

Killing the Common Core: An Analysis of State Policymaking

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama
August 5, 2017

Keywords: Public Policy, Policymaking, State Politics, Education Policy, Case Studies

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Abstract

Policymaking research explains and predicts what will happen when an issue enters the policy stream and why changes occur. Numerous theories, frameworks, and models have been created to attempt to explain policy shifts. Some theories are that policy narratives change, and thus, a policy shift may or may not occur with this narrative shift. While some models have incorporated policy narratives, no one model fully explains why the narrative changes and why that results in a policy shift. To remedy this gap, I merged three existing models, the Advocacy Coalition Framework, Narrative Policy Framework, and Policy Pathways Model, into a singular model, the Pathway Coalition Model (PCM), which aggregates three existing policymaking models into a singular and more complete model that integrates both policy narratives and an explanation of why narrative changes occur. To test the PCM, I conducted case studies of Alabama and New Hampshire using the Common Core State Standards as the observation policy. The case studies relied on interviews with actors involved in the policymaking process in each state, including state legislators, interest group members, and bureaucrats in education, analysis of official government documents and legislative actions, and as needed, various secondary sources of information. The case studies showed support for the PCM, through the successful use of the pluralist pathway in Alabama and the partisan pathway in New Hampshire. The PCM offers a more complete understanding of why policy shifts occur at the state level.

Acknowledgments

My list of acknowledgments could be as long as the dissertation itself; however, I will keep it limited. First and foremost, I want to thank God for giving me all of the blessings in my life that he has. Without God, none of this would be possible. I want to thank my wife, Lauren Malone, for sticking beside me throughout this entire process. We began dating months before I began my doctoral studies, were married while I was completing coursework, and had our first child, Emerson Clare, while I was writing this dissertation. She sacrificed time with me, time with our family, and numerous other things in order to help me complete this process. I am eternally grateful for all that you do and have done for our family. I also want to thank my daughter Emerson for sitting in her bouncy chair and smiling and giggling to cheer me on as I finished writing.

I want to thank my parents, Donald Malone and Sharon Ayers, for giving me all that they did as child to set me up for success later in life. They also had me put education first, and that is a lesson that will last a lifetime. I could never thank them enough for being such great parents.

Academically, I have had some of the best teachers, instructors, and professors throughout my entire education. Every teacher I had in my K-12 years had some sort of impact on who I am today. I want to thank Dr. Matthew Schoenbachler for being such a great mentor to me during my undergraduate years. I will never forget a particular exchange in his office discussing an in-class assignment where he assigned me a more difficult book to review because he saw me as a “pre-graduate student” rather than an undergraduate student. Dr. John Pottenger,

who served as my advisor for my MA, pushed me to think critically about the philosophical underpinnings of our government in way that I had never been pushed before. I want to thank all members of my dissertation committee for the feedback and help along this journey. Thank you Dr. Bridgett King, Dr. Mitchell Brown, and Dr. Linda Dennard. Finally, I want to thank my committee chair and advisor, Dr. Cindy Bowling. You encouraged throughout my entire doctoral journey. Whether it be in classes, conference papers, or this dissertation, your help and input were invaluable. Thank you for putting up with my countless e-mails and dropping by your office unannounced often to discuss things. I will put everything you have taught me to practice as I begin my academic career.

For anyone who I failed to mention, rest assured I know how you contributed to my growth as a person and as an academic, and it does not go without thanks.

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List of Abbreviations

ACF	Advocacy Coalition Framework
AEA	Alabama Educators Association
BCA	Business Council of Alabama
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
CCSSO	Chief Council of State School Officers
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NGA	National Governors Association
NPF	Narrative Policy Framework
PCM	Pathway Coalition Model
RTTT	Race to the Top

Chapter One: An Introduction

“Education policy is frequently contentious...with lively debates on...what goes on inside schools themselves” (Berkman and Plutzer 2013, 375). The contentious nature of education policy is well illustrated by examining the Common Core State Standards Initiative. In 2009, the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) launched an initiative to develop a common set of educational standards for the fifty states. In less than four years, forty-five states had agreed to adopt these standards. However, today, some states that had agreed to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and even begun implementation, have reversed course. A few states have dropped the standards altogether, and other states have begun to shift resources to consider the same course of action. Many explanations have been offered for states’ initial difficulties with advancing or propensities for reversing Common Core Standards’ implementation; however, chief among these initial explanations has been partisanship (Jochim and Lavery 2015). Many frameworks exist as to why policymaking decisions are made and why policy shifts occur, but not all take into account partisanship or shifting of the policy narrative as catalysts for policy decisions or changes.

In this dissertation, I explore the nature of policy shifts in the states. The Common Core State Standards Initiative began as a grassroots effort at the state level to create a common set of educational standards that would, in theory, put American students on par with their international counterparts. Once created, the standards were introduced into forty-eight states, and they were eventually adopted by forty-five of those states. However, the standards were not always addressed, understood, or analyzed the same way within the individual states. This led to numerous policy shifts that range from increased funding for research into the standards before

implementation, allowing individual school districts to opt out of using the standards, or even outright repeal of the standards. What has caused these policy shifts, and how are they explained? That is the core question I examine. The first chapter of the dissertation provides a very brief background of public policies on United States' educational standards, particularly the Common Core State Standards, specifies the research question, addresses the study's significance, explores relevance to current policy discussions, and presents a short overview of the study's methodological design.

As mentioned above, the Common Core State Standards were created by a consortium of state level actors to provide a set of common educational standards across all states. The federal government played no role in the initial creation of the standards. In fact, both the NGA and CCSSO made multiple requests for the United States Department of Education to “stop referring to CCSS and leaving many groups...with the impression the federal government was either creating the standards or asking NGA and CCSSO to lead the development” (Linn 2014, 40). While the national government has a vested interest in the education of its citizenry, the majority of the educational burden falls upon sub-national governments. Specifically, the development of educational curricula and methods of measuring students' success has remained at the sub-national level. The national government tends to concern itself with grants and other similar programs (Gilbert and Specht 1974, Manna and Ryan 2011). Thus, state government leaders saw the need for education reform, especially with Congressional failure to pass an extension to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or revise impossible standards of “No Child Left Behind” (Bowling and Pickerill 2013). Governors and other state school officers took it upon themselves to make this happen. This approach has been characterized as “bottom-up federalism” (Gamkhar and Pickerill 2012).

Within a short period of time after its creation, an overwhelming majority of the US states adopted the CCSS and began implementation. As a state led effort, there was no shortage of support for the standards. The United States Department of Education's Race to the Top (RTTT) Grant Program may have been the catalyst to reverse some of the support. According to the November 2009 executive summary circulated by the Department of Education, RTTT "will reward States that have demonstrated success in raising student achievement and have the best plans to accelerate their reforms in the future" (U.S. Department of Education 2009). States were required to submit an application covering a multitude of aspects of their education programs. While on the surface this may seem simple, one particular area within the grant application caused a stir. States were scored on a section called "Standards and Assessments." Within that section, sub-category descriptions included "developing and adopting common standards," "participating in consortium developing high-quality standards," and "developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments" (U.S. Department of Education 2009). This grant program may have been the turning point for some in their support for the CCSS.

Some argued that the common standards portion of the Race to the Top application was an implicit endorsement of CCSS by the national government; some others argued that the endorsement was explicit. This also sparked some individuals in state leadership positions to cry out that the federal government was overstepping its bounds and attempting to subvert power from the states by creating a national curriculum for K-12 education (Neff 2015). This "top-down" argument seemed to become a rallying cry for those opposed to the Common Core. Thus began the fragmentation of common core educational policy. Politicized rhetoric has become a staple in arguing against the CCSS, and much of the opposition has come from conservatives who focus on the ties of the standards to the federal government (Pickerill and Bowling 2014).

What motivates states or state actors to attempt to change their course on a particular public policy? How do they accomplish their policy goals through these policy shifts? Is there an existing model or framework that can fully encapsulate the policymaking process? These questions are central to my dissertation. The story of policy making is not one that is simple and clear cut. Unlike the traditional three act play, it is very difficult to view policymaking with a clear beginning, middle, and ending. Public interest and media coverage may rise and fall, but the public policy process never truly goes away. An issue, such as K-12 education standards, may have huge public attention for a period of time before returning to the obscurity of policy wonks and those in the world of K-12 education. Thus, a policy framework is needed that allows for these spikes in public attention, explains the policymaking process, and allows for a continuous feedback loop to create space for change when the need arises again. The model I created does all three of these.

I pull from three existing frameworks that individually can explain some of the policymaking process to create an integrated theoretical model of public policymaking. This new model is an amalgamation of the advocacy coalition framework, the narrative policy framework, and the policy pathways model. The advocacy coalition framework (ACF) focuses on the importance of coalitions in policymaking (Jenkins-Smith et al 2014). The narrative policy framework (NPF) extends this notion of coalitions to include the importance of a policy narrative (Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth 2011). Shanahan et al (2011) present a unified model combining the advocacy coalition framework and the narrative policy framework. I take this a step further by introducing Conlan et al's (2014) "pathways of power" into the model.

Conlan et al (2014) presented four “pathways of power” to policy making. The “pluralist pathway” involves many actors from varying spheres of influence converging to make decisions. The “expert pathway” calls for experts in a particular substantive area to assist in policymaking. The “symbolic pathway” is taken when a policy has little opposition and supporting it will bring positive recognition to those involved. Finally, the “partisan pathway” argues that decisions are made using the lens of partisanship as the main driving factor in policymaking. These pathways have been used to explain policy making at the national level and amongst broad policy areas. I argue this same framework is applicable at the sub-national level as well, and that when combined with the ACF and NPF, it provides more explanatory power than the other two frameworks, or itself, alone. The model is further developed in chapter two and tested using case studies in chapter four and five to substantiate this claim.

The Common Core State Standards are unique in that they have taken all four “pathways to power” described by Conlan et al (2014) at various points in time in various states. The authors make their arguments using examples of singular policies taking a singular policy pathway. Thus, it is yet to be shown that a singular policy can traverse all four pathways during the policymaking process. I trace the CCSS from the introduction on the symbolic pathway all the way to the final phases of the policy cycle where partisanship appears to become the driving force behind political action. Specifically, I seek to determine the extent to which partisan politics/preferences within the states have impacted policy choices and implementation. A two state case study is used to form a deeper understanding of actual state experiences with the CCSS. Beyond that, I also analyzed bills introduced from 2011-2016 to search for traces of partisan politics in the types of bills that have been introduced in legislatures across the states. I

theorize that partisanship is a major determining factor in state policy making decisions regarding the Common Core State Standards.

This work adds to the literature in a few important ways. First, I add to the pool of knowledge on public policymaking. Despite the numerous models, theories, and frameworks of policymaking currently found in the literature, none can wholly explain the life of the Common Core State Standards. Most fall very short of an explanatory or predictive power. The advocacy coalition framework, the narrative policy framework, and the policy pathways to power are three policymaking models that are somewhat effective, but each is still incapable of fully explaining or predicting outcomes on their own. By integrating the three into a more complete policymaking model, I am better able to explain the movement of the Common Core through the policy process. I also place my work within the relevant literature on policy diffusion. The backlash against the CCSS has created what might be termed negative policy diffusion. Negative policy diffusion means that the anti-Common Core movement has diffused policies that are intended to kill, outright or through delay, the Common Core State Standards. This is a new idea that has very little current literature. Craig Volden (2016) wrote a piece of diffusion of policy failures, but it does not address change due to other variables. I included variables to examine the effects of partisanship and similarities amongst states to further flesh out this idea of negative diffusion.

To test my model of policymaking, a mixed methods approach is used; however, a much larger emphasis is placed on the qualitative portion of the research design. Case studies of Alabama and New Hampshire are utilized to follow the Common Core from its inception to its state of affairs in early 2017. This was done using interviews and publically available secondary data. I looked for evidence that supported my model within each state's case study. To

supplement the qualitative portion of the dissertation, I used a quantitative analysis of bills put before the state legislatures that address the Common Core or education standards in general using a database created by the National Conference of State Legislatures. This research design allowed me to test my theoretical model and truly dig into the experiences of each state with the Common Core State Standards.

This first chapter has served to set-up the remainder of the dissertation. Chapter two will provide more in-depth coverage of the history of education standards in the United States and the Common Core. It also presents existing theories of public policy and my new theoretical model. The third chapter details my research design and methodology. Chapters four and five will be the individual case studies of Alabama and New Hampshire, respectively. Finally, the sixth chapter provides a discussion of my findings, final conclusions, and a roadmap for future research.

Chapter Two: Background on Education Standards and Relevant Policy Literature

Introduction

To understand how the Common Core State Standards came into existence, we must first understand policymaking. This chapter begins with an overview of many theories, frameworks, and models of public policymaking. Each is explained before having its shortcomings pointed out. After identifying portions of two frameworks and one model that could have predictive or explanatory power, I aggregated the three to create my model, which better explains the policymaking process. Specifically, my model better explains policy shifts. To test this model, the CCSS are used. Thus, a history of the creation of the standards that dates back to the 1980s concludes this chapter to set-up the examination of my model using the Common Core.

Theories, Frameworks, and Models of Public Policy

To understand policy shifts, we must first understand the policy cycle. I chose to use Stewart Jr. et al's (2008) description of the policy cycle to discuss the process. The policy cycle goes as follows: agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, policy evaluation, policy change, and policy termination. The cycle is presented in a cyclical manner, which allows the process to continue as necessary. For agenda setting, John Kingdon (1995, 3) writes, "the agenda, as I conceive of it, is the list of subject or problems which governmental officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time." Essentially, agenda setting is bringing things to the table for discussion and/or action. James Anderson (1990) discusses the policy formulation phase as the stage where pertinent and acceptable courses of action for dealing with a particular problem are

identified and possibly enacted into law. If a policy passes the policy formulation phase into the policy implementation phase, it will then be put into action by the institution or actor charged with executing the policy. Within state politics, implementation of public policies can vary from state to state (Hale and Brown 2013, Rosenthal 2009, Manna 2006). According to Stewart et al (2008, 130), “in its simplest form, policy evaluation is concerned with learning about the consequences of public policy.” Thus, if implementation occurs, the outcomes of the policy will be evaluated before further action is or is not taken. Finally, once a policy has been implemented and evaluated, three things could happen. The policy could be left as is bringing a halt to the policy cycle, the policy could be changed to address shortcoming or complaints with the initial policy implementation, or the policy could be terminated, which starts the entire process over again.

The Common Core, however, has brought into question the linear nature of the policy cycle. The policy was brought to the agenda in the same manner within all states. The NGA and CCSSO released the final standards at a single point in time, and at that point, it entered the agendas of the states. From there, it followed the linear policy process presented above in some states, but it was more unpredictable in others. The case studies highlight two of the different ways states experienced the policy process with the CCSS.

There is an abundant amount of research on theories of public policy. Frameworks for understanding public policy include ideas such as institutional rational choice (Ostrom 2007), multiple streams (Kingdon 1995), and punctuated equilibrium (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Each has identifiable strengths and weaknesses, so it is difficult to claim one theory or framework is better than another as a whole. It is, however, possible to claim that one framework

is better for explaining specific events than others. With the Common Core State Standards, no existing framework fully explains the policy process. Rather, it takes an amalgamation of three to create a more advanced framework to wholly explain the process.

First, I present some of the existing and traditional public policy frameworks. I summarize the frameworks and how they explain policy making. Then, it is shown how the Common Core cannot fully fit into the framework. I then proceed to present the three frameworks that can be combined in order to form one coherent framework to explain the policy process. Finally, I layout my new framework and why it does the best job to explain the progression of the Common Core through the policy process.

Institutional Rational Choice

To begin with, we have the institutional rational choice frameworks. As Sabatier (2007) points out, there is not a single institutional rational choice framework; rather, there are a number of them that have similarities. A large portion of the literature focuses on relationships between institutions (Moe 1984, Miller 1992), but institutional rational choice has also been applied to policy problems (Ostrom 1990, Dowding 1995, Scharphf 1997). A key feature of the institutional rational choice framework is that actors come to the best possible decisions using the information they have at hand. This is the idea of bounded rationality that can be traced back to Herbert Simon (1955). While institutional rational choice frameworks are many combined into one conceptual framework for discussion, other frameworks and theories are more singular in nature. These changes are also typically incremental in nature, meaning “the constraints of time, intelligence, and cost prevent policy makers from identifying the full range of policy alternatives and their consequences...public policy formulation (acts) as continuation of past government

activities with only minor modifications. (Stewart Jr. et al 2008, 94). The disjointed nature of the institutional rational choice frameworks prevents a true understanding of the policy process.

Multiple Streams Framework

John Kingdon (1995) created the multiple streams framework. Within this framework, the policy process is presented through three streams that operate independently of one another until they are united by a policy entrepreneur-taking advantage of a policy window. The policy window occurs when the three streams come together, possibly through a focusing event, to create an opening for major policy change. The streams can be understood as a problem stream that contains information and assumptions about a given policy problem, a policy stream that holds the solutions of various actors to the policy problem, and finally, the politics stream where the political actors lie. When the streams unite to form the policy window, an actor from the political stream is able to utilize a solution from the policy stream to address an issue from the problem stream. These policy shifts are typically less incremental and more radical.

The multiple streams approach, as first envisioned by Kingdon, has been altered over time by various authors. One of the more prolific updates was done by Nikolaos Zahariadis (2014). The basic idea of three streams remained intact, but he did make some alterations. We must first, however, discuss the basic assumptions of the theory. The first assumption is individual attention or processing is serial, and systemic attention or processing is parallel. Stated in a simpler way, individuals can only attend to one issue at a time, but systems have the ability to approach multiple issues in unison. The second assumption is fairly straightforward. Policymakers operate under significant time constraints. The final assumption is that the streams

flowing through the system are independent. This is similar to Kingdon's model that has already been discussed. Zahariadis, however, does present the streams differently.

First, the problem stream consists of the various problems citizens and policymakers want addressed and how they are brought to their attention. Zahariadis (2014) presented four examples of ways problems are discovered. These are indicators, focusing events, feedback, and load. Indicators can be routinely monitored statuses or through special studies of a specific policy, problem, or bureaucratic agency. Focusing events are simply events that bring a problem to the forefront of the attention of the public. Feedback is similar to indicators, but it is more brought about from the citizenry, the media, interest groups, or other non-public officials. Finally, he uses the term load to describe the number of issues within the problem stream at any given time. Despite systems being able to tackle multiple issues at once, they still must allocate their limited resources in some way. Thus, the number of problems at any given point can affect the number of resources available to address any given problem.

The politics stream contains many of the standard elements of what most people think of when they hear the term politics. First is party ideology. Party ideology of elected officials can affect how they vote (Jenkins 2006), creates competition when running for office (Aistrup 1993), and even what items make it to the political agenda (Cox and McCubbins 2005). Next, national mood, as explained by Zahariadis (2014, 34), "refers to the notion that a fairly large number of individuals in a given country tend to think along common lines and that the mood swings from time to time." Balance of interests is the final interest. By balance of interests, it is meant that politicians must balance the interests of their constituents, interest groups, legislative colleagues, and any other institution or actor of influence.

The problem and politics streams both feed directly into the policy window. The policy stream, however, goes through a filter, per se, before entering the policy window. Thus, before we can discuss the policy window, we must describe the policy stream and policy entrepreneurs. The policy stream contains four key elements: value acceptability, technical feasibility, resources adequacy, and network integration. Those four elements affect a policy's potential success or failure. That is, if a policy is technically unfeasible or resources are unavailable, a policy may be doomed for failure; however, a policy that is seen as valuable may be primed for success.

The policy stream feeds through policy entrepreneurs before reaching the policy window. Policy entrepreneurs are individual actors or organized groups that want to take advantage of the three streams to pass their preferred policy during a policy window. Their success (or failure) is predicated on three factors: access, resources, and strategies. Access refers to the ability to communicate with and influence policymakers. Resources are simply the available resources, such as money, networks, or services, that a policy entrepreneur can bring to the table to assist a policymaker or assist in policy implementation. A policy entrepreneur must have a strategy to both promote a problem and have a readymade solution to that problem. If a policy entrepreneur is successful, the entrepreneur will unite the streams in a policy window.

When all streams converge, a policy window is created. As Kingdon wrote, a policy is an "opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems" (1995, 165). Zahariadis (2014) puts four items into his policy window, with three of the four informing the first. Problem politics are what create the policy window, and coupling logic, decision style, and institutional context all inform the political problem. Coupling logic, decisions style, and institutional context are all created by the policy entrepreneur. The

policy entrepreneur uses these tactics, along with his/her resources, to try to create a policy output. They must bring attention to a problem, create a solution or a number of solution options, and finally select a final solution. Once this is completed, we have a policy output.

The multiple streams framework is very appropriate for the initial creation of the Common Core. Policy entrepreneurs at the state level realized the need for higher academic standards, so they utilized a policy window to create the standards. The problem arose with policy feedback and change. The multiple streams framework does not contain a strong policy feedback mechanism, nor does it address anything after the initial policy output. Given that fifty states were handed the CCSS, the decisions that followed their introduction greatly varied. Therefore, the multiple streams framework is not complete enough to explain the life cycle of the Common Core.

Punctuated Equilibrium

Another radical rather than incremental change theory is the theory of punctuated equilibrium by Baumgartner and Jones (1993). As Sabatier (2007, 9) summarized, “policymaking in the United States is characterized by long periods of incremental change punctuated by brief periods of major policy change.” As Baumgartner et al (2014, 59) wrote, “Punctuated Equilibrium Theory seeks to explain a simple observation: although generally marked by stability and incrementalism, political processes occasionally produced large-scale departures from the past.” In its simplest form, punctuated equilibrium theory argues that despite the typically incremental nature of policymaking, brief periods of high activity will occur that produce major change. May, Workman, and Jones (2008) operationalized this theory using the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 as an agenda disruptor that created an opportunity for

the Bush administration to consolidate multiple bureaucratic agencies into the newly formed Department of Homeland Security.

Policy Feedback Theory

The policy feedback theory is a newer theory garnering attention. Unlike many frameworks and theories of the policy process, policy comes first in the policy feedback theory. In other words, the policy precedes the actors and institutions (Mettler and Sorelle 2014). Their model begins with a public policy. The policy then feeds into four different streams, and each stream leads to several tributaries according to Mettler and Sorelle. The four streams they identify are meaning of citizenship, form of governance, power of groups, and political agendas and definition of policy problems. They distill meaning of citizenship into “the reciprocal relationship between government and ordinary people under its domain (Mettler and Sorelle 2014, 155).” This comes in different ways. Policies can affect membership within the political community by granting or limiting rights to certain groups of people. For example, the so called Civil War Amendments (13th, 14th, and 15th) to the United States Constitution outlawed slavery and granted African-Americans the right to vote. Status and social identity are to other tributaries of the authors’ meaning of citizenship. To use the Civil War Amendments as an example again, African-Americans were given status as citizens rather than property. This not only changed their status, but it also gave them a new social identity through government intervention. The efficacy of the Civil War Amendments at achieving these meanings of citizenship can be debated, but the idea behind the amendments serve as great examples of the meaning of citizenship.

By form of governance, they mean the “impact on the capacity of government and political learning by public officials (Mettler and Sorelle 2014, 155).” In other words, policies

can change the role of government institutions, such as the bureaucracy. Beyond the institutions of government, it may also impact individual actors within those institutions. A way to look at this could be using two examples from Anthony Downs's *A Theory of Bureaucracy* (1965). In this piece Downs discusses five types of bureaucrats. A climber will attempt gain more power and better positions or jobs. Meanwhile, a conserver is timid in regards to change and prefers to maintain their secure status within an organization. A climber may use a policy change to attempt to move up with an organization, but a conserver should attempt to maintain their current standing while minimizing risk of losing their position. Policies lead directly to "what kinds (of interest groups) emerge and when they do so, whether they expand or deteriorate over time, and how they define their goals" (Mettler and Sorelle 2014, 155). This is what they mean by power of groups. Finally, political agendas and definition of policy problems are defined by public policy "with consequences for how issues are understood and which ones receive attention from policymakers (Mettler and Sorelle 2014, 155)." Thus, a policy can put something on or take something off the political agenda. It could also alter or assuage policy problems. After passing through these streams, a second public policy is created. This could be an entirely new policy from the initial policy, or it could be similar to the first policy with changes made to address issues brought up through the four streams.

The foundation of the policy feedback theory fails to take into account important aspects of the CCSS policy process. Part of what makes the Common Core such an interesting issue is that its creation was an elective state-led initiative. While the four streams of change can assist in understanding what happened in each state after the initial introduction of the standards, one must account for the creation of the policy for full understanding of the entire process. Failure to account for the full story behind the initial policy creation leads us away from the policy

feedback theory as a fully explanatory model of the experiences of the Common Core State Standards.

The frameworks, theories, and models covered thus far do not adequately explain the policy process with regards to the Common Core State Standards. The Common Core has been a unique policy from its inception, so it follows that it may need a new, unique model to explain the policy process. The new model I present shortly is strongly informed by three models and frameworks yet to be discussed. Now, I will turn my attention to the policy pathways model. It will be followed by a discussion of the advocacy coalition framework and the narrative policy framework. These serve as the foundation for the new model I use to explain the Common Core and its progression through the policymaking process, which serves as the final portion of this section.

Policy Pathways Model

Conlan et al (2014) discuss four pathways to federal policymaking. Each pathway puts an emphasis on coalition building to reach the end goal of policy creation. The pluralist pathway focuses on situations where all, or many, institutions and actors are represented in decision making. It can be highlighted by fragmented and dispersed decision making with incremental policy changes. An emphasis is put on coalition building amongst the players to achieve the policy ends. The partisan pathway is used to explain when decisions are made for partisan purposes. This could be a coalition that is created by a party leader, a partisan platform, or someone with resources to move decision makers in a particular direction. Conlan et al caution “such unity rarely lasts long, however, so that partisan policymaking historically has been an intermittent approach to public policy formulation (Conlan et al 2014, 43). The expert pathway

involves experts in the substantive policy area in the policy process. The role and influence of experts in the policymaking process is murky and little agreement is found among researchers on the exact role that they play. Carrol Weiss (1979) laid out some routes that experts are able to influence the policy process. For example, there is the interactive role where experts are part of an issue network that is actively involved in policymaking or the tactical role where research from experts is used as a means of agenda denial. Lastly, the symbolic pathway allows policymakers to have favorable association with a policy, despite abstract or incomplete goals. According to the authors, symbolic politics tend to be “evocative rather than rational” and “visceral and emotive rather than deliberative and reflective” (Conlan et al 2014, 93). I unify what is presented as four separate pathways for policymaking into a singular policy pathway by using the Common Core’s advancement through the policy cycle and take what was created to explain federal policymaking and transfer it to the state level. It should be said that the policy does not follow the four pathways simultaneously in every state. The experiences of each state will likely differ with the policy possibly being on one pathway in State X while on another pathway in State Y. The uniqueness of this project is that shows that one policy can go through all four policy pathways during its life cycle.

Advocacy Coalition Framework

The importance of coalitions in the pathways model allows for integration of the pathways framework with the advocacy coalition framework (ACF). First, I need to outline some of the basic assumptions about the advocacy coalition framework. Jenkins-Smith et al (2014) discuss six assumptions that are key to understanding the ACF. First, the policy subsystem is the primary unit of analysis for understanding policy processes. They defined the policy subsystem

as “a policy topic, territorial scope, and the actors directly or indirectly influencing policy subsystem affairs” (Jenkins-Smith et al 2014, 189). For my research, the policy topic is the Common Core State Standards, the territorial scope is each individual state, and the actors involved are an extensive group that is too large to list. The final point on actors leads to the second assumption, which is the set of relevant actors includes any person regularly attempting to influence subsystem affairs. Assumption three is that individuals are bounded rational actors with limited ability to process stimuli, motivated by belief systems, and prone to experience the “devil shift.” The basic idea behind bounded rationality is that given all available information and a limited number of options, an individual will make the most rational choice possible (Simon 1957). Belief systems can be found within a given coalition, and at a lower level, within members of a coalitions. These motivations can lead actors to favor or oppose a policy based on their particular belief system. Finally, the “devil shift” is simply one coalition being made to look like the worse of the two choices by painting them as “wrong,” “evil,” or even “the devil.”

The next assumption is that subsystems are simplified by aggregating actors into one or more coalitions. For my purposes, the actors are put into a pro-Common Core coalition and an anti-Common Core coalition. The coalition membership is not static. Over time, some may move from one camp to the other for a number of possible reasons. These motives can be explained via the pathways model. Next, policies and programs incorporate implicit theories reflecting the translated beliefs of one or more coalitions. Again, the pathways model comes into play with this assumption. The coalitions want to pass policies that reflect their agenda and beliefs. Finally, scientific and technical information is important for understanding subsystem affairs. This could mean the scope and meaning of the Common Core State Standards, the powers and roles of institutions and actors involved, and/or the policy process as a whole. With the assumptions laid

out, Jenkins-Smith et al (2014, 195) define advocacy coalitions as “actors sharing policy core beliefs who coordinate their actions in a nontrivial manner to influence a policy subsystem.

Simply put, the advocacy coalition framework is a big idea used to explain policy choices. The pathways model can fit within the ACF. In essence, the ACF can exist without the pathways model, but the pathways model cannot exist without the ACF. Figure 1 below displays a flow diagram of the advocacy coalition framework.

[Insert Figure 1 About Here]

As one can see, a number of variables affect the policy subsystem, which in turn affects the policy subsystem and policy outputs. The relatively stable parameters, external subsystem events, long-term coalition opportunity structures, and short-term constraints and resources of subsystem actors all exist outside of the policy subsystem, but they affect the actions taken within the policy subsystem. Many of the variables in this figure can be overlain with the policy pathways to further explain the change in variables within the ACF. This can occur with variables both inside and outside the policy subsystem. For example, under long-term coalition opportunity structures, the degree of consensus needed for a major policy change could overlap with the symbolic policy pathways. Figure 2 shows Figure 1 with the addition of the relevant policy pathways.

[Insert Figure 2 About Here]

The pathways model takes the ACF and increases its explanatory power. At each point where the pathways model can be added to the ACF, a deeper understanding can be gained about what is happening to cause the changes in the policy subsystems.

Narrative Policy Framework

The Advocacy Coalition Framework, even with the addition of the policy pathways, does not wholly tell the story of policy shifts. Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth (2011) recognized that narratives influence coalitions and as such, narratives could increase the explanatory power of the ACF. Jones and McBeth first introduced what they termed the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) in 2010. The NPF holds that policy narratives have specific elements that can be generalized across space and time to various policies: setting, characters, plot, and moral (Jones and McBeth 2010, McBeth, Jones, and Shanhan 2014). In aggregate, these elements construct a narrative that can be used to help explain policy decisions. The setting is the context in which the policy problem is understood. Characters are individual actors or coalitions who argue for or against a policy. The plot establishes the relationship between characters, places the characters within the policy subsystem, and typically has a story arc with a beginning, middle, and end. Finally, the moral of the narrative is the policy solution or policy output. The coalitions (characters) use their resources to construct the narrative they see most likely to help achieve their policy goals (moral). In Figure 3, you can see the NPF combined with the ACF as Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth (2011) envisioned it.

[Insert Figure 3 About Here]

Coalitions use narratives to accomplish policy goals. They also use narratives to garner public support, discredit the opposing coalition, and any other tactic to advance their cause. The NPF can then be united with the policy pathways. Narratives and policy pathways are tied together. By changing the narrative or their narrative strategies, coalitions can shift policies to different policy pathways. For example, in a study of windmills being built in Cape Cod,

portrayal of a coalition as “angels,” or the good guys, led to a policy victory (Shanahan et al 2013). This is akin to the partisan pathway where each side attempts to garner support while discrediting their opponents on the other side. This leads to my overall model that combines the Advocacy Coalition Framework, Narrative Policy Framework, and Policy Pathways model into an aggregate model to examine policy shifts.

Pathway Coalition Model

My theoretical model can be seen in Figure 4. The model is termed the Pathway Coalition Model (PCM) for its focus on coalition building and narrative-driven policy pathways. It is an amalgamation of Jenkins-Smith et al (2014), Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth (2011), and Conlan et al (2014)’s models.

[Insert Figure 4 About Here]

First, the factors external to the policy subsystem are almost identical to those used by Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth (2011). The two changes I made were simplifying the public opinion box and removing the recursive causeway from the policy subsystem to public opinion. Public opinion in and of itself is self-explanatory and does not necessarily need to be broken down any further. As for the recursive causeway, I removed its link in the policy subsystem, which then negated the need for it in the model.

It is within the subsystem that the PCM most deviates from the existing frameworks. Again, it does share similarities and takes from the three groups of authors mentioned above, but it formulates them in different manners with the removal and addition of various factors. Within the policy subsystem, I start with two coalitions. Each coalition has an existing policy narrative.

Within the existing policy narrative, they each have core policy beliefs and coalition resources. The coalitions then leverage their policy narratives to construct a political narrative strategy. As each coalition executes their political narrative strategies, they will be perceived as either winning or losing. The influences on this perception could come from many places. Public opinion could inform their position. Members entering or exiting the coalition or the amount of money flowing into the coalition's resources could influence the perception of winning or losing.

It is here where the Conlan et al (2014) policy pathways enter into the fray. The political narrative strategies could involve following a policy pathway. For example, Conlan et al (2014) use the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act as an example of a policy on the partisan pathway. That is, a policy that whose coalition exists based on their partisan position. If a coalition is perceived as winning, they should move forward and remain on their policy pathway. If the coalition believes they are losing, they can attempt to shift the policy to another pathway. A losing coalition could attempt to bring in subject matter experts in an attempt to use expert actors to influence policymaking. This would be a shift to the expert policy pathway. It is also possible that both coalitions come to an agreement and gain from supporting a policy. This would be an example of the symbolic policy pathway. Regardless of being in a position of winning or losing, the policy pathways play a prominent role in the movement of a policy within the policy subsystem.

Once a winning pathway is established, the subsystem moves to the decision making phase. Within the model, I use the term "decisions by government authorities," which is the same used by Jenkins-Smith et al (2014). These decisions could come from executive orders, legislative politics, or bureaucratic policies. Once the decision is made, a policy output occurs. This is the actual policy in its official form. Finally, the policy impacts are found and the process

can likely begin again. The addition of the policy pathways increases the explanatory powers of the model by adding an additional layer to explain narrative shifts within the policy subsystem.

During the agenda setting phase, the need for better educational standards was recognized by many in leadership positions throughout the American states. To remedy this, the National Governor's Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) began an initiative to create national common education standards. At this point, it was beneficial for policymakers to be associated with this effort. Thus, the symbolic policy pathway was being exercised. The Common Core State Standards Initiative itself was symbolic in the agenda setting phase, but it also bled over into the policy formulation phase. It shifted from being symbolic at this point in some states to being an example of expert policymaking. The initiative brought in experts in the field of education to assist with the policy formulation. The standards were then sent to various actors across the nations, including politicians, bureaucrats, educators, and ordinary citizens. Involving all of these actors followed the pluralist pathway. With the input of these actors, along with those involved with the initiative in an official capacity, the pluralist pathway could explain the creation of the final standards, which would end the policy formulation phase of the policy cycle. It is at this point that the virtual uniformity amongst the states shifts. By using the Pathway Coalition Model, the case studies of Alabama and New Hampshire examined how and why these policy shifts occurred.

Policy Diffusion and Federalism

Policy diffusion can take many forms. Within the system of United States federalism, policies are typically handled in a bottom-up fashion (Gamkhar and Pickerill 2012, Weissert and

Scheller 2008, and Shipan and Volden 2006) or a top-down manner (McCann et al 2015 and Daley and Garand 2005). Each term needs to be defined before proceeding. According to Gamkhar and Pickerill (2012), bottom-up federalism can be “characterized by states having to address pressing fiscal and social issues without federal assistance as well as state and local pushback against federal policy.” Meanwhile, McCann et al (2015) define top-down federalism as a “higher level of government influencing lower levels...a conditional process, in that responses to national policy discussions will vary by state.” Diffusion can also occur horizontally among governments of the same level.

I add to the body of diffusion work by continuing to bridge the gap between bottom-up federalism and top-down federalism. The Common Core State Standards are unique in regards to these two types of federal diffusion. The initial creation of the standards was a bottom-up effort led by state governments. At no point did the federal government involve itself directly during the creation of the standards. The federal government did not fully enter the picture until the Race to the Top Grant Program (RTTT) was created and implemented. The call for common academic standards as a requirement for the program was deemed by some as federal intrusion into the educational standards of the states. It was then argued by some that the policy was flipped into a top-down approach. Thus, we came into a situation where a policy that was truly created in a bottom-up manner was now being treated as top-down.

The United States Department of Education’s Race to the Top Grant Program may have been the catalyst to reverse some of the support. According to the November 2009 executive summary circulated by the Department of Education, RTTT “will reward States that have demonstrated success in raising student achievement and have the best plans to accelerate their

reforms in the future” (U.S. Department of Education 2009). States were required to submit an application covering a multitude of aspects of their education programs. While on the surface this seemed simple, one particular area within the grant application caused a stir. States were graded on a section called “Standards and Assessments.” Within that section, sub-category descriptions included “developing and adopting common standards,” “participating in consortium developing high-quality standards,” and “developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments” (U.S. Department of Education 2009). This grant program may have been the turning point for some in their support for the CCSS.

Some argued that the common standards portion of the Race to the Top application was an implicit endorsement of CCSS by the national government. This also sparked some individuals in state leadership positions to cry out that the federal government was overstepping its bounds and attempting to subvert power from the states by creating a national curriculum for K-12 education (Neff 2015). Federal government involvement has been nothing new in the education realm in recent memory. President George W. Bush used the No Child Left Behind Act and funds associated with it to attempt to increase educational standards and achievements among American students. The RTTT using grant money to potentially push for the adoption of the Common Core was not unprecedented.

The argument then begs the question: was the Race to the Top Grant Program a use of coercive federalism by the national government. Coercive federalism can be understood as the federal government, through regulations, mandates, or preemption of authority, attempting to compel sub-national governments to comply with federal standards in the pursuit of national goals (Posner 2007, Birkland and Waterman 2008). The use of coercive federalism in education

policy is nothing new. The No Child Left Behind Act was considered coercive by some (Krane 2002). Coercion can also be found in other policy areas. For example, states saw the tying of federal funding for homeland security activities tied to the implementation of the National Incident Management System and National Response Plan by the states as an act of coercive federalism (Birkland and Waterman 2008). Although, using grant money to invoke state action may also be seen as a duality of coercive and cooperative federalism in that federal funding would cover some costs associated with the new policy (Posner 2007).

Coercive federalism may not be the best explanation of why the federal government chose to get involved with the Common Core by proxy through RTTT. It could be a matter of the “carrot and stick” approach. “Carrots” are central to cooperative federalism and can many forms, including grant funding (Cho and Wright 2001). Cooperative federalism can be understood as a political system in which both levels of government are active in a policy area and share some level of sovereign authority (Kollman 2015). On the other hand, “sticks” are instruments of coercive federalism that could come in many forms, including regulations or loss of federal funding (Cho and Wright 2001).

The “carrot and stick” approach does not fully explain the Race to the Top Grant Program. The “carrot” is very clear in additional federal funding for state education. By adopting the CCSS, a state increased its chances of receiving grant money. This can be seen in the states that received funding. RTTT dispersed funding in three phases. In phase one, Tennessee and Delaware both won grants (Hamilton 2010). “The 10 winning Phase 2 applications in alphabetical order (were): The District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Rhode Island” (United States Department

of Education 2010a). In the third and final phase, Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania all received funds (United States Department of Education 2010b). What did these states all have in common? They initially adopted the CCSS. The “stick” is murkier. A state could receive funding without adopting the Common Core if they scored enough points on other parts of the application. States were not directly punished for non-adoption of the standards.

With that being said, the RTTT likely falls somewhere in-between coercive federalism, cooperative federalism, and the “carrot and stick approach.” Early in the creation of the standards, the federal government wanted to partner with the states, but the states shunned the partnership. With Race to the Top, states were incentivized to adopt common educational standards, but not specifically the CCSS. Ultimately, the decision to adopt Common Core remained with the states, but the federal government at least inserted itself into the discussion to some degree. The case studies elucidate how the states perceived both the Race to the Top Grant Program and the Common Core State Standards.

I also looked at the states and their experiences with diffusion. Desmarais et al (2015) sought to discover and understand policy diffusion networks. They did so with the idea that states turn to one another for cues when making policy decisions. They found that states with similar characteristics adopt similar policies regardless of neighboring states. Meanwhile, Pacheco (2012) used the social contagion model that relies on public opinion of neighboring states for policy decisions. My research affirms the Desmarais et al (2015) conclusion that the “overwhelming majority of policy diffusion relations exist between states that are not geographically contiguous” (Desmarais et al 2015, 397). This is not to say that geographically

contiguous states will not ultimately adopt the same policies. The argument is more so one that the states that are the initial catalysts for change are not always contiguous. Building on Volden (2016), I theorize that a negative diffusion is occurring with the CCSS. Instead of policies diffusing, the backlash against the policy has diffused. That is, diffusion occurred to remove a policy rather than to adopt or implement it. This negative diffusion seems to be driven by partisan motives.

Partisan Politics and Electoral Success

The federal government implicitly to some, explicitly to others, endorsed the Common Core State Standards by including an item in the Race to the Top Grant Program calling for common education standards. The reasons for pushback on the Common Core State Standards following the introduction of the Race to the Top grant program could be many. A myriad of possibilities exist as to why state actors became entrenched staunchly in support or opposition to the standards. One possibility is that state actors viewed the Race to the Top program as federal coercion to force states to adopt the Common Core. The federal government can use rewards or penalties, or what Cho and Wright (2001) call carrots and sticks, to encourage states to adopt specific policies. Coercion has shown to be effective in policy diffusion (Shipan and Volden 2008, Allen, Pettus, and Haider-Markel 2004). The withholding of funds, as can be argued occurred with the standards requirement of Race to the Top, is one of the most powerful weapons in the federal repertoire (Derthick 2013, 155). States want to create policies on their own accord, and they can be hesitant to accept a federal policy when they feel forced into doing so. Under the guise of federal intrusion into a traditionally state run arena, supporters of states'

rights, many of which were conservative Republicans, heralded this as another attempt by the Obama Administration to socialize America. Governor Bobby Jindal (R-LA), once a supporter of the Common Core, had this to say when proposing alternatives to the CCSS, “This legislation will help us get Common Core out of Louisiana once and for all...The package of legislation will make clear that the federal government or third parties do not have control over Louisiana’s schools” (Bidwell 2015). This is only one of many examples of the federal intrusion argument.

Another argument, very much related to the first, was that the inclusion of the “common standards” clause in the Race to the Top scoring standards forced an unfunded mandate on states. Using Boadway and Shah’s (2011, 154) definition of a positive mandate, the Common Core could be argued to be a mandate “which requires states to initiate programs, or to design their programs in ways that advance national economic or social objectives.” Overhauling a state’s education standards can be an expensive endeavor; requiring implementation of “common standards” to be a viable contender for Race to the Top funds placed the implementation of Common Core as a mandate upon states wishing to receive federal funding. As Gormley (2006, 525) points out, “The more mandates the federal government imposes on the states, the unhappier the states tend to be.” States typically do not like to be told how to govern by the national government. Thus, legislators may oppose the Common Core due to the real or perceived costs of enacting the policy to be competitive for Race to the Top funds.

Finally, those who both support and oppose the Common Core could be seen as making policy decisions based on ideology rather than substance, consistent with the idea of fragmented federalism. Fragmented federalism is “fueled by intense partisanship and ideological polarization of decision-makers” (Pickerill and Bowling 2014, 370). This polarization can be seen in the

federal coercion and top-down federalism arguments above, but it is more complicated than those two alone. With Race to the Top being created during the tenure of the Democratic President Barack Obama, he has been directly tied to both Race to the Top and Common Core. Presidents can become tied to all policies created during their time in office, and examples of this can be seen in both the media and in scholarly work (Wong and Sunderman 2007, Manna and Ryan 2011, Vegari 2007).

In a period of intense partisanship, party loyalty can become more important than meaningful policy actions. Intense partisanship can create policy gridlock (Bowling and Ferguson 2001). Little progress is made when partisanship takes priority over policy. The current state of federalism is showing no signs of changing. As Kincaid (2014, 28) predicted, “The 2014 midterm elections will intensify gridlock as both parties stand fast on their policy preferences for campaign purposes. Republicans may do well in the elections because of President Obama’s unpopularity and problems with the Affordable Care Act.” This extreme polarization may be the strongest argument as to why state actors support or oppose the Common Core State Standards, or why they may have changed their minds over time.

The highly polarized environment of recent years allowed Republicans to use opposition to Common Core as a campaign tactic. In Indiana, former Governor Mitch Daniels (R - IN) maintained support for the CCSS even as it became the “unpopular” thing to do with the Republican Party. This allowed his primary challenger, then candidate Mike Pence (R – IN), to take the opposition position of anti-Common Core, federal intrusion, and states’ rights to defeat Daniels in the Republican primary election and win the general election against John Gregg (D - IN). Despite the transformation of opinions from many former supporters, there are those who

have continued their support in the face of criticism from their party's base and extremities. 2016 Republican Presidential candidates Ohio governor John Kasich and former Florida governor Jeb Bush continued to tout the Common Core as a good thing for educating American children throughout their campaigns of the Republican nomination (Rose and Bowling 2015). Neither received the party's nomination, and Mike Pence was chosen as the running mate of Republican Presidential nominee Donald Trump.

David Mayhew classified congressmen as "single-minded seekers of re-election" in his seminal work on congress, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (2004). Mayhew goes as far as to argue that "what a congressman has to do is to ensure that in primary and general elections the resource balance favors himself rather than someone else" (Mayhew 2004, 43). Again, this was written about the United States Congress, but it can easily translate to a state legislature. Introduction of bills is a resource that an incumbent has that a competitor most likely does not, at least not within the same chamber. To maximize re-election chances, an incumbent may introduce legislation that is popular to his/her constituents or to his/her political party. With the Common Core, it has been shown that affiliation with or condemnation of the policy can great play into election, i.e. Indiana's 2012 gubernatorial Republican primary. A state legislator in a state where opposition to the Common Core is either strong within the entire state or strong within the legislator's party, may be inclined to produce legislation against the Common Core in order to enhance one's chances of re-election. The inverse could also be true if support for the CCSS is high within a state or party. I seek to see if the anecdotal evidence in above mentioned gubernatorial election can be empirically found in state legislatures or in other gubernatorial contests in the case studies. That is, will a candidate introduce legislation or express an extreme or partisan opinion for the sole purpose of gaining re-election?

Origins of the Common Core State Standards

The origins of the Common Core State Standards initiative can be traced back to the early 1980s. In 1983, The National Commission on Excellence in Education, made up of educators, bureaucrats, and politicians appointed by then United States Secretary of Education Terrel Bell, presented *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* to the United States Department of Education. The Commission made five recommendations in *A Nation at Risk*, but for our purposes, only the first recommendation needs to be addressed. The Commission recommended more stringent graduation requirements, including a focused education on “the New Basics.” The “New Basics” were a set of standards that all students should be able to demonstrate in English, mathematics, science, social studies, and computer science. Specifically, the report laid the standards out as follows:

1. The teaching of *English* in high school should equip graduates to: (a) comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and use what they read; (b) write well-organized, effective papers; (c) listen effectively and discuss ideas intelligently; and (d) know our literary heritage and how it enhances imagination and ethical understanding, and how it relates to the customs, ideas, and values of today's life and culture.
2. The teaching of *mathematics* in high school should equip graduates to: (a) understand geometric and algebraic concepts; (b) understand elementary probability and statistics; (c) apply mathematics in everyday situations; and (d) estimate, approximate, measure, and test the accuracy of their calculations. In addition to the traditional sequence of studies available for college-bound students, new, equally demanding mathematics curricula need to be developed for those who do not plan to continue their formal education immediately.
3. The teaching of *science* in high school should provide graduates with an introduction to: (a) the concepts, laws, and processes of the physical and biological sciences; (b) the methods of scientific inquiry and reasoning; (c) the application of scientific knowledge to everyday life; and (d) the social and environmental implications of scientific and technological development. Science courses must be revised and updated for both the college-bound and those not intending to go to college. An example of such work is the American Chemical Society's "Chemistry in the Community" program.
4. The teaching of *social studies* in high school should be designed to: (a) enable students to fix their places and possibilities within the larger social and cultural structure; (b) understand the broad sweep of both ancient and contemporary ideas that have shaped our world; and (c) understand the fundamentals of how our economic system works and how our political system functions; and (d) grasp the difference between free and repressive societies. An

understanding of each of these areas is requisite to the informed and committed exercise of citizenship in our free society.

5. The teaching of *computer science* in high school should equip graduates to: (a) understand the computer as an information, computation, and communication device; (b) use the computer in the study of the other Basics and for personal and work-related purposes; and (c) understand the world of computers, electronics, and related technologies.

The report ends with affirmation that the United States can achieve the goals laid out in the report (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983).

Education and educational standards were examined numerous times in the years following the publication of *A Nation at Risk*. Governors came to the forefront of the standards discussion at the first education summit in 1989 (Linn 2014). Governors as leaders in education policy began during the 1988 Presidential race. George H.W. Bush pledged to meet with governors to discuss public education if he were elected President of the United States. After his victory in November, the President-elect and the governors met to discuss the idea of setting long-range education goals and targets, and both sides agreed to pursue it further with the NGA taking the lead (Vinovskis 1999). In the following year, governors and business leaders called for national education standards, without success, at a summit in Charlottesville, VA with then President George H.W. Bush (Posner 2007). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) attempted a large scale overhaul at a national level. “In 1994, at the prodding of the Clinton Administration, Congress imposed the first accountability mandate on the states...the core idea underlying NCLB had been conceived” (West and Peterson 2003, 7). This accountability mandate was ambiguous and had few mechanisms of enforcement. Created under the administration of George W. Bush, NCLB was much more direct in its purpose, means, and ends. The statement of purpose for No Child Left Behind was “to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (No Child

Left Behind Act of 2001). NCLB required states to put into place a set of educational standards and a means of measuring success to receive federal funding, amongst other things as well. The standards associated with NCLB were ambiguous. States were allowed to set their own academic standards and “proficiency levels.” They would then test students in grades 3-8 and once in high school based on each state’s “proficiency level” (Hess and McShane 2014). By allowing states to determine their own academic standards and proficiency levels, states could lower their academic standards, which would theoretically increase test scores and proficiency levels. States that lowered their standards showed a great increase in high performing students and schools. On the other hand, states that kept or raised their standards showed a smaller increase or even a decrease in student and school performance (Carlson 2014). The lack of a uniform proficiency level or standards created more problems after NCLB than before its passage. This could factor into many governors’ and state education officials’ desire for a program such as the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

In 2008, a big change was to come. In that year, the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) began the undertaking that would eventually lead to the Common Core State Standards Initiative. An initial taskforce, created by the NGA and CCSSO, chaired by former Governor Janet Napolitano (D-AZ) and former Intel CEO Craig Barrett, lead the way. Achieve Incorporated, a nonpartisan organization created by governors and business leaders to promote high education standards, also joined the NGA and CCSSO. The three associations published *Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education*. Per the report, all states should upgrade their educational standards “by adopting a common core of internationally benchmarked standards in math and language arts for grades K-12” (National Governors Association, the Council of Chief

State School Officers, and Achieve, Inc., 24). The goal of the upgraded standards was to create a uniform standard that would ensure children in any U.S. state would have the access to a quality education that would allow them to compete internationally. A baseline would be set for all states in math and language arts that could be increased state to state but could not be decreased. The report also addressed how the states could utilize the Common Core State Standards Initiative and their benefits:

“To upgrade state standards, leaders will be able to leverage the Common State Standards Initiative... The initiative will enable all states to adopt coherent and rigorous standards in K-12 math, reading, and language arts that are fully aligned with college and career expectations and also internationally benchmarked against leading nations.” (National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Achieve, Inc., 24)

With the initiative already outlined in *Benchmarking for Success*, the effort to create the Common Core State Standards was launched in 2009. This was a state-led effort to address a national problem, illustrating the idea of “bottom-up federalism.” Bottom-up federalism occurs when a sub-national government or governments recognize and react to a problem that could have national impacts. The sub-national governments create or adopt policies to address this problem, and diffusion may occur to other subnational governments or to the national government (Gamkhar and Pickerill 2012). In a September 2009 press release, the National Governors Association announced that forty-eight states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia were represented in the Common Core State Standards Initiative (National Governors Association 2009). Alaska and Texas chose not to participate in the Initiative. To make the Initiative official, the representatives of the participating states signed a memorandum of agreement to work together to develop the standards (Rothman 2011). By reviewing current state standards, with experience from key players (educators, policy-makers), and public feedback, the NGA and CCSSO released the draft Common Core State Standards in

the same year to elicit feedback. Ten months later in June of 2010, the finalized standards were released.

The NGA and CCSSO were careful to keep the creation of the Common Core a bi-partisan, non-political process. As Rothman (2014, 12-13) points out, “that desire was particularly important because of the heightened political polarization in Washington: if the standards were seen as the product of a particular political party, they would never achieve widespread support.” The actors were attempting to keep the policy on the symbolic pathway with high support rather than creating a situation where the partisan pathway could take hold. As already mentioned, the groups wanted to maintain their distance from the federal government. The standards were a state-led effort, and its architects wanted to do everything possible to ensure that they were understood in that manner. To drive this point home, the final standards were not announced in Washington D.C. or anywhere in the near vicinity. Instead, the official unveiling of the final standards occurred at Peachtree Ridge High School in Suwanee, Georgia. The speakers at the event were also purposefully chosen to represent the sub-national government. The list of speakers were the Governor of Georgia Sonny Purdue (R), Governor of Delaware Jack Markell (D), the State Superintendent from West Virginia, the State Commissioner from Florida, and leaders of two national teacher unions (Rothman 2011). This group not only reinforced the CCSS as a state-led effort, but it also highlighted the bi-partisan support at the time of creation.

By 2013, forty-five states, the District of Columbia, and three U.S. territories had agreed to adopt and implement the Common Core State Standards. As Dale Linn (2014, 35) wrote, “if these standards are implemented with fidelity, American students will be prepared for whichever

path – college and/or career – they choose, and the United States will return to being an internationally competitive nation.” The standards were to only pertain to math and language arts, to be state led and uniform across all states, and were not intended to be a national curriculum. For example, the Language Arts Reading Section expects that students in 9th and 10th grade should be able to “determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text,” (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010a, 38) and the Mathematics Section expects that an eight grade student should be able to “understand and apply the Pythagorean Theorem” in Geometry (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010b, 53).

Despite the overwhelming majority of American states and territories adopting the standards within three years of their completion, opposition to the standards was ever-present. The National Conference of State Legislatures maintains a database of all bills related to education standards. These bills are extremely varied, but the common thread is they are all related to education standards. Using this database, every education bill from 2011-2016 was examined to look for bills meant to kill, or repeal, the Common Core State Standards. Table 1 presents the number of education bills, kill bills, and percentage of kill bills across all fifty states.

[Insert Table 1 About Here]

From the table, it is apparent that bills related to education standards have increased all but one year. From 2015 to 2016, the number of bills dropped by six. Beginning in 2011, the number of kill bills rose yearly through 2014. The number of kill bills began to drop in 2015 and continued in 2016. The majority of states had at least one kill bill introduced to their state legislature during

this time period. Largely, however, these bills failed to pass. Table 1 simply illustrates that despite the vast number of states that adopted Common Core, just as many had individuals or coalitions that wanted to remove the standards.

The Next Steps

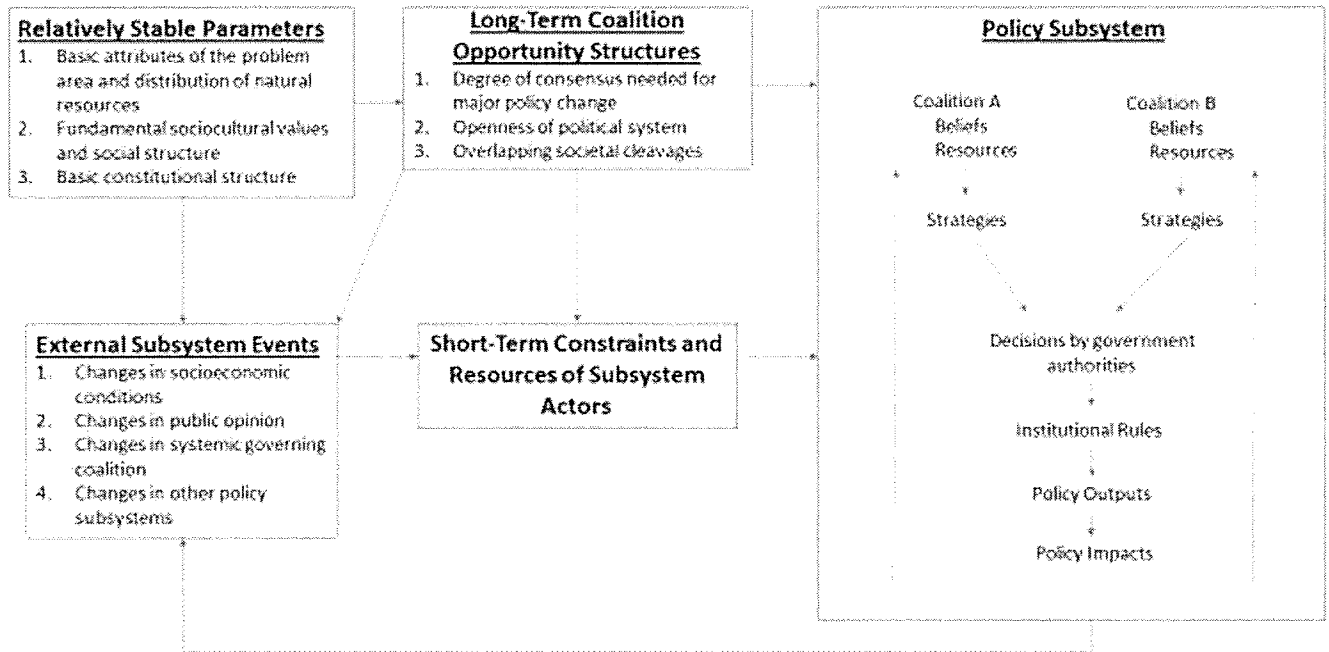
This chapter has served to put my research into context while providing necessary information that informs my research design. Background was provided on education standards in America and the lead up to and development of the Common Core State Standards. Previous substantive work on the Common Core was addressed. Various influences on policymaking (intergovernmental relations, elections, and partisanship) received attention before the true issue at hand was addressed: what causes policy shifts or policy change in state politics and why do those changes or shifts occur? A number of existing frameworks, theories, and models were discussed before I introduced my model of policymaking, the Pathway Coalition Model. In the next chapter, I lay out why I chose to approach my research question as I did and how I executed my research design, a two state comparative case study with a supplemental quantitative analysis of education bills across the states.

Table 1

Education Standards and Kill Bills Nationwide 2011-2016

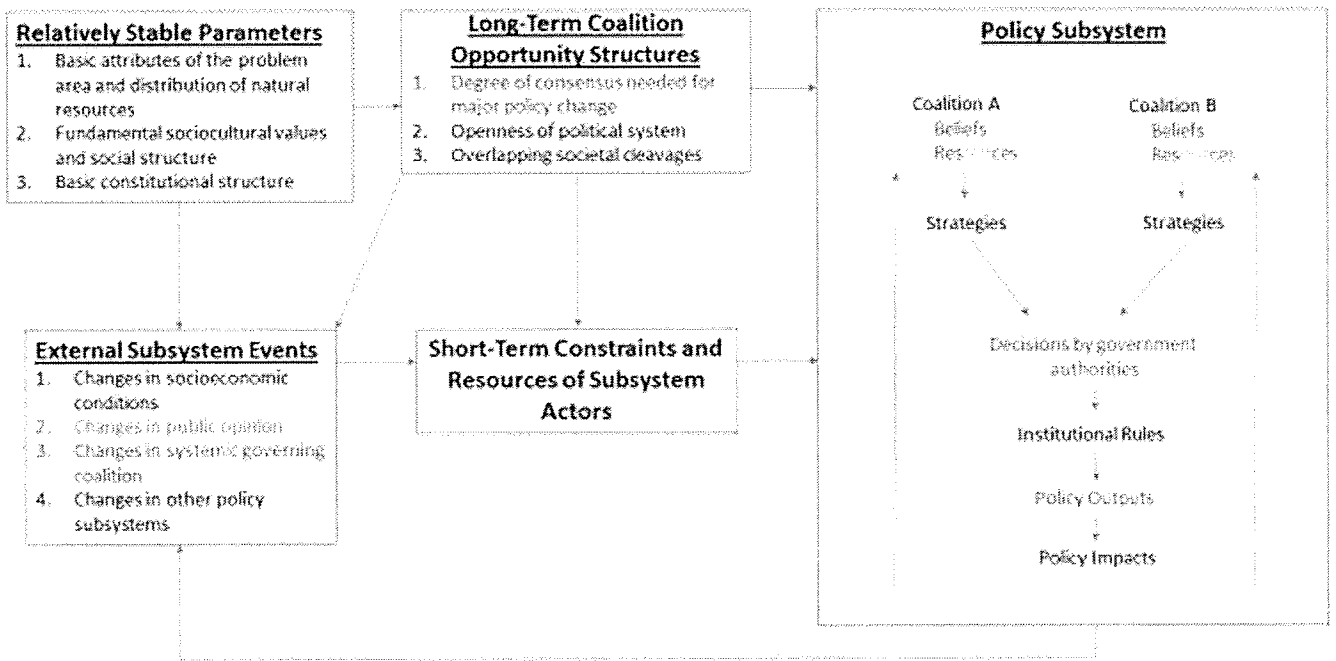
Year	Number of Education Bills	Kill Bills	National Percentage of Kill Bills
2011	42	8	19.05%
2012	117	9	7.69%
2013	293	20	6.83%
2014	427	62	14.52%
2015	773	46	5.95%
2016	767	35	4.56%

Figure 1



Source: Jenkins-Smith et al 2014, 194

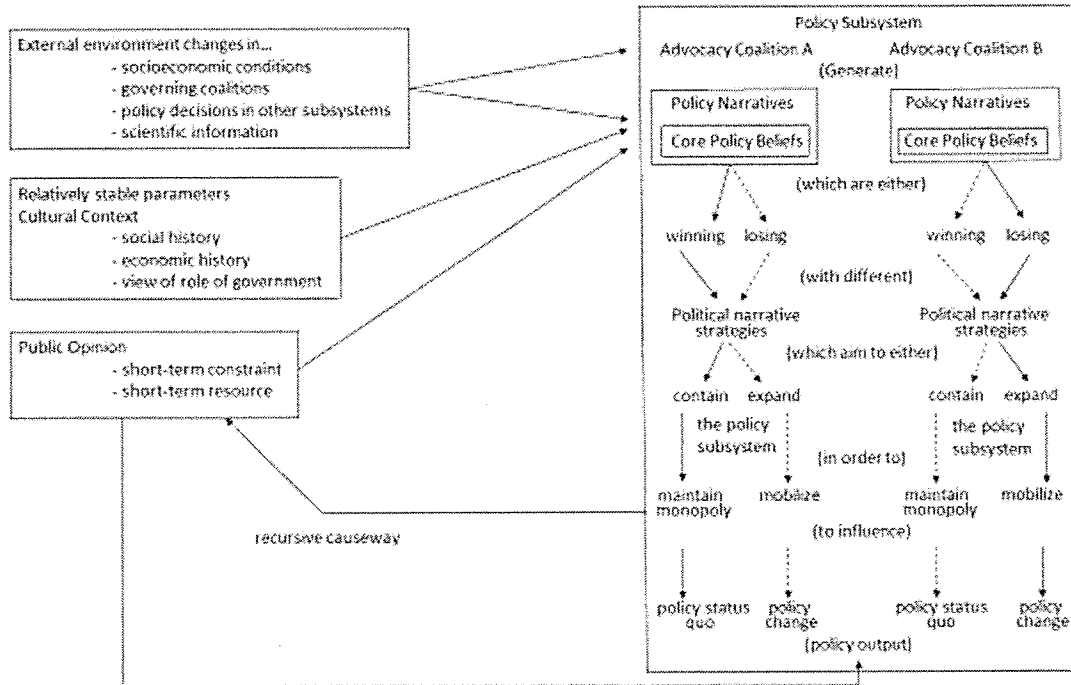
Figure 2



Pathways: [Partisan] [Pluralist] [Expert] [Symbolic]

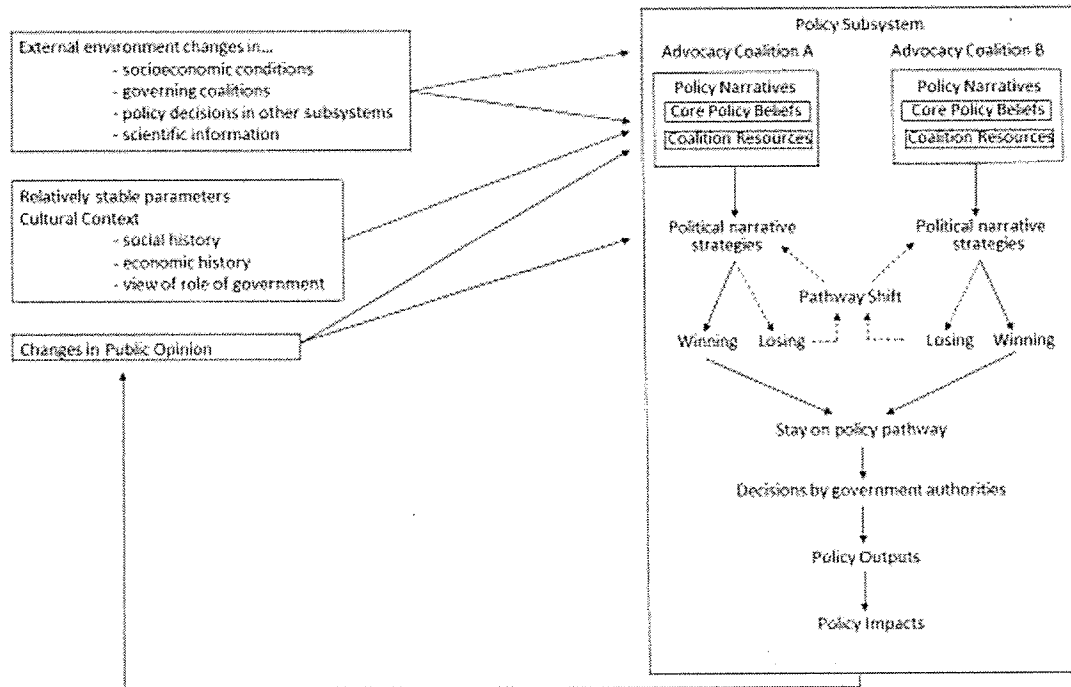
Malone 2017 adapted from Jenkins-Smith et al 2014, 194

Figure 3



Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth 2011, 543

Figure 4



Malone 2017 adapted from Jenkins-Smith et al 2014, 194 and Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth 2011, 543

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to test the theoretical policymaking model introduced in Chapter Two. First, expectations of what could constitute support for the pathways framework are discussed. Then, an in-depth look at the case study methodology used is presented. This includes discussions on how interviews were conducted, along with how secondary data was gathered. The logic behind the types of questions used in the interviews and sought through secondary sources is also mentioned. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of how the two observation states are structured in chapters four and five.

The Pathway Coalition Model focuses on coalitions utilizing their resources to gain policy victory. The use of policy pathways and shifting from one pathway to another is key to the model. If the pathways model does indeed explain policy shifts, certain expectations can be placed on what will be seen on each pathway, along with what could occur to shift the policy from one pathway to another pathway. The first pathway the CCSS took in the two observation states is the symbolic pathway. It is on this pathway where support for action is high, and the need for improved educational standards would likely be universally approved and popular. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the creation of the standards had support from forty-eight of the fifty states. The fact that each of the states sent representatives to the creation meetings supports this pathway. From the symbolic pathway, the policy could move to any of the three other pathways: the pluralist pathway, the partisan pathway, or the expert pathway. If the policy moves to the expert pathway, I expect that shift to occur due to the presence and voice of experts in education. This may be from members of the State Board of Education, local school board

superintendents, or from the “street-level bureaucrat” teachers themselves (Lipsky 2010). The shift to the pluralist pathway would involve bringing in a litany of different actors to attempt to influence the policy. These actors could be interest groups, businesses, legislators, or even average citizens. Unlike the expert pathway, the pluralist pathway allows for those who may not specialize in the policy area to take part in the discussion. Finally, the partisan pathway is taken when a policy is divided along party lines and little discussion occurs at a substantive level. The subject of my initial exploratory interview claimed that from the outset the Common Core was argued as a partisan issue in their state. Clear lines were drawn that Democrats supported the standards and Republicans opposed the standards. While this may not be the case for all states, it was for this state, and it illustrates a policy taking the partisan pathway. I expect to find that each state has a different overall experience with the standards. The CCSS could traverse all four pathways, but they may not do so in every state or at the same time in each state. The expectations of actions on each pathway, along with the possible shifts from each pathway, are presented in Table 2. Thus, the case studies should allow the picture to be painted of the policy crossing pathways and why these shifts are occurring or have already occurred.

[Insert Table 2 About Here]

To examine my core research question of why policy shifts in Common Core legislation have occurred across the states, qualitative methods were employed. Specifically, case study methodology was implemented. Robert Yin (2014) gives a twofold definition of a case study. He addressed the scope of a case study by claiming that “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin 2014,

16). He then discussed the features of a case study by asserting “a case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (Yin 2014, 17).

Yin (2014) then lays out three conditions to be met to determine the methodology to be used in research. First, research meets all three categories for implementing a case study methodology. The research question is posed as a “how” or “why” question. As already mentioned, the focal point of my research examines why policy shifts have occurred amongst the states with Common Core legislation. Second, the study does not require control of behavioral events, and the study does focus on contemporary events. As the story has organically evolved, control of behavior and events would cloud my findings, if not be outright impossible. And while the roots of education standards can be traced back decades, the Common Core State Standards can be directly traced back to 2007 State Chief School Officers discussed developing common standards during CCSSO's Annual Policy Forum in Columbus, Ohio (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2016). For these reasons, a case study methodology is an appropriate tool to examine my research question.

I implement a dual-case design. This is done for a number of reasons. First, evidence from multiple cases is often considered to be more compelling and more robust than a single case design (Herriott and Firestone 1983). Second, my cases were chosen to use the logic of theoretical replication. The two cases produce theoretical replication because the cases are predicted to have contrasting findings, but for anticipated reasons (Yin 2014). The replication

logic serves to increase the external validity of my study. Finally, by having more than one case, I compare and contrasts findings among the two studies when analyzing the data.

The two cases to be studied are Alabama and New Hampshire, and each was specifically chosen for their experiences with the CCSS. Each of the states initially adopted the Common Core State Standards in an official capacity through the State Board of Education. The deviation in the cases occurs after adoption. Alabama has rebranded the standards, but the state has kept the basics of Common Core relatively intact. New Hampshire had a smooth ride with the standards and their implementation until the change of political power from the Democrats to the Republicans in 2017. Adding New Hampshire to the study creates theoretical replication because the outcome is different from the other state, and the reasons for this are anticipated. The nature of these states will tell the story of how one policy traversed the four policy pathways, in different manners and if at all, across two separate states.

As Yin (2014, 110) stated, “one of the most important sources of case study evidence is the interview.” I used the interview process to gain as much data as possible. In each case, I contacted state legislators, bureaucrats in the realm of education, the Office of the Governor, and any other potential source that arose from other interview subjects. The initial contact with each potential interview subject was completed via e-mail. A standardized e-mail introducing myself, the nature and purpose of my research, and an appeal for an interview was used. I also included an additional option of providing a written statement in the form of an e-mail reply if they would like to provide information, but did not want to participate in an interview for whatever reason. The e-mail is available in Appendix A.

I expected one of four outcomes from the e-mails, and each outcome elicited a different means of moving forward. First, the subject may agree to an interview. In this case, I worked with the subject to set-up a time and location for the interview. If the interview was unable to be completed in-person due to time or spatial issues, I used either a phone call or some sort of face-to-face meeting technology, i.e. Skype or FaceTime. Second, the subject may provide a written response to the interview request that will deny the interview, but provide statements that can be used in lieu of an interview. Next, the subject could simply deny my interview request and provide no written statement of use. When this occurred, I removed their name from my list for any future follow-up. Finally, if no response was received in a timely manner, I sent a follow-up e-mail in hopes that the second e-mail would receive a response.

The interview questions began in very broad terms, and follow-up questions were used to dive deeper into subjects brought up by the interviewee. Questions used in the interview process focused on institutions and actors that may play a role in shifting the policy from one pathway to a different pathway. The effects and the actions of interest groups, bureaucrats, political parties, partisan politics, policy advisors, governors, and the legislature on pathway shifts were at the core of the interviews for each case. Interest groups enter the policymaking process when they begin to lobby. To use the definitions of Anthony Nownes (2013, 4-5) interest groups are “any non-party organization that engages in political activity,” and lobby is “attempting to influence government decisions.” Interest groups use lobbying as a means to gain a political outcome they feel is favorable to their organization and/or its members. In another book, *Total Lobbying* (2006), Nownes outlines various strategies employed by lobbyists working on behalf of interest groups. Within the two cases under study, interest groups entering into the policy discussion may vary, and with that variance, shifts to different pathways may occur. Two examples, evangelicals

and teachers' unions, can and have shown the ability to affect policymaking and policymakers. Evangelicals have been shown to have influence over Republican legislators and increased impact in states with strong conservative coalitions (Calfano 2010, Conger 2010). Thus, evangelicals and evangelical interest groups, such as the Southern Baptist Convention, may push policymakers towards the partisan pathway. Teachers unions also attempt to affect public policy (Hartney and Flavin 2011). These unions could shift the policy to either the expert pathway or the partisan pathway. The presence of many interest groups in the discussion may in and of itself indicate that the policy is on the pluralist pathway. The interview questions attempted to discern what interest groups played a role in each state and how strong or effective that role was.

Despite Woodrow Wilson (1887) arguing that politics and administration should remain in two distinct spheres, bureaucrats factor into the policymaking process in the twenty-first century. For the purposes here, I examined the roles and influence of educators and policy advisors or analysts. Policy advisors or analysts who work for governments play a role in the policymaking process. Their role, effectiveness, and level of influence vary, but little research has been done on them (Howlett and Wellstead 2011, Howlett et al 2014). Within education policy, I found policy advisors playing a role in the policymaking process. They could push policies down the expert, pluralist, or partisan pathway. As for educators, they played a role in the creation of the CCSS (Rothman 2011), and they have continued to play a role. Much like policy advisors, they have the ability to send the policy down multiple pathways.

The governorship and the legislature are the two most prominent policymaking institutions at the state level. As Alan Rosenthal (2013, 30) writes, "an examination of the powers of the legislature would be somewhat misleading, because the potential to utilize political

power does not exist in a vacuum.” These two institutions are at the heart of state politics, and their institutional arrangement can greatly affect state policy outcomes (Lewis et al 2015). The powers of each governor varies based on the laws of the state. Two important institutional powers that governors may have to affect the policymaking process are budgetary and veto powers. The amount of power the governor has over the budgetary process can affect their policymaking power. Veto powers also vary by state. At the highest level, the governor has a line-item veto with a special majority needed to override the veto, and on the other end, some governors have no veto powers at all (Ferguson 2013). The power of the governor to present a State of the State address each year allows the governor to participate in the legislative arena as an agenda setter, and it also presents an opportunity for the governor to present his or her legislative goals (Ferguson 2003, 2013, Rosenthal 1990, 2013). Finally, governors may use executive orders as a political tool (Ferguson and Bowling 2008).

The legislature may also play the most important role in state policymaking. As the title of his book states, state legislatures can be considered engines of democracy (Rosenthal 2009). Their roles include writing, debating, and voting on legislation. Of course, with the exception of Nebraska, legislators and governors are elected in partisan elections. Thus, it can be difficult to divorce the elected official from their political party. If the party is their main guiding source of voting or policymaking, policies will follow the partisan pathway (Cox and McCubbins 1993, Cox and Poole 2002). These two institutions also have the ability to steer a policy down any of the other three pathways.

The interviews are corroborated with and augmented by documentation and archival records (Yin 2014). For documentation, I reviewed State of the State addresses given by the

governors for the time period between 2011 and 2016. I also examined stories on the Common Core in major news outlets in each state. Finally, the National Conference of State Legislatures maintains a database on bills related to the Common Core and education standards. Using this database, I identified bills that attempted to produce significant change in policy. This change could be to repeal the CCSS, to delay the implementation of the standards, or to actively implement the standards. With the final bill and bill number in hand, I worked backwards looking through minutes from committee discussions on these bills and any discussions that took place on the legislative floor. These data sources should reflect the situations described to me during the interview process.

While the interviews are the primary data source and the documentation and archival records are secondary, each has specific strengths and weaknesses that affected the final outcome. The strengths of interviews included that they were targeted to focus directly on the study at hand, and they have the potential to be insightful by providing both explanations to occurrences and personal views of the subject. On the other hand, weaknesses could include response bias, inaccuracies due to poor recall, or the subject telling me “what I want to hear.” The social desirability effect is the effect that occurs when a respondent tells the interviewer what they believe the interviewer wants to hear (Ginsberg et al 2015). Meanwhile, the strengths of documentation and archival records are stability, they are not created as part of the case study, specificity, and in terms of archival evidence, they are precise. Weaknesses included difficulty in obtaining the documents, biased selectivity, and reporting bias of the author of the documents (Yin 2014). The use of interviews, documentation, and archival records in aggregate help to bolster the strengths and reduce the weaknesses of the case studies themselves.

The discussion of the cases is structured in the same manner. Each begins with a general introduction to be followed by a discussion of the governorship, state legislature, and state board of education. Then, the cases are structured chronologically with each case beginning in the same year, 2009. Next, the cases are analyzed through the year 2017. The story being told during the eight-year time period is predicated on primary interviews and publically available secondary data. Major events may not occur at the same point in time in each state, so subsections differ in each chapter. By that, I mean that the same years may not be grouped together in Alabama and New Hampshire. Finally, the information obtained from the cases is run through the theoretical policymaking model to test the efficacy of the model.

Table 2

Policy Pathway	Expectations on the Pathway	Possible Causes to Shift Out of Pathway
Symbolic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for policy action would be high • Need for improved educational standards would be recognized • Representatives would be sent to the CCSS creation meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence and voice of experts in education • Multiple actors attempting to influence the policy • High levels of partisanship
Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education policy experts voice opinions on the CCSS • Education policy experts are invited into the discussion by policymakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United support amongst majority of actors and electorate • Multiple actors attempting to influence the policy • High levels of partisanship
Pluralist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policymakers seek out opinions from a variety of sources • Outside lobbying efforts take place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence and voice of experts in education • United support amongst majority of actors and electorate • High levels of partisanship
Partisan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of polarization are driving force for action or inaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United support amongst majority of actors and electorate

Chapter Four: Alabama Case Study

Introduction

This chapter contains the Alabama case study. From the beginning, Alabama was a member of the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The adoption of the standards in the state, however, was contentious. First, an overview of institutions in Alabama that have a role in education policy in the state are discussed. Next, the creation and adoption of the Common Core from 2009-2010 is discussed. From 2011-2014, various actors within Alabama fought vigorously to repeal and replace the Common Core in the state. While these actors had some minor victories, the standards were never truly repealed and replaced. Rather, the standards were rebranded the Alabama College- And Career-Ready Standards with minimal changes from the CCSS. The battle over the standards greatly subsided in most recent three years, which is covered in the penultimate section of this chapter. Finally, the chapter concludes with the Common Core policymaking process being analyzed through the theoretical model presented in Chapter Two.

Institutions in Alabama

The first observation is the State of Alabama. Alabama officially entered into statehood in 1819 as the twenty-second state in the Union (Alabama Department of Archives and History 2016). Alabama was a part of the Southern succession to join the Confederate State of America, leaving in 1861, but it was readmitted to the United States of America in 1868, three years after

the official end of the United States Civil War. Currently, the state still operates under its 1901 Constitution, the longest in the nation (Alabama Department of Archives and History 1943). Under the Constitution, the state has an executive branch headed by an elected governor and a legislative branch consisting of an upper and lower house.

Governors have varying levels of power. These powers are divided in personal powers and institutional powers. Personal powers are those that are not inherent to the Office of the Governor. They are powers that come from an electoral mandate, popularity, or other intangible factors. Institutional powers are those that the governor has regardless of the personal powers. These include budgetary power, vetoes, and appointment powers, to name some of the key institutional powers. In Alabama, the governor can propose a budget, but the legislature must approve it. The governor has line item veto power, but the veto can be overturned with a two-thirds legislative vote. Finally, the governor has limited appointment power. Most major offices are elected in Alabama, so the governor can appoint administrative positions, such as department heads, but offices such as the Attorney General are elected by the public. With the election of other major officials and the legislative power to approve budgets and override vetoes, the Office of the Governor is institutionally weaker than the legislature. The path to being a strong governor in Alabama is to use personal powers to influence the legislature.

The upper house of the Alabama State Legislature is the Alabama Senate. It has thirty-five members elected by district. The lower house is the Alabama House of Representatives. This is a body of 105 members also elected by district. Using the Squire Index (Squire 1993, 2009), Alabama is considered to be one of the least professional in the nation. It is ranked forty-fifth of fifty in terms of legislative professionalism. The base compensation for a legislator is set at the

median household income in the state, but the per diem amounts can increase the overall compensation. For 2017, the base salary of a state legislator is \$44,765 (National Conference of State Legislatures 2017). The legislative session is three and a half months every year, with a permanent staff of approximately 467 people (Hamm and Moncrief 2013). Legislative professionalism does not measure the efficacy of a state legislature; rather, it “refers to the capacity of the legislature to act as an effective and independent institution (Hamm and Moncrief 2013, 163).

The Alabama State Board of Education (State Board) consists of ten members. Of those ten, nine are voting members. Eight are elected from districts across the state, the state superintendent is on the board, and finally, the governor is the tenth and only non-voting member. The State Board is tasked with most policy decisions that affect the state. As one state legislator told me, “we’re (Alabama Legislature) supposed to finance, and they’re (State Board) supposed to set policy.” With the Common Core State Standards, this was initially how decisions were to be made. It was the State Board that voted to adopt the Common Core State Standards in Alabama by a seven to two vote on Thursday, November 18th, 2010. From the creation of the Common Core to the point of the Alabama State Board’s vote, the CCSS met some resistance, but it was nowhere near the resistance that was to come later.

Entering the 2009 calendar year, Alabama had a Republican Governor, Bob Riley, and a Democratically controlled legislature. Mike Hubbard and a number of other Alabama Republicans saw that Alabamians were ready to turn their conservative ideologies into votes for Republicans at the ballot box. They were readying their donors and supporters to “storm the statehouse,” as his book was to later be titled. They were blaming groups such as the Alabama

Education Association (AEA) for having total control over a liberal state legislature (Hubbard 2012). They blamed the AEA for the state of public education in Alabama. Interest groups such as the Eagle Forum of Alabama and the Business Council of Alabama (BCA) were supportive of this Republican movement to gain control of the state legislature. Little did they know at the time, when it came to education policy, the BCA would be aligned with the AEA rather than the Eagle Forum. Education policy in Alabama was not going to be the wholly partisan issue that Hubbard and others had hoped.

2009-2010: The Creation and Adoption of the Common Core State Standards

The official creation of the Common Core State Standards began in 2009, and Alabama played a role in the process. The overall origin story of the CCSS was discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation. Therefore, I only focus instances where Alabama had a role in the origin. When the creation of the standards began with the Common Core State Standards Initiative, Alabama was among the states and territories to send representatives (NGA 2009). Governor Bob Riley was a staunch supporter of the standards. The standards were initially conceived in a closed-door, Governors only session of the yearly meeting of the National Governor's Association (NGA). Riley was in that session. The NGA then enlisted the help of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the national organization for the top education official in each state. During this time, State Super Intendent Dr. Joe Morton represented Alabama in the CCSSO. When asked his opinion on the standards, Dr. Morton responded, "I think that it is a wonderful effort to stabilize, and do so at a high level, the standards that students must meet in K-12 education across the nation without going so far as to establish a national required set of

standards and/or curriculum. So knowing how it originated, I think it was a great effort.” A third key player in this process was the education policy advisor to Governor Riley. Echoing similar thoughts to Dr. Morton, Governor Riley’s policy advisor at the time of the creation of the standards spoke about the importance of the standards meeting business and industry needs nationwide. The standards would be defined at the national level, but defined using state representatives. This was the mantra put out by the NGA and CCSSO during the creation process, and it was also an idea that was mentioned in many interviews. These three actors were essential in Alabama joining the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

To officially join the Initiative, states had to agree to enter the Initiative in writing. It is here that some of the opposition begins to enter the fray. The memorandum of understanding to enter the Initiative was written by the governor’s policy advisor and reviewed and signed by the Governor. While support to join the Initiative was strong within Alabama’s government at the time, the Alabama State Board of Education (State Board) had some members who were skeptical of Alabama entering the Initiative. A member of the State Board said, “In 2009, there was an M.O.U., a memorandum of understanding, that each state had to pass. I’m the only person that voted against it. Dr. Morton called it merely a seat at the table with no strings attached.” Governor Riley, his policy advisor, and State Superintendent Morton truly saw this as only a formality. As another Riley advisor put it in reference to the M.O.U. with the Initiative, it did absolutely nothing. However, the State Board member who voted no worried that Alabama would be ceding control of its educational standards and curriculum. With an 8-1 vote, Alabama proceeded in the process and authorized the memorandum of understanding to join the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The first draft of the standards was released on September 21st,

2009, and the final draft was released on June 2nd, 2010. With the final draft standards in hand, Alabama took steps to allow for public and educator input on the standards.

The State Superintendent at the time, Dr. Joe Morton, “convened task forces with expertise in Pre-K through 12, college/university education, and business and industry to assess Alabama State Standards and Common Core Standards.”¹ Dr. Morton explained that the task force was given direction to compare the Alabama State Standards, the standards Alabama had in place prior to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, with the CCSS side-by-side, word for word. The task forces spent months reviewing and comparing the two sets of standards. The task forces determined that “ninety-six percent of the math standards that were developed already match Alabama’s standards, and ninety-two percent of the English Language Arts standards that were developed already match Alabama standards.”² Per Dr. Morton, the task forces reported “our standards are good, but these standards are just better. They’re clearer. They’re better written. And we would think that our fellow teachers and our students would be well served by the adoption.”

While the task forces came away in favor of adoption, the State Department of Education still felt further vetting was needed. The State D.O.E. set-up four public forums for discussion of the Common Core. These meetings occurred in Mobile, Birmingham, Montgomery, and Decatur between September 28th and October 19th, 2010. According to one source, these public meetings typically followed the same template. First, the representatives from the Department of Education would discuss the actual standards themselves. Next, the most up to date information on actions taken on the Common Core would be discussed. Then, the task forces findings and

¹ Nathan Lindsay, e-mail message to Governor Bob Riley, November 8th, 2010.

² Nathan Lindsay, e-mail message to Governor Bob Riley, September 20th, 2010.

their recommendation of adoption would be presented. Finally, the floor would be opened for public comments and questions. Per the memory of some of those involved, these public forums were typically well attended by citizens in favor of the standards, citizens opposed to the standards, and citizens who truly wanted to better understand what was happening before coming to a conclusion. Beyond these official public forums, a member of the State Department of Education claimed that public discussions of the standards had been occurring for approximately six months prior to the official adoption of the standards.

Despite the minimal changes that would be made to Alabama's math and language arts standards, the Common Core was met with strong opposition. The opposition typically came from legislators and organizations on the more conservative end of the political spectrum. The left and "business Republicans" stood in support of the standards. "Business Republicans" was a term used by a member of the Business Council of Alabama (BCA) to describe those Republicans who were loyal to the BCA's policy preferences and had the overall interest of business as one of their top motivators when voting upon legislation. Organized groups such as the Eagle Forum of Alabama, the Alabama Policy Institute, and the Federation of Republican Women adamantly opposed the standards per one Alabama lobbyist. Opposition was also found in less organized Tea Party groups throughout the state. An advisor to Governor Bob Riley, the state's governor from 2003-2011, combined some of the arguments being made against the Common Core into a memorandum sent to the Governor on November 8th, 2010 entitled "Common Core State Standards – Myth vs. Reality." The advisor laid out the "myth" being disseminated by the opposition groups and followed the "myth" with the "reality" of the situation. In this memorandum, the advisor addressed four myths that summarized the majority of the anti-Common Core argument put forth by the organized opposition groups.

The overarching argument made by the organized opposition groups was that “Alabama will ultimately cede its sovereignty over curriculum content to the federal government.”³ The first myth addressed in the memorandum was that “the State Board of Education will vote on whether to give away their authority to decide what is taught in Alabama classrooms and ultimately how it is tested and how it is taught (Roberts, 2010).” The vote being discussed here is the Alabama State Board of Education’s vote on Common Core adoption that was scheduled for November 18th, 2010. The advisor explains to Governor Riley that the reality is “the State Board will not be giving away their authority to decide what is taught in Alabama classroom,” and “the State Board, local (school) boards, local superintendents, principals, and teachers will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.”⁴ The advisor also ensured the Governor that all curriculum decisions will remain at the local level.

The second “myth” covered in the memorandum is that “Common Core will establish one national standard for curriculum.” This quote is attributed to Gary Palmer, who was the head of the Alabama Policy Institute at the time, in an article printed November 5th, 2010 in the Montgomery Advertiser.⁵ The “reality” response to this claim is that the Common Core is not a curriculum. Rather, “they are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed.”⁶ This was a common misperception among many of the anti-Common Core individuals and groups. They did not differentiate between curriculum

³ Nathan Lindsay, e-mail message to Governor Bob Riley, November 8th, 2010.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ I have been unable to find the article itself, as the Advertiser has a gap from 1999-2012 in its archives.

⁶ Nathan Lindsay, e-mail message to Governor Bob Riley, November 8th, 2010.

and standards. Curriculum are specifics as to what is taught and how. On the other hand, standards are simply benchmarks that students should be able to achieve.

This same curriculum versus standards argument leads into the third “myth.” The Eagle Forum of Alabama is quoted as writing “a one-size-fits-all approach likely leads to decreased emphasis on advanced work and a generally dumbed-down curriculum.” Much like the second myth, I was unable to track down the reference source. In the memorandum, it is attributed to the Eagle Forum of Alabama on June 28th, 2010 in a piece entitled “The Facts on Common Core Standards.” The Eagle Forum of Alabama’s web-site (<http://alabamaeagle.org/>) does contain much written opposition to the Common-Core, but again, I could not locate this specific piece.⁷ The “reality” response lays out that the standards were developed from the best state standards and informed by top performing countries. Specifically, the advisor wrote, “Far from looking for the ‘lowest common denominator,’ these standards are designed to ensure that all students, regardless of where they live, are learning what they need to know to graduate from high school ready for college or a career.”⁸

Finally, the fourth “myth” is accredited to the same Eagle Forum of Alabama piece as “myth” number three. “The State Board of Education will consider two courses of study without considerable input from teachers and parents over an extended period of time” is the quote attributed to the Eagle Forum. The advisor responds with the reality of how the initial standards were created through the NGA and CCSSO. They then detail the regional state meetings mentioned earlier in the chapter, along with the task force meetings also already mentioned.

⁷ I reached out to the Eagle Forum on multiple occasions in an attempt to speak to someone within the organization, but I was unsuccessful in all attempts.

⁸ Nathan Lindsay, e-mail message to Governor Bob Riley, November 8th, 2010.

Taken together, the four “myths” were debunked by four “realities” as presented by an advisor to Governor Riley ten days before the State B.O.E. was to vote on Common Core adoption.

Following the “myth vs. fact” memo, Governor Riley agreed to meet with people he considered conservative allies who were opposed to the Common Core. The meeting had the governor and two of his advisors and aides on one side, and the other side consisted of State Representative John Merrill, State Representative Mary Sue McClarkin, the President of the Eagle Forum of Alabama Eunie Smith, a teacher from the Tuscaloosa area, and possibly a few others. The advisor to Riley I spoke with could only recall those specific attendees; however, he did state that the attendees were typically aligned with the governor, and he considered them “his friends.” The account of the meeting was given to me by one of the two Riley advisors, and as he put it, “I can remember the meeting almost like it was yesterday.” The advisor also said that this particular meeting was “one of the most bizarre meetings I’ve ever sat in on in the Governor’s Office.”

Before the meeting, Governor Riley told his two colleagues that he was going to sit and listen, but he was not going to say a word. He instructed the advisors to let the opponents speak, but they were to ask all of the questions. According to the advisor, this was very unlike the way the governor typically handled business. The initial forty-five minutes of the meeting consisted of the opponents expressing their concerns with “strong rhetoric.” Some of the specific claims the advisor recalled were that the Common Core “is a way for the government to control our children’s minds” or that Bill Gates and The Gates Foundation would “pull all of the strings” in American education. The advisor said to me that “it was just factually incorrect what they were saying.” After the opponents spoke, the two advisors asked a few questions regarding the

“federal takeover” argument and basic process questions around how education is handled in Alabama. The meeting ended with the Governor standing up and addressing the opponents. He told them that he fully disagreed with them and that he would be going to the State Board of Education meeting to vote to approve the standards.

At the same time as the Common Core debate was coming to a head in Alabama, the state was also electing a new governor. Alabama limits governors to two terms, and Bob Riley had been in office since 2003. The 2010 gubernatorial race was between Republican Robert Bentley and Democrat Ron Sparks. On November 2nd, 2010, Robert Bentley became Governor-elect beating Ron Sparks by 15.7% of the popular vote (Alabama Votes 2017). Governor-elect Bentley asked that the State Board postpone the Common Core adoption vote until he and his administration took office. He also said that if the State Board adopted the standards before he took office, he would “go on record as opposing this action” (Leech 2010). Despite Bentley’s desires, the Common Core continued to navigate its way to a State Board vote.

The initial pushback was limited to political elites and a small number of very conservative interest groups. The Alabama State Board of Education met on November 18th, 2010 with a vote on Alabama’s adoption of the Common Core State Standards on the docket. For meetings of the Alabama State Board of Education to commence, a vote must be taken to approve the agenda. Per the minutes of the meeting, when the approval of the agenda was brought to a vote, it was approved in a 7-2 vote. Stephanie Bell and Betty Peters voted against agenda approval. The minutes show that “Mrs. Bell informed Mr. McKinney (Vice President of the State Board) and the Board that her vote was based on her request to address the proposed acceptance of Common Core Standards during the February 2011 meeting in place of today’s

meeting.” After two adoptions of other items, the Common Core was brought up. First, public comments were heard. In total, thirty-nine members of the public, spanning from citizens to educators to interest group members to Alabama legislators, spoke on the topic of the Common Core. Some of the speakers were in favor of adopting the Common Core, and other speakers opposed adoption. Of the speakers, State Senators Scott Beason and Dick Brewbaker may have been the most noteworthy.⁹ The comments of Senators Beason and Brewbaker were brought up by numerous interview subjects to me.

Per multiple individuals I spoke with that attended the State Board meeting that day, Senators Beason and Brewbaker were there to speak against adopting the standards. Beyond speaking against the adoption, Senator Beason also read a statement by Governor-elect Bentley urging the State Board to postpone the adoption vote. One of the arguments in the statement was that Bentley felt “that it is unfair to pass standards such as this when there is an incoming newly elected school board,” and that he would “go on record as opposing this action” if the adoption occurred (Leech 2010). Despite Bentley’s appeal, the vote would eventually happen. To a lobbyist from the Business Council of Alabama, this was a sign that Governor-elect Bentley could be a very weak governor.

Following the thirty-nine speakers, State Superintendent Dr. Joe Morton took the floor. Superintendent Morton echoed many things already mentioned above. He reasserted that this was a state-led effort, and Alabama had chosen to voluntarily enter the creation initiative through a State Board vote on May 14th, 2009. He even brought in Dr. Susan Pimentel, who was one of the main architects of the standards, to speak to the Board on September 23rd, 2010. He reiterated

⁹ The minutes offer a hyperlink to audio of each speaker’s comments, but the link is broken. I was unable to find the audio anywhere on the State Board’s web-site, and I was unable to obtain them all together.

that during her time with the board on that day that he asked her if “anyone from the White House, U.S. Department of Education, or any other person connected with the federal government ever directed or made suggestions to her or any of the writing committee, and she firmly stated no to the question” (State Board Minutes 11-18-10). He went on to talk about the regional meetings, public feedback, and the rigidity of the standards. He ended with a paraphrased statement that for these and numerous other reasons he did not have time to mention that he believed Alabama should adopt the Common Core State Standards. This aligns with a singular sentence that summed up his entire view of the Common Core during his interview with me, “I wanted to make sure Alabama had the best standards possible.”

The time to vote was almost upon the State Board. Board member Elle Bell motioned to move to vote to adopt the standards, and Mary Jane Caylor seconded the motion. In response, the two main opponents of the standards on the State Board, Stephanie Bell and Betty Peters, motioned and seconded, respectively, to table to adoption vote until the State Board meeting in February 2011. In a 7-2 vote, the motion to table the adoption vote failed. Immediately following this vote, State Board member David Byers Jr. offered an amendment to the initial adoption language. The amendment contained three different clauses, but for our purposes, one clause was pivotal to the pro-Common Core argument:

“Whereas, the Alabama State Board of Education will continue to be the sole and exclusive entity vested with the authority, without restriction, to adopt or revoke all academic standards in all subjects for students in the public schools in the state of Alabama, including the Common Core State Standards, without direct or indirect pressure or coercion by the United States government or any of its subdivisions and the Alabama State Board of Education will be kept apprised of any such activity;” (State Board Minutes 11-18-10)

This amendment essentiality ensured that Alabama would have full control over its academic standards without influence from the national government. He defended the amendment by

arguing that it allowed districts to maintain their own curriculum and kept Alabama protected from federal intrusion.

Stephanie Bell again attempted to halt the process. First, she offered her own amendments, and the Vice-President of the Board stopped her by pointing out that rules only allowed for one amendment to be discussed at a time, Mr. Byers amendment at the time. She then tried to argue that the new amendments were lengthy and would require more time to review as the current reading was too vague to protect Alabama from federal intrusion. She again recommended a delay to the adoption vote. Betty Peters then brought up the suggested reading lists that were an appendix to the CCSS. Superintendent Morton chimed in to remind the Board that local school districts had, and would retain, all decisions on textbook adoptions. Board member Randy McKinney motioned to vote to add the amendments to the resolution of Common Core adoption. These amendments would be added to the actual adoption vote that had yet to occur. Again, Stephanie Bell tried to motion to table the vote until February 2011, which was called out of order. The motion to add the amendments passed with another 7-2 vote, with Stephanie Bell and Betty Peters again being the two dissenters.

This led to the final discussions prior to the official vote for Alabama to adopt the Common Core State Standards. Mr. Byers asked if Alabama had to go through an application process or enter into an agreement to adopt the standards. Superintendent Morton stated that no official application or agreement would be required; however, an e-mail would be sent to the CCSSO to tell them of Alabama's adoption. This would allow Alabama to work with other Common Core states on professional development. He also restated that Alabama could opt out of the CCSS with a State Board vote at any time, and by the same token, Alabama could only opt

into the standards with a vote. Ella Bell then commented that “she was excited that someone has put high standards of achievement in place and sees it as an opportunity for the students in her Board district to have a level of education the same as the other 40 states” (State Board Minutes 11-18-10). It should be noted that forty states had adopted at this point and that Mrs. Bell’s district was the poorest district in the state.

Next, Governor Riley finally broke his silence to speak. Per the State Board minutes of the day, the governor began by praising the discussion that had occurred on the day and thanked all those who spoke. He then spoke on the creation process and the long road it had taken to get to the current point. He stated “that the Common Core was set up primarily to make sure the federal government could not dictate to the states what their curriculum could be” (State Board Minutes 11-18-10). He said that Alabama had never been a leader in education and had never been a state that innovated in education. He concluded that through adoption, Alabama would be taking its rightful place, and the Common Core would raise the bar for students in the state. Governor Riley said, “this is an opportunity for Alabama to continue to do what is best for the children in this state, and we did not need to delay” (State Board Minutes 11-18-10).

Stephanie Bell continued to attempt to derail the vote. Following the governor, she read a list of organizations that opposed Common Core adoption. The groups were all very conservative in nature, including the Wetumpka Tea Party, Tea Party Patriots of Alabama, Eagle Forum of Alabama, and the Alabama Federation of Republican Women. She also mentioned a handful of national organization, again conservative in nature, that opposed the standards. She spoke of numerous individuals who asked her to oppose the standards for both Alabama and the nation as a whole. For a third time, she asked to delay the vote until February 2011. Finally, Dr. Caylor

spoke that she had enjoyed her four terms on the State Board. She also alluded to her initial opposition to the standards, but she was overwhelmed by the number of people in her district that asked her to support the standards. Due to this, “she changed her mind and was in full support of the standards” (State Board Minutes 11-18-10).

Dr. Caylor motioned to end discussion and vote. State Board member Ethel Hall seconded the motion. This motion led to the apex of the Common Core creation and adoption process. The vote on Alabama adoption was finally to occur. In a third 7-2 vote of the day, Alabama officially adopted the resolution to adopt the Common Core State Standards for Alabama. Ella Bell, David Byers Jr., Mary Jane Caylor, Ethel Hall, Randy McKinney, Gary Warren, and Governor Bob Riley were the seven votes in favor of adoption. On the other side, Stephanie Bell and Betty Peters were the two votes in opposition to adoption. Alabama officially became the forty-first state to adopt the CCSS. The remainder of the State Board meeting that day was relatively uneventful.

2011-2014: The Battle to Repeal and Remove Common Core

While the State Board of Education may have voted to adopt the Common Core in November of 2010, the battle was nowhere near over. It was to be continued on in the Alabama State Legislature, the State Board of Education, and by interest groups and individuals across the state. In 2011, three things changed the tone and debate over the Common Core in Alabama. First, Governor Bob Riley left office after his second term to be replaced by newly elected Governor Robert Bentley. Governor Bentley was already on record as opposing the standards. Second, the Alabama State Board of Education replaced four of its members. David Byers Jr.,

Mary Jane Caylor, Ethel Hall, and Governor Bob Riley left the board, all four of whom voted to adopt the Common Core. They were replaced by Charles Elliot, Mary Scott Hunter, Yvette Richardson and Governor Robert Bentley. This shift opened up the possibility of a different policy on standards from the State Board with the two dissenters from the initial adoption vote still on the board. Finally, a historic shift happened in the Alabama State Legislature. After 136 years of Democratic control, the Republican Party gained control of both the Alabama House of Representatives and the Alabama Senate (Hubbard and Azbell 2012). Former minority party leader Mike Hubbard, who became Speaker of the House until a scandal forced him from office, wrote an extensive book on how the Republican Party brought about this change. With these changes taking place, the Common Core debate was not going away.

2011 had the first legislative attempt to repeal the Common Core State Standards in Alabama. Battles began between competing sides of the Common Core argument. The debate was deeply ideological and somewhat partisan. Democrats were largely in favor of the Common Core, or rather, they were not actively attempting to repeal or replace the standards. The debate saw much more action within the Republican Party. The GOP was fractured on the issue. Business-minded Republicans and Republican interest groups were pitted against the more conservative members of the GOP and the Tea Party. These battles took place on the legislative floor, in the hallways of the state capitol building, and at the ballot box.

The first move came when Alabama State Senator Dick Brewbaker (R-District 25) introduced and sponsored Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 153 in the 2011 legislative session. According to an advisor to Governor Bentley, Dick Brewbaker was one of the few legislators opposed to the standards on philosophical grounds of education. SJR 153 had two purposes.

First, it would revoke the adoption of the CCSS in Alabama. Second, it would “encourage” the State Board of Education to retain full control over Alabama’s educational standards. The latter goal was mute, as Alabama never gave away control of its educational standards. The former would undo the new standards to be put in place through the Common Core and revert Alabama to the standards it had on November 17th, 2010. SJR 153 was introduced May 31st, 2011; however, it saw no legislative action after that day.

While Senator Brewbaker may have had a philosophical opposition to the standards, other legislators who rallied against the Common Core may not have had such altruistic goals. While groups such as the Federation of Republican Women and the Eagle Forum of Alabama were already organized, new organized interests emerged to oppose the Common Core. One such new group was Truth in American Education. As their web-site states, “Truth in American Education (TAE) is a national, non-partisan group of concerned parents and citizens...(TAE) shines a beacon of light directly on the government’s behind-the-scenes efforts to drastically alter American education” (Truth in American Education 2017a). The banner atop every page of TruthInAmericanEducation.com lays out their message quiet succulently, “Fighting to stop the Common Core State Standards, their Assessments and Student Data Mining.” While this group considers itself a national group, it has deep roots in Alabama. The group claims four founders, who are nowhere listed on their web-site, but Alabama State Board Member Betty Peters identified herself as one of the four founders. To her, “(the Common Core) is the worst thing we could have ever done.”

Truth in American Education makes bold claims opposing the Common Core. Similar to the “Myth vs. Fact” memorandum referenced earlier that circulated around Governor Riley’s

office, TAE has their own “Myth vs. Fact” page. The first one on the page illustrates the group’s distrust of the Common Core:

“Myth: Common Core (CC) was a state-led initiative.

Fact: The CC standards were initiated by private interests in Washington, DC, without any representation from the states. Eventually the creators realized the need to present a façade of state involvement and therefore enlisted the National Governors Association (NGA) (a trade association that doesn’t include all governors) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), another DC-based trade association. Neither of these groups had a grant of authority from any particular state or states to write the standards. The bulk of the creative work was done by Achieve, Inc., a DC-based nonprofit that includes many progressive education reformers who have been advocating national standards and curriculum for decades. Massive funding for all this came from private interests such as the Gates Foundation.” (Truth in American Education 2017b)

As one can see, the group wholly distrust the entire creation of the Common Core. The group goes on to claim the federal government was directly involved in the creation, states were coerced into adopting the standards, and the Common Core is a curriculum, among other claims. It is difficult to accept most of their claims, as an earlier chapter of this dissertation debunked many of them.

Truth in American Education posted to their web-site and linked other stories, but they did not appear to do any active lobbying. Other groups were very active on capitol hill in Montgomery. The Eagle Forum of Alabama, briefly referenced in the Governor Riley meeting detailed earlier, was opposed to the standards. They actively lobbied legislators to oppose and repeal the standards. The Eagle Forum was a known conservative group, but according to those with whom I spoke, they were not regarded as far right or radical. They lobbied on many issues beyond education and the Common Core, and as such, they were seen as more “legitimate” than some other groups.

The Wetumpka TEA Party rallied greatly against the Common Core. They were led by Becky Gerritson. Ms. Gerritson and her husband are credited as the founders of The Wetumpka

TEA Party. Beyond that, she has given herself the moniker “born free American woman.” She “frequently speak on such issues as the IRS conservative targeting scandal, parental rights, fighting Common Core and the new AP US History standards” (Gerritson 2017). She could be found at the Statehouse in Alabama often lobbying legislators to repeal the Common Core. As another lobbyist told me, she would show up on capitol hill “making extreme claims that nobody took seriously.” The same lobbyist claimed that even opponents of the Common Core seemed uncomfortable by some of the things being said by her and The Wetumpka TEA Party. In 2014, Ms. Gerritson ran an unsuccessful primary campaign against incumbent Republican United States House of Representative member Martha Roby.¹⁰

The Tea Party was one of the main forces of opposition to the Common Core in Alabama. The Tea Partiers also wanted to push conservative members of state government further to the right. In regards to the CCSS, a Bentley advisor told me “the Tea Party and Rainy Day Patriots really organized around this message that you can’t be a Republican if you are in favor of the standards.” Multiple state legislators in Alabama confirmed that Tea Party groups lobbied them to oppose the standards. Given the disjointed nature of the Tea Party, it was difficult for them to affect policy on a large scale. Thus, they turned their attention to changing the legislature rather than lobbying existing members.

If a legislator would not oppose the Common Core, the Tea Party would attempt to usurp that legislator’s seat in a primary election. This was seen in the election years of both 2012 and 2014. As a one Republican state legislator said, “it (Common Core) is a dirty word with some people. It’s been a very, very divisive thing in the Republican Party.” Many “business”

¹⁰ I was told directly by one lobbyist that I should speak with Mrs. Gerritson. She did not respond to e-mail requests, nor direct requests through her personal web-site.

Republicans and Republican organized interests supported the standards. Unlike the disorganized opposition, the proponents of the standards organized a single coalition of fight for the Common Core. Alabama GRIT – Graduate Ready, Impact Tomorrow became the united lobby for numerous Common Core supporters. The list of Alabama GRIT members includes many powerful local and state lobbies. These include the Alabama PTA, Birmingham Business Alliance, Boeing, the Business Council of Alabama, Huntsville/Madison County Chamber of Commerce, and the School Superintendents of Alabama, to name only a few. Using the coalition’s resources for candidates it supported, opponents of the Common Core were very unsuccessful at winning legislative seats.

Alabama GRIT told candidates that running using Common Core as a main platform would be unsuccessful in Alabama, and many listened. A member of Alabama GRIT described it as such:

“It goes back to elections with the Tea Party stuff. They kept saying we are going to run people against you, and most of them kept their word. They tried. They put people on the ballot to run against these people, but they were not successful. They didn’t have the ability to raise money. They lacked sorely in what it takes to actually run a campaign. They couldn’t stay on message, because you can run for office, but Common Core cannot be your only issue.”

The lobbyist continued to give the examples of Medicaid, prisons, and budgets as topics many of these Tea Party primary challengers could not speak to very well. According to this same person, Alabama was actually singled out at a United States Chamber of Commerce national meeting as a state where they “are doing it the right way, because the opposition has never been successful.” That was a paraphrased quote given by a lobbyist in attendance to the meeting.

While the strategy of replacing legislators through elections failed, sitting legislators continued to push for legislative repeal of the standards. From 2011-2014, nine bills made it to the floor of either the Alabama House or Senate. A total of twenty educational standards bills

were introduced in either of the main chambers during that same timeframe. Table 3 contains a brief overview of each of the twenty bills that were introduced during the defined timeframe.

[Insert Table 3 About Here]

A staggering 45% of education standards bills in Alabama during the four-year period from 2011-2014 were intended to repeal the Common Core State Standards in Alabama. Table 4 below contains the year, bill number, sponsor, and co-sponsors of each of the nine kill bills.

[Insert Table 4 About Here]

In the Senate, either Senator Dick Brewbaker or Scott Beason, who spoke against the Common Core at the State Board meeting on 11-18-10, were the sponsor to repeal legislation. In the State House, Jim Barton was responsible for sponsoring all repeal legislation. With the exception of the lone 2011 bill, all bills had multiple co-sponsors. Again, the same names continued to be attached to the various bills. While every legislator may not have co-sponsored every bill, the co-sponsors seemed to always come from the same pool of Republicans. Independent Senator Harri Anne Smith co-sponsored two of the bills, and no Democratic legislators co-sponsored any of the legislation. Within the legislature, Common Core was almost solely a Republican issue.

Eight of the nine bills were straightforward repeals of the Common Core within Alabama. The ninth bill, and final chronologically of the nine, had the potential to cause the biggest stir in Alabama education. Rather than repealing and replacing the CCSS at the state level, Senator Scott Beason proposed SB 443 in March of 2014 to allow individual school districts to opt out of the Common Core Standards. While the bill never made it through a vote, it did set-up the potential for an Alabama with varying standards from school district to school district. A former

policy advisor turned lobbyist said the bill would have been disastrous, as it would have created a patchwork of standards around the state. This person also claimed that all of the education lobbies in Montgomery were opposed to this bill. Another state legislator had this to say about the potential of this bill, “In Huntsville...we’re probably the only area of the state where if you took a vote, the Common Core would survive.” He attributed this to the military and industry located in Madison County. Hypothetically, this could have created a situation where students in one of the largest counties in the state had standards that possibly differed from the other sixty-six counties.

Again, not all Republicans were opposed to the Common Core, and many bills never left committee, so the nine repeal bills are only representative of those that passed through committee. As a pro-Common Core Republican legislator said to me, the Common Core was divisive within the Republican Party. It pitted business-minded Republicans against Tea Party Republicans. This same legislator, whose district contains some of a large Alabama city, said, “I get a ton of letters from my businesses and CEOs and so forth every time it comes up that were very much in favor of the Common Core. They think it’s a great thing...” The chairperson of one of the education committees in the legislature told me that they kept many bills from leaving committee. This chair was a Republican in favor of the CCSS and told me that teachers they spoke with were overwhelmingly in favor of the standards. This person also had a very favorable relationship with the Business Council of Alabama, as confirmed by a lobbyist for the BCA. Legislative change was wholly unsuccessful in Alabama during these four years.

The one governmental realm that did produce change with the Common Core was the State Board of Education. The first change occurred on August 31st, 2011 when State

Superintendent Dr. Joe Morton resigned. Dr. Tommy Bice, who was the number two behind Dr. Morton, took over the position in November of the same year. A nomination process was held with three names being proposed, and the only name that was voted upon was that of Dr. Bice. He was elected in a 7-2 vote on November 10, with the standard holdouts of Betty Peters and Stephanie Bell abstaining from the vote. It is worth noting the Mrs. Peters and Bell nominated a candidate who only received support from the two of them during the nomination phase. While this was not itself a policy change, it did shake-up the State Board membership.

The November 10th meeting contained much more than a simple vote to elect a new State Superintendent. It also marked the “end” of the Common Core State Standards in Alabama. This changed occurred in two phases during the meeting. Governor Bentley introduced a “Resolution to Rescind the Adoption of the Common Core Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics.” Governor Bentley motioned to vote to adopt the resolution, and it was seconded by Stephanie Bell. Mr. Randy McKinney responded by introducing an alternative resolution. Mr. McKinney’s resolution was a rebranding of the Common Core State Standards. Under this alternative resolution, the work of the tasks force created by Dr. Morton in 2010 to review the Common Core State Standards and the (at the time) Alabama State Standards would be recognized and the fruits of their efforts would be termed the Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards. Essentially, the resolution read much like the resolution to adopt the Common Core, but the name Common Core would be changed to the new title of Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards. Stephanie Bell and Betty Peters motioned and seconded a vote to table the vote on the new resolution. The vote to table was defeated 6-3, with Mrs. Bell, Peters, and Governor Bentley being the three no votes. The vote to officially adopt the resolution passed 6-3, with the same three voting no to the resolution. The essence of this resolution was that the

standards that were in place remained in place, but they were now known as the Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards rather than the Common Core State Standards.

One other policy change of note happened during the 2011-2014 timeframe through the State Board of Education. As discussed earlier, the State of Alabama entered into a memorandum of understanding to officially join the Common Core State Standards Initiative. At the November 14th, 2013 meeting, the Board voted to rescind this M.O.U.. The vote passed 5-2. Governor Bentley and Mrs. Stephanie Bell were not in attendance at the meeting to cast votes. The two no votes were Mr. Jeff Newman and Mrs. Betty Peters. This was odd in that Mrs. Peters opposed the initial adoption of the M.O.U., and she opposed its rescension. As one lobbyist indicated, the move was made to appease some of the anti-Common Core members as they saw the M.O.U. as tying Alabama to the federal government. He also described the rescension was purely symbolic with no practical effects.

Thus, in the four years that followed the 2010 adoption of the Common Core, a lot happened but very little changed. Various legislators attempted to repeal the standards through the legislative process. The lobbyists and Tea Partiers on the far right were unable to sway enough legislators to vote to repeal the standards. As such, the legislative attempts to repeal the standards failed. These same interest groups and Tea Party groups were largely unsuccessful in their attempts to defeat pro-Common Core Republicans in primary elections. The newly elected Governor, who went on record as opposing the standards as Governor-elect, was unable to use his power or influence to repeal the standards. The only true “successes” came through the State Board of Education with the rebranding of the Common Core and the rescension of the M.O.U. that initially entered Alabama in the Common Core State Standards Initiative. While the name

may have changed from the Common Core, the Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards stood in the face of major opposition and remained intact through two election cycles.

2015-2017: The Battle Subsides

The biggest battles over Common Core in Alabama were fought in the two years leading up to adoption and in the four years following adoption. Much like the Battle of New Orleans occurred after the War of 1812 had been won, battles against Common Core still occurred despite the “war” having already been won by supporters of the CCSS. These battles were almost strictly limited to the legislature. The Office of the Governor, the State Board of Education, and many interest groups had given into the new status quo of education in Alabama. As a pro-Common Core legislator said, bills were still being introduced to repeal the Common Core in 2015 and 2016, but they were not being pushed with force. The same legislator also said the 2016 contained the least amount of discussion on the Common Core in the years since 2009. The 2017 legislative session is underway now, but no movement has currently been made to do anything with the Common Core.

2015 and 2016 saw sixteen total education bills reach the floor, and of those, four bills to repeal the Common Core reached the legislative floor in the Alabama State House, despite the Common Core no longer existing (in statute) in Alabama. Table 5 contains a brief summary of all sixteen bills.

[Insert Table 5 About Here]

Table 6 below contains the year, bill number, sponsor, and co-sponsors of each of the nine kill bills.

[Insert Table 6 About Here]

Much like the bills of the previous two legislative sessions, the sponsors were consistent. In each session, Rusty Glover purposed a kill bill in the State Senate, and Bob Fincher purposed a kill bill in the State House. Both Glover and Fincher were Republican legislators. Unlike many of the bills in prior sessions, neither were able to garner any co-sponsors for their legislation. In total, four of sixteen education bills were kill bills. This puts the percentage at 25% kill bills and 75% non-kill bills. This is a drop from 45% of bills being intended to repeal the Common Core from 2011-2014.

One lobbyist had some very poignant thoughts on the legislative decline. In an interview in early 2017, they had this to say:

“The debate has really kind of died down recently. If you go back to 2010, well leading up to 2010, you’re kind of going up. Then, you kind of plateau out for a couple of years, and then probably around 2014-2015, you kind of start to go down, because the opposition to repealing has never had a victory. They’ve never gotten anything through the legislature, so legislators are getting tired of it, and the opposition is kind of getting tired of losing. I think 2013 was the height of it all.”

Based on the number of legislative bills, 2013 was the “height of it all” as the lobbyist put it. One could argue that the name change from the Common Core State Standards to the Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards was a victory for the opponents of Common Core, and this name change signified victory to some. However, the strongest support comes from the theory of losing put forth by the lobbyist quoted above. With kill bills still being introduced in the legislature, it hurts the argument that the name change was the major catalyst for the subsidence of the battle. Logically, it does make sense that one would only be willing to fight a losing cause

for a certain period of time. It was a minor victory at best. If the argument has lost steam, or been lost altogether, it is no longer fruitful for legislators to attach themselves to the issue. The constant defeats, the little progress made, and the bi-partisan support seemed to keep the Common Core, or a permutation of it, alive and well in the State of Alabama.

Discussion of the Policy Process in Alabama

The policy process surrounding the Common Core State Standards in Alabama was quite interesting. It involved actors from the common citizen all the way to two governors. Organized interests inserted themselves into the argument at various points, both supporting and opposing the standards. Ultimately, once adopted, the Common Core was never repealed within the state, and its rebranding as the Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards was more a matter of semantics than policy change. Using the integrated policy model laid out in Chapter Two, I am able to trace exactly how Alabama got to where it is today in regards to the Common Core.

Referencing back to the policy subsystem within the model, we can see two clear coalitions form. On one side were the supporters of the Common Core. In Alabama, these tended to be Democrats, moderate and business Republicans, business and other similar interest groups, and many educators. The chairperson of one of the Alabama legislative chamber's education policy committees, a Republican, said that "teachers that I've heard from have all been very supportive of the standards," and the legislator said they had traveled across the state speaking with many educators. In the opposing corner, you had more conservative Republicans, the Tea Party and other similar interest groups, and a smaller number of educators. Typically, the concern from this group was federal intrusion into a typically state run arena. As a former policy

advisor to Governor Bentley stated, there was a “real authentic fear on the far right.” One key difference in the two coalitions were the resources available to each. The supporters of Common Core had some of the richest lobbies in Alabama supporting their cause. The disparity in money gave the pro-Common Core group a clear advantage.

When looking at the political narrative strategies, the supporters of the Common Core focused on the positive impacts the standards could have on Alabama. These included having students graduating ready to impact the workforce or succeed in college, and it also included the ease for students transferring in or out of Alabama schools to be at or higher than students at the same level in another state. “The Business Council of Alabama really dug in on this. They (saw) the intrinsic connection between education and rigor and their workforce,” said a former Bentley advisor. A state legislator, who supports the standards, emphasized the importance of new students being brought into Alabama by businesses and military being able to seamlessly transition into the education system and vice versa. The legislator worded it as such, “we’ve got to have some kind of standard that will align us up with the rest of the country and that also provides for the best education for our children.” As a final example another state legislator viewed the standards as a more global issue by stating, “if our students are going to be competitive in a global environment, which is what they are going to be in, then we have to be reaching for the highest standards that we can.” The narrative was that the Common Core would be the best possible way for Alabama students to succeed within the state, nationally, and even globally. This group also did not bring partisanship into the narrative, as it contained both Republicans, Democrats, and interest groups that were traditionally aligned with one or both parties.

The coalition that opposed the Common Core focused their narrative on two things: partisanship and opposition to the federal government. As already discussed, the partisanship aspect was both interparty and intraparty conflict. Those opposed to the Common Core attempted to make it a partisan issue. As a former Bentley policy said, “at the end of the day, there weren’t a lot of conversations about substance... we (Alabama) got way too polarized.” Democrats did tend to support the standards on a larger scale than Republicans, so that led to the interparty partisanship; however, moderate Republicans were also attacked in intraparty conflict for not opposing the standards. As already referenced earlier, one state legislator said, “it (Common Core) is a dirty word with some people. It’s been a very, very divisive thing in the Republican Party.” For those making it a partisan issue, it was easy to blame the other party for all of the perceived problems. A former State Superintendent discussed the issue of partisanship with the Common Core:

“I never really thought of it as a Republican or Democrat, because, I mean I didn’t view it that way. I don’t know how you can politicize algebra or something like that. I don’t know where you put an R or a D behind math...I know it became an R and a D, a conservative and a liberal, and a social media issue, but I never did understand why if anyone actually read the document”

While acknowledging the partisanship, they expressed their concern on it being a partisan issue. This may not be the best way to understand the partisanship argument, though. The intraparty conflict was at the state level, but the Republican versus Democrat argument was more directed at the federal government and idea of federal intrusion.

In 2010, it proved a sound strategy for Republicans nationwide to run against anything that could be tied to the Obama Administration. In Alabama, that strategy lasted the entirety of his presidency. While the federal government was not involved with the creation of the standards, it tied itself to them with the Race to the Top Grant Program. As mentioned in Chapter

Two, a portion of the RTTT application was adopting a common set of education standards. To many, this meant Common Core, or at least, they could argue that it did. As one legislator said, “I think the view of the majority of people in Alabama is the federal government has no place and no role in education. If you look at the 10th Amendment, they don’t have any authority there.” This was the states’ rights argument. Some wanted to argue that the Common Core had become a set of national standards rather than voluntarily adopted state standards.

A former Riley advisor argued that RTTT was the start of the misconception that these were national standards. They attributed the grant application as the catalyst for the opposition to get more organized. This person went further to state, “in the ultra-conservative wing of the party, obviously anything the President did in education under a Democratic President was going to be viewed as federal overreach, and so that’s when it got politicized.” They continued, “this is one of the most politicized issues that has such a disconnect to what it actually was, what it actually meant, and what it would have actually done for children. There just no basis in reality. It was all political rhetoric.” The former advisor went as far as to say that if Common Core had come about during the Bush administration and without Race to the Top, “this would have been the easiest thing in the world,” because it would have been viewed as more voluntary and without as much partisan pushback in the state.

Therefore, we got to the point where the pro-Common Core coalition was creating the narrative that the CCSS would prepare students better for the workforce or college and that businesses wanted students to be educated using the standards as benchmarks. The anti-Common Core coalition was using the federal intrusion and nationalized standards argument to fuel their narrative. The pro-Common Core movement never lost momentum, and as such, it never really

had to shift its narrative. The anti-Common Core coalition always seemed to be losing the war. They attempted to shift their narrative using multiple policy pathways. The coalition tried to use the partisan pathway to argue that supporting the standards was akin to supporting the Obama Administration, which was highly unfavorable in Alabama. They also tried to tell Republicans who favored the standards that they would attempt to vote them out of office if they continued to support the standards. This pathway was unsuccessful. They also attempted to use the pluralist pathway. They brought together interest groups, citizens, and legislators opposed to the Common Core in various attempts to use numbers to force their way. This also failed, because the pro-Common Core coalition had used the pluralist pathway more successfully by having more, and better organized, interest groups backing their side of the argument.

Coalition building using the pluralist pathway was the winning pathway for the pro-Common Core group. They were able to mobilize citizens behind the cause by appealing to them directly using town hall meetings during the adoption phase. Business interests saw the importance of an educated workforce, so they lined up in droves to back the standards. These interests united to form a coalition within the coalition called Alabama GRIT that was discussed above. With the state and local chambers of commerce and numerous other high profile groups counted as members, Alabama GRIT became a force to be reckoned with. As one lobbyist put it, “things got a lot better when we built the coalition, GRIT. Before that, everyone was kind of doing their own thing.” By better using the pluralist pathway, the pro-Common Core group was able to stand their ground and weather all opposition. Despite numerous attempts to shift the narrative or change pathways, the anti-Common Core group was never able to successfully repeal the Common Core in Alabama. As was said by multiple sources, their opposition has been flagging for years now, and we may be at a point where we can move past the battling of the two

sides and analyze the policy impacts the Common Core State Standards has had on education in Alabama.

Table 3

All Education Standards Bills in Alabama 2011-2014

<u>Year</u>	<u>Bill</u>	<u>Legislative Objective</u>
2011	SJR 153	Kill Common Core
2012	H 541	Standards Alignment within School Innovation Zones
2012	H 639	Align Higher Education Admissions Standards and K-12 Standards to Meet Core Requirements
2012	S 514	Align Higher Education Admissions Standards and K-12 Standards to Meet Core Requirements
2012	SJR 49	Kill Common Core
2013	H 254	Kill Common Core
2013	H 565	Kill Common Core
2013	HJR 377	Keep State from Receiving Federal Funds Tied to the Common Core
2013	HJR 378	Keep State from Receiving Federal Funds Tied to the Common Core
2013	HJR 404	Keep State from Receiving Federal Funds Tied to the Common Core
2013	S 190	Kill Common Core
2013	S 403	Kill Common Core
2013	S 404	Kill Common Core
2013	SJR 98	Keep State from Receiving Federal Funds Tied to the Common Core
2013	SJR 109	Keep State from Receiving Federal Funds Tied to the Common Core
2014	H 558	Redefines "Failing School" in Alabama
2014	H 569	Restricts Use and Sharing of Student Data via Cloud Computing Software
2014	S 380	Kill Common Core
2014	S 425	Restricts Use and Sharing of Student Data via Cloud Computing Software
2014	S 443	Kill Common Core

Table 4

Kill Bills in Alabama 2011-2014

Year	Bill Number	Sponsor	Co-Sponsors
2011	SJR 153	Dick Brewbaker – R	N/A
2012	SJR 49	Dick Brewbaker – R	Phil Williams – R, Bill Holtzclaw -R, Gerald Allen – R, Clay Scofield – R, Shadrack McGill – R, Bryan Taylor – R, Cam Ward – R, Jerry Fielding – R
2013	SB 190	Dick Brewbaker – R	Scott Beason - R, Rusty Glover - R, Slade Blackwell - R, Shadrack McGill - R, Tom Whatley - R, Bill Holtzclaw - R, Jerry Fielding - R, Phil Williams - R, J.T. Waggoner - R, Cam Ward - R, Clay Scofield - R, Trip Pittman - R, Gerald Allen - R, Paul Sanford – R
2013	SB 403	Scott Beason - R	Phil Williams - R, Shadrack McGill - R, Rusty Glover - R
2013	SB 404	Scott Beason - R	Shadrack McGill - R, Rusty Glover - R
2013	HB 254	Jim Barton - R	Ed Henry - R, David Sessions - R, Wes Long - R
2013	HB 565	Jim Barton - R	Mary Sue McClurkin - R, Ed Henry - R
2014	SB 380	Scott Beason - R	Jerry Fielding - R, Paul Bussman - R, Bill Hightower - R, Gerald Allen - R, Harri Anne Smith - I, Cam Ward - R, Jimmy Holley - R, Greg J. Reed - R, Trip Pittman - R, Shadrack McGill - R, Slade Blackwell - R, Tom Whatley - R, Rusty Glover - R, Dick Brewbaker – R
2014	SB 443	Scott Beason - R	Jimmy Holley - R, Trip Pittman - R, Bill Hightower - R, Gerald Allen - R, Del Marsh - R, Tom Whatley - R, Greg J. Reed - R, Shadrack McGill - R, Cam Ward - R, Rusty Glover - R, Paul Sanford - R, Harri Anne Smith - I

Table 5

All Education Standards Bills in Alabama 2015-2016

<u>Year</u>	<u>Bill</u>	<u>Legislative Objective</u>
2015	H 23	Requires Teaching of Cursive Writing
2015	H 155	Appropriations for Public Education (No Funds Allowed for Common Core)
2015	H 424	Kill Common Core
2015	H 564	Limits Data Collected on Students
2015	S 101	Kill Common Core
2015	S 179	Appropriations for Public Education (No Funds Allowed for Common Core)
2015	S 246	Establish a Dual Enrollment Program for High School Students Admitted to College in Alabama
2016	H 117	Appropriations for Student Assessments
2016	H 122	Appropriations for Student Assessments
2016	H 218	Requires Teaching of Cursive Writing
2016	H 264	Kill Common Core
2016	H 267	Limits Data Collected on Students
2016	S 60	Kill Common Core
2016	S 89	Requires Passing U.S. Citizenship Test for Graduation
2016	S 316	Creates Program for Teacher Evaluation and Monetary Rewards for Evaluations
2016	S 318	Limits Data Collected on Students

Table 6

Kill Bills in Alabama 2015-2016

Year	Bill Number	Sponsor	Co-Sponsors
2015	SB 101	Rusty Glover - R	N/A
2015	HB 424	Bob Fincher - R	N/A
2016	SB 060	Rusty Glover - R	N/A
2016	HB 264	Bob Fincher - R	N/A

Chapter Five: New Hampshire Case Study

Introduction

This chapter contains the New Hampshire case study. From the beginning, New Hampshire was a member of the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The adoption of the standards in the state was met with very little resistance; however, resistance has built since the adoption. First, an overview of institutions in New Hampshire that have a role in education policy in the state are discussed. Next, the creation and adoption of the Common Core from 2009-2010 is discussed. Beginning in 2011, the opposition to the Common Core began a grassroots effort to repeal the standards. Cornerstone Policy Research was the main entity behind this effort. With divided government, very little changed in the years immediately following the Common Core adoption. In 2016, a Republican governor was elected, which gave New Hampshire unified government that began in 2017. This was a first for the state during the Common Core Years. It is here that the opposition to Common Core began to make serious pushes against the policy. Finally, the chapter concludes with the Common Core policymaking process being analyzed through the theoretical model presented in Chapter Two.

Institutions in New Hampshire

My second observation state is New Hampshire. The history of New Hampshire spans back to the beginning of the United States. It was one of the original thirteen colonies. New Hampshire claims many firsts in its history. As the state's web-site claims, "Just as it was the first to declare its independence and adopt its own constitution, New Hampshire was the ninth

and deciding state in accepting the National Constitution as that of a republic, never to be known under any other form of government” (New Hampshire Almanac 2012a). These firsts lead New Hampshire to be very keen on maintaining control over all aspects of its government, and it is very hesitant to make changes to some of its long standing traditions, such as the pay of state legislators.

As I have already discussed, gubernatorial power varies by state, and according to historian Jeff Bolster, the governorship in New Hampshire is “not one of the weakest governorships, it is the weakest governorship” (Haverty and Plourde 2016). He comes to this conclusion due to a number of factors. First, the governor is elected to serve a two-year term. This only occurs in two states, New Hampshire and Vermont (Ferguson 2013). Since there are no term limits, this keeps the governor in a constant state of campaigning. The second factor making the Office of the Governor so weak in New Hampshire is the presence of an elected Executive Council. In a similar style to a mayor-council system of government at the local level, New Hampshire operates in what could be described as a governor-council system. The Executive Council consists of five elected officials from five districts within New Hampshire. Per the office web-site of the Executive Council, “The Executive Council of the State of New Hampshire has the authority and responsibility, together with the Governor, over the administration of the affairs of the State as defined in the New Hampshire Constitution, the New Hampshire statutes, and the advisory opinions of the New Hampshire Supreme Court and the Attorney General” (State of New Hampshire Executive Council 2017). Thus, the Governor of New Hampshire must have the approval of the Executive Council on many major decisions, such as appointing officials, pardons, and major state contracts. Again, according to Bolster, this set-up is wholly unique to New Hampshire. Bolster also cites the lack of a line-item veto and the

size of the state legislature as two other factors contributing to a weak governorship within the state (Haverty and Plourde 2016).

The New Hampshire General Court, as the state legislature is officially known, is one of the largest legislatures in the country. The New Hampshire House of Representatives has 400 members, putting it thirty-five shy of the number in the entire United States House of Representatives. The Senate is a more manageable twenty-four-member body, but it still creates an aggregate legislative body of 424 elected officials. Using the Squire Index (Squire 1993, 2009), New Hampshire is considered to be the least professional legislature in the country coming in last in Squire's rankings. Legislators receive a salary of one hundred dollars per year with no recorded voucher expenses.

The Senate is the upper house of the state legislature. It consists of twenty-four members, each of whom is elected from a unique district within the state. The districts are based on population, and senators serve two-year terms. The lower house is the House of Representatives. As stated above, this is a 400-person legislative body also elected by district. Given the meager salary and five-month session length, it is difficult for the average citizen to run for office in the state. The large number of legislators helps to foster the ideal of local control that seems to be the cornerstone of New Hampshire politics. "There are very few states that have the local control that New Hampshire does," said one state legislator.

The New Hampshire State Board of Education consists of seven voting members. The state is divided into five districts, and each district has one member on the board. The other two seats are filled at large. The State Board is appointed by the Governor and the Executive Council, and members serve five year terms. A board member may only serve two consecutive terms. The

Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Education also often attend the meetings; however, they do not have a vote. The State Board of Education of New Hampshire is given a clear set of responsibilities by statute in the state. They are tasked with reviewing programs and activities of the Department of Education and making recommendations to the State Commissioner of Education on these matters. They advise the Commissioner on all aspects of elementary and secondary education within the state, and they appoint members to professional standards boards and any other advisory boards as provided by law. They also hear disputes between school boards (New Hampshire Department of Education 2017a). Decisions made by the State Board can be overridden, altered, or repealed by the legislature. Therefore, the legislature can play a very active role in education policy in the state. This has been the case with the Common Core State Standards.

2009-2010: The Creation and Adoption of the Common Core State Standards

New Hampshire was a part of the Common Core State Standards Initiative. It seems as if there was little opposition to this. Very little is available that goes into deep detail on the full ins and outs of the early stages of New Hampshire's involvement with the initiative.¹¹ In 2009, Virginia Barry was appointed by then Governor John Lynch and confirmed by the Executive Council as the New Hampshire Commissioner of Education. Dr. Barry had a background in education, being a tenured professor and vice-president of academic affairs at the collegiate level. Her appointment was set to expire in March of 2017. We will circle back to Dr. Barry's

¹¹ Attempts to reach those involved in these early stages were met with unreturned e-mails or phone calls that were arranged but never executed.

actual length of service later in this chapter. Under Dr. Barry's leadership, New Hampshire took part in the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

The Department of Education issued a memo in 2010 that gave a brief timeline of New Hampshire's actions from September 2009 through the fall of 2010. This timeline gave the best overview of New Hampshire's path to the adoption of Common Core that could be found. Per the timeline, the first draft of the College and Career Ready Standards was released by the NGA and CCSSO. At this point, they were not being referred to as the Common Core State Standards. Two months later in November, a "first very rough draft" was released to the states (State of New Hampshire Department of Education 2010). The Initiative also announced K-12 Work and Feedback Groups to examine the standards. In the final noted act of 2009, New Hampshire submitted comments and documents from then current New Hampshire curriculum frameworks on topics that they felt needed to be better addressed, including text complexity and quantitative literacy, in December.

In January 2010, the second draft of the standards went out to the states with a "very quick turnaround time." The following month another draft of the standards went out to the states, and conference calls were scheduled with the states to get feedback. New Hampshire was given permission to hold its own focus groups despite the standards still being confidential at the time. This led to fourteen two-hour feedback sessions being held across New Hampshire. These were held in Manchester, Concord, Keene, Claremont, Exeter, and Gorham according to the Department of Education's timeline. Over 200 teachers and curriculum leaders attended these sessions to give feedback "on the clarity and appropriateness of the standards in mathematics and English/language arts." The first public draft of the Common Core State Standards was discussed

by the New Hampshire State Board of Education on March 10th, 2010. New Hampshire submitted comments to the Initiative that “included teacher feedback from the sessions and also an in-depth review by the New Hampshire Teachers of Mathematics. The state urged the consortium writing the standards to “take their time and review all the feedback.” The state received the penultimate draft of the English/Language Arts standards on May 14th and the Mathematics standards on May 26th.

On June 1st, the Common Core State Standards were confidentially released to the states. A policy roundtable discussion of the standards was setup by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and facilitated by the Council of State Governments for legislators and education officials at the state level. The following day, the standards were publically released. The CCSS were posted on the New Hampshire Department of Education’s website for comments and review by New Hampshirites. In a memo also put out by the D.O.E., it was noted that “the year-long development process was led by governors and chief state school officers in 48 states, 2 territories, and the District of Columbia. The final standards were informed by nearly 10,000 public comments and by standards in other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy” (New Hampshire Department of Education 2010). In the same memo, the Commissioner of Education Barry noted, “teachers and specialist have informed us that the Common Core State Standards appear to align closely with our current New England Common Assessment standards. The New Hampshire State Board of Education is looking forward to hearing from our citizens regarding this important new initiative for our State.” The memo also mentioned that two more public hearings were to be held, one on the English/Language Arts Standards and on one the Mathematics Standards, to gain public feedback, in addition to the ability to do so online.

June continued to be a busy month in New Hampshire. The State Board discussed and held a public hearing on the Language Arts standards on the 9th. On the 15th, a webinar for schools to view was posted to the D.O.E.'s website. Written feedback was also being solicited and accepted on the standards through June 29th. While no specific date in June was listed, under the broad category of June, it was written that a gap analysis and standards matching occurred between the Common Core State Standards and the existing New Hampshire State Standards at the Department of Education. The feedback was given to the State Board for review on July 1st.

Seven days later, the State Board met with Common Core on the agenda. The first item on the agenda for open board discussion was the Common Core. Board Member Daphne Kenyon informed the board that a public hearing on the Mathematics standards would occur at 10:00 am. The meeting began at 9:30 am. The board minutes only say "the Common Core Standards for Mathematics were discussed" (State Board Minutes 7-8-2010). The remaining portion of the section of the minutes contains an argument about the need for higher math standards to keep American students on pace with the foreign counterparts, an overview of the goals of the standards, and other general information on the standards. No indication is given of who said this, if it was written and presented, or anything of the nature; thus, I cannot with full confidence attribute that portion of meeting to any one or group of people. Ms. Kenyon is then noted as saying "that the gap analysis between New Hampshire and the New England Common Assessments Program to Common Core State Standards is very helpful." She also noted that some of the comments from the website posing of the standards were also helpful. Department of

Education member Deb Wiswell¹² also noted that she found the online comments and feedback as helpful and positive.

The public hearing portion of the meeting commenced at 10:00 am being opened by the State Board Chairman John Lyons Jr.. The public portion of the hearing was on the aggregate Common Core State Standards, not simply the mathematics portion that was the focus of the board members' discussion. Six members of the public spoke, including teachers and interest group members. Ms. Wiswell, the Department of Education member mentioned in the previous paragraph, is noted as saying, "the English Language Standards will help New Hampshire move ahead, but there is work to do on the Mathematics Standards." Board Member Daphne Kenyon responded by stating that the standards are on the first step in the process of improving education. Very little else of note was covered in the minutes. At 11:00 am, Chairman Lyons ended the public hearing.

A motion was then made by Ms. Kenyon and seconded by Board Member Tom Raffio "that the State Board of Education adopt in principle the final draft of the Common Core State Standards, and that the Department of Education commit to a thoughtful, orderly transition process for implementation and assessment to ensure that all New Hampshire students experience a successful and productive future." Simply put, this would officially adopt the Common Core in New Hampshire. The motion passed with a 4-1 vote. Chairman Lyons was the lone negative vote, and he said he had significant concerns over the process. With the vote over, the rest of the meeting continued covering various other topics, but the main event had already occurred. New Hampshire had officially adopted the Common Core State Standards.

¹² No formal title or job description was given for Ms. Wiswell.

There is debate about the openness of the Common Core adoption process by some in the state. One state legislator told me that Common Core snuck in the backdoor without much discussion. Bits and pieces of Common Core were discussed here or there, but the entire set of standards was never truly discussed as a whole. Another legislator told me that “the biggest criticism I’ve heard about implementation in New Hampshire is that they (citizens) would have liked more public forums.” In a much more deliberate and colorful diatribe, an anti-Common Core lobbyist said, “Nobody in the state knew that this was going on. Nobody knew about Common Core. You could ask any of the legislators in 2010, nobody had ever heard of it. It just was, whoosh, brought in and it was adopted like that, and that’s how we got it. That’s basically how we got it in New Hampshire.”¹³

A state legislator thought that the Common Core was being sold as a pilot program to see how implementation would work. The legislator, however, does not believe that this, or any program, is ever properly piloted in New Hampshire. Their thoughts were:

“A pilot is our first full implementation, so it’s not a true pilot. We’ll try something out. We’ll see how it works. We’ll get feedback. We’ll get data. We’ll evaluate it, and then, we’ll make a decision based upon that. A pilot for the way the Department of Education works is it’s our first full implementation, so we can show people how wonderful it is without any real data coming back from it. That’s how Common Core was put in.”

While I cannot find anything to substantiate this claim, it is an argument that was made against the Common Core. Thus, without the interview support to counter these claims, the only documentation to refute any of these claims are those found in State Board minutes and documents released by the Department of Education that highlighted the fourteen local feedback sessions.

¹³ I was unable to obtain a response from any legislators that thought differently due to a lack of response to interview requests.

Whether the pre-adoption knowledge was sufficient or not, the state's Department of Education released significant information on the standards once they were adopted. Two of the releases were of particular note. The first was a list of so-called talking points used to promote the CCSS, and the second was a very short memo entitled "Why the Common Core State Standards Are Good for New Hampshire." Both were made available on the New Hampshire Department of Education's web-site. The talking points note had three categories for discussion: "About the Common Core State Standards," "Local Control and Innovation," and "Other Benefits of the CCSS" (New Hampshire Department of Education 2016). The first section contained standard information on the Common Core that had already been reported and circulated throughout most of the nation. Information included the number of states that had adopted the CCSS, the bottom-up creation at the state level, how students would be prepared to compete in a global economy, and reassurance that each state chose to adopt the standards on their own accord. Virginia not adopting the standards was referenced in relation to the final point.

The "Local Control and Innovation" portion was essential to New Hampshire. As multiple people mentioned in interviews, local control is of the utmost importance in all matters in the state. The first of three bullet points reiterated that the standards were only what students should know, not how they will be taught. It was written that "decisions about curriculum, tools, materials, and textbooks are, as they should be, left to local decision-makers who know their students best. Standards are not curriculum. School districts will – as they always have – adopt their own curriculum just like they did under the old set of state standards." The second bullet point opened with its most key point, "there is no national curriculum and there never will be, not only because state and local policymakers would not allow it as a matter of policy, but

because the CCSS call for the development of a more robust market for instructional tools.” The final bullet point in this section further elaborated on the idea that a marketplace should emerge for educational materials. “The clarity, consistency – and commonality – of the CCSS are giving states, districts, and schools the market power to demand more and better choices. The CCSS is a market-place game changer” (New Hampshire Department of Education 2016). Again, these ideals of local control and the open market are fundamental to New Hampshire.

The final section is an amalgamation of things under the title “Other Benefits of the CCSS.” Two of the seven bullet points were brought up during my various interviews. The first had to do with the support of the business community and the need for a strong workforce. As a legislator said, businesses were telling the legislature that they do not have enough qualified members of the workforce to fill job vacancies. The legislator gave specific example of a business that told them “they have jobs that pay \$25-30 dollars an hour, and they can’t hire people, because they don’t have the technical training that they need.” This same legislator also referred to the Common Core as not just an education issue, but an economic issue as well. “It’s an economic development issue in New Hampshire in one of the oldest states in the country, and our young people are leaving and going to more exciting places.” The thought process being that more businesses would attract more entertainment and amenities that would keep and attract young people to New Hampshire. The other key point had to do with student mobility. If students move from one Common Core state to another, they should be on par with the students in the new state. As a policy advisor to one of the state’s governors claimed, “I think it’s important to have some sort of uniform standard...I know it’s very important, especially to business leaders, as students go from state to state to know that their education will be similar as they move around the country. When Common Core was first developed, it really was driven by

governors and business leaders.” These talking points were all publically available online, but they were also used in town halls and other meetings by those who supported the standards.

The “Why the Common Core State Standards Are Good for New Hampshire” memo was also posted online through the Department of Education’s web-site. While not in the exact bullet point format of the previous document, it was essentially thirteen different points on, as the name state, why the CCSS were good for New Hampshire. A few of the points are noteworthy. First, “the Common Core State Standards are not significantly higher or lower than New Hampshire standards, making the transition and alignment process easier than in many other states” (New Hampshire Department of Education 2017b). I heard, even from opponents of the standards, that the CCSS were significantly better than the existing New Hampshire standards. As one state legislator said, “Common Core Standards is (sic) better than New Hampshire Standards before Common Core came into play.” This brings into question the veracity of this point in the memo. However, a later point claims that “the Common Core State Standards are generally clearer and easier to understand than the current NH standards, including the format.” It appears that the Department of Education was both saying the Common Core was no different than the New Hampshire Standards while also claiming the Common Core was better. These points are made separate from one another, so that could have been strategically done by the author of the memo. The other point to highlight is “the Common Core State Standards allow K-12 educators and higher education to work together to hold ALL students accountable for the same standards.” This point and the capital ALL serve to posit that the best performing and worst performing school districts will be held to the same standards. It was said to me by some legislators that the Common Core was a great thing for lowering performing districts in that it would raise their standards, but they feared it would lower the standards in higher performing districts whose

standards may have already been more stringent than the CCSS. With the standards now in place, it was time for the battle over the standards to truly begin.

2011-2015: The Opposition Begins to Rumble

Compared to the two years prior and the subsequent two years, the timeframe of 2011-2015 was rather mild in New Hampshire. Maggie Hassan replaced John Lynch as Governor of New Hampshire, but both were members of the Democratic Party. The legislature, however, moved from Democratic control to Republican at the beginning of the 2011 legislative session. The anti-Common Core groups truly ramped up their efforts, and those that supported the standards seemed to believe the argument was essentially over. This relaxation by one side and vigor in the other set the stage for the beginnings of the systematic dismantlement of Common Core.

Cornerstone Policy Research Institute began a grassroots effort to oppose the standards. They used Ann Marie Banfield as their featured spokesperson. She traveled to town hall meetings across the state attempting to garner support for the anti-Common Core Movement. Anytime an education bill was put before a public hearing at the state legislature, Ms. Banfield would be there, and at many, she would provide verbal or written testimony. No tangible results are being directly attributed to the work of Cornerstone, but they certainly kept the anti-Common Core discussion alive in New Hampshire.

Legislative action was more scarce in New Hampshire than many other states in the immediate years following Common Core adoption. From 2011-2015, thirty-three bills were put

forth to the state legislature dealing with education standards. A summary of all thirty-three bills can be found in Table 7.

[Insert Table 7 About Here]

In 2011 and 2013, the state legislature attempted four times to require General Court approval of adoptions of any and all statewide education standards. This was an attempt to usurp power from the State Board and give it to the state legislature. While the goal of the bills was related to stopping the Common Core, the bills were not explicitly attempting to repeal the Common Core in New Hampshire.

Of those thirty-three, only three bills were intended to explicitly kill the Common Core. Table 8 below contains the year, bill number, sponsor, and co-sponsors of each of the three kill bills.

[Insert Table 8 About Here]

The of the sponsors and co-sponsors of the bills were Republicans. One possible reason for this was posited by a state legislator: “The issue has become partisan with Democrats taking to the House floor to deliver the same talking points in favor. Moms with kids often run as Republicans and speak against Common Core mandates.” Two of the three bills failed to pass the legislature, but one, SB 101 in 2015, did pass the legislature.

SB 101 would prohibit the Common Core State Standards from being implemented in any school district despite being called for by the State Department of Education and the State Board of Education. A state legislator who consistently emphasized both the New Hampshire ideal of local control and a dislike of the CCSS said to me, “there was...SB 101, that was going

to ban the Common Core, and I did vote against that, because communities had done so much work to implement it. I thought that banning it was actually taking away their local control. There were only two or three Republicans that voted against that, and I was one of them.” This points to partisanship being a factor in supporting this particular bill. The bill would eventually hit another partisan barrier, but first, the path of the bill should be traced more thoroughly.

Senate Bill 101 was introduced to the Senate on January 8th, 2015 and referred to the education committee. On February 12th, the bill passed the Senate. Almost a month later, the bill was introduced to the House of Representatives on March 4th. A public hearing was held while the bill was in the House, and it was eventually passed on April 15th. The House and the Senate passed the final bill on April 29th. The legislature was controlled by the Republican Party, and the Governor’s Office was controlled by a Democratic governor. Thus, Governor Maggie Hassan vetoed the bill on May 8th, which prevented the law from going into effect.

2016-2017: The Assault on the Common Core

The 2016 election in New Hampshire created a situation that had not been seen in the Common Core era in the state. The Republicans were finally able to take control of both legislative bodies, which they had split with the Democrats since 2011. As opposed to seeking re-election as governor, Maggie Hassan instead chose to run for a United States Senate seat, which she won by fewer than 1,000 votes. This left the governorship open for new candidates. In the end, the election pitted Republican nominee Chris Sununu against Democratic nominee Colin Van Ostern. Republican Chris Sununu won the election with forty-nine percent of the vote compared to almost forty-seven percent for Van Ostern (New York Times 2017). This gave the

Republicans unified governmental control for the first time since the Common Core adoption. As an anti-Common Core lobbyist said to me, the governor openly ran on an anti-Common Core platform, and the lobbyist spoke with the governor during the campaign to ensure he would do all he could to remove the standards from New Hampshire.

This same lobbyist indicated she was “pleasantly surprised” by the new unified Republican control. They also continued that Trump ran on an anti-Common Core platform, so they hoped that Trump would “pull the federal government off of our backs.” If these statements weren’t strong enough, they continued on to say this:

“We have an opportunity here like we’ve never had in the past six years, because, number one, we won’t have the feds on our back, and we have a governor who obviously doesn’t like it (Common Core) and would like to get rid of it. And we have control of the House and the Senate. And we’ve not had that. From 2010 until this day, I’ve crisscrossed this state to every person, every group that would invited me, and I would come there and tell them what the problems were with Common Core. I met with Tea Party. I met with GOP groups. I met with parents...I educated the grassroots.”

Clearly, this particular lobbyist did all that they could to stir up anti-Common Core sentiments. They also emphasized the role the new unified Republican government could play in repealing Common Core in New Hampshire.

Interestingly, despite having control of the legislature, not a single bill was put forth to remove the Common Core during the 2016 legislative session. In 2017, this would change, at least to some degree. Both the House and Senate Education committees sought to damage the Common Core in New Hampshire. The Education Committees in each chamber took action on January 5th, 2017. The House Education Committee introduced HB 304, and the Senate Education Committee introduced SB 44. The bills were strikingly similar in nature, both to each other and to SB 101 from the State Senate’s 2015 legislative session. The bills sought to prohibit the State Board of Education or the State Department of Education from requiring school

districts to implement the Common Core State Standards. The language of each was the biggest difference in the two bills. HB 304 was written to say that “if a school board elects not to implement academic standards adopted by the state board of education, a school board shall implement alternative academic standards that meet or exceed the state academic standards.” In the other chamber, SB 404 stated, “neither the department of education nor the state board of education shall by statute or rule require that the common core state standards developed jointly by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers be implemented in any school or school district in this state.” Essentially, both bills would allow local school districts to opt out of standards set by the state, so long as their new standards meet or exceed the state standards. Now, a closer look at each bill is taken as it moved through the policy process.

First, House Bill 304 was introduced on January 5th, 2017 and referred to the House Education Committee. The bill had seven sponsors, all Republican, including the chairman and vice-chairman of the committee. The official title of HB 304 was AN ACT “relative to the implementation of alternative academic standards by a local school board.” A public hearing was held by the House Education Committee on January 17th; however, there are no minutes or notes from the hearing, nor is there an audio recording. There was a recess that began on January 19th. With no vote being held yet, the bill was held over until the continuation of the legislative session. The committee reconvened on February 14th, and HB 304 was still on the agenda.

On February 14th, an amendment was introduced to the bill. Amendment #2017-0448h sought to change the title of the bill to AN ACT “relative to implementation of academic standards by a local school board and relative to review of academic standards under

consideration by the state board of education.” This amendment was introduced by the chairman of the Education Committee, Representative Rick Ladd. The amendment also added provisions that would require review of the state academic standards every ten years, prohibited local school districts from being required to implement the Next Generation Science Standards, and finally, states that no new academic standards can be approved by the State Board of Education without legislative oversight. The amendment was added to the bill by vote on March 8th, in a 16-2 vote. The bill was also passed on the same day.

The bill was then introduced in the State Senate on March 9th and referred to the education committee in that chamber. A hearing was scheduled and occurred on March 28th. New Hampshire notes in their committee hearing minutes those present who support, oppose, or are neutral on a given bill. In this particular hearing, Representatives Ladd, Cordelli, and Hinch were all listed as supporting the bill. In addition to the representatives, Michelle Levell from School Choice for New Hampshire, Darryl Perry of Liberty Lobby LLC, and Ann Marie Banfield of Cornerstone Policy Research were also in favor of the bill. Only two present were opposed to the bill, Carl Ladd from the New Hampshire School Administrators Association and Timothy Kerman of Granite State Progress. No one present at the meeting was noted as neutral on the bill. Representative Ladd spoke at the hearing noting that the bill was similar in nature to past legislation that was vetoed by former Governor Hassan. Senator Watters “asked if it would be fair to say that ‘Next Generation’ and common core appears nowhere in state statute or Education rules. Rep. Ladd stated that this was correct” (HB 304 Senate Education Committee Hearing). This is a point Senator Watters had made before. The words “Common Core” cannot be found anywhere in New Hampshire’s education standards, so he has consistently said that bills related to Common Core are irrelevant because Common Core does not exist in New

Hampshire statute. Ann Marie Banfield also submitted written testimony that questioned the wording of the bill, which seemed odd given that she supported the bill.

During the same time period that HB 304 was working its way through the system, SB 44 was doing the same. I will discuss SB 44 more momentarily, but for now, it needs to be noted that the bills were in competition with one another. In an e-mail exchange with a member of the House Education committee, I asked what the Representative thought would be the ultimate outcome of the bills, and they responded by typing, "It's hard to tell what will happen... I like our bill better :)." The smiley face is quintessential citizen legislature, but the bigger point was the House member felt that their bill was the better of the two. On April 11th, the Senate Education Committee voted 5-0 to "inexpedient to legislate" on HB 304. According to the New Hampshire Almanac, "a bill is considered killed when the House or Senate votes to adopt the committee report of 'Inexpedient to legislate,' or when a motion from the floor to 'indefinitely postpone' is adopted" (New Hampshire Almanac 2012b). Thus, the New Hampshire House of Representatives attempt to pass this piece of anti-Common Core legislation was killed in the State Senate.

With HB 304 killed, this left Senate Bill 44 as the alternative piece of legislation. Just as with HB 304, SB 44 was introduced on January 5th and referred to the Senate Education Committee. The bill had eleven sponsors, all Republicans, and it included the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee. The bill sought to amend RSA 193-E:2-a, Section IV to add the text, "neither the department of education nor the state board of education shall by statute or rule require that the common core state standards developed jointly by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers be

implemented in any school or school district in this state.” A hearing was set to be held on January 24th.

The Senate Education Committee did meet on January 24th to hold their hearing. Just as with the previously mentioned Senate Education Committee hearing, it was noted who supported, opposed, or was neutral on the bill. New Hampshire State Senators Birdsell, Daniels, Reagan, Carson, French, and Innis supported the bill. Along with the senators were Representative Seidel, Ann Marie Banfield of Cornerstone Policy Research, and mother/daughter pairing Erika and Jocelyna Adler. The only person present listed as in opposition to the bill was Carl Ladd of the New Hampshire School Administrators Association. No one present was neutral on the bill. Senator Avard spoke first introducing the bill and adding that it was fundamentally the exact same bill that passed the House and Senate 2015. Just as with the hearing on HB 304, Senator Watters asked Senator Avard if he could show him where Common Core could be found in New Hampshire law or statute, and he could not. Senator Watters then followed up by asking if it would be fair to say that this legislation would have no effect. Senator Avard responded that he had constitutions that said their school board superintendents claimed the Common Core was mandated, and this legislation was ensure that it was not. This essentially ended Senators Watters and Avard’s exchange.

Ann Marie Banfield was then given the floor to speak. She began by stating her support, along with Cornerstone Policy Research’s support, of the bill. She also put forth that the wording should be changed to replace “Common Core” with “all national standards.” She argued that due to testing to the state standards, Common Core was, in fact, a curriculum. Again, it should be noted that there is no “official” Common Core curriculum, only standards that students should be

able to meet. She then went further to state that when Common Core was adopted by the state, legislators and parents were unfamiliar and unaware of the standards. Senator Watters again used his same line of questioning to ask for specific references to Common Core in any New Hampshire statute or law, and Ms. Banfield said she could not provide that. The back and forth with the two continued on for a few moments, but the line of questioning only set to reinforce Senator Watters idea that removing something that is not there would be useless and ineffective legislation.

The more emotional testimony came from sixth grader Erika Adler and her mother Jocelyne. Erika began her testimony in what seemed like a very rehearsed fashion, which included use of words very few sixth graders could correctly use. She stated that she was struggling with reading and the school lacked enough books for students to be able to take them home to read. She on multiple occasion said Pearson, an education company, was the problem. Again, this was very odd for a sixth grader. Pearson offered the texts online for students to read, but Erika said that it tracked how long it took her to read, if she highlighted any words, or took any notes. It is here where the testimony became emotional. She broke down in tears claiming that it was difficult for her to read quickly, and she was embarrassed to have her reading speed tracked. She claimed that her teacher would ask students the time it took them to do their assigned readings and that would upset her. Almost unable to speak through tears, the committee called her mother to continue the testimony. The mother continued along the same lines as the daughter, but more directly attacking Pearson and the data tracking. She claimed that the parents were informed of a reading pilot program being done at the school, but she said that was the extent of the information that they were given. The mother claimed that her school was implementing Common Core without their knowledge. She also mentioned calling Pearson

herself attempting to obtain a book for her daughter, but Pearson refused due to the texts being available online for students to access at any time. Her testimony was more in-depth than that, but that covers the important bullet points of what was said. The committee meeting was dismissed following her testimony.

The Senate Education Committee voted 3-2 to pass the legislation on February 16th. This sent the bill to the Senate Floor on February 23rd. In a roll call vote, the bill passed the Senate by a vote of fourteen to nine with one member being excused from the vote. The vote went directly along party lines. The fourteen yea votes were all from Republican legislators, and the nine nay votes were all from Democrats. SB 44 was introduced in the House of Representatives on February 16th and referred to the House Education Committee. This was the same day the Senate Education Committee voted to pass the bill through committee. This is strikingly odd that a bill would go to another chamber while only having a committee vote rather than a vote from the entire legislative chamber.¹⁴ A public hearing was scheduled by the House Education Committee to be held on March 15th.¹⁵ On a side note, this seems to be a common theme in House versus Senate committee hearings. Senate hearings have official minutes and audio recordings available for all of their hearings; meanwhile, the House publishes very little.

At the time of writing, the Common Core debate has not been decided in New Hampshire. The state legislature has only had three bills reach the floor to kill the Common Core, one of which was passed and vetoed by former Governor Hassan. Another bill passed through the State Legislature to allow school districts to opt out of state standards, but this, too, was vetoed by the governor. In 2017, both chambers of the state legislature have attempted to

¹⁴ I was unable to find any reasoning of why this occurred.

¹⁵ No report, notes, or audio is available from this meeting.

pass bills allowing local school boards to opt out of state standards, which are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The House bill has failed, but the Senate bill is still alive. Whether the opt out bill passes or not, the debate about Common Core in the State of New Hampshire is likely far from over.

Discussion of the Policy Process in New Hampshire

The policy process surrounding the Common Core State Standards in New Hampshire was very intriguing. It involved actors from the common citizen all the way to multiple governors. Organized interests inserted themselves into the argument at various points, both supporting and opposing the standards. Ultimately, the Common Core has yet to be repealed within the state, but that battle has only increased in the past three years. A bill to prevent the Common Core from being adopted at the local level passed the legislature before being vetoed by the governor in 2015. In early 2017, multiple bills have been put forth to kill the CCSS, and one is still making its way through the bill making process. Using the integrated policy model laid out in Chapter Two, we can trace exactly how New Hampshire got to where it is today and where it may be going in regards to the Common Core.

Within the policy subsystem, there exists the pro-Common Core coalition and the anti-Common Core coalition. The pro-Common Core coalition held onto the core policy belief that the Common Core was the best thing for the students of New Hampshire, and to some degree, the entire nation. They felt the CCSS would raise the overall state standards for New Hampshire, which would fulfill a void in the marketplace for qualified workers as pointed out by members of the business community. On a national scale, they felt that a common set of standards would

allow students to seamlessly transfer in and out of New Hampshire without being ahead of or behind other students. This could create a parity in education, per se. On their side, they had a Democratic governor, Democratic legislators (the minority party), and a number of citizen and interest groups. Despite having support for the standards throughout the state, a policy advisor to one of the state's governors claimed that they did not do a good job of organizing those citizen and interest groups that supported the Common Core into a single coalition.

The anti-Common Core group seemed to hold a few deep seeded core policy beliefs. First, they felt that the Common Core State Standards were not the best standards out there. The Massachusetts State Standards and the local standards for Love, California were both mentioned as standards that were stronger than the CCSS, and those standards should have been used to increase the New Hampshire State Standards as opposed to the Common Core standards. Second, they saw the standards as federal overreach. I heard this argument in various forms. For example, a legislator said, "(Common Core) was certainly a federal overreach trying to homogenize standards across the United States, which in my personal opinion, is against the Constitution and federal law." Lastly, another common belief was that the Common Core was adopted by the State Board of Education without enough public debate and participation. The phrase "snuck in the backdoor" was used to describe the adoption of the standards by a legislator. Their resources began as having the majority party in the state legislature and powerful, organized interest groups. Their resources grew in 2017 with the swearing in of an anti-Common Core Republican governor.

The policy narrative strategy for the pro-Common Core group was fairly straight forward. It had two main points. First, they posited that the Common Core State Standards were an

improvement on the existing New Hampshire State Standards. An increase in education standards should, in theory, lead to students being more prepared for higher education or the workforce. This leads directly into the second narrative focus, businesses supported the Common Core. Businesses and business interests saw a possible correlation between higher standards and a higher caliber employee. Thus, the policy narrative strategy of the pro-Common Core coalition was to sell the notion that the higher standards would lead to a better life for students by better preparing them for higher education and higher quality jobs.

The pro-Common Core coalition was not without its faults or fractures. Despite easily winning the policymaking process early on, they did very little to maintain their victory. A poor job was done uniting pro-Common Core groups into a united coalition. The standards had support, but the groups and government officials did not act in unity. Their narrative remained one that was winning without much pushback until 2014. It was then that the proverbial first shot was fired. Republican state legislator Lenette Peterson introduced the first bill to make it to a vote that was meant to kill the Common Core. The bill was defeated, but it was the first blow to the pro-Common Core coalition's dominance.

With support from a majority Republican legislature, the anti-Common Core coalition began to shift its narrative. Initially, the narrative was two-fold. First, they argued that the Common Core State Standards were not the best possible standards, and as such, New Hampshire should either adopt a higher state standard or allow local school districts to choose their own standards, so long as they meet or exceed the CCSS. The second portion of the narrative was that the federal government was attempting to usurp power from New Hampshire and gain control over their Department of Education. These two narratives alone were not

gaining enough traction statewide to predicate change. Therefore, leaders from within the coalition sought to change the policy pathway to reframe the policy narrative.

The anti-Common Core group began to push their narrative down the partisan pathway. It truly began statewide in 2015 when Senate Bill 101 preventing school districts from implementing the Common Core was passed through the Republican legislature and vetoed by a Democratic governor. This opened the door for the Republicans to claim that the Democrats, or specifically the Democratic governor, were playing partisan politics with education standards. This partisan pathway shift continued into 2016. A policy advisor claimed that the Common Core was a major campaign issue in the 2016 gubernatorial election. An interest group leader involved in the anti-Common Core coalition lobbied the Republican nominee for governor many times to oppose the Common Core. By this time, players around the state were saying things such as “it is absolutely a partisan issue” and “Democrats were required to vote for the policy, even though that vote would cost many of them their seats.”

The shift to the partisan pathway proved to be successful in the election of 2016 and the early months of the 2017 state legislative session. The state elected Republican Chris Sununu as governor. The House and Senate both remained under Republican control. This gave Republicans a unified government to pursue the anti-Common Core agenda. The shift to the partisan pathway had worked. The anti-Common Core coalition was now the winning coalition. The next move was to turn this victory into policy. This leads us to where we are now. The legislature has a bill currently working its way through the legislature that would remove any requirements for local school districts to adopt the Common Core, and in return, it would allow

them to adopt any standards that they see fit. The final outcome of the new bill is yet to be determined at the time of this writing.

The pro-Common Core coalition attempted to remain on their policy pathways; meanwhile, the anti-Common Core coalition chose to shift to a new policy pathway. Thus, the decisions by government authorities are now being made by the anti-Common Core coalition in 2017, whereas they were made by the pro-Common Core coalition for the previous six years. As stated in the paragraph above, policy is working its way through the process to create a new policy output. Until that occurs, the policy output within the policy subsystem is still that of the Common Core. With the anti-Common Core movement seemingly having the momentum, it is difficult to envision a situation where a new policy is not put into place. If that occurs, we can then judge the new policies impacts. Until that point, we are left with the current impacts of the Common Core, which have no universally accepted impacts. Those who favor the standards believe New Hampshire is bettering itself and its citizens, and those who oppose the standards believe that New Hampshire will be better off under a new system of education standards. This is an ongoing story that will require follow-up in future research.

Table 7

All New Hampshire Education Standards Bills 2011-2014

<u>Year</u>	<u>Bill</u>	<u>Legislative Objective</u>
2011	H 39	Requires General Court Approval of Education Standards
2011	H 164	Requires General Court Approval of Education Standards
2011	S 172	Requires General Court Approval of Education Standards
2013	CACR 7	Requires General Court Approval of Education Standards
2013	H 321	Demonstration of Proficient Level of Education for Graduation Through Exam or Work Samples
2014	H 1239	Requires Fiscal Analysis of Common Core Implementation
2014	H 1247	Requires D.O.E. to Reimburse Schools At Least 50% of Online-Assessment Implementation
2014	H 1262	Protection of Collected Student Data
2014	H 1397	Establishes a Committee to Ensure D.O.E. is Acting Within Its Statutory Authority
2014	H 1432	Delays Common Core Implementation for Two Years
2014	H 1508	Kill Common Core
2014	H 1586	Protection of Collected Student Data
2014	H 1587	Protection of Collected Student Data
2014	S 312	Creates Job Creation Tax
2014	S 343	Prohibits Assessments of Non-Academic Components of Education
2015	H 1	Appropriations for Education Assessments
2015	H 124	Requires Fiscal Analysis of Common Core Implementation
2015	H 206	Protection and Limits on Collected Student Data
2015	H 218	Provides Additional Assistance to Third Graders Testing Behind Third Grade Level
2015	H 242	Requires Third Grade Students to be Proficient in Mathematics and Reading
2015	H 276	Kill Common Core
2015	H 303	Adds Additional Material to Statewide Assessments
2015	H 322	Protection of Collected Student and Teacher Data
2015	H 323	Allows for Multiple Options for Assessments
2015	H 424	Requires Parental Notification of Student Assessment Results
2015	H 538	Continuation of Statewide Assessments
2015	H 578	Relates to Unfunded Federal Mandates
2015	H 603	Allows Students to be Exempted from Statewide Assessments with Parental Approval
2015	H 611	Requires Legislative Approval on Contracts and Grants Accepted by the D.O.E.
2015	S 82	Limits Commissioner of Education's Authority
2015	S 101	Kill Common Core
2015	S 195	Requires Teaching of Cursive Writing

Table 8

Kill Bills in New Hampshire 2011-2015

Year	Bill Number	Sponsor	Co-Sponsors
2014	HB 1508	Lenette Peterson – R	Alfred Baldasaro - R, Pamela Tucker - R, Patrick Bick - R, Jeffrey Harris - R, David Murotake - R, Jane Cormier - R, Donald LeBrun - R, Jeanine Notter - R, and William Infantine - R
2015	HB 276	Rick Ladd – R	John Reagan - R
2015	SB 101	Kevin Avard – R	Gary Daniels - R, John Reagan - R, John Burt - R, Laura Jones - R, Jeanine Notter - R, William O'Brien - R, J.R. Hoell - R, David Boutin - R, Sharon Carson - R

Chapter Six: Discussion, Analysis, and Conclusion

This study attempts to further the understanding of public policymaking. By creating the Policy Coalition Model, I add to the vast literature that exists on policymaking; however, the PCM adds a new wrinkle that furthers the understanding of the policymaking process. The model uses a combined structure of the Advocacy Coalition Framework and Narrative Policy Framework and intertwines the Policy Pathways Model to explain how coalitions shift their policy narrative. The policy pathways create a feedback loop to explain policy narrative shifts when a coalition is “losing” in the policymaking process. This new model goes beyond what existing models offer to more fully explain policymaking. The addition of a means to explain how policy narratives shift is the largest addition to the field of knowledge. This was illustrated in the case studies of Alabama and New Hampshire. Below, the cases are discussed together to further examine how the cases fit into the PCM, and the overall findings of the model are documented. The chapter concludes with notation of the limits of the study and a guide for future research.

Comparison and Contrast of Alabama and New Hampshire

The case studies of Alabama and New Hampshire provide a unique insight into the policymaking process. The two states began at the same point with the Common Core State Standards. Each state entered into the initial consortium to create the standards, and both were adopters of the standards within the first year of their creation. The policy, however, moved

along differently in the two states. While some common themes emerged in both states, the differences in each state's experience highlights the true story of the Common Core.

State Board of Education

The first major difference in the two states is how the State Board of Education comes to be. In Alabama, eight of the ten positions on the State Board are filled through elections. The Governor and State Superintendent of Education serve on the board by virtue of the offices that they hold. While the governor is technically an elected official, they are not elected specifically to serve on the State Board. The core eight members of the board are elected from eight districts across the state. The members are elected to serve four year terms, and there are currently no term limits. On the other hand, the State Board of Education in New Hampshire is appointed. The board has seven voting members. The state is divided into five districts, and each district has one member on the board. The other two seats are filled at large. The State Board is appointed by the Governor and the Executive Council, and members serve five year terms. A board member may only serve two consecutive terms.

This stark contrast of the way in which the State Board of Education is filled in the two states bring about different concerns. In Alabama, the State Board members are beholden to constituents within their district. If their constituents are unhappy with their performance for any reason, they have the option to vote them out every four years. However, with the New Hampshire State Board being appointed by the Governor and Executive Council, the citizens have virtually no voice in board members. They must entrust those in power to appoint the best people for the job. This creates a possible principle-agent dilemma. The citizens, the principle in

the dilemma, elect the governor, the agent, who in turn selects the State Board. The only way that citizens can then affect the State Board is to elect a new governor that will be able to make appointments to the State Board as members end their five year terms or serve out their two term limits. This is a very surprising model in New Hampshire given how much local control is valued by the citizenry.

Legislative Action

Another key difference in the two states has to do with legislative action towards the Common Core. The legislative pushback against the Common Core in Alabama was strong in the early years following adoption. From 2011-2014, nine bills were voted upon that were intended to kill the Common Core. All nine failed to pass. During this same four-year period, only one kill bill made it to a vote in New Hampshire, and it was defeated on the floor. Partisanship played a key role in this process and will be discussed more later in this chapter. Beginning in 2015, the legislatures of the two states diverged from their earlier tracks. Alabama still had four kill bills introduced, two in 2015 and two in 2016, but neither gained any traction. Each year, the same Republican senator and Republican house member introduced one bill to kill the Common Core. Their bills had no co-sponsors and were defeated without much notice. Legislative action against the Common Core in Alabama has continued to wane, and it has been a non-issue thus far in 2017.

Meanwhile, New Hampshire legislative opposition has had a renaissance in recent years. In 2015, two bills to stop the Common Core made it to a vote, and one passed the legislature. The bill that would prevent the state from requiring school districts to implement to Common Core was vetoed by then Democratic Governor Maggie Hassan. 2016 was a lame duck year. No

legislation was introduced with regards to the Common Core, but a Republican Governor was elected. With a renewed vigor, two bills were immediately introduced to kill the CCSS in 2017. The bill that began in the House was killed in the Senate, and the bill that began in the Senate is currently on the docket for the House. Again, partisanship is a key explanation for this change. With unified Republican government and an openly anti-Common Core governor, the legislature saw a policy window open to stop the Common Core in the state.

Federal Intrusion Argument

One common theme that arose in both states was the perception of federal intrusion into the traditionally state run arena of education. A number of legislators in each state expressed thoughts and ideas along these lines. For example, one legislator stated that, based on the Tenth Amendment, Common Core was an unconstitutional federal mandate. Another legislator echoed similar concerns of the constitutionality of the CCSS stating that the federal government was trying to homogenize standards across the country and Race to the Top was the means to that end. I also heard similar arguments from anti-Common Core organized interests in both states. As a counterpoint, a number of legislators and lobbyists in both states argued that there was no federal overreach, no federal connection, and those that argued that there was such were simply misinformed.

The facts show that Common Core was created at the state level, so there was no federal involvement at that point. The inclusion of the common educational standards scores in the Race to the Top Grant Program does lend credence to the possibility of federal coercion. This is never explicitly stated, but it does provide enough ambiguity for opponents of the Common Core to make their case. Arne Duncan, the former Secretary of Education under President Obama,

supposedly recognized the mistake of including the common educational standards language in the RTTT application. According to a former policy advisor to one of the governors of the two states, Secretary Duncan told this particular governor that if he could re-do the RTTT application, he would likely leave the Common Core out of it, because that further fueled the oppositions argument. Therefore, we can concretely say that the federal government was not an active participant in the creation of the standards, but we cannot say that they did not purposefully insert themselves into the policy with Race to the Top.

Partisanship

In both states, all of the kill bills were sponsored by Republicans. With the exception of one independent, all co-sponsors were also Republicans. The sponsorship of bills intended to kill the Common Core completely followed party lines. Democrats were not introducing bills to kill the Common Core and Republicans were. When the bills were voted upon, partisan voting did not occur the same in Alabama and New Hampshire. At the committee voting level, votes were almost always along party lines in New Hampshire with Republicans voting against the CCSS and Democrats voting in favor of them. In Alabama, committee votes were more bipartisan, but the majority of Republicans and Democrats followed the same pattern as New Hampshire. The major difference arose when the full chamber voted on bills. The New Hampshire General Court again tended to stick to partisan lines when it came to voting. It was almost a given that Republicans would oppose the standards and Democrats would support them. One Republican I spoke with in New Hampshire claimed to be one of three Republicans that voted against an anti-Common Core Bill, and it was not viewed favorably by many of their colleagues. In Alabama, just as with the committee level, full chamber votes were more bipartisan. A number of

Republicans would vote in opposition to bills intended to kill the Common Core. Alabama rose above partisanship with the Common Core. New Hampshire did not.

Coalition Building

Coalition building was one of the major factors in the policymaking process in both states. In Alabama, pro-Common Core groups coalesced to form an umbrella organization to represent the collective. Alabama GRIT, as it came to be known, was an association of local school boards, chambers of commerce, statewide education lobbies, and various business organizations that supported the Common Core and more rigorous education standards in Alabama to create a more capable workforce and better prepare those that were college bound. In New Hampshire, the pro-Common Core groups did not organize in such a manner. A supporter of Common Core went as far as to say that pro-Common Core groups in the state did a poor job organizing.

On the other hand, the anti-Common Core coalition in New Hampshire was more clearly organized. While many groups opposed the standards, a grassroots effort was led by Cornerstone Policy Research and one of its members, Ann Marie Banfield. Rather than using interest groups and elites to lead the charge against Common Core, Ms. Banfield traveled the state attending public meetings, speaking publically whenever given the opportunity, and using the resources of Cornerstone Policy Research to garner support to oppose the Common Core. This grassroots effort led to a large coalition of rank and file citizens who could have their voices heard by their representatives. What the coalition may have lacked in terms of “elites,” it more than made up for it in the sheer volume of coalition’s masses. Alabama’s anti-Common Core coalition had the opposite outcome. There was no clear leader in the opposition that was able to unite the various

anti-Common Core groups, representatives, and citizens across the state. Instead, the Alabama anti-Common Core coalition was a cacophony of voices that did not present a clear and concise message. The pro-Common Core coalition in Alabama made itself the stronger side, and the anti-Common Core coalition did so in New Hampshire.

The successes of the pro-Common Core coalition in Alabama and anti-Common Core coalition in New Hampshire appear to be directly tied to the direction the debate took in the individual states. 2014 was a pivotal year in both states. It is in 2014 that the battle over Common Core began to subside in Alabama, as it truly ramped up in New Hampshire. Unable to gain a strong foothold within the Republican majority in Alabama, the anti-Common Core coalition never had the votes to repeal the Common Core. In a semantic victory, the name of the standards was changed from the Common Core State Standards to the Alabama College- And Career-Ready Standards. Despite this change, a few legislators still attempted to use the Common Core in campaigning and legislation, but they obtained almost no success. The name change allowed those who were opposed to the CCSS to claim victory to their constituents, even with the change being in virtually name alone. Thus, the Common Core debate has essentially been decided in Alabama. The Common Core vis-a-vis the Alabama College- And Career-Ready Standards remain in place in the state.

New Hampshire has had the opposite experience since 2014. Through grassroots efforts, the anti-Common Core movement was able to increase support as the 2014 elections approached. The Republicans were able to maintain their control of the legislature and add to the pressure to repeal the Common Core. They were successful in passing a bill that would have allowed school districts to opt out of the Common Core in 2015, but it was vetoed in the governor's office. The

biggest victory for the coalition came in 2016 when an anti-Common Core Republican won the gubernatorial election. With unified Republican government, the anti-Common Core movement has gained more popular support and has remained on the forefront of education policy debates. Bills are currently in the que to weaken and eventually remove the Common Core from New Hampshire. 2014 marked the end of the debate in Alabama, and it was the catalyst for change in New Hampshire.

Overall Findings

The Policy Coalition Model introduced in chapter two was tested in each of the case study observations. The model integrated the advocacy coalition framework, the narrative policy framework, and the policy pathways model into one aggregate model. This aggregated model was meant to provide greater explanatory power than any of the one models or frameworks alone. Through the observations of Alabama and New Hampshire and their experiences with the Common Core State Standards the model was able to be utilized in two different states with different sets of circumstances. Overall, support for the efficacy of the model was obtained in the study of both states.

In Alabama, the coalitions supporting and opposing the Common Core were mixed. Figure 7 displays a brief summary the Alabama case study using the Pathways Coalition Model. It highlights some of the key actors, the coalition beliefs and resources, the pathway used, and the current policy status.

[Insert Figure 7 About Here]

The pro-Common Core coalition's membership was heterogeneous, consisting of Democrats, Republicans, citizens, and interest groups that had both liberal and conservative ideologies. The anti-Common Core coalition was much more homogeneous with membership almost strictly consisting of Republicans and ideologically conservative interest groups. The narrative strategy of the pro-Common Core coalition was to present a bipartisan argument that the standards would be great for students, businesses, and universities. Students would be more prepared to enter the workforce with the ability to succeed at entry level jobs, or they would be able to enter college without the need for remedial coursework and the ability to succeed in their studies. This strategy utilized the pluralist pathway to formulate their narrative. By bringing in membership from a variety of interests, the pro-Common Core group was able to obtain success in the State of Alabama.

The anti-Common Core coalition was unable to successfully utilize any of the policy pathways to craft their narrative. When the group was "losing" the policy battle, they were unable to organize enough support from interests across party lines or large numbers of groups or politicians on their side. This prevented the coalition from successfully utilizing the pluralist pathway. There was no universal agreement that the Common Core was the best policy option, so the symbolic pathway was not an option. Most education groups across Alabama supported the Common Core, as did many teachers per the feedback from legislators. With education specialists supporting the standards, this put a roadblock on using the expert pathway. Finally, they attempted to use the partisan pathway to lead to "winning" the debate, but they were unable to coalesce a united Republican Party to oppose the standards. Therefore, the anti-Common Core coalition was unable to successfully use any of the four policy pathways to change the narrative.

The success of the pro-Common Core coalition by utilizing the pluralist pathway in crafting their policy narrative supports the integrated policymaking model.

In New Hampshire, the coalitions were each homogenous. The coalitions were divided along partisan lines. Democrats and liberal leaning interest groups tended to be a part of the pro-Common Core coalitions; meanwhile, Republicans and conservative leaning interest groups tended to be a part of the anti-Common Core coalition. Given the split in support and opposition for the standards, the symbolic pathway was never an option for either coalition. Neither coalition was able to assemble enough “experts” to successfully use the expert pathway to sway public opinion or policy outcomes in their favor. The pluralist pathway was also initially not an option, as interests within each coalition were not varied enough to be considered pluralistic. Therefore, each side attempted to use the partisan pathway to win the policy battle as displayed in Figure 8.

[Insert Figure 8 About Here]

From adoption through 2014, the Pro-Common Core coalition remained victorious using the partisan pathway. Ann Marie Banfield, an influential member of Cornerstone Policy Research, began a grassroots effort to bolster the Anti-Common Core coalition. Using the resources of Cornerstone, Ms. Banfield traveled throughout New Hampshire speaking at local school board meetings and town hall meetings to build the Anti-Common Core coalition. She was also present at Education Committee meetings for both chambers of the state legislature, often providing written or verbal testimony. Through this effort, the Anti-Common Core coalition turned to the pluralist pathway, which can be seen in Figure 8.

With newfound support, the Anti-Common Core coalition had enough support to bring about change. The anti-Common Core coalition utilized the narrative strategy of the “devil shift”

to return to their use of the partisan pathway. The “devil shift” strategy is a strategy that creates a policy narrative exaggerating the power of an opponent while understating the power one’s own coalition (Shanahan et al 2013). In 2014, New Hampshire was already in a situation of divided government, and Republicans and their supporters were able to paint the Democrats and the Democratic Governor as the “devil” that was stopping policy progress. The Republican legislature passing an anti-Common Core bill that was vetoed in 2015 by the Democratic Governor Maggie Hassan furthered the devil shift strategy of the anti-Common Core coalition. The Democratic “devils” had all the power to suppress the Republicans policy advances. This narrative shift strengthened the partisan pathway used by the anti-Common Core coalition. Victories were obtained in 2016 elections to given New Hampshire a unified Republican government. Under this new partisan government, the anti-Common Core coalition has been able to begin the process of removing the Common Core by successfully utilizing the partisan pathway. Figure 9 shows the Pathway Coalition Model in the current state of affairs in New Hampshire.

[Insert Figure 9 About Here]

As compared to Figure 8, the power of the coalitions shifted. The Anti-Common Core coalition has utilized the partisan pathway to push policy against the Common Core. As stated in Chapter Five, there is currently a bill to allow districts to opt out of the CCSS working through the legislature, and this is displayed at the bottom of Figure 9.

Support for my policymaking model was found in both case study observations. The pluralist pathway was used successfully to craft the narrative in Alabama. Partisanship was key in New Hampshire, and the partisan pathway offers the best explanation of how the state got to

its current situation. By integrating the three existing policymaking models and frameworks, I was able to create a theoretical model that offers a better explanation of the policy outcomes using the Common Core. With the addition of the policy pathways as an explanation of why coalitions shift their policy narratives, this model fills voids left by each of the individual models taken alone by integrating them together to create a more complete model. Without the policy pathway feedback loop within the policy subsystem, the existing models offered no concrete explanation of how or why coalitions shifted their narratives in order to gain policy victories. The policy pathway feedback loop used in the PCM allows for a more thorough explanation of policymaking.

Research Limitations and Future Research

As with any study, my research does have limitations. First, the study only contains two case study observations. This limits the generalizability of the study. If more observations were able to added to the study, the external validity could be increased. Initially, the study began with three states, but I was unable to gain enough access to actors in Indiana to obtain enough data to include the state in the study. Second, the model was only applied to one specific policy. Again, testing the model using more policies, the external validity of the study could be increased. In future research, I would like to test the model further using both the Common Core and other policy areas. Adding more states to this initial study is one option for future research. The second is to choose another policy area and test the model using that policy. As with any qualitative study, more interviews could always shed light on more areas that could be examined more thoroughly.

With New Hampshire's story still playing out, future research will also be predicated on what happens with current policies in their state legislature. Could the state allow school districts to opt out of the Common Core? Will the standards be fully repealed in the state? These questions are all currently unanswered. Only time will allow for research into their decisions to continue. I will continue to monitor the situation in New Hampshire to add to my research. The uncertainty of New Hampshire's future with the Common Core leaves many questions unanswered. However, this study lends support that the partisan pathway may point us to the eventual policy outcome.

Figure 7

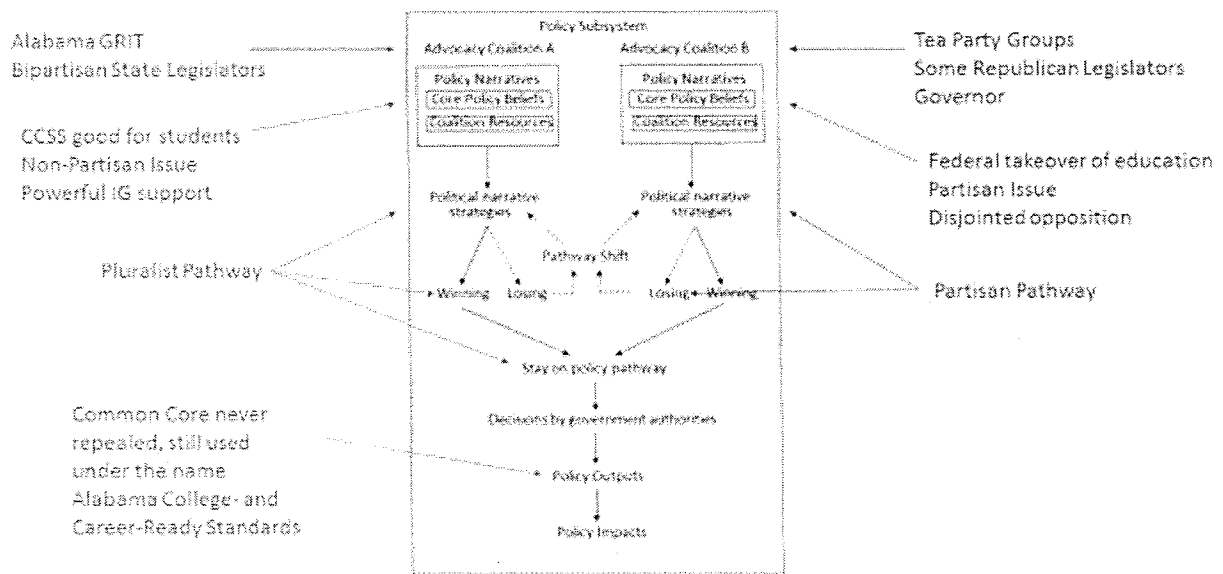


Figure 8

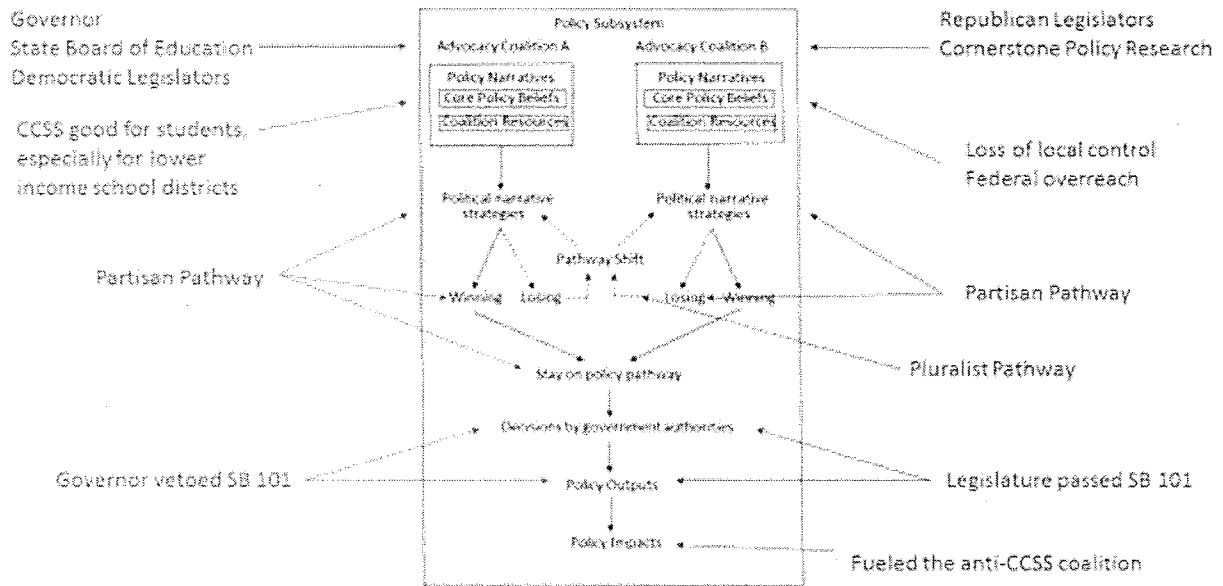
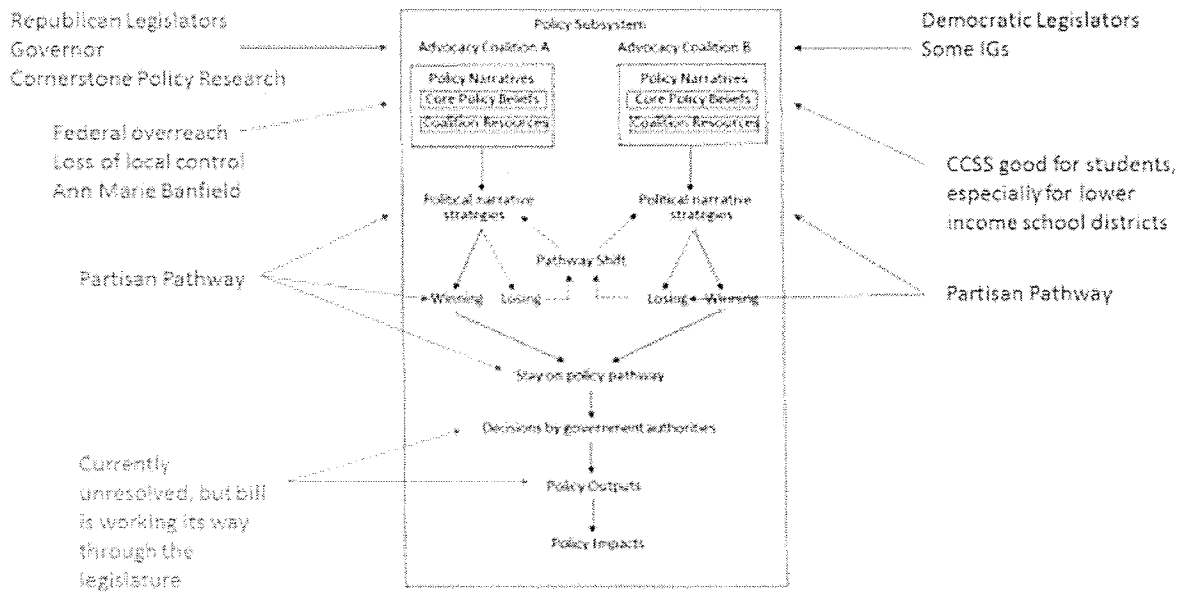


Figure 9



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Appendix A

To whom it may concern,

Hello, my name is Matthew Malone, and I am a PhD candidate at Auburn University. Currently, I am completing my dissertation. My research focuses on the policymaking process using the Common Core State Standards as my observation. I am completing a case study for three states, including your state. Would you be willing to speak with me regarding your experiences and your state's experiences with the Common Core State Standards? I plan to conduct a number of interviews in order to gain a complete picture of how the Standards have been addressed in your state. If you are willing to speak with me, please contact by responding to this e-mail (mam0026@auburn.edu) or by phone at 256-348-2681. If you are unable or unwilling to complete an interview, but would still like to provide a statement on the Common Core, I would also gladly appreciate that. Interviews and statements will remain confidential. Your name, district, nor any other identifying information will be used in my final dissertation. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Matthew Malone

PhD Candidate

Department of Political Science

Auburn University