSIP development. Additionally, this gave her considerable access to the top experts in the field of SSIP development and stakeholder engagement in this work throughout her research.

Methodology

The study used a pragmatic paradigm (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) because the intent was to search for practical responses to questions that are of interest and value to the field. This study is approached from the perspective of pragmatism outlined by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) based on Johnson and Onwuegbuxie's (2004) characteristics of pragmatism. Characteristics as they specifically relate to this study include:

a) Preference for action rather than philosophizing. The study was not designed to prove or disprove a hypothesis, but to describe how organizations report their actions during an era of results-driven accountability in which stakeholders are valued and expected to participate with government agencies to address a messy social issue.

b) An approach that is value-oriented stemming from cultural values. The research and theoretical literature, as well as public policy, identifies and describes the importance of a culture that values stakeholder engagement and identifies types of engagement to assist in the work.

c) Knowledge as being constructed while also being shaped by the realities of the context in which one lives and acts. Context matters. It shapes how organizations and the people

within them behave. OSEP has repeatedly described expectations of states to involve stakeholders as they bring the specific context of their experiences to the issues at hand. Of interest in this study was how states responded to building knowledge about as shaped by the experiences of stakeholders who are engaged in the implementation and affected by the outcomes of improvement planning.

d) Truths, both ultimate which are yet to be known, and current which are "instrumental and provisional" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 18). There are *a priori* categorizations or descriptions of stakeholder engagement which were used as current truths, yet the iterative nature of the coding process and subsequent analysis also generated other truths to describe how states engaged stakeholders.

The study was intended to describe what is, to examine how states describe stakeholder engagement. Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to this as an essentialist or realist approach in which the study was intended to report "experiences, meanings and reality of participants" (p. 9). Sandelowski (2000) identifies this straightforward approach as "qualitative description". In this method, the researcher stays very close to the data, the written material being examined, less similarly than other qualitative approaches such as grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology or narrative studies (Sandelowski, 2000). Sandelowski argues for this qualitative method as a valuable and respectable method for describing a phenomenon, without a researcher feeling the need to search for 'epistemological credibility' (Thorne, Kirkham, & MacDonald-Emes, as cited in Sandelowski, 2000).

The coding system for this study stemmed from research and theoretical literature that already had identified or proposed categories of depths or degrees of stakeholder engagement when individuals are working together on solving problems (Cashman et al., 2014; Frey et al.,

2006; Gajda, 2004; Hogue, 1993; Peterson, 1991). While categories initially guided the coding of the data, a more iterative process such as that used in template analysis (Brooks et al., 2015; King, 2017) and feedback from experts in the field of SEA special education stakeholder engagement guided the formalization of a code book. Thus, Sandelowski's (2000) characterization of the qualitative descriptive method as "…[an] eclectic but reasonable and well-considered combination of sampling, and data collection, analysis and re-presentational techniques" (p. 337) best describes the design of this study. There are accusations that a study's findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source or a single investigator's bias (Patton, 1990). Yet document analysis has been used as a stand-alone method (Bowen, 2009) in certain circumstances such as in historical and cross-cultural research that was noted by Merriam's case studies (as cited in Bowen, 2009). Bowen (2009) suggests that document analysis serves as an efficient, cost-effective and available method for researchers.

To drastically reduce possible issues that would arise due to the sampling technique selected, a highly saturated purposive sampling strategy was used (Patton, 1990). Patton's (1990) purposeful sampling techniques are appropriate for a qualitative descriptive method, although Sandelowski (2000) highlights maximum variation sampling as a suitable technique given the broader range of cases which can be included. Patton's (2002) collection or criterion sampling, in which all cases that meet the criteria are used, must meet these pre-established conditions.

Documents

The study focused on the 50 states and commonwealths of the United States, under the authority of the IDEA, that submitted a Part B-Phase I SSIP to OSEP in April 2015. Excluded from the study were the 8 territories of the United States (American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Marshall Islands, Palau, Puerto Rico, Virgin

Islands), the District of Columbia and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) because of differences in governance structures, representation in Congress, or some differences in IDEA requirements.

The documents reviewed in this study, the SSIPs, were expected to include five sections: data analysis, infrastructure analysis, a state identified measurable result (SIMR), improvement strategies, and a theory of action (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education, 2014). The USDOE and OSEP identified SEAs with the leadership role and authority to develop the SSIP. The SEAs were expected to involve broad stakeholder input, engage stakeholders in the development of the SSIP, and describe how that involvement and dissemination of the outcomes of that involvement occurred (OSEP Memorandum 05-12, 2005; M. Musgrove, personal communication to states, December 23, 2014, p. 2).

Data Collection

The 2014-15 Part B-Phase I SSIP (FFY 2013) written narrative reports and attachments (subsequently referred to as the Phase I SSIP) for each state were the data sources for this study. Federal regulations of the IDEA require SEAs to make their IDEA Part B State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) a public record, of which the Part B-Phase I SSIP is a component. OSEP makes each state's SSIP, also referred to as Indicator 17 for Part B of the IDEA (i.e., regulations for children ages 3-21), available to the public by posting the reports and accompanying documents (e.g., appendices) on the government provided US DOE GRADS 360. This is the electronic platform to which SEAs are required to annually and electronically submit the IDEA Part B State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR).

The 2014-15 Part B-Phase I SSIP (FFY 2013) written narrative reports and attachments were retrieved from the US DOE GRADS 360 electronic platform. The Phase I SSIP for each

state was used for this study and had been submitted to OSEP by each state on this site on April 1, 2015 and subsequently posted by OSEP to this electronic site. The SSIPs were downloaded and printed as hard copy documents by the researcher for review and stored in a filing cabinet in the researcher's home office. Additionally, the documents were downloaded from the public website, uploaded to NVivo (2017) and labeled in NVivo (2017) for coding by the researcher.

As these documents were public records, they did not require secure management during the study. This study did not require Internal Review Board (IRB) review as the research involved "the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects." (Protection of Human Subjects, 45 CFR §46.101 (b)(4), (2009).

Data Analysis Plan

Due to the ease of use of QSR International's NVivo 11 Software (2017) in its ability to import documents directly from a word processing package (Welsh, 2002), and the NVivo training and support available to this researcher, the selection of NVivo to assist in the coding process was appropriate.

The approach to data collection and analysis developed for this study was based on a review of the literature and thematic analysis of the data (refer to Table 3.1 and Table 3.2). There were three stages to this study's data collection and analysis: 1) code preparation, 2) data collection, and 3) data analysis. During the code preparation stage a code book was used along with the collection of case information in the form of state and SSIP characteristics (i.e., national technical assistance regions, child count of students with disabilities, and page length of the

SSIPs). The SSIP data were simultaneously coded as they were collected. The data analysis stage included the manner in which this researcher identified themes, by

a) coding the cases into thematic node/subnode categories,
b) referencing each node/subnode to a research question,
c) examining each node/subnode to identify patterns or frequency of occurrences,
d) running NVIVO (2017) queries, mind maps, etc., to expose emerging patterns or themes,
e) creating charts and Microsoft Excel spreadsheets (2010) to identify patterns, themes and subthemes,
f) matching themes to research questions,
g) cross-checking occurrence of coded material across and within nodes/subnodes,
d) terminating the analysis once themes and subthemes were exhausted, and
e) comparing and contrasting themes that emerged from the data to those identified in the literature.

Table 3.2

Steps of the Research Study

Stage I: Code Preparation
1. **A priori codes:** identify codes in the literature.
2. **Familiarization:** Review/code subset of data to identify other viable codes or subcodes that were not identified *a priori*.
3. **Case Information:** Collect descriptive information to inform analysis
4. **Code Book Development:** Following these initial steps with the subset, develop a code book.
5. **Expert Input:** Receive feedback from experts

6. **Revisions:** Revise codebook

Stage II: Data Collection

7. **Coding:** Code full data set, with alterations to code book occurring along the way, if deemed appropriate

Stage III: Data Analysis

8. **Theme Identification:** Examine codes for themes

9. **Code and Theme Coherence**: Examine codes for coherence of the pattern within the theme and examine the themes for coherence across the data set.

10. **Theme Analysis**: Explain what is interesting about the data within the theme and why

---

Stage 1: Code Preparation

During this stage, codes were developed from personal communications with experts in the field (see Appendix A), this researcher's prior experience with stakeholder engagement and the SSIPs, and a priori themes identified in the literature. Additionally, other viable codes emerged from a review of a subset of the SSIPs in the study with expert review conducted to solidify the final coding prior to data collection. Case information on each state was also collected during this stage.

A priori codes

Theme codes were identified *a priori* as gleaned from personal communications with experts (see Appendix A), this researcher's prior experience with stakeholder engagement and the SSIPs, and a priori themes identified in the literature on stakeholder and group engagement (see Chapter 2). These themes were loaded into NVivo as nodes and child nodes as the beginning set of codes and sub-codes to be used at this stage of the process. Brooks and colleagues (2015)

suggest a priori themes as helpful, although tentative based on the analysis being conducted; and therefore, additional steps were taken by the researcher, as described in succeeding steps, below.

Familiarization

Ritchie and Spencer (1994) suggest that the researcher become initially familiar with the data prior to identifying the thematic frame or codes to be used. This researcher was familiar with all of the content of all the SSIPs prior to the literature review which identified the a priori thematic codes and those arrived at during this stage of the research study. The researcher had reviewed all of the SSIPs in 2014 when they were initially submitted to OSEP as part of a prior analysis conducted on behalf of the OSEP. Ritchie and Spencer also suggest that if there is too much material available, an abbreviated selection for review is acceptable. More recently and intentionally at this stage of the data analysis process reported here, the researcher read an abbreviated selection of the SSIPs.

The idea of applying a priori codes to a subset of data is included in some manner by all of the authors reviewed (Bowen, 2009; Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clark, 2006; Brooks et al., 2015; Crabtree & Miller, 1992; King 2017; Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). As this study had many samples (i.e., 50 reports), a subset of the SSIPs was 'piloted' using the a priori literature codes.

Brooks and colleagues (2015) suggest that the selection of cases for a pilot should be of the greatest variety possible to aid in identifying a "good cross-section of the issues and experiences covered in the data as a whole" (p. 204). As Ritchie and Spencer (1994) suggested in the situation of when a researcher has lots of material for review, the pilot should include a selection from a variety of the cases, considering data source types and time periods from which data is collected. As all the cases (i.e., 50 state SSIPs) are the same data type and were completed within the same time span, the selection of 5 states SSIPs was based on characteristics of the

cases (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). These characteristics included demographics (location, population size, geographic size), and history of stakeholder engagement or training in engaging stakeholders. In addition to this researcher's familiarity with the states during the development of these SSIPS, the expertise of a technical assistance advisor to states during the period of development of these SSIPs, assisted the researcher in applying these criteria in selecting the five SSIPs for the pilot.

During this familiarization stage of the data analysis process, five of the SSIPs were initially read in hardcopy and references to stakeholder engagement were highlighted by the researcher. This allowed the researcher to become more familiar with the format of the reports and the extent of references to stakeholder engagement. Subsequently, these five SSIPs were coded by the researcher through NVivo using the a priori codes identified in step 1 above. During this initial examination, notes were taken in a reflexive journal to identify potential themes or ideas (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994) and how these cases responded to the research questions (Braun & Clark, 2006; Ritchie & Spencer, 1994;). In Bowen's model (2009) this is called a 'first-pass' examination of the data rather than the more familiar quantitative aspect of content analysis. Bowen (2009) incorporates content analysis at this point as it 'begins to organize[s] information into categories related to the central questions of the research" (p. 32). Bowen's model (2009), while not identical, is best aligned with this stage of the study. While his model is a "skimming' of all the material, the familiarization stage of this study focused just on a subset of the material.

The pilot preceded any finalization of a code book and was intended to identify other viable codes or sub-codes that were not identified a priori. This pilot identified some additions

and revisions while confirming the appropriateness of other existing codes to create a code book (See Appendix B).

Case information

Simultaneously with the pilot, case information was collected not only about these five states whose SSIPs were reviewed, but for the entire sample to include demographic and descriptive information about the context of the state in which the stakeholder engagement occurred and the characteristics of the SSIP. This case information included the state child count of students with disabilities for FY 2013 which is the year of the data used in the analysis of the reports reviewed, the six OSEP parent and resource center technical assistance regions of the country in which the state was located, the page length of the SSIP document, and the topical area of each states' SIMR (see Appendix C).

There are six resource center regions (North East, Mid-South, South East, North Central, Mountain Plains, Western) which align with the parent technical assistance center regions, respectively (Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). The page length of the SSIPs, not including attachments or appendices, are based on groupings identical to those in the OSEP 2013 annual report (over 90 pp., 61-90 pp., 31-60 pp., up to 30 pp.) Each state's SSIP identified a SIMR in one of 5 categories (Reading, Math, Reading and Math, Graduation/Post School Outcomes and Early Childhood Outcomes) and each SSIP fell into one of three categories of the total number of students with disabilities, ages 3-21, for FY 2013 (small-up to 70,000 students with disabilities; medium-70,000 through 170,000 students with disabilities; large- over 170,000 students with disabilities).

There are 28 states with reading SIMRs, 6 states with math SIMRs, 2 states with both a reading and math SIMR, 2 states with an early childhood outcome SIMR and 12 states with a

graduation or post school outcome SIMR. The states' SSIP reports varied in length from under 30 pages to over 90 pages and were categorized into three groupings for this study. There were 17 states with reports under 30 pages, 22 states between 30-90 pages and 11states over 90 pages in length.

There are between 7-10 states within each of the technical assistance regions. While each state's child count varies from year to year, all regions have states of each size of the three categories identified in this report, except for MPRRC/PTAC 5 that has no large child count states in the year of the data for this report, although the MPRRC/PTAC 5 has the most states in their region, with 10. See Appendix C.

Code book development

Following these initial steps with the five SSIPS, an initial code book (see Appendix B) was developed from the a priori themes, and concepts or themes drawn from the initial review (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994) and familiarization stage with the data. This type of preparation for coding was more in line with Crabtree and Miller (1992) who combine both a priori and reading of the text to identify code. The code book contained codes and sub-codes. Coding of the SSIPs occurred on words, phrases and paragraphs. The sources of the data as coded in the NVivo database, can be understood as follows (see Appendix E). Example- **C:D:O:SI_ME_3 -** All letters connected by the (:) refer to a node or sub-node in the NVivo database. Coding had as many as four levels that refer to nodes or subnodes within the NVivo database. The most levels of coding within the same node was four, the node is noted first and is followed by up to three levels of subnodes. The first colon (:) separates the node (category) from a sub-node (sub-category of that node). Any subsequent colon (:) separates a sub-node from a sub-sub-node, etc. The first underscore (_) separates the nodes/subnodes reference from the state reference. The

second underscore (_) separates the reference to the state from the reference to the order of coding of the word, phrase or paragraph within the SSIP being coded. For example, **C:D:O:SI_ME_3** can be understood as, the node-**Communication (C):** subnode-**Directionality (D):** subsubnode-**OneWay (O):** subsubsubnode-**SIMR(SI)_**state-**Maine (ME)_**third consecutive word, phrase or paragraph- **3 (3)**.

Expert input

Several experts in SSIP stakeholder engagement (see Appendix A) were asked to comment on the extensiveness, descriptiveness and definitions for each of the codes. Their feedback informed the next step in this code preparation stage.

Revisions

Revisions were made to develop a code book (see Appendix D) based on feedback from these experts. This codebook included rewording of definitions of the codes and sub-codes, regrouping of codes and sub-codes, as well as the addition of sub-codes.

Stage II: Data Collection

During this stage, codes were applied to the text of the SSIP documents which served as the sources and the unit of analysis.

Coding

All fifty SSIPs were reviewed using the codebook that resulted from the feedback of the expert group, with alterations occurring along the way as informed from the notes in the researcher's reflexive journal. During this step, similar text was assembled using the codes and sub-codes, and the data were returned to for further examination and analysis by the researcher (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). NVivo features and manual examination of NVivo code groupings by the researcher were used to inform this stage. An examination of the broader text surrounding

some of the coded text was examined by the researcher for context with some text being deleted from the codes that upon review did not appear as appropriate as when initially coded. An expert review was conducted to review the new coding (Appendix E) that occurred during this step (see Appendix A).

Ritchie and Spencer (1994) refer to this process as the 'indexing' stage. During this phase of coding, each of the 50 SSIPS were reviewed to locate those portions of the document that were meaningful and relevant to the research questions. Bowen (2009) indicates a thorough re-read of the documents with "coding and category construction" (p. 32) occurring at this stage. Each of the SSIPs were initially coded by the researcher and then recoded using the final code groupings. Brooks and colleagues (2015) recognize that a 'final' version of a template or coding scheme may never occur. Yet, a sufficiently final version allows all relevant data to the research question to be coded. The researcher for this study had reviewed all 50 of the SSIP documents on three occasions, the first being in 2014 as previously described and the last two reviews being specifically for this research study.

Stage III: Data Analysis

Once coding was completed, a variety of analyses occurred in steps 8 through 10. An analysis of the data resulted in a finding, theme or subtheme that describes the breadth, range, parameters, or array of items identified within and throughout the SSIPs and states. Keyness of the items coded in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006), prevalence or frequency of states referencing a topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998); and, themes that were similar to those of the experts (Boyatzis, 1998) all were considered within the analyses.

Theme identification

Descriptive themes were identified through contextual analysis. At this stage a data analysis template of the research questions and data codes that responded to the questions (See Appendix F) was developed by the researcher. Queries and other NVivo (2017) features such as diagrams, project maps and mind maps were developed also by the researcher to help illuminate, visualize, describe and create these themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data analysis template was used by the researcher to inform the creation of tables to visually inspect the data at the nodes and sub-nodes. The results of applying these strategies assisted in uncovering patterns and relationships which resulted in identifying more latent or revealed themes.

Code and theme coherence

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that once themes are identified, an examination of the themes occurs to examine codes within a theme creating a coherent pattern and that themes are reexamined in light of the entire data set for coherence of themes across the data set. At this stage of analysis, the researcher through an iterative process examined themes and the associated data within the coding scheme for that theme to determine if a pattern was evident. Additionally, each set of data by code was examined by the researcher for patterns related to the themes. Themes were refined as a result of this review by the researcher. A peer/expert reviewer (see Appendix A) examined the themes and support from the data for logical interconnection and understandability.

Theme analysis

Finally, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) the researcher wrote an analysis about the essence of each theme addressing what was interesting and why.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017), stated that qualitative work should be "recognized as familiar and understood as legitimate by researchers, practitioners, policy makers

and the public" (p. 3). Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research is critical to achieving this end. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness descriptors that incorporate the elements of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, are well recognized in qualitative research as guidance when conducting research and reviewing findings. Anfar, Brown, and Mangione (2002) offer strategies for these attributes that help to ensure quality and rigor in qualitative research (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Quantitative and Qualitative Criteria for Assessing Research Quality and Rigor

Quantitative Term	**Qualitative Term**	**Strategy Employed**
Internal validity	Credibility	• Prolonged engagement in field • Use of peer debriefing • Triangulation • Member checks • Time sampling
External validity	Transferability	• Provide thick description • Purposive sampling
Reliability	Dependability	• Create an audit trail • Code-recode strategy • Triangulation • Peer examination
Objectivity	Confirmability	• Triangulation • Practice reflexivity

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for trustworthiness and recognition of the importance of persuading others of the value of one's research informed Nowell, Norris, White and Moules' (2017) development of examples for establishing trustworthiness during the various stages of thematic analysis. These three frameworks (Anfar, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017) assisted in summarizing the data collection strategies used to establish trustworthiness in this research study (Table 3.4 and 3.5).

Table 3.4

Application of Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) Table for 'Establishing Trustworthiness During Each Phase of Thematic Analysis'

Nowell et al. (2017) Phases	**Steps of the Research Study**	**Data Collection and Analysis Strategies Used in the Research Study**	**Nowell et al. (2017) Means of Establishing Trustworthiness**
Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data	Stage 1: Steps 1, 2, 3	• Prolonged engagement with data • Documented theoretical and reflective thoughts • Documented thoughts about potential codes/themes • Stored raw data in well-organized archives • Kept reflexive journal	• Prolong engagement with data • Triangulate different data collection modes • Document theoretical and reflective thoughts • Document thoughts about potential codes/themes • Store raw data in well-organized archives • Keep records of all data field notes, transcripts, and reflexive journals
Phase 2: Generating initial codes	Stage 1: Steps 4, 5, 6,7	• Feedback/discussion with peers/experts • Used a coding framework • Retained an audit trail of code generation • Documented all notes from discussions with experts and debriefings	• Peer debriefing • Researcher triangulation • Reflexive journaling • Use of a coding framework • Audit trail of code generation • Documentation of all team meeting and peer debriefing
Phase 3: Searching for themes	Stage III: Step 8	• Diagrammed data to make sense of theme connections • Kept reflective and descriptive notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes	• Researcher triangulation • Diagramming to make sense of theme connections • Keep detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes
Phase 4: Reviewing themes	Stage III: Step 9	• Tested for referential adequacy by returning to raw data	• Researcher triangulation • Themes and subthemes vetted by team members • Test for referential

			adequacy by returning to raw data
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes	Stage III: Step 9	• Debriefed with peer • Documented peer debriefings • Documented theme naming	• Researcher triangulation • Peer debriefing • Team consensus on themes • Documentation of team meetings regarding themes • Documentation of theme naming
Phase 6: Producing the report	Stage III: Step 10	• Debriefed with peer • Described process of coding and analysis in detail • Provided thick descriptions of context • Reported reasons for theoretical, methodological and analytical choices throughout the entire study	• Member checking • Peer debriefing • Describing process of coding and analysis in sufficient details • Thick descriptions of context • Report on reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study

Table 3.5

Application of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) Criteria for Establishing Trustworthiness

Establishing Trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)	**Data Collection and Analysis Strategies**
Credibility	• Prolonged engagement with data • Debriefed with peers • Triangulated with expert • Kept reflexive journal
Dependability	• Debriefed with peers • Triangulated with expert • Documented thoughts about potential codes/themes • Stored raw data in well-organized archives • Kept reflexive journal • Documented all notes from discussions with experts and debriefings • Kept detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes

	• Documented peer debriefings • Documented theme naming
Transferability	• Purposive and saturated sampling • Documented thoughts about potential codes/themes • Kept reflexive journal • Used a coding framework • Documented all notes from discussions with experts and debriefings • Diagrammed data to make sense of theme connections • Described process of coding and analysis in detail • Provided thick descriptions of context
Confirmability	• Documented theoretical and reflective thoughts • Kept reflexive journal • Used a coding framework • Retained an audit trail of code generation-confirmability • Documented all notes from discussions with experts and debriefings • Diagrammed data to make sense of theme connections • Kept detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes • Tested for referential adequacy by returning to raw data-confirmability • Reported reasons for theoretical, methodological and analytical choices throughout the entire study

Delimitations and Assumptions

The study is specifically designed with several delimitations. While a more typical qualitative studies utilize interviews, observations, and other artifacts, the design selected for this study was limited to a content analysis of historical documents, the unique expectation of the OSEP regarding state reporting, and the specificity of the research questions bas they related directly to the SSIP documents.

The data source, which is solely historical archival government documents from 2014-2015, was selected for two reasons. First, it is of historical significance as it is the first time a state level improvement plan of this magnitude, prescription, and engagement of stakeholders

was required as part of the data measuring results for students with disabilities. Examining this document in this manner provides a measure of stakeholder engagement in improvement planning for students with disabilities at the SEA level. Second, while interviews and other artifacts of the process could be utilized to examine this first-time event, these would rely on recollections of work conducted during 2014-2015. The review of document content increases factual reliability. Bowen (2009) notes documents are highly viable data sources "…when events can no longer be observed or when informants have forgotten the details" (p. 31). The high rate of turnover in state departments over the past 5 years, and with 23 new state directors beginning in 2015 (B. East, October 5, 2015, personal communication; F. Balcom, personal communication, February 15, 2016) decreases the likelihood of identifying individuals in all or many of the fifty states with knowledge of the process used to introduce stakeholder involvement.

This study captured a single point in time under similar circumstances, assistance, and direction. Examination of subsequent reporting years examinations would add further context to the understanding of stakeholder involvement. Critical to future studies is further understanding the progression of stakeholder engagement in Phase II and Phase III of the SSIP process.

Additionally, the sample utilized bound the study. While sixty states and entities were required to submit this plan, the study focused only on the fifty states. The additional 10 entities covered by the IDEA and this reporting requirement are so uniquely different from the other fifty states in their context created by their size, culture, governance, and affiliation with federal expectations, which make their reports significantly less similar to those submitted by the states. For comparative purposes, it would be worthwhile in the future to better understand the similarities and differences that exist.

Another limitation of this study are the research questions. Being a descriptive study that is intended to specifically examine how SEAs report stakeholder engagement in the SSIP would not need interviews or other artifacts to inform how stakeholder engagement is reported in the document. An examination of documents identifies how SEAs reported their engagement with stakeholders. What is not reported is stakeholder perceptions of the accuracy of these single sources.

The study investigated documents as written and used reported data to identify levels or depths of the engagement using a qualitative method. The study will not determine if what is written is what occurred either from the perspective of the state or from that of the stakeholders. It will not assume or determine if the report accurately reflects the depth of the engagement that occurred or if the engagement occurred at all. The study will describe demographic information about the state as the state relates it in their public report. The study will not identify information about a state that is not contained within the boundaries of the documents submitted as SSIP Phase I.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study which employed a purposeful saturated sample was to examine how State Education Agencies (SEAs) engage stakeholders in special education improvement planning. Missing from the literature is research in educational policy implementation regarding stakeholder engagement and more specifically special education policy implementation on the features of stakeholder engagement in state improvement planning to improve results for students with disabilities. This study begins to fill this research void through thematic analysis review of State Systemic Improvement Plans (SSIP) Phase I of the 50 states which are required for submission by the U.S Department of Education (USDOE), Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). These archival government documents were reviewed to

to better understand membership, selection, and preparedness of stakeholders for the work, the nature of the interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA, and the arrangements constructed by the SEA to facilitate stakeholder engagement. An eleven step data collection and analysis process was utilized with the researcher applying an a priori literature and expert based thematic coding framework to the reports. Coding was followed by theme and data set reexamination for patterns and coherence to arrive at final themes of the data. The use of a purposive and saturated sample, a coding framework, reflexive journaling, an audit trail, and peer review and debriefings ensured a trustworthy study that is credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine how State Education Agencies (SEAs) engage stakeholders in special education improvement planning. The findings were identified through coding of examples within the SSIP. The intent of the findings is to describe the breadth, range, parameters or array of items from the SSIP and therefore distinct or unique cases are included to shape findings. Frequency of an item, alone did not determine the development of findings. The findings presented in this chapter respond to the following research questions:

1. How do State Education Agencies (SEAs) in the five sections of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I represent/describe stakeholder engagement?
2. How do State Education Agencies (SEAs) actions as represented in the five sections of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I relate to the range of interaction between the stakeholders and the SEA?

The 50 SEAs' State Systemic Improvet Plans (SSIP) Phase I which were required for submission by the U.S Department of Education (USDOE), Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for FY2013 served as the primary source of the data to respond to these questions. This chapter will focus on results directly derived from the data contained in each state report. The SSIPs were thematically coded using an iterative process that relied on repeated reading of the reports and extracting key phrases. Support for the trustworthiness of the themes and categories that emerged will be triangulated by incorporating scholarly literature in Chapter 5.

The following report is organized around the two research questions: 1) a description of how states reported on stakeholder engagement in the SSIPs; and 2) an examination of the

relationship of interactions between stakeholders and the SEAs as reported in the SSIPs. The subheadings within this chapter highlight the themes that emerged from the data.

An examination of how stakeholder engagement was described in the SSIPs revealed four major themes: representation, support, communication, and influence. Representation incorporated breadth, affiliation, and value-added contributions. The theme of support was comprised of being informed and skilled, providing context, making examination more manageable, assisting ease of viewing and analysis, and providing purposeful directions and parameters. Communication was the third theme that emerged with the following subthemes: means of communicating, purpose of communication and transparency. The fourth major theme that emerged was influence and its focus on stakeholder behavior and the nature of the work and its use. Lastly, interactions which were unilateral, bilateral and collaborative surfaced as a key theme and subthemes throughout the SSIPs.

In response to the second research question the findings from an examination of the relationship of interactions between stakeholders and the SEAs clustered around a) confluence of communication exchanges and influence, b) directionality of interactions within categories of the SSIPs, and 3) descriptors of states and SSIPs across categories of the SSIPs. In addition to the first themes, the second theme of directionality of interactions was comprised of the subthemes associated with collaboration and lateral engagement. The categories of states' and SSIPs' descriptors included SIMR, child count, length of report, and region of the country.

Research Question 1: Description of Stakeholder Engagement in the SSIPs

This section addresses the findings in response to the first research question asked: *How do State Education Agencies (SEAs) in the five sections of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I represent/describe stakeholder engagement?* Four primary themes and

accompanying features were evident. Findings indicate that states describe the engagement of stakeholders in the SSIP development in terms of 1) representation, 2) support, 3) communication, and 4) influence (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Themes of Stakeholder Engagement in the Phase I SSIPs

Themes	Features
Representation	• Breadth • Affiliation: Internal/External • Value Added Contributions
Support	• Informed and Skilled • Provide Context • Make Examination More Manageable • Assist Ease of Viewing and Analysis • Purposeful Directions and Parameters
Communication	• Means of Communicating • Purpose of Communications • Transparency
Influence	• Stakeholder Behavior • Nature of the Work and Its Use

Representation

Throughout the SSIPs, frequent references were made to the stakeholders engaged in the development of Phase I of the SSIP. The following evidence demonstrates how states anticipated OSEP expectation for states to involve stakeholders in the plan's development, "These stakeholders were included because they either pay for, provide, receive, participate in, or collaborate on Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) services and issues, and/or provide expertise" (UT_IE_Ref2). Additionally, OSEP expected a description of the stakeholder engagement that occurred within each of five components of the state's plan: 1) data analysis to identify root causes for low student outcomes; 2) the identification of a state identified measurable result based on this analysis, 3) infrastructure analysis to improve the state

system for instituting and sustaining the needed change to improve the outcome, 4) coherent improvement strategies to address the outcome, and 5) a theory of action to guide the work (Part B phase I evaluation tool, 2014). This was exemplified in one SSIP as, "These stakeholders represent individuals that provide services, oversee implementation and in the case of students and parents are the recipients of these initiatives and as such are extremely relevant to data and infrastructure analysis and improving the SIMR" (O:I_VA_2).

Breadth

Engaging a variety of voices contributes to the usefulness of the work (Block, 2005, Mallery et al., 2012, Man & Hofmann, 2017). Throughout the SSIPs, attention to engaging stakeholders who are representative of a wide range of factors to assist in the work was clearly evident (see Table 4.2) in the following example, "LDOE selected representatives for the SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group to reflect a wide variety of constituency groups and geographic locations, balancing that with maintaining a size that would allow thoughtful and robust interactions" (B_LA_3). Demography, roles, expertise and influence characterized the breadth of stakeholders that were engaged in states' SSIPs.

Table 4.2

Descriptors of Stakeholders

Factors	Terms Used In SSIP	Quotes from SSIPs
Breadth	Broad, varied, wide range, diverse,	Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) representatives and a broad scope of stakeholders from across Indiana focused their work on developing Indiana's State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) (R:B_IN_1). Nebraska's RDA committee represents diverse disciplines and experiences. Committee members represent multiple internal and external partners (R:B_NE_2).
Roles	leadership and practitioners,	Personnel were selected which represented special education administrators, superintendents, current special

	parent and educator groups, internal and external to the SDE	education professors from IHEs, parents, educational agencies, educational cooperative staff, reading interventionists, special education teachers, behavior specialists, Birth to Three (Part C) representative, Title office, Division of Learning and Instruction, the State Library, Division of Education Services and Supports director, State Performance Plan coordinators, Parent Connections (PTI Center), contractors specializing in behavior and instruction and Special Education Program staff (R:B_SD_3). These internal and external stakeholders represented persons with disabilities, parents of students with disabilities, teachers, principals, superintendents, higher education faculty, state school staff, correctional facilities, vocational rehabilitation representative, and other state agency representatives (R:B_KS_1). Staff, in conjunction with internal and external stakeholders, identified a variety of data sets that would be analyzed (EXT_FL_1).
Geography	drew from community, Regional representation of schools and charters due to different demographics (rural, suburban and urban),	LDOE selected representatives for the SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group to reflect a wide variety of constituency groups and geographic locations, balancing that with maintaining a size that would allow thoughtful and robust interactions (R:B_LA_3). LEA special education administrators were selected to assure regional representation from each of the three counties in the state, and the public schools including charters, that are representative of rural, suburban and urban communities. This county-balanced representation was important given the demographic differences across the three counties that create unique student and school strengths and needs (R:B_DE_2). Those stakeholders needed to represent all of the state's geographic regions and represent the many disciplines involved in the education of students with disabilities (R:B_ND_2). The state Special Education Program office (SEP) ensures that the entire state geographic area is covered along with different district sizes in order to adequately represent the diversity in South Dakota (R:B_SD_3).

People	across the age and grade spans, various ethnic/racial groups rep of student pop, ELL, Early childhood	These internal and external stakeholders represented persons with disabilities, parents of students with disabilities, teachers, principals, superintendents, higher education faculty, state school staff, correctional facilities, vocational rehabilitation representative, and other state agency representatives (R:B_KS_1).
Expertise	Knowledge of existing systems, Who contribute depth of knowledge and diversity, wide range of expertise; wealth of experience; necessary to plan,	These 26 external stakeholders had areas of expertise that included district and school administration, parent partnerships, delivery of multi-tiered instruction and interventions, data analysis, policy planning, early intervention, early childhood services, behavior interventions, mathematics instruction, teacher preparation, and inclusive practices for students who need the most comprehensive supports (R:B_MD_3). OEC added specialists in early literacy to the SSIP Stakeholder Team. (R:B_OH1_2). Alaska EED selected stakeholders based on the perspectives needed for the development, implementation, and evaluation of the SSIP, and has invited additional and different stakeholders to participate in varying tasks (O:IE_AK_2).
Influence	integral to the process, those who develop policy, those with influence or access to individuals who could make change, connection to constituents; those necessary to plan, those needed to implement, implement policy	The Task Force was comprised of 44 members including legislators, district administrators, principals, parents, special education teachers, general education teachers, parent advocacy group representatives, and nonpublic agency and post-secondary representatives (R:B_MS_2). In order to help sustain changes resulting from this work, staff and representatives that linked to the Governor's office and the legislative branch of government were invited to participate. LEA special education administrators were selected to assure regional representation from each of the three counties in the state, and the public schools including charters, that are representative of rural, suburban and urban communities (EXT_DE_1).

Another recurring feature of the breadth of stakeholders engaged in the work was the

quantity of people that states mention engaging. Some states organized stakeholder committees of a limited, manageable size (e.g., 26, 31, 35, 63 members), to attend to the SSIP work. In one report it was written, “These 26 external stakeholders had areas of expertise that included…” (R:B_MD_3). Also, states reported on large volumes of people that they engaged in place of or in addition to SSIP oversight committees. Examples include, “Hundreds of responses from special education administrators, teachers, and parents were analyzed to identify patterns for possible root causes and strategies” (R:B_AR_2) and “We involved 240 Department and Community Stakeholders in the SSIP Phase I Process” (R:B_HI_2). While a broad spectrum and high volume of stakeholders were the norm with some states, a more nuanced approach was evident in states where they used explicit identification in which names roles or groups of individuals were identified.

Also evident was selective identification, where states chose individuals for specific purpose, based on particular parameters or under unique circumstances by noting, “One of the focus stakeholder group members, a principal in a CPS elementary school, was added to the SSIP external stakeholder group to maintain the focus group voice throughout the remainder of the SSIP process”(R:B_IL_4) and “This county-balanced representation was important given the demographic differences across the three counties that create unique student and school strengths and needs”(R: B_DE_2). States noted being “intentional”, and “deliberate” with their choices of stakeholders (see Table 4.3) stating, “As the focus has evolved, the essential players were refined to ensure that stakeholders with the direct expertise, commitment and experience were included” (R:B_NH_2) and “Additionally, Nebraska was intentional about organizing a group of stakeholders involved in supporting children with disabilities ages birth through age 21” (R:B_NE_3).

Table 4.3

Nuanced Selection of Stakeholders

Explicit Selection	**Selectivity**
From state level initiative	Balancing with maintaining a size that allow thoughtful and robust interaction
Knowledge of existing systems	Consistent group
Regional representation of schools and charters due to different demographics (rural, suburban and urban) as they create unique student strengths and needs	Refined to ensure that stakeholders with the direct expertise, commitment and experience were included
various ethnic/racial groups rep of student pop	Right stakeholders at the right time making recommendations that spoke directly to the decisions the sea was making
Special attention to family groups	Additional and different stakeholders invited for varying tasks,
Panel members as well as SEA staff serve in other agency or organization leadership positions or on advisory groups in the disability community. This enables us to draw insight and advice from a very encompassing overview and understanding of Montana's unique needs, potentials, weaknesses and strengths	Groups involved at times based on their expertise and experience

Affiliation

As was the case with these SSIPs, representation from specific groups is often mandated by federal policy (Salamon, 1989). Specifically, for the SSIP, OSEP had expectations for representation from groups and organizations outside of the SEA. This study did identify these external partners noting, “As with the other components of California’s SSIP development process, a large group of external stakeholders from various elements of California’s public education sector contributed to the analysis” (RP:E_CA_2).

External stakeholders were identified as those individuals from other organizations; organizations outside of the SEA or individuals that do not work for the SEA. This group typically included individuals with roles such as principal, teacher, parent, advocate for parents or specific student populations. This was observed in statements like, “In addition to the internal representatives, the state involved external representatives from other state agencies, regional educational agencies, and LEAs in the development of Phase 1 components. Additional representatives included members (including parents of students with disabilities) of the State Advisory Committee for the Education of Exceptional Students (SAC) and other parent and community groups” (RP:E_MS_6). A few states (AK, HI), that notably had indigenous populations and stakeholder groups engaged in the work, displayed pictures of their students, teachers, cultural events and stakeholders throughout the SSIP. One SSIP recorded, “These agency and parent/community representatives are referred to as external stakeholders in other sections of this SSIP. A listing of the external representatives, their offices/agencies/ affiliations, and positions is included in the chart below” (RP:E_FL_5).

Additionally, there were internal stakeholders identified. These are stakeholders from within the SEA who are affected/directed by or involved in the state’s decision-making process as reported in the following statements, “In collaboration with the School Improvement and Intervention staff, Exceptional Student Services (ESS) reviewed the data of the schools selected for school improvement”(RP:I_AZ_2) and “A variety of departments from the Colorado Department of Education: representatives from the Exceptional Student Services Unit, the Office of Learning Supports, the Office of Literacy, the Federal Programs Unit, the District and School Performance Unit, the Improvement Planning Office, Teaching and Learning Unit, and the Early Learning and School Readiness Unit” (RP_CO_5).

This study revealed that states organized and engaged internal and external stakeholders for various purposes throughout the development of the Phase I SSIP. Teams were convened, or existing teams utilized for specific purposes related to the SSIP and select individuals or role alike groups of individuals were approached for specific purposes.

Function-Oriented Teams Convened

Several types of teams were identified by states' that engaged in the development of the SSIP. The states included planning teams, leadership teams, steering committees and state advisory councils in their descriptions of engaging stakeholders.

SSIP planning team This team was typically a special education unit of the SEA. Some states included members from other units within the SEA who were critical to the SSIP work either for purposes of ensuring alignment of the work to SEA initiatives or because within the organizational workflow of the SEA they were a part of special education work. In a few instances representatives external to the SEA were included. For example, "MA ESE created an internal leadership team to work on the SSIP that eventually became, with additional members representing early childhood special education, the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Leadership team" (RO:C:SE_MA_1) and "formed an internal Part B Core Team to guide the development of the South Carolina State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)" (RO:C:SE_SC_1).

Some states administratively include other state or federal projects with special education in the same organizational unit, or states have flattened work groups that engage cross units bringing together special education staff with staff from other units within the department, such as curriculum and instruction and assessment divisions. These teams made sure that agendas were developed, communication occurred back and forth between the SEA and stakeholders, and meeting formats were arranged as in the following example, "The Core Team set the agendas for

SSIP Stakeholder Team meetings expanding on prior meetings, the next elements of Phase I, and areas that the SSIP Stakeholder Team felt needed to be addressed" (RO:C:SE_IN_3).

Sometimes this group served as the reviewer of stakeholder meetings' findings and synthesizer of the meetings' information in preparation for the next meeting, disseminating stakeholder input to other SEA groups or those groups outside of the organization (public reporting) as reported in the statement, "The Core Team set the agendas for the broader based Leadership Team meetings and prepared data and other information to be shared with various advisory groups" (RO:A:N_MN_1).

It was common for states to have the special education division of their SEA provide the leadership for the administrative aspects of the SSIP (convening meetings, writing the SSIP, preparation and follow-up with stakeholders) as exemplified in these reports from two states, "The SSIP development was led by the special education policy office" (RO:C:SE_LA_1) and "Office of Special Education programs (OSEP), is given the responsibility of developing and overseeing the implementation of the SSIP" (RO:C:IO_AK_1).

SEA leadership team Some states identified a leadership team that encompassed the division heads or their designee within the SEA and served to assure overview and alignment of SSIP to state work, while making executive administrative decisions about the work.
This team of administration within the SEA to whom results were reported and from whom direction was taken by the SEA may have been an existing cabinet of state leadership that routinely met on SEA matters and to which SSIP material was brought either as information, for decision-making as to the SSIP's content or to set direction for future stakeholder input. One example indicated "The Utah State Office of Education (USOE) Leadership Team (Superintendent and Associate Superintendent, Special Education Director, and Coordinators)

guided the review of data, data analysis, and development of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)" (RO:C:IO_UT_1). The members of these teams were internal stakeholders from the state.

Steering committee Some states had a larger group of representatives that were specifically convened for purposes of developing the SSIP. This group served as the primary stakeholder group for engagement around the SSIP. This was stated as, "The Steering Committee, comprised of members of the Statewide Special Education Advisory Council, state agency partners, special educators and related services providers, parents, and other interested parties, reviewed statewide longitudinal data for Indicator 7A, as well as early childhood special education program improvement activities that directly support improving outcomes for children with disabilities aged 3 through 5" (RO:A_MA_1) and "The State's 2011 broad stakeholder group consisted of : IDEA Advisory Panel representatives, Parent Training and Information Centers, Directors of Special Education, Parents, Representatives from the Developmental Disability Council, Teachers, Directors of Regional Educational Cooperatives" (RO:A_NM_1).

In several states this was an existing group such as their State Advisory Panel (SAP) which is constituted by state or federal regulation and mentioned in OSEP guidance as an appropriate representative body to engage in the development of the SSIP as evidenced by the following statements, "Discussions and Stakeholder input of the SPP, APR, SSIP, and RDA began in 2013 with our State Special Education Advisory Panel. …The advisory panel is our primary stakeholder group" (RO:A:S_MT_1) and "Primary conceptualization, review of data, sorting of small-group input and making of recommendations was accomplished by Iowa's Special Education Advisory Panel. Iowa's SEAP has thirty-one members and includes representation from individuals with disabilities, parents of learners with disabilities, special

educators, district" (RO_IA_1).

State Advisory Council (SAC) As this group is required under IDEA and identified by OSEP as an important group of stakeholders to involve in the SSIP's development, the SAC was a group with which states conferred to confirm the direction the SEA was suggesting for the SSIP or to request input from on how to proceed with the SSIP work in the following statement, "The following stakeholder groups were engaged in all components of the data analysis. The Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)" (RO:A_MS_1).

In some instances, this group served as the steering committee, described above. States did not universally convene a stakeholder group solely for purposes of developing the SSIP, although examples of this having occurred included, "This group, newly formed in spring of 2014, combined two former stakeholder groups that separately provided perspectives on state supervision, monitoring, target setting, and improvement planning, and includes 30 members representing key perspectives or roles" (RO_TX_2), "The SSIP Stakeholder Input team was established early in the development of the SSIP, giving participants a foundation to support them with making recommendations for targets" (RO:A:N_NH_1), and "The main stakeholder group for the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) was selected based on several factors" (RO:A:N_SD_1).

Other states created ad hoc groups for the work. One noted, "We did not form an omnibus stakeholder group to guide our thinking about every Component in the SSIP. Instead, we brought together various groups of stakeholders depending on the task at hand" (RO_NV_1).

Some states utilized existing teams (i.e., SAC, other state initiative groups, stakeholder groups regulated by state) and charged the group with the task of development of the SSIP in addition to their existing purposes. Two states wrote, "Involvement of these participants took

many forms and, to the extent possible, was incorporated through existing groups and activities rather than as an extraneous activity" (RO_IA_1) and "The Special Education Task Force, which was assembled by the State Superintendent of Schools for the purpose of improving Mississippi's special education system and offering quality learning and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, served as a stakeholder group for the SSIP" (RO:A:E_MS_1).

Other states approached existing groups to assist with specific SSIP work (e.g., gather data, conduct an analysis, confirm results, solicit ideas, inform the process) as exemplified in the next statement, "The Data Management Group was an existing group of stakeholders that had met in previous years to address data issues as these impacted programs and outcomes for students with special needs. For the first SSIP Stakeholders Meeting we reconvened this group to capitalize on their previous working relationships" (RO_ME_1).

Combinations of these arrangements occurred in states as reported in the statement, "The Oklahoma State Department of Education – Special Education Services (OSDE-SES) began the process in FFY 2014 to analyze and review current and historical data submitted through Oklahoma's State Performance Plan (SPP) and requested the participation of existing and newly formed Stakeholder groups to assist with this process" (RO_OK_1).

Stakeholder Organizations Represented in The Work

States approached various groups of people for gathering information from or disseminating information to that would contribute to the development of the SSIP. These groups included educational professional organizations and groups, other public and private organized groups, and select individuals. States gathered information from members or representatives of these groups through a variety of means (e.g., websites, surveys, conference gatherings,

newsletters). The information received from them informed other groups (mentioned above) that had responsibilities for developing the SSIP.

Educational professional organizations or group. Superintendents, directors of special education and principals were typical examples of the membership of organizations whose assistance or input was solicited as noted by these three states, “Kentucky Council of Administrators of Special Education (KYCASE)” (RP:E_KY_1), “meetings in each of the state’s six educational regions for superintendents, principals, and special education directors (by invitation only)” (RP:E_ID_1), and “The primary group responsible for this work included 50 representatives of… building principals, …, district directors of special education” (RP:E_IA_1).

Other organized groups (public and private) States also approached law centers, institutions of higher education, professional development organizations, parent advocacy groups, teacher unions, social service agencies, civic organizations, and their states’ legislature as reported in statements such as, “Learning Disabilities Association of Florida… Division of State Colleges… State University System” (RP:E_FL_1), “Parent Training and Information Center, Hawai‘i Families as Allies” (HFAA)”(RP:E_HI_3), and “Lt. Governor Denn’s Office” (RP:E_DE_1).

Individuals Specific individuals or representatives were identified due to their affiliation with the above organizations or professions. Some states reported having official representatives from the above organizations. Also states had individuals (e.g., education attorneys, advocates, school educators, school administrators, parents; students, professional developers, higher education faculty) from a variety of professions who may or may not have been members of the above groups, who were selected because of their specific professional experiences. Supporting statements include, “Military Representative… Community Representative, Private Provider”

(RP:E_HI_3), “representatives from the three institutions of higher education who receive IDEA Part B funding through sub-awards from the ISDE (University of Idaho, Boise State University, and Idaho State University)” (RP:E_ID_1), and “Governor’s Office” (RP:E_DE_1).

While some states were interested in engaging representatives of different organizations and professions, others looked to engage a wider representation of any one group. One can appreciate that input from a representative of an organization does not necessarily mean that the individual is provided the authority of the organization to speak for the entire organization or profession represented. One state noted, “In August 2014 external Stakeholders participated in analysis of the ISDE Infrastructure through feedback obtained via the Education Stakeholder Survey and the Agency/Parent Stakeholder Survey. The Education Stakeholder Survey was sent to ISDE staff, superintendents, principals, and special education directors. The Agency/Parent Stakeholder Survey was sent to Idaho Interagency Council on Secondary Transition (IICST), Early Childhood Coordinating Council, Higher Education Consortium, and advocacy and parent groups” (SA:P:B_ID_15). Another state wrote, “Additional information was gathered from focus group conversations with over 150 representatives of parents, special education teachers, general education teachers, local special and general education administrators, Area Education Agency (AEA) consultants, AEA special education administrators, institutions of higher education, other state agencies and Department of Education Special Education staff. Results of these conversations are included in Results of Infrastructure Analysis and Selection of Coherent Improvement Strategies” (W:F_IA_4).

Other Findings

Another notable finding related to representation was that groups morphed over the course of the SSIP development process. Stakeholders from across the SEA and individuals

within the SEA's special education unit specifically were accessed and engaged (e.g., planning group expanded as SSIP process proceeded) based on their expertise relative to the SSIP topic and needs (e.g., targets set with department staff having expertise in literacy, fiscal officers/school improvement staff/assessment personnel provided analysis of infrastructure, data managers prepared specific data requests). One state indicated, "As the focus has evolved, the essential players were refined to ensure that stakeholders with the direct expertise, commitment and experience were included. Participants included individuals skilled and knowledgeable about: (a) data collection and analysis; (b) intra- and inter-agency connections; (c) TA and early childhood systems; (d) family engagement; quality standards and program development; (e) local and state infrastructure components; and, (f) evidenced-based practices. This brought both technical skills and systems-thinkers to the table" (RP:B_NH_2).

This was also evident with identifying the expertise of other non-SEA stakeholders to involve. Evidence was presented by this state, "As the development of the SIMR unfolded, OEC added specialists in early literacy to the SSIP Stakeholder Team described in detail in the SIMR section of the SSIP" (B_OH1_1). States reported adding individuals to groups based on the expertise needed to accomplish the work by stating, "…the education specialists most knowledgeable about state level performance data related to students with disabilities" (RP:B_RI_1) and "Because reading was identified as the focus of the SIMR, the existing stakeholder group was revised to include stakeholders with expertise in the area of reading" (RP:B_SC_4).

Two groups of professionals were particularly noted by SEAs in the SSIP work, OSEP staff and facilitators. A review of the data indicated that at least in 16 states, OSEP staff engaged with the SEA and its stakeholders on-site within a state and others reported communications with

OSEP virtually or through email or phone communication evidenced in statements such as, "In addition to OSEP and U.S. Department of Education staff, the … participated in the two-day meeting" (RP:E_CT_3) and "Additionally, U.S. Department of Education staff participated for some portions of the process" (RP:E_DE_5). It was reported, "…several guidance calls with OSEP were conducted and input from Idaho's Technical Assistance Center was received producing the following indicators for consideration for Idaho SSIP focus" (RP:E_ID_10).

At least over half of the states (27) engaged the technical assistance and input of staff from the then existing OSEP's national technical assistance center for special education, the Regional Resource Center Program (RRCP), most frequently to facilitate stakeholder meetings and to provide specific content knowledge about the SSIP to stakeholders within and external to the SEA that were "facilitated by the Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC)" (W:F_ME_1) and "With technical assistance from the Mid-South Regional Resource Center (MSRRC)" (W:F_SC_1). Another wrote, "… North Central Regional Resource Center helped facilitate the Council meetings" (W:F_WI_2).

Rationale

Across the SSIPs, indications of stakeholder prominence in state work, their impact, and value added, were noted rationales for including stakeholders in the SSIP development. While stakeholders were required to be engaged in the work, states spoke of "meaningfully involving stakeholders" and recognizing their involvement as "paramount to authentic and meaningful analysis". States also described their appreciation for stakeholders' contributions. See Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Rationales for Stakeholder Involvement

Rationales	**Examples from the SSIPs**
Prominence of Stakeholder Engagement in	History in state, voice of stakeholders is

the State	strong in state work, continue this culture, local decision making critical to SEA efforts; “small town with very long streets”, close knit; -state law requires working in partnerships
Value Added	More assured of identifying data of value, paramount to identifying barriers, analyzing current capacity, selecting SIMR, developing appropriate strategies; more thoughtful decision can be made; provided expertise during the entire data analysis process, including framing the initial data analysis, developing the methodology, identifying reliable sources for information, as well as continuous analytic expertise throughout the process; higher level of rigor and heightened analysis; recognized importance of adding sh to accurately identify needs; help ensure ambitious and meaningful change; help state planning to continuously evolve; garner more substantial input; input so strategies meet needs of not only schools but students and families directly
Appreciation for Stakeholder Engagement	The USOE [SEA] recognized the need for moving beyond simply informing a limited group of stakeholders through public channels, consulting/gathering input, and reaching decisions, to creating opportunities for authentic and direct interaction, building consensus, and sharing leadership opportunities with the full range of education and community stakeholders to implement practical and sustainable solutions (Rhim, 2014).
Strengthen Partnerships	Developed partnerships that are ongoing and impactful; developed strong working relationships; SSIP has strengthen existing partnerships
Build Internal Alignment	Stronger working partnership and integrated approach with SEA units and other state agencies that will support future work; sh efforts show others within agency aligning

and connecting with Sped; helps connect the work within the agency; Their queries insured closer connections with the sped unit and across the agency; including stakeholders has lead to unified and inter-bureau work, resource use and idea development at the SEA; helpful to aligning initiatives internally

In this study attention, as noted within the SSIPs, to the breadth and number, as well as the intentional selection of stakeholders with particular expertise or experiences as was previously detailed, demonstrates the importance states placed on stakeholder engagement in this work. An additional notable feature of stakeholder engagement in this study as explicated in the succeeding section (Support) was the work conducted by the SEA to assist stakeholders in advance of and during the SSIP work. Such attention to helping stakeholders understand and engage in the work more efficiently and with greater understanding shows not only the importance the SEA places on their contributions, but also shows respect for stakeholders' time and effort.

Valued Contributions

The 'value-added' contributions and the array of purposes states suggested, as captured in Table 4.5 below, demonstrate the value states placed on what stakeholders bring to the work. Examples include, "It is work that we cannot do alone and we are grateful to all of our stakeholders" (RO:C:IE_HI_5), "The State Director of Special Education received invaluable feedback and will continue to use authentic engagement strategies to obtain stakeholder input" (RO:C:IE_GA_2), and "Stakeholders made very valuable requests for additional data points and assisted EED in developing critical questions that led to the SIMR" (RO:C:IE_AK_3).

Table 4.5

Purposes and Examples Extracted from the SSIPs

Purposes	**Examples Extracted from the SSIPs**
Develop commitment to the work	Develop commitment of stakeholders to the work and outcomes; develop ownership and responsibility to the work of improving student outcomes; ensure accountability over implementation in the future, buy in is critical to sea efforts, support the work; foster shared ownership of the process; local buy-in; support for the work; vital to success of SSIP and more specifically to outcomes.
Build capacity for the future	To build capacity, awareness now as they may be involved in the future SSIP work; builds foundation now to support recommendations later; Build awareness within SEA; to understand their role in development, implementation and evaluation of work

Support

States in this study clearly recognized the importance and value of supporting stakeholders in the SSIP work. Table 4.5 organizes the characteristics of this assistance which occurred throughout the SSIP development process, some of which was continuous and ongoing and expressed as “To prepare for the meeting, Stakeholders were asked to review a presentation made available online” (SA:P_HI_7), “Due to the varying abilities of student participants, procedures for the student focus groups were adjusted in various ways to facilitate understanding of questions being asked.” (SA:P_MN_5), and “LDOE provided the SSIP Stakeholder Group with a detailed written summary after each meeting and before the next to assure continued involvement, identify ways input was incorporated into the SSIP, and frame future conversations” (SA:P_LA_2). Additionally, many states prepared themselves as well, in order to

better support participants with the process as shown in this state, "Pennsylvania's SPP/APR team visited the NDPC-SD to identify current research, strategies, protocols, and data tools" (SA:P_SD_3).

SEAs across the country participated in trainings offered by OSEP's Regional Resource Centers to become knowledgeable of the SSIP process as shared by one state, "Pennsylvania sent a team to the NERRC Regional SSIP Meeting to gain knowledge about the requirements of the SSIP and begin planning for a potential focus area" (SA:P_PA_4). SEAs then turn-keyed this training to the stakeholders throughout their states and some to their own state leadership teams. One state reported, "SEA staff attended a regional SSIP planning event that included state level data analysis and infrastructure analysis strategies and reviews of planning and analysis tools and processes. From that "kick-off" meeting, SEP began contacting key stakeholders to schedule work groups and planning meetings" (SA:P_SD_3).

Informed and Skilled

SEAs showed their interest in having stakeholders informed and skilled. This was done in a variety of ways as noted in Table 4.5. Some states accounted for these options in the following ways, "The SSIP team members have received monthly trainings from the SISEP Center to strengthen understanding of "implementation science" as it relates to the SSIP" (SA:P_KY_2), "Those materials identified the agenda, facilitators, and participants, and explained the purposes of the meeting. They defined roles and responsibilities and provided an explanation of the data carousel procedure that would be used at the meeting" (SA:P_ND_3), and "stakeholders received training on the types of data, collection types, and procedures to increase the knowledge base of the collective group" (SA:P_OK_3).

Provide Context

SEAs also provided a context for stakeholders by explaining the history of the RDA process and expectations of OSEP for the SSIP by writing, “Sandy Schmitz with the North Central Regional Resource Center (NCRRC) presented on RDA at the 2014 Special Education Directors’ Conference to increase awareness and understanding regarding RDA and the SSIP” (SA:P_IL_4) and “An overview of the State’s General Supervision System http://wvde.state.wv.us/osp/SPP.html and Results Driven Accountability Compliance Monitoring System http://wvde.state.wv.us /osp/SPP.html relative to the SPP/APR was presented to participants” (SA:P_WV_4).

Participants also learned about expectations for their role in the process. One state reported, “began with an explanation of the role and purpose of the stakeholder group, introducing the phases of the SSIP including the State Identified Measurable Results (SIMR); selection of coherent improvement strategies; and the development of the theory of action” (SA:P_OK_1).

Make Examination More Manageable

SEAs specifically provided extensive resources to compliment the expectations of the SSIP development in order for the work to be more manageable and understandable by the participants (see Table 4.6). Resource documents, condensations of information, summaries, and prior synthesis of data were shared to assist the stakeholders conduct the extensive analyses expected of the SSIP. One state explained this process as “honing mega data into digestible chunks” for the stakeholders to consume.

Some states explicitly discussed the use of facilitators external to the SEA, such as staff from the RRCPs, to assist in guiding the process. States structured the discussions to assist stakeholders in completing the work as exemplified in the following statements, “used a

structured process to obtain input" (W:F_OH2_1), "Thus, specifically, stakeholders were given general data on these three result areas and worked in groups to respond to the following questions for each of the results indicators" (SA:P_HI_3), "The facilitator of the meetings led the discussion of the whole group, ensuring each stakeholder member had a common understanding of the data findings in order to understand the related needs based on these findings" (SA:P_IN_3), and "At the recommendation of the WRRC, the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) Worksheet was used as a checklist and communication chart to ensure the sufficiency of the scope of work undertaken in the previous components and to quickly summarize information for stakeholders" (SA:P_WA_6). These steps were delineated as follows,

Assist Ease of Viewing and Analysis

Many other supports to assist stakeholders with managing the material were ones that assisted them with understanding the information they were examining and analyzing. SEAs provided participants scenarios and visual aids through facilitation strategies (see Table 4.6).

Throughout the SSIPS strategies were reported that SEAs used to engage stakeholders thus promoting discussion and exchange of ideas. These strategies included brainstorming, charting, gallery walk, on line presentations, polling, PowerPoint (PPT), laptops to access data, questions as prompts, SWOT steps. Statements exemplifying this include "Stakeholders especially appreciated the way we summarized the review of data into a table that included findings and observations. The variety of ways data were connected and separated (especially into elementary compared to secondary) challenged the beliefs of many"(SA:P_MO_1), "Due to the varying abilities of student participants, procedures for the student focus groups were adjusted in various ways to facilitate understanding of questions being asked. For example,

students ranged in their skills to read and write; thus, it was necessary to elaborate, clarify, and provide greater context in many of the student groups in which it was occasionally necessary to depart from the procedures used for the administrator groups, but critical to obtaining responses relevant to each focus group question" (SA:P_MN_5), "Subsequently, data was displayed on graphs, in larger fonts, in color and with some labeling for ease of view and analysis" (SA:P_DE_6), and "Participants completed the survey during in-person events where they answered items with audience response systems (clickers). This real-time interaction allowed for anonymous feedback and prompted additional discussion" (W:F_MI_10).

Purposeful Directions and Parameters

This study illuminated three types of directions and parameters that SEAs used to frame the work for stakeholders, assisting them with understanding of the task at hand (see Table 4.6). States provided directions to engage in activities; principles to consider during the work; and knowledge or skills to apply when working.

States provided instructions with step by step directions for engaging in activities that assisted them in analyzing data and generating ideas. An example included, "provided an explanation of the data carousel procedure that would be used at the meeting." (SA:P_ND_3).

Several states noted principles that were provided to stakeholders to guide their thinking such as holding high student expectations, and applying research findings, implementation science concepts and systemic improvement processes. Examples include, "Several principles for target-setting were shared with the stakeholder group" (SA:P_NV_1) and "However, during these discussions it was important for the team to remember that "correlation is not causation" (SA:P_OH2_4).

Capacity building was a critical feature for how states assisted participants in a desire to

build “knowledge…for meaningful participation.” Other comments were offered, “stakeholders received training on the types of data, collection types, and procedures to increase the knowledge base of the collective group” (SA:P_OK_3), “prior to team member and stakeholder engagement in rigorous data analysis, existing data governance mechanisms were reviewed including the overarching system of state agencies, within OSPI as the State Education Agency (SEA), and within the special education department” (SA:P_WA_2), and “large part of the early work with external stakeholders focused on increasing their knowledge” (SA:P_AR_5).

Table 4.6

Features of Support as Coded in SSIPs

Support Features	**Examples from SSIPs**
Informed and Skilled	Minutes from prior meeting; updated PDSA process, guidance on how to participate in data carousel and SWOT process, explained purpose of next steps, defined roles and responsibilities
Provide context	By overviewing the RDA process, SSIP and state context also national context
Make Examination More Manageable	Data sets of indicators and other state or national data, policy and procedure documents, analyses already conducted to make examination more manageable (“honing mega data into digestible chunks”-WV), data already collected on infrastructure, new data collected for the SSIP purposes, analyses requested by sh, qualitative data for some aspects such as identifying concerns and quantitative for others such as identifying SIMR focus
Assist Ease of Viewing and Analysis	Materials (see bigger list in my audit trail table), examples, presentations, guiding questions, clarification discussions, provide projection scenarios and options to consider;

	graphs, larger font, in color, labeling; charts; data maps; ease understanding of focus group questions for students it was necessary to elaborate, clarify, and provide greater context in many of the student groups in which it was occasionally necessary to depart from the procedures used for the administrator groups, but critical to obtaining responses relevant to each focus group question; summaries were helpful to challenge beliefs; PPT to aid in discussion
Purposeful Directions and Parameters	Instructive- steps to accomplish a task Principles- setting high expectations for student outcomes, research on factors affecting NECAP, experiences of other states in DROP OUT, research on transition practices and predictors, implementation science processes, systemic improvement process) Capacity building- knowledge building for meaningful participation, capacity building, increase knowledge

Communication

Throughout the SSIP reviews, SEAs communicated with stakeholders through a variety of means, for a multiplicity of purposes, using meetings as a primary vehicle to accomplish the work with stakeholders. Statements included, “these specific groups have engaged in face-to-face and virtual meetings, and other communication modalities with TEA” (C:T_TX_1) and “Examples of the communication protocols include weekly intra- and inter-departmental meetings within OSPI, formal presentations to the State Special Education Advisory Council and State Early Childhood Special Education Coordination Team, dialogues through community-based advisory panels, and numerous one-to-one communications with key leadership personnel across the SEA system” (C:TR_WA_2).

Transparency also surfaced as a feature of SEAs communication with stakeholders as evidenced by the following, “We submit a narrative instead of using the template in the U.S. Department of Education’s online tool for submission (Grads360), to increase accessibility to the content with the aim of understanding of the Phase I process” (C:TR_HI_1).

Means of Communicating

The use of technology for communication took on various forms in the states. Electronic mail, web-postings, polling/surveying on line, video presentations, laptop access of data, listserves, PowerPoint presentations and twitter messaging were all noted, “…through the use of social media using Twitter feeds” (C:T_KY_2), “stakeholders participated in an interactive webinar on the Indicator 7: Preschool” (C:T_MA_2), “a video was created about the SC Part B SSIP process using basic non-technical terminology. The video was published on YouTube (https://youtu.be/OS3ODX-Oll8) and thus made available for broad stakeholder review” (C:T_SC_1), “The group also had virtual interaction for final target setting and theory of action input” (W:F_LA_13), and “Stakeholders worked in small groups on laptops with access to all available NJDOE data” (W:F_NJ_4).

Written communications were utilized as well to communicate with stakeholders. Such communications included open-ended and forced choice surveys, transcriptions of focus group discussions, newsletters, reports, and data displays. These methods were identified in the following statements, “Information and requests for feedback about the progress of SSIP planning was also distributed through state organization meetings and newsletters…” (C:T_MN_1), “developed a Perceptions Survey”(C:T_MI_1), “all meetings were carefully documented with detailed notes, agendas, and PowerPoint presentations” (C:T_KY_3).

Face to face meetings played a primary mode of communication for accomplishing work with stakeholders. Some of these meetings occurred with identified stakeholder groups, previously referred to in this study as a Steering Committee, and convened periodically and routinely (e.g., monthly or quarterly SSIP Stakeholder Advisory Team meetings) or as a one-time event or sporadically (e.g., public hearings, listening tours), specifically for SSIP purposes. Also, pre-established meetings for non-SSIP purposes occurred, during which SSIP work was added to these meetings' existing agenda. Some examples included advocacy organization convenings, professional groups' routine meetings (e.g., Superintendents, directors of special education), and annual conferences of professional organizations or public agencies (e.g., Back to School events).

While the meetings were formal means of engaging stakeholders in which agendas, minutes and facilitation occurred, some states reported having informal communications with stakeholders to inform the work of the SSIP. These took on the form of electronic emails, phone calls, impromptu conversations, or follow up discussions with stakeholders who attended the more formal meetings. Discussion were approached in several different ways including, "onsite and follow-up email communications" (W:F_KS_4), "formal and informal discussions" (W:F_AK_2), and "informal and formal stakeholder discussions" (W:F_WA_2).

Purpose of Communications

The communications that SEAs had with stakeholders served many purposes throughout the twenty-four-month period that states had to develop the SSIP. Communication served to invite participants to meetings to engage in the work or to events to solicit input or feedback (invite to public hearings, listening tours), to prepare stakeholders for meetings either through summaries of prior work together or information to prepare them for future activities, to inform

and train them during the meetings, and to update the public or the broader network of stakeholders of the work to date. Two states offered, “The Special Projects Office staff also worked closely with Hawai‘i State Board of Education … to hold Listening Tours for Teachers” (W:F_HI_5) and “LDOE provided the SSIP Stakeholder Group with a detailed written summary after each meeting and before the next to assure continued involvement, identify ways input was incorporated into the SSIP, and frame future conversations” (SA:P_LA_2).

States kept people informed and gathered information employing communication protocols and loops, as described in the following statement, “ongoing information and dissemination loops to State leadership and internal and external stakeholders” (C:T_WA_1).

They also appeared to purposefully make material more accessible to stakeholders to assure stakeholders had a better understanding of what was occurring and what needed to occur. One state wrote, “We submit a narrative instead of using the template in the U.S. Department of Education’s online tool for submission (Grads360), to increase accessibility to the content with the aim of understanding of the Phase I process” (C:TR_HI_1).

Meetings were held throughout the development period of the SSIP which served to inform a broader network of stakeholders of the work to date, while other meetings were intended to be instructive for those stakeholders more intimately engaged in the work. Some meetings were specifically held to solicit feedback on topics of interest to the SSIP development or on decisions that the SEA was contemplating. Two report statements include, “The TCISC has engaged in multiple face-to-face and other meeting modalities to provide thoughtful input to the intense and important work that has resulted in a comprehensive, multi-year SSIP, focused on improving results for children and youth with disabilities and their families” (W:F_TX_2) and “Multiple informational meetings were conducted during the summer of 2014 to familiarize

stakeholders with the SSIP process" (C:D:O:D_CT_4).

Transparency

Scattered throughout the SSIPs was evidence of states' efforts to be transparent about the development of the SSIP. One state wrote, "Advisory Council was informed of how the SSIP Work Group had arrived at the decision to focus the SSIP generally on reading achievement for SWD" (C:D:O:SI_DE_1). One state offered focus groups for teachers and invited them to attend one or more of the groups to hear what others were saying by stating, "Teachers could attend one session as their schedule accommodated, or all three to hear the conversation" (C:TR_HI_20).

States were intentional about acknowledging what was requested or noting what work was accomplished by stakeholders and then informing these stakeholders on how the state was responding/not responding to those requests or using/not using the work of the stakeholders. One state developed a plan for responding to each concern and question raised by those stakeholders who had reviewed SSIP information for the SEA, accounting for this approach stating, "Based on the data analysis, the State has identified a systematic plan to address each of the above concerns and questions raised by reviewers" (C:TR_OR_1). SEAs also used public reporting of the work being accomplished during the development of the SSIP by posting minute agendas, meetings, and in some instances, the data being examined for the data analysis.

Influence

Another significant theme of the data was the influence that SEAs afforded stakeholders in the SSIP development process. SEAs were expected to engage stakeholders in each of the five components of the SSIPs development that included data analysis, infrastructure analysis, SIMR identification, improvement strategy identification, and theory of action development. A review of the SSIPs revealed how stakeholders impacted this work, as evidence by 1) the variety of

work-related actions in which stakeholders were engaged and 2) how SEAs reported they used stakeholders' work in the development of the SSIP.

Stakeholder Behavior

The type of work-related actions in which stakeholders were involved crossed a range of behaviors. Through document examination, evidence indicated stakeholders:

1) were engaged in discussions about the information at hand (e.g., Discussions were about interests, focus, perceptions, evaluation, informing root cause);
2) offered input by providing feedback, reviewing, analyzing, or developing;
3) made decisions by rating, prioritizing, voting, and coming to consensus; and
4) made requests of the SEA.

Table 4.7

Engagement of Stakeholders as Coded in SSIPs

Stakeholder Behaviors	**Examples from the SSIPs**	**Quotes from SSIPs**
Engaged in discussions	Interests, focus, perceptions, evaluation, informing root cause	The stakeholder groups discussed current likely root causes based on the data analysis, and considered what actions might improve. (C:SA:D_CA_1) Team members also discussed potential issues with being able to compare proficiency data longitudinally due to ongoing changes in state tests related to revisions of state standards. (C:SA:D_MN_11)
Offered input	Displaying, recommend, input, answered, suggested, recognized, believed, perception, posed	A total of 209 comments were received from stakeholders concerning 13 broad categories as to the root causes for why South Carolina's students with disabilities have

		low reading performance. (C:SA:I_SC_4) The districts compiled a list of the initiatives in their districts currently. (C:SA:I_SD_6)
Provided Feedback	Agreed, feedback, proposed, confirmation, noted, reaffirmed, supported, concurred, guidance, approval, advice, endorsed, reinforced, compare, prioritized, react, validated, echoed, agree	Also like SEAP members, Directors supported MDE's focus on these two student groups. (C:SA:F:MN_8) Stakeholders echoed the sentiment of focusing on the early grades, instead of students in middle or high school, in order for South Carolina to have a better chance at improving reading proficiency (C:SA:F_SC_4)
Reviewed	Review, referred to, looked at, examined, explored, reflect, considered, discussed	...team meetings were held in alternating 2-3 week cycles, reviewing data, considering analyses, alternatives and next steps. (C:SA:D_MN_9)
Analyzed	Analyzed, narrow, determined, noted clear pattern, findings, evaluation of, trends, conclusions, identified, prioritized, observed, correlation, established validity, drilled down	The ADE-SEU identified and analyzed significant quantitative data from a number of data sources. (C:SA:A_AR_1) The team reviewed the State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicator data and looked at Colorado's academic achievement data in reading, writing, and math, looking for trends that were positive and those that appeared concerning. (C:SA:A_CO_1)
Developed	Crafted, development, propose, determined, proposed, made findings, formed hypotheses, concluded,	In the natural course of analyzing the data, the stakeholders began to form

	evaluation, development hypothesized, identify	hypotheses concerning likely root causes for low student academic performance. (C:SA:D_CA_2) The stakeholder groups ultimately crafted the SIMR. (C:SA:D_IN_1)
Made Decisions	Rating, prioritizing, voting, narrowing, coming to consensus	In response to this discovery, and following further discussions regarding the possible limiting impact on all students of current SEA practices, the USOE staff across multiple departments reached consensus, using an adapted Leading by Convening model (C:SA_UT_1) Stakeholders proposed no alternate targets and all stakeholders reached consensus with respect to the setting of targets for the Alabama SIMR. (C:SA_AL_3) During these information-seeking and decisionmaking discussions, The DDOE staff and representatives of multiple stakeholder groups critically informed the development of the SiMR and identified root causes for low reading performance. (C:SA_DE_1)
Requests	Additional data or information, types of analyses, comparisons, questions to analyze, disaggregate data, display data, data sources and quality, for clarification, not to create a new system, work within existing initiatives, structural changes	They further requested that the CSDE investigate the best prediction model for the performance of SWD on 3rd grade reading assessments. (C:SA:I_CT_10)

Stakeholders requested additional data to determine how pervasive this pattern was for other grade levels. (C:SA:REQUEST_GA_2)

While it was expected that SEAs were to engage stakeholders in each of the SSIP categories, the data revealed that it was not clearly evident that this had occurred. Theory of Action showed that in almost a third of the states (14 states, 28%) there was not clear evidence that stakeholders were directly involved in its development. Yet, other findings revealed there was clear evidence of stakeholder involvement in the infrastructure analysis (88%), SIMR identification (90%), improvement strategy identification (98%), and data analysis (98%).

Nature of the Work and Its Use

The work reported in the SSIPs required stakeholders to apply their expertise, experiences and cognitive skills with each element of the SSIP. This included offering root causes to observed data trends in the data analysis section of the report (C:SA:D_CA_2), offering recommendations for the SIMR due to trends in the data analysis (TE:SI_LA_ 1), suggesting improvement strategies based on their experiences and expertise as related to root causes (TE:IS_DE_1), offering insights, thoughts, suggestions or recommendations during discussions throughout the infrastructure analysis process (TE:I_MD_2), or providing feedback in the development of the Theory of Action (TE:TOA_PA_4).

The SEA described how that work was to be used in the development of the SSIP. The data show a hierarchy of the degree of influence SEAs afforded the work. The hierarchy of influence levels is described here as: 1) no evidence of SEAs knowing the content of stakeholders' work; 2) evidence of SEAs knowing about the content of stakeholders' work; 3) evidence of using stakeholders' work, yet unclear of specifically what was used/not used; and, 4)

evidence of using/not using stakeholders' work with clarity about specifically what the work was that was used /not use. Table 4.8 offers examples of these four levels of influence.

Table 4.8

SEA Actions with Stakeholders' Work to Influence the SSIP

Hierarchy of SEA Actions with the work of Stakeholders	**Examples from the SSIP**	**Quotes from SSIPs**
No evidence of SEAs knowing the content of stakeholders' work	Engaged stakeholders	Discussed and received stakeholder feedback on proposed improvement activities. Stakeholders suggested the State consider recommendations that include, but are not limited to: Require teachers to provide explicit instruction to students with disabilities; Prepare teachers to teach reading to students with disabilities; Strengthen policy and professional development on literacy and pre-literacy skill development;... (SA:L_NY_3)
	Could consider stakeholders work	Further feedback from the directors that could be incorporated into the CIS included suggestions around the requirements of coaches to be knowledgeable in reading and data analysis, the encouragement of more reading in the schools and the encouragement of communication and collaboration among teachers at a school site (17% of the feedback was related to communication and collaboration among teachers.)(SA:L_NM_7)
Evidence of SEAs knowing about the content of stakeholders' work	Considers stakeholders work	ESS considered input from all stakeholders before deciding on the SIMR. (SA:L_AZ_3) These themes were recorded for consideration by the project leadership team when identifying the strategies that would be effective for the improvement of graduation rates for students identified with emotional disturbance. (SA:L_ND_2)
Evidence of using	From the work of	Stakeholders were also encouraged to

stakeholders' work, yet unclear of specifically what was used/not used	stakeholders	provide feedback and their comments were incorporated into further development of the Theory of Action. (SA:L_AR_9)
	Took action based on stakeholders	They also provided information about the overall strengths and weaknesses of the state's infrastructure. From this work, a set of coherent improvement strategies that are based on the state's data and infrastructure analysis were identified in order to increase the graduation rate for students with disabilities with a standard high school diploma. (SA:L_FL_2)
Evidence of using/not using stakeholders' work with clarity about specifically what the work was that was used /not use	Direct use of stakeholders	The final decision on the use of an extended year graduation rate was made by a group of five local unit special education directors, representing the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders (NDCEL), along with members of the project leadership team. (SA:L_ND_4)
	Clear decision of what was not used	Many also expressed that the SIMR was unattainable, but a vocal minority found the 36% increase to be either appropriate or not rigorous enough. RDA staff believe the SIMR is both rigorous and attainable and if they must err, choose to err on the side of being overly ambitious with the understanding that the target can be adjusted in the future, if needed, based upon student data and in communication with the OSEP. (SA:L_NM_4) Using disability category data alone, up to 86% of Utah students with disabilities have mild/moderate disabilities. However, discussions with stakeholders seem to reflect a focus on the generalized perceived ability level of all students with disabilities, with stakeholders basing decisions upon a potential impact on a small number of students with significant disabilities. It is not the SEA's intention to marginalize the expectations for any student with disabilities, but to instead address the needs of all students with disabilities while ensuring

policy and practice decisions meet the needs of all students. (SA:L_UT_6)

Further examination of this data reveals that much of the influence was through stakeholder input being taken under advisement with some influence occurring in collaboration with SEA. Some SEAs noted they were "pulling the thread" through various sources of information, such as using stakeholder input, other analyses, research and core team decisions as a means of triangulation prior to finalizing decisions.

Research Question 2: Relationship of Interactions between Stakeholders and SEAs Within the SSIPs

This section addresses the findings in response to the second research question: *How do State Education Agencies (SEAs) actions as represented in the five sections of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I relate to the range of interaction between the stakeholders and the SEA?*

Interactions

An analysis of the data with respect to the interactions between the SEA and stakeholders revealed three specific findings. First, these interactions were identified as communication exchanges that displayed a degree of influence conferred by the SEA on the use of the information shared in the communication exchange. The second finding in response to this research question was the directional nature of the interactions. Lastly, the third finding was the types of relationship of interactions between the SEA and stakeholders within the SSIPS and across the country when examining the data, based on the SIMR of the states, the page length of the SSIP, the child count of the state and the technical assistance region of the country in which the state is located.

Confluence of Communication Exchange and Influence

This study identified interactions as defined by the confluence of a communication exchange and influence. *Communication exchange* in this study is at least one party expressing an idea or thought to an audience, and *influence* is the use or non-use of that thought by another party or multiple parties. The combination of communication between the SEA and stakeholders and the influence that SEA's afforded stakeholders' work on the development of the SSIP is referred to here as *interaction*. Communication exchanges coupled with the influence of those exchanges was the first of the findings concerning interactions between the SEA and the stakeholders. As noted in Table 4.9, the four variations of communication exchanges evident in the SSIPs contained seven degrees of influence conferred by the SEA on the information that was exchanged between the SEA and stakeholders.

Table 4.9

Interactions: Levels of Communication and Influence

	Communication Exchange	Influence	Quotes from SSIPs
A.	• One way from SEA to SH external and internal • Disseminate, get the word out	1. No SH influence on the information provided by the SEA	Coherent improvement strategy survey results were shared with the large stakeholder group. (C:D:O:IS_IL2_1)
II.	• SEA asks for feedback • Feedback is to already prepared or proposed material, or draft conclusions or ideas, or decisions being considered	2. Input may or may not be acknowledged 3. Input may be acknowledged 4. Input is considered, taken under advisement yet unclear what of the input is utilized	Share the SSIP process to date and solicit general stakeholder impressions. (C:D:O:S_IL_2)
III.	• SEA provides information, raw data, documents for group to engage with • Asks group to analyze, synthesize, develop	5. Input of what is and what is not accepted transparent to SH 6. How input is incorporated into final	The team reviewed the State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicator data and looked at Colorado's academic achievement

		product is transparent	data in reading, writing, and math, looking for trends that were positive and those that appeared concerning. (C:SA:RE_CO_3)
IV.	• SEA and SH discuss and shape next steps, ideas, conclusions, decisions together	7. Final ideas, conclusions, decisions, products are developed and owned by the group	The final decision on the use of an extended year graduation rate was made by a group of five local unit special education directors, representing the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders (NDCEL), along with members of the project leadership team. (C:D:T:T_ND_1)

Directionality

The second finding regarding interactions between the SEA and stakeholders concerned the directional nature of the interactions a) from the SEA to stakeholders (unilateral), b) from the stakeholders to the SEA (bilateral-A), or SEA to stakeholders (bilateral-B) who in turn responded to the initial interaction, and c) back and forth between the SEA and stakeholders (collaborative). (See Table 4.10)

Table 4.10

Directional Interactions

Direction	Examples of Interactions from the SSIP	Quotes
Unilateral	• Informational meetings were conducted. • Provided an update. • Associated information posted on the state website. • Variety of constituent groups were kept abreast of the two stakeholder	Multiple informational meetings were conducted during the summer of 2014 to familiarize stakeholders with the SSIP process. (C:D:O:SS_CT_4) ISBE management met with IAASE at the board meeting

	groups' recommendations. • Administration at all levels of the organization was routinely updated during internal leadership meetings. • Presentation to…	during their fall conference to discuss the SSIP. An update on the Phase I progress to date was given. (C:D:O:SS_IL_4)
Bilateral- A	• The SSIP Advisory Council had several requests concerning the display of data. They asked for visual interpretations with labeling (other than tables with labeling) to help understand the data. Subsequently, data were displayed on graphs, in larger fonts, in color and with some labeling for ease of view and analysis. • Followed by question and answer sessions. • The SSIP Stakeholder Group addressed the data analysis, SIMR and root causes, and requested additional data for review. • Relevant information and data were presented and discussed at multiple [stakeholder] meetings,…..[Stakeholders] asked questions regarding data sources and quality. They also requested information for expanded analyses as well as advised the Core and Leadership teams on what issues they thought were most salient.	The SSIP Advisory Council had several requests concerning the display of data. They asked for visual interpretations with labeling (other than tables with labeling) to help understand the data. (C:SA:RQ_DE_3) The SSIP Stakeholder Team met, discussed the results of two rounds of stakeholder responses to the prompt, examined and analyzed related data, and requested additional information for a subsequent meeting. A file displaying charts and graphs of some of the additional data analyses requested by stakeholders for consideration and discussion is also attached (see "Additional Data for Stakeholder Consideration"). (C:SA:RQ_OH_1)
Bilateral-B	• Keep all committees abreast of the SSIP work and provide a vehicle for each committee to inform the results. • Conduct focus group surveys of schools within the purposeful sample group-This information then was used to identify root causes that contribute to low performance in reading and English language arts. • The [SEA] provided updates and solicited feedback. • Share the SSIP process to date and solicit general stakeholder	The division then shared the strengths and challenges that the department structure presents at the October 2014 meeting of the Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities and solicited stakeholder feedback on areas that merit increased state focus. (C:D:O:D_TN_4) Results of the in-depth data analysis, including two potential

	impressions. • Solicited feedback. • Considered input from all stakeholders before deciding. • A presentation was made …. for their input and approval.	broad areas of focus for the SSIP, were shared with members of the WAPSD panel and special education directors in order to obtain additional input. (C:D:O:D_WY_1)
Collaborative	• Staff and stakeholders examined... • Management met with … during the Special Education Directors Conference to discuss... • Analysis was conducted by the Core Planning Team and stakeholders with data content expertise. • Were developed together with the team. • The panel strategically analyzed … in concert with the State. • [SEA] worked with the SSIP External Stakeholder Group to identify this SIMR. • State staff and key stakeholders then reviewed current MDE priorities, goals and initiatives to determine if the proposed SIMR area (i.e. reading proficiency) was aligned to them.	Stakeholders were able to engage in a critical exchange with MA ESE to identify the focus of the data and infrastructure analyses presented below. (C:D:T:I_MA_1) Throughout the development of the State Systemic Improvement Plan, improvement strategies have been at the forefront of thought and planning. As the CDE and stakeholders worked through this process...(C:D:T:IS_CO_1) The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Office of Special Education staff and various stakeholder groups conducted a comprehensive data analysis to determine the Department's State-identified Measurable Result (SIMR) and the root causes contributing to low performance of students with disabilities.(C:D:T:D_MS_1)

While the study revealed unilateral, bilateral and collaborative directionality, an examination of each of these categories further revealed interactions that could be described in one of three ways: 1) SEAs presenting to stakeholders, " Special Populations personnel presented the SIMR, potential strategies, and the theory of action to an audience of special education teachers and leaders from across the state" (C:D:O:I_TN_1); 2) SEAs receiving from the stakeholders, "includes stakeholder feedback gathered"(C:D:O:S_TX_1), "gathered feedback on the development of the…" (C:D:O:TA_AR_%); and, 3) SEAs and stakeholders collaborating

together, “The final decision on the use of an extended year graduation rate was made by a group of five... special education directors,... along with members of... leadership team” (C:D:T:T_ND_1).

Table 4.11

Directionality of Communication Exchanges

Direction of Exchange	Quotes from the SSIPs
Presentation	The SSIP stakeholder group was presented with the information regarding the root cause data and possible coherent improvement strategies identified by the internal stakeholder group and core leadership team. Information from the data analysis, as well as a "tiered universal" approach for technical assistance which the state plans to execute through the SSIP, was shared with various internal and external stakeholders. During the February 19, 2015 ISAC meeting, ISBE staff reviewed SSIP Phase I accomplishments to date under each of the SSIP components.
Receipt	At the session on the XXX conference, stakeholders such as special education teachers and supervisors and general education teachers responded to a questionnaire with their input on the SIMR and coherent improvement strategies. The following groups … contributed to the final determination of the SSIP and SIMR. (RI_infra_) Based on some specific stakeholder input, the proposed strategies underwent some minor revisions before being presented to the Wyoming Association of Special Education Directors, who submitted input used to craft the language for the SSIP Theory of Action. (WY_Improve)
Collaboration	BSE and the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) reviewed state and national data regarding graduation outcomes for students with disabilities. The ALSDE, in conjunction with a broad representation of stakeholders, have designated improvement in Indicator 14b as its SIMR with a focus on improvement in the indicators that have the greatest impact upon post-school success.

	The FLDOE, in collaboration with its internal and external stakeholders.
	The final decision on the use of an extended year graduation rate was made by a group of five local unit special education directors, representing the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders (NDCEL), along with members of the project leadership team.
	Over the course of SSIP development, stakeholders and OEC interacted continuously to develop Ohio's SIMR.
	The SSIP stakeholders have been deeply engaged in recent discussions with MA ESE on the importance of targeting the work of the SSIP to early childhood special education given the significant opportunity for longitudinal improvement in child level outcomes that activities targeted towards this age group provides.
	As the following list demonstrates, multiple stakeholders that represent a wide range of constituents, including parents of children with disabilities, adults with disabilities, advocacy groups, district administrators, and teachers, participated with OSDE interagency collaborative teams in the development of the SSIP.

While lateral and collaborative directionality was identified throughout the SSIPs, this study did not gather data for analysis to determine an overall conclusion about the pervasive directionality of engagement. Yet, several findings were noted. First, directionality coded language data of the SSIPs, when examined for which component of the SSIP the language occurred, revealed that collaborative language, more than presentation or receipt language was used in more states when examining each of the components of the SSIP in aggregate, and of the data analysis section of the SSIP, in particular.

Secondly, when states referenced the SSIP as a whole, presentation and receipt language was more evident than collaboration language. States routinely shared information on the progress with the SSIP on their website or through direct 1:1 presentation to SEA leadership teams or groups of teams at statewide conferences and professional organizations' meetings.

Also, states would, in these same situations, request stakeholders to provide input, whether through responding on-line, through a web-contact, soliciting feedback at large conferences using roundtable discussions, or asking for feedback following a presentation at a professional organization's meeting. Therefore, 'receipt language use' was evident in many of the 'present language use' situations.

Finally, there were findings based on language referencing the direction of the exchange used within each SSIP component or the SSIP in general, by state, and by SSIP descriptors (i.e., technical assistance region, child count, page count of SSIP, SIMR area). Data were only reported when 'many states', defined as 50% or more of the states within a descriptor grouping, used a particular type of directional language. Also reported is the directionality language that was 'most commonly used', defined as the language most frequently used by at least 2 or more states, within a descriptive grouping.

Analysis by SSIP Component

States referenced stakeholder engagement in their reports in respect to each of the five components of the SSIP (i.e., data analysis, infrastructure analysis, SIMR identification, improvement strategy identification, and theory of action development) as well as the SSIP as a whole. One state reported, "An overview of the plan was presented at regional special education administrators' meetings" (C:D:O:S_VT_4 . An examination of the directional nature of the interactions was undertaken using the following categories: 1) presentation defined as SEAs presenting information about the work to stakeholders, 2) receipt defined as SEAs receiving information from stakeholders to inform the work, and 3) collaboration defined as SEAs and stakeholders jointly sharing information to arrive at decisions about the work, revealed the

following findings from the five components of the SSIPs with respect to the TA regions, child count, page length and SIMR aspects of the SSIPs and states.

Data in the findings below are only reported when 'many states' (50% or more) within a state descriptive grouping (i.e., length of report, child count, region of the country, SIMR) used a particular type of directional language. Also reported is the directionality language that was 'most commonly used' (state "n" size equals 2 or more) within a descriptive grouping (i.e., length of report, child count, region of the country, SIMR). The state descriptive categories that are reported on below, (i.e., length of report, child count, technical assistance (TA) regional resource center (RRC) regions of the country and SIMR), are described and explained previously in the case information found on pg. 53 and Appendix C.

SSIPs In General

The following data relate to states' references to the SSIP as a whole.

Presentation to stakeholders

Presentation of the SSIP to stakeholders occurred in many states 1) within all RRC regions of the country, 2) with medium size child count (i.e., 70,00-170,000 students with disabilities), 3) with reports of all lengths except those with a 61-90 page range and 4) with graduation or reading SIMRs. Presentation of a general overview of the SSIP was most commonly reported in a state's SSIP 1) in 4 of the 6 RRC regions of the country, 2) in all states, irrespective of child count, 3) in states with reports of all lengths except with a 61-90-page range, and 4) in states with graduation or reading SIMRs.

Receipt

Receipt of information on the SSIP in general was most commonly reported in the SSIPs of states with a math SIMR.

Collaboration. Collaboration with stakeholders on the SSIP in a general way was most commonly reported in the SSIPs of states within one RRC region of the country.

SSIP-Data Analysis Component

There was insufficient evidence on directionality other than collaboration to report about states in the data analysis component of the SSIP. Within this component of the SSIP many states in specific categories used collaborative directionality language when reporting on stakeholder engagement: 1) States with an early childhood SIMR and ones with both a reading and math SIMR, 2) three of the RRC regions (NERRC, MPRRC and WRRC), 3) states with medium size child counts, and 4) states with SSIPs up to 30 pages and states with SSIPs of 31-60 pages in length.

Collaboration with stakeholders on the data analysis component of their SSIP was most commonly reported in the SSIPs of states 1) of all sizes, regardless of child count, 2) of all page lengths except over 90 pages, 3) in 5 of the 6 RRCs, and 4) with SIMRs in early childhood, reading, reading and math, or graduation.

SSIP-Infrastructure Analysis Component

The following data relate to states' references to the infrastructure analysis component of the SSIP.

Presentation

Only one demographic grouping, SIMR identification, within one section of the SSIP, infrastructure analysis, did there appear that many states presented information to stakeholders. This was evident in the states with both a reading and math SIMR and those states with an early childhood SIMR.

Receipt

There was insufficient evidence on directionality of the SEA receiving information on the SSIP to report about states in the infrastructure analysis component of the SSIP.

Collaboration

Collaboration with stakeholders on the infrastructure analysis component of their SSIP was most commonly reported in the SSIPs of states 1) with medium and large child counts, 2) with page lengths of all sizes except for over 90 pages, 3) in 4 of 6 RRC regions, and 4) in all SIMR categories.

SSIP-SIMR Identification Component

The following data relate to states' references to the component of the SSIP which identifies the SIMR.

Presentation

Presentation of information to states on the identification of the SIMR occurred in many states 1) with a small child count. Presentation of information to states on the identification of the SIMR was most commonly reported in one regional resource center region in the country (Mid-South).

Receipt

There was insufficient evidence on directionality of the SEA presenting information on the SSIP to report about states in the infrastructure analysis component of the SSIP.

Collaboration

States and stakeholders collaborating on the identification of the SIMR occurred in many states 1) with a large child count and 2) that had a SIMR of early childhood or graduation. States and stakeholders collaborating on the identification of the SIMR was most commonly reported in states 1) with medium and large child count, 2) with all lengths of reports except over 90 pages,

3) within 4 of 6 RRC regions, NE, SE, NC, MP, and 4) that had a SIMR in early childhood, reading, or graduation.

SSIP-Improvement Strategy Identification Component

The following data relate to states' references to the component of the SSIP on the identification of improvement strategies.

Presentation

There was insufficient evidence on directionality of the SEA presenting information on the SSIP to report about states in the infrastructure analysis component of the SSIP.

Receipt

States receiving information from stakeholders was most commonly reported in the SSIPs of states with a reading SIMR.

Collaboration

States and stakeholders collaborating on improvement strategy identification was most commonly reported in the SSIPs of 2 RRC regions, the northeastern and the western.

SSIP-Theory of Action Development Component

The following data relate to states' references to the component of the SSIP on the development of the theory of action.

Presentation

Presentation of information to states on the development of the theory of action was most commonly reported in states with an early childhood SIMR.

Receipt

Receipt of information to states on the development of the theory of action was most commonly reported in states with a reading SIMR

Collaboration

States and stakeholders collaborating on the development of the theory of action was most commonly reported in states within the northeastern regional resource center region of the country.

Summary

In this qualitative descriptive study using thematic analysis, archival historical data in the form of 50 state government reports, were examined and analyzed for this study. The researcher collected relevant information applying literature-based, expert generated and emergent coding themes to examine how State Education Agencies (SEAs) engage stakeholders in special education improvement planning. The central research questions asked were: 1) *How do State Education Agencies (SEAs) in the five sections of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I represent/describe stakeholder engagement* and 2) *How do State Education Agencies (SEAs) actions as represented in the five sections of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I relate to the range of interaction between the stakeholders and the SEA?*

Responding to the first research questions, the findings suggest SEAs describe stakeholder engagement in 4 domains: representation, support, communication, and influence. The second research question focused on an examination of interactions between SEAs and stakeholders within the five components of the SSIP across the discriptive features of the SSIPs and states. These findings revealed (a) a convergence of communication exchanges with influence, (b) directionality of interactions and (c) three types of interactions between SEA staff and stakeholders within the SSIP components: 1) lateral-SEA presentation, 2) lateral-SEA receipt, and 3) collaborative-SEA and stakeholder joint development.

Throughout the SSIPs, attention to engaging stakeholders to assist in the development of the SSIP, who are representative of a wide range of factors, was clearly evident. The reports

indicated the number and breadth of those involved based on a variety of roles, expertise, demographics, and influence. SEAs were both purposive and explicit in their selection of stakeholders. With OSEP requiring SEAs to engage stakeholders, and from specific groups of people, evidence of these affiliations was expected and confirmed, as there was a multiplicity of professions, roles and organizations represented. Stakeholders came from within the SEA as well as from other public and private agencies and professional affiliations. These individuals and representatives were parts of existing teams that were engaged for the purposes of the work, or were selected due to their affiliations and expertise. Other notable findings concerned the flexible engagement of individuals and the facilitation of the stakeholers. Evidence of a variety of rationales for including stakeholders were found, including the prominent role stakeholders play in the state, the value they added to the work, appreciation for their contributions, and some of the influences that occurred as a result of their engagement.

Second, the reports described that SEAs provided support to stakeholders. This support prepared stakeholders in advance of the work and provided informative assistance to stakeholders during the work.

Third, how SEAs and stakeholders communicated with each other was portrayed throughout the reports. The use of a variety of means for connecting with stakeholders before, during and after meetings including the use of technology were features of communication between the SEAs and stakeholders as identified in the SSIPs.

A fourth theme in the study, was the influence that SEAs afforded stakeholders in the SSIP development. A review of the SSIPs revealed how stakeholders impacted this work, as evidenced by 1) the variety of work in which stakeholders were engaged and 2) how SEAs reported they used stakeholders' work in the development of the SSIP.

The fifth identified theme of the study and revealed in response to the second research question, concerned the nature of interactions between SEAs and stakeholders. Interactions are described here as unilateral or one-way such as posting of material on websites; bilateral, including providing information and response to requests; and collaborative in which the SEA and stakeholders co-jointly engaged in work. While lateral and collaborative directionality was identified throughout the SSIP and states, this study did not gather data to determine an overall conclusion about the pervasive directionality of engagement for any particular state's SSIP.

Interactions that occurred between the SEA and stakeholders throughout the SSIP's five components (data analysis, infrastructure analysis, SIMR identification, improvement strategy identification and theory of action development) were revealed in three categories- SEAs' presentation of information to stakeholders, SEAs' receipt of information from stakeholders and thirdly, a collaborative exchange of information between SEAs and stakeholders. The data within each category within each component of the SSIP were then examined with the demographic lenses of each state's a) child count, b) SIMR area of focus, c) page length of report, and d) OSEP TA centers region of the country.

This examination revealed collaborative language more than presentation or receipt language was used in more states when examining each of the components of the SSIP in aggregate and of the data analysis section of the SSIP, in particular. Additionally, when states interacted with stakeholders and referenced the SSIP as a whole, rather than when states were engaged with stakeholders for any particular aspect of the SSIP, presentation, and receipt language were more evident than collaboration language. Lastly, there were findings which identified the directionality language within descriptor groupings.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This qualitative study (Sandelowski, 2000) using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) within the broader approach of content analysis examined all fifty states' special education state systemic improvement plans (SSIPs) to understand how State Education Agencies (SEAs) engage stakeholders in special education improvement planning. The discussion, conclusions and recommendations presented in this chapter are informed by the scholarly research and respond to the review of the SSIPs in light of the research questions.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the themes and relationships that emerged in the study as they aligned with each of the two research questions. A leadership structure for SEAs' engagement with stakeholders in accountability planning is subsequently offered based on this discourse and on the expectations OSEP has of SEAs. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

Research Question 1: Description of Stakeholder Engagement

> Research Question 1: How do State Education Agencies (SEAs) in the five sections of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I represent/describe stakeholder engagement?

This research question examined how SEAs engaged stakeholders in state level planning to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Collaborations among people and organizations, as described in the business, education, and other social systems' literature, are believed to be essential to success in solving the issues confronting these systems (Bradshaw, 1999; Honig, 2006; Miller, 2008; Jochim & May, 2010; Yip et al., 2011). As a SEA's role is to implement policy which has been written to address challenging issues in the field, employing strategies such as stakeholder engagement is one policy tool that SEAs can use to achieve the

intended outcomes of educational policy (Halliday, 2016; Linehan, 2010; Man & Hofmann, 2017). Therefore, knowing how stakeholders are engaged in state level special education work, which this research question explored, contributes to states' engagement of stakeholders to solve the complex challenge of improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

Representation

Representativeness of stakeholders is a critical feature contributing to the success of systemic change (Hirota & Jacobwitz, 2007). As SEAs engage stakeholders to affect such changes, a broadening of constituency groups represented in the work increases the awareness of issues. This is one way of assessing the legitimacy of involvement (Hirota & Jacobwitz, 2007; Nordmeyer, 2017) and the level of 'buy-in' by stakeholders (Rowan et al., 2004). Additionally, when a variety of voices are included the possibility of the work being incorporated into planning and implementation improves (Block, 2005, Mallery et al., 2012, Man & Hofmann, 2017). As evidenced in the SSIPs, states involved a wide range of stakeholders. Demography, roles, expertise, and influence were variables used to assess the breadth of representation among stakeholders that were identified in states' SSIPs. This study confirms what previous SSIP analyses identified (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education, 2015); a multiplicity of professions, roles, and organizations of stakeholders were represented throughout the states.

OSEP identified an expectation for states to involve particular representatives in the development of the SSIP. Recommended participants included "local educational agencies (LEAS), and the State Advisory Panel… parents of children with disabilities, parent advocacy groups, and other State and local agencies that pay for, provide, or collaborate on IDEA services and issues… with expertise on the issues to be discussed…" (Regional Resource Center

Program, 2015, p. 3). Two particular categories of stakeholders have been identified throughout the literature; those individuals from within an organization and those external to an organization (Block, 2015; Mallery, et. al., 2012; Nordmeyer, 2017). While these terms are descriptive of who are engaged, they do not sufficiently illuminate the ways various categories of stakeholders are engaged in collaborative work, nor how these groupings of stakeholders were engaged in the development of the SSIPs.

Not unexpectedly, the SSIPs demonstrated this array of internal and external constituents and groups that was mentioned in the literature. In the only other study of the Phase I SSIPs (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2015) over 18 different categories of personnel internal to SEAs were engaged in some manner and over 20 different categories of people and organizations external to SEAs were engaged to some extent.

Cashman and colleagues (2014) commented on the fear that is experienced when there is talk about engaging a full array of stakeholders. Disclosing information which could be problematic or damaging to the organization is recognized as an area to be addressed in establishing credibility and trust in organizational work with stakeholders (Men, 2012; Rawlins, 2009). Being transparent and managing the effects of being transparent may contribute to this fear. Experience of this researcher finds that fears can stem from state staff's concern of their abilities to skillfully manage large groups of people with diverging opinions and their skills to calmly engage with stakeholders that may become verbally or physically aggressive or antagonistic due to differences in ideas and experiences that get expressed. Some fears of state staff may be based on the possibility of hearing ideas of stakeholders that would identify a different perspective than the one held by state staff or that may require a change in direction than the current focus. Yet, like Cashman and colleagues (2014), as well as Hirota and Jacobwitz

(2007), Man and Hofmann (2017) recommended “casting a wider net” (p. 1) to encourage increased numbers of stakeholders to be engaged in the task being undertaken by the convening authority. Quantity of stakeholders was an attribute of representativeness that states valued as they reported on the numbers of stakeholders engaged in the various activities of the SSIP (e.g., 200 supervisors and other district leaders...asking both groups [a variety of questions]; involved 240 Department and Community stakeholders in the SSIP Phase I process; 500 special education administrators, educators, service providers and parents of students with disabilities...[received an update on the work with the SSIP and the components of the SSIP]; 1200 responses to literacy survey).

In addition to the types of people engaged, the purpose of their engagement was manifested in the way SEAs grouped stakeholders to address the work. One type of work group is a group that is engaged in intellectual tasks (Devine, 2002; Honts, 2012) for “processing and integrating information for decision-making, addressing workflow issues, designing products and services, and/or coordinating work functions” (Honts, 2012, p. 315). These intellectual teams may include executive teams, advisory groups and commissions, among others (Honts, 2012). Such intellectual teams and the work they produce are not dissimilar from the groupings that the SEAs established in the development of SSIP and the work that the SEA expected from them.

One type of team established by the SEAs was a SSIP planning team, which Cashman and colleagues (2014) referred to as a core team. These authors describe members’ roles as one committed to the success of the work and responsible for the convening and structuring of meetings to accomplish the work. This team could be described in Devine’s (2002) term as a ‘commission’ whose membership is for “special projects or investigations and requires judgments or plans” (p. 301).

Another team, identified in this study as a steering committee, was constructed of team members having similarities to the individuals Cashman and others (2014) referred to as key participants and advisors. In their description, key participants have responsibility for specific issues in which they share a deep interest. Cashman and colleagues believe the role of steering committees is to periodically meet with planning teams to share their expertise, problem-solve, or give advice. This type of intellectual team (Devine, 2002; Honts, 2012) is similar to Devine's 'advisory work group'. Following this definition the 'advisory work group's' purpose is to improve an organization's effectiveness, the membership is typically not from within the organization, and it advises the organization without any authority to implement its suggestions. The group usually exists for a short period of time to accomplish its intended purpose.

The importance of states engaging authentic and many voices rather than just one representative voice from an organization has been noted by stakeholders engaged in stakeholder development work (personal communication Rogette Barber, February 2018 and Patschke, February 2018). O'Haire's (2011) study revealed a similar concern in which some participants questioned the definition of stakeholder representative balance absent "empirical evidence about numbers and breadth of stakeholders required for optimal input" (para. 71). In states where stakeholder committees were used for the development of the SSIP, the attendance of only one representative from an organization comprised the sole voice of that organization's contributions to the development of the SSIP. Other states though, may have seen engaging just a singular voice representing an entire organization's input as a limitation. In several states an entire population or greater numbers of a group (e.g., directors of special education, superintendents, teachers) were invited for interaction. Engagement in these situations was accomplished through surveying, conference discussions, web-based feedback systems, focus groups, etc. The use of

surveys, web-based feedback systems, focus groups, and discussions at conferences in which many people were in attendance, produced a greater likelihood of gathering more reliable input from an organization into the SSIP's development due to the number of people engaged from that organization. O'Haire (2011) also identified similar large group strategies for engaging stakeholders including focus groups, forums, town halls, symposiums, workshops, and conferences.

Many researchers recognize the value of bringing groups together to address complex social issues (Bradshaw, 1999; Conklin, 2005; Honig, 2006; Jochim & May, 2010). Block (2005) emphasizes the importance of working across boundaries which recognizes the value diversity of experiences brings to groups as was seen in UT and GA, "Part of the review process identified the need to recruit and ensure the involvement of general education teachers (at the USOE and in LEAs) and members of the business community, groups who have historically had little role in providing input regarding students with disabilities, despite the fact that virtually all Utah's students with disabilities access the general education classroom and local businesses" (C:R:B:UT_2) and "An area of strength was the engagement of varied stakeholders who contributed depth of knowledge and diversity" (C:R:B_GA_1).

Across the SSIPs, SEAs specifically recognized various attributes and value that diversity and breadth of stakeholder membership offered to the SSIP development. Several states included photographs of their students and teachers, cultural events and stakeholders. These states (AK, HI) each had notable stakeholder representation of indigenous groups in the SSIP development and student population. Perhaps the valuing of stakeholders through the display of pictures of them engaged in work is related to notable inclusion of indigenous group representation in SEA work or as a notable constituent group within the state. SEAs mentioned the need to

meaningfully involve stakeholders and recognizing stakeholders' involvement as critical to authentic and meaningful analysis as in the following example, "Throughout the data analysis process, stakeholder participation was paramount to an authentic and meaningful analysis-feedback loop" (O:I_AR_3).

Organizations involve stakeholders in order to benefit from the expertise that stakeholders bring to the organization's work (Mallery et al., 2012). SEA's SSIPs indicated in the following statements that stakeholders added value to the results of the work as they offered perspectives that could not be contributed by the convening authority, "It is work that we cannot do alone and we are grateful to all of our stakeholders"(O:I_HI_5) and "Practitioners that provided services to SWD and that understood the instructional process and Response to Intervention efforts at an LEA level were included. These stakeholders were essential to include as they bring a data analysis skill set to the work and a knowledge-base at the level of practice" (O:I_DE_6).

Mallery and colleagues (2012) identified that a motivation for including stakeholders was to "strengthen the legitimacy of and relations with local authorities and the local community" (p. 7). Through engaging with stakeholders some SEA's indicated that their partnerships between SEAs and organizations were strengthened and internal alignment of initiatives within a SEA occurred as noted, "MA ESE has developed a strong working relationship with these stakeholders, the foundation of which was the development of mutual trust and respect through our shared priorities that now allows for greater opportunity for critique and a shared process for identifying and developing ECSE goals and initiatives. These stakeholders will play a critical role in the next phases of the SSIP" (O:I:MA_2). These activities helped MA ESE develop an even stronger working partnership and integrated approach with these other units and state

agencies that will support the work of the SSIP (O:I:MA_4). This was represented by the following notes, "As a result of the positioning of the Collaborative Work, we are seeing a significant effort on the part of other Offices within the agency to connect and align with our work. We are also making a significant effort to align what we do to the other quality improvement work supported throughout the agency—this is perhaps the beginning of systems development" (O:I:MO_4) and "The Title I Bureau is largely responsible for the coordination of the SSIP and includes the Priority Schools Bureau, the Literacy Bureau and the Special Education Bureau in the planning and implementation of results-driven accountability. Including these stakeholders in the SSIP planning and implementation has led to unified monitoring visits, the inter-bureau use of monitoring tools, consolidation of resources and the synergistic development of ideas" (I:O:NM_2).

Support

A notable feature of stakeholder engagement in this study was the preparation of by SEAs to provide information to stakeholders in advance of the work and to support stakeholders during the work (Man & Hofmann, 2017). Preparation helps to ensure stakeholders' meaningful contributions (Mallery et al., 2012) by being informed, skilled, and knowledgeable in the process as well as the content of the work.

In Mallery and colleagues (2012) literature review on stakeholder engagement, the need to provide "appropriate education for active and engaged participation" (Mallery et al., 2012, p. 4) was raised. They noted the need for

> "…input by the organization prior to stakeholder involvement, notably, the role of informational materials as a means of preparing stakeholder participants. In general, identifying and addressing stakeholder needs for informational resources or training is vital to ensuring a stakeholder's ability to meaningfully contribute to a discussion

> or process. It is also important to equip individuals with information on their role… and how they might be affected by the outcomes ….” (Mallery et al., 2012, p. 10).

SEAs showed their interest in having stakeholders informed and skilled (Hirota & Jacobwitz, 2007; Mallery, et al., 2012) to meaningfully participate in meetings by providing information to stakeholders in advance of meetings. Stakeholders supported in this way contributes to having participants understand meeting expectations (Man & Hofmann, 2017). Initial preparation opportunities provided by the SEAs allowed participants to learn the terminology being used by OSEP and how to be involved with the work. In this study these preparations included providing instructions for participation, establishing principles to operate by, and building stakeholders’ capacity to do the work.

Another support to stakeholders is the involvement of facilitators. The regional resource center staff played an integral part in many states’ SSIP development through facilitation of the work with stakeholders. Hogue (1993) identified facilitators as a reoccurring role in stakeholder collaboration and noted that a skilled facilitator engaged within a group promotes successful collaboration. Lessard, Bareil, Lalonde, Duhamel, Hudor, Goudreau, and Levesque (2016) assert that facilitation supports changes in practice within organizations. Facilitation roles can be of two types, roles that are oriented toward implementation and those oriented toward support (Lessard et al., 2016), both of which were demonstrated by the technical assistance providers from the national regional resource center programs (RRCP). Implementation orientated roles relate to change and project management including such features as Lessard and colleagues (2016) identify: (a) “communication or vision of project guidelines” (p. 5), (b) the training provided by RRCP facilitators to stakeholders on the expectations OSEP had for the SSIP, and (c) “application of PDSA cycle” (p. 5) which RRCP staff explained to stakeholders for use in the SSIP development process. A support-oriented role addresses meeting management and group

and interpersonal dynamics including “management of effective meetings” (p. 5) which were frequently a role of the RRCP staff and “encouragement” (p. 5) which was demonstrated when the RRCP guided stakeholders through activities with step by step explanations for the work being accomplished.

SEAs staff specifically provided extensive resources to compliment the expectations of SSIP development for the work to be more manageable and understandable by the participants. One such resource, a facilitator, was used in many states, and identified by Hogue (1993) as a reoccurring role in stakeholder collaboration and noted that a skilled facilitator engaged with a group promotes successful collaboration. Supports were also provided that allowed for a freer exchange of ideas than limiting input of stakeholders to just pro forma support of SEA decisions or to narrow pre-determined choices for stakeholders from which to select. Man and Hofmann (2012) cautioned state agencies when preparing materials for stakeholder engagement that limiting input rather than encouraging more of a stakeholder’s voice in the work could be counter-productive.

Communication

The use of a variety of means for communicating with stakeholders before, during, and after meetings, including the use of technology (Mallery et al., 2012), are components identified in the engagement literature and evident throughout the SSIPs (Mallery et al., 2012, Man & Hofmann, 2017; O’Haire, 2011). Written communications, on-line postings and exchanges, and face to face meetings serve as vehicles to keep communication of stakeholders occurring throughout the engagement period. O’Haire (2011) relates the use of focus groups, forums, and conferences, either alone or in combination with other methods of interaction as very common in stakeholder engagement situations. Man and Hofmann (2017) identified initial communication as

a way of promoting effective engagement that helps participants understand jargon and expectations. Communication should be clear and open with established procedures for communicating between meetings (Borden & Perkins, 1999). Communication for many purposes whether inviting people to meetings, asking for input, summarizing past work, or preparing stakeholders for tasks ahead all support open and clear communication.

Man and Hofmann (2017) also identified the need for state agencies to be transparent in communicating with stakeholders such that stakeholders' contributions are documented and clarified as to how that input was utilized. This transparency was illustrated in the SSIPs through publicly reporting on the activities of the stakeholders through the following statements in the SSIP documents, "The DDOE then took this information as well as elements of their discussion to the SSIP Advisory Council to explain why reading was selected as the beginning area for focus" (C:T_DE_1), "all decisions regarding the coherent improvement strategies; focus for implementation; theory of action; and targets were sent out to stakeholders to obtain final feedback....Stakeholders were informed that depending upon the final SIMR, the information provided through the infrastructure analysis would be utilized to improve the result, or would be dealt with through another process to be defined" (C:T_HI_4), and "In addition, to maintaining stakeholder engagement, LDOE provided the SSIP Stakeholder Group with a detailed written summary after each meeting and before the next to assure continued involvement, identify ways input was incorporated into the SSIP, and frame future conversations" (C:T_LA_1).

Influence

Work by Roome and Wijen (2006) in a study of stakeholder power alternatively uses the word 'influence' for 'power' and argues that in organizational learning, power "...is possessed by stakeholders, in part it is vested by organizations involved in learning or stakeholder engagement, and in part it is determined by the ambition of organizations and the type of

learning and relationships they have with other actors" (p.257). Of significance to this study of the SSIPs, is that Roome and Wijen (2006) suggest that organizations learn through conferring power, or influence, through stakeholder engagement.

The SSIPs similarly referenced levels of influence or power that SEAs attributed to or afforded stakeholder's contributions to the final content of the SSIP. This was evidenced by the language SEAs used to describe stakeholder impact on the various types of actions (e.g., data analysis, identification of improvement strategies, etc) that were reported in the SSIPs. SSIPs included language about stakeholder engagement which ranged from little or low potential for influence through direct influence on the SSIP. Little or low potential influence was exemplified in this example: "Further feedback from the directors that could be incorporated into the CIS included suggestions around the requirements of coaches to be knowledgeable in reading and data analysis, the encouragement of more reading in the schools and the encouragement of communication and collaboration among teachers at a school site (17% of the feedback was related to communication and collaboration among teachers)" (SE:L_NM_7). The use of the phrase "could be incorporated" implies that this information could not be used as well, leaving one skeptical about the degree of influence that the SEA allowed of this stakeholder input.

In this next example which is a bit higher up in influence, the SEA attributes some influence to stakeholder engagement. Yet, the specificity of what aspect of the work the stakeholders had any impact with could be described as vague or very broad. What one does know is that the content is specific to the SSIP in the area of data collection and analysis. Also having less specificity is the degree to which that work was used by the SEA. One can agree that the stakeholders at least provided the SEA with recommendations. What the SEA does with those recommendations is not stated, "The SPP/APR team meets with the SEAP on an ongoing

basis, to discuss data collections and data analysis, and receive recommendations for the SPP/APR, including the SSIP" (SE:L_PA_1).

As one climbs higher on the degree of influence scale this next example shows greater clarity and specificity, "One example of the stakeholders' influence on the review of data is the request that EED and the stakeholders review both 4- and 5-year cohort data to determine if either set of data is more likely to show improvement. EED put together the data set for review and EED and stakeholders learned that the benefit of using either a 4 or 5-year cohort varies by school district" (EA:L_AK_2). Here, the influence content is specifically identified as a request from the stakeholders for data in which they can examine achievement data on the 4- and 5-year graduation cohort of students. The degree to which this stakeholder request was given influence is high as the state indicates that they responded to that specific request by putting together and providing the data set that was requested to the stakeholders for their analysis.

The last two examples show an even higher level of influence afforded to the stakeholder's work than prior examples. In the first of these final examples, the stakeholders' input was enacted upon by the SEA specifically in direct and specific manner to alleviate the concern raised by the stakeholders, "On March 22, 2015, the Task Force met and reviewed the proposed improvement strategies for the SSIP. The group expressed concerns surrounding the assurance that the additional supports offered through the SSIP would be used with fidelity. MDE addressed those concerns with the assignment of two internal staff to serve as monitors of the program" (SA:L_MS_1). This second example demonstrates a recommendation by the stakeholders to align the SSIP work with the ESEA waiver. This recommendation was enacted upon by the SEA exactly as recommended. The SEA aligned the SSIP work with ESEA by selecting schools for the SSIP work that were already identified as focus or priority schools

under ESEA, as exemplified in the following statement, “In addition, stakeholders highly recommended finding ways to link with the State’s ESEA waiver (further explained in the Governance section of the Infrastructure Analysis). Thus, the OSES chose districts that were part of the ESEA waiver who had schools identified as focus or priority schools for multiple years” (SA:L_SC_3).

The various frameworks in the literature (Cashman et al., 2014; Frey et al., 2006; Gajda, 2004; Hogue, 1993) that examine stakeholder engagement each describe levels of interaction at which stakeholder input is increasingly more influential in the decisions made about the work. A high degree of influence would be those levels of the framework in which ideas are generated and decisions are made more collectively among stakeholders and the organizing authority. Thus lower levels would indicate minimal or no group (i.e., combination of SEA and stakeholders) idea generation or decision-making. For example, Gajda’s (2004) level of ‘networking’ has minimal or no group decision-making, while at the ‘partnering’ level there is equal sharing of decision-making. This is also evident in Frey and co-authors’ (2006) work in which ‘networking and cooperation’ levels include decision-making that is independent of others, ‘coordination’ has some shared decision-making, ‘coalition’ has equal voting in decision-making and at the ‘collaboration’ level consensus decision-making occurs. With Hogue (1993), at the lowest level, ‘networking’, there is minimal decision-making while at the highest level, ‘collaboration’, decision-making is shared among the participants. In these models, decisions range from those made independently of the stakeholders to ones in which consensus is reached among all. There was little evidence in these SSIP reports of the highest levels of interactions in which consensus decisions were reached as discussed in the various frameworks reviewed above. Similarly, the 2015 OSEP analysis of these reports did not indicate explicit or extensive use of

consensus decision-making across the SSIPs as would be evident in Cashman and colleagues' 'transformative' level of engagement. This researcher speculates that transformation (Cashman et al., 2014) or collaboration (Hogue, 1993; Frey et al., 2006, and Gajda 2004) requires stakeholders to spend more time together in order for work to be considered a partnership with merged resources and leadership, and with consensus decision-making as an explicit practice of the group. In this study SEAs provided the leadership and resources to convene stakeholder groups, solicit input, facilitate the work and compile the results. With regard to decision-making, some SEAs (e.g., AR, HI, MN, TX) displayed actions in which stakeholder input was only considered, while the final decisions about portions of the SSIP were made by the SEA leadership. For example, one state reported, "In the fall of 2014, based upon the work that was done in the initial stakeholder meetings, and the resulting recommendations by the stakeholders, Leadership decided on a focus on reading improvement as the state-identified measurable result" (SA:L_HI_4). Examples such as this indicate that the final decision-making authority rested with the SEA rather than an authority that was shared with stakeholders through a consensus decision-making process. In only one SSIP reviewed in this study was there evidence that stakeholders held the final authority, through voting, to come to a decision on the SSIP (IN).

Research Question 2: Interactions Within Sections of the SSIP

Research Question 2: How do State Education Agencies (SEAs) actions as represented in the five sections of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I relate to the range of interaction between the stakeholders and the SEA?

Interactions

Throughout the scholarship on stakeholder engagement, discussion and research focuses on how interaction of stakeholders is put into practice and assessed (Borden & Perkins, 1999;

Cashman et al., 2014; Frey, et al., 2006; Gajda, 2005). This engagement literature looks at interactions and describes several levels in a progression of (a) informing, networking and collaborating (Cashman et al., 2014), (b) networking, cooperating and partnering (Gajda, 2004), or (c) networking, cooperation, coordination/coalition (Frey et al., 2006). While this scholarship examines features of stakeholder interaction including leadership, decision-making, and communication, it does not address the granular nature of engagement.

In this study interaction was seen as the confluence of a 'communication exchange' and 'influence'. *Communication exchange* in this study is at least one party expressing an idea or thought to an audience, and *influence* is the use or non-use of that thought by another party or multiple parties. To best understand the findings of this study, the terms communication and interactions need delineation. The definition of interaction used in this study is slightly different from dictionary definitions of "interaction" which implies an exchange coupled with an actually occurring influence that is mutual among the parties involved, as seen in the Merriam Webster (2018) and The Free Dictionary (2018) definitions: "mutual or reciprocal action or influence". For this study, the definition of interactions may also include actions in which there is no mutuality, reciprocity or evidence of mutual influence. To better understand how the definition differs from the dictionaries, a delineation of 'communication exchange' is necessary.

Nordquist (2018) describes elements of the communication process to include the sender, receiver, the message, the medium and the feedback. The communication exchange in Nordquist's process is completed when feedback regarding the message is provided to the sender from the receiver. The IDEA Partnership (2018) coined the term 'two-way' communication, to describe a similar type of exchange, one in which communication flows back and forth between or among SEAs and stakeholders. In addition to this type of exchange, the IDEA Partnership

(2018) refers to ‘one way’ communication in which information is sent from the sender (e.g., SEA) to a receiver (e.g., the public, stakeholders) via a medium or channel (e.g., presentation), and shows no evidence of feedback provided from the receiver to the sender. Each of these exchanges, for purposes of this study can be considered communication or “a transfer of information” (Simon & Benjamin,2018). In a one-way communication the information is transferred in one direction, with or without acknowledgement by the receiver of the information having been received. In a two-way communication there is evidence (e.g., feedback) provided by the receiver of having heard the message.

Within this study’s examination of interactions, the communication exchanges can be described as lateral interactions and collaborative interactions. These types of interactions had several directions (a) lateral-one direction interaction (IDEA Partnership, 2018), (b) bilateral-back and forth interaction (Frey, et al., 2006), and (c) collaborative interaction (Cashman et al., 2014; Hogue, 1993;).

Lateral Interactions

Communication exchanges that are lateral, can be classified as ones in which SEA personnel presents information to stakeholders and those in which the SEA personnel receive information from stakeholders. Von Mering (2017) notes that in situations that have more centralized networks of interactions among people, leadership practices are not necessarily distributed across the people within the situation and a leader’s influence can be constrained. Situations in this study in which SEAs were presenting and receiving information seem to align with a more centralized networking scenario while the collaborative communication exchanges exemplify a more decentralized network and thus a more distributed leadership style by SEA personnel. A more decentralized network has the potential for engaging a distributed leadership

style (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) and according to von Mering's (2017) application of their work, of having more influence on outcomes. In addition to describing lateral interactions as ones in which information is either presented or in which information is received, lateral interactions also can be portrayed as unilateral or bilateral as noted below. In the SSIP, unilateral interactions were more likely to occur when the SEA was providing information about the progress in general on the SSIP and when conveyed to SEA internal administrative groups, large external organizational groups, or when posted on state websites. Bilateral interactions occurred throughout all of the components of the SSIP.

Unilateral

In this study, unilateral interactions are a one directional interaction characterized as one party (sender) transmitting information that another party (receiver) may/may not evidence receipt of that information (see Figure 5.1). Munodawafa (2008) in an article on communication concepts noted an example of how communications by professionals or the government can be delivered which ignore the receiver in the exchange. As noted above, the IDEA Partnership (2018) refers to this type of exchange as a 'one way' communication. Zorich, Waibel, and Erway (2008) identify a 'cooperative' level of engagement as sometimes being one-way. Most SSIPs reported SEA's use of unilateral interactions in which the SEA staff presented information to stakeholders through a variety of means or communication channels. Figure 5.1 illustrates one type of directional flow in which the communication exchange is just from one person to another.

Figure 5.1

Unilateral Interaction

Bilateral

Another type of exchange emerging from the data were bilateral exchanges, defined as those in which (a) one party provides information and another party receives that information and as a result of that information, requests additional information from the first party, or (b) another party shares back related information to the first party (see Figure 5.2). These exchanges can still be viewed as one-way communications but in a bilateral direction. Zorich et al. (2008) refer to cooperative exchanges referencing groups sharing information with some benefit received through the sharing, although it may still be a one-way exchange. In the former bilateral situation, an SEA would provide data sets to the stakeholder groups for their use. As a result of analyzing these data sets the stakeholders would request additional data or data displayed in a different manner. This is an example of bilateral which are two unilateral exchanges. Both parties are providing information to the other. Frey and colleagues (2006) describe interactions in which the parties provide information to each other yet, act independently of each other. Figure 5.2 illustrates directional flow of communication exchanges in which one party provides information to a second party and the second party provides information to the first party.

Bilateral-A

Bilateral- B

Figure 5.2

Bilateral Interactions A and B

Cashman and co-authors' (2014) networking engagement description also is similar to a bi-lateral interaction, in which a party asks others what they think about an issue and then listens to the other party's response. An example from the SSIP is one in which the SEA provides the stakeholders with suggestions of possible ways to set the targets for the SIMR. The stakeholder then offers feedback to the SEA based on their experiences and knowledge on the targets. Each exchange is unilateral yet, two related exchanges occur making it bilateral. The SEA personnel provided information about targets but did not engage in the actual formation of a new thought with the stakeholders, except by providing data to the stakeholders to consider. The stakeholders arrive at a new thought using the information provided by the SEA, but they created this thought independently of the thinking of the SEA. While this may be iterative in nature, the ideas that are generated are created and decided upon independently of the other party.

Collaborative Interaction

Regardless of how this type of engagement is referenced, whether collaboration (Hogue, 1993; Cashman, et al., 2014; Zorich et al., 2008); or partnership (Gajda, 2004) each recognize that the parties create new ideas or problem solve together and make joint decisions (see Figure 5.3). Within the SSIPs, ideas were generated by the SEA personnel and the stakeholders, acting together. The SEA personnel and stakeholders co-join ideas to create a collaboratively shared new thought. The parties examine information together, engage in dialogue around the

information, mingle their thoughts and reactions to the information, create shared understanding, and then form a new thought or arrive at conclusion etc. that is jointly owned by those engaged in the interplay of discussion. An example of this was described in the ID SSIP when a group of stakeholders were brought together by the ID SEA, "...included the ISDE Special Education Team [ID SEA staff], RCs, and representatives from the three institutions of higher education who receive IDEA Part B funding through sub-awards from the ISDE (University of Idaho, Boise State University, and Idaho State University). Small workgroups discussed the different indicators, analyzed potential impacts on student outcomes, and completed a broad analysis of indicator data..." (C:D:T:D_ID_1). Figure 5.3 illustrates directional flow of communication exchange between 2 parties and the idea creation that occurs as a result of the exchange.

Figure 5.3

Collaborative Interaction

Understanding Directionality in Communication Exchanges within the SSIP

Value of the Exchange

Of note is that interactions that are lateral or collaborative do not necessarily connote any intrinsic value. One type of interaction is not more important than another. Context is needed in order to assess value. Yet, in reading the engagement literature, value is given to what this researcher is referring to as collaborative interactions, as in the case of Gajda (2004) who developed an evaluation scale to measure groups' growth in collaborating. The implication of using this scale to measure how a group is developing and becoming more collaborative as a

group. Another example of the literature valuing collaborative interactions is noted in Frey and colleagues' (2006) work. They indicate that most grants require program evaluators to address an objective of increased collaboration as a measure of that grant's success. Zorich et al., (2006) developed a Collaboration Continuum emphasizing a directionality of groups movements toward more complex interactions requiring increased investment of effort yet resulting in reaping greater rewards. Williams (2002) suggests that governing should include competencies of collaboration, partnership, and networking. What is implied in such statements is government's need to engage in collaborative ways for all aspects of government work.

Given the limited resources of government and the extensive resources such engagement requires, one needs to question if there are some situations in which lateral rather than collaborative engagement is sufficient while perhaps not optimal to achieve policy outcomes. The SSIPs suggest that forms of interactions other than collaborative ones, such as unilateral and bilateral are utilized and can be useful as well. The SSIPs display a variety of means, contexts and interaction types for engaging stakeholders to achieve the development of a plan that engages stakeholders besides just collaboration. As noted previously, states used a variety of means that were not collaborative but bilateral, such as focus groups, surveys and public forums to gather input from a greater number of stakeholders than what could have occurred if the SEA collaborated with just a team of stakeholders for generating ideas. For example, in MA, the SEA "...conducted a statewide web-based survey of all Special Education Directors, Early Childhood Coordinators, and Preschool Coordinators on the use of the COS process in their program in the fall of 2013. .... Approximately 250 administrators from across the state participated in this survey and provided valuable insight about child outcomes in their district. This feedback indicated a need for additional support in early childhood special education, including

developing social emotional skills, and the results of this inquiry were closely reviewed by the SSIP team" (C:T_MA_1).

Communication Exchanges Within the SSIP Components

The communication exchanges between SEA personnel and stakeholders throughout the five components of the SSIPs (data analysis, infrastructure analysis, SIMR identification, improvement strategy identification and theory of action development) were reported with language that implies a directionality between those engaged in exchanges. As previously discussed, there were two major directional categories: lateral- communication that was sent from one party to another in an exchange of information, or collaborative-communication in which parties share ideas and create new ones. The lateral communications were of two types, referred to here as presentation and receipt. Those referred to as presentation were ones in which the SEAs presented information to the stakeholders such as, "Special Populations personnel presented the SIMR, potential strategies, and the theory of action to an audience of special education teachers and leaders from across the state" (C:D:O:I_TN_1). Receipt exchanges were communications in which SEA personnel received information from the stakeholders that "includes stakeholder feedback gathered" (C:D:O:S_TX_1) and "gathered feedback on the development of the…" (C:D:O:TA_AR_5). The IDEA Partnership (2018) refers to the lateral communication as 'one-way', although in that literature the flow of information is defined as only being sent from the SEA to the stakeholders. A one-way exchange of this nature is referenced as 'presentation' in this study because the SEA is sending out information either through a newsletter, keynote address, or a posting on a website with no expectation at the time of the presentation for any return interaction from the audience to whom the presentation is being made. The second type of lateral communication exchange that was evident in the components of

the SSIP are referred to as ‘receipt’, which is an exchange in which SEA personnel receive information from the stakeholders. Examples include gathering of input from “...external stakeholders [who] participated in a gallery walk designed to elicit member input regarding: best practices in literacy instruction; effective interventions targeted at each of the three tier levels of the implementation framework; and potential partners for Phase 2 of the SSIP” (C:D:O:SS_CT_6). Another example was in TN where “stakeholders such as special education teachers and supervisors and general education teachers responded to a questionnaire with their input on the SIMR and coherent improvement strategies” (C:D:O:IS_TN_1).

Lastly, there was a third type of exchange identified throughout the 5 components of the SSIP, referred to here as ‘collaborative’. This type is one in which new ideas are generated, in which the parties co-join ideas to create a collaboratively shared thought. In the literature there are corresponding levels of engagement that are similar to this such as Zorich et al., (2008) and Cashman and her colleagues (2014) engagement level of ‘collaboration’, Hogue’s (1993) ‘partnership’, or Gajda’s (2004) ‘coordination’. In these types of engagement, it is a “…process of shared creation: two or more [groups]...interacting to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own” (Schague, 1990, p. 140).

All states used some form of directionality language in their SSIPs, although suggesting a particular prominence of directionality language used in any particular states’ SSIP was not examined in this study. The data did suggest that collaborative directionality language when speaking about stakeholder engagement with one or more aspects of their SSIP, or about their SSIP in general seemed to have greatest prominence throughout the country. Collaborative language, such as the use of terms and phrases like, “together” or “in discussion with stakeholders”, more so than presentation or receipt directionality language, was evident across

regions of the country, child count populations, SIMR focus, and various page lengths of the SSIP. This is noteworthy as states could have chosen to engage stakeholders in solely lateral exchanges. Yet, there was evidence of this deeper level of collaborative exchanges occurring despite the increased vulnerability of the SEA to such engagement surfacing potential damaging or problematic information (Balkin, 1999; Men, 2012; Rawlins, 2009). Also, additional time is needed to gather stakeholders' voice or engage them in dialogue to conduct collaborative work (Devine, 2002) such as was arranged in the SSIP development which increases the already scarce SEA personnel resources needed to engage and manage such an exchange.

Presentation communications by SEA personnel, though, serve an important function for conveying information to stakeholders to keep them informed of the work of an authority group such as the SEA. Man and Hofmann (2017) suggest making stakeholder feedback publicly available is critical to a SEA's credibility with stakeholders. Sharing stakeholder input publicly conveys transparency as the organization is being accountable through disclosing of information which could be problematic or damaging to the organization (Men, 2012; Rawlins, 2009).

Additionally, engaging stakeholders, such as gathering input or feedback from stakeholders (i.e., receipt) in order to advise SEA personnel in their work, is an expectation of government oversight (Peterson, 1991, Zorich et al., 2008). Balkin (1999) recognizes stakeholder engagement in political decision-making as participatory transparency and views this engagement as an element of the political values of openness and accountability within a democracy.

Yet, collaborative engagement is highly valued and envisioned as a goal to be achieved (Zorich et al., 2008). Collaborative engagement of stakeholders offers contributions that can influence long term commitment from the stakeholders to the work of the SEA and sustain

efforts overtime by providing historical perspective and memory (personal communication, Linehan, 2018).

Leadership for SEA Engagement with Stakeholders in Accountability Planning

Based on the findings and summarizing themes of this study, along with the expectations OSEP holds for SEAs, I developed a new dynamic model of SEA leadership for engaging stakeholders in federal policy initiatives. This proposed leadership structure to guide SEAs for effective stakeholder engagement offers the field a more nuanced approach to stakeholder engagement than prior contributions to the literature.

A review of the literature on stakeholder engagement revealed five themes that capture aspects of engagement: representativeness, preparedness, leadership, communication, and interaction. A review of the 50 states' SSIPs revealed similar themes and provided additional detail and breadth. The literature themes support and complement those from this study in various ways. Figure 5.4 provides a partial alignment and relationship among identified themes and illustrates how the themes of stakeholder engagement identified in the literature review compare to the findings of this study.

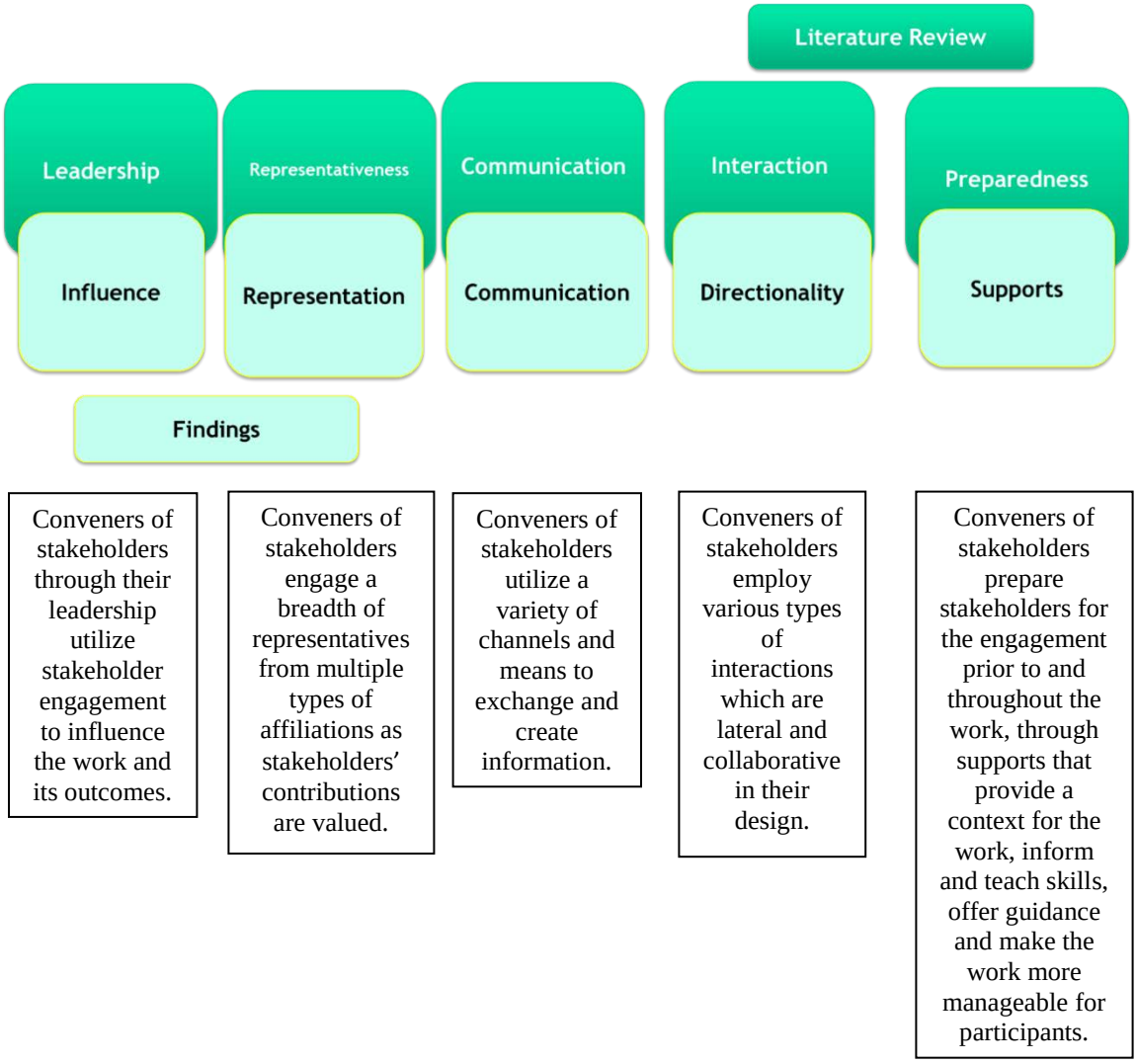

Figure 5.4

Findings in Relationship to Literature Review

OSEP held several expectations of SEAs for stakeholder engagement in the development of the SSIP. These requirements can be abbreviated to four descriptors: leading, convening, engaging and supporting as described in Figure 5.5 and the narrative that follows. First, SEAs were given the role and authority to lead the development of the SSIP with stakeholders (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In addition, SEAs were required to include broad stakeholder input (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2014) which was

done through the convening of voices and engaging stakeholders in each component of the SSIP development process. Finally, SEAs needed to describe stakeholder involvement in the SSIP and dissemination of the outcomes of their involvement (M. Musgrove, personal communication to states, December 23, 2014). Application of these requirements were evident in the literature and findings of this study. Figure 5.5 depicts OSEP expectations as leading, convening, engaging and supporting, and illustrates their relationship to the literature and findings of this study.

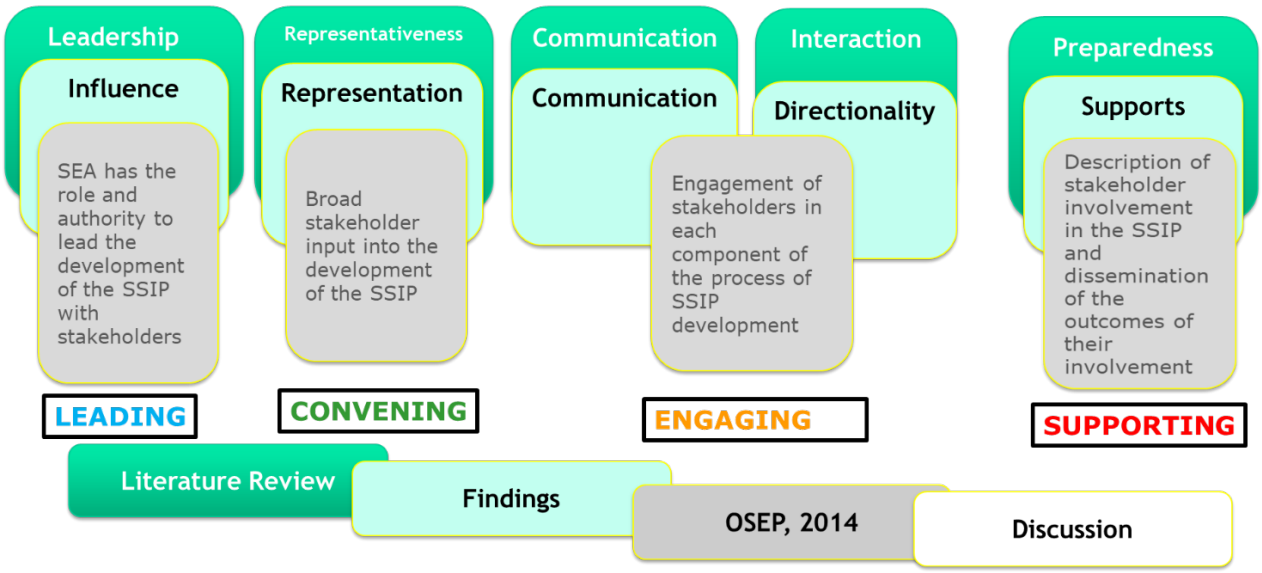

Figure 5.5

Literature Review in Relationship to Findings and OSEP Expectations

The leadership role in the development of the SSIP was charged to the SEA through federal legislation and OSEP policy. While stakeholder engagement was a required feature of the development of the SSIP, how SEA personnel implemented this mandate was a matter of leadership. In a leadership role, SEA personnel have a responsibility and opportunity to utilize a variety of policy tools for the purpose of effecting change (Bemelmans-Videc et al., 1998). Stakeholder engagement is one of those tools (Halliday, 2016; Linehan, 2010; Man & Hofmann,

2017). The literature on stakeholder engagement identifies various attributes and skill sets of leaders (Block, 2005; Cashman et al., 2014; Gajda, 2004: Hogue, 1993). In this study, SEA leaders conferred power or influence to the work of stakeholders in the development of the SSIP. Williams (2002) recognizes that for organizing and governing "...listening, negotiating, leadership through influence, partnership working..." (p. 113) are needed.

SEAs were also required to solicit broad stakeholder input. There was a minimal expectation that SEAs would solicit input from representatives from "LEAs, and the State Advisory Panel for the IDEA ,… Also parents of SWD, parent advocacy groups, other state and local agencies that pay for, provide or collaborate on IDEA services and issues.... Finally,....Include stakeholders with expertise on the issues to be discussed for the SSIP" (Regional Resource Center Program, 2015, p. 3). So, it was not surprising in the findings that SEAs would first identify an array of people, a representation of constituents, and then find ways to convene, or bring forward their voices into the SSIP development.

Next, there was an expectation of engaging these stakeholders in ways to develop the SSIP. OSEP director Melody Musgrove advised states to "...identify the mechanism for soliciting broad stakeholder input in the... development and implementation of the new Indicator 17 [SSIP]" (M. Musgrove, personal communication to states, December 23, 2014, p. 2). The interactions and communications among and between the SEA and stakeholders served to assure this engagement. Written communications, on-line postings and exchanges, and face to face meetings served as vehicles to keep communication of stakeholders occurring throughout the engagement period in the development of the SSIPs. The SEA and stakeholders demonstrated an array of interaction types for engagement such as one- and two- way communications (IDEA Partnership, 2017; Frey, et al., 2006) by presenting information to and receiving information

from stakeholders. There were many examples of collaborative exchanges (Cashman, et al., 2014; Hogue, 1993; Zorich et al., 2008) as the SEA staff and stakeholders co-joined voices and co-created new thoughts.

Lastly, OSEP indicated that the SSIPs needed to be publicly available describing how stakeholders were involved in the SSIP development (M. Musgrove, personal communication to states, December 23, 2014). This study identified an array of supports provided by SEAs to stakeholders as part of efforts to develop SSIPs. There are many supports that were identified in the SSIPs and throughout the literature. This array of supports includes preparing stakeholders for the work (Mallery et al., 2012; Man & Hofmann, 2017), assuring stakeholders are informed and skilled (Hirota & Jacobwitz, 2007; Mallery et al., 2012), and providing facilitators to assist stakeholders in the work (Hogue, 1993; Lessard et al., 2016).

Figure 5.6 offers a model of SEA leadership for engaging stakeholders in federal policy initiatives that proceeds from the findings of this study, the literature on engagement, and the expectations of OSEP. This figure illustrates a model for SEA staff to engage stakeholders based on the literature and findings of this study.

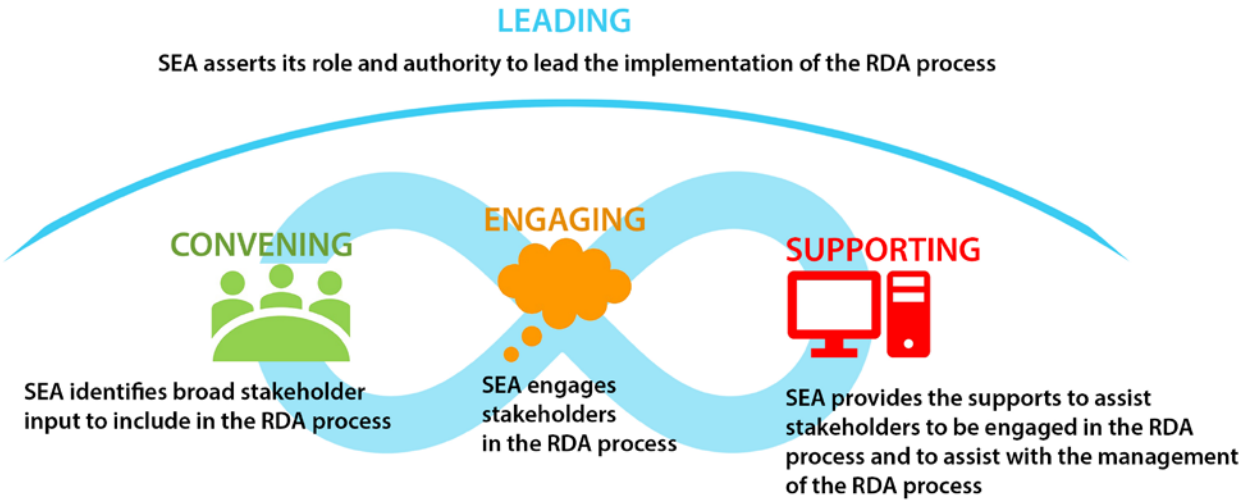

Figure 5.6

Model of Relational-Collaborative Leadership for Stakeholder Engagement

Leading for Stakeholder Engagement

Leadership for 'good governance' encourages citizen influence on policy implementation (Bemelmans-Videc et al., 1998). Figure 5.6 visually illustrates the importance of SEA leadership for promoting stakeholder influence through a collaborative-relational leadership approach (Weir, 2018) in which all other aspects of states' effective engagement of stakeholders are interconnected. Leadership of this type generates from valuing and promoting communication, relationships and teamwork, in which leaders share power with stakeholders and rely on relationships to get the work done (Weir, 2018). Boleman and Deal (2008) asserted that leaders need to apply different lenses to their understanding and control of their organizations such as providing a structural mindset to accomplish a goal, and a human resource approach to serving the needs of those involved. In this proposed model, SEA leadership, through a collaborative-relational approach of engaging stakeholders, incorporates the human resource lens that values the convening of broad stakeholder voice, while offering the structural supports to accomplish shared goals, through engagement that offers a variety of communication exchanges and arranges for the influence of stakeholder voice on the outcomes of the work.

States have demonstrated through their SSIPs the various aspects of how SEAs can best lead stakeholder engagement in SEA work, by: 1) convening broad stakeholder voice, 2) engaging stakeholders in a variety of ways in the work, and 3) supporting stakeholders' participation and actions. SEA leaders as described in the SSIPs involved each of these expectations of OSEP in ways that contributed to the development of the RDA work intended to improve results for students with disabilities.

Convening with Stakeholders

Leadership in special education policy implementation was suggested by Petersen (1991) as the promotion of cooperative effort, collaborative involvement and implementation across agencies. Each of these features conveys a togetherness, a collective involvement among players to achieve successful implementation of policy. Cashman and colleagues (2014) in their work with local, state, and national professionals and other individuals associated with special education refer to 'The Partnership Way' of leadership in which leaders appreciate the value of convening "…groups with authority and groups with influence together in a shared leadership strategy" (p. 4). Block's (2005) work in civic engagement refers to 'engagement centered leadership'. These three authors emphasize the importance of the act of bringing a variety of people together to as a leadership principal in addressing a challenging issue that requires work among people and across organizations. O'Haire (2011) offers that bringing people together in-person is advantageous, as this type of engagement as it "allows for exchange of information to clarify participants' questions and .... elicit a deeper understanding of viewpoints through rich narratives" (para. 7).

"Strong determined leaders…, who know how to recruit the right people, consistently prove to be effective." (Hogue, 1993). State personnel in the SSIP development made efforts to collaboratively involve a breadth of stakeholders with specific purpose and broad affiliations. As this was an expectation of OSEP for all states in the development of their SSIP, some states had state requirements (TX, ND) or a history of stakeholder engagement in other areas than special education which may have contributed to a state culture for engagement. One state noted, "The focus on high school graduation leading to post-school success is a fundamental principle in both IDEA and ESEA. Florida's commitment to this goal is reflected in our ESEA Flexibility Waiver, as well as our Race to the Top grant participation. For several years, there has been broad,

multiple, internal and external stakeholder representation in response to these federal initiatives; including the development of state statutes, rules and policies to support the goal of all students graduating from high school college and career ready" (O:I_FL_1).

Some states indicated that stakeholder engagement was a culture of their SEA (MT, HI, NV), being a "small town with very long streets" (MT). Several states were intentional in their selection to assure expertise was brought to the work (OH, MD, NH), as well as representativeness of geography and demographics of the state and student population (DE, LA, TX).

Supporting Stakeholders

State personnel developing the SSIPs demonstrated means of promoting a cooperative effort through the use of supportive strategies to engage stakeholders. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) identify technical and adaptive challenges to creating change. Technical challenges can be solved by applying expert knowledge while resolving adaptive challenges requires new learning (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Therefore, SEAs in their leadership efforts need to address both of these challenges (Cashman, et. al., 2014) through the manner in which they support and engage stakeholders in the work. Addressing these challenges was accomplished throughout all of the work of the SSIP, in preparation prior to, during and following the work so that stakeholders were informed and skilled (Hirota & Jacobwitz, 2007; Mallery et al., 2012). Keeping stakeholders informed and skilled was most frequently evident in the SSIP components of data analysis (evidence) and improvement strategy identification (evidence). Also, stakeholders can be supported through acknowledgement of their work and the value they bring to that work (Hogue, 1993) as was evident in several SEAs SSIPs (HI, GA, AK). This transparency in how stakeholders' work impacts the outcomes of that work (Man and Hofmann, 2017) was evident in

SSIPs where stakeholders' contributions were documented and clarified as to how that input was utilized (DE, HI, OR). Strategies seen in the SSIPs such as focus groups (MN), surveys (GA, OK, MI, WV), town hall meetings, are common ways to engage stakeholders (O'Haire, 2011) along with facilitated dialogues, and analysis and reflection discussions. Also, an awareness of how materials are prepared for stakeholders can influence participation (Man & Hofmann, 2012). Visually displaying data or information in a variety of ways can assist with data interpretation. Varieties of visual displays were evident in the SSIPs (AZ, DE, HI, OH, WI). The use of independent facilitators is also a valuable contribution to assisting SEA personnel and their stakeholders to be meaningfully engaged in a collective manner for promoting successful collaboration (Hogue, 1993). Many states engaged facilitators (CT, ID, IN, LA, MD, ME, MI, MT, ND, NH, OH, OK, WI) for planning meetings and facilitating stakeholder meetings, conveying information to SEA staff and stakeholders, guiding infrastructure analyses and conducting activities to generate improvement strategies.

Engaging with Stakeholders

Bemelmans-Videc and colleagues (1998) have argued that "the degree citizens influence policy implementation is one of several criteria for 'good governance'" (p. 2). Therefore, SEAs should assure interactions are arranged which encourage stakeholder voice through lateral and collaborative communication exchanges. The IDEA Partnership (2018) speaks of 'one-way/two-way' communications in which communication flows from a source to a receiver in a unilateral direction, as in one-way communication. Two-way communication implies a joint exchange, a back and forth interaction between or among stakeholders. More specifically data from this study contribute the nuance that engagement occurs in three ways which attends to both the exchange of information and the influence of the exchange, (a) one direction exchange-no influence, (b)

back and forth exchange-influence on one party, and (c) collaborative interaction-joint influence. In this model, there is a confluence of influence and communication exchange that occurs at different times in the reports. In every component of the SSIP there are examples of all of these types of exchanges. SEAs presentation or one direction exchange provides information to stakeholders to keep them abreast of what is occurring or document and make transparent stakeholder work or the work of the SEA to others. This type of exchange occurred throughout the SSIP development process. Back and forth exchanges were frequently evident in the SEAs request for feedback and input from stakeholders as were collaborative exchanges on all components of the SSIP. This is significant so that SEA personnel and stakeholders are aware of the type of influence their communications have at any given time during the course of working together.

The variety of exchanges that emerged from the data contributes to the discourse and should occur before, during and after meetings to be supportive to stakeholder engagement. Mallery and co-authors (2012) have highlighted the use of technology when communicating with stakeholders, in addition to face to face encounters, or group gatherings. All forms of written communication, both formal and informal (IDEA Partnership, 2018) are also means of engaging with stakeholders.

Limitations

As with any qualitative study there are limitations. Specifically, in this study, using thematic analysis and template analysis with documents, Phase I SSIPs, limitations are identified unique to this approach. The researcher's skill level influences the quality of the research. Thematic analysis does not engage in the 'complexities of interpretation' as other qualitative approaches (Stein, 2013).

While Bowen (2009) describes three limitations to document analysis: 1) insufficient detail, 2) low retrievability, and 3) biased in-selectivity, these are not significant limitations in this study using document analysis. Given the saturated sample size and the guidance provided for reporting, detail is less of an issue than might be in other documents. There is no issue with the ability to retrieve all the reports, as they are public documents. This is unique for this type of document as historically any public reporting was done on state websites or other public display methods. Navigating fifty unique state websites or methods (e.g., placing a hard copy of a report in a public library) made retrieval next to impossible. In this situation, all documents were available as the OSEP created a public portal in GRADS 360 for posting these in 2016. As for bias selectivity, any limitation was the bias in states' decision on the format for presentation of the information (e.g., level of specificity), the language selected to describe their efforts (e.g., preciseness and clarity on language definitions) and the political context (e.g., role of constituents in SEA decision-making) that might influence what is related in the SSIP. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describe one other limitation of note for this type of content analysis. Researchers may come with a bias when using a priori codes based on theory, despite those codes being informed by the literature, which could result in more evidence found to be supportive rather than non-supportive of the theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Additionally, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) caution that contextual aspects of the topic under investigation may be overlooked if too much emphasis is placed on a prior theory coding. Therefore, this study used 5 experts to review definitions and codes prior to the study as a method to ameliorate this concern (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Further Considerations

As stakeholder engagement is an essential component of most federal initiatives, the following suggestions based on the findings from this study are offered for SEAs and federal government officials to consider when engaging or recommending stakeholder engagement:

- Engage more than a stakeholder group that minimally represents constituent groups by interacting with larger groups of authentic voices (Representation, pp. 68-82) through various means (Communication, p. 91, Purpose of Communication, pp. 93-94).
- Utilize various means to communicate (Communication, pp. 91-93) and engage with stakeholders (Interactions, pp. 99-105) at different stages of the work (Stakeholder Behavior, pp. 96-97; Nature of the Work, p. 97; Analysis by SSIP Component, pp. 105-109) and for different purposes (Purpose of Communication, pp. 93-94; Interactions, pgs. 99-105).
- Supports need to be tailored to preparing stakeholders for engagement (Provide Context, p. 87; Purposeful Directions and Parameters, p. 90), while also assisting stakeholders throughout the work process (Other Findings, pp. 81-83; Supports, pp. 85-91).
- Be clear about the level of authority stakeholders believe they are being given (Influence, pp. 95-96; Nature of the Work, pp. 97-98; Interactions, pp. 99-100).
- Be transparent with stakeholders throughout the process p. 94).

Conclusion and Implication for Further Research

This study offers elements of a leadership structure for SEAs as they utilize stakeholder engagement as a policy tool in improving outcomes of students with disabilities. Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that SEA leadership to promote improved outcomes for students with disabilities 1) encourages breadth of engagement of stakeholders that is both representative and authentic, 2) provides means of support that encourages,

maintains and sustains stakeholder understanding of and engagement in the work, and 3) that expects interactions that allow for authentic and influential stakeholder voice through lateral and collaborative interactions for the creation of ideas and decisions.

This initial qualitative study was important to delineating various aspects of the qualities or features of the implementation of stakeholder engagement prior to examining how these features affect the outcomes of the plans being developed through the stages of engagement. As such, the findings of this study provide ample data for analysis and ample questions to design future qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods research studies on various aspects of stakeholder engagement.

Several areas to examine include:

1) How did the supports that were provided to stakeholders differ when the engagement of the SEA with the stakeholders was collaborative vs. unidirectional?
2) How does SEA engagement (i.e., unilateral, bilateral, collaborative) with external and internal stakeholders that represent professional organizations, parent organizations, other state agencies, and local school district personnel predict student outcomes/results?
3) Did group descriptors (i.e., child count, SIMR, page length, technical assistance region) correlate with types of stakeholder engagement? How did state or regional culture influence participation in reporting?

While the findings of this study suggest more specific parameters for stakeholder engagement, the relationship of these elements to student outcome success is still warranted in the research literature. There is an increasing emphasis on stakeholder engagement in implementation of education policy (Cashman, et al., 2014; King, 2016; Council of Chief

State School Officers, 2016). More specifically, special education has always had an expectation of stakeholder engagement since its inception in 1975, with continued requirements promoted over the years for their engagement. Yet, there remains little attention in the research literature on ascertaining the impact of stakeholder engagement in promoting successful student outcomes. Given the position of SEAs as somewhat removed from the classroom, and the increased pressure on states to ensure student gains, examining the impact of this policy tool of stakeholder engagement on student outcomes is warranted.

While the literature abounds with strategies that organizations use to engage stakeholders, an examination of which of these features have the greatest impact on their intended purpose would contribute to the literature. For example, the levels of interaction in the literature, while descriptive of a hierarchy of stakeholder engagement in decision-making, do not indicate under which circumstances any particular level of engagement is more efficient and effective for achieving a particular end. While the IDEA Partnership (2018) express that deeper levels of engagement are desirable, the evidence for any one type of engagement being 'better' than another without a context for that judgment is yet to be explored in the research literature. This would be valuable information for SEAs that need to balance the expenditure of limited human and fiscal resources with state and federal mandates for stakeholder engagement.

Policy tools are how state governments wield their authority (Bemelmans-Videc et al.,1998), gaining a greater understanding under what circumstances the tool of stakeholder engagement is most useful and effective to achieve a desired policy goal warrants a focused research agenda. Understanding when stakeholder engagement is most useful to achieving an

end, what level or depth of engagement has the greatest cost-benefit, and which engagement strategies yield the most useful information are all future areas of study.

APPENDIX A

EXPERT INFORMATION AND TRUSTWORTHINESS ACTIONS BY EXPERTS

Expert #	Expert Information
1	Co-Director of the Region 1 National Parent Technical Assistance Center (OSEP Technical Assistance Center)
2	Director of the IDEA Partnership, National Association of State Directors of Special Education
3	State technical assistance liaison, National Center for Systemic Improvement (OSEP Technical Assistance Center); former consultant with the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), US Department of Education
4	State technical assistance liaison, National Center for Systemic Improvement (OSEP Technical Assistance Center); former state technical assistance liaison, Regional Resource Center Program (OSEP Technical Assistance Center); former Vermont Department of Education staff member
5	State technical assistance liaison, National Center for Systemic Improvement (OSEP Technical Assistance Center); former state technical assistance liaison, Regional Resource Center Program (OSEP Technical Assistance Center); former Georgia Department of Education Associate Superintendent and State Special Education Director
6	Team Lead, National Center for Systemic Improvement (OSEP Technical Assistance Center); Staff member National Association of State Directors of Special Education
7	Executive Director of the international Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE), Council for Exceptional Children; current member of the IDEA Partnership
8	State technical assistance liaison, National Center for Systemic Improvement; Staff member, National Association of State Directors of Special Education

TRUSTWORTHINESS ACTIONS BY EXPERT

Action	Date	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8
Informed a priori codes prior to the pilot	Spring 2016		x		x	x			
Informed criteria to select the pilot states	Fall 2017			x	x				
After the pilot reviewed codes to create code book prior to data collection	Fall 2017	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Reviewed the application of the codes to the reports.	Summer 2018					x			
Examined the themes and support from the data for logical interconnection and understandability.	Summer 2018					x			

APPENDIX B

'A PRIORI' CODING AND DESCRIPTION

Coding	Description
Actions of SEA_Leadership_Communication	Any action taken by the SEA that was related to engaging a stakeholder or stakeholder group, before, during or after the intended engagement of the stakeholder traits and actions of people or agency that leads the work manner and types of information provided and received among participants.
Bring Info to Stakeholder for a purpose_Preparedness	Having skills or information in advance of the work that is helpful for engaging in the work with interest and competence. Situations in which the SEA brings information to the Stakeholders to a) inform them of something in preparation for an activity. This is an item that the SEA decided upon and wanted to provide an explanation for why they made this decision. b) in response to a request of the stakeholders c) show them what they had done, like a summary of their work d) to keep them informed
Purpose of the Actions	Actions by the SEA were descriptive of what they expected from the stakeholders: a) confirmation of a decision b) narrow a focus c) apply expertise to provide data to inform decision-making d) give recommendations e) disconfirm f) prioritize options g) make revisions or additions to SEA interpretations of stakeholders' work
Conducted activities for a purpose	SEA conducted certain activities in order to a) help stakeholders better understand the information being presented b) invite future participation in the work c) accomplish a task that needed to be completed d) identify available resources to further support the work
Actions of the Stakeholders	Behaviors, actions, performed or assumed by the stakeholders; the manner in which stakeholders contribute to the work
Descriptors of Stakeholders_Representativeness	Titles, groupings, organizations, terms used to describe them. The individuals and groups participating in the work

External	Stakeholders that are in organizations outside of the SEA or are individuals that do not work for the SEA. Titles (e.g., Principal, teacher, parent, advocate for LD) and types of population (e.g. students with disabilities, ELL)
Internal	Stakeholders within the SEA_Those who are in the organization and affectd by or involved in the decision-making process
Special Ed Staff	Members of the special education unit of the SEA
Types of teams	Various types of teams developed to accomplish the development of the SSIP.
Advising team	Stakeholders that were egnaged in regular or routine discussions on the content. they are the go to people for the majority of stakeholder input.
Core	Those that orchestrated the work (typically this is the special education unit of the SEA)
Other Groups	Other orgs or groups that were engaged to provide perspective, feedback, advise, etc on the work of the advising team's decisions.
Format of the engagement	Meetings, group, the manner in which the engagement occurs
Level of Engagement	Degree of engagement or interaction, the relationship between the SEA and stakeholders, the manner in which they engaged (e.g., stages, levels, hierarchy, degrees)
Future expectations of Stakeholders	Activities, actions, or other types of engagement that the SEA intends to take with stakeholders beyond the submission date/development of this Phase I SSIP. This would include activities or engagement that occur around Phase I if it is after the date of this report, or for any future Phase II or III activities, or future years during the life of the SSIP.
Stakeholders	Titles, groupings, organizations, terms used to describe those that are anticipated to participate in some manner beyond Phase I.
Improvement strategies for stakeholder engagement	Identification of improvement strategies to address stakeholder engagement.
Literature	SEA identifies literature or research to support the stakeholder engagement processes being used.

Reasons for Engagement	Explanations offered as to why stakeholder engagement is important, why it is occurring.
References	Where stakeholder is referenced in the report
Graphics	Stakeholder reference made in a graphic such as a chart, graph.
Lists	Stakeholder reference made in a list such as a table or item listing.
Sections of Report	Stakeholder reference made in the headings of sections of the report.
Table of Contents	Stakeholder reference made in the table of contents of the report.
Show respect and value for stakeholders	Language used conveys an appreciation for the value a stakeholder brings to the work; the language conveys respect for the time, effort, talents provided by the stakeholders to engage in the work; what is it about the stakeholder that makes them valuable to the work
Time	How often did they meet, what was length of meetings_ amount of time together; length of time commitment to the work
Topics for Engagement	Aspects of the process of Phase I work in which stakeholders are engaged; when are stakeholders asked to participate?
Data Analysis	This is the part of Phase I in which data are identified, collected, examined, interpreted with stakeholder engagement.
Root Cause	This is a component of data analysis specific to searching or attempting to identify the root cause for the problem being examined with stakeholder engagement.
Infrastructure	This is the part of Phase I in which elements of an organization's (primarily the SEA) infrastructure is analyzed with stakeholder engagement. Elements may include fiscal, data systems, PD/TA, governance, quality standards, accountability/monitoring but are not limited to these as identified with in the report.
Improvement Strategies	This is the part of Phase I in which strategies are identified with stakeholder engagement, that will be addressed to improve the SIMR
SIMR	This is the part of Phase I that develops and identifies the SIMR using stakeholder engagement.
Theory of Action	This is the part of Phase I that develops and identifies a theory of action using stakeholder engagement.

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE STATE SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Technical Assistance Region	Child Count (S-Small-up to 70,000 students with disabilities; M-Medium- 70,000 through 170,000 students with disabilities; L-Large- over 170,000 students with disabilities)	Reading SIMR	Math SIMR	Reading/ Math SIMR	Graduation/ Post School Outcomes SIMR	Early Childhood Outcomes SIMR
North East/ Region 1	S		ME#, RI#, VT*			NH*
	M	CT#				MA*
	L	NY#			NJ*, PA#	
Mid South/ Region 2	S	DE#			WV#	
	M	SC#, TN*	KY*, MD@		VA*,	
	L				NC#	
South East/ Region 3	S	AR@ MS@				
	M	LA#, OK#			AL#	
	L	TX#			FL#, GA*	
North Central/ Region 4	S	IA*,				
	M	IN*, WI*		MO*	MN@	
	L	IL#, MI@, OH$				
Mountain Plains	S	KS*, NE*, NM#, SD*, WY#			MT*, ND*	
	M	AZ#, CO@	UT$			

	L			
Western	S	HI$, ID#, NV#		AK#
	M	OR@, WA#		
	L		CA@	

SSIP Page Length: $over 90 pgs., @61-90 pgs., #31-60 pgs., *up to 30 pgs.

APPENDIX D

CODE BOOK AND DESCRIPTION BASED ON EXPERT FEEDBACK

Name	Description
Communication	Manner and types of information provided and received among participants
Directionality	The description of transmission of and response to communication (one way, two way). Sharing information.
One way	Communication that goes only from one party to another
Two way	Communication that is reciprocal between two parties
Schedule of Communication	Points in the process when communication occurs. E.g.: established means for communicating between meetings (Borden & Perkins, 1999). Mallery et al., (2012) ways of communicating with stakeholders before, during and after engagement.
Stakeholder Actions	This is any action taken that may not fit in the subnodes. Also includes activities such as collecting data for the SEA, organizing or more administrative types or activities to aid in doing the actual work.
Analysis	Use of language that denotes or includes the terms- weighed, assessed, decided upon, determined, concluded, evaluated, identified (if from analysis), evaluated , indicated (if following analysis), conclusion (if following analysis); narrow or reduce or eliminate (in response to an analysis), noted missing elements
Develop	Use of language that denotes or includes the terms- as a result of analysis or when tasked, stakeholders develop, create
Discussion	Use of language that denotes or includes the terms- discussion, discussed, dialogue among group members, including between stakeholders and SEA staff
Feedback_ Verification	Use of language that denotes or includes the terms-verification, reaction to SEA's ideas, concurring with an SEA decision
Input	Use of language that denotes or includes the terms-input, opinions, suggestions, thoughts, ideas, advise, recommendation
Requests	Use of language that denotes or includes the terms-information, data, or other items were requested by the stakeholders to inform their work.
Review	Use of language that denotes or includes the terms-looked at, examined, reviewed… this is passive. It's what the stakeholders did.

Name	Description
Transparency	Contributions are documented and clarified by the agency as to how that input was utilized
Types	Manner in which communication occurs (e.g., technology, media, etc)
Other	
Difficulties and Challenges	Problems that occur when engaging stakeholders
Foundational Literature, Frameworks, Theories	SEA identifies literature or research to support the stakeholder engagement processes being used. 1) Leading by Convening; 2) Structured Dialogue
Importance of Engagement	Explanations offered as to why stakeholder engagement is important, why it is occurring. The state recognizes the importance of stakeholder engagement by identifying why stakeholder engagement is important. -Language used conveys an appreciation for the value a stakeholder brings to the work; the language conveys respect for the time, effort, talents provided by the stakeholders to engage in the work; what is it about the stakeholder that makes them valuable to the work
Traits Making engagement successful	Characteristics/skills that contribute to successful stakeholder engagement. Examples of terms/concepts used in document that indicate this trait made for successful engagement: problem solving relationships; trust; flexibility, facilitative, autonomous, hierarchical, shared, collaborative involvement, implementation across agency, promotes cooperative effort, questions asked, environment established, capitalize on diversity& org strengths, develop interconnecting systems for communication, trust, sharing human& fiscal resources, seek resources, use input, partnership way, top down, bottom up
Representativeness	The individuals and groups participating in the work. A stakeholder is a person (or group) who is responsible for making or implementing a management action, who will be significantly affected by the action, or who can aid or prevent its implementation (EPA, 2013, p.1). (https://cfpub.epa.gov/npstbx/files/stakeholderguide.pdf);
Breadth	Expansiveness of the array of titles, expertise of those represented- Strategies for increasing the number and the type of stakeholders
External	Those from other organizations than the SEA. Stakeholders that are in organizations outside of the SEA or are individuals that do not work for the SEA (e.g., Principal, teacher, parent, advocate for LD) and types of populations (e.g. students with disabilities, ELL)

Name	Description
Internal	Those who are in the SEA and affected by or involved in the decision-making process. Staff within the SEA that are engaged in work related to SSIP or to its purpose.
Roles	Leading by Convening Circles of Engagement (Core Team ; Key Advisors/Key Participants; Extended Participants/Feedback Network; Dissemination Network); in positions that take actions such as disseminate, represent larger group of constituents, outreach, provide input, provide feedback; Various types of teams developed to accomplish the development of the SSIP.
Advising_ routinely and regularly	Stakeholders that were engaged in regular or routine discussions on the content. They are the 'go' to people for the majority of stakeholder input.
Core	Those that orchestrated the work (typically this is the special education unit of the SEA)
Other Groups	Other organizations or groups that were engaged to provide perspective, feedback, advise, etc on the work of the advising team's decisions.
SEA Actions	These are actions of the SEA to engage SEA staff or other stakeholders. It may also include what they believe or perceive about the stakeholders. (e.g. Stakeholders are invested...)
Expectations of Stakeholders	Description of what the SEA expected from the general stakeholder population: a) confirmation of a decision b) narrow a focus c) apply expertise to provide data to inform decision-making d) give recommendations e) disconfirm f) prioritize options g) make revisions or additions to SEA interpretations of stakeholders' work
Future engagement in SSIP work	Acknowledges future engagement of stakeholders anticipated for future SSIP work of any type... planning, implementing, etc.
Leadership-use Stakeholder's info	Traits and actions of people or agency that leads the work that connotes leading; extent of members' ownership of leadership; attribute of utilizing input of stakeholders
Preparing Stakeholders	Activities, strategies, information, content that is provided to stakeholders before, during or after engagement that assists in the work expected of them
Topics for engagement	Sections of the report in which engagement was noted
Baseline and Target	Section of the report in which engagement was noted
Data Analysis	Section of the report in which engagement was noted
Improvement	Section of the report in which engagement was noted

Name	Description
Strategies	
Infrastructure Analysis	Section of the report in which engagement was noted
Referenced in report	Section of the report in which engagement was noted
SIMR	Section of the report in which engagement was noted
Theory of Action	Section of the report in which engagement was noted
Work	Description of the manner in which work was accomplished.
Format_ Structure of the Engagement or Interaction	Meeting formats, group arrangements, the manner in which the engagement occurs, strategies to solicit engagement, actions such as 1) form new team, 2) align existing team, 3) build connections among existing groups or networks/roles
Time Committed to Work	How often did they meet, what was length of meetings_ amount of time together; time commitment to the work (length of time, i.e., over 9 months; depth of time, i.e., 10 hours/week, etc.)

APPENDIX E

REVIEWER'S CODE BOOK

COMMUNICATION

Code	Coding	Sub codes	Sub Sub Codes	Sub Sub Sub Codes	Description
C	**Communication**				Manner and types of information provided and received among participants
C:TY		**Type**			Manner in which communication occurs (e.g., technology, media, etc)
C:D		**Directionality -**of communication			The description of transmission of and response to communication (one way, two way)
C:D:O			**One Way**		
C:D:O:D				**Data**	Topic within the SSIP
C:D:O:IS				**Improvement strategies**	Topic within the SSIP
C:D:O:I				**Infrastructure**	Topic within the SSIP
C:D:O:SI				**SIMR**	Topic within the SSIP
C:D:O:SS				**SSIP**	Topic within the SSIP
C:D:O:T				**Targets**	Topic within the SSIP
C:D:O:TOA				**Theory of Action**	Topic within the SSIP
C:D:T			**Two Way**		
C:D:T:D				**Data**	Topic within the SSIP
C:D:T:IS				**Improvement strategies**	Topic within the SSIP
C:D:T:I				**Infrastructure**	Topic within the SSIP
C:D:T:SI				**SIMR**	Topic within the SSIP
C:D:T:SS				**SSIP**	Topic within the SSIP
C:D:T:T				**Targets**	Topic within the SSIP

C:D:T:TOA			**Theory of Action**	Topic within the SSIP
C:SC	**Schedule of Communication**			Points in the process when communication occurs. E.g.: established means for communicating between meetings (Borden & Perkins, 1999). Mallery et al., (2012) ways of communicating with stakeholders before, during and after engagement.
C:SA	**Stakeholder Actions**			This is any action taken that may not fit in the subnodes. Also includes activites such as collecting data for the SEA, organizing or more administrative types or activities to aid in doing the actual work.
C:SA:I		**Input**		Input, opinions, suggestions, thoughts, ideas, advise, recommendation
C:SA:F		**Feedback**		Verification, reaction to SEA's ideas,
C:SA:RV		**Review**		Looked at, examined, reviewed… this is passive. It's what the stakeholders did.
C:SA:A		**Analysis**		Weighed, assessed, decided upon, concluded
C:SA:DV		**Develop**		As a result of analysis or when tasked, stakeholders develop, create
C:SA:DI		**Discussion**		Dialogue among group members
C:SA:RQ		**Requests**		Information, data, or other items were

		requested by the stakeholders to inform their work.
C:TR	**Transparency**	Contributions are documented and clarified by the agency as to how that input was utilized
C:T	**Type**	Manner in which communication occurs (e.g., technology, media, etc)

OTHER

Code	Coding	Sub codes	Description
O	**OTHER**		
O:T		**Traits making engagement successful**	Characteristics/skills that contribute to successful stakeholder engagement. Problem solving relationships; trust; flexibility, facilitative, autonomous, hierarchical, shared, collaborative involvement, implementation across agency, promotes cooperative effort, questions asked, environment established, capitalize on diversity & org strengths, develop interconnecting systems for communication, trust, sharing human& fiscal resources, seek resources, use input, partnership way, top down, bottom up
O:D		**Difficulties and Challenges**	Problems that occur when engaging stakeholders
O:F		**Foundational Literature, Frameworks, Theories**	SEA identifies literature or research to support the stakeholder engagement processes being used. 1) LbC; 2) Structured Dialogue
O:I		**Importance of Engagement**	1.Value:What is it about the stakeholder that makes them valuable to the work. Explanations offered as to why stakeholder engagement is important, why it is occuring. 2. The state recognizes the importance of stakeholder engagement by identifying why stakeholder engagement is important. 3.Language used conveys an appreciation for the value a stakeholder brings to the work; the language conveys respect for the time, effort, talents provided by the stakeholders to engage in the work; what is it about the stakeholder that makes them valuable to the work

REPRESENTATIVENESS

Code	Coding	Sub codes	Description
RP	**Representativeness**		The individuals and groups participating in the work. A stakeholder is a person (or group) who is responsible for making or implementing a management action, who will be significantly affected by the action, or who can aid or prevent its implementation (EPA, 2013, p.1). (https://cfpub.epa.gov/npstbx/files/stakeholderguide.pdf);
RP:I		**Internal**	Those who are in the organization and affected by or involved in the decision-making process ; Stakeholders within the SEA. Those who are in the organization and affected by or involved in the decision-making process
RP:E		**External**	Those from other organizations; Stakeholders that are in organizations outside of the SEA or are individuals that do not work for the SEA. Titles (e.g., Principal, teacher, parent, advocate for LD) and types of population (e.g. students with disabilities, ELL)
RP:B		**Breadth**	Expansiveness of the array of titles, expertise of those represented

ROLES

Code	Coding	Sub codes	Sub Sub Codes	Description
RO	**Roles**			LbC Circles of Engagement (Core Team ; Key Advisors/Key Participants; Extended Participants/Feedback Network; Dissemination Network) disseminate, represent larger group of constituents, outreach, provide input, provide feedback; Various types of teams developed to accomplish the development of SSIP.
RO:A		**Advising team**		Stakeholders that were engaged in regular or routine discussions on the content. They are the go to people for the majority of stakeholder input.
RO:A:E			**Existing group**	Group already existing that is used for SSIP work
RO:A:N			**Newly formed SSIP**	Group that is formed to address SSIP work
RO:A:S			**State Advisory Panel**	Group that is in each state for the purpose of IDEA oversight
RO:C		**Core**		Those that orchestrated the work
RO:C:IE			**Internal and external**	Membership of the group is from within and outside of the SEA
RO:C:IO			**Internal only**	Membership of the group is from within the SEA
RO:C:SE			**Special Ed only**	Memberships of the group is only special education related staff
RO:M		**Multiple Groups**		When various groups are used to address the SSIP work
RO:O		**Other Groups**		Other organizations or groups that were engaged to provide perspective, feedback, advise, etc on the work of the advising team's decisions.

SEA ACTIONS

Code	Coding	Sub codes	Description
SA	**SEA Actions**		Any action taken by the SEA that was related to engaging a stakeholder or stakeholder group, before, during or after the intended engagement of the stakeholder-traits and actions of people or agency that leads the work-manner and types of information provided and received among participants
SA:P		**Preparing Stakeholders**	**Provided Information**: Description of SEA providing or stakeholder receiving skills or information in advance of the work that is helpful for engaging in the work with interest and competence; 1) to understand expectations 2) to understanding jargon 3) in response to a request of the stakeholders 4) show them what they had done, like a summary of their work to keep them informed **Conducted Certain Activities**: SEA conducted **certain activities** in order to a) help stakeholders better understand the information being presented-inform them of something in preparation for an activity. This is an item that the SEA decided upon and wanted to provide an explanation for why they made this decision. b) invite future participation in the work c) accomplish a task that needed to be completed d) identify available resources to further support the work
SA:E		**Expectations of Stakeholders-**	**Expectations**: Description of what the SEA expected from the stakeholders: a) confirmation of a decision b) narrow a focus c) apply expertise to provide data to inform decision-making d) give recommendations e) disconfirm f) prioritize options g) make revisions or additions to SEA interpretations of stakeholders work When are stakeholders asked to participate? With what types of work?
SA:L		**Leadership-use stakeholder'**	Traits and actions of people or agency that leads the work; extent of members' ownership of leadership

s information	
Future Engagement in SSIP work	Acknowledges future engagement of stakeholders anticipated for future SSIP work of any time... planning, implementing, etc.

TOPICS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Code	Coding	Sub codes	Description
TE	**Topics for Engagement**		Locations in the SSIP that stakeholder engagement was noted.
TE:R		**Referenced in Report**	Stakeholder engagement is referenced in the Table of Contents, headings, titles within the report
TE:B		**Baseline and Target**	This is an element of the reporting requirements of the SSIP SIMR in which a baseline is identified and 5 years of targets.
TE:D		**Data Analysis**	This is the part of Phase I in which data are identified, collected, examined, interpreted with stakeholder engagement.
TE:I		**Infrastructure Analysis**	This is the part of Phase I in which elements of an organization's (primarily the SEA) infrastructure is analyzed with stakeholder engagement.. Elements may include fiscal, data systems, PD/TA, governance, quality standards, accountability/monitoring but are not limited to these as identified within the report. (From GRADS 360-A description of how the State analyzed the capacity of its current infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity in LEAs to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices to improve results for children with disabilities. State systems that make up its infrastructure include, at a minimum: governance, fiscal, quality standards, professional development, data, technical assistance, and accountability/monitoring.
TE:IS		**Improvement Strategy Selection**	This is the part of Phase I in which strategies are identified with stakeholder engagement, that will be addressed to improve the SIMR. (From GRADS 360: An explanation of how the improvement strategies were selected, and why they are sound, logical and aligned, and will lead to a measurable improvement in the State Identified result(s). The improvement strategies should include the strategies, identified through the Data and State Infrastructure Analyses, that are needed to improve the State infrastructure and to support LEA implementation of evidence-based practices to improve the State Identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities.
TE:SI		**SIMR**	This is the part of Phase I that develops and identifies the SIMR using stakeholder engagement.
TE:TOA		**Theory of Action**	This is the part of Phase I that develops and identifies a theory of action using stakeholder engagement.

WORK

Code	Coding	Sub codes	Description
W	**Work**		
W:F		**Format/ Structure of the Engagement or Interaction**	Meetings, group, the manner in which the engagement occurs- 1) form new team, 2) align existing team, 3) build connections among existing groups or networks/roles 4) strategies to engage stakeholders
W:T		**Time Committed to Work**	How often did they meet, what was length of meetings, amount of time together; time commitment to the work (length of time, ie., over 9 months; depth of time, ie., 10 hours/week;, etc.)

APPENDIX F

TEMPLATE FOR DATA ANALYSIS-ALIGNMENT WITH RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(RQ)

RQ Code	RQ 1: How do State Education Agencies (SEAs) in the five sections of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I represent/describe stakeholder engagement?	Data Code
1a1	RQ1a. Who are the stakeholders that are involved	Representativeness: -breadth -external -internal Roles Roles: -advisory -core -Other groups
1a2	how are they selected for the work?	Other: importance engagement SEA Actions: future engagement in SSIP work
1a3	how are they prepared for the work?	SEA actions: -preparing -expectations
1b	RQ1b: How are interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA represented/described?	SEA Actions: -expectations -preparing Communication: -directionality -stakeholder actions
1c1	RQ1c: What is the nature and range of interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA in regard to SEA leadership, about the work?	SEA Actions: leadership
1c2	RQ1c: What is the nature and range of interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA in regard to decision-making processes and authority of the stakeholders, about the work?	SEA Actions: expectations Communication: stakeholder actions Roles -advisory -core -other group
1c3	RQ1c: What is the nature and range of interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA in regard to communication between the SEA and stakeholders about the work?	Communication -directionality -types -transparency

		Work -format -time committed
RQ Code	**RQ2: How do State Education Agencies (SEAs) actions as represented in the five sections of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I relate to the range of interaction between the stakeholders and the SEA?**	**Data Code**
2a	RQ2a: How do SEAs' range of interactions with stakeholders vary across components of the SSIP?	Topics for Engagement -SIMR -baselines -data analy -infra analy -improve strate -ToA
2b	RQ2b: How does the range of stakeholder interactions with the SEA vary among SEAs?	Communication -Stakeholder actions SEA Actions -Expectations -Future Engagement -Preparing stakeholders Work -time -format

APPENDIX G

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT THEMES AND FEATURES

Themes	Features
Representation	• Breadth
	• Affiliation: Internal/external
	• Value Added Contributions
Support	• Informed and Skilled
	• Provide Context
	• Make Examination More Manageable
	• Assist Ease of Viewing and Analysis
	• Purposeful Directions and Parameters
Leadership	• Flexibility
	• Shared
	• Questions asked
	• Environment established
	• Respect for participant
	• Recruit participants
Communication	• Means of Communicating
	• Purpose of Communications
	• Transparency
Interactions	• Unilateral
	• Bilateral
	• Collaborative
Influence	• Stakeholder Behavior
	• Nature of the Work and Its Use

APPENDIX H

LITERATURE THEMES CORRESPONDING TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND CODING FRAMEWORK

Literature Theme	Research Questions	Coding Framework
Representation	RQ1a. Who are the stakeholders that are involved and how are they selected and prepared for the work?	**Representativeness:** -Breadth -External -Internal **Roles:** -Advisory -Core -Other **Other:** Importance **SEA Actions:** Future Engagement
Preparation	RQ1a. Who are the stakeholders that are involved and how are they selected and prepared for the work?	**SEA Actions:** -Preparing -Expectations
	RQ1b: How are interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA represented/described	**SEA Actions:** -Preparing -Expectations **Communication:** -Directionality -Stakeholder actions
Leadership	RQ1b: How are interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA represented/described	**SEA Actions:** -Preparing -Expectations **Communication:** -Directionality -Stakeholder actions
	RQ1c: What is the nature and range of interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA in regard to SEA leadership, decision-making processes and authority of the stakeholders, and	**SEA Actions:** -Preparing -Expectations -Leadership **Communication:** -Directionality -Stakeholder actions

	communication between the SEA and stakeholders about the work?	
Interactions	RQ1b: How are interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA represented/described	**SEA Actions:** -Preparing -Expectations **Communication:** -Directionality -Stakeholder actions
	RQ1c: What is the nature and range of interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA in regard to SEA leadership, decision-making processes and authority of the stakeholders, and communication between the SEA and stakeholders about the work?	**SEA Actions:** -Expectations -Leadership **Communication:** -Stakeholder actions -Directionality -Types -Frequency **Roles:** -Advisory -Core -Other **Work:** -Format -Time Committed
	RQ2a: How do SEAs' range of interactions with stakeholders vary across components of the SSIP?	**Topics for Engagement:** -SIMR -Baseline and targets -Data Analysis -Infrastructure Analysis -Improvement Strategies -Theory of Action
	RQ2b: How does the range of stakeholder interactions with the SEA vary among SEAs?	**Communication:** -Stakeholder actions **SEA Actions:** -Preparing -Expectations -Future Engagement **Work:** -Format -Time Committed
Communication	RQ1b: How are interactions	**SEA Actions:** -Preparing

between the stakeholders and the SEA represented/described	-Expectations **Communication:** -Directionality -Stakeholder actions
RQ1c: What is the nature and range of interactions between the stakeholders and the SEA in regard to SEA leadership, decision-making processes and authority of the stakeholders, and communication between the SEA and stakeholders about the work?	**Communication:** -Directionality -Types -Transparency **Work:** -Format -Time Committed
RQ2a: How do SEAs' range of interactions with stakeholders vary across components of the SSIP?	**Topics for Engagement:** -SIMR -Baseline and targets -Data Analysis -Infrastructure Analysis -Improvement Strategies -Theory of Action
RQ2b: How does the range of stakeholder interactions with the SEA vary among SEAs?	**Communication:** -Stakeholder actions **SEA Actions:** -Preparing -Expectations -Future Engagement **Work:** -Format -Time Committed

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alok Disa, A. (2012, November). Stakeholders and Public Policy [Web log post, 11/12/12]. Retrieved from https://www.future500.org/stakeholder-engagement-as-a-public-policy-tool/

Anfar,V.A., Brown, K.M., and Mangione, T.L. (2002). Qualitative analysis on stage: Making the research process more public. *Educational Researcher, 31*(7), 28-38.

Bailey, D., & Koney, K. (2000). *Strategic alliances among health and human services organizations: From affiliations to consolidations*. (Abr. Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Balkin, J.M. (1999). How mass media simulate political transparency. *Cultural Values, 3,* 393-413.

Bemelmans-Videc, M. (1998). Introduction: Policy instrument choice and evaluation. In M. Bemelmans-Videc, R. Rist, & E. Vedung (Eds.), *Carrots, sticks and sermons: Policy instruments and their evaluation* (pp. 1-18). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Bemelmans-Videc, M., Rist, R., & Vedung, E. (Eds.) (1998). *Carrots, sticks and sermons: Policy instruments and their evaluation*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Blomgren Bingham, L., Nabatchi, T., & O'Leary, R. (2005). The new governance: Practices and processes for stakeholder and citizen participation in the work of government. *Public Administration Review, 65,* 547-558.

Bland, J.T., & Abaidoo-Asiedu, K. (2016). Issue networks: The policy process and its key actors. In A. Farazmand (Ed.), *Global encyclopedia of public administration, public policy, and governance* (pp. 1-7). https://doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-31816-5_2445-1

Block, P. (2005). *Civic Engagement and the Restoration of Community: Changing the nature of the conversation*. Civic Engagement Series: Peter Block. Retrieved from: http://www.peterblock.com/_assets/downloads/Civic.pdf

Boleman, L.G., & Deal, T.E. (2008*). Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey -Bass.

Borden, L.M., & Perkins, D.F. (1999). Assessing your collaboration: A self-evaluation tool. *Journal of Extension, 37*(2). Retrieved from https://www.joe.org/joe/1999april/tt1.php

Bowen, G. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal, 9*, 27-40. https://doi:10.3316/QRJ0902027

Boyatzis, R.E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Bradshaw, L.K. (1999). Principals as boundary spanners: Working collaboratively to solve problems. *NASSP Bulletin, 83*, 38-47. https://doi:10.1177/019263659908361105

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. https://doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brooks, J., McCluskey, S., Turley, E., & King, N. (2015). The utility of template analysis in qualitative psychology research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 12*, 202-222. https://doi:10.1080/14780887.2014.955224

California State University. *Qualitative Research*. Retrieved on September 4, 2017 from http://teachingcommons.cdl.edu/cdip/facultyresearch/Qualitativeresearch.html

Cashman, J., Linehan, J., Purcell, L., Rossier, M, Schultz, S., & Salski, S. (2014). *Leading by convening: A blueprint for authentic engagement*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

Chand, S. 4 types of direction in formal communication. Retrieved from http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/business-communication/4-types-of-direction-in-formal-communication/28014

Cohen, D.K. (1990). A Revolution in one classroom: The case of Mrs. Oublier. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 12*(3), 311-329. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1164355

Cohen, D. K., & Hill, H. C. (2001). *Learning policy: When state education reform works*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Cohen, D. K., Moffit, S.L., & Goldin, S. (2007). Policy and practice: The dilemma. *American Journal of Education, 113,* 515-548. https://doi: 10.1086/518487

Conklin, J. (2005). Wicked problems and social complexity. *Dialogue Mapping: Building Shared Understanding of Wicked Problems.* New York: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved from http://www.ideapartnership.org/documents/wickedproblems.pdf

Conley, D. T. (2003). Changes in roles at the state level. In D.T. Conley (Ed.), *Who governs our schools? Changing roles and responsibilities* (pp. 126-143). New York: Teachers College Press.

Council of Chief State School Officers (2016). *Let's get this conversation started: Strategies, tools, examples and resources to help states engage with stakeholders to develop and implement their ESSA plans.* Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ccsso.org/documents/ 2016/ESSA/CCSSO%20Stakeholder%

20Engagement %20 Guide%20 FINAL.pdf

Crabtree, B.F., & Miller, L. (1992). A template approach to text analysis: Developing and using codebooks. In B.F. Crabtree and W.L. Miller (Eds.), *Doing qualitative research* (pp. 93-109). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Deslisle & Yudin, M. May 21, 2014 personal communication to chief state school officers

Devine, D.J. (2002). A review and integration of classification systems relevant to teams in organizations. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice, 6*(4), 291-310.

Doern, G.B., & Phidd, R. (1978). *The politics and management of Canadian economic policy*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada.

Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, Pub. L. No.94-142, 89 Stat. 773 (1975).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-10 § 115, Stat. 1425 (2002)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Request, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) No. 1810-0581 (2012).

Every Student Succeed Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-95, 129 Stat. 1802 (2015).

Elmore, R. F. (1979). Backward mapping: Implementation research and policy decisions. *Political Science Quarterly, 94*(4), 601-616. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2149628

Elmore, R. F., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1988). *Steady work: Policy, practice, and the reform of American education*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand.

Frey, B.B, Lohmeier, J.H., Lee, S.W., & Tollefson, N. (2006). Measuring collaboration

among grant partners. *American Journal of Evaluation, 27*(3), 383-392. https://doi: 10.1177/10982140006290356

Fusarelli, L.D. (2002). Tightly coupled policy in loosely coupled systems: Institutional capacity and organizational change. *Journal of Educational Administration, 40*(6), 561-575. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.silk.library.umass.edu/ docview/220428361? accountid=14572

Gajda, R. (2004). Utilizing collaboration theory to evaluate strategic alliances. *American Journal of Evaluation, 25*, 65-77. https://doi:10.1177/109821400402500105.

Halliday, D. (2016, July 21). Stakeholder engagement in Montana: How one SEA does it [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://www.ecs.org/stakeholder-engagement-in-montana-how-one-sea-does-it/

Hamann, E. T., & Lane, B. (2004). The roles of state education agencies as policy intermediaries: Two cases. *Educational Policy, 18*, 426-455. https://doi: 1177/0895904804265021

Hannaway, J., & Woodruff, N. (2003). Policy instruments in education. *Review of Research in Education, 27*, 1-24. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/3568126

Heifetz, R.A.& Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the line: Staying alive through the dangers of leading.* Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.

Hirota J., & Jacobwitz, R. (2007). Constituency building and policy work: Three paradigms. *The Evaluation Exchange, XIII* (1-2). Retrieved from: http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/advocacy-and-policy-change/constituency-building-and-policy-work-three-paradigms

Hogue, T. (1993). *Community based collaboration: Community wellness multiplied.*

Chandler Center for Community Leadership. Retrieved from http://www.uvm.edu/crs/nnco/collab/wellness.html http://www.uvm.edu/crs/nnco/collab/wellness.html

Honig, M.I. (2006). Street-level bureaucracy revisited: Frontline district central-office administrators as boundary spanners in education policy implementation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 28,* 357-383. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/4121790

Honts, C. Prewett, M., Rahael, J., & Grossenbacher, M. (2012). The importance of team types for different team processes. *Team performance management, 18*(5/6), 312-327. https://doi10.1108/13527591211251104

Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S.E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277-1288. https://doi: 10.1177/1049732305276687

IDEA Partnership. *One-Way, Two-Way Learning*. Retrieved on August 14, 2018 from http://www.ideapartnership.org/building-connections/the-partnership-way.html

Improving America's School Act of 1994, Pub.L.No. 103-382, 108 Stat. 3518 (1994).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1994, Pub. L. No. 101-476, 104 Stat. 1142 (1994).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-446, 118 Stat. 2647, 20 U.S.C. 1400 note (2004).

Instrument. 2018. In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary* (11th ed.). Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/instrument

Institute for Educational Leadership, Task Force on State Leadership. (May 2001). *Leadership for student learning: Recognizing the state's role in public education. School*

leadership for the 21st century initiative: A report of the task force on state leadership. Retrieved from http://www.iel.org/programs/21st/reports/staterole.pdf

Interaction. 2018. In *Free dictionary online*. Retrieved from https://www.thefreedictionary.com/interaction

Interaction. 2018. In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary* (11th ed.). Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interaction

James, T. J. (1991). State authority and the politics of educational change. *Review of Research in Education*, *17*, 169-224. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1167332

Jochim, A.E. & May, P.J. (2010). Beyond subsystems: Policy regimes and governance. *The Policy Studies Journal, 38*(2), 303-327. https://doi:10.1111/j.1541-0072.2010.00362.x.

Johnson, R.B., & Onwuefbuzie, A. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher, 33*, 14-26.

Katz, D., & Kahn, R.L. (1966/78). *The social psychology of organizations.* New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Kondracki, N. L., Wellman, N. S., & Amundson, D. R. (2002). Content analysis: Review of methods and their applications in nutrition education. *Journal of nutrition education and behavior*, *34*(4), 224-230.

King, J.B. (2016, June 23). Archived letter of thanks to colleagues during transition to the new ESSA. Key Policy Letters Signed by the Education Secretary or Deputy Secretary. U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/ secletter/160622.html

King, N. Template- Technique. Retrieved September 4, 2017 from http://www-old.hud.ac.uk/hhs/research/template-analysis/

Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2003). *What we know about successful school leadership.* Philadelphia, PA: Laboratory for Student Success, Temple University.

Lemke, A.A., & Harris-Wai, J.N. (2015). Stakeholder engagement in policy development: Challenges and opportunities for human genomics. *Genetics in Medicine, 17*(12), 949-957. https://doi: 10.1038/gim.2015.8

Lessard, S., Bareil, C., Lalonde, L., Duhamel, F., Hudon, E., Goudreau, J., & Levesque, L. (2016). External facilitators and interprofessional facilitation teams: A qualitative study of their roles in supporting practice change. *Implementation Science, 11*(97). https://doi 10.1186/s13012-016-0458-7.

Lin, A. C. (2000). *Reform in the making: The implementation of social policy in prison*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, EG. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications

Linder, S.H., & Peters, B.G. (1989). Instruments of government: Perceptions and contexts. *Journal of Public Policy, 9*(1), 35-58. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/4007218

Linehan, P. (2010). *Communities of practice as a technical assistance strategy: A single case study of state systems change* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The George Washington University, Washington, DC.

Malen, B., & Muncey, D. (2000). Creating "a new set of givens"? The impact of state activism on site autonomy. In N. D. Theobald & B. Malen (Eds.), *Balancing local control and state responsibility for K-12 education* (pp. 199-244). Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Mallery, C., Ganachari, D., Fernandez, J., Smeeding, L., Robinson, S., Moon, M., Lavallee, D., & Siegal, J. (2012). Innovative methods in stakeholder engagement: An environmental scan. AHRQ Publication NO.12-EHC097_EF. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: May 2012. Retrieved from http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/tools-and-resources/ho-to-get-involved-in-the-effective-health-care-program/

Man, R., & Hofmann, C. (2017). ESSA stakeholder engagement: Early challenges and promising practices. *Policy Update-National Association of State Boards of Education, 24*(1). Retrieved from http://www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/Man_Hofmann-Stakeholders-Final.pdf

McDermott, K. A. (2006). Incentives, capacity, and implementation: Evidence from Massachusetts education reform. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 16*, 25-45. https://doi: 10.1093/jopart/mui24

McDonnell, L. M., & Elmore, R. F. (1987). Getting the job done: Alternative policy instruments. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 9*, 133-152. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1163726

McLaughlin, M.W. (1987). Learning from experience: Lessons from policy implementation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 9*, 171-178. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1163728

Men, L.R. (2012). Internal reputation management: The impact of authentic leadership and transparent communication. *Corporate Reputation Review, 17*, 254-272.

Miller. P.M. (2008). Examining the work of boundary spanning leaders in community contexts. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 11*, 353–377. Retrieved from

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603120802317875

Munodawafa, D. (2008). Communication: Concepts, practice and challenges. *Health Education Research*, *23*(3), 369–370. https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyn024

National Center for Systemic Improvement, Community of Practice Call, April 2018.

National Education Association, (2013). *Planning for school restructuring: Keeping stakeholders in the process.* (Policy Brief 51). Retrieved from https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Planning-for-School-Restructuring-06282013.pdf

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425, 20 U.S.C. 6301 note (2001).

Nordmeyer, B. (2017). The roles of stakeholders in the planning process. *Houston Chronicle*. Retrieved from http://smallbusiness.chron.com/roles-stakeholders-planning-process-32051.html or http://www.chron.com/

Nordquist, R. (2018). The basic elements of communication process. Retrieved from https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-communication-process-1689767?print

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D.E., & Moules, N.J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*, 1-13. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

NVivo qualitative data analysis software, Version 11 for Windows (2017). Doncaster, Victoria, Australia: QSR International Pty Ltd.

O'Haire, C., McPheeters, M., Nakamoto, E.K., LaBrant, L., Most, C., Lee, K., Graham, E., Cottrell, E., & Guise, J. (June 2011). Methods for engaging stakeholders to identify and prioritize future research needs. *Methods Future Research Needs Report No. 4.* (Prepared by the Oregon Evidence-based Practice Center and the Vanderbilt Evidence-Based

Practice Center) Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Publication No.11-EHC 044-E. Retrieved from: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK62565/pdf/Bookshelf_NBK62565.pdf

Office of Special Education Programs, 2005, Memorandum 05-12.

Office of Special Education Programs, 2014, SSIP Phase I.

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Perie, M., Park, J., & Klau, K., (2007). *Key elements for educational accountability models.* Retrieved from http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2007/Key_elements_for_educational_ 2007.pdf

Peterson, N. (1999). Interagency collaboration under part H: The key to comprehensive, multidisciplinary, coordinated infant/toddler intervention services. *Journal of Early Intervention, 15,* 89-105.

Policy Design Lab (2017). *Policy instruments and tools*. Retrieved from http://policy-design.org/wiki/what-is-policy-design/policy-instruments-and-tools/

Protection of Human Subjects, 45 C.F.R.§46 (2009).

Race to the Top, Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) No. 84.395A (2009)

Rallis, S.F., Rossman, G., Cobb, C., Reagan, T., & Kuntz, A. (2008). *Leading dynamic schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Rawlins, B. (2009). Give the emperor a mirror: Toward developing a stakeholder measurement of organizational transparency. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 21,* 71-99.

https://doi: 10.1080/10627260802153421

Regional Resource Center Program (January 2015). Part B State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) B-17 Compilation of OSEP Guidance Matrix- Overall stakeholder involvement checklist, *SSIP FAQ (November 25, 2014)*. Retrieved from https://ncsi.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CompilationofOSEPGuidanceonSSIP_January2015_Release.pdf

Ritchie, J. & Spencer, L. (1994). Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research. In A. Bryman and R.G. Gurgess (Eds.), *Analyzing qualitative data* (pp. 305-329). Taylor and Francis Books, Ltd.

Rittel, H., & Webber, M. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences, 4,* 155–69.

Roome, N., & Wijen, F. (2006). Stakeholder power and organizational learning in corporate environmental management. *Organization Studies 27*(2), 235–263.

Rowan, B., Camburn, E., & Barnes, C. (2004). Benefiting from comprehensive school reform: A review of research on CSR implementation. In National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform, *Putting the pieces together: Lessons from comprehensive school reform research*, 1-52. Retrieved from http://www.uky.edu/~gmswan3/609/Cairncross_Mannion_2001.pdf#page=10

Salamon, L.M. (1989). *Beyond privatization: The tools of government action.* Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.

Sandelowski, M., (2000). Focus on research methods: Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health 23,* 334-340. https://doi: 10.1002/1098-240X(200008)23:4<334::AID-NUR9>3.0.CO;2-G

Schrage, M. (1990). *Shared minds: The new technologies of collaboration*. NY: Random House.

Simon, A., & Benjamin, B. (2007) *The anatomy of communication: How understanding can transform our professional interactions*. Retrieved from: https://www.massagetherapy.com/articles/anatomy-communication-how-understanding-can-transform-our-professional-interactions

Spillane, J. M. (2005). *Standards Deviation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Spillane, J.M., Reiser, B.J., & Reimer, T. (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research, 72,* 387-431. https://doi:10.3102/00346543072003387.

Stakeholder. (2017). In *Merriam Webster.com*. Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stakeholder

Stein, J.Y. (2013, October 13) Re: How do you feel about Thematic Analysis? [Online forum comment]. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/post/How_do_you_feel_about_Thematic_Analysis

Swanson, C.B., & Stevenson, D.L. (2002). Standards-based reform in practice: Evidence on state policy and classroom instruction from the NAEP state assessments. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24*, 1–27. https://doi: 10.3102/01623737024001001

Teddlie, C., & Tashakorri, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Tollefson, C., Zito, A.R., & Gale, F. (2012). Symposium overview: Conceptualizing new governance arrangements. *Public Administration, 90*, 3-18.

Tool. 2018. In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary* (11th ed.). Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tool

Trujillow, T., & Renee, M. (2013). Democratic school turnarounds: Pursuing equity and learning from evidence. *Voices in Urban Education, 36*, 18-26. Retrieved from http://vue.annenberginstitute.org/issues/36/democratic-school-turnarounds-pursuing-equity-and-learning-evidence

United States. National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform : a report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education, United States Department of Education*. Washington, D.C.: The Commission : [Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O. distributor]

U. S. Department of Education (2012, March 2). Department announces new effort to strengthen accountability for students with disabilities moving from compliance-focused approach to one driven by results. *Press Office*. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/department-announces-new-effort-strengthen-accountability-students disabilities

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (2014). Part B phase I evaluation tool. Retrieved from https://osep.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/6454

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (2015). Part B state performance plan/snnual performance report 2015 indicator analyses. Retrieved from https://osep.grads360.org/#program/spp-apr-resources

von Mering, M.H. (2017). *Using social network analysis to investigate the diffusion of special education knowledge within a school district*. (Doctoral dissertation) Retrieved from

Doctoral Dissertations (983), http://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/983

Weatherley, R. and M. Lipsky (1977). *Street-level bureaucrats and institutional innovation: implementing special education reform.* Joint Center for Urban Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University.

Weir, K.E.. (2017). *The leadership experiences of female special education administrators* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, Massachusetts.

Welsh, E. (2002). Dealing with data: Using NVivo in the qualitative data analysis process. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 3*(2), Art. 26. Retrieved from http://nbnresolving.de/ urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0202260

Williams, P. (2002). The competent boundary spanner. *Public Administration, 80,* 103–124. Retrieved from http://www.wiley.com.silk.library.umass.edu/WileyCDA/

Yip, J., Ernst, C., & Campbell, M. (2011). Boundary spanning leadership: Mission critical perspectives from the executive suite. Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) Organizational Leadership White Paper Series. http://www.ccl.org/leadership/pdf/research/BoundarySpanningLeadership.pdf

Zawame, F.C. (2015). The implication of using NVivo software in qualitative analysis: Evidence-based reflection. *Malawi Medical Journal, 27,* 13-15.

Zorich, D., Waibel, G., & Erway, R. (2008). Beyond the silos of the LAMS: Collaboration among libraries, archives and museums. Report produced by OCLC Programs and Research. Retrieved from: https://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/publications/library/2008/2008-05.pdf