Funding its Own Organizational Learning:
The Impact of National Education Association Grants in Supporting and Sustaining Affiliate Change Efforts

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Abstract

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The National Education Association (NEA), the United States' largest labor union representing close to 3 million educators, implemented a $3 per member dues increase in 2013 to create the Great Public Schools (GPS) Fund grant program to support innovative change efforts within its affiliates. In the first five years of the program, $32.3 million in grants were awarded to 78 NEA state and local affiliates in support of a collective excellence agenda prioritizing student-centered policies and professional quality supports for educators. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the impact of those NEA grant investments in supporting its affiliates' change efforts towards that priority. The conceptual framework for this study is informed by three theories: organizational learning theory, feminist theory, and labor-management collaboration theory. A qualitative, interpretive case study is utilized as a methodological approach in analyzing interviews and documents from 22 grant recipients. Using data from interviews, grant applications, progress reports, and other relevant documents,

the 22 grants were analyzed to determine their level of impact along a continuum of sustainability. Key findings include qualities shared by sustained and limited impact grant projects which may inform funding, implementation, and partnership decisions for future grant programs. The importance of including educators as authentic partners, and the consideration of the professional identity of participants were found to be factors that influenced the sustainability of change efforts. Study results may prove relevant in informing partnership roles in labor management collaboration efforts and in the future application of identity elements from feminist theory to the field of education.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Appendices

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

The National Education Association (NEA) represents close to three million educators nationally and is the largest labor union in the United States. As an organization, NEA represents a confederation of 52 state and over 14,000 local education associations, called "affiliates"[1] united under a complex governance structure composed of elected local, state, and national leaders and supported by professional staff at each level of the enterprise.[2] Today, the Association finds itself on the cusp of organizational change. Factors such as strong anti-union public sentiment, a political culture in which teachers have been situated as the problem-to-solve, the loss of collective bargaining rights in many states, and the strong possibility of losing a significant revenue source if the right to collect fair share dues is lost, all serve as impetus for the organization to reflect on the current value educators receive from membership and the effectiveness of its current programs in continuing to effectively implement its mission.[3]

This research seeks to understand the impact of a grant program NEA offers its affiliates to support innovative change efforts that are focused on student success while supporting professional growth and a culture of excellence for its members. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to understand and describe the grantee experience, implementation decisions, and barriers and supports in sustaining the work funded. A focus on student learning and

[1] Affiliates are chartered into the organization by a majority vote of the Executive Committee and must maintain membership standards set in the NEA Bylaws defining election, financial reporting, and membership representation requirements.

[2] In addition to the 50 state Affiliates, the Federal Education Association (FEA) represents educators in U.S. Department of Defense Schools internationally and the Utah School Employees Association (USEA) represents Education Support Professionals in Utah.

[3] NEA Mission Statement: *Our mission is to advocate for education professionals and to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.*

professional quality is not necessarily new for NEA as many affiliates and departments within NEA headquarters have a long history of supporting this work. However, issues of quality and learning have not been the primary strategies by which the organization is known. NEA's aspiration to pivot its resources and brand in support of this work has the potential to impact large populations of educators and students and provides a unique opportunity to study a large organizational change endeavor.

NEA's commitment towards this new focus can be traced to its 2011 *Transforming Teaching: Connecting Professional Responsibility with Student Learning* report which called on NEA to adopt the goal of improving student learning as a core organizational goal (Commission to Transform Teaching, 2011). Responses by NEA leaders and subsequent work teams are described later in this chapter, but an overall unifying term to describe the new focus has not been universally adopted. One document described the work as "Advocate[*ing*] for quality inside our professions and promoting our union's role in advancing…student learning."[4] Another described a "new vision – a system of shared, mutual responsibility…founded on the premise that educators are ultimately responsible to students, to their colleagues, and to the profession."[5] Others simply call it supporting a "culture of professional excellence"[6] or more explicitly state, "…the success of every student is the responsibility of all adults at a worksite."[7] However the work is described internally, at its core is the idea that NEA should reposition itself as a support in nurturing the professional quality of its members in order to take shared

[4] NEA Leadership Competencies Guide, 2013
[5] A New Vision for Student Success: A Report form NEA's Accountability Task Force, 2015
[6] Great Teaching and Learning: Creating the Culture to support Professional Excellence, 2017
[7] Education Support Professionals Professional Growth Continuum, 2017

responsibility in ensuring the success of all students. In doing this work, NEA leaders believe they can position the Association as a recognized advocate for quality professional practices.

In the past, the term "collective bargaining" was recognized both within and outside the organization as a strong value and as a shorthand term to describe the organization's working condition advocacy and work negotiating and managing employment contracts. Since no term has yet been officially recognized by the organization to describe the new focus on learning and quality, the term "collective excellence" is proposed by this researcher both to describe the new value the organization is striving to provide and as an overarching descriptor of efforts supporting the new organizational focus. The term also captures the concept that the power of the association has been in its collective action. The question yet to be answered is what will NEA members be collectively powerful about? The organization believes it will be about quality and excellence in their professional practice and support for their students.

Description of Research Problem

One of the first external indications of the organization's commitment to supporting the collective excellence of its membership was the creation of the "Great Public Schools Fund" (GPS Fund) grant program. Recognizing that this was a new organizational priority and would represent a role for many of its affiliates, the intent of the grant program was to support and incentivize this new, student and practice-focused work. The GPS Fund grant program was created and is sustained through a $3 dues increase adopted into bylaw by delegates to the 2013 NEA Representative Assembly. The goal of the GPS Fund grant program, as described in its grant guidelines is to:

- Generate and develop innovative ideas designed to promote sound practices [and] to capture key learnings that promote student success
- Establish new organizational partnerships toward improving professional practice and aligning it with organizational priorities
- Cultivate sustainable programs that can be reproduced and amplified by others to make meaningful change in public education for educators and students

Appendix A provides details regarding the grant fund guidelines.

The guidelines explicitly restrict the use of the funds to support traditional union activities such as legislative programs, political campaigns, and other "…programs or activities covered by other NEA grants or funded with other NEA monies" which includes both organizing, advocacy, and communication initiatives. Examples of the types of projects funded include supporting the success and retention of early educators, implementing restorative practices in schools, and developing the infrastructure necessary to deliver relevant professional development. All NEA Affiliates[8] are eligible to apply for the grants. Grant applications are accepted each June and December, with approximately $3 million awarded each grant period. Awards range from $25,000 to a maximum of $250,000 per year for a period of one to three years. Grant funding for multi-year projects is contingent upon a yearly review. Applications received are first reviewed by staff for alignment to the scoring criteria defined in the grant guidelines. An Oversight Committee composed of leaders from NEA's National Councils[9], the

[8] Student NEA members do not pay the $3 yearly dues to support the program so are ineligible to apply for GPS Fund grants

[9] National Council of State Education Associations (NCSEA) , National Council of Urban Education Associations (NCUEA), National Council of Higher Education (NCHE), and National Council of Education Support Professionals (NCESP)

NEA Vice-President, NEA Secretary-Treasurer, an elected representative from the Board of Directors, and two senior staff review each application and make funding recommendations to the NEA President and NEA Executive Director who ultimately approve, reduce, or reject the proposed funding allocations.

Prior to dispersal of funds, an NEA grant coordinator is assigned to each site. Grant coordinators are NEA employees who act as official liaisons between affiliates who receive GPS Fund grants and NEA. After a grant is awarded, the grant coordinators help negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding with the affiliate to finalize the budget, develop a reporting and deliverable calendar aligned with the stated goals of the grant, and ensure that intellectual property and programs developed through the grant funding will be made available to NEA in order to be shared throughout the organization.

Knowledge Gap

Since the GPS Fund's inception in 2013, 274 grant applications have been submitted by state and local affiliates requesting $91.4 million in total assistance. To date, 120 of those applications have been funded at an organizational investment of $32.3 million. See Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: GPS-Fund Applications and Funded Projects by Year

Grant Period	Applications Received	Amount Requested	Grants Awarded	Amount Funded
2013-14	69	$23.1 million	40	$13.4 million
2014-15	65	$15.9 million	17	$3.1 million
2015-16	35	$10.4 million	22	$4.0 million
2016-17	44	$15.8 million	22	$5.5 million
2017-18	61	$26.2 million	19	$6.3 million
TOTALS	274	$91.4 million	120	$32.3 million

While the GPS Fund grant program is frequently cited as evidence of NEA's commitment to supporting the professional practice and growth of its membership, the impact of the program as a driver in implanting NEA's collective excellence change effort among its affiliates has yet to be questioned, studied, or critiqued. Furthermore, how the NEA affiliates themselves conceptualize the investment provided through the grant program it is not well understood. This research is an opportunity to understand and describe the grantee experience including factors that influence their decision to petition funding for a specific project or activity. I analyze implementation decisions made by affiliates, each an independent and self-sustaining education organization in its own right, as well as document barriers and supports to sustaining change efforts.

Significance of the Research

Researching the impact of the GPS Fund grant program provides an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the organizational learning efforts of NEA, the largest education agency in America. While many education organizations actively seeking out innovations and ideas to adopt and incorporate, the scale of NEA's fiscal investment and the ability to self-fund its own innovative activities through its affiliates is unique in the field. The study also provides an opportunity to apply a unique conceptual frame synthesized from elements of organizational learning, labor management collaboration, and feminist theories to describe and understand the effects of the change efforts funded by the grants. Finally, the research applies identity formation aspects of feminist theory to a unique context, namely, the formation and support of a new union identity grounded in professional quality.

Background and Context: The National Education Association

Founded in 1857 to "…evaluate the character and advance the interests of the profession of teaching and to promote the cause of popular education in the United States,"[10] the National Education Association has employed a variety of strategies to advance this goal. Until the late 1800's, NEA primarily served as a convener for the profession. It sponsored yearly conventions for education thought leaders to meet in order to present, discuss, and debate education issues of the time. (Wesley, 1957; West, 1980).

At the end of the 19th century, NEA changed its approach to achieving its goals. From 1892 through 1918, NEA shifted its focus from sharing papers at conventions to sponsoring official committees and commissions to issue formal reports on a variety of education topics. An example of one of these reports from the commission period was the 1892 NEA "Committee of Ten" which recommended the qualities of a common high school program of instruction (Butler, 1987).

Beginning in the 1920's, NEA added legislative advocacy as another strategy for achieving its mission. (NEA, 2018; West, 1980). These practices continue today and since 1970, have included support for a strong Political Action Committee (PAC) to elect pro-public school officials (Edwards & Walsh, 2010). In the late 1960s, NEA endorsed the use of collective bargaining across the enterprise and in 1969, officially recognized the right for its affiliates to strike (Kahlenberg, 2010). By 1979, 60% of the nation's teachers were covered under collective bargaining agreement laws in 31 states (Henderson, 2004).

[10] The Charter purpose from the National Teachers' Association which changed its name to the National Educational Association in 1870, and the National Education Association in 1907. With the exception of dropping the word "popular" in 1907, the charter purpose language remains in effect today.

For almost 50 years, collective bargaining and advocacy focused on compensation, working conditions, and labor contracts served as the primary value NEA provided to its members. Today, the organization is actively shifting to a new sustainable value proposition, or service to provide that both meets the needs of its members and drives the next iteration of organizational strategies to continue its mission.

A New Theory of Success: Collective Excellence

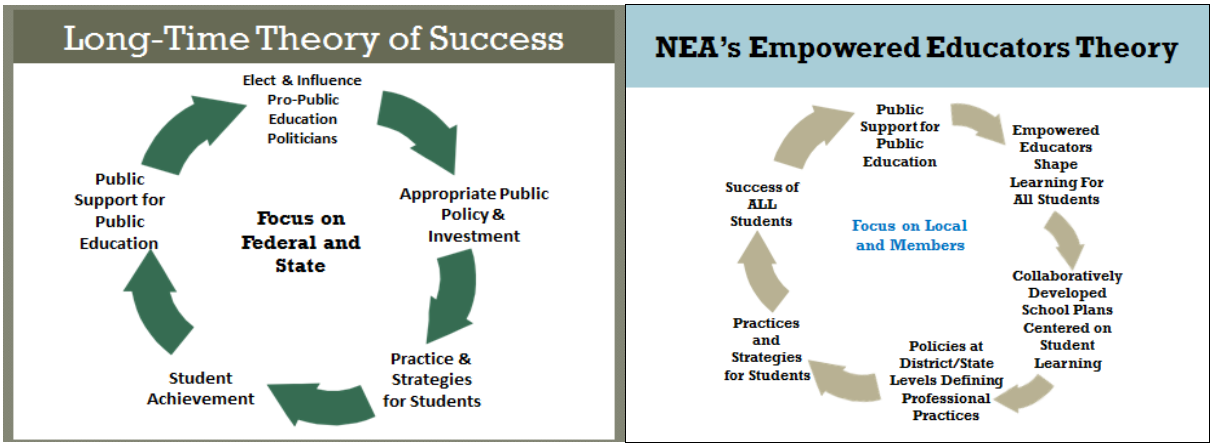
NEA has been strongly influenced by the Commission of Effective Teachers and Teaching report, which called on the Association to actively reposition itself as an advocate for student learning and educator quality and professionalism. A leadership growth continuum was developed across six competencies including one focused on educator quality, effectiveness and professional practice titled: "Leading our Professions: Advocating for education transformation and student learning".[11] These six competencies served as the basis for an internal staff reorganization at the national office creating six multi-departmental "centers" that comprise NEA's current organizational structure.[12] The Center for Great Public Schools is one of these centers charged with guiding the research, policy, and professional practice agenda and to support "leading the profession" on issues of quality and student learning.

In addition, analysis of member feedback and the organization's strengths and weaknesses further affirmed the need for a new theory of success which was described internally by NEA leadership as the "Empowered Educators" theory of success. Shown in Figure

[11] The six 2013 NEA Leadership Competencies: Advocacy, Business, Communication, Governance and Leadership, Leading our Professions, and Organizing.
[12] The Center for Social Justice was created as a 7th NEA center in August, 2016.

1.1,[13] the Empowered Educators theory of success was based on the fundamental belief that educators know best about what and how the students in their communities need to learn. In Figure 1.1, this new theory of success is contrasted with NEA's prior long-standing theory.

Figure 1.1: Comparing NEA's Theories of Success



The Empowered Educators frame posited that, as educators are empowered to shape learning for their students, they will collaboratively develop plans based on quality professional practices that promote supportive policies. When professional practice focused on student learning is embraced and practiced broadly, students learn and succeed. Successful students and school systems promote public support for educators and schools, and the cycle repeats itself with public education and teachers further empowered to create solutions that improve the profession and their students' learning.

In his 2015 Representative Assembly address, NEA Executive Director John Stocks called on NEA to support the professional excellence and empowerment of educators "to use their voice, professional expertise and judgment in the best interests of their students…" and to be a

[13] Slides taken from an internal NEA staff presentation delivered May 14, 2015

union "…indispensable to our members' success, in their practice, in their professional development, and in their careers" ("NEA Representative Assembly," 2015).

In terms of impact, the Empowered Educators theory of success drove NEA's strategic planning and development for the 2014-16 and 2016-18 budget cycles and served as the rationale behind multiple initiatives including the development of two new strategic goals,[14] the release of Statement of Strategic Intent[15] by the Executive Committee, conference alignment efforts, and repurposed budgetary and staff resources to help drive this change. Building on these efforts, in 2017 the NEA Board of Directors approved four strategic opportunities to prioritize in the 2018-20 budget cycle including the directive to "Provide Professional Supports: Build a system of Association-convened, educator-led professional learning and supports for all educators across their career continua to ensure student success."[16]

The GPS Fund grants represent tangible evidence of NEA's aspirational commitment to, and financial investment in, adopting collective excellence as the next organizational strategy to

[14] **Goal 1: Strong Affiliates for Educator Voice and Empowerment:** NEA will partner with state and local affiliates to strengthen their organizational capacity to: secure opportunities for empowered educators to impact the conditions of teaching and learning through supportive policies, practices and structures; engage and continually deepen relationships with and relevance to members; and grow association membership and strength while thwarting attacks to member rights and union strength. **Goal 2: Uniting the Nation for Great Public Schools:** In partnership with state and local affiliates and parents and communities, NEA will enhance the quality of education professions by supporting the development of educators across their professional continuums for empowerment roles that create solutions designed to improve student outcomes, enhance the quality of professional practice, shape the future of teaching and learning, achieve educational opportunity and equity, and advance national, state and district level policies.

[15] **2015 Strategic Intent statement of the Executive Committee**: The NEA Executive Committee affirms its commitment to empowering educators and supporting their career development and highest professional aspirations. We seek to enhance NEA and affiliate efforts to engage educators and aspiring educators at the earliest possible point along their professional continuum.

[16] The other three prioritized opportunities include: **(1) Increase Educator Voice, Influence and Professional Authority**: Develop and sustain effective structures, processes, and leaders to increase educator influence in decision-making at worksite, district, state, and national levels. **(2) Recruit and Engage New and Early Career Educators:** Identify, recruit, support, and engage new educators in our Association, and connect them with opportunities for professional learning, leadership, and advocacy. **(3) Advance Racial Justice in Education:** Support members in advancing racial justice in education and improving conditions for students, families, and communities through, awareness, capacity-building, partnership, and individual and collective action.

support its continued mission advocating for education professionals and fulfilling the promise of public education for every student.

In researching the impact of the GPS Fund grants to support affiliate change efforts supporting professional excellence and student success, it should be remembered that not all NEA affiliates applying for the grant are prepared to enact aspects of the NEA agenda. While many affiliates are actively seeking support to pivot their work towards supporting the collective excellence of their members, others, especially those in which collective bargaining as a value proposition is working well, are less likely to apply for a GPS Fund grants.

SUMMARY

This study explores the impact GPS Fund grants have on supporting and sustaining change efforts and an organizational shift toward the professional quality needs of its membership. Interested audiences may include NEA members and staff working to implement collective excellence as a strategy, grant recipients and granters interested in sustainable impacts of grant beyond the grant award period. In addition, it is hoped that education theorists might consider the usefulness of a unique conceptual framework composed of elements from three established theories to better understand organizational change in an education system. For NEA as well as other organizations that offer or accept grants, the themes developed and lessons learned through this research might inform future decisions to maximize the sustained impact of grant investments to support organizational change. The next chapter describes the conceptual approach and informing literature grounding this research.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL APPROACH AND INFORMING LITERATURE

Conceptual Approach

This chapter describes the development of the conceptual framework utilized to understand the impact of the NEA grant investment in supporting its affiliates' change efforts. This unique frame is grounded in elements of three established theories: organizational learning, feminist, and labor-management collaboration. Key aspects of the three theories informing this conceptual approach are summarized and a rationale for utilizing each is explained. The chapter ends with a description of the resulting conceptual frame used to focus analysis of the differing impacts NEA grants had in sustaining change efforts in state and local NEA affiliates.

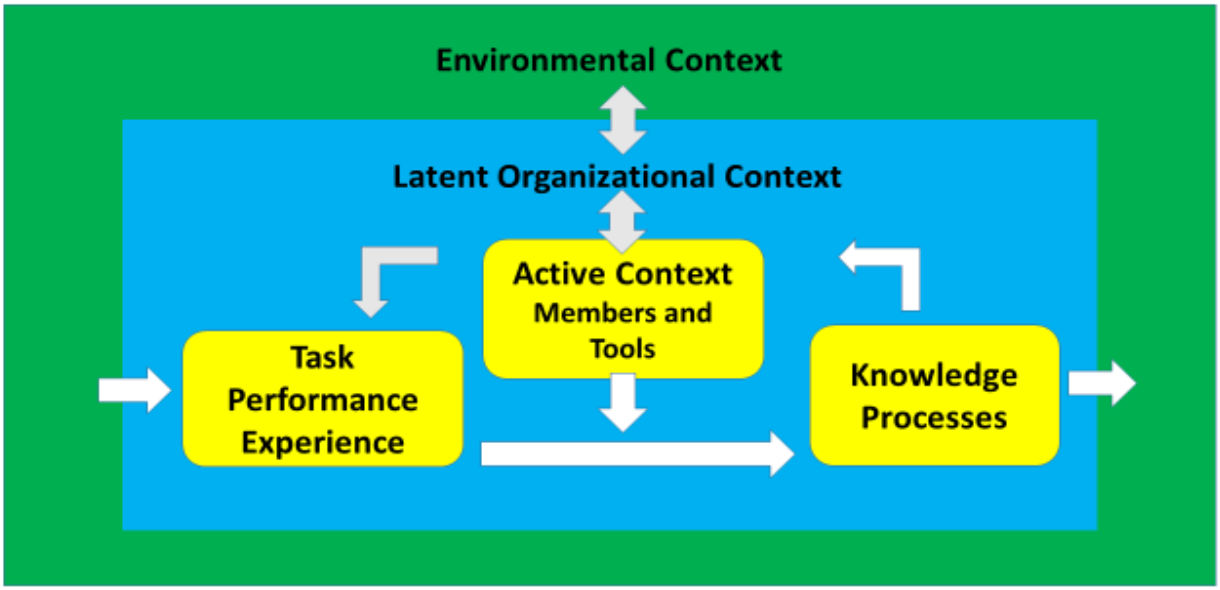
Organizational Learning Theory

Organizational learning (OL) theory posits that organizations learn by adopting or rejecting processes informed by the knowledge acquired through experience (Foil & Lyles, 1985, Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). Similar to the learning process observed in individuals, organizations actively seek to acquire (Huber, 1991) or explore solutions to solve problems (Levitt & March, 1988, Miner & Haunschild, 1995). Once a potential solution has been identified or proposed, it is tried or experienced to determine its usefulness in influencing or changing organizational activities or operating assumptions (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011,; Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998). Processes that are helpful and make sense (Coburn, 2001; Weick, 1993) to those using it, as well as solve the problem it was intended to improve (Argyris, 1976), are incorporated as one of the organization's stored and encoded capacities

(Cohen & Levinthal, 1990) and into memory (Alavi, 2001; Levitt & March, 1988) to be used again.

Figure 2.1 illustrates a theoretical framework (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011) describing the process of organizational learning.

Figure 2.1: A Theoretical Framework for Analyzing Organizational Learning

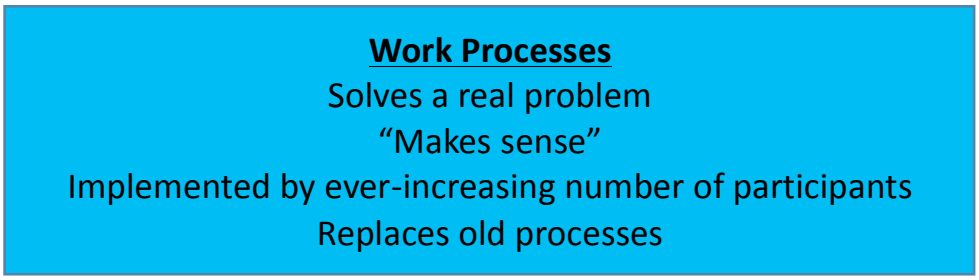


Organizations exist within an environmental context (Glynn et al., 1994). The external environmental interacts with the latent organizational context, which includes the culture, membership, partners and memory of the organization. While the latent context does not perform tasks itself, it influences the work of the active organizational context, composed of the workers, the tools they use, and the tasks they perform. The active context performs tasks and gains experiences that inform their learning and knowledge as to whether the experience was helpful or not. (Kane et al., 2005). Experiences are retained by the organization as knowledge which affect the latent organizational (Weber and Camerer, 2003) and

environmental contexts (Mansfield, 1985). Knowledge created by its own experience, (knowledge creation) and knowledge developed by the experience of others (knowledge transfer) can be taken into the organization and impact the work of the active context members (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011).

Research utilizing organizational learning theory focuses on the dimensionalities of its learning cycle and contexts. Using the language of OL, NEA GPS Fund grants support task performance experiences that promote a collective excellence agenda in its affiliates. Of the many dimensions of the theory, the work processes around these funded affiliate experiences are the element of the theory this research utilized. Typically, grant "success" is based on the successful implementation of the change effort described in the grant application and meeting the deliverables stated in the application. A focus on the work processes provides a new dimension in defining the effectiveness of the investment. Does the funded change effort solve a real problem and "make sense" to the active context workers as a valid solution? Is there evidence of activity spread from individual implementers, to other groups or to the larger organization? And, if so, what was given-up or modified as the new activity became routinized? See Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Elements of Organizational Learning Theory Utilized in the Conceptual Frame



Feminist Theory

Feminist theorists have struggled through, identified, and learned much as they tackled tough and uncomfortable issues in their unpacking of the experience of being a woman. Currently, 80% of America's teaching workforce is female (Ingersoll & Stuckey, 2014). Consequently, feminist theory can provide important insights into the work of educational organizations. Feminist thinking is diverse and has and will continue to utilize a variety of conceptual and contextual theoretical approaches to study, understand and acknowledge the complexity of feminism and the state of "being" female. In her introduction to feminist theory, Beasley (1999) acknowledges this complexity and offers two concepts; that misogyny exists and must be examined and challenged and; that women, as the privileged subject of study, define the boundaries in thinking and approaches within the field. Kolmar (2005) offers ten debates within feminism that have influenced feminist thinking. Two of these feminist debates, (1) Power and (2) race, class and gender intersections, and their impact on identity formation, influence the analytical frame I bring to this work and apply to this case.

Union Leadership: Power and Identity Formation

Not all current NEA leaders are eager to adopt a collective excellence frame supporting the professional growth and quality of the membership. At times, efforts to engage in this transformation have been both actively and passively blocked by leaders at all levels defending a status quo that validates their own sense of constructed union identity. When defending a "traditional" union identity, it is often one developed and reinforced around bargaining or adversarial advocacy and organizing skills. The defense of the status quo is often justified as

advocacy efforts to maintain personal participation benefits such as travel and conference attendance or constituency special interests. Two recent examples of these obstructionist activities include a decision by a group of leaders to not approve proposed funding for early career support programs in order to fund constituency conferences so that election campaigning could occur. In another case, a proposed (and defeated) Representative Assembly amendment to the NEA Bylaw that funds the GPS Fund grant program being studied to fund campaigns against Charter School proliferation and privatization efforts.

Most of these individuals gained their power and identity as a leader within the association in an era when collective bargaining and political advocacy were primary strategies to provide value to its membership. Feminist theory tell us that identity formation is a social product, often constructed through discourse (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). The formation of gender identities and behaviors has been described as a series of performances, which over time become internalized (Butler, 1997). Using this lens, these obstructionist union leaders have performed and internalized a union leadership identity built around traditional unionism. They reinforce this identity with each other through "Big D Discourse" (Gee, 2011) behaviors; sharing an "insider" NEA acronym-rich vocabulary, common political views, similar shared institutional histories, and mastery at complicated meeting protocols which immediately distinguish newcomers from the ideas presented by "legitimate" leaders.

Gender and racial identities are not simply psychological or physiological states but imposed classification systems (Spelman, 1997). Spelman symbolized this classification as "doors" individuals choose to walk through to assert certain identities. She warns that those in power label and control access to the doors. Spelman's analogy is applicable to those enjoying

current union leadership power. They "earned" their leadership status by behaving in a specified way and have been successful to date in controlling and labeling the doors to leadership. The next generation of union leaders will need a legitimate new door that welcomes leaders who follow a different, new pathway to leadership and exhibit behaviors and expertise grounded in a professional, practice-based skill set.

Learning from Feminist Theory

Feminist studies can inform and strengthen the learning of educators as they strive to improve and understand their own field. Feminist scholar Audre Lorde's writing illuminated several of these lessons for me that have influenced my conceptual frame. In her essay, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 1984a) argues that only when women embrace their differences, will the opportunity for thinking differently occur and genuine changes happen. Lorde writes, "…this fact is only threatening to those who still define the master's house as their only source of power" (p. 112). As changes to NEA's current value proposition for membership are considered, some of those in power will push to maintain the status quo. The larger lesson for education to remember is the failed second-wave feminist movement grounded in "essentialism" (Kolmar, 2005), and the "empty" concept, led by privileged and powerful women, of a common sisterhood (hooks, 1997; Mohanty, 2003) where all women were supposed sisters simply because of a shared gender. Educators should remember this lesson, and not make the same mistake by grouping "teachers" into a generic professional identity imposed by the privileged that does not honor and recognize differences in power, privilege, race, gender and the daily lived experience of individual teachers. Genuine

power for the profession will only occur if the differences within the teaching workforce are acknowledge and embraced.

Another of Lorde's essays, "The uses of anger: Women responding to racism" (Lorde, 1984b) delineates the difference between hatred, which stems from unfulfilled anger and whose objective is destruction; and anger, which stems from grief and whose objective is change. Lorde urges the reader to use their anger, "But anger expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future is a liberating and strengthening act of clarification…" (p. 127). While Lorde's essay was specifically referring to anger against racism, the idea that anger may be harnessed as a catalyst for change has multiple applications in education.

Lorde's admonishment that strength comes through embracing diversity and her perspective that anger is a catalyst for change are two concepts that inform my framework. Did the affiliate possess an element of anger driving the search for a new solution? And if so, does that influence the use of a particular solution? Also, in determining a solution, were diverse and minority opinions part of that search process or was the solution proposed and implemented by privileged, majority-opinion power holders who believe they are acting on behalf of "teachers" and "union leaders" as a broad, generalized (and unified) category?

Analysis of the data sources should include being mindful of how involvement in the process potentially influenced the identity performance and formation of the participants. Is the activity at odds with their formed identity as a union leader? Or is it an opportunity to "perform" an alternative definition of what it means to be a union member and leader grounded in professional practice and excellence? Also, if new union identities are formed, will

those currently in power find a place for these newcomers? Will they open and legitimize an alternative "door" to power? Looking at the opportunities to perform and assert alternative union leadership identities and finding systemic ways to welcome those individuals to legitimately share power in the system is a an element of the conceptual framework that is informed by feminist theory. See Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Elements of Feminist Theory Utilized in the Conceptual Frame

Identity Formation
Encourages practice of new identity
New identity granted access to legitimate power

Labor-Management Collaboration Theory

Labor-management collaboration (LMC) theory speculates that when teacher unions and district management partner collaboratively - particularly on issues of teaching and learning - solutions to advance student learning will occur in a more effective and sustainable way than if the district implemented the change alone. LMC reframes the role of unions from adversaries to partners on student learning issues (Futernick, McClellan, Vince, & Shirley, 2013; Futernick, 2016).

A commonly reported catalyst for districts and unions to adopt LMC practices is a critical breakdown in labor-management relations, often following a labor-crisis or leadership transition (Dubin, 2013; Rubinstein, 2013). Other factors include exposure to positive exemplar models of LMC in other districts and outside assistance in implementing LMC; either through facilitation or external funding (Futernick et al., 2013).

Practices that promote LMC include a shared commitment to student learning, and clear, transparent communication, especially around budget issues (Futernick, 2016). Districts with strong LMC relationships stress the importance of frequent, even daily communication between top association and district leadership (Eckert, 2011). These sites also tend to apply principles of distributed leadership by both labor and management, utilize "interest-based"[17], as opposed to positional bargaining strategies, and receive technical assistance and support by external providers (Futernick, McClellan, & Vince, 2012).

Labor-Management Collaboration Outcomes

Participation in LMC can promote improved professional relationships, trust, and collaboration between the leadership of the teachers and administration (Futernick, 2016; Rubenstein & McCarthy, 2016). Common district policies that LMC typically impact include teacher evaluation, peer assistance and review, leadership improvement and extended learning time (Murray, 2004). The process of mutual collaboration through LMC increases both the district's problem solving capacity (Rubinstein, 2001) and the empowerment of participating educators as they have a voice in the decision-making processes and decisions that affect their professional practice (Futernick et al., 2013). As elected representatives of their membership, local union leaders tend to have a high level of trust that can be leveraged to more effectively implement new programs and solutions (Moore Johnson et al., 2009; Rubinstein, 2013).

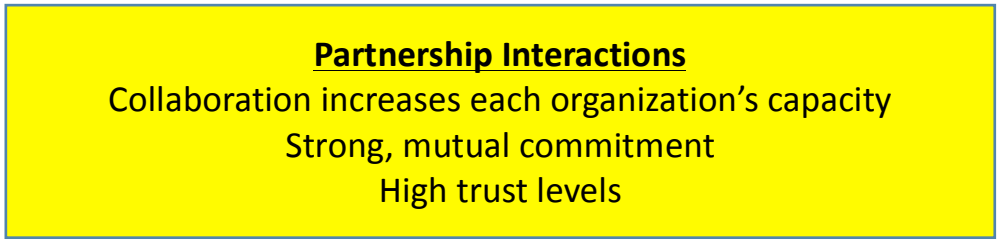
A strong labor management collaboration can have a positive impact on student learning as both sides work together innovating solutions to problems affecting teaching and

[17] Interest-based bargaining (IBB) is a form of bargaining in which both sides acknowledge that the interests of both management and labor are largely aligned. Time is spent seeking collaborative solution to these shared interests.

learning (Futernick, 2016; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2016). Positive building staff-to-management relations predicted different communication patterns between the union building representative and principal, typically more frequent and less formal than low-partnering schools, and predicted an increase of teacher-to-teacher collaboration and communication around teaching and learning issues.[18] However, LMC theorists such as Futernick and Rubenstein recognize that labor-management collaboration by itself is insufficient for sustaining improvement. It must be coupled with parent and community engagement, data analysis, continual trust building, and commitment to the process by both parties (Anrig, 2013; Rubinstein, 2013).

A core aspect of labor-management theory is that capacity is increased by working together, if trust is present. Trust doesn't just happen; it is reinforced through hard work and mutual commitment. These ideas inform my analytic questioning. Is there evidence of hard work between partners that demonstrates a mutual commitment to trust building? In what ways is each partner's capacity being increased by working together? Currently, grants fund affiliate-led innovation. LMC asserts that trusted, collaborative partners can contribute to the large scale changes and solutions the affiliate desires. See Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4: Elements of Labor Collaboration Theory Utilized in the Conceptual Frame

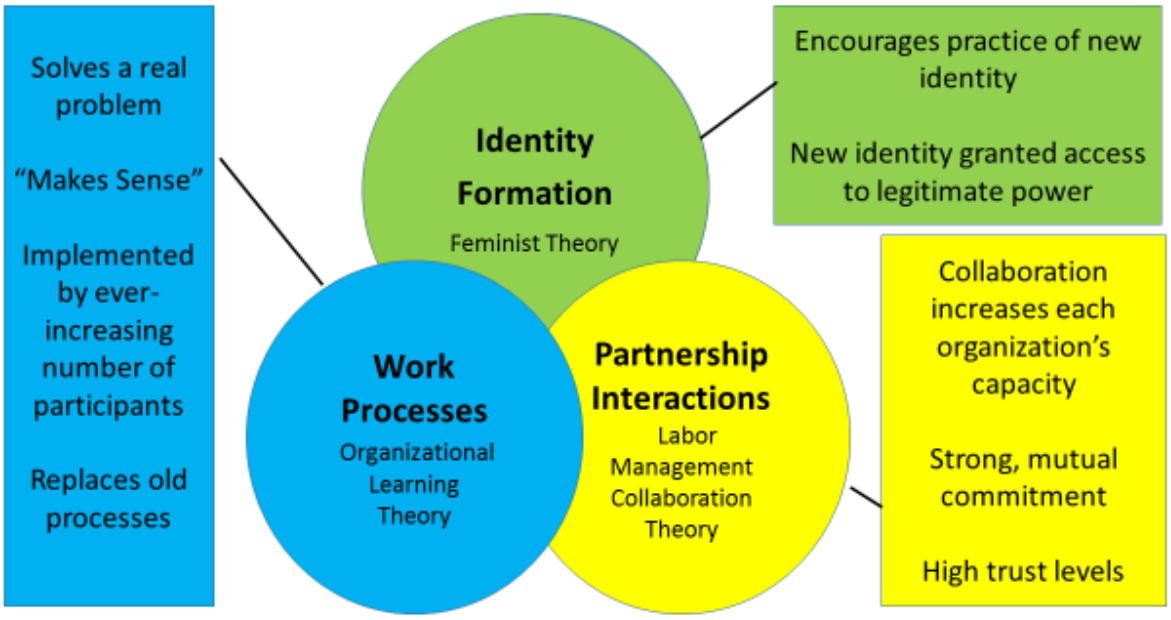


[18] Examples of student learning issues include such topics as: student performance data, curriculum development, grading and instructional practices, and peer mentoring

Description of Conceptual Framework Elements

A visual representation of the conceptual framework is shown in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5: Analytical Elements of Sustained Organizational Change



WORK PROCESSES

The *work processes* element is informed by organizational learning theory and focuses the work processes of the receiving affiliate examined. This element suggests that the change effort work being funded solves a real problem and the solution being tested or tried "make sense" as a solution to a variety of diverse participants. The number of participants increase as the change effort is implemented and adapted. Finally, there should be evidence that the work is sustainable beyond the course of the grant funding and is replacing or modifying old practices.

IDENTITY FORMATION

The i*dentity* f*ormation* element is informed by feminist theory. This element suggests the development or enrichment of a new union identity grounded in issues such as excellence of professional practice or social justice; issues that have a direct impact on student learning and tie to the collective excellence change effort. Participants in the grant funded work show evidence that this work is not outside of their perception of “unionism” but an integral part of being a union member. An assumption underlying the conceptual framework is that participants who see themselves as this type of union member will become involved in the association and take opportunities to lead and actively participate, with support from the current leadership.

PARTNERSHHIP INTERACTIONS

The *Partnership Interactions* element is influenced by labor-management collaboration theory and suggests evidence of collaboration in enacting the work. While the grant funds “union led" activities, sites with sustained implementation efforts may show evidence of collaboration with districts, community partners or parent organizations to increase their implementation capacity. An assumption is that there will be mutual commitment to the work between the partners and high levels of trust development.

SUMMARY

Utilizing elements of three well established theories as a conceptual frame to understand organizational change efforts within a teachers union is a unique application of theories. Each theory alone is inadequate in describing the complexities of the phenomena

under study. While LMC theory focuses on the relationships between the educators and management to drive change, it does not address the individual practice and performance of identity educators bring into those interactions. OL theory focuses on the change processes of the organizations, but is silent on partnership quality and educator identities being challenged as factors impacting the process. Finally, the Feminist theory element of identity formation helps to understand how identities are developed through practice and performance, but has not been applied to the context of education processes and partnership interactions as factors promoting or discouraging the performance of a professional union identity. The conceptual frame is represented in a Venn diagram purposefully in order to visually represent that the three theoretical elements overlap, each filling in aspects of change the others are lacking. The following chapter describes the specific research questions addressed in the study and the study's method of inquiry.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research questions guided by the conceptual framework. A description of and rationale for using a qualitative interpretative case study as an appropriate methodological approach is explained. Primary data sources include interviews with affiliate members, and all available documents related to the grant. The documents include site visit reports, progress reports, final reports, grant applications and award letters. After a discussion on methodological limitations, the chapter ends with an explanation of my own positionality in regards to the NEA and the grant program studied.

Research Questions

In what ways have NEA grant funded projects supported organizational change efforts led by its affiliated local and state education associations?

- In what ways, if at all, have grant activities influenced the work processes of the affiliates?
- In what ways, if at all, has participation in the grant activities influenced affiliate and educator conceptions of professional identify?
- In what ways, if at all, are grant activities impacted by partnership interactions?

What type of impacts do NEA grant funded projects have on the work of affiliates?

- In what ways does impact vary across funded projects?
- What similarities exist among grant sponsored activities that are more likely to be sustained beyond the term of the grant?

- What similarities exist among grant activities that appear to have had minimal or limited impacts on the affiliate beyond the term of the grant?

What factors support or hinder affiliate efforts for long-term organizational change?

- What issues and local contexts prompt affiliates to seek funding?
- What roles do affiliate leadership, staff, and members play in supporting these efforts?
- What characteristics of grant awards, if any, are more conductive to supporting organizational change efforts?
- Which affiliate contexts, if any, are more conducive to supporting organizational change efforts?
- In what way do affiliate implementation decisions support the opportunity to drive organizational change or maintain the status quo?

Methodological Approach

A qualitative, interpretative case study was utilized as the methodological approach for this study. The research intent was to understand impacts of the NEA GPS Fund grants on its affiliates, as the organization at all levels of the enterprise attempts to reposition itself in support of a collective excellence change agenda. This question best suited a qualitative approach because (1) I focused on gaining understanding from the participants' point of view, (2) I was the "primary instrument in the data collection process and analysis," and through the interview process, engaged in field work, (3) While I utilized some elements of deductive research methods testing elements of established theories as a theoretical lens, I primarily

"employed inductive research" by building concepts and themes , and finally, (4) The product findings are a "richly descriptive" attempt to convey what I have learned (Merriam, 1998).

The methodology centered on an *instrumental* case as I am focused on a specific issue and selected and studied a bounded case that illustrated the issue (Creswell, 2013). A case study was the appropriate methodology because the goal of the research was to gain an "in-depth understanding" of a current, in-progress, instrumental case (Creswell, 2013). In addition to increasing understanding, case studies are characterized by being highly descriptive and highly focused. (Yin, 2006).

Case Selection and Description

Focusing the research required the case studied to be defined in a bounded construct (Merriam, 1998, Yin, 2006). Utilizing purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013), the single, multi-sited case I studied was composed of the 22 NEA state and local affiliates funded in the 2015-16 GPS Fund grant cycle.[19] There were multiple reasons for choosing to focus on the 2015-16 cohort of funded grants. This group represented the first funded cohort after the GPS Fund grant guidelines were revised and updated by the Board of Directors. Prior to this revision, it could not be guaranteed that funded grants supported the collective excellence agenda. The Guideline revision defined ten scoring criteria and made clear that the grants could not be utilized for organizing, political action activities, or to fund full-time positions.

Coinciding with the Guideline revision, updates were made to the application scoring process. A scoring rubric was developed by staff to aid their decision-making around the

[19] A total of 35 grant applications requesting $10.4 million in assistance were received in 2015-16. 22 applications, totaling $4.0 million in grant funding, was awarded.

potential funding slates they bring to the governance Oversight Committee deliberations. Additionally, two NEA staff grant coordinators were hired in 2015 to track grant deliverables and act as the organizational liaisons with the sites after grants were awarded. Grant coordinators also began the practice of conducting regular site visits, increasing NEA's ability to manage the grant investments.[20] Site visits typically last 1-2 days and grants perceived as either doing exceptional work or in need of intervention are prioritized for visits. The site visit report outline is found in Appendix B.

Another benefit of purposefully limiting the research to the 2015-16 awards was that all 22 awardees in the case were well into their implementation phase at the time of the study, with nine of the grants already closed. This "maturity" of the case ensured that reporting and tracking documents had been generated for each grant, guaranteeing rich and varied available data sources for study.

The 22 funded affiliates were a diverse group allowing for detailed "within case analysis" (Creswell, 2013). This diversity was reflected in their geographical representation, project topics, and the length and amount of awards received. Eight grants were awarded to local affiliates and 14 to state affiliates. As shown in Table 3.1, grant recipients were distributed across six U.S. geographic zones as well as internationally through the NEA Federal affiliate, which represents American educators working abroad in U.S. military schools.

[20] The purpose of a site visit may include: (1) technical assistance on program or resource development, (2) acknowledgment of effective practices, (3) assistance with promotion or outreach planning, (4) consulting on future development, and (5) intervention.

Table 3.1 Geographic Zones of Grant Recipients

Geographic Zone	Number of Grants
Atlantic	5
Central	4
International	2
Mountain	4
Northeast	1
Pacific	5
Southern	1

Since the grant's inception, application requests have exceeded available funding. The same was true in 2015-16 with a total of $10.4M requested and only $4M in available funds to distribute.[21] Award amounts ranged from $25,000 to $530,500 as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Grant Amounts Awarded

Award Amount	Number of Grants
$25,000 - $49,000	2
$50,000 - $99,000	3
$100,000 - $149,000	5
$150,000 – 249,000	7
$250,000 – 349,000	3
$350,000 - $549,000	2

Responding to political pressure to award as many grants as possible with the limited funds available, the grant Oversight Committee funded several of the lower scored grants at reduced amounts than requested in their applications. The result of that decision was that only 12 of the 22 grants received full funding and 10 of the awardees were funded at decreased amounts. The length of the grant funding period with the 22 cases was also mixed, spanning from one to three years as shown in Table 3.3.

[21] Yearly distribution amounts vary slightly based on membership dues collected, averaging approximately $6M per year. The total amount awarded in 2015-16 was purposefully reduced to $4M to recoup over-committed funds inadvertently awarded the first year of the grant program's existence.

Table 3.3: Length of Grant Funding Awarded

Funding Period	Number of Grants
1 Year	14
2 Years	4
3 Years	4

The 2015-16 grants were also diverse in terms of the project topics for which funding was requested. Examples of the change efforts included the development and delivery of professional learning courses and resources on topics such as culturally competent classroom management, recognizing and supporting children suffering from childhood trauma, and student dropout prevention. Some grant plans included outsourcing professional development for their members on topics such as unconscious bias and improving instructional practices.

Some affiliates used the funding for research on areas such as peer assistance and review or school wide distributive leadership models. Others used the funding to invest in increasing their capacity to deliver supports by investing in online delivery infrastructure and/or training their staff or members, or even re-distributing NEA's investment as mini-grants to support innovation in individual schools. Part of the normal intake of applications by NEA staff involves the assigning each grant to one of ten subject areas, internally referred to as "content clusters." The intent of the content cluster assignment is to aid in assigning the grants to a grant coordinator's caseload and utilized for online sorting of grants by topic area. Staff are instructed when assigning a content cluster to a grant that it should reflect the primary work or focus of the proposed project. The 22 grants in this case were cataloged into nine of the ten[22] possible content clusters by NEA staff. See Table 3.4.

[22] The *Community Engagement* content cluster was not as represented in the 2015-16 GPS Fund grants awarded.

Table 3.4: Content Cluster Topics Represented in Awarded Grants

Content Cluster	Number of Grants
Curriculum Development and Improving Instruction	1
Diversity, Equity and Cultural Competence	4
Early Career Support and Engagement	1
Educator Evaluation or Effectiveness	1
Educator/Teacher Preparation	1
Leadership and Career Growth	4
Professional Development and Learning	3
Student Advocacy and Success	1
Systemic Change Initiative	6

For a detailed summary of case participant characteristics delineated by each of the 22 individual grant awards, see Appendix C.

Data Sources

Data collection was limited to the 22 affiliates awarded GPS Fund grants in the 2015-16 funding cycle.[23] Three categories of data were collected from each of the 22 subcases, defined as the individual affiliate and their grant award which make up the larger case, and included both documents and interview data. The first category captured the pre-implementation intent of the affiliate change effort being funded. Documents in this category included the original grant applications and NEA grant award letters. The second data group was composed of affiliate self-reported results. Documents in this category included both progress and final reports submitted by the affiliates.

The final data group was composed of interviews I conducted to triangulate claims made in the affiliate reports and to increase my understanding of their work. If the NEA grant

[23] The application to complete this study received IRB approval from the University of Washington (IRB ID: STUDY00001376).

coordinator assigned to the grant had completed a site visit, that site visit report was also included in this data category. The three data categories are shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Categories and Type of Data Collected for Analysis

Intent of Funded Change Effort (Pre-Implementation)		Results as Self-Reported by Affiliates		Results as Verified by 3rd Party Observers	
Applications	Award Letters	Progress Reports	Final Reports	Interviews	Site Visit Reports

Data Collection Procedures

This section describes data collection and analytical procedures utilized for documents, reports and interviews.

DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS

Documents reviewed included the applications and award letters for each affiliate as well as all available progress and final reports. Progress reports were not submitted by four affiliates. All four received grant funding for one year and submitted one joint progress/final report. Missing final reports either represent grants who asked for a time extension on their project, or as 2015-16 year was the first year NEA grant coordinators were hired to oversee the reporting process, closed before reporting systems were fully in place. Nine of the grants received site visits from NEA assigned grant coordinators who produced site visit reports which were also included in the document review. Currently, all grants awarded receive at least one physical visit from a grant coordinator. That was not the practice in 2015. A list of all documents reviewed for each for each funded grant is shown in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6: Individual Grant Documents Reviewed

Grant	Application	Award Letter	Progress Report(s)	Final Report	Site Visit Report
1	X	X	X	X	
2	X	X	X		
3	X	X	X		X
4	X	X	X		
5	X	X	X	X	
6	X	X		X	
7	X	X	X		X
8	X	X	X	X	
9	X	X	X		X
10	X	X	X		X
11	X	X	X		X
12	X	X	X		
13	X	X	X		X
14	X	X	X		X
15	X	X	X		X
16	X	X	X		X
17	X	X		X	
18	X	X	X	X	
19	X	X	X	X	
20	X	X		X	
21	X	X		X	
22	X		X		

All of the documents reviewed in this case are stored on an NEA database I am an administrator on and access regularly as part of my normal job duties. In addition to the University of Washington IRB approval for their inclusion in this study, I petitioned and received approval from the NEA Executive Director and General Council to access them for the purpose of this research. Individual documents were downloaded from the database for coding. The data was backed-up in a secure, virtual Dropbox.

INTERVIEW DATA

Each grant application requested the identification and contact information for a primary grant contact. These individuals, approximately half of which were affiliate staff and the other half governance leaders, had an intimate understanding of the work funded. In addition to writing the application, they were responsible for implementing or managing the change effort and reporting on the progress of the grant. Grant contacts from 21 of the 22 awarded grants in the case were invited by me via email to participate in an interview.[24] The text used in the email invitations is found in Appendix D. I followed up with phone calls to grant contacts who did not initially reply to the email request. The script for these phone calls is found in Appendix E.

Despite multiple communication attempts, two grant contacts never responded to the invitations to participate. Appointments were made with the other 19 grant contacts who agreed to participate in a phone interview. Interviews were conducted in November and December, 2017. The *s*emi-structured interview protocol (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) utilized is shown in Appendix F.

Three potential participants were unable to complete their interviews, either because they declined to consent or were unavailable. Fortunately, site visit reports written by NEA grant coordinators were available for all three of these grants and served as the primary data

[24] One local affiliate was not invited to participate in an interview due to an ongoing conflict with its state affiliate in which the local actively threatened disaffiliation. NEA staff were asked not to engage with the affiliate until after the issue was resolved.

source validating claims made in the self-reported documents submitted by the three sites. In total, 18 interviews were conducted, transcribed, and coded for 16 of the 22 subcases.[25]

Coding Activities

Preliminary coding focused on basic categorization of the affiliate and grant award characteristics using NVIVO qualitative software. Data sources were limited to grant applications and award letters. This coding activity served to increase my familiarity with each of the 22 subcases. Affiliate characteristic codes were based on size and leadership capacity. Grant characteristic codes were identified according to funding amounts and time periods for awards. The codes generated are shown in Appendix G.

I examined the data, including the interview transcripts, for each of the 22 subcases for evidence of impact beyond the funding period. All the subcases were then sorted onto a continuum of impact based on the change effort's sustainability by the affiliate after funding ceased.

Creswell (2013) states that qualitative research begins with a theoretical lens. I began by coding all the data sources available for each subcase with a focus on my conceptual framework in which I identified the three theoretical elements of organizational learning, feminist, and labor-management theories.[26] After this was complete, I revisited each of the codes for another cycle of analysis, this time identifying sub-elements within each theoretical element. For example, within the coded sections identified as the element "Work Processes," I created

[25] After completing their own interviews, three grant coordinators recommended I conduct an additional interview with one of their colleagues. All three interviews occurred, however only two of the three secondary interview participants ultimately consented for their feedback to be included in the study.

[26] Partially through theoretical coding, I discontinued the use of NVIVO software and completed the remainder of the coding process manually.

sub-elements for “Addresses real problem”, “Common sense solution”, “Increased participation/ownership”, and “Replaces old work processes.” I did the same for the other two theoretic elements, adding sub-elements s aligned to the conceptual framework.

Throughout this analytic process, I employed a constant comparative strategy (Glaser & Strauss, 2008) involving not only coding, but keeping memos, charts, and drawings to foster my own self-awareness, make connections, and check my biases and assumptions. This often led to returning to the data to focus on identifying and grouping emerging categories to code. Groupings on “Project Leadership,” Investment,” “Delivery,” and “Plan Modifications” are examples of additional topics and codes added throughout these analytic activities. These cycles of analysis were completed for all 22 subcases and continued until saturation was reached as no new concepts were forthcoming. The final list of code categories that emerged through this process is shown as Appendix H.

After coding was complete, claims were triangulated in the data as I sorted codes to ensure concepts represented in the affiliate self-reported data set could be verified by the 3rd party data. I was unable to complete this process for three of the affiliates as they failed to respond to the invitation to participate in an interview and had not received a site visit during the course of their grant. All three of these grants funded time-bound projects with end dates in their applications. Two of the grants funded research projects and the other supported the development and delivery of a specific, one-time training.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

I am acutely aware that this study of organizational change and learning is situated within the NEA (an organization in which I have been a member, governance leader, and am

currently employed as a Senior Executive). My employment within the organization and relationship to the grant program limited the data available to utilize. For example, interviewing NEA staff employed within the Center for Great Public Schools such as the grant coordinators or grant project manager may have compromised consent by potentially introducing influence into the process due to my position of authority. To avoid any potential conflict, data analysis was limited to documents available in the grant database and the grant coordinator interviews approved in the IRB.

Researcher bias and assumptions can greatly impact the analysis and application of meaning to data when conducting qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). To limit this, I utilized several analytical methods to check for signs of bias during the analytical process such as keeping personal notes and charts to foster my own self-awareness and to strengthen an audit trail of the decisions made during analysis (Merrium, 1998). I made constant comparisons within the data, and, grounded my initial questioning in elements of several accepted theories to inform my initial observations and interviews. Because of my strong background and history with the research topic, during data collection of analysis, I attempted to name, identify and limit the influence of my own unconscious bias. In doing so, I have attempted to unpack and make transparent my varied historical assumptions, beliefs and lived experiences that inform the lenses I bring to unionism and topics of teacher quality and advocacy for professionalism by identifying my point of location in respect to these areas. My efforts in this area are explained further in the next section.

Finally, I made the decision to focus this study on the impact of the GPS Fund grants in supporting the organization's efforts to reposition itself around a collective excellence agenda.

The grants are not the only change activities the organization has implemented. For example, NEA is driving two major campaigns, one around ESSA Implementation as an opportunity for members to increase their professional voice on policy decisions that affect their practice, and a Racial Justice in Education awareness campaign to educate and empower educators on issues of racial justice that impact their students and the school systems in which they work. The GPS Fund grant program, while significant in terms of public promotion and financial investment, represents one piece of a larger organizational change effort.

Positionality/Politics of Location

In a 1984 speech titled "*Notes toward a Politics of Location*" (Rich, 1986), Adrienne Rich publically modeled positioning herself, her body, beliefs, privilege and identities – both imposed and embraced – as a way "…to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history…" (p. 212). In reference to her whiteness, Rich spoke of the importance of "recognizing our location, having to name the ground we're coming from, the conditions we have taken for granted… [in an effort to] …experience the meaning of my whiteness as a point of location for which I needed to take responsibility" (p. 219).

Following the example set by Rich, I attempted to describe my own "politics of location" within the union in order to purposefully explore and expose my history, interactions, identity and beliefs within the context of the organizational change and learning phenomenon I propose to study. As a white, educated, American male, I strive to always be cognizant of my race, gender, class, and geographic privilege. This includes a deep concern for how my actions impact or may be interpreted by others. It is my hope that applying Rich's frame to my own location within the union and teaching profession will be interpreted in the reflective and respectful

spirit in which I begin this work as I endeavor to increase my own self-awareness and the reliability of this research. The results of my effort to position myself within the topic of my research can be found in Appendix I.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, findings and analysis of data collected across all the sub-cases are discussed. Throughout this discussion the term "sub-case" refers to each of the 22 awarded grants that, taken together comprise the larger case. Data sources include participant interviews as well as grant applications, award letters, and all available progress, final, and site visit reports for each of the 22 sub-cases. Analysis began by creating a continuum of impact for the grant-funded projects which is discussed in detail in the next section. After locating each case along that continuum, each sub-case was sorted into one of two categories representative of the affiliate's ability to continue the activity beyond the term of the grant. These two categories were labeled sustained impact (SI) and limited impact (LI) grants.

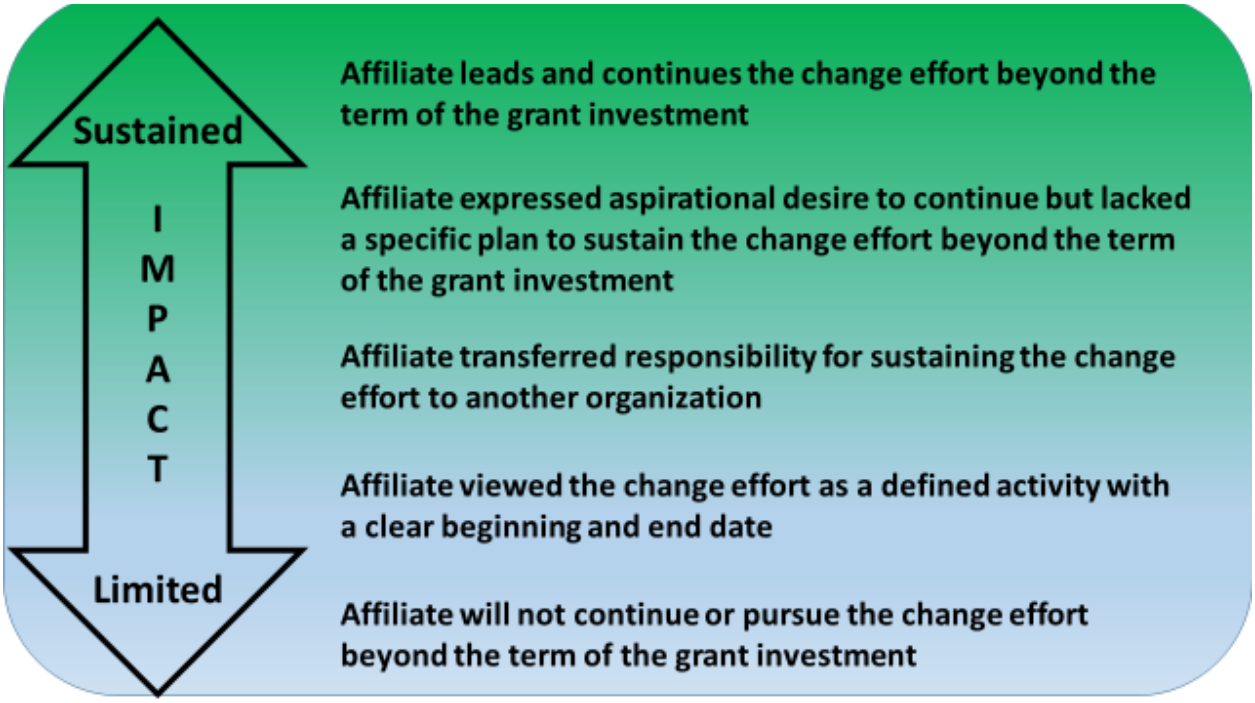
Grant awards and affiliate characteristics were compared across the sub-cases assigned to SI and LI groups. Next, similarities and difference between the two groups were analyzed by using the three primary theoretical elements of the study's conceptual framework. Then the process was repeated utilizing the conceptual framework sub-elements. Throughout this analytical process, emerging themes and patterns are identified and discussed.

A Continuum of Impacts

The purpose of this research is to study the impact of NEA GPS Fund grants on affiliate change efforts in support of a new, collective excellence organizational focus. Data analysis began with a review of all the data collected for each affiliate, also referred to as a sub-case, for evidence of lasting impact beyond the term of the grant. Some sub-cases had clear indicators that the funded change effort would continue. A plan was in place and resources were

allocated to sustain the work. In contrast, data from some sub-cases explicitly revealed that the work funded by the grant would not continue. The remainder of the grants fell between these two extremes across a continuum of potential lasting impacts. Some affiliates met the deliverables of the grant and reported positively on participating in the change effort activities, but had only aspirational, nonspecific plans for sustaining the work. Others completed the funded activity only to give the resulting program or project away to an external group to sustain. Other sub-cases finished their grant-funded activities according to their approved grant timeline, and considered the project successful and complete. A visual representation of the varying degrees of grant impacts across the case is shown as Figure 4.1, and includes descriptors associated with the progression along the continuum.

Figure 4.1: Continuum of Grant Impacts across the Case



Comparing Sustained and Limited Impact Grants

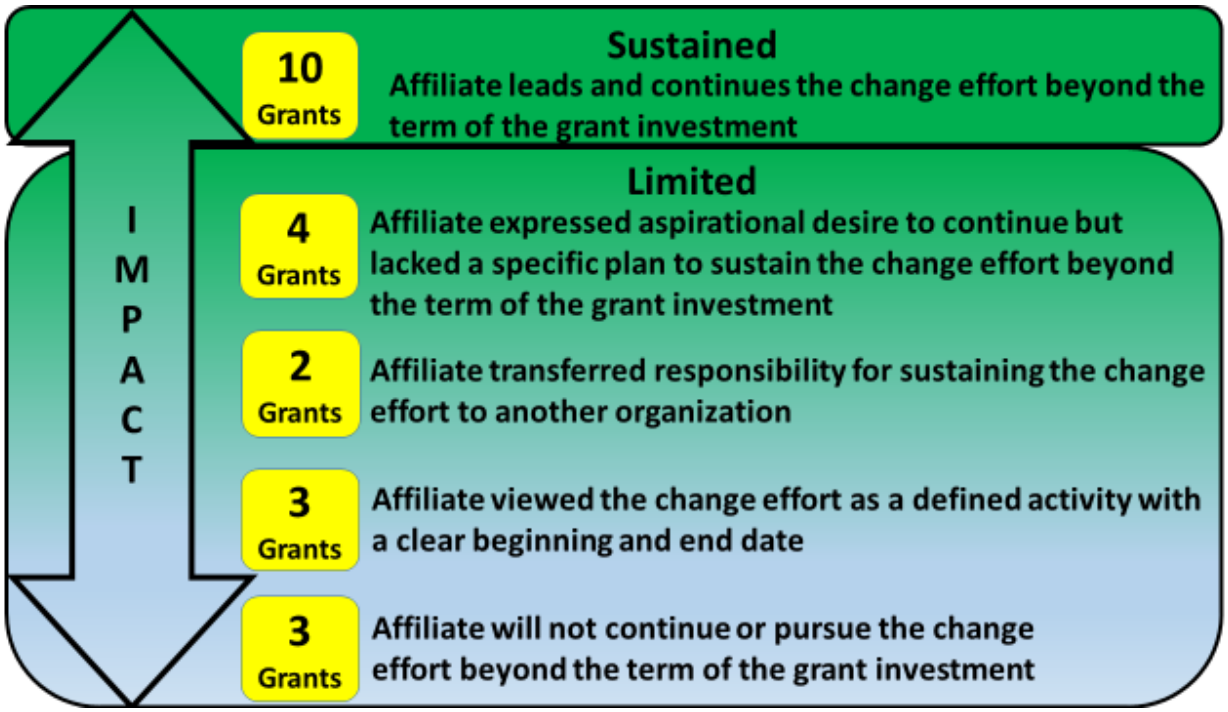
The continuum of impacts provided a framework to sort the individual sub-cases. Ten of the 22 sub-cases were assigned to one end of the continuum, showing indicators of continued sustainability. The funded change effort developed into new, ongoing work led by the affiliate beyond the term of the grant. One local president described the type of sustained activity that the grant prompted as: "It's one of our main priorities. We've allocated some of our budget to help support that [work]." A state affiliate staffer wrote in their final report the following specifics regarding their efforts to ensure sustainability: "To guarantee sustainability, the Teaching and Learning Center is established as a 503(b). Another key to our sustainability is the intentional shifting of the [course] design and implementation, which was staff led, to a completely member-led program."

At the opposite end of the continuum, three of the change efforts were identified as work the affiliate would not continue beyond the grant period. One state affiliate staff member described the type of sustained activity that the grant prompted in this way, "It's unfortunate that it just didn't move the way we had hoped it would move and I think it was more lack of economic sustainability than it was lack of quality of the program." A staff member interviewed in a different state affiliate offered the following thoughts about factors that contributed to their struggle to continue the work:

> "We can't say exactly what did it. But keeping a superintendent for four years, number one. Creating a curriculum, number two. And creating a system where people are not living in quite so much daily crisis because their school's not going to be closed tomorrow. All of that has contributed in some way [to not sustaining the work]."

The remaining grants fell between these two groups in a continuum of potential legacy impacts as demonstrated in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Continuum of Grant Impacts on the Work of Individual Affiliate Sub-Cases



Of the grants in the middle three categories of the impact continuum, four lacked specific plans for the affiliate to continue the work of the change effort, each offering unverified, or aspirational claims that the work would continue. As stated in the final report of one local affiliate, "It is our hope to negotiate teacher leadership and professional leadership into our negotiated agreements." Another state final report included similar aspirational hopes of sustainability, "We believe that the schools can find unique ways to support their own job-embedded planning and redesign work."

At the time of the interview, two affiliates were actively attempting to transfer responsibility for the work they had started to their school districts to maintain and fund. The president of a local affiliate, when describing the trainings the grant had funded, intended for

the district to take on responsibility for their continuation by including them in the district's strategic plan for the coming year: "We are putting these process into the district's Local Accountability Plan as the district continues to budget for the future." Similarly, the final report for a local affiliate similarly stated their intent to continue the grant funded activity by transferring it to the local school board: "The Board of Education has preliminary approval to budget the program for the next year."

Three affiliates viewed their change efforts as defined activities, with set start and end dates. These bounded grant funded projects included the development of two research reports used by the affiliates, one on the effectiveness of a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program and the other on alternative distributed leadership models. The third grant funded the development and delivery of a one-time training. All three of these grants were completed on schedule and currently closed. None of the grant coordinators for these grants replied to my invitations for a follow-up interview. Neither the applications nor final reports of these three grants specified the work would continue beyond the funding work timeline.

Comparison of Grant Characteristics and Their Relationship to Impacts

The following section explores potential relationships between characteristics of the grantee and the level of sustained or limited impact of each grant. Affiliate size and organizational level are analyzed, followed by the size of the grant award and the length of the grant period. Finally, instances of partial funding are compared. The data accessed for analysis in this section include the grant application and award letters.

Sub-case and Award Characteristics

AFFILIATE TYPE

Of the 22 GPS Fund grant sub-cases, ten were awarded to local affiliates (45%).[27] Using the impact continuum described previously, seven of the ten local affiliate awards (70%) were identified as limited impact, with only three (30%) of the local affiliate grants identified as having a sustained impact beyond the term of the funded grant activity. See Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Local Affiliate Sub-cases Impact Level

Local Affiliate Sub-case	Impact Level Assigned
LI-4	Limited
LI-5	Limited
LI-6	Limited
LI-7	Limited
LI-9	Limited
LI-11	Limited
SI-2	Sustained
SI-8	Sustained
SI-10	Sustained

Twelve of the 22 sub-cases (55%) were awarded to state affiliates. Five of those twelve (42%) had limited impact beyond the grant, and seven (58%) sustained the *work processes* beyond the funded grant time period. See Table 4.2.

[27] One sub-case was counted as a local affiliate for the purpose of this research. The application was submitted by a United Services District (UniServ) comprised of four local affiliates serviced together by state staff due to their close geographic proximity.

Table 4.2: State Affiliate Sub-cases Impact Level

State Affiliate Sub-case	Impact Level Assigned
LI-1	Limited
LI-2	Limited
LI-3	Limited
LI-8	Limited
LI-10	Limited
LI-12	Limited
SI-1	Sustained
SI-3	Sustained
SI-4	Sustained
SI-5	Sustained
SI-6	Sustained

In the case studied, 30% of local affiliate grants were categorized as having a sustained impact on the work of the affiliate compared to 58% of state affiliate grants having a sustained impact.

AFFILIATE SIZE

Local affiliate sizes in the case ranged from 93 to 126,172 individual members. See Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Local Affiliate Sub-cases Impact Level and Sorted by Membership Size

Local Affiliate Sub-case	Impact Level Assigned	Total Membership
LI-12	Limited	93
LI-9	Limited	167
SI-2	Sustained	1,257
LI-6	Limited	1,625
LI-5	Limited	1,712
LI-4	Limited	3,018
SI-8	Sustained	3,583
LI-7	Limited	11,037
LI-11	Limited	12,735
SI-10	Sustained	126,172

There was great diversity in the size of state affiliates as well, with membership ranges from 5,046 to 124,736 individual members. See Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: State Affiliate Sub-cases Impact Level Sorted by Membership Size

Sub-case	Impact Status	Membership
LI-8	Limited	5,046
SI-1	Sustained	5,046[28]
SI-6	Sustained	8,401
SI-3	Sustained	8,452
SI-5	Sustained	9,342
LI-10	Limited	12,050
LI-2	Limited	14,818
SI-7	Sustained	21,695
LI-3	Limited	31,747
SI-9	Sustained	88,361
LI-1	limited	105,028
SI-4	Sustained	124,736

There does not appear to be a pattern between sustainability of the grant sponsored change effort and size of the affiliate. Local grants with 1,200, 3,500 and 126,000 members had sustained impacts, as did state grants with membership ranges of 5,000 to 124,000. A claim that affiliates with less than 1200 members would not be successful at sustaining the work of the grant also cannot be made. The 167 member local grant (LI-9) was funding a time-bounded activity with a clear end date, not meant to continue. The 93 member local (LI-12) utilized their grant to co-fund a district initiative instead of a change effort of their own. The activity goals of both grants were completed satisfactorily, but were not sustained as new work.

[28] One state affiliate was awarded two separate grants in 2015-16 represented in the data as sub-cases LI-8 and SI-1.

As a group, the ten grants identified as having sustained impact included three local affiliates and seven state affiliates. Their membership ranged from 1,257 to 126,172 members. See Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Sustained Impact Grants by Affiliate Type and Membership

Affiliate Sub-case	Affiliate Type	Total Membership
SI-2	Local	1,257
SI-8	Local	3,583
SI-1	State	5,046
SI-6	State	8,401
SI-3	State	8,452
SI-5	State	9,342
SI-7	State	21,695
SI-9	State	88,361
SI-4	State	124,736
SI-10	Local	126,172

GRANT LENGTH AND AMOUNTS

Six of the ten sustained impact (SI) grants (60%) were awarded for one year, one grant was for two years (10%), and three had three year terms (30%). All but three of the SI grants were awarded for the full time period requested on their applications. Award amounts ranged from $35,620 to $530,500 with a mean of $218,369. Four of the SI grants (40%) were awarded an amount than was between 67% and 76% less than the amount requested. The remaining six were fully funded. See Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Funding Requested and Received for Sustained Impact (SI) Grants

Sub-case	Grant Length Awarded	% of Grant Length Requested by Affiliate	Grant Amount Awarded	% of Grant Amount Requested By Affiliate
SI-1	2 years	67%	$112,200	31%
SI-2	1 year	33%	$60,000	33%
SI-3	1 year	100%	$35,620	33%
SI-4	1 year	100%	$250,000	100%
SI-5	1 year	100%	$109,000	100%
SI-6	3 years	100%	$241,222	100%
SI-7	1 year	100%	$220,147	100%
SI-8	3 years	100%	$530,500	100%
SI-9	3 years	100%	$450,000	100%
SI-10	1 year	33%	$175,000	24%

Seven of the 12 limited impact grants (58%) were awarded for one year. There were no 2 year grants awarded. Five of the 12 were awarded for 3 years (42%). All but one of the grants were awarded for the full time period requested. Award amounts ranged from $25,000 to $250,000 with a mean of $147,982. Six of the 12 grants (50%) were awarded an amount 33-69% less than the amount requested on their applications. The six remaining were fully funded. See Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Project Funding Requested and Received for Limited Impact (LI) Grants

Sub-case	Grant Length Awarded	% of Grant Length Requested by Affiliate	Grant Amount Awarded	% of Grant Amount Requested By Affiliate
LI-1	3 years	100%	$146,500	52%
LI-2	1 year	100%	$175,000	100%
LI-3	1 year	100%	$250,000	100%
LI-4	1 year	33%	$179,922	31%
LI-5	1 year	100%	$90,000	100%
LI-6	3 years	100%	$214,000	100%
LI-7	3 years	100%	$133,258	67%
LI-8	1 year	100%	$25,000	100%
LI-9	1 year	100%	$51,600	67%
LI-10	1 year	100%	$250,000	100%
LI-11	3 years	100%	$150,000	67%
LI-12	3 years	100%	$110,500	67%

Clear claims for full or partial funding amounts and lengths impacting activity success were not seen in this data set. There was a wide range of both sustained and limited impact grant funded amounts. This data suggests that not receiving funding for the full time requested did not have a negative impact on the SI groups, of which only 70% of the sub-cases were funded for their full timeline, as opposed to 92% of the limited impact grants. Both groups had a large percentage (40% and 50% respectively) of the subsets funded for amounts less that requested.

PATTERNS ACROSS GRANT CHARACTERISTICS

A comparative summary of grant characteristics of both sustained impact and limited impact grants is shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Grant Characteristics Comparisons between Sustained and Limited Impact Grants

Grant Characteristics	Sustained Impact	Limited Impact
Total grants	10 (45%)	12 (55%)
Number of state affiliate grants	7 (58%)	5 (42%)
Number of local affiliate grants	3 (30%)	7 (58%)
Number of one year grants	6 (60%)	7 (58%)
Number of two year grants	1 (10%)	0 (0%)
Number of three year grants	3 (30%)	5 (42%)
Number of fully-funded grants	6 (60%)	6 (50%)

There is a difference between the percentages of SI grants between the state affiliates (58%) and local affiliates (30%). The size of the membership did not appear to be a factor as both local and state affiliate that were identified as SI grants had a wide range of membership numbers as shown in Tables 4.3 and 4.4. No patterns were observed in the number of years funded between the SI and LI groups, although the LI grants received three year grants at a slightly higher percentage (42%) that the SI grants (30%). Whether or not the affiliate received its full funding request also does not appear to explain the difference in outcomes for SI and LI grants.

The Conceptual Framework as an Analytic Tool

After sorting each of the 22 sub-cases along a continuum from sustained to limited impact, and comparing characteristics of affiliate and grant awards for each of the 22 sub-cases, I utilized the conceptual framework as analytic tool to further explore the range in the types of in sustainability outcomes between funded affiliate change efforts. While all data for each sub-case was coded, the most useful data for this analysis were the final and site visit reports, and individual interview transcripts.

Theoretical Elements

I coded each sub-case for the three theoretical elements comprising my conceptual frame: *work processes*, *identity formation* and *partnership interactions*. The outcomes of the sustained impact grants are discussed first, followed by the limited impact grants. Then, following the same format, I looked for differences and similarities across the sub-cases and will describe the findings following the same format. All but one of the ten SI subgroups had evidence of all three theoretical elements. The exception was one subgroup without evidence to support inclusion of the *Partnership Interactions* element (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9: Identification of Conceptual Frame Elements in Sustained Impact Grants

Sub-case	Work Processes [WP]	Identity Formation [IF]	Partnership Interactions [PI]
SI-1	X	X	X
SI-2	X	X	X
SI-3	X	X	X
SI-4	X	X	X
SI-5	X	X	X
SI-6	X	X	X
SI-7	X	X	X
SI-8	X	X	NO
SI-9	X	X	X
SI-10	X	X	X

An illustrative example of the work processes of a sustained impact grant is sub-case SI-9 whose grant funded an affiliate change effort to develop and deliver culturally responsive classroom management. For this grant, when looking for evidence of the *work processes* element, the change effort was of value to the members and spreading. As stated in the interview with the state affiliate staff member leading this work, the affiliate knew in advance

that the funded change effort was a need of the membership, "The number one request by our PD survey was the need for strategies to close the opportunity gap, culturally responsive instructional strategies and culturally responsive classroom management." The grant activity also showed signs of spreading and scaling as the affiliate staff member described membership responses as follows:

> "For the first year of the grant, we thought we're gonna hit like 40 sites and do 40, three hour trainings and we thought, you know, that would be a good start. We hit 81 different sites…probably hit about 3,000 members in one year."

For the *identity formation* element, participants in this same grant had an opportunity to engage and perform a new union identity around topics important to them. The two quotes from that same interview with the staff member demonstrate how educators, who had not been necessarily active in the association before, stepped up and performed a union function grounded in their dedication and expertise around issues of equity. This engagement, the act of sharing that expertise, was perceived as doing real union work as explained by the governance leader describing the engagement of these previously unengaged members:

> "The program's 49 prospective trainers, recruited based on both their passion for equity and closing the achievement gap and their potential for leadership, come from locals in districts throughout [our state]."

> "People that we hadn't touched before… came out. [People] who no one's really identified other than, 'Hey, this person's really passionate around social justice issues and their instruction is strong.'"

The change effort also increased partnership interaction with evidence of repositioned relationships with community partners. The following excerpts from SI-9's progress reports show how the affiliate partnered with communities allied organizations and school districts to accomplish this work:

> "We've integrated their [communities-of-color advocacy groups] participation in our work, and what I mean by that is, what we did was community focus groups first, before we even created the curriculum."
>
> "This project has helped [our affiliate] build meaningful relationships with district superintendents from five districts."

In contrast, only 2 of the 12 limited impact sub-cases had all three of the theoretical elements in place. Five of the subgroups were missing one element, three were missing two elements, and two sub-cases had no coded evidence for any of the three elements from the conceptual framework. Ten of the 12 sub-cases included work processes, while only 4 of the 12 included partnership interactions. See Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Identification of Conceptual Frame Elements in Limited Impact Grants

Sub-case	Work Processes [WP]	Identity Formation [IF]	Partnership Interactions [PI]
LI-1	X	NO	X
LI-2	X	X	NO
LI-3	X	X	NO
LI-4	X	X	NO
LI-5	X	NO	X
LI-6	X	X	X
LI-7	NO	NO	NO
LI-8	X	X	NO
LI-9	X	NO	NO
LI-10	X	NO	NO
LI-11	X	X	X
LI-12	NO	NO	NO

An example from this group is sub-case LI-12, in which the three theoretical elements were all missing. In coding this sub-case, not only was evidence of each element missing, but several of the implementation decisions the affiliate made seemed in direct opposition to the intent of the elements. For example, the grant supplemented the school district's contract with

a university college of education to train the educators in a specific distributed leadership model as part of a larger, district improvement initiative. In looking for evidence of the *work processes* element, instead of solving a problem identified by the members, the project was instead instigated by the district which asked the association to help co-fund the effort. As a result, according to the state staff affiliate member interviewed, the work was viewed as not only imposed on the teachers, but addressing the wrong problem:

> "In some schools there was a real, firm belief that… the number one problem to solve was classroom management, discipline, and so having a good curriculum wasn't going to solve the problem they were having with extreme behavior problems. So there was some turmoil around how top priorities get chosen."

For this same case, under the *Identity Formation* element, rather that provide opportunities for educators to perform a new union identity or provide legitimate access to power, the work was primarily developed and delivered by the contractor and viewed with suspicion by the educators receiving it because of the contractor's resistance to making modifications to a program developed for another district. The staff member elaborated:

> "One of the inefficiencies that I did see in the rollout, more often than not, had to do with the university… saying, 'Well, that's our model.' And… [teachers] saying, 'That's not going to work for us.''

Participant identity formation around the change effort was further impeded by the branding of the training materials. Because the resources had been developed by the university under a previous grant focused on supporting a private school network, the materials maintained the branding in recognition of the intent of original funding source. The staffer explained:

> "So our members… were immediately like, 'This doesn't apply to us.' The people feel unacknowledged. They feel like this stuff isn't for us. They looked at it as carelessness. Like, 'You can't even put two minutes into changing your header? If you haven't proofread this stuff and modified it… to apply to our circumstances, why should we pay attention to it?'"

In terms of the *Partnership Interaction* element, instead of increasing capacity and trust between the district and affiliate as they worked in partnership to solve a problem together, their collaboration was limited to simply co-funding an outsourced solution. According to an LI-12 progress report highlighting progress to date, rather than being transformative, the work was described as: "Grant funds supported an outside consultant… [and]… kept labor and management at the school reform table."

Utilizing the three elements of the conceptual framework as an initial analytical lens to begin to understand the differences between the sub-cases on the impact continuum provided several insights. Evidence of the three elements were found in all but one of the ten affiliates who were sustaining the change effort beyond the term of the grant. Conversely, only two of the affiliates showed evidence of all three elements. Beyond identifying the presence or absence of the conceptual framework's three elements, the next section describes the continuation of this analytical approach by coding and analyzing the data for evidence of the sub-elements of the three theories across the sub-cases, and by comparing the SI and LI grants.

Theoretical Sub-Elements

The second cycle of analysis involved coding for sub-elements, within each of the three major elements identified in the conceptual framework. The codes used are shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Conceptual Framework Elements and Sub-Elements Codes

Element	Code	Sub-Element	Code
Work Processes	WP	Addresses "Real" Problem	RP
		Common-Sense Solution	CSS
		Increased Participation/Ownership	IPO
		Replaces Old Work Processes	ROW
Identity Formation	IF	Encourages Practice of New Identity	PNI
		Legitimate Access to Power	LAP
Partnership Interactions	PI	Capacity Increased for both Organizations	OC
		Mutual Commitment	MC
		Trust	TR

Work Processes Findings and Analysis

SUSTAINED IMPACT SUB-CASE

Without exception, all of the sustained impact (SI) grants had evidence of each of the *work processes* sub-elements. Sub-case SI-8 serves as an example of an SI grant that exhibited all four sub-elements. SI-8 is a local affiliate which received a grant to support its efforts to position itself as a training site for other affiliates working with their districts to implement Community School programs and to develop professional development trainings on restorative justice discipline practices. "Community Schools" refers to the Coalition for Community Schools, a national program promoting increased partnership between the school, community resources, and families working collaboratively to increase student achievement. NEA promotes the Community Schools model as an alternative to school closures and district charter takeover reform measures.

The first *Work Process* sub-element analyzed was for evidence of the change effect addressing a real problem, as identified by the educators themselves. According to the local affiliate president interviewed, the affiliate had conducted surveys of its membership to

identify their desire to engage in this work, “We came to this project having implemented and evaluated school climate improvement teams across the district.”

There was also evidence of the second sub-element, the change effort perceived as a common sense solution to the problem. The common sense solution for the president of SI-8 was for his teacher’s training to come from their peers. He explained:

> “I think …we just had a firm belief that educators …really appreciate professional developments that are coming from fellow educators. They prize that work over something coming from outside. We knew we had to take hold of that… “

The third sub-element of increased participation and ownership of the change effort over time, was also seen in this case. The president enthusiastically shared growing number of schools engaging in the training the affiliate offers:

> “We had six [schools] the first year. Then we added three more last year. We’ll add three more this year. The incredible thing is that the process… has inspired other buildings to start exploring restorative practices. We’re really leveraging a lot of restorative practice work in [site name] with our contract language.”

Finally, there was evidence of the fourth sub-element, that the change effort was replacing or modifying existing work procedures. This site already had a history of offering professional development to its members. The affiliate president described how the grant provided the opportunity to expand that work to explore and implement strategies to make the program financially self-sustainable.

> “The professional development piece has been a collaboration in some ways with our district in the past. We’ve had that available to our members. Developing a tuition structure for our professional development that will support sustainability was a key activity of the first year. It’s open to our members for free. Fair share and folks from outside of town, we charge a fee. Educators can take [our courses] for workshop

credit. Some of our classes… they can also take for college credit for an additional fee."

LIMITED IMPACT SUB CASES

None of the limited impact sub-cases showed evidence of all four *work processes* sub-elements. Of the 12 sub-cases, 9 of the 12 addressed real problems and common sense solutions, but the majority of sub-cases did not address increases in participation/ownership or the replacement of old work processes.

See Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Identification of Conceptual Frame *Work Processes* Sub-Elements in Limited Impact Grants

Sub-case	Address Real Problem	Common Sense Solution	Increases Participation/ Ownership	Replaces Old Work Processes
LI-1	X	X	NO	X
LI-2	X	X	X	NO
LI-3	X	X	NO	NO
LI-4	X	X	NO	NO
LI-5	X	X	X	NO
LI-6	X	X	NO	NO
LI-7	NO	NO	NO	NO
LI-8	X	X	NO	X
LI-9	X	X	X	NO
LI-10	X	X	NO	X
LI-11	NO	NO	X	NO
LI-12	NO	NO	NO	NO

Evidence of addressing a real problem identified by its membership was seen in nine of the 12 LI sub-cases. As an example, the progress report of one state affiliate grant described the motivation for applying for a grant to examine the discipline program in an individual school came after one of its members was quoted in a local newspaper:

> "The standard protocol is a student gets in trouble, you suspend them or they a detention. It doesn't' really address the actual behavior and what the behavior is doing, or how it is impacting others."

The three LI sub-cases that requested funding for efforts that did not directly address a problem identified by their members had each been encouraged by an external entity, specifically their district, another NEA entity, and a university partner, to apply for participation in the work. These same three sub-cases also did not show evidence of the second *work processes* sub-element that the work represented a common sense solution valued by their members. As the president of a LI local affiliate shared, some of his members had concerns that resources were being spent on a program that was not perceived as valuable to many of the members. "There were some within our membership who kind of questioned, 'Why are we spending all this energy on this, when we gotta meet our own needs?'"

Two thirds of the limited impact grants showed evidence of increasing participation or ownership of the change effort. In contrast, all of the sustained impact grants showed evidence of this sub-element. Often in the LI cases, the change effort was led by an individual staffer, as opposed to a team approach described in several SI grants in which the affiliate chose to rally resources and additional supports to ensure the success of the change effort. The staff member charged with supporting professional development programs in a large state affiliate, including managing the grant LI-3, described frustration with colleagues at not stepping in to support the work of the grant once it was received.

> *"*Some [affiliate colleagues] would pop in, but not to the degree I wish they would of, even when we tried to orchestrate that. That's what, I think, was my biggest disappointment. If [affiliate name] truly focused on teaching and learning this should have been all hands on deck."

For nine of twelve of the limited impact grants, the change effort was simply an additional project added on top of their current responsibilities. However, all of the SI grants discussed how the change effort had supplanted or modified their previous work. When I asked this same staff member if her affiliate was encouraging her to change her workload to focus on the new work, she replied, "Do you want me to be real honest? No, they haven't."

Grant LI-2 is an example of an affiliate that modified the goals of their change effort from its original intent to support legacy work. For example, a grant to identify and engage accomplished teachers as trainers for association professional quality programs was successful in identifying the educators, but instead of engaging them to support the change effort, many were recruited to support a traditional union activity; namely, testifying to advance the affiliate's legislative agenda as reported in a progress report of the grant.

> "By having more [accomplished] members testify at the Legislature and attending town halls, we developed more positive relationships with legislators and defeated very bad language and advanced positive legislation."

ADDITIONAL WORK PROCESSES THEMES

Affiliate Commitment to the Success of the Change Effort

As I compared the *work processes* across the sustained and limited impact sub-cases, I noticed several references to the upcoming *Janus* decision coupled with a sense of urgency and commitment to the success of the change effort. *Janus v. AFSCME* is a case currently being heard by the Supreme Court concerning the right of labor unions to collect fees from non-union members who benefit from collective bargaining agreements at their worksite. An unfavorable ruling will result in the loss of millions of dollars of revenue for NEA and other unions across the

country. One state Executive Director shared how the potential loss of funding had encouraged the affiliate leadership to think differently:

> "I think the legislation with the potential loss of fair share has really spurred us to think outside the box. And I think it's just a realization that we have to do things differently in order to survive in post era non-fair share world."

The same concerns were shared by a local president, " "I think at the same time, looking at Janus coming down, how can we start to figure out how to actually market that work so it becomes more self-sustaining?"

There was a sense of urgency, expressed in the interviews of SI grants, that success of the program was tied to the survival of the affiliate. One state executive interviewed described the opportunity the grant provided in the face of increasing membership loss, "We were losing 1000 members a year, 1200 the year before we got the grant verses 325 this year with this program. This focus is a real shot in the arm."

This urgency translated to a willingness to invest in the program by involving top leadership and committing the additional staff time or changing the focus of current staff to support the work. A state affiliate staffer interviewed described working with the affiliate's top leadership on the project and how the work of the grant is changing perceptions of her fellow staff as they position their work around supporting professional development.

> "I was working with our President and Executive Director. What I've seen significantly since I started two years ago is where, in the past, they kind of had to fight to get people to understand what professional development was and how important it could be to organizing. Now, you're starting to hear everyone say … 'it activates members, it gains members.'"

Data from the interviews revealed that there is a sense of "owning" the work and being responsible for the success of the change. An example of this sense of ownership of the change effort was heard in the comments of a state affiliate executive:

> "You can't keep the status quo. So, we're moving forward, and the people I hire from this point on, and I've hired five new ones… are good organizers and understand that this is how we're going to do our work in professional development."

Openness to Modification and Opportunity

In looking for evidence of the affiliates' commitment to success, I noticed references to the number of modifications made to the grant's original work plan. In analyzing the progress and final reports of the limited impact grants, I found that many LI grants had similar statements around being "on track" for their deliverables or referencing fidelity to their work plan as this LI local affiliate final grant reported, "We have not had to make any mid-course changes."

In contrast, data from the reports of the sustained impact group revealed that grantees were much more likely to request modifications or provide details explaining changes to the work plan. One Executive Director interviewed described an example of how the state affiliate was learning and making modifications to their project over time.

> "We had to create our own online piece. What we found out was that locals were taking it upon themselves to do webinars with our Google Docs. I mean, there are things that you learn as you go through, but you don't know until you've hit an obstacle, right?"

A different state affiliate, who was utilizing the grant to train educators in a variety of subjects, took advantage of a change in state licensure to pivot mid-grant in order to focus on this new opportunity. Their Executive Director described how they reprioritized a section of

their grant-funded work in order to take advantage of a change in their state licensure requirements which recognized master educators with an increase in salary:

> *"*We had a master educator premium just starting. One of our committee members sat on the state committee that helped set the parameters for this, and so she decided that's what we were going to train on. And, it has just blown the top off this thing. There was such demand, that we ended up pulling in our trainers, and she trained them in how to do this, and once they knew what they were doing, then they trained also."

Identity Formation Findings and Analysis

SUSTAINED IMPACT SUB-CASES

Without exception, all of the sustained impact (SI) sub-cases had evidence of both *Identity Formation* sub-elements: encouraging and supporting the practice of a new identity, and allowing for legitimate access to power. Evidence of both sub-elements can be seen in the examination of sub-case SI-5, which serves as an example of this group. This state affiliate requested grant funding to recruit and support members with content expertise to develop member-led professional issues cadres to develop and deliver professional development trainings to their peers. Evidence of encouraging the practice of a new-type of union identity through participation in the grant activity was repeatedly referenced. For example, the grant coordinator shared how the opportunity to participate in the grant funded work brought in new affiliate leadership, many of whom had not been active in affiliate activities previously.

> "One of the chief successes of the program has been finding new, credible and trusted leaders. We have identified and supported the development of 35 such professional leaders and are on track to grow to 60 by this summer's end."

> "Many [teachers] that may not have been attracted to the association in the past have come to association membership and leadership through the opportunity to lead training."

The second sub-element, access to legitimate, leadership roles with the power and authority to make decisions and drive change within the Association, was also evident.

> "We see leadership growth and more association involvement. We can actually document that there are like 22 that have been elected either as association reps…and presidents in leadership roles. So that's pretty significant when we were trying to get 75 leaders across the state… and 22 of them come out of our professional issues work."

LIMITED IMPACT SUB-CASES

In contrast to the sustained impact group which all had evidence of each *Identity Formation* sub-element, only six of the 12 sub-cases with limited impact change efforts encouraged the practice of a new union identity. Only four of those six demonstrated the second sub-element, namely, that the practice of the new identity led to opportunities for legitimate power and leadership. See Table 4.13.

Table 4.13: Identification of Conceptual Frame *Identity Formation* Sub-Elements in Limited Impact Grants

Sub-case	Encourages Practice of New Identity	Legitimate Access to Power
LI-1	NO	NO
LI-2	X	X
LI-3	X	X
LI-4	X	X
LI-5	NO	NO
LI-6	X	NO
LI-7	NO	NO
LI-8	X	NO
LI-9	NO	NO
LI-10	NO	NO
LI-11	X	X
LI-12	NO	NO

As an example, one sub-case funded partial tuition for 25 of its members to participate in a training designed to give them the skills to "…take purposeful action to advance powerful student learning in their own classrooms." The affiliate seemed to view its support for instructional practice as separate from its legitimate work. Evidence of the success of the program was that one graduate of the training program had gone into administration, rather than exploring ways to legitimately engage the graduates in increased association participation. When I asked if supporting tuition for these members had led to an increased opportunity for participants to identify themselves to others as association members or increased their access to affiliate leadership, the affiliate staff member interviewed shared that participants in the program had stayed limited to that specific program.

> "They mostly stayed in the instructional side. In fact, one… has gone on to become an assistant principal in his building. But again, he, in that leadership capacity is still promoting what he learned through the project."

It was clear from the interview that the affiliate is proud of the program and encourages its members to participate. But participation in the project was viewed as a separate, self-improvement activity for educators to invest in their own professional development, not as an opportunity to perform or practice a new union identity rounded in professional practice excellence. This sentiment was reiterated in a progress report submitted by the affiliate:

> "Teachers participating in this work are calling it 'transformative' both in regard to how they have made improvement to their teaching and to their collaboration with their peers. [Affiliate name's]…'biggest win' thus far has been the enthusiastic support of meaningfully engaged members and the growing interest in this model."

Similarly, in looking for evidence of the second sub-element, participation leading to legitimate access to power within the organization, I asked if any of the graduates from this

program were leading other affiliate work, including a current GPS Fund grant the state received, and the response was, “No. Totally, totally different group.”

In a different LI grant in an affiliate, the state executive interviewed recognized that many of the participants in collective excellence were being denied legitimate access to association leadership opportunities. She shared frustration that the current leadership was unwilling to allow new voices into decision making. She described a board meeting conversation in which one board member was complaining about the quality of professional development offered by the district, but simultaneously blocking the association from offering any alternatives with the argument that it was not their responsibility.

> “It became clear to me that, here we were, this old group of fuddie-duddies - we have some young members on the board, but not enough. We were making decisions around what will be the future of [affiliate name], but we weren’t inviting them into the conversation.”

ADDITIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION THEME

Members as the Solution

In looking for *Identity Formation* themes across the sustained and limited impact sub-cases, I began to notice ways in which the affiliates referred to their members in regards to the change effort. In many of the LI grants, they were referred to almost passively, as recipients to an intervention or activity designed to promote an external agenda. In the final report of one LI grant, the president wrote, “I believe the biggest win was the increase in [participant] knowledge of all the great things NEA does.”

In contrast were the references found in many of the sustained change efforts to members as being part of the solution, leading efforts to solve their own issues and support

their peers. Some examples of comments made during interviews in which members were engaging and leading in the change effort include:

> "Oh my gosh. It was amazing. We had members that had not been involved in anything totally passionate about teaching their peers and looking at it as a leadership opportunity. There are members out there who will engage with their association on topics that they care about."

> "You didn't see staff monitoring the tables, you saw members. You didn't see staff taking care of technology issues, you saw the members doing that. It was completely member driven!"

Partnership Interactions Findings and Analysis

In contrast to the other two conceptual frame elements which, with one exception, all of the sustained impact sub-cases had identifiable evidence of all the sub-elements, several *partnership interactions* sub-elements were missing in the sustained group. Evidence of collaborative efforts increasing the capacity of each organization was not seen in all but one sub-case. Three sub-cases lacked evidence of a mutual commitment to the work, and three did not show evidence of trust between the partners. These conclusions are based on evidence from the interviews and across all the documents relating to the sub-case.

See Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Identification of Conceptual Frame *Partnership Interactions* Sub-Elements in Sustained Impact Grants

Sub-case	Capacity Increases for all Partners	Mutual Commitment to the Work	Evidence of Trust between the Partners
SI-1	X	X	X
SI-2	X	X	X
SI-3	X	NO	X
SI-4	X	X	NO
SI-5	X	X	X
SI-6	X	NO	NO
SI-7	X	X	X
SI-8	NO	NO	NO
SI-9	X	X	X
SI-10	X	X	X

SUSTAINED IMPACT SUB CASE

Sub-case SI-1 serves as an example of a SI grant that showed qualities of each *Partnership Interaction* sub-element. The member need being addressed by the change effort was lack of relevant professional development options for non-core subject teaching staff. The grant coordinator explained the issue that prompted her to apply for the grant:

> "Instead of subject specific PD, [non-core subject] teachers were made to spend hours in non-differentiated, boxed PD on Standards they did not teach. Nothing would be catered to what we needed to be doing in our fine arts classrooms."

The affiliate approached the district and offered to develop and deliver applicable trainings, and the district agreed to partner with them on the effort.

> "Rather than try to sit at their table - because I've been trying to sit at their table for years - I was going to set a table and have them come to my table. The only option was to approach management and develop a bigger partnership. This support of a teacher driven, teacher led, union funded professional development effort is completely unprecedented."

There was evidence of the first sub-element, that the collaboration increased each organization's capacity as the district needed to train teachers on a new standard, and the affiliate wanted to engage a different membership consistency. The grant coordinator explained, "Management needed to implement new [fine arts] Standards, and did not yet have a plan. I think us having a plan and a solution helped." She continued by explaining the affiliate's desire to connect with younger teachers around issues of professional quality:

> "So, what are we going to do to get these new people in [as union members] that are younger, and how are you going to grab them? Well, professional development is one of those ways."

The second *Partnership Interaction* sub-element, strong, mutual commitment to the effort, was referenced in the final report:

> "[Management] supported this endeavor to the tune of 150 leave days and… funding travel for 25% of our cohort members in addition to sending management level coordinators to learn alongside our members."

Finally, the final sub-element, high trust levels around the work, was clear in the reflections of the grant coordinator during the interview:

> *"I'm absolutely union. She's absolutely management, but we work really well together. We know what we need to do. She knows what to say to her people, I know what information I need to provide to her so she can get what's best for teachers."*

LIMITED IMPACT SUB-CASES

Grant funded change efforts identified as having limited sustainability on the impact continuum showed remarkably low evidence of the *Partnership Interaction* sub-elements. None of the LI grants demonstrated evidence of collaboration increasing each other's capacity. Only

four of the 12 showed mutual collaboration to the work, and in only one sub-case was evidence of trust demonstrated. See Table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Identification of Conceptual Frame *Partnership Interactions* Sub-Elements in Limited Impact Grants

Sub-case	Capacity Increases for all Partners	Mutual Commitment to the Work	Evidence of Trust between the Partners
LI-1	NO	X	NO
LI-2	NO	NO	NO
LI-3	NO	NO	NO
LI-4	NO	NO	NO
LI-5	NO	X	X
LI-6	NO	X	NO
LI-7	NO	NO	NO
LI-8	NO	NO	NO
LI-9	NO	NO	NO
LI-10	NO	NO	NO
LI-11	NO	X	NO
LI-12	NO	NO	NO

None of the LI grants showed evidence of multi-lateral capacity increases between the affiliates and their partners. Several affiliates did not engage external partners. Of those who did, some affiliates were able in increase membership involvement or number of programs they offered, but the capacity outcomes were unilateral, without increasing the capacity of the partner.

Conversely, some grant change efforts, especially those in which the "partner" served in a paid contractor role, increased the capacity of the partner financially or in terms of spreading their program to the field, but failed to provide sustained or measurable organizational capacity increases to the affiliated.

The second sub-element, mutual commitment to the work, was either largely absent, or in several cases, the affiliate's actions did not engender their partner's commitment to the project by bringing them in as partners early in the process. As reported in one site visit reports:

> "[Local affiliate name] had not shared the proposal with the district. [Once notified] the superintendent committed $10,000 but did not network with his leadership or the district grants person. In the future, [state affiliate name] requests to know about these linkages to avoid hurt feelings that arose which delays progress."

Finally, only one of the limited impact grants mentioned trust between themselves and the district, and that is the sub-case planning to give the program developed to the district to administer after the term of the grant is complete. Most of the other sub-cases were silent in regards to trust and one seemed to view the investment as just another issue to negotiate. The following site coordinator's notes in the site visit report show that the change effort was not viewed by the affiliate as an opportunity to invest in the relationship with the district:

> "It was clear that the district and [affiliate name] were not working collaboratively on projects. In fact, the talk of how the grant would proceed was identified as 'now we open negotiations.'"

ADDITIONAL PARTNERSHIP INTERACTION THEME

<u>Contractors are not Partners</u>

Not every affiliate grant utilized a partnership to accomplish the goals of their grants. Four of the SI grants (40%) did not reference engaging another entity to support their work. When partners were listed, they referenced school districts, other NEA affiliates, community groups, and organizations that provide content. Although there may be some administrative

costs involved, payments were not being made to these partners to engender their participation or to lead the project.

Four of the LI grants (33%) did not utilize partners either. Of the eight who did, three followed a similar pattern as the SI grants. Partnerships were in place with school districts, other NEA affiliates, and organizations that provide content or coaching support. The remaining five LI sub-cases (42%) utilized a significant portion of their funding to contract with external groups to deliver an externally developed solution. These include two universities and three national programs. There were two reasons offered for contracting out the work. One was that the affiliate wanted the expertise a contractor could offer. In an interview, one staff member described the importance of bringing in experts, "They were critical. They really have the background, academic structure, and lessons and the training based on their previous work." Another reason was that a contractor would bring much needed capacity. A state affiliate staff member interviewed shared her capacity concerns:

> "I'm a one woman shop, when it comes to professional development that we offer, so that unless I have access to external partners, and the group that I was working with [name], was an external partner that we became aware of and we strongly supported the work *they* [emphasis added] were doing."

In all five of the sub-cases which spent a significant portion of their budget paying for the involvement of a "partner," once the partnership funding ended, so did the program.

SUMMARY

Data from this study reveal that the GPS grantees examined differed in the amount and type of impact. The impacts fell along a continuum, with 10 of the 22 grants examined having a sustained impact that endured beyond the grant funding period. The remaining grants had

varying degrees of limited impact. The analysis of the relationship between grant characteristics and grant impact also revealed some differences. A higher percentage of state affiliates had grants with sustained impact as compared to local affiliates. However no consistent patterns emerged when comparing grant characteristics such as grant amount, length of funding, and whether grantees received the full funding amount requested.

Analyses guided by the elements of the study's conceptual framework revealed several differences between sustained and limited impact grants. All the affiliates who sustained their change effort after the funding ended shared commonalities around their *work processes*. Every one utilized their grant to address issues important to their membership. The solutions the funded activity supported made-sense to the members. Involvement in supporting the grant activity increased over time, and the change effort replaced former work. The leadership of SI affiliates were more likely to demonstrate an attitude of commitment to the success of the project, often becoming involved themselves and allocating additional resources and staff towards its success. Finally, many SI affiliate grant reports show the affiliate willing to modify implementation plans as necessary in response to unforeseen challenges or opportunities.

In contract, while most affiliates whose efforts had a limited lasting impact used their grant investment to fund efforts important to their members, several utilized the grant investment to fund projects in service of an external entity or audience and implemented an effort that did not make sense or provide value to their members. Many of the grant funded LI activities were administered by individuals, with the work not being taken on by others. The grant funded change effort did not replace current work responsibilities for most of the LI participants.

As a whole, SI grants were more likely to leverage member involvement as an implementation solution. In terms of identity formation, each of the SI grants provided opportunities for members to assert or practice sharing their expertise or interests related to the grant activity. Each LI grant also showed ways that involvement in delivering the grant activity led to increased access to additional opportunities to engage and lead within the affiliate. The majority of LI grants however, provided neither of these opportunities to build a union identity grounded in support of the change effort.

Not all SI grants demonstrated evidence of partnership interactions. One affiliate was successful in completing and sustaining the work without external partners. For those who had partners, each organization in the partnership benefitted through their participation in the grant activity. The majority of SI grant partnerships also showed a mutual commitment to the work and demonstrate a level of trust between partners.

In contrast, none on the LI grants showed a shared benefit or joint increases in capacity with their partners. LI affiliates were more likely to engage with partners in a contractual relationship, paying for their services. Most LI grants did not show a mutual commitment to the success of the work and, with the exception of one of the 12, did not have evidence of trust.

A discussion of these finding follows in the next chapter. Insights from the findings are shared as well as practical and theoretical implications. Recommendations for areas of future research are shared.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses insights and implications of the research findings. A reflection on the use of the literatures that informed the study and conceptual frame are discussed first, followed by insights from the findings around the key questions guiding the study:

1. In what ways have NEA grant funded projects supported organizational change efforts led by affiliates?
2. What type of impacts do NEA grant funded projects have on affiliates?
3. What factors support or hinder affiliate efforts for ling-term organizational change?

Practical and theoretical implications and application of the research findings are then offered. The chapter concludes with recommendations of areas for future research.

Reflections on the Conceptual Frame

The GPS Fund Grant Program is an interesting organizational learning effort to study due to the self-funding nature and scale of the learning endeavor. As NEA funds affiliate change efforts that align with its collective excellence agenda, it is funding its own experiences for these affiliates as they perform their new tasks. However, the use of organizational learning theory alone, while helpful in providing a lens to describe the work processes being done, was inadequate in providing a full understanding of why members or partner organizations joined in and supported the work or not. Feminist theory provided the identity, performance, and practice lens to consider the identities of the latent members as a factor which influences their engagement in active context work. Labor management collaboration theory provided the lens

to apply to external partners, and what motivates or discourages their movement from latent into active context to support and invest in the success of the new change effort tasks. The interweaving of elements from all three theories as conceptual frame has not been done before, making this study unique and providing a new possibility for theorizing about this type of improvement work. Additionally, the use of multiple theories also served as a form of triangulation for the interpretation and analysis of the data.

Supporting Organizational Change

There were three guiding questions for this research. The first asks in what ways the grant funded change efforts supported organizational change in the affiliates. One of the charges of the NEA GPS Fund grant program as written in the grant guidelines (Appendix A), is to "…cultivate sustainable programs that can be reproduced and amplified by others to make meaningful change in public education for educators and students." One way in which GPS Funds have successfully supported that change are by influencing the work processes of the affiliates. As affiliates saw success providing a common-sense solution to address a need identified by the educators, staff, leadership, and educators joined in the effort replacing existing work processes. The successful change effort scaled and spread. It is interesting that all the sustained grant activities followed this same pattern.

Another way the grants supported organizational change was by engaging a new member constituency, one which had an interest in the change effort being offered. The grant activities offered opportunities for this newly engaged member to perform, and have accepted by those in power, a new union identity not grounded in a traditional union value proposition, but in the new activity. As these newly activated, engaged members are given opportunities for

leadership, they may influence organizational priorities. Variations of this co-construction of a professional and union identity while allowing access to power were seen in all the sustained grant activities.

Lastly, the grant activities have supported organizational change through the partnerships they engendered. One sustained grant did not work with an external partner, but all the rest worked to ensure that both the affiliate and their partner mutually benefitted by working together. The majority of those joint-partnerships showed evidence of shared trust and commitment to the success of the change effort.

Impacting the Work of Affiliates

The second guiding question asked what type of impacts the grants had on the affiliates. Sorting grants by their impact was initially more challenging than expected. Affiliates with clear evidence of sustaining their change effort activities were easily sorted into a group, as were the affiliates who explicitly stated their intent not to continue the change effort. A continuum of impacts for the group outside these extremes proved a frame conducive to comparisons across the case. These middle groups ranged from those professing non-planned or unfunded aspirations for sustaining impact, to sites that gave away their developed program to an outside entity to manage. Another group in this middle area of the continuum completed their change effort successfully, yet failed to consider continuing it beyond the funding period. Having a continuum of impacts proved helpful in understanding influences limiting impacts supporting project continuity.

Although they fall across a continuum, there are multiple similarities shared across the limited impact grants. Some in this group sought grants to address issues not valued or of

concern to their membership. The activity was instead serving a need of the leadership or an outside entity. As the issue had no practical meaning to the members, there was little interest in investing in the solution. As scaling and increased participation did not occur, current work was not impacted or replaced. Even when the grant funded activity addressed a need of the membership and a solution offered, the limited impact group was more likely to assign responsibility to a single staff member. Organizational participation was less likely to occur, and the opportunity to impact or replace current work was often missed.

Limited impact grants were less likely to offer opportunities for members to practice a union identity supporting an area of professional interest. Members were more likely to be viewed as the audience receiving, rather than delivering the activity. Access to power and decision making decisions were less likely to occur in limited impact grants as well.

An interesting finding is that none of the limited impact grant partnerships had evidence of mutual benefit. Paid contractors to deliver the work were more likely to be referenced as "partners" by this group. Mutual commitment between partners was limited, and trust between partners was seen in only one subcase.

Influencing Change Outcomes

The third guiding question asked which factors support or hinder long-term organizational change. One observation is that legitimately involving interested allies is key. For members, the issue the grant addresses needs to be of importance to them and they need to be play an active role in the delivery of the solution. For staff, increasing participation of peers is a factor in the scaling and sustainability of the change effort. For partners, the work should be of mutual benefit to each party.

An interesting finding of the research was state affiliates projects were sustained at twice the rate as local change efforts. Factors such as affiliate size, funding amounts, time period of the grant, and whether the affiliate received its full or partial funding request did not account for this difference. A factor seen more often in sustained grants than limited grants may offer a potential explanation. Evidence of an increased commitment to the project by the affiliate is seen more often in sustained grants. One potential reason for this difference may be that, due to their position in the organization, they may recognize earlier that the old value proposition is no longer working as a growth and strength strategy so the affiliate is willing to do whatever it takes to make the funded project work. This includes increased leadership involvement, which may account for the increased staff involvement seen. State affiliates, although not necessarily larger than local affiliates may have more resources to direct to the project.

Another factor seen in sustained grants was an increased number of modifications to the funded plan. This may tie back the theme of a mindset willing to do whatever it takes for the project to be successful. Sustained grants also utilize partners differently, not as consultants to offload the work, but in a spirit of true partnership and trust and with concern that both partners benefit and are committed to the work.

Implications for Practice

The findings from this research have the potential to greatly influence practice. NEA typically views grant success as progress towards the stated deliverable of the project in the application, hoping that that success contributes to an organizational change towards a collective excellence agenda. By that standard, 19 of the 22 grants in this case were successful.

Redefining success as the ability to sustain the change effort after funding would be a new way to view and evaluate organizational change programs like the GPS Fund grants. Utilizing this frame, only 10 of the 22 grants funded in 2015-16 were successful and remain actively driving the organizations change the GPS Fund program was developed to support.

The findings from this research will impact how future grant applications are read and scored, with attention to the factors found in sustainable grant projects. For example, the application could be modified to ask why the affiliate chose to focus on the requested issue and whether it was one their members identified. Other questions could verify that a plan existed to scale and spread the activity if the change effort is successful and if the affiliate has the capacity to move resources and staff to support the new work. A telling question may be to ask on the application what exact work this program will replace if successful.

Similar screening questions about the role of members in delivering the program, and how that increased involvement in the affiliate will lead to officially recognized leadership opportunities may be asked during the application process. Currently, no NEA programs consider the practice and performance of a union identity during the development or evaluation of programs offered. Adding that dimension could drastically impact the success of future educator supports and resources offered. Specifically asking who the proposed partners will be and how they too will benefit from involvement in future NEA funded change efforts would also be a change from current practice and may improve the sustainability of other projects. Budgeting requests for the majority of the funds to pay outside contractors could be flagged and critiques in the future. Changing the guidelines to exclude time limited, non-scalable projects would also be an interesting proposition for NEA to consider.

After a grant is awarded, it may be interesting to pivot the focus of the progress reports and site visits from a focus on meeting grant deliverable deadlines to an opportunity to move an affiliate up the impact continuum by supporting the development of concrete plans for sustaining, and not giving away, the learning, activities and programs funded.

From the affiliate's perspective, knowing the factors that sustained impact grants share could inform grant planning. For example, knowing that the change effort is an opportunity to co-construct professional identities around both the funded topic and association membership could inform planning and deliver of the program. Being aware that increasing member and staff participation in the deployment of the program are factors sustained grants share could impact decisions prioritizing funding and resource allocation to the project. Finally, both NEA and affiliates would benefit from knowing that modifications to the original plan should be viewed, not as a failure or nuisance, but evidence that the affiliate is engaged and committed to the success of the change effort.

There are multiple ways in which the findings of this study might influence the broader work of NEA or other grant funding organizations. The consideration of participant ownership and engagement opportunities, the influence of participant identity as a barrier or asset in sustaining the work, and the depth of partnership commitments in reviewing and managing grants could be applicable to a variety of organizations, including government grants and grants from philanthropies. .

Outside of a grant context, NEA could potentially apply the findings of this study and conceptual frame to the larger collective excellence change effort that NEA is supporting. As it supports aspirational opportunities for new work experiences for its affiliates and within its

own strategic plan and budget priorities, it is important to use the knowledge generated to change its own work practices. NEA must ask itself if its financial and staff investment is creating knowledge to inform the next active context, or simply performing those new tasks and assuming change will happen. NEA must attend to the application of this knowledge to both inform the active context work internally and influence the latent context in the broader environment if lasting organizational change towards a collective excellence agenda is to occur.

Theoretical Implications

The conceptual framework utilizing the *work processes* element from organizational learning theory, the *identity formation* element from feminist theory, and the *partnership interactions* element from labor management collaboration theory proved a helpful analytical lens. As the grants were funding projects aimed to impact organizational change efforts, it was expected that sub-elements of *work processes* would be seen. In reality, all the sub-elements were seen in every sustained impact projects and conversely, lacking in limited impact grants. Focusing on *work processes*, proved a strong predictor of sustaining organizational change efforts. While many organizations search for new processes to adopt, the scale of NEA as an organization, with both the fiscal resources and diversity of affiliates in which to search and test its own learning and change efforts is a unique organization to study in the field of education.

Utilizing the *identity formation* element to study the performance and practice of a union professional identity is an unconventional application of feminist theory. Strikingly, all the sustained impact change efforts demonstrated both *identity formation* sub-elements in the conceptual frame and roughly half of the limited impact efforts offering opportunities to perform a new identity. While hoping to see evidence of identity formation, having it as equally

prevalent as the organizational learning element was a surprise and offers a unique and new perspective in which to understand organizational change efforts in education.

Finally, the *partnership interaction* element from labor management collaboration theory was useful as part of the conceptual frame in identifying components of true partnership shared by the majority of the sustained efforts. This frame was especially helpful as none of the limited impact grants appeared to consider mutual benefit of working together, other than a financial payment, as a requirement for partnering.

Areas for Future Research

Before making recommendations for future research, the strengths and limitations of this study should be revisited. A primary strength of the research was its use of triangulation. Multiple sources of data were used in this study. The applications, and the award letters were used by the researcher to look for clear patterns that might influence outcomes. Progress and final reports created by the sub-case sites were used to track work processes and to understand how the affiliate viewed its progress and success in meeting the deliverables and goals of the grants. The interviews and site visit reports were where the majority of the conceptual frame elements were seen and served to triangulate the claims made in the written reports. The use of multiple theories, the labor management, organizational learning, and feminist theories served as another form of triangulation.

In terms of limitations, the researcher's close position to the change effort, grant program, and organization studied is a limitation. Attention to signs of bias were implemented throughout the research process. For example, a purposeful frame of neutrality in regard to the content being proposed by the affiliates as the topic of the change effort was employed when

placing the affiliate projects across the impact continuum. Keeping personal notes and charts, and making constant comparisons across the case during analysis were attempts to foster self-awareness of unconscious bias. To limit unintended bias, the study was purposefully grounded in elements of three well-established theories. Publically positioning within the politics of location for the topic was another attempt to make transparent any bias brought to the analysis.

Another limitation of the research is the limitation of the single case itself. The findings and conclusion offered are applicable for this case of 22 grants only. Additional application of the methods and conceptual frame to other cases should occur before generalizations across contexts are made.

Acknowledging both the strengths and limitations of the work, there are multiple areas in which future researchers might build on the findings of this study. For example, confirmation studies could be conducted to see if the presence of the conceptual frame elements are as useful in understanding the sustainability of change efforts as they were in this study. Of particular interest would be the strength of the *identity formation* element in relation to sustained change efforts. Other studies could test for the application of identify formation elements as a factors in the success of other NEA member engagement initiatives.

Of particular interest to the researcher would be follow up studies to explore the difference seen in this study between the sustained impact rates seen between state and local affiliates. This finding was both surprising and frustrating in that a simple explanation tied to a quantifiable characteristic such as size of the affiliate or length of the grant period was not identified. Multiple explanations could be explored, for example, from the state affiliate's

heightened location within the organization, which, may support a more national, rather than local, perspective. Or, perhaps a state's more consistent staffing and infrastructure may offer an increased stability make sustaining a new program more likely.

An area of organizational learning theory that was not studied in this dissertation was the interaction between the larger environment and the latent context of the organization. As referenced in chapter one, the current educational environment is one in which too often, educators are perceived as a problem to be fixed, and NEA as a barrier to that fix, rather than critical assets and partners who engage in improving our system of public education. The application of the conceptual frame, with its attentiveness to how performed identities and partnership relations hinder or support sustained work processes could inform further research on the interaction between the environmental context and an organization's latent context. The idea of collective excellence, where everyone is focused on student learning and supporting the professional quality of all educators, may prove to be a unifying concept that numerous education stakeholders, including the NEA, can rally to support. I hope so.

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APPENDIX A

NEA GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS FUND GRANT GUIDELINES

(Revised May, 2015)

INTRODUCTION

State Affiliates, Local Affiliates, partnerships between State and Local Affiliates, or partnerships of Local or State Affiliates may apply for NEA Great Public Schools Grants (GPS Fund Grants) to advance the goal of great public schools for every student. Funds will be provided to help Affiliates demonstrate leadership in enhancing the quality of public education and to assist in the development and implementation of an agenda that engages members with an emphasis on student-centered success through union-led efforts. Grants will be awarded using criteria that focus on ensuring successful students, accomplished professionals, dynamic collaboration, and empowered leaders.

Statement of Purpose

The NEA GPS Fund Grants' purpose is to further policies and practices that grow and improve the education profession by promoting and fostering student success in public schools. Grants will be awarded to NEA State and Local Affiliates who demonstrate the capacity and competency through initiatives and partnerships to generate and advance student-centered policies and professional practice programs.

The goal is to generate and develop innovative ideas designed to promote sound practice, to capture key learnings that promote student success, to establish new organizational partnerships toward improving professional practice and aligning it with organizational priorities, and to cultivate sustainable programs that can be reproduced and amplified by others to make meaningful change in public education for educators and students.

GPS Fund Grants Restrictions

Grants may not be used to fund the following:

- Overhead expenses
- Public relations activities
- Legislative programs
- Political campaigns

- Capital improvements or equipment
- Programs or activities covered by other NEA Grants or funded with other NEA monies
- Hiring of full-time staff positions (unless there is a commitment from the applicant to support the position(s) in their program budget after the grant term ends).

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING GRANT APPLICATIONS

In awarding Grants, primary consideration will be given to the following criteria:

1. Potential of the proposed program or activities for measurable impact on student success, especially in schools with the greatest need;
2. Ability to expand the capacity of the Affiliate to lead student-centered programs with union-led efforts;
3. Strength of partnerships involved and degree of collaboration required of both internal and external partners;
4. Affiliate(s) capacity and readiness to implement the proposed activities, such as:
    a. Prioritized leadership and governance support;
    b. Alignment to Affiliate's mission, vision, and strategy;
    c. Integration into organizational structure;
    d. Adequate management structure and systems to support proposal; and
    e. Leveraged organizational partnerships and external relations;
5. Sustainability of or potential for expansion of the program beyond the term of the Grant;
6. Potential for extending the program or its findings to other State and/or Local Affiliates;
7. Program's intentional alignment with key NEA student-centered and professional practice initiatives;
8. Degree of innovation and presentation of new ideas;
9. Consideration for the ability to obtain in-kind, matching, or external funding from additional sources to support the Grant proposal and its continuation: and
10. Inclusion of specific plans for engagement of member and/or non-member recruitment in proposed programs and activities.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications for GPS Fund Grants will be processed as follows:

1. Submission of an "Intent to Apply" notification form, ideally 60 days (and no less than 30 days) prior to the Grant submission date.
2. State Affiliates, Local Affiliates, State-Local Affiliate partnerships, multiple state partnerships, or multiple local partnerships will submit the GPS Fund application through the grant submission portal on the NEA website. Note:
    a. No individual member Grant application will be accepted.
    b. NEA reserves the right to determine final Grant award based on:
        i. Compliance with Fund guidelines;
        ii. Previous performance of other Grant or program awards;
        iii. Evaluation of Grant budget expenses; and
        iv. Available funds.
3. Grant applicants may request staff consultation in preparing their Grant proposals.
4. Staff of the Center for Great Public Schools will review the completed application, consulting as necessary with other appropriate NEA Centers and Departments to provide a comprehensive assessment of the application and to ensure Grants do not overlap in unintended ways with other state grant programs.
5. Following this review, all eligible and final Grant applications, along with recommendations from the Center for Great Public Schools and any supporting documentation, will be submitted to the Oversight Committee for review and comment.
6. The Oversight Committee will consist of the NEA Vice President; the NEA Secretary Treasurer; the Presidents of the National Council of State Education Associations, the National Council of Urban Education Associations, the National Council of Education Support Professionals, and the National Council of Higher Education; one NEA Director elected by the Board, the NEA Director of the Center for Great Public Schools, and one staff content expert.
7. Grants totaling less than $25,000 (over the term of the proposal) are not eligible for Grant awards. Grant awards are limited to a maximum of $250,000 annually, unless

otherwise approved by the NEA Executive Committee. Grant applications must be for a period of one to three years. However, Grant funding will only be guaranteed on an annual basis with further funding contingent upon a review of the project after completion of its first year.

a. If the recommendation of the Oversight Committee is to fund the proposal, then that recommendation, with appropriate supporting information, will be forwarded to the NEA President and the NEA Executive Director for action. The NEA President and the NEA Executive Director may approve the recommendation of the Oversight Committee, may reduce the amount of assistance recommended by the Oversight Committee, or may reject the application for a GPS Funds Grant. If the Affiliate is not satisfied with the action taken by the NEA President and the NEA Executive Director on its application for a GPS Funds Grant, it may appeal to the NEA Executive Committee. The NEA Executive Committee may take such action as it deems appropriate, and the action taken by the NEA Executive Committee will be final.
b. Beginning with the 2015-16 fiscal year, NEA will accept Grant applications during two (2) Grant periods each year: March and September.
c. Following the initial Grant proposal review, staff may request of an applicant:
    i. Additional information to clarify or support a proposal;
    ii. Recommendations or verification of partner support and involvement;
    iii. Evaluation/assessment of previous or existing Grants to ensure they are in compliance with their intended goal and purpose; and
    iv. For State Affiliates, evidence of compliance with NEA/NCSEA Financial and Operational Standards.
d. The Oversight Committee will communicate a final decision to each applicant within 60 days of the application deadline.

ADMINISTRATION OF FUNDS

At the end of each membership year, any unexpended monies will remain in the NEA Fund GPS Grant Funds.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The NEA President will make an annual report to the NEA Board of Directors and the Representative Assembly regarding the operation of the Grant program, including a financial statement.

Grantees will be expected to meet the Grant guidelines described herein as well as to participate in a Grant reporting-and-evaluation process during and at the close of the funding cycle in order to adhere to the NEA's Financial Standards as established by the Center for Business Operations. Grantees are required to complete the interim and final evaluation reports as applicable, with a summary of program activities and success, and to provide financial accounting at and during the close of the funding cycle.

APPENDIX B

Site Visit Report Outline

<table>
<tr><td>Affiliate Name(s):</td><td>Grant Number(s):</td></tr>
<tr><td>Title of Grant(s):</td><td>Grant Term – Years and amount</td></tr>
<tr><td>Content Cluster:</td><td>Date(s) of Site Visit:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Grantee/s Participated or Position/s:</td><td>Staff/Oversight Committee Attending Site Visit and Position:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Status of Grantee based on Site Visit
Challenged
Emerging
Potential
Exemplary</td><td>Status of Grantee based on Site Visit</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Primary focus of the site visit:
Technical assistance on program or funding development
General site visit acknowledging effective practice
Promotions and outreach planning
Thought partner for future development
Intervention for significant problem</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">BRIEF Summary of Site Visit Highlights (what are we worried about; what excited us, observations; etc.):</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Next Steps (what resources do they need from NEA; who should they connect with, what should others learn from this grantee, etc.):</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Any Immediate/Urgent Action:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Report completed by:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Date Report is Completed:</td></tr>
</table>

APPENDIX C

Case Participant Characteristics

Grant	Affiliate Size	Geographic Zone	Amount Requested	Total Awarded	Length of grant	Content Cluster
1	Local	Pacific	$76,600	$51,600	1 year	Leadership and Career Growth
2	State	Mountain	$199,887	$133,258	2 year	Educator Evaluation or Effectiveness
3	State	International	$358,100	$112,200	1 year	Systemic Change Initiative
4	State	Mountain	$108,860	$35,620	1 year	Student Advocacy and Success
5	State	Central	$250,000	$250,000	1 year	Systemic Change Initiative
6	State	South	$109,000	$109,000	1 year	Professional Development and Learning
7	Local	North East	$283,000	$146,500	3 year	Diversity, Equity and Cultural Competence
8	Local	Atlantic	$225,000	$150,000	2 year	Systemic Change Initiative
9	State	Pacific	$214,000	$214,000	2 year	Professional Development and Learning
10	State	Pacific	$220,147	$220,147	1 year	Diversity, Equity and Cultural Competence
11	State	Central	$241,221	$241,221	3 year	Professional Development and Learning
12	Local	Atlantic	$164,500	$110,500	2 year	Early Career Support and Engagement
13	Local	Central	$530,500	$530,500	3 year	Educator/Teacher Preparation
14	State	Atlantic	$750,000	$175,000	1 year	Systemic Change Initiative
15	Local	Pacific	$450,000	$450,000	3 year	Systemic Change Initiative

16	Local	Atlantic	$90,000	$90,000	1 year	Diversity, Equity and Cultural Competence
17	State	Pacific	$586,200	$179,922	1 year	Diversity, Equity and Cultural Competence
18	State	Mountain	$250,000	$250,000	1 year	Curriculum Development and Improving Instruction
19	State	Atlantic	$250,000	$250,000	1 year	Leadership and Career Growth
20	State	International	$25,000	$25,000	1 year	Systemic Change Initiative
21	Local	Central	$180,000	$60,000	1 year	Leadership and Career Growth
22	State	Mountain	$175,000	$175,000	1 year	Leadership and Career Growth

APPENDIX D

Participant Email Recruitment Message

Hello _____ [*name*],
I am contacting you in regards to the NEA GPS Fund grant_____
[insert grant ID and name] you received on _____ *[date of award].*

I am a current doctoral student at the University of Washington studying GPS Fund grants and would like to schedule a 30-minute call to discuss your experience with the grant you received.

I'm particularly interested in hearing about any ways the work the grant funded influenced your affiliate and/or members as well as any positive or negative lessons-learned.

I appreciate your time and consideration. Please let me know if you are willing to participate in this research and a good time and number for me to call you in the next week or so.

Thank you.

Andy Coons
PhD Candidate, Education Leadership, Policy and Organizations
University of Washington, College of Education
acoons@gmail.com
202-818-0623

APPENDIX E

Participant Phone Recruitment Script

Hello _____ [*name*],

I am contacting you in regards to the NEA GPS Fund grant_____
[insert grant ID and name] you received on _____ *[date of award].*

I am a current doctoral student at the University of Washington studying GPS Fund grants and would like to schedule a 30-minute call to discuss your experience with the grant you received.

I'm particularly interested in hearing about any ways the work the grant funded influenced your affiliate and/or members as well as any positive or negative lessons-learned.

Please let me know if you are willing to participate in this research and a good time and number for me to call you in the next week or so.

Thank you.

Andy Coons
PhD Candidate, Education Leadership, Policy and Organizations
University of Washington, College of Education
acoons@gmail.com
202-818-0623

APPENDIX F

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Contextual Information

1. In your own words, what was the primary purpose of the grant?
2. What did you hope would happen as a result of the grant? (or) What motivated you to apply for the grant? (or) What problem were you trying to solve?
3. Who was involved in submitting the application? What were their roles and responsibilities?
4. What happened after the grant was awarded? (or) What decisions were made as you implemented the grant?
5. Who was involved in implementing the grant? (follow-up) What roles did they play?

The Project

1. How did things work?
2. What was most interesting?
3. What did you learn from the grant experience?
4. Did others learn similar things?
5. Follow up:
    - (If evidence of participant identity formation not mentioned): Tell me about the members who participated. Did this project lead to deeper or new engagements with the Association?
    - (If evidence of organizational learning not mentioned): How has this project influenced or changed your work? What about other affiliate staff?

Impact

1. What aspects of the grant, if any, will continue once the funding is gone? Have district or school leaders integrated elements of the grant with other activities?
2. Can you think of any structural changes within the local affiliate that resulted from this work?
3. What are your next steps? Why are you choosing to go in that direction?

Other

1. (If external partners were not mentioned previously…) What partners did you work with? How did they help, or not? How is your relationship now? To what extent, if at all, has the project furthered collaboration among the partners?
2. (If successes or frustrations were not mentioned previously…) In your opinion, what factors influenced/did not support the success of the grant?
3. Is there anything else about your work with the grant that I haven't asked about that is important for me to know?

Thank you so much for your time. You've given me much deeper insight into the project and where you are now.

APPENDIX G

Affiliate and Grant Characteristic Codes

Affiliate Size [AS]	AS
Local [L]	AS-L
UniServ Region/District [D]	AS-D
State [S]	AS-S
Affiliate Capacity [ACAP]	ACAP
Full-time Governance Release [GR]	ACAP-GR
Assigned Staff [AS]	ACAP-AS
Positive LMC Relations [PR]	ACAP-PR
Negative LMC Relations [NR]	ACAP-NR
Full Funding Awarded [FFA]	FFA
$25,000 - $49,000 [25K]	FFA-25K
$50,000 - $99,000 [50K]	FFA-50K
$100,000 – $149,000 [100K]	FFA-100K
$150,000 – $249,000 [150K]	FFA-150K
$250,000 – $349,000 [250K]	FFA-250K
$350,000 - $449,000 [350K]	FFA-350K
$450,000 – 750, 000 [450K+]	FFA-450K
Full Period Awarded [FPA]	FPA
1 year [1]	FPA-1
2 year [2]	FPA-2
3 year [3]	FPA-3
Partial Funding Awarded [PFA]	PFA
$25,000 - $49,000/year [25K]	PFA-25K
$50,000 - $99,000/year [50K]	PFA-50K
$100,000 – $149,000/year [100K]	PFA-100K
$150,000 – $199,000/year [150K]	PFA-150K
$250,000 – $349,000 [250K]	PFA-250K
$350,000 - $449,000 [350K]	PFA-350K
$450,000 – 750, 000 [450K+]	PFA-450K
Partial Period Awarded [PPA]	PPA
1 year [1]	PPA-1
2 year [2]	PPA-2
3 year [3]	PPA-3

APPENDIX H

Analytic Codes

Partnership Interactions [PI]	PI
Both Organizations Capacity Increased [OC]	PI-OC
Mutual Commitment [MC]	PI-MC
Trust [TR]	PI-TR
Work Processes [WP]	WP
Addresses "Real" Problem [RP]	WP-RP
Common-Sense Solution [CSS]	WP-CSS
Increased Participation/Ownership [IPO]	WP-IPO
Replaces Old Work Processes [ROW]	WP-ROW
Identity Formation [IF]	IF
Encourages Practice of New Union Identity [PNI]	IF-PNI
Legitimate Access to Power [LAP]	IF-LAP
Project Leadership [PL]	PL
Staff - Leader [SL]	PL-SL
Staff - IPD or UD [SUD]	PL-SUD
Governance [G]	PL-G
Member [M]	PL-M
Investment [INV]	INV
Affiliate Contribute to Funding [AC]	INV-AC
Partners Contribute to Funding [PC]	INV-PC
Leverage Grant to Seek Additional Investment [LG]	INV-LG
In-Kind Only [IK]	INV-IK
Delivery [DL]	DL
Staff – Leader [SL]	DL-SL
Staff – IPD or UD [SUD]	DL-SUD
Governance [G]	DL-G
Member [M]	DL-M
Partner, Full-Service Contract [CFS]	DL-CFS
Partner, Support-Service Contract [CSS]	DL-CCS
Plan Modification [MOD]	MOD
Obstacles [OBS]	MOD-OBS
Successes [SUCC]	MOD–SUCC
Lessons Learned [LES]	MOD-LES

Next Steps [NSTPS]	NS
Impact, Sustained [IMS]	NS-IMS
Impact, Limited [IML]	NS-IML

APPENDIX I

Politics of Location

Following the example of Adrienne Rich, I locate myself within the union and my profession:

- Andy Coons
- Union member and Teacher – or is it Teacher and Union member?
- National Board Certified Teacher
- Building union representative
- Tacoma Education Association (TEA) National Board candidate facilitator
- Washington Education Association (WEA) state-wide National Board Jump Start Trainer
- WEA sponsored member of National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Board of Examiners
- NEA sponsored seat on National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) Board of Directors
- TEA and Tacoma UniServ Council President
- WEA Board Member
- Commissioner, NEA Commission on Effective Teaching and Teaching
- Strike Leader
- District and community bridge builder
- Chief Operating Officer, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
- Senior Director, NEA Center for Great Public Schools

Taking a break after writing this list, I notice and am embarrassed by the titles and fear the reader will think I'm pompous, or worse, a career climber. Each decision that pulled me deeper

into the NEA enterprise or served to increase my sphere of influence advocating for increased teacher quality was driven, not from ego or pride but after deep reflection, resolve and a lot of self-doubt. The jobs each came with high stress, a steep learning curve, new professional cultures and relationships to learn and navigate, disappointment, celebrations, and a workload that seemed unsustainable. And, each ultimately served to cement another layer to my complicated, fused professional identity as both an advocate for increased professional quality and a union leader.

My family are not necessarily pro-union. Neither my parents nor siblings have ever been members of a union. The same holds true for my wife's family. By shear chance, my first job in high school was in a unionized grocery store. I didn't know anything about what a union was, but was grateful for a starting salary $1.50 - $2.50 more than my friends who were working in retail or fast food. My co-workers credited our higher salary to "the union," an explanation I didn't question. Each positional advancement I made in the store over the three years I worked there (from bagger, to back-room clerk, to shelf stocker) came with significant pay increases. I assumed paid breaks and lunches, overtime, and holiday pay were workforce norms.

My perception that "union jobs pay better" was reinforced during my first year of college when I worked stocking snacks in tourist concession shops. The work was not unionized and I was paid well below what I had made as a high school student. There was no overtime or enforced break benefits. I ended up working as a phlebotomist in hospital labs the last few years of college and as a medical lab technician immediately after graduation. This work was unionized, at a decent pay rate, and offered the breaks and overtime I was used to as well as insurance benefits. While not a union-activist in any sense, I had developed through my lived

experience the impression that unionized workplaces were positive and preferable places to work.

I joined the NEA as a student member before I graduated from my teacher preparation graduate program. In addition to possessing a generally positive impression of unions, I was also motivated to join because I heard that unions offered liability insurance and, more importantly, I was trying to pad my resume with professional affiliations. I remember having a negative impression of "teacher strikes" but naively thinking to myself that if a strike ever happened, I just wouldn't participate. I was a dues-paying member but not involved at all in the Virginia Education Association (VEA) where I worked while my wife finished her graduate degree in DC, the Oregon Education Association (OEA) after moving to Portland to follow my wife's career, and the Washington Education Association (WEA) when we settled in Tacoma.

After several years working in Tacoma, it was the local affiliate, the Tacoma Education Association (TEA) President who reached out to me and asked if I was interested in National Board Certification, a process I had not heard of previously. I was working as the lead teacher on our school's state improvement efforts at the time. The TEA President had heard I was "into improving my practice" and thought I might be interested in applying to be part of a new joint union-district initiative to increase the number of board certified teachers in the district. Having moved and transferred my teaching license to three different states early in my career, I was interested in the licensure reciprocity board certification provides. I was one of twelve teachers to receive union scholarships to pay certification costs and received mentoring support

throughout my candidacy. The collaboration was so unique at the time that the state affiliate ran a feature article on the program and the teachers involved.[29]

Achieving board certification was the most difficult task I had undertaken in my career up to that point. The transparency and risk involved in videotaping and submitting student work and personal reflection as evidence to be anonymously evaluated against national standards was terrifying. Learning that I certified was an incredible boost to my professional self-esteem. I had not only shown myself that my practice met national standards, but I had gained a standards-based vocabulary to describe my pedagogy and an increased confidence to talk about and advocate for my profession. The district printed posters with all our pictures and the content areas we had certified in for every school in Tacoma to post that highlighted our individual accomplishment and the union collaboration. I was interviewed by the local paper and highlighted as an example of what investment in teacher professional quality could produce.[30] Shortly after I certified, the TEA President asked if I'd serve as a union building representative. Not having a clue what that meant, but appreciating the union's investment in my professional learning, I agreed and started attending monthly association meetings.

One of my first "asks" by TEA was to "pay it forward" and serve as a facilitator for the following year's cohort of National Board candidates. TEA arranged for me to receive state candidate facilitator training. That coaching experience led to a request from the state affiliate to help train candidates through a new state-wide National Board *Jump Start* program they

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[29] Woo, L. (2004, December). Growing excellence locally: Tacoma EA and school district pilot unique support for National Board candidates. *WE: Washington Education Association, 42*(4), 14-15.

[30] Abe, D. (2004, December 18). Just call them superteachers: Excellent teachers get even better. *The News Tribune*, A1.

were developing. The four-day training event grew from training 50 candidates to literally filling high-school gymnasiums and become WEA's largest professional development offering within several years.

This exposure led to several national opportunities as WEA recommended my service to become a member of the NCATE Board of Examiners and finally, to my joy, petitioned NEA to recommend me to fill a practitioner seat as a member of the National Board's Board of Directors. In Tacoma school district, my board certification led to several teacher leadership opportunities including serving as a secondary math coach, developing a middle school Montessori Program, and being a K-12 instructional technology facilitator. Although primarily focused on professional quality issues, my union involvement began to expand at this time as well. I ran and was elected as a representative to the state and national representative assemblies, knocked doors and made phone calls as part of a levy campaign, and was featured with my students as the faces of a statewide WEA class-size reduction campaign.

I received an out-of-the-blue call one evening asking if I was interested in become TEA President. Apparently I had been written in as a person-of-interest so qualified to be listed on the ballot. Previously that year, the Tacoma School District had accepted four School Improvement Grants and implemented three of the Federally-approved reform models (transformation, turn-around, and closure) resulting in over 250 displaced teachers. The current President was blamed and, as the Chair of the Elections committee explained, would run unopposed if I didn't consent to run. After consulting with several mentors I trusted who assured me this was a good opportunity to learn more about how the district operated and a

platform to advocate for students, within two days I had a campaign committee, a slogan:

"Teachers Matter," and a website where I made public my vision for TEA. I wrote:

> "These are unique times in education. The closing or restructure of four of our middle schools is just the first wave of change we are about to experience as our district responds to the national reform agenda currently being implemented nationwide. Yet in the midst of all these changes is the simple idea that in the end it is us, the teachers - by the quality of our work and commitment to our kids - that matter in providing a quality education.
>
> In a recent speech, John Stocks, NEA's Deputy Executive Director discussed the current crossroads of public education. If you haven't seen it, it is well worth the 17-minute online stream. I've included a link to his speech under the "Resources and Links" tab. Stocks discusses two emerging camps within education that he categorizes as the "State of Emergency Responders" and "The New Architects." The emergency responders are looking for bold, swift, quick changes in education. Examples would be focusing on basics mastery, student test scores or increasing the number of charter schools.
>
> The new architects are also looking to change education. They recognize the importance of basics but understand that basics are insufficient for today's youth. They advocate for a new, transformative architecture in education, based in research, in which we provide our students with the 21st century skills to compete.
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> Stocks continues by arguing that we, as a union, must transform ourselves to remain applicable today. NEA's old industrial model of unionism is insufficient in itself. Let me stop there and say that I am not naïve. I understand fully that one of our strengths in Tacoma is our strong contract and that once a right is lost, it is almost impossible to get back.
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> As your TEA president you will continue to be protected fully under the contract. But I believe a union can be more than just an organization to enforce contractual rights. We can also embrace, just as Stocks is advocating for NEA, a model of unionism focused around the improvement of our professionalism."

I won the election and became the local president, as well as president of the UniServ Council (one of 21 WEA service areas across Washington State) and gained a seat on WEA's

Board of Directors where I served on the Professional Practice and Policy Committee. I find it ironic that I chose to quote John Stocks, now the Executive Director for NEA and my current boss in my campaign. I did not know him at all at the time.

I became the first National Board Certified teacher to lead an urban local in the state and received quite a bit of attention from NEA including serving as a panelist on that year's "Trends in Education" Policy forum focused on "the new union leader" and was invited to serve as a Commissioner on NEA's Commission on Effective Teachers and Teaching. While ensuring due-process rights and the contract was followed, I was also able to advocate for supports for teachers, rewrite TEA's bylaws and constitution, reorganized the executive committee, recruited board certified teaches into leadership positions, and offered professional development during building representative meetings. I felt my relationship with the district was strong as I had long personal relationships with most of the district leadership from my time serving in various teacher leadership roles. In fact, the superintendent and I flew to Palo Alto to have dinner with Linda Darling-Hammond to showcase our work together as an example of progressive labor-management relations.

It came as a shock then, when I showed up to bargain the new contract and was met by a management team led by two strangers representing the district's interests. The district had outsourced the negotiations to two labor attorneys. It soon became apparent that the district had no intention of settling the negotiations. Given the diversity of Tacoma's schools program offerings (Art, Montessori, STEM, and International Baccalaureate-focused schools to name a few) and the recent history of large scale staff displacements as a result of the SIG grants, the primary concern for my membership was new and clarifying displacement language. The district

quickly "bundled" this issue to two of their own – meaning a settlement could not be reached on one issue without agreeing to all three.

The issues they tied to displacement were (1) increasing class size (to which we were not opposed with the exception of protecting small classes for the most fragile student populations such as special education, English language learners, and kindergarten students) and (2) a small pay reduction (about which my members were not happy, but were okay accepting given it was a state-wide reduction and management was taking a cut too). Before serious discussion on the issues could occur, the district unilaterally declared a stalemate and brought in federal mediators. Their media machine pushed the story that the "selfish" teachers were holding out due to salary disputes.

Although we had started the school year without a contract, I called a general membership meeting on September 12th, a date I will never forget. I told the membership that I had failed them, negotiations were not progressing and, through literal tears, asked for their support to strike. Tacoma had not had a teacher's strike in 27 years. An "old guard" union leader came up and put his arm around me, as did a board certified teacher working as an instructional coach in the district office. Both said they supported my leadership and the decision. A vote was taken and 87% of the total teacher membership voted to strike. [31]

What they don't tell a local president about a strike is how overwhelmingly alone it feels. I was fighting the district. I was fighting my own internal doubts wondering if there was anything I could have done differently and hoping I had made the right choice. One member called asking if his insurance was at risk as he had a child with a feeding tube. Another called

[31] The Associated Press. (2011, September, 12). Tacoma teachers vote to strike immediately. *The Seattle Times,* E1.

worried participation in a strike might negatively impact their pending adoption of a child from China. I was assigned UniServ support staff from across the state, and found myself fighting them as well as they arrived eager to fight – and party. They had a great time stirring up the media and making threats to district management in the name of "building power" while acting like they were at one long frat party each night. I was literally left with the physical clean-up of their bottles each morning as well as the realization that I would be cleaning-up district relationships after the strike ended and these agitators left. And, I was fighting court battles. A judge immediately issued an order for the teachers to return to their classrooms. The district sent legal notice to all the teachers telling them they were breaking the law and putting their jobs at-risk. The district sued me personally as well as in my role as a member of the TEA leadership team. The media, continually fueled by the district, was reporting that the issue was all about money. Three days into the strike I rented the Tacoma Dome and called all the teachers together to ask them what they wanted me to do. We held a second vote and this time, 94% of the total membership voted to defy the judge's order and continue the strike. As we left the Tacoma dome, we were surrounded by high school students chanting "We Support our Teachers!" It was one of the saddest and proudest moment of my life.

Ten days into the strike, both negotiation teams were called to the governor's offices. Governor Gregoire told us that we were sequestered and that she personally would facilitate the negotiations. When she asked the superintendent why his teachers were striking, he said, "I don't know. I need to ask my attorney." When she asked me, I shared my list of the 11 unsettled issues, the first 3 being the reason for the strike. She said, "We'll use Andy's list" and sent both teams out to come up with a proposed solution and a compromise they could live

with for the first item. When we returned 30 minutes later, the district had been unable to come up with a solution. We had, and the governor accepted it. We went through all 11 items utilizing this process.

The strike was terrible, but it also served as a wake-up call for me to the complexities of driving change. I had begun my presidency with the most altruistic of intentions, to position the union as a support to teachers so they could better support their students, and had been taken advantage of for it. It wasn't until I employed traditional union strategies, the side of the union I honestly had not valued, that I was able to leverage the collective power of the members to make progressive change. As a result of the strike, I co-led, along with the new interim superintendent (I hadn't realized that district leaders typically don't survive strikes[32]) a joint union-district committee to re-envision how displacements would occur. The entire process, which included community input, took 8 months to complete and served to rebuild relationships and trust. The resulting policy honored the alignment of the professional qualifications of the teacher to the school's defined specialty focus or program. Criteria for displacement decisions were transparent and defensible with tenure status serving as a tie-breaker only when all other criteria were equal. The principal, building representative and an elected staff representative oversee the displacement process with TEA serving as the appeals and oversight organization. TEA also took over approval of all professional development offerings for the district as a result of the new contract language.

I had served as a Board of Director for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards during my time as the TEA President. During one meeting (and I'm sure my

[32] Within one year of the strike, the superintendent, two school board members, the head of Human Resources and a district Director were no longer employed by Tacoma Public Schools.

inhibitions were lowered due to the strike), I went on a rant, publically challenging the Board to actively engage in current issues of education reform, particularly on the teacher evaluation and effectiveness debates. As a result, the CEO called and offered me the position of Chief Operations Officer for the organization, stating that the Board ironically, had never had an NBCT serve on its executive staff and that he wanted a teacher's perspective to inform his decision making. I accepted and moved my family to DC.

Working for the National Board was a huge personal honor, but also incredibly difficult work. The Board was under extreme financial stress and while there, I led the work revising the certification process, renegotiated the scoring contract, moved the offices, closed a processing facility in San Antonio TX, and let go over 40 employees. I was instrumental in the Board receiving multiple external grants, coordinated with the Department of Education on a joint Teach to Lead (T2L) campaign and served as the organization's liaison with NEA to heal a strained relationship as we worked together to develop and support an NEA Teacher Leadership Initiative (TLI).

TLI was developed by the Teacher Quality Department within the NEA division known as the Center for Great Public Schools. When the Senior Director for the center retired, I was offered his position. I actually said no – twice. The third time, the NEA President called and asked what was wrong with me. I was being offering the opportunity to lead NEA's professional quality, research and policy agenda. I eventually accepted and currently oversee four departments within the center including: the Teacher Quality, Education Support Professional Quality, Research, and Education Policy and Practice departments. Additionally, the center maintains the organization's external professional quality partnerships, the blended learning

opportunities offered through NEA's online EdCommunities platform, and all the affiliate grant programs related to professional quality and support, including the GPS Fund. This position is a cabinet-level seat where I represent the center, served as the strategic plan and budget Lead for NEA's Goal 2 charged with "…supporting the development of educators across their professional continuums for empowerment roles that elevate the quality of professional practice…" (National Education Association, 2016) and the Goal Lead for the 2018-20 budget priority, "Provide Professional Support to develop a system of affiliate-led, educator supports across the career continua of our members."

I have considered the possibility that I am too close to the NEA to research the collective excellence change efforts objectively. I know, live, and work within its systems, culture, and bureaucracy. I also know NEA's history, its aspirations, the current influence it has on the field of education, and the organization's potential and aspirations to support the professional quality of its membership. I benefitted greatly by my local, state and the NEA national's investment in my own professional growth and obviously, by making professional quality the focus of my current job, believe NEA should expand and prioritize that work. For the same reasons I worry about being too close to NEA, I can also argue that due to my insider knowledge and past experiences, I'm uniquely situated to study and critique NEA's current learning and change efforts and the impact of the grants program on that aspirational transformation. I recognize the deliberate and thoughtful implementation of analytic strategies I will need to utilize to balance the strong sensitivity I feel for the subject with the objectivity necessary to do this research.