

2-2022

## A Multiple Case Study of Oregon's K-12 Accountability Transformation: A Journey to include Outcome Mapping

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A Multiple Case Study of Oregon's K-12 Accountability Transformation:

A Journey to include Outcome Mapping

by

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A Dissertation Proposal Presented to the Faculty of the

Doctor of Educational Leadership Department in

Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of Doctor of Education

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

02.01.22

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“A Multiple Case Study of Oregon’s K-12 Accountability Transformation: A Journey to include Outcome Mapping,” a Doctoral research project prepared by SHAY MIKALSON in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.

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### **Abstract**

This multiple case study investigated the experiences of three Oregon K-12 educational leaders and their perspectives on the potential of Outcome Mapping, through the implementation of the Student Success Act, as a catalyst for improved statewide accountability and increased academic achievement for Oregon's students. Outcome Mapping is a theory-driven model developed from the "black box" problem in accountability that focuses its measurement on the process by which change occurs, instead of just the results of the change, attempting to ultimately link cause and effect relationships. Few previous studies have explored the use of Outcome Mapping within the context of education. Even fewer, if any, had explored Outcome Mapping as a critical lever within a statewide public K-12 schools accountability framework. Through one-on-one interviews, this study shares the stories of an Oregon Department of Education state-level leader, a school district superintendent, and a program/building administrator through narrative case reports and then highlights cross-case findings on their description of Oregon's K-12 accountability transformation to include Outcome Mapping.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2019, the Oregon legislature passed House Bill 3427, the Student Success Act (SSA), representing a historic investment in Oregon's education system, bringing approximately \$1 billion of additional annual funding to Oregon public schools and early childhood programs through a gross-receipts tax on businesses with at least \$1 million in yearly sales (HB 3427: Student Success Act, 2019). The policy has been lauded by the Oregon School Boards Association, and many others, as a once in a generation investment, a game-changer for schools in Oregon, and a historic investment in education (Student Success Act Passes, Promising \$1 Billion Annually for Education, 2019). While the money is important, the Student Success Act includes several other policy components that this research explored as potential levers in Oregon's accountability effort to finally deliver on its promise of an excellent and equitable public school system for all students.

Before diving into these critically important Student Success Act policy details, the most pertinent of which related to this study's purpose is the addition of Outcome Mapping into Oregon's accountability framework, understanding Oregon's public-school context and historical performance are essential. Oregon, like many states, significantly altered school funding in the early 1990s by simultaneously shifting funding from the local to the state level and capping property tax increases (Oregon Department of Revenue, 2009). This combination limited local ability to raise revenue. It also tasked the state legislature with additional financial responsibility without specifying how to pay for it. During this same time period, Oregon's K-12 public education system journeyed through three major performance-based accountability transformations: 2001's authorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the Federal Adequate Yearly Progress Waiver process that began in 2012, and most recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. Since this shift in funding in the early 1990s, and

regardless of the accountability framework enacted during the first two decades of the 2000s, Oregon has lagged in both funding and student performance (Oregon's Quality Education Commission, 2020). Before the passage of the Student Success Act, Oregon's most recent thirty years of results have continually produced dramatic disparities in student funding and outcomes for historically marginalized groups, including students of color, students with disabilities, English-language learners, and students living in poverty (Gill, 2020).

This lack of adequate funding and, more importantly, a provenly effective accountability framework available for Oregon public K-12 schools, led to the formation of an Oregon bipartisan legislative committee in early 2018. This committee called the Joint Committee on Student Success, conducted a statewide tour to listen and learn about the challenges and opportunities facing Oregon public schools. For the first time in recent history, through the work of this committee, Oregon had the political consensus and will to rethink its funding and accountability structures. The committee, in its final Joint Committee on Student Success report (2019), declared that "Oregon must do more to ensure that the 580,000 children enrolled in our schools are receiving a first-class education" (p. 3). This bipartisan call for action eventually led to the passage of the Student Success Act in the 2019 legislative session. The following summarizes the most critical elements of Oregon's new Student Success Act policy. Policy elements that go far beyond the increased funding that the act is most publicly known for and represent the core element, through its implementation of Outcome Mapping, that this multiple case study explored in terms of potential.

The Student Success Act has two main goals. The first aim is to meet students' mental and behavioral health needs more fully. Second, the law calls out the goal of increasing students' academic achievement, including reducing academic disparities. In both efforts, the Student Success Act strongly focuses on addressing, head-on, the historic inequities across student

groups (HB 3427: Student Success Act, 2019).

To accomplish these two goals, the Student Success Act divides and directs the estimated \$1 billion toward early learning (20 percent), statewide education initiatives like expanded school nutrition programs (30 percent), and the creation of a Student Investment Account (50 percent) (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: 2019-21 Program Funding, 2019). The Student Investment Account, the portion of the Student Success Act funding that goes directly to school districts, is a non-competitive grant for which Oregon's 197 school districts must submit a plan to the Oregon Department of Education outlining how they will spend their money towards the aims of the Student Success Act within four broad allowable uses: increasing instructional time, reducing class size, enhancing student health and safety, and supporting well-rounded education (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Student Investment Account, 2019).

While the Student Success Act brings much-needed resources to Oregon's public education system, the act goes much deeper than increased funding and traditional reform efforts alone. First, the Student Success Act requires meaningful, sustained, and ongoing community engagement. As a fundamental part of the law, and specifically detailed in the Oregon Department of Education's Student Investment Account Comprehensive Guidance Document, school districts in Oregon must authentically and meaningfully engage students, families, communities, and staff. This engagement, which is confirmed through school district quarterly progress reports to the Oregon Department of Education, is particularly required to focus on helping districts build on historically underserved and marginalized groups' strengths and assets in their strategic planning efforts (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account: Community Engagement Toolkit, 2021). Secondly, and most importantly, as it relates to this study's purpose, the Student Success Act attempts to transform the status quo

accountability framework currently found in Oregon and the nation. Under the Student Success Act, school districts still need to develop and monitor student performance-based summative metrics traditionally found in previous accountability reform efforts such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Federal Waiver, or the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). However, the Student Success Act takes a significant step beyond this current accountability paradigm by requiring each district recipient to additionally monitor progress from a learning and continuous improvement orientation through the establishment of statewide Progress Markers Framework (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account Guidance for Eligible Applicants: A Comprehensive Resource, 2019).

The Progress Marker Framework for the Student Investment Account is a new, potentially transformational mechanism in Oregon's statewide accountability system. Built on the theoretical underpinnings of Outcome Mapping, an approach to monitoring and evaluation that has been used for decades outside of the education setting in the planning and assessing of development programming that is oriented towards social change and transformation, the Progress Marker Framework defines outcomes as desired changes in adult behaviors within the system such as the use of an equity lens, the formation of data teams, increased communication with families, the adoption of high-quality curriculum, and active professional learning (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account: Progress Markers, 2020). The potential of this transformation to include adult behaviors in the accountability system for the first time in Oregon's history, through the implementation of the Progress Marker Framework, is the Student Success Acts' policy shift that this multiple case study explored.

Outcome Mapping is explicit about the fact that change occurs as a result of many actors and factors. It is designed for understanding and measuring the contributions to change, not just its effects. As a former teacher, building principal, and now superintendent in three districts

across Oregon who has invested years leading and implementing accountability systems, it is clear to me that improved student performance results do not occur by measuring them. As educators, the reality is that we plant our seeds in the students we serve long before the flower of student achievement emerges. Oregon's K-12 public schools, like the nation's public school system at large, have continued to produce achievement disparities no matter the student performance-based accountability framework required, be that No Child Left Behind, the Federal Waiver, or the Every Student Succeeds Act. According to Oregon's Quality Education Commission, Oregon schools' performance and outcomes have lagged over the past thirty years (Oregon's Quality Education Commission, 2020). Oregon's educational disparities are specifically evident in markers of low academic performance and graduation rates in Oregon's historically marginalized student groups, including students of color, students with disabilities, English-language learners, and students living in poverty (Gill, 2020). While the heroic efforts of countless teachers, administrators, and community nonprofits across Oregon may have led to significant improvements for students in individual schools and classrooms, system-wide progress towards a more equitable and excellent public education system for all students in Oregon has seemed virtually unobtainable given the current status quo carrot and stick model of accountability based solely on student performance. The concept of Outcome Mapping, found in the Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework, broadens our focus from the results we want from students to include the behaviors we expect in the adults and systems educating them. The Progress Marker Framework offers a set of milestones for school districts and the Oregon Department of Education to look for and map research-based upstream adult behavior progress towards with a focus on learning about the kinds of changes that happen from distinct investments.

## **Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this research was to provide a multiple case study analysis of Oregon K-12 educational leaders', including an Oregon Department of Education state-level leader, a school district superintendent, and a program/building administrator, perspectives on the potential of Outcome Mapping through the implementation of the Student Success Act as the missing link in Oregon's statewide accountability system to finally improve the academic achievement of all students. Few previous studies have explored the use of Outcome Mapping within the context of education. Even fewer, if any, had explored Outcome Mapping as a critical catalyst within a statewide public K-12 schools accountability framework. Through one-on-one interviews with Oregon K-12 educational leaders, their description of Outcome Mapping as a catalyst for improved accountability in Oregon public schools was collected and retold in a collaborative multiple case study investigation.

## **Research Question**

What potential, if any, does outcome mapping hold for Oregon's K-12 education accountability system?

## **Significance of Study**

This process of providing a multiple case study of the implementation of Outcome Mapping is important and timely as the findings of this research have the power to inform the state of Oregon's implementation roll-out of the Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework, which was put on hold during the 2020-21 school year as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account: Progress Markers, 2020). As the Chief Student Success Officer for the High Desert Education Service District, Superintendent of the Jefferson County Education Service District, and former

Superintendent of both the Bend-La Pine Schools and the Redmond School District I am positioned to bring forward the learning from Oregon K-12 educational leaders experiences with public school accountability systems and their description of Outcome Mapping's potential as a catalyst for improved accountability to positively impact Oregon's implementation of Outcome Mapping over the next biennium. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, the purpose of this case study was not to draw generalizations or attempt to create theory. Instead, the purpose of this study was to listen critically and intensely to the experiences and perspectives of Oregon K-12 educational leaders' description of Outcome Mapping for improved accountability. These perspectives and this study are critically important and timely as they can potentially influence Oregon's attempt to implement, and adjust where needed, its set of progress markers in the manner that holds the most promise possible for Oregon and its students. For example, integrating the changes the research has shown, and educators can embrace, to advance each of the common student achievement metrics in the Student Investment Account long-term. These include on-time graduation and 5-year completion rates, ninth grade on-track rates, third grade reading proficiency, and regular attender rates (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Student Investment Account, 2019).

### **Definition of Key Terms**

In education policy, *accountability* generally refers to attempts to ensure that students are enrolled in high-quality and effective schools. According to the Education Commission of the States (ECS), "school accountability can serve many purposes, including sharing information, measuring progress toward state and local goals, and supporting greater educational equity" (pg. 1).

A *state accountability system* refers to the set of policies and practices a state uses to measure and hold schools and districts responsible for raising student achievement for all

students, and prompt and support improvement where necessary (Trust, 2020).

*Evaluation* refers to the systematic assessment of an initiative's design, implementation, or results. Evaluations are conducted for the purposes of learning, decision making, judgments, conclusion, findings, new knowledge, organizational development, and capacity building in response to the needs of identified stakeholders leading to improvement, decisions about future programming, or accountability by ultimately informing and contributing to organizational or social value (Yarbrough et al, 2011; Patton, 1997).

*Outcome Mapping* is a methodology for planning, monitoring, and evaluating development initiatives that focus its measurement on the process by which change occurs, instead of just the results of the change. As the name suggests, Outcome Mapping's niche is understanding outcomes; the so-called 'missing middle' or 'black box' of results that emerge downstream from the initiative's activities but upstream from longer-term academic, economic, environmental, political, or demographic changes (Earl, Carden, & Smutylo, 2001).

And finally, an *assessment or accountability culture* refers to a culture where people at every level of the organization are personally committed to achieving key results. A culture where people demonstrate high levels of ownership to think and act in the manner necessary to achieve organizational results, voluntarily assume their accountability, and proactively measure progress because they internalized their commitment to achieving results (Leadership, 2021).

## **Organization of Study**

This chapter provided a brief introduction to the research study and established the purpose of the research. Chapter 2 explores existing literature around the use of models and model thinking, accountability in public K-12 education, and the specific role that Outcome Mapping can potentially play as a model for increased accountability. Chapter 3 details the methodological approach. Chapter 4 includes both individual case study reports and cross-case

analysis. Chapter 5 concludes the study with a discussion of findings and emerging questions for future research.

## **Chapter 2: A Review of Literature**

A thorough body of literature exists on accountability reform in American schools and its impact. This chapter will begin with a brief history of this accountability transformation, including describing the significant federal accountability legislation and associated state laws and policies over the past forty years. It will also summarize the current state of scholarship on the impact of accountability reform on the American public education system, both positive and negative. And finally, this chapter will provide a thorough review of the current research articles and studies on the theoretical framework and evaluation model supporting the potential of Outcome Mapping as the missing link in Oregon's effort to transition from the current reality of islands of excellence at the individual school level to system-wide progress towards a more equitable and excellent public education system for all students in Oregon.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion of Research**

As formal research on Outcome Mapping in educational programs is emerging, several search terms were used to collect sources for review. To identify research, "accountability," "accountability frameworks," "performance-based accountability," "No Child Left Behind," "Every Student Succeeds Act," and the "Student Success Act" were used as search terms in EBSCO and Google Scholar. These terms were qualified with additional terms such as "high-stakes," "student performance metrics," "outcomes," "metrics," "outcome mapping," and "state accountability systems." The same search engines were used to garner peer-reviewed literature on the history of accountability reform in America, benefits and concerns of performance-based accountability, and Outcome Mapping. I found the snowball method helpful throughout the process as I discovered the interconnectedness of the existing literature and the prominent voices of key scholars.

Peer-reviewed research and writing on accountability in education were more accessible and necessitated a threshold for inclusion in the literature review. The natural point for inclusion was a publication date of 1980 since modern research in the field of accountability reform in American public schools all stem from the foundational release of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The inclusion of federal and state laws, policies, guidance, and reports were primarily determined by data mining from articles on federal and state accountability frameworks since the methodology is in response to the accountability reform at the state level in Oregon.

### **The History of Accountability Reform in America's Public Schools**

Accountability in American public schools is the most commonly referenced reform agenda in education in recent history and therefore is the lens through which this study views participants' experiences. As such, it merits thorough discussion. Accountability in American public education has been at the center of the education reform agenda of each American president since Ronald Reagan (Graham, 2005; Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2009). While the practice of holding American students accountable for the knowledge and skills necessary to advance through school dates back to the Lancasterian schools of the early nineteenth century (Hogan, 1989; Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001), the current movement in America's recent history focused on accountability for schools based on student performance metrics started with the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) (Diamond, 2007; Dworkin, 2005; Mathison, 2008). This report, published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, claimed that American public education had low standards for teachers and students and low achievement nationwide (Mathison, 2008; NCEE, 1983; Ravitch, 1995). In response to this report, President Reagan encouraged state leaders to effect reforms of their educational systems, resulting in the

creation of "more than 250 task forces ... helping forty-six states develop comprehensive state accountability action plans to improve educational outcomes of students" (Schwartz & Robinson, 2000, p.175).

Building upon this work, President George H.W. Bush created, along with the nation's governors, six ambitious goals for public education to be achieved by the year 2000 (Mathison, 2008). Schwartz and Robinson (2000) asserted that these goals, known as America 2000, "legitimized the idea of national standards and tests as a public policy issue" (p.177). While President Reagan placed the responsibility on states to effect educational reform, it was President Bush who attempted to use federal policy to address the problems of "a rising tide of [educational] mediocrity" cited in *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Ultimately, however, the United States Senate voted down America 2000 over concerns of dramatically increasing the federal government's role in education (Schwartz & Robinson, 2000).

While President George H.W. Bush failed to pass America 2000, President Bill Clinton successfully passed his Goals 2000: Educate America Act in 1994. In President Clinton's own words, the act was "designed to promote a long-term direction for the improvement of education and life-long learning and to provide a framework and resources to help States and others interested in education to strengthen, accelerate, and sustain their own improvement efforts" (Clinton, 1993, p. 643). Critically, the act opened the door for President Clinton to work toward raising educational accountability across the nation, meeting with governors, educators, and business leaders to address three central challenges: "improving educator quality, helping all students reach high standards, and strengthening accountability" (Mathison, 2008, p.12). As a result, by 1999, all 50 states except Iowa had either set common standards for education or were in the process of setting them (Mathison, 2008).

The Presidency of George W. Bush brought federal legislation that focused explicitly on school and district accountability through standardized tests scores. President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) aimed to "close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve academic proficiency" in reading and math by the 2013-2014 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, para. 2). NCLB mandated that states develop their own assessment and accountability plans that delineate how they will "achieve full proficiency toward state academic content standards" and "close persistent achievement gaps between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers" (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a). Under President Bush, Rod Paige, Secretary of Education, noted that "accountability is the cornerstone of our new education law" (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a). NCLB achieved high-stakes accountability by requiring local school districts and states to publish report cards detailing the achievement of their students in reading, mathematics, and graduation rates as a whole and disaggregated by various subgroups, including racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and students from low-income families (Paige, 2002). A school defined by its state as "needing improvement" entered a progressive and graduate series of sanctions. These sanctions ranged from offering its students the opportunity to transfer to another public school, to undergo restructuring, to a complete closure (U.S. Department of Education, 2003b).

An even more overt movement toward school-level performance accountability in education was ushered in through President Obama's Race to the Top (RTTT) program as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) (U.S. Department of Education, Background section, 2009). RTTT offered a total of \$4.35 billion in grants for which states could compete for funds by showing that they were making progress in many of the areas emphasized in NCLB:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p.2).

While the RTTT was an incentive program, difficult economic times encourage states to seek more federal funding for education. Thus, the federal government, which was historically a minor actor in American public education's decentralized policy landscape, became a central figure in educational reform throughout the entire country. For example, Fowler (2009) noted that when municipal governments, including local school districts, experience financial crisis, they look toward the state for assistance and resources, often resulting in the state's acquisition of more power over the schools.

As a result of RTTT, the United States saw a similar phenomenon between the states and the federal government. In return for its financial assistance, the federal government acquired more significant control over educational reform at the state level. During this same period, the Obama administration subtly shifted the incentive notion of the accountability reform agenda from RTTT to providing Federal Waivers. The Federal Waiver process allowed states to waive some of the outdated requirements of the NCLB Act in exchange for implementing the same reform agenda detailed through RTTT. Moreover, the specific reforms that RTTT and the Federal Waiver incentivized continued propagating the move to performance accountability that began in 1983.

The movement toward performance accountability for schools based on student performance in American public education did substantially evolve back to more local control

under the final years of President Obama and continued under President Trump and now Biden. With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed into law in 2015, critical decision-making authority was returned to the states and local districts over designing accountability and assessment systems (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). While the impact and consequences of this flexibility remain unclear, in states across the country, the focus has been mainly on reforming accountability policies. The new law encourages states and districts to innovate while at the same time maintaining the focus on equity and accountability.

In place of the one-size-fits-all approach under NCLB of 100% of all students meeting standards by 2013-14, states have the flexibility under ESSA to set their own goals for improving student achievement and graduation rates (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). States also have more flexibility in identifying and supporting schools and districts that show need and opportunity for growth along multiple measures with less punitive measures. In Oregon, which is the context in which this study occurred, this transition to ESSA has meant that schools no longer have an overall accountability rating or score. Instead, Oregon has taken a more holistic approach to evaluate and measure a school's impact (Oregon's Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, 2017).

Oregon has expanded the data used for its performance accountability system to include Chronic Absenteeism, 9th Grade On-Track, and the 5-Year Completion rate. These new metrics add to the previous metrics used in Oregon under NCLB. These include Math and English Language Arts Achievement, Math and English Language Arts Growth, English Learner Progress, and the 4-Year Graduation Rate (Oregon's Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, 2017). More profoundly, however, with the passage of the Student Success in 2019, Oregon is on the journey to implement Outcome Mapping within its state-level accountability framework. The state of Oregon, its communities, families, students, and educators all share

responsibility under Oregon's ESSA plan and Student Success Act for the success of each student. With Oregon's Progress Marker Framework implementation within the Student Success Act, Oregon is entering a new era in performance accountability. One that is just as concerned with the behaviors of the adult educators in the public school system through the use of Outcome Mapping as it is with its students' performance in an effort to build upon the positive impacts accountability has delivered while attempting to minimize the potential of its many unintended negative consequences.

### **Accountability Reform's Positive and Negative Impact on America's K-12 Public Schools**

As described in the previous section, America's forty-year high-stakes testing and accountability journey have produced both benefits and unintended consequences on its public schools and the students they serve. While performance accountability in American public schools' emphasis on student performance has forced schools to focus on addressing well-known and historic achievement and opportunity gaps (Guthrie & Springer, 2004), many critiques of the current system appear in the literature as well (Dworkin, 2005). These critiques, often cited as the unintended impacts of performance accountability, include narrowing curricula to only what is tested, teaching only to the test, encouraging cheating, emphasizing test-taking skills over actual learning, and increasing dropout rates (Dworkin, 2005).

Guthrie and Springer (2004) added that while accountability has its benefits, including an emphasis on school systems' outputs rather than merely the resources provided, we now have a "federalization of education policy, a trend that accelerated with *NAR [A Nation at Risk]* and that continues to threaten the creativity and diversity of local school systems that have been among the nation's greatest strengths" (p. 9.). Other researchers have also warned that the federalization of education reforms has standardized education to a detrimental level to the strengths of local school districts and contexts (Sergiovanni, 2000; Zhao, 2010).

Educational accountability begins with gathering information, or data, on specific student outcomes. This information is used universally in all American K-12 public schools since the passage of the NCLB in the form of public-school report cards that detail test performance and other student outcomes by K-12 grade, subject, and student subgroup (Deming & Figlio, 2016). Based on these publicly released school report cards, a set of escalating sanctions are implemented based on the repeating failure of schools and districts to meet achievement benchmarks. This punitive-based approach to motivating improvement is what Hanushek and Raymond (2005) call consequential accountability. Those in favor of this approach argue that low-stakes accountability systems will not induce the necessary improvement and push for high-stakes consequences associated with a lack of measured progress (Deming & Figlio, 2016).

Deming and Figlio (2016) argue that this perspective can best be viewed through the lens of the classic principal-agent problem where “policymakers, parents, and students contract with schools to provide education” (p37). However, as Deming and Figlio continue to argue, “the provision of education requires the system insiders to make an array of decision and budgetary choices, about hiring, discipline, tenure, curriculum, pedagogy, pay and benefits, grading and exams, and class sizes” (p38). This complexity makes it difficult for those contracting the services to monitor schools and their impact. As such, the hope of greater educational accountability, as Deming and Figlio point out, “is that it will pressure the insiders in schools to alter their production decision and to improve in some key areas” (p 37).

There is strong evidence it works, even if costly in terms of other unintended consequences. Still, one must start with the solid and unmistakable evidence that American K-12 public schools' student performance positively responds to accountability pressure. Several studies of state and federal accountability have found positive gains in reading and math scores

(Chiang 2009, Figilio & Rouse 2006, and Greene, Winter & Forster 2004; all in Florida; Rochoff & Tuner 2010, in New York City; Jacob 2005, in Chicago; and Ladd 1999, In Dallas). These studies tend to find more significant effects for math than reading. A typical finding suggests that performance accountability boosts math test scores in the lowest-performing schools by one-tenth of a standard deviation compared to those in high-performing schools (Deming & Figlio, 2016). This evidence supports accountability's critically important role as a positive contributing factor in narrowing achievement gaps through its greater impact on the bottom of the achievement distribution.

Accountability's positive impact has also been demonstrated beyond increased test scores and narrowing achievement gaps to other long-term outcomes like graduation, college attainment, and earnings. Deming, Cohodes, Jennings, and Jenchs found, for example, that accountability pressures in Texas high schools led to increases in high school graduation, college attainment, and earnings for low-scoring students in low-scoring schools. The national graduation rate is another example of the positive impact of accountability pressure. As nationally, the high school graduation rates rose by more than ten percentage points between 2000 and 2013, the height of high stakes accountability in school reform in the United States, after stagnating during the previous three decades (Murnane 2013).

While it is clear that high-stakes accountability has driven improved student outcomes, Cizek (2001), a proponent of high-stakes testing for accountability, also cited some of the criticisms that one must weigh against the use of tests in high-stakes accountability. According to Cizek, critics claim that consequences of testing include: instruction methods that match only those that the tests seem to value (often emphasizing lower-order thinking); narrowing of curriculum or neglect of subjects not tested; negative effects on teacher morale; a development of anti-testing attitudes among the students who are tested; harmful effects on students' self-

esteem; and "the possibility that high-stakes tests have differential effects by student ethnicity" (p. 2). But, Cizek noted that many of the conclusions of studies of high-stakes testing that raised the issue of unintended consequences were based on either extremely small samples or the mere perceptions of teachers and administrators. In response to the critics, he argued that the testing culture has resulted in teachers' deeper understanding of the science of testing; a greater variety of educational options for students (charter schools, magnet schools, Advanced Placement [AP] and International Baccalaureate [IB] programs), fueled by parents' knowledge of educational systems through newly-available data; higher-quality tests (more reliable, bias-free, and requiring sophisticated thinking) as a result of the 'ever-present critique of tests; and teachers' increased sensitivity to students' special needs and therefore, more intervention and support.

In the years following Cizek's defense of high-stakes testing, numerous studies have provided strong empirical evidence of the proven consequences of performance accountability systems. In addition to those listed by Dworkin (2005), researchers have found a diversion of resources toward some students at the expense of others (Booher-Jennings, 2006; Cullen & Reback, 2006; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Dworkin, 2005; Ladd & Zelli, 2002); elitist models of education in which schools select for admission only those students who will help raise the schools' test scores (Apple, 2000; DeMoss, 2002); manipulation of school demographics within districts (Dworkin, 2005); multiple forms of fabrication in order to maintain compliance with standards regulations (Adler-Kassner & Harrington, 2010; Ball, 2001; Cullen & Reback, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Husbands, 2001); increased and suspect exemption of students from testing (Cullen & Reback, 2006); an exorbitant focus on marketing, public relations, and image-management (Apple, 2000; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Elliott, 2001; Lubienski, 2005; Niesz, 2010; Smyth, 2001); and a loss of democratic practices in school leadership and decision-making (DeMoss, 2002; Gleeson & Gunter, 2001; Leithwood, Steinbach, & Jantzi, 2002; Reed,

McDonough, Ross, & Robichaux, 2001; Smyth, 2001). With these in mind, accountability reform moving forward must weigh both the adverse effects and positive benefits of accountability to determine a new path forward to most fully deliver on America's Public Schools accountability promise of an equitable and excellent public education for each and every student while minimizing its negative and often unintended consequences.

### **Outcome Mapping as a Missing Link in Oregon's Public-School Accountability**

This literature review concludes with a focus on Oregon's attempt at a potential accountability improvement solution to the historic accountability reform tension described above. This accountability transformation in Oregon builds on the theoretical underpinnings and principles of Outcome Mapping. The theoretical framework supporting Outcome Mapping is a theory-driven model and approach developed from the now-familiar "black box" problem in program evaluation and accountability. This "black box" problem in evaluation refers to the common practice of viewing accountability primarily in terms of effects, with little attention or evaluation to how those effects are produced (Ashbury & Leeuw, 2010). As Ashbury and Leeuw state, "although the focus and form can vary, one key aim of theory-driven evaluation is to unpack programmatic 'black boxes' and explain how and why the programs work or fail to work in different contexts and for different stakeholders" (p. 1).

A large body of research now speaks to the importance of identifying mechanisms that link cause and effect relations. This research highlights this linkage as a crucial step in the development of accountability and evaluation systems with the depth necessary to balance the positive and negative impacts of accountability on schools previously discussed in this chapter (e.g., Bunge, 1997, 2004; Elster, 1989, 2007; George & Bennet, 2004; Hedstrom & Swedberg, 1998; Lawson, 1997; Little, 1991; Machamer, Darden, & Craver, 2000; Mayntz, 2004; Steele, 2004; Stinchcombe, 1991; Tilly, 2001). By focusing more explicitly on the underlying mechanisms that generate

results, the theory-based model supporting Outcome Mapping resists the oversimplified answers to school improvement that do little to develop generalizable and usable knowledge for the field (Ashbury & Leeuw, 2010). Although the literature on theory-based evaluation is strong, the use of casual mechanisms does not seem common practice in evaluation, which is especially true in the field of educational evaluation and accountability. As Davidson (2000) has observed, “Despite the purported focus of theory-based evaluation on investigating the causal mechanisms by which a program achieved its effects, surprisingly few actually do this” (p. 18).

The critical transformation in accountability under the Student Success Act to include the Outcome Mapping holds great significance for Oregon students, especially those that have been most historically underserved, by including for the first time the adults in Oregon's K-12 system and not merely its students. Outcome Mapping has been successful in many developmental contexts outside of education and holds much promise in its application within the Student Investment Account of the Student Success Act (Smutylo, 2005). More specifically, as the name and author's Earl, Carden and Smutylo further suggest, Outcome Mapping's niche is understanding outcomes; the so-called ‘missing middle’ or ‘black box’ of results that emerge downstream from the initiative's activities but upstream from longer-term academic, economic, environmental, political or demographic changes (Earl, Carden, & Smutylo, 2001). This concept of Outcome Mapping, found in the Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework, offers a set of potential milestones for school districts and the Oregon Department of Education to look for and map adult behavior towards. Student Investment Account recipients are not expected or required to meet all progress markers, only to track changes when the investments create or contribute to the changes outlined.

Oregon's Student Investment Account Progress Markers are listed below. These fifteen research-based markers are designed to improve Oregon's ability to strengthen its judgments about

causality and what works in schools. The first six detail changes in adult behavior the Oregon Department of Education expects to see. The following six are changes the Oregon Department of Education would like to see, and the final three detail the changes the Oregon Department of Education would love to see in connection to the school district's Student Investment Account investments:

1. Every school recognizes and honors the strengths that educators, students and their families bring to the educational experience through active and consistent community engagement;
2. An equity lens is in place, adopted, and woven through all policies, procedures and practices;
3. Data teams are forming, and they frequently review data that inform a school's decision-making processes, including barriers to engagement and attendance;
4. Schools and districts have an inventory of literacy assessments, tools, and curriculum being used;
5. Increased communication exists between educators and families about student growth, literacy trajectory, areas for improvement, and individualized supports are provided;
6. Schools and districts co-develop and communicate a shared understanding (among educators, students, families and community members) of what it means to be on track by the end of the 9th Grade;
7. Every school has effective foundational learning practices in place including safe, welcoming classroom environments, social-emotional learning, trauma-informed practices, behavioral supports, and culturally sustaining practices;
8. Educators use student-centered approaches to foster student voice, reinforce student engagement and motivation, and increase academic achievement;
9. Dedicated time for professional learning and evaluation tools are in place to see if policies/procedures are adequately meeting the needs of students;

10. Comprehensive literacy strategies, including professional development plans for educators, are documented and communicated to staff, students (developmentally appropriate), and families;
11. An audit of 9th grade course scheduling is conducted, accounting for student core and support course placement, and disaggregated by student focal groups;
12. Schools strengthen partnerships with active community organizations and partners, including local public health, businesses, faith communities, tribal leaders, and others;
13. Educators have a balanced assessment system in place to help them identify student learning in the areas of reading, writing, research, speaking, and listening that are clearly connected to Oregon's English Language Arts and Literacy Standards;
14. School districts have a process to identify and analyze the barriers that disconnect students from their educational goals and/or impede students from graduating on time; and
15. Students have avenues to share and communicate their dreams and aspirations at all levels, including a clear picture of the contributions and next steps they plan to take after they graduate from high school (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account: Progress Markers, 2020).

The Progress Marker framework detailed above for the foundational year of the Student Investment Account was developed through rounds of engagement with leading experts in each common metric, including practitioners, and policy advocates integrating the kinds of changes the Oregon Department of Education believes could advance each of the "Common Metrics" in the SIA long-term while also attending to current school year conditions (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account: Progress Markers, 2020). These "Common Metrics" include: Ninth grade on-track; Four- year graduation; Five-year competition; Third grade reading; and Regular attendance. Individually, each of these progress markers can be considered as indicators of behavioral change, but their real strength rests in their utility as a set, as cumulatively

they illustrate the complexity of the change process. This is something no single indicator can accomplish. For the progress markers are designed to be a collective mechanism to support a developmental approach to evaluation with a focus on learning about the kinds of changes that happen from distinct investments. These progress markers, as an Outcome Mapping framework, have the potential to illuminate the depth and complexity of changes that advance over time. Moving from early and expected changes towards likely changes; and extending toward profound changes desired based on the efforts of Student Investment Account grant recipients. Outcome Mapping, as an educational evaluation method through Oregon's Student Investment Account, provides the opportunity to be a catalyst for student achievement in Oregon's accountability system by focusing its measurement on the process by which change occurs, instead of just the end result of the change (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account: Progress Markers, 2020).

This transformation in Oregon accountability, through the implementation of Outcome Mapping in the Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework, is needed in educational evaluation. According to Lewis' work, increases in student academic achievement are the product of a confluence of events for which no single program, researcher, or agency can realistically claim full credit (Lewis, 2014). Authors Van Ongavelle and Rafael further point out that because of this challenge, an evaluation methodology like Outcome Mapping is needed in education at large. Outcome Mapping holds the potential to practically solve the status quo's accountability framework's inability in Oregon to untangle program impacts on student achievement from normal student growth and other factors that influence students' achievement daily (Van Ongavelle & Rafael, 2014).

Further, research from Oritz (2005), Ofek (2015), and Amos (2009) suggests that Outcome Mapping should be viewed as an additive to but not a replacement for a traditional accountability

system. These studies conclude that the two methods, "Outcome Mapping" and traditional "results-based" accountability, are compatible. Their research goes on to detail that Outcome Mapping can contribute essential elements to results-based management, such as supporting stakeholder learning concerning the program's management, fostering social communication as a basis for participation, and strengthening local institutions (Ortiz, 2005, Ofek, 2015, and Amos, 2009). Because educational improvement is slow and laborious, Outcome Mapping, through its focus upstream of student results to the adult behaviors that affect student performance, is critical to help shift our perspectives to a more systemic and sustainable way of viewing education evaluation. Outcome Mapping, applied to educational accountability in Oregon through the passage of the Student Success Act, holds promise as a critical lever previously missing in Oregon. One dedicated to highlighting the causal mechanisms necessary to support Oregon's aspirational vision of transitioning from our current reality of islands of excellence at the individual school level to system-wide progress towards a more equitable and excellent public education system for all students in Oregon.

However, like every reform effort and intervention, Outcome Mapping has the potential, and if history teaches us anything, a high likelihood of failure. In my over twenty years of experience in education in Oregon, I have personally witnessed Oregon's 1995 Education Act for the 21st Century, widely lauded at the state and local level as the answer to poorly performing schools come and go with no measurable impact. Under this educational reform, schools would issue Certificates of Initial mastery (CIM) and certificates for advance mastery (CAM) to students who attained the new standards. Yet, six years after its launch, Oregon test scores showed no improvement when I started my teaching career in Oregon in 2001 (Oregon's Quality Education Commission, 2001). In 2007, when Oregon finally ended CIM and CAM, data continued to show that Oregon high schools had made zero progress in getting more students to graduate with the skills they needed to pass

college classes (Oregon's Quality Education Commission, 2007). I have seen No Child Left Behind come and go with no sustained change in improved student outcomes. I have witnessed Career and Technical Education and the more recent STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) trend, rise and fall and rise again in popularity with no sustained change produced. If Oregon's passage of the Student Success Act and its implementation of Outcome Mapping will make a difference, it must learn from Oregon and the nation's past educational reform failures.

At the core of these failures, from my experience as an Oregon teacher, principal, and superintendent, has been a call for a prescription before diagnosis or more commonly referred to as the classical one-size-fits-all, top-down approach to solve our education problems. Political, business, community, and educational leaders too often decide the educational solution without carefully examining the varied context and people who must embrace the change, be trained in it, and ultimately supported to live out the desired change, mainly Oregon's students and educators themselves. Outcome Mapping offers a robust methodology that can adapt to a wide range of contexts. It can enhance team and program understanding of change processes, improve the efficiency of achieving results, and promote realistic and accountable reporting but only through skilled facilitation, training, and the support of dedicated budget and time (Earl, Carden, & Smutylo, 2001). It is how we lead, how we team, how we learn, how we support, how we communicate, and how we build community in Oregon schools that will determine whether the potential of Outcome Mapping on paper becomes real in the experiences of our students, families, and educators.

Outcome mapping, like all reform efforts, has the potential to be seen as nothing more than another requirement or to-do list to complete. It is not enough to identify where we want to go and take steps to get there. Authentic leadership seeking sustained results in Oregon public schools through implementing Outcome Mapping must be as bottom-up as possible and top-down as

necessary to build collaborative cultures within and across schools, leading to the collective capacity to improve instruction linked to student needs and achievement. Oregon must raise the bar and close the gap for all students, and doing so for the whole system—not just for some schools, but for all students; not just for some districts but all districts; and not just one level but at all levels. Collective genius in Oregon public schools will require the space for each voice. The work of Oregon leaders, if Outcome Mapping is to be successful, is that of co-designing with staff, teachers, students, families, and the community at large. Teaching and leading in Oregon schools now require adults through the causal mechanisms detailed in the Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework to work effectively within teams to share ideas, challenge perceptions, analyze results and continue designing towards best outcomes for every student.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This dissertation research utilized a qualitative, multiple case study investigation methodology. Through this approach, this study focused on the first-hand experiences and stories of Oregon K-12 educational leaders' perspectives on the evolving role of Outcome Mapping within Oregon's statewide accountability system. More specifically, a multiple case study was needed to provide in-depth information regarding the perceptions of these Oregon K-12 leaders' accountability experiences and the connections they saw in the potential of Outcome Mapping to improve student outcomes. These stories provided the perceptions of what they valued about accountability, their contributions to its successful implementation at the state and local level, barriers they encountered in that effort, and ultimately the opportunity to explore and retell their views and perspectives, both positive and negative, on the potential Outcome Mapping holds, if any, for Oregon's K-12 education accountability systems.

#### **Research Design**

Few previous studies have explored the use of Outcome Mapping within the context of education. Even fewer, if any, had previously explored Outcome Mapping as a critical catalyst within a statewide public K-12 schools accountability framework. Through one-on-one interviews, the perspectives of Oregon K-12 educational leaders, inclusive of an Oregon Department of Education state-level leader, a school district superintendent, and a program/building administrator, were collected and retold in a collaborative multiple case study investigation on the potential of Outcome Mapping.

In research from Yin (2003), a case study aims to investigate a current phenomenon within its context. A case study copes with situations where there are many variables of interest and results rely on many sources of evidence and triangulation (Dul and Hak, 2008, p. 4; as cited in

Yin, 2003). According to Yin (2006), case study research is best applied when the research addresses descriptive or explanatory questions: i.e., what happened, how, and why? By combining my experiences as a practitioner and researcher with the first-hand experiences, stories, and perspectives of those responsible for leading accountability reform at the state and local level in Oregon, this research produced a collaborative case study narrative (Creswell, 2003). One focused on the potential of Outcome Mapping's role and ability to be a key lever to help Oregon more fully deliver on its promise for an equitable and excellent public school system for all of our kids.

### **The Researcher**

During my more than 20 years in education, I have worked to provide exceptional education leadership in support of the building, implementation and investment in an education system that meets the diverse learning needs of every student and provides boundless opportunities that support individual student success. I have a proven track record of innovation and an unrelenting focus on student achievement.

I currently serve as the Superintendent of the Jefferson County Education Service District and Chief Student Success Officer for the High Desert Education Service District where I lead Central Oregon's development, implementation, and evaluation of Oregon's Student Success Act—which passed in May, 2019—representing a historic investment in Oregon's education system, bringing approximately \$1 billion additional annual funding to Oregon schools and early childhood programs.

Prior to joining both the Jefferson County and High Desert Education Service Districts I served as the Superintendent of Bend-La Pine Schools where I was responsible for the leadership, administration and management of approximately 18,700 students, 35 schools, 2,000 employees and a \$190 million general fund budget. Prior to joining Bend-La Pine Schools I was the Superintendent of the Redmond School District, also in Oregon.

I actively serve as a consultant to school leaders, schools, school districts and other organizations across Oregon and beyond undertaking system-wide improvement strategies. I continue to teach graduate level teacher and administrative courses for Oregon State University and Lewis and Clark College and serve on numerous boards and state advisory committees.

### **Sampling**

This study used purposive sampling as defined by Merriam and Tisdell (2015), who write, "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 96). I selected and contacted participants directly from throughout the state whom I had a previous relationship. Thus, participant identities were protected from the school districts or state agencies in which they worked. The specific strategy employed for selection was criterion sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each interviewee selected was targeted as they met two criteria: a.) they had first-hand experience and responsibility recently leading or implementing Oregon's K-12 accountability structures as an Oregon K-12 educational leader at the state, district, or building level and b.) additionally, these Oregon K-12 educational leaders selected as participants were individuals that I worked with for multiple years in Oregon. This effort helped establish the level of expertise and rapport needed between myself and the participants as my primary concern when selecting each case was not representation but rather the opportunity to learn from it (Stake, 1995).

### **Instrumentation, Administration & Procedures**

The interviews with each Oregon K-12 educational leader occurred either in person or via video conferencing. These interviews were conducted in an informal conversational manner to encourage the participants to reveal their individual stories and perspectives and the reality of my

close work history with them over the past seven years. According to Kvale (1996), in an interview conversation, the researcher listens to the interviewee express their views and opinions in their own words, learns about their perspectives from their point of view, and ultimately is a construction site of knowledge. As Kvale expresses, “an interview is literally an inter-view, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest (Kvale, 1996, p. 1).

The interviews contained a greeting, description of the purpose of the research, research question, open-ended interview questions, and space for follow-up questions and conversation based on the interviewee’s response to each scripted interview question to probe for deeper meaning. Following the recommendation of Kvale (1996), regarding the interpersonal behaviors necessary to conduct a good interview, I posed the following open-ended questions during a two part interview with each participant, one hour long each in length, in order to allow each interviewee permission to talk at their own pace while listening carefully for subtle meanings. I used the following interview protocol with each participant for both interviews:

### **Interview Protocol**

**Thank you:** Hi, thanks so much for being willing to sit for an interview with me today!

**Introduction:** It is good to see you again, as you know, I’m an EdD student at George Fox. I’m interested in learning more about the potential you see, if any, of Oregon’s new Student Success Act (SIA) Progress Marker Framework and I’m hoping to learn from your perspective and experience through our interview today.

**Informed consent:** Before we get started, I have a few formalities to take care of. Only myself and my dissertation chair will ever see the transcript of our interview. At the end of our interview today I will ask if there is anything you would like me to strike from the record. If there is, it will

not be included in my analysis. When we meet next time, I might also have some clarifying questions for you or ask you check my interpretation of your story. And most important – you can stop talking to me at any time if you wish. All of that information, and more, is on the form for you to review.

**Move into interview mode:** Okay, so now we can get on with the interview...

**\*Start recording\***

### **Interview Part #1**

- **Question 1:** Can you tell me about your experiences leading and implementing Oregon's K-12 accountability system at the state, district, or school level—be that No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Federal Waiver, or the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)? Tell me whatever you can about what that effort has looked and been like for you.
- **Question 2:** What would you say if I asked you what has worked under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Federal Waiver, or the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) accountability in achieving increased student outcomes and decreased disparities?
- **Question 3:** What limitations have you found under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Federal Waiver, or the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) accountability to achieve increased student outcomes and decreased disparities?
- **Question 4:** As part of the new Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework, do you believe Outcome Mapping holds promise as a catalyst to improve accountability in Oregon? Why or why not?

- **Question 5:** What are your concerns about Oregon's decision to include Outcome Mapping as part of the new Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework in its state-wide accountability system?

### **Interview Part #2**

- **Question 1:** I wanted to follow-up on the end of our conversation last time, by simply asking you what you like about Oregon's new Student Investment Account Progress Marker framework?
  - Can you tell me more about....
  - Do you have anything to add about...
  - Can you give me an example of...
  - Can you tell me what you were thinking/feeling when...
- **Question 2:** What don't you like about it?
  - Can you tell me more about....
  - Do you have anything to add about...
  - Can you give me an example of...
  - Can you tell me what you were thinking/feeling when...
- **Question 3:** If you were solely in charge of implementing Oregon's K-12 accountability system, what would it look like?
  - Can you tell me more about....
  - Do you have anything to add about...
  - Can you give me an example of...
  - Can you tell me what you were thinking/feeling when...

**Give opportunity for edits:** As we wrap up our interview today, I want to give you the opportunity to pause and think over our conversation. If there is anything you'd like to add or have me strike from the record, please let me know.

**At the end of the interview:** I so appreciate your willingness to speak with me today. I'm grateful for your time, honesty, and for sharing your experiences with me. I'd like to tell you a little bit about what I will do with our interview. I am going to analyze each part of our interview along with my other interviews to reach some more general understandings about the potential of outcome mapping. Then I will use some of the material to write about what I've heard from the stories you have shared with me. Again, I am so grateful for your time and willingness to sit down with me and share!

**Adopted from:** Josselson, R. (2013). *Interviewing for Qualitative Inquiry: A Relational Approach*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org>

All interviews were audio-recorded through QuickTime software applications on my iPhone when the interview was conducted in-person or on my computer when conducted via Zoom videoconferencing.

## **Analysis**

Data analyses included transcribing, coding, and the construction of each narrative case study. Specifically, I used a professional transcriber to transcribe each interview. Transcribing the data after each interview allowed me to identify emerging themes more accurately. Coding each transcript additionally enabled me to describe, classify, and interpret the data more fully. Pattern coding involved identifying "explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). Pattern coding helped

reduce large amounts of interview data into related themes. These emerging themes were then used to construct the individual case study narratives for each interviewee. The construction of these case studies ultimately provided a sequence of experiences to form a multi case study that reflects all Oregon K-12 education leader interview participants' experiences and the themes that emerged from them. Member checking with the interview participants occurred as my final step to add accuracy by confirming the reconstruction of these experiences.

### **Research Ethics**

This study had minimal risk and discomfort to the participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to the greatest degree possible throughout the study. However, given that the public nature of the participant's positions, it was difficult to guarantee absolute anonymity and it is possible that others may recognize part of a given participants experience. With that said, all of the information collected from each interviewee was treated as confidential. The audio recordings were reviewed only by the researcher and a professional transcriber who agreed to keep information confidential. The interview audio recordings were destroyed after they were transcribed, and transcripts will be retained for at least three years in a locked file in the principal investigator's office. Additionally, each participant had the ability to refuse to participate or stop participation at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty. Furthermore, nothing asked through this multiple case study investigation and interview process would be considered determinantal in any way possible to the participants in terms of their psychological safety, cause any conflicts of interest or power dynamics for any of the participants, or place the participants in jeopardy of any legal/policy requirements or constraints. No one will be harmed in the process. The implementation of Outcome Mapping through the passage of the Student Success Act is not experimental but in fact is happening currently in Oregon. In fact, it is this research's hope that through the sharing of these Oregon K-12 educational leaders' stories and the case for Outcome

Mapping, more people will be able to understand Oregon's K-12 public school needs, gaps, and help deliver the future solutions needed.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

The purpose of this study was to provide a multiple case study analysis of Oregon K-12 educational leaders' perspectives on the potential of Outcome Mapping, through the implementation of the Student Success Act, as the missing link in Oregon's statewide accountability system to improve the academic achievement of all students. These leaders included an Oregon Department of Education state-level leader, a school district superintendent, and a program/building administrator. Chapter 4 will include the narrative case report of each study participant. It will be followed by a discussion of the research findings of their individual cases and cross-case analysis based on the coding and categorization of interview data. Member checking with the interview participants occurred as my final step to add accuracy by confirming the reconstruction of these perspectives.

### **Participants**

Participants in this study included three Oregon K-12 educational leaders who have first-hand experience and responsibility recently leading or implementing Oregon's K-12 accountability structures. However, none of the participants work for the same organization or in the same geographic area of the state. Each is a leader at the state, district, or program/building level and are individuals that I have worked with for multiple years in Oregon. This level of expertise and past working relationship helped establish the level of rapport needed between myself and the participants. My primary concern when selecting each case was not representation but rather the opportunity to learn from it (Stake, 1995). While the level of expertise and rapport bounded each case, the cases themselves were unique as the experiences of each individual in leading K-12 accountability structures and their perspective of Outcome Mappings potential as a catalyst of improvement of this work comprised a case rather than the individual themselves. A

demographic summary of the participants is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1:**

*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Gender	Area of Leadership	Highest Degree Earned
Katie	Female	Program/Building	Masters
Jeff	Male	District	Ed. D
Ben	Male	State	Masters

The following section includes a narrative case study of each participant’s perspective on the potential of Outcome Mapping, through the implementation of the Student Investment Account’s Progress Marker Framework, as the missing link in Oregon’s statewide accountability system. Each case study begins with a brief description of each participant’s professional background to help illustrate the experiences of the individual. Jeff’s biography illustrates an experienced K-12 educational leader currently serving as a mid-size Oregon school district superintendent. Katie’s opening biography tells the story of how she has served as a teacher, principal, and now program/building administrator. And finally, Ben’s biography describes his journey to becoming a state-level leader in the Oregon Department of Education.

***Case Report 1: Jeff***

When we met, Jeff was serving as a superintendent in a mid-size Oregon school district. Previous to that role, he worked as an assistant superintendent for one of the largest school districts in Oregon. In that role, he supervised the district's schools and academic programming, led school improvement, and oversaw Human Resources. Before that work, Jeff was a high school principal for more than five years, during which his leadership was recognized at both the state and federal levels. His K-12 educational leadership experience additionally includes serving as a middle school

principal, middle school assistant principal, a secondary-level teacher, and middle and high school coach. And finally, Jeff has also taught during this same period on an adjunct basis for multiple colleges and universities in Oregon for the last ten years.

Through all these work experiences, as I talked with Jeff, it was clear that he has always felt the pressure of school accountability. As a new teacher, as he expressed at the beginning of the interview, Jeff was trained in the CIM (Certificate of Initial Mastery) and CAM (Certificate of Advanced Mastery), which was the accountability language of the day in Oregon. As Jeff said:

CIM and CAM were all about an exam that tenth graders would take and a score they needed to meet. And that was, I think, the first-time state-level accountability really showed up for me in Oregon at all.

Jeff went on to recount that when he left the classroom and became a principal for the first time in 2003, "No Child Left Behind ruled the day, and he knew that his first job in this new role was to have kids pass the language arts and mathematics state tests." From there, Jeff's professional journey moved him to a district office position where it was clear to him that No Child Left Behind would not dominate the accountability landscape for much longer, for this was the era of the federal waivers. And Jeff, being the district's Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, was responsible for the change in direction that now embraced teacher evaluations, Value-Added Measures, and even experimented with merit pay. But, as Jeff expressed in our interview, "There was a lot of money behind this accountability shift, and in the back of my mind, and my gut, I felt a lot of this effort was a smokescreen and felt the sense that this too will pass." And now, as a superintendent of one of Oregon's 197 school districts, Jeff is experiencing the broadening metric landscape of trying to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Student Success Act (SSA) in a very demographically diverse school community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

From our discussion through these varying experiences, both positive and negatives were raised by Jeff about the role of accountability in education. First, it was evident in our conversation that Jeff has had much success meeting the accountability benchmarks of previous reform efforts.

In fact, he stated very clearly that:

You can rally a team around it and even though the metrics of accountability have been generally incomplete, with many fallacies surrounding them, we had and have kids who need a clear goal, and these benchmarks have pushed the system and students to meet them.

Jeff also praised no Child Left Behind accountability as the mechanism in Oregon schools to focus on the needs of all students, especially those historically underserved within the system. As Jeff put it, "No Child Left Behind was the first time that I ever as a teacher or administrator ever paid attention to disaggregated data, which is foundational data now in everything we do." While Jeff highlighted these positive impacts of accountability, he quickly and regularly spoke of the many unintended consequences he has seen due to accountability's pressures. From the narrowing of curriculum and course offerings to attempting to believe one could link the impact of a teacher mathematically to a test score, Jeff consistently highlighted the concerns he has seen related to accountability's effect on students, teachers, and schools in Oregon. While each concern was presented as a unique case by Jeff. When taken together, each painted a historical perspective by Jeff as one where we far too often focused in Oregon's accountability journey to date on things that didn't matter and took our eyes off the most essential work. With that said, Jeff also expressed hope for the future and the potential of this positive change under both ESSA and SSA.

As Jeff expressed it in his own words, "I think ESSA and specifically the SSA accountability under the Progress Marker Framework is much more helpful, and I think Oregon has chosen some things that matter to pay attention to." Specifically, it was clear that Jeff has a deep

appreciation for the fifteen progress markers identified in the Student Investment Account's Progress Maker Framework. The focused shifts towards the system and adult behavior change were a considerable strength Jeff expressed repeatedly and strongly supported as key levers that could bring lasting and sustainable change through their impact on policies, practices, and attitudes. "It feels like we are coming back to a level of accountability, clarity around what we are chasing, and the pressures and hopes that surround it, and I think we'd already be there without COVID-19", Jeff said. The impact of COVID-19 and the timing and implementation of the Student Investment Account's Progress Maker Framework could not be overstated from Jeff's perspective. While mostly viewed as a negative, Jeff did express that COVID-19 may have turned over the status quo enough in Oregon's education system to make it more open than ever to a new paradigm of accountability. If true, Jeff strongly encouraged the Oregon Department of Education to do the work to make a case for Outcome Mapping in a manner that helps all involved primed to embrace the philosophy of Outcome Mapping as a missing and essential component in Oregon's accountability structures.

Jeff concluded our conversation together with solid and specific advice towards that effort. While Jeff leaned in support of the framework, he was strongly discouraged by the lack of communication to the field from the Oregon Department of Education related to them. While Jeff himself was well-versed in the concept of Outcome Mapping as the framework for the Student Investment Account Progress Markers Framework, he was the first to admit that he could not state what the fifteen progress markers were. Furthermore, Jeff was certain no one in his current district could. As he put it, "So here is what I know and don't know about these fifteen markers. I could not tell you what they are. I can maybe remember four or five, but I can't tell you more than that." More importantly than improving the communication and professional learning surrounding these

new progress markers, Jeff's most critical feedback and strong reaction are that fifteen is way too many. Specifically, he said:

When I hear fifteen markers, I worry about two things. First, I worry about that being too many for any school district to really be able to digest, apply, and own. The second thing I think about is that fifteen are too many to effectively and accurately monitor and adjust practice towards. In short, fifteen's too much, and any district that says they are working hard on all fifteen of these is probably not telling the truth.

Jeff worried how many of these progress markers are there because they are politically the right ones to include in the fifteen instead of being there because research has demonstrated that they move the needle for students, especially those historically underserved by Oregon's education system. He further went on to suggest that the Oregon Department of Education allow local districts, based on their context, to choose from the list of fifteen to a more manageable number of annual progress markers, perhaps five, that would allow districts to navigate their own local politics and more importantly create an effective monitoring system for them. As Jeff put it, "You are what you measure, and if we want these markers to become real, we need to make sure they are being monitored and measured at the local level." While the state of Oregon has established a quarterly review of each district's progress towards these Student Investment Account Progress Markers Framework, built on the theoretical underpinnings of Outcome Mapping, districts must have the capacity to do this work in a way that matters. As Jeff expressed, "Measuring every quarter and reporting on all fifteen is way too much; we can't do this." From that statement, he left me with a final question of his own:

Right now, if you were to say nine years from now, what will we say about the effort to include Outcome Mapping? Without meaningful adjustment from the state, we are saying,

'do you remember when? I say this because I don't know that there is anything we could start right now in the pressures of COVID-19 that will be here in nine years unless it becomes our one unifying mission. From that perspective, I don't think it will be driving our work. I think if we believe in it and want it to, it calls on leaders at all levels to do more than ever to say this is what matters without adding a whole lot of complexity that counterintuitively may not matter much.

***Case Report 2: Katie***

When Katie and I met, she was serving as a program/building leader focused on math, science, health, and PE. Before that work, Katie served as an educational program specialist for the Oregon Department of Education. In both roles, Katie has successfully demonstrated the ability to work collaboratively with teachers to provide students a personalized, authentic, and rigorous educational experience that allows them to explore their passions, define their identities, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Her K-12 educational leadership experience also includes teaching math, science, and special education for 13 years in various school settings in juvenile corrections, self-contained special education, a large urban high school, and a small STEM high school. In addition, Katie has also served as a teacher leader, professional development specialist, and principal.

This range of experience provided Katie with a first-hand perspective on accountability's impact at the classroom, building, district, region, and state level. With a background in mathematics, Katie rejected the simplified Value-Added Measures and test score analysis she experienced as a teacher and building principal. Instead, she consistently asked, as she continues to today, "How does any of this improve what we are doing in the classroom?" Through our conversation, it was apparent that most of these experiences have left Katie quite skeptical about the potential of accountability frameworks to drive improvement. However, it was interesting that

this skepticism has not diminished her efforts in exploring accountability structures to support her work, but quite surprisingly, it has done the opposite. Within the first few minutes of our interview, it was clear that Katie was one of the most passionate, inquisitive, knowledgeable, and forward-thinking educators I have had the chance to meet. She has taken the accountability frameworks provided by the state or federal government and attempted to adapt and improve them in practice. One specific example of this effort came to light when she shared her work helping to establish Oregon's STEM hubs across the state.

This one example was one of many she shared with me during our time that demonstrated a profound understanding of making accountability work in the field. In that work, Katie put together a set of indicators designed to measure the collective impact of the STEM Hub. These indicators were collectively developed and supported by all participants. As Katie expressed it:

We developed a series of measurable indicators we all thought were important. We then asked practitioners to provide their evidence of progress on these through multiple interviews throughout the year. And, ultimately, they rated themselves and set goals for the next quarter where they needed and wanted to improve.

In her retelling of this experience, it was clear this was the closest she has experienced in terms of effective accountability helping to drive continuous improvement. She also used the retelling of her work with the STEM Hub to express her support for Oregon's most recent effort to implement Outcome Mapping through the SIA Progress Marker Framework. As she put it, "I think Outcome Mapping resonates with a lot of educators. So, when I saw what Outcome Mapping was as I learned about its details within the Student Success Act, I thought to myself, that is what I believe in."

With that said, and even with that level of commitment to Outcome Mapping's success in

Oregon, Katie was quick to express concerns and suggested improvements. It was clear that Katie was concerned that the lack of focus in Outcome Mapping on disaggregation of data has the potential for unintended negative consequences. While overall, Katie is very cynical of the No Child Left Behind type of accountability structures, she did express the one clear benefit it brought: a laser-like focus on all students, especially those most historically underserved by our education systems. In our time together, Katie said, "Federal, traditional, performance-based accountability centered our current equity work, and for that, I am thankful." While she voiced this benefit and the concern of the lack of disaggregation of data in Outcome Mapping many times in our conversation, she was most hopeful that we might find the right balance with the correct implementation of Outcome Mapping in combination with other accountability metrics. More specifically, Katie voiced this perspective when she said that "Outcome Mapping might be the mechanism needed to push back on the negative side of disaggregation of data which is its potential to reinforces a deficit framing for students instead of challenging the system itself."

Like I mentioned previously, it was clear that Katie is a big thinker with big ideas. She spoke of COVID-19's impact often but consistently hoped that this chaotic time in education might actually be creating the conditions for something much better. For while she voiced the concern that fifteen SIA Progress Markers may be too many for the field right now, she was more interested in using this opportunity coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic to, as she put it, "Open space for accountability focused on community values and needs, for culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy, and for more holistic definitions of academic success." The COVID-19 pandemic paused traditional measures, and increased the discourse around care and connection, wellness and belonging across the state of Oregon. As Katie expressed, "There is both opportunity and need to slow down and ask our communities what accountability, data collection, analysis, and reporting can look like if it is not rooted in punishment but instead in our values." For Katie, this would

produce an education system that exists for and belongs to everyone, especially those currently marginalized and excluded communities. This education system would prioritize total community wellness and deep collective care. As she said when I asked her to describe her ideal system of accountability when she said:

Accountability would be neither quantified nor centralized. Rather, every student, family, educator, and community member would be trusted. Accountable would be to ourselves and each other for our shared values and processes of transformation and growth. This is the Student Investment Accountability we aim to make reality.

Katie concluded our conversation together with solid and specific advice towards the use of Outcome Mapping. Foremost, she strongly advised the state to think of this new accountability framework in a model that many educators are more used to, that being the idea of accreditation. “When presented this way, the SIA Progress Marker Framework can be viewed as the heart of continuous improvement through a lens of accreditation,” she said. In short, Katie hoped that the fifteen progress markers could be seen to define the characteristics of an excellent educational institution and provide guidelines for efforts that will grow students, teachers, leaders, schools, and districts. This view is one that schools are familiar with in Oregon, she argued, at least at the high school level and those partnering with AVID, the International Baccalaureate Program, and more. Essential to the accreditation and Outcome Mapping processes in the SIA Progress Marker Framework is broad engagement that probes data, gathers objective input, and observes how learners respond to their environment and instruction—all along the way, shifting as Katie put it, “From looking at what the students are expected to learn to what the system provides.”

***Case Report 3: Ben***

When we met, Ben was serving as a state-level educational leader within the Oregon Department of Education. Ben's journey to that position included more than fifteen years of leadership experience at the intersection of education, social work, community organizing, capacity building, and social change. This cross-sector work included serving as an executive director at the state and national levels and a consultant for organizations like the Oregon Department of Education, the Chalkboard Project, the Educational Policy Improvement Center, the Oregon Center for Educational Equity, and numerous Oregon school districts. Before that, Ben served as an elementary and middle school teacher and a school-level leader. The school he led gained national and international attention amongst leaders in alternative education for small-scale personalized learning models.

While Ben's work experiences are profound, it was clear that Ben's focus on improving all that he is a part of through study and reflection began at an early age. In our conversation, Ben discussed the impact of being raised in a household of educators, his undergraduate studies, graduate studies, and other early experiences that exposed him to different ideas around what education could and should be. As he put it, "I was being dosed in theories of student development while I was experiencing, as a new teacher, the opposite forces of No Child Left Behind in my day-to-day job." These experiences as a middle school teacher in a failing school under No Child Left Behind were pivotal in forming Ben's beliefs around effective accountability. As he put it, "I remember having to negotiate with my principal about teaching my kids. He wanted me to have my kids on computers for test prep 75% of the instructional time, and I had to negotiate him down to 25%." But most jarring to Ben was the school's theory about getting out of No Child Left Behind. "We were actually given lists of kids between the 29th and 49th percentile and were told to give these students extra instructional time and computer test prep and ignore the kids above, but

more gross, ignore the kids below." This system gaming may have been effective in moving test scores, but morally wrong to Ben, and changed everything in terms of Ben's professional decisions and the trajectory moving forward.

From that early experience, Ben asked himself profound questions that still guide him in his work today, such as, "What is No Child Left Behind and who writes these types of laws?" These types of questions ignited Ben towards what has been his more recent work at the intersection of policy and practice, where he traveled throughout the nation and internationally doing this work, including now at the Oregon Department of Education. In fact, it was at an international gathering during this time where Ben was first introduced to the concept of Outcome Mapping and then later experienced its implementation in the field of economic and community development. This exposure pushed Ben to be a part of helping the state of Oregon attempt to focus not on how to game the system, as was his previous experience in education, but instead, as he put it:

On trying to figure out how systems change and what behavior change happens to create the right outcomes over time, for if we don't solve for that, we will always stay trapped in this kind of simplistic view of a certain set of numbers and far away from what actually causes a system to change.

While Outcome Mapping may not have the capacity to answer Ben's questions completely, Ben expressed that Outcome Mapping is the most elegant and practical framework that he has found in his career that can potentially fill this gap in accountability in education systems. As he put it in our interview, "I believe Outcome Mapping has the potential to act as a leverage point for that deeper work in terms of what we care about and what we measure in Oregon accountability." While supportive in direction, Ben also expressed concerns related to Oregon's efforts to implement it. Specifically, saying "That while I believe in its core concepts and the values

Outcome Mapping is built upon, it's a lot for people to digest and a completely different mental model of evaluation." Ben expressed that this is especially true in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic's impact on capacity in our schools and districts. As he put it, "I wonder, given the impact of COVID-19, if we are not better off as a state seeding the concept of Outcome Mapping in practical applied ways without trying to train everybody." From Ben's perspective, this seeding has more potential to build gravity around the Progress Marker Framework as the mechanism to tell the story in terms of what is leading to the increased student outcomes we all want to see.

No matter the impact of COVID-19 and which implementation strategy the Oregon Department of Education will embrace, it was clear from Ben's perspective that we still need traditional long-term student benchmarks and cannot replace them with Outcome Mapping alone. Instead, Ben clarified in our time together that the Oregon Department of Education's vision of Outcome Mapping is additive in helping the field document the adult behavior changes along the way that lead to improved student outcomes. This perspective was mainly from the practical reality of state-level politics. As Ben expressed, "The corporate and business lobby funding the Student Success Act through the Corporate Activity Tax demand a student performance framework that includes traditional accountability metrics in place." Ben also expressed this same demand within the leadership and staff at the Oregon Department of Education. However, at the same time, this reality was discussed as an essential driver of accountability implementation in Oregon; it was evident in the interview that Ben did not view this in a negative light. As he stated:

In order to operationally create the possibilities for future execution of something better, we have to build upon the current foundation while simultaneously asking people to do things before they really fully understand what they are being asked to do.

Ben concluded our interview focused on the work the state must do if Outcome Mapping will have any staying power and positive impact. At the center of this advice were two straightforward steps. The first was recognizing that the Oregon Department of Education must attempt to deliver increased integration and alignment of the many state initiatives impacting school districts in Oregon. As Ben declared:

The Oregon Department of Education must produce aligned guidance and more importantly increased coherence. If done, I am really optimistic that we can create a place where people see a set of braiding and blending of funds all focused towards the system changes identified in the SIA Progress Marker Framework, creating a common language to think about iterating change over time.

Ben's second step focused on the need to grow the state's capacity to gather accurately, report, and most importantly, use the finding of progress identified by all 197 districts through the use of quarterly Outcome Mapping reporting. As Ben put it, "The proof will be in the pudding. Outcome Mapping will break down if we don't have the goods to show the change points within the framework that are making a difference." During this conversation, it became clear that while the Oregon Department of Education has strong capacity for basic and applied research, it has very little muscle around translational and dissemination research and understanding how you take information and make it usable in the field. As Ben put it:

We should be way more accountable for what is or is not happening in our schools, but that level of accountability does not come through these small, moving, and outdated student achievement numbers. It comes through a framework that can transparently report what it is actually doing to help all of its students. A system that can say here is what we've done. Here is where we are. Here are the early returns. Here is where we are going.

While these two steps will be hard to pull off, Ben expressed confidence in the leadership, direction, and resource capacity allocated towards it. Ben believes that increased alignment may occur as soon as this next biennium. The department is already committed to delivering a system able to report and help drive the use of the finding found through the SIA Progress Marker Framework. As Ben highlighted:

The Oregon Department of Education is working on an RFP that will come out in the next couple of months. This RFP will be for several hundred thousands of dollars for a monitoring and evaluation research partner to come and help us build the internal infrastructure and capacity, so the agency long-term has the skill do this.

This effort is not about outsourcing but getting an injection of expertise and capacity for Ben. An injection is needed based on the perspective that Outcome Mapping will take root permanently, or not, based on the Oregon Department of Education's ability to deliver at scale the concrete backend feedback mechanism to districts and the public at large that effective accountability systems demand. As he put it in his final statement of the interview:

Mostly I think Outcome Mapping is a framework that actually matches most people's kind of common-sense instinct but simultaneously does not seem to hold enough rigor. And to be honest, we haven't always treated it to have enough rigor. That has to change.

### **Cross Case Analysis**

As a multiple case study, for this research, I attempted to consider the data of individual cases separate from each other and highlight the most prominent themes of each participant's perspective in the case reports. To develop these individual case study themes, I used an iterative process of listening to each interview, reading each participant's interview transcript multiple times,

and then coding each transcript by theme through numerous cycles of refinement. This individual case study data analysis allowed me to first look critically at each case and, secondly, and most importantly, notice clear, replicative categories across the cases. The highlighting of similarities across the cases was designed not to generalize the findings but rather to identify commonalities in these three bounded cases by categorizing the theme codes from each case and then comparing them. Through this analysis, which included member checking with the interview participants as a final step to add accuracy by confirming the reconstruction of these perspectives, similarities across the cases emerged through the participants' voices, experiences, and perspectives.

***Results of Coding***

The thematic coding of interview data was compiled individually first, looking for similar data to sort into the same place. This was done keeping in mind that the themes needed to be exhaustive, mutually exclusive, and conceptually congruent (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015; Morse, 2008). I then compared the themes across each compilation to ensure the cross case analysis categories developed were accurate reflections of the participants' experiences. This combined effort led to five overarching categories for this multi-case analysis research study, as can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2:**

*Categories*

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COVID-19 Pandemic Impact
Promise and Hope Exists
Accountability Must Center on Relationships and Follow-Through
Knowledge Mobilization is Critical
Consolidation and Coherence are Essential to Support Implementation

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The process of sorting the theme codes into categories, in addition to naming each category, was as insightful as looking at the results. The following category finding and patterns were uncovered.

### ***COVID-19 Pandemic Impact***

To provide perspective on the impact that COVID-19 has had on our participants' local experience related to the Student Success Act, it is essential to first start with a look at COVID-19's impact at the state level. The Student Investment Account (SIA) was to receive pre-pandemic more than \$470 million from the Student Success Act (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Supporting Quality Implementation, 2021). However, due to the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tax supporting the Student Success Act, this amount changed. This change significantly reduced SIA funds to approximately \$150 million due to COVID-19 (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Supporting Quality Implementation, 2021). To best support districts amid the COVID-19 crisis, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) made the following adjustments and shifts:

- Allowed applicants to submit a partial (or incomplete) initial application in 2020 and an adjusted 2021 plan instead of an entirely new plan (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Supporting Quality Implementation, 2021).
- Cancelled the Quality Assurance and Learning Panels (QALP) for 2020 (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Supporting Quality Implementation, 2021). The QALP was initially set up include a broad mix of stakeholders, as described in the December 2019 SIA Guidance.
- Redirected energy to support school districts' efforts to hold effective virtual school board meetings. Specifically, supporting efforts to continue allowing public comment and

engagement in approving SIA applications and plans (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Supporting Quality Implementation, 2021).

- Released of Longitudinal Performance Growth Targets (LPGTs) (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Supporting Quality Implementation, 2021). In the August 2020 special session, the Oregon Legislature increased flexibility for the administration of the SIA by releasing SIA applicants from needing to co-develop with ODE and track LPGTs due to reality of the lack of data available as a result of COVID-19. In addition, the bill named that ODE could develop other applicable performance growth targets and indicators of performance.

While the Oregon Department of Education implemented the above steps at the state level in response to the pandemic, one fundamental reality that became apparent as codes were sorted was that all participants viewed nearly every question posed in the interview through the lens and impact of leading during the COVID-19 pandemic. All three participants spoke to the reality that Oregon school districts, operating in good faith, engaged with hundreds if not thousands of students, families, and staff in new ways through the development of their SIA plans, but they themselves had to pivot due to the changed financial impact of COVID-19. This quick adjustment due to opening schools under COVID-19 protocols and requirements just after district stakeholders and the community helped to elevate priorities has left the community confused on what has or has not occurred due to the passage of the Student Success Act. This reality of constant change resulting from the COVID-19 crisis over the past two years produced a clear sense of leadership fatigue in each participant and the perspectives they shared. The discernment by each participant that they are leading a system in survival mode produced a tacit understanding that the potential of the SIA Progress Markers has been delayed due to COVID-19 and must wait until the system has the time and capacity to care about them.

### *Promise and Hope Exists*

The overwhelming majority of codes from all three participants' interviews fell under the idea that promise and hope exist in this work. The codes in this category represented both the larger aspects of the Student Success Act and the more specific and practical support for the use of adult behaviors through the implementation of Outcome Mapping through the Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework. The perspective of the positive promise of both was the predominant common experience for the participants. There was a widespread sense that the two years of listening done by the Joint Committee for Student Success was essential and led to legislation that holds real promise of educational change in Oregon. The law embeds critical principles of authentic community engagement, attention to focal students, families, and staff. It applies an equity lens to strategic planning focused on student well-being and solving long-standing academic disparities.

All three participants saw the potential of Outcome Mapping in the SIA Progress Marker Framework as a practical methodology for planning and assessing school and district initiatives by aiming its measuring and reporting on real and tangible change within the system itself. Initially, while viewed by all participants as a complicated process made up of numerous elements, each continued to see its promise, especially if adjusted in appropriate ways, to be a valuable way of planning, monitoring, and evaluating their work, while also engaging more stakeholders. Specifically, all three participants saw hope in Outcome Mapping. First, all participants appreciated its ability to introduce monitoring and evaluation considerations at all stages of a school or district's journey. Secondly, they saw Outcome Mapping's ability to move the system away from the notion that monitoring and evaluation are done to a school or district to a new model as incredibly important. This new model sees monitoring and accountability through Outcome Mapping as a tool to actively engage the entire school and district community in a framework and evaluation plan that

promotes self-assessment. And finally, and most powerfully, it was impressive to hear all participants focus on Outcome Mapping's potential to help the field learn about the influences of change in their work. Therefore, it allows the field to systematically and practically think about what they are doing and adaptively manage variations in strategies to bring about desired outcomes.

### ***Accountability Must Center on Relationships and Follow-Through***

The addition of Outcome Mapping through the Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework adjusts the focus of districts and schools. It creates an enhanced mechanism to interact and engage with their communities, Educational Service Districts, and the Oregon Department of Education. At the same time, the Oregon legislature was clear from its passage that an investment the size of the Student Success Act must be balanced by increased transparency and accountability to ensure the money is spent correctly and that our students see results from the investment. Outcome Mapping's centering focus on accountability through relationships and follow-through, a common theme in all three participants' stories, was the positive early signs of these changes coming to life.

Specifically, all participants spoke to the reality that school improvement and accountability are essentially about people, and they liked that the focus of Outcome Mapping is on people. Each spoke to the mindset shift in Outcome Mapping away from assessing the development impact of an initiative, school, or district toward changes in the behaviors, relationships, actions, or activities of those within it as an essential step towards proper accountability. This shift significantly alters how a program, school, or district understands its goals and assesses its performance and results. Outcome Mapping focuses on monitoring and evaluating factors and actors within that direct sphere of influence of educators. And finally, each participant expressed their appreciation of the

steps in the law's process that promote transparency in ensuring that SIA plans and results are shared with the community. Some of the positive steps discussed by participants included:

- Board approval of the district SIA plan with opportunity for the public to comment;
- Required availability of the SIA plan at the main office and on the website;
- Annual audits and annual progress reports available on the district website, presented to the local board, and reviewed by ODE;
- The reality that if the audit identifies issues, ODE may collaborate to identify and implement specific interventions, provide technical assistance, and potentially deduct amounts from future SIA distributions; and
- The quarterly and annual review of progress related to the SIA Progress Marker Framework. This review includes the checkpoint that if a district does not meet progress, ODE may require a district to participate in a coaching program or direct the expenditure of future funds.

### ***Knowledge Mobilization is Critical***

Spoken about by all three participants during their interviews and elevated as the fourth coded theme in the findings, one of the hallmarks of generative educational systems change is increasing the culture and rate of professional sharing and learning. This type of learning and use of accountability's findings is needed so that key innovations in one context are digested, not simplistically replicated, in another. Most of the technical assistance and field-building work designed into the Student Investment Account is about to begin. This work is a crucial area of opportunity that all participants spoke to in terms of Outcome Mapping's potential as a catalyst for knowledge mobilization networked learning across the field. In all interviews, each participant saw Outcome Mapping's new theories and practices for monitoring and evaluating impact through the

Student Investment Accounts Progress Marker Framework as positive progress in Oregon's effort towards increasing educational outcomes at multiple levels in the educational system.

In each case, participants noted that the traditional models for professional learning and educational improvement they have experienced chiefly in their career tend to focus on learning and change at the individual educator level. This level of focus was consistently discussed in each interview as something which prevents a complete understanding of persistent challenges within the context of the entire system, prevents knowledge of root causes of problems, and keeps educators isolated. All participants saw Outcome Mapping as a catalyst for a new and needed networked approach. This networked approach to continuous improvement focuses on identifying the core system, rather than individual challenges, and supporting stakeholders to align around a common problem, understanding root causes, goals, and system shifts to work toward. This approach addresses issues that have historically been avoided by building solid relationships between educators, removing the barriers of isolation and perfectionism, and encouraging testing new instructional practices. Networked improvement approaches create a sense of possibility and hope within educators as they learn from each other, see longstanding problems resolved, and start to view themselves as change agents at scale.

It was the hope of all participants through comments coded into this fourth category that Outcome Mapping could allow this new networked model to flourish and would be the critical reality that must occur to prove Outcome Mapping's potential. First, each participant spoke of their hope that Outcome Mapping could increase the efficacy of educators and support adults to learn new ways to shift practices and implement professional learning. Secondly, on its potential to unlock the skills and potential of everyone involved. Thirdly, on the power of Outcome Mapping to help both educators and students gain new skills, new ways of being in the classroom, and new ways of being in relationship with each other. And finally, on its ability to create peer-to-peer,

school-to-school, and district-to-district supported and supportive professional learning and development structures that strengthen the network's direct work and the school's or district's overall culture.

***Consolidation and Coherence are Essential to Support Implementation***

In the same way that the Joint Committee on Student Success toured Oregon, each participant in their own way spoke to the reality that it might be a good time for an implementation tour to get into the details that come from understanding the barriers and challenges presented by there being more than 88 distinct state programs in addition to federal programs in addition to COVID-19 impacts and priorities. All three participants raised the theme that one of the best ways to build support and deep implementation for Outcome Mapping is to take fragmentation and the administrative burden districts experience out of the equation. At the same time, all participants recognized that the Oregon Department of Education staff has done work to map these challenges and begin to make changes in internal operations. Nevertheless, they all believe there is significant room for improvement without additional legislation. That said, the common voice from all three participants is one of needed alignment and coherence from ODE to better support districts' effort to focus on the crucial work enshrined in the SIA and other Student Success Act programs and priorities.

Each participant spoke in unison as they spoke for leaders across Oregon in terms of the critical need of the field to experience improved coordination, alignment, and support for districts at the state level to better align programs with similar or connected goals. One of the critical aims expressed by participants was to figure out how to reduce the administrative burden while increasing the potential impact of each initiative with attention to local and regional relationships and context. Each participant recognized this transition out of the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to bring this alignment work together in a way that operationalizes coordination

ahead of potential legislative action that could further review or consolidate grant programs.

Specifically, each participant focused in on the potential at ODE for combining grant applications, grant agreements, grant monitoring, and reporting for the School District Investment grants established in House Bill 3427 with other programs, or grants, administered by the agency--including grants made from the High School Graduation and College and Career Readiness Fund (Ballot Measure 98), Title I Grants where appropriate, and other grant programs identified by the agency.

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 began with a detailed description of the study participants, whose experiences and perspectives defined the individual cases. This was followed by the individual narrative case reports, which recounted the perspectives of each Oregon K-12 educational leader's description of Outcome Mapping as a catalyst for improved accountability in Oregon public schools. The individual case reports were then compared, and a categorical description of the replications across cases was presented. Direct quotes from the interviewees in this study were used to illustrate participants' perspectives in their own words. Chapter 5 will include a discussion of the findings, possible implications of Outcome Mapping for practice, recommendations for SIA Progress Marker Framework implementation from the participants, and emergent questions for future research.

## Chapter 5: A Discussion

After more than 20 years in public education in Oregon, as a teacher, principal, and superintendent, the 2019 legislative session was the most hopeful I have seen. During the 2019 Oregon legislative session, Oregon's leaders made a significant investment in Oregon's children, educators, schools, and state with the passage of the Student Success Act (SSA) ORS 327.175. The SSA bolsters K-12 and early learning funding by \$1 billion each year (HB 3427: Student Success Act, 2019). In addition, \$200 million was placed into the State School Fund of those funds. The remaining was distributed into three accounts: the Early Learning Account, the Student Investment Account, and the Statewide Education Initiatives Account (HB 3427: Student Success Act 2019). While the money is critically important, this study explored the Student Success Act's critical policy shift from the traditional accountability structures found in previous educational reform efforts to include Outcome Mapping through the Student Investment Account Marker Framework's implementation.

Under the Student Success Act, school districts still need to develop and monitor student performance-based summative metrics traditionally found in previous accountability reform efforts such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Federal Waiver, or the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). However, the Student Success Act takes a significant step beyond this current accountability paradigm by requiring each district recipient to additionally monitor progress from a learning and continuous improvement orientation through the establishment of statewide Progress Markers Framework (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account Guidance for Eligible Applicants: A Comprehensive Resource, 2019). Built on the theoretical underpinnings of Outcome Mapping, an approach to monitoring and evaluation that has been used for decades outside of the education setting in the planning and assessment of development programming that is oriented towards social change and transformation, the

Progress Marker Framework defines outcomes as desired changes in adult behaviors within the system (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account: Progress Markers, 2020).

Through one-on-one interviews with Oregon K-12 educational leaders, including an Oregon Department of Education state-level leader, a school district superintendent, and a program/building administrator, this study attempted to explore their descriptions of Outcome Mapping as a catalyst for improved accountability in Oregon. Participants shared stories and reflected on their experiences leading and implementing Oregon's accountability systems through narrative interviews that highlighted the strength and concerns of using Outcome Mapping within the Student Investment Account's Progress Marker Framework. This study shared participants' experiences in the form of individual case reports in Chapter 4, and replications across those cases were identified in the cross-case analysis.

This chapter includes a discussion of the research findings and possible implications of Outcome Mapping as part of the Student Investment Account's Progress Marker Framework. This is followed by recommendations for Outcome Mappings Implementation based on the participants' stories and suggestions for future practice from the participants themselves. The chapter concludes with emerging questions for future research.

## **Discussion**

In my daily work with the Student Success Act, since its passage in 2019, it is clear that public approval and accountability are core components built into the Student Investment Account (SIA) statute (HB 3427: Student Success Act, 2019). A singular set of fifteen progress markers have been developed for the 2021-22 school year and beyond. These progress markers focus on integrating the kinds of changes the Oregon Department of Education believes could advance each of the common metrics, also known as Long-term Performance Growth Targets (LPGTs), in the SIA long-term (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account Guidance for

Eligible Applicants: A Comprehensive Resource, 2019). The progress marker framework is a mechanism to support a developmental approach to evaluation, focused on learning about the types of changes that happen from specific investments.

Beginning in January 2021 and continuing every quarter after that, districts are required to submit programmatic and financial progress reports to ODE (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account Guidance for Eligible Applicants: A Comprehensive Resource, 2019). In the programmatic progress reports, recipients have and will continue to detail their progress on SIA plan activities and the kinds of changes unfolding towards the fifteen identified statewide progress markers. Districts are also required to review their progress annually through a cumulative progress report and a municipal audit (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account Guidance for Eligible Applicants: A Comprehensive Resource, 2019). The annual progress review asks grantees to review their implementation efforts, examine what worked and what didn't, and document through ODE the reporting requirements to substantiate changes within the progress markers framework. In addition, under Section 15 of the Student Success Act, districts are required annually to conduct a financial audit of their SIA expenditures in accordance with the Municipal Audit Law (HB 3427: Student Success Act, 2019). The annual progress report and yearly municipal audit must be made available in the main office and posted on the grantee's website. They additionally must each be presented to the school board at an open meeting with the opportunity for public comment and the results of that effort submitted to ODE (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account Guidance for Eligible Applicants: A Comprehensive Resource, 2019).

Outcome Mapping served as the theoretical underpinning for this set of fifteen progress markers established in the Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework and ODE's required quarterly progress reports, annual reports, audits, and the framework for this study. Its

tenets informed every part of this study design, from the methodological approach to the data analysis process. As I compiled, processed, and interpreted the data, I identified replicative patterns in experiences that were shared related to Oregon's implementation of Outcome Mapping with the passage of the Student Success Act. These included:

1. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on implementing the SIA progress markers;
2. The reality that the belief in the promise of the law and Outcome Mapping continues to hold despite the pandemic's impact;
3. The recognition that accountability, no matter the system, must maintain trust through relationships and follow-through;
4. The realization that is sharing what works and what doesn't through knowledge mobilization and networked learning must be central in any successful accountability system; and
5. The real-world experience that if we want Outcome Mapping to have its hopeful impact, the ODE must focus on alignment, consolidation, and coherence to support its successful implementation and impact.

While other similarities between cases existed, these replications were unique in the importance participants placed on them and the frequency in which participants mentioned them.

The following implications for practice take into account each of these common areas and my perspectives from leading this work as the Chief Student Success Officer in the High Desert Education Service, in light of the theoretical framework of Outcome Mapping put in practice throughout Oregon public schools. In their interviews, participants drew clear delineations between their perspectives and experiences with the Student Success Act in general and the potential of the SIA Progress Marker Framework before the COVID-19 pandemic, during, and now what they see

as its potential as we emerge from it. As a result, I have chronologically organized the implications for practice to mirror these distinctions.

### **Implications for Practice**

The Oregon Department received a total of 208 SIA applications, out of a total possible 210, from school districts and charter schools who were eligible to apply from across the state by their April 15, 2020 deadline (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Supporting Quality Implementation, 2021). As part of the SIA application, districts and eligible charter schools were required to submit a detailed budget describing their budgeted activities for their first year of implementation and denoting the relevant allowable use category. Based on a review of the submitted budgets before the August 2020 COVID-19 reduction in funding, applicants planned to allocate:

- 36.1% of funds to Improving Student Health and Safety,
- 27.1% to Reducing Class Size,
- 25.7% to Well Rounded Education, and
- Less than 5% each to the other allowable use categories that could include increasing instructional time, ongoing community engagement, or administrative costs (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Supporting Quality Implementation, 2021).

Eligible applicants were then required to adjust or amend their original SIA plan in light of the COVID-19 reduction in funding. This required SIA applicants to make significant changes to their planned strategies or outcomes and submit three items to ODE:

- an updated SIA plan,
- updated budget, and
- board meeting minutes, showing the opportunity for public comment and approval of the amended plan. (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Supporting Quality

Implementation, 2021).

And finally, SIA grant recipients again needed to additionally update ODE on how they will make adjustments or amendments in executing their existing three-year plans and applications for the 2021-23 funding cycle. This updated submission process allowed grant recipients to provide ODE with a streamlined set of essential information, including the new budget, narrative details on using an equity lens analysis, and information on current community engagement processes. Grant recipients submitted an updated SIA plan adjustment or amendment during the window of May 1 - June 30, 2021 (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Supporting Quality Implementation, 2021).

This level of bureaucratic lift to simply complete an approved Student Investment Account plan, let alone implement it well, as a result of the impact of COVID-19 has diminished the proper focus of the Student Success Act in practice in Oregon public schools. From most districts' perspectives, the SIA has become a set of due dates and timelines according to the participants' experiences in this study. Yet, the Student Investment Account centers on a commitment to equity and community engagement. The implications of that dual reality, and the hope that all participants expressed in this study, is that the Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework can be the tool to bring the aspirations visions of the Student Success Act back into reality. This refocusing is critical not only for Oregon educators, families, but most importantly, for every student in Oregon, especially those from historically marginalized groups, including students of color, students with disabilities, English-language learners, and students living in poverty. Through ongoing engagement within schools and across the communities they serve, the Student Investment Account's Progress Marker Framework holds the practical implication of calling out fifteen adult outcomes expected and desired in all schools. With this common language, school districts can bring more concrete structure in their efforts to fully engage in authentic and meaningful

community engagement with focal student groups and their families and the larger community as part of creating their SIA Plan.

Furthermore, Sections 17 and 18 of the Student Success Act established two distinct but related coaching programs which have the potential implication for practice to provide capacity building, system improvement supports, and accountability structures to support SIA implementation of all fifteen progress markers (HB 3427: Student Success Act, 2019).

The first of these two coaching programs is the Intervention and Strengthening Program (ISP). The ISP is the general coaching program outlined for districts that do not meet the common metrics established in the SSA. These measures, also known as Long-term Performance Growth Targets (LPGTs), are expected to monitor annually by ODE (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account Guidance for Eligible Applicants: A Comprehensive Resource, 2019). If a district does not meet LPGTs, the grant recipient may explain why the LPGTs were not met. After considering the answer offered by the district, ODE may require the district to enter into the ISP. If required by the ODE, participation in the coaching program must be for at least twelve months. (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account Guidance for Eligible Applicants: A Comprehensive Resource, 2019). Under the ISP, the department shall advise and counsel the district on meeting LPGTs and assist them with ongoing professional development and peer collaboration. This step in the coaching program is where ODE can apply the SIA Progress Marker Framework. If done appropriately, this framework can guide each district's support and ultimately, as the act provides, allow ODE to direct the expenditure of SIA funds as the most potent form of intervention within this program. The earliest engagement with districts under this program is anticipated for the Fall of 2022, given the release of the LPGTs for the 2020- 21 school year. The ISP program is for districts, charter schools they sponsor in the SIA application, and independent charter schools who have applied and are receiving SIA funds. For the 2020-21 school year,

general technical assistance and coaching funding were reduced from \$4,531,000 to just over \$811,000 (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account Guidance for Eligible Applicants: A Comprehensive Resource, 2019).

The second coaching program is called the Intensive Coaching Program (ICP). The ICP is established for school districts with the highest need for coaching, support, and intervention. This intensive program is invitational for districts and requires at least four years of commitment. Districts that agree to participate in the ICP are eligible for additional funding from the Statewide Education Initiatives Account (SEIA) (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account Guidance for Eligible Applicants: A Comprehensive Resource, 2019). A total of \$12 million is included in the Grant-in-Aid section of the SEIA for the additional funding for these districts; however, this was reduced to \$4 million in the August 2020 special session (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Supporting Quality Implementation, 2021). ODE will initiate conversations with the first districts invited to participate, with the formal coaching program planned to start in Fall 2021. From the General Fund, this program received \$293,895 and \$1,800,748. Other Funds were approved for three positions (2.30 FTE) and \$1,502,605 for needs assessments, contract members of the teams, and onsite assessments for participating districts (Oregon Department of Education Student Success Act: Supporting Quality Implementation, 2021). The ICP will utilize Student Success Teams (SST) as outlined in the act (HB 3427: Student Success Act, 2019). Each SST will include individuals internal and external to the district. Ideal SST will consist of the superintendent, a board member, a teacher, an ODE point person, and three stewards who will support the district in leadership, teaching and learning, and community outreach and advocacy (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account Guidance for Eligible Applicants: A Comprehensive Resource, 2019). SST provides advice and counsel on working collaboratively with the community, sovereign nations, and other stakeholders to improve

performance outcomes and develop recommendations for meeting LPGTs. This again is where ODE can use the practical implication of the Outcome Mapping, through the implication of the Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework, to offer a set of potential milestones for school districts and the Oregon Department of Education look for map adult behavior towards.

And finally, Section 25 of the Student Success Act describes and authorizes ODE to disburse up to \$24 million for use by Education Service Districts to provide technical assistance to school districts in their region to support SIA application development and early implementation as well as supporting coordination between districts and ODE (HB 3427: Student Success Act, 2019). This is a third area where Outcome Mapping has tremendous implications for practice. During the August 2020 special session, the funding for Education Service Districts Technical Assistance was reduced to \$20 million (Oregon Department of Education Student Investment Account Guidance for Eligible Applicants: A Comprehensive Resource, 2019). Each Education Service Districts has identified a staff member or contractor who is allocating at least 0.25 FTE towards the role and function of being a Liaison - the primary point of contact and collaboration - between the Office of Education Innovation and Improvement, the Education Service Districts they represent, and the districts within the Education Service District's service region. Education Service Districts Liaisons participate in biweekly calls with ODE staff to learn more about the process, ask questions, and provide feedback on guidance and resources before it's released to districts. In addition, Education Service Districts Liaisons have collaborated across regions to develop and share materials to support districts with community engagement, data, and progress reporting. It is the hope and expectation with increased alignment at the Oregon Department of Education that the Education Service Districts Liaisons role will grow in FTE, responsibility, and, most importantly, impact through the effective use of Outcome Mapping's focus upstream of student results on the adult behaviors that lead to increased student performance.

## **Limitations**

This study endeavored to examine the experiences of individual participants. Although a cross-case analysis was done and replications across the three cases identified, the stories participants shared were their own and not intended to be understood as a collective story. During the research and data analysis process, special care was taken to keep the participants' stories anchored in the contexts from which they were first shared. As discussed in more detail earlier in Chapter 3, the purpose of this case study was not to draw generalizations or attempt to create theory. Instead, the purpose of this study was to listen critically and intensely to the experiences of Oregon K-12 educational leaders' description of Outcome Mapping for improved accountability. The findings from this study should be treated similarly and kept within the context from which they were gathered. These perspectives and this study are critically important and timely as they can potentially influence Oregon's attempt to implement, and adjust where needed, its set of progress markers in the manner that holds the most promise possible for Oregon and its students.

## **Emerging Questions for Future Research**

As research on the use of Outcome Mapping in educational accountability is relatively new, there are many directions one could point to future research. However, based on the experiences of the three participants in this study and my focus on evaluation and accountability in Oregon K-12 public schools, I recommend further investigation on one key area in particular. That focus is on studying how the Oregon Department of Education and its 197 districts use the findings reported on and found within SIA Progress Marker Framework over the next few years to drive improvement in Oregon. Outcome Mapping can act as a cognitive guide. It can help locate us and help us figure out where we are, where we want to be, and most importantly, help Oregon districts explicitly plan the adult actions necessary to get us where we're going. Outcome Mapping's success

and sustainability hinge on the field's ability and capacity to see this new framework of accountability supporting this learning as its primary outcome.

Research and common sense have observed that long-term outcomes and impacts often occur far downstream from school or district investments and program implementation. These longer-term outcomes depend on responsiveness to context-specific factors, creating diversity across investments and Oregon's 197 school districts. The outcomes examined in the SIA Progress Marker Framework include the depth and breadth of involvement by many stakeholders, investments, programs, and processes that become results in and of themselves through the use of Outcome Mapping. For Outcome Mapping offers a methodology that can create planning, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms that most importantly enable school districts to document, learn from, and share with other districts their achievements. It can assist in understanding a school district's results in more specific ways and in ways that others can use to change their practice. For example, measuring downstream results in Outcome Mapping is dealt with by focusing on transformations related to adult behaviors, practices, and policies upstream rather than measuring annual student results. This methodology holds much promise if networked or shared learning becomes the intended outcome of its pursuit, facilitating a common language of indicators for success without oversimplifying the complex work of teaching and learning by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches into Oregon's K-12 accountability. Outcome Mapping provides a guide to essential evaluation and understanding and a recognition that to scale learning across Oregon that being attentive along the journey is as important as, and critical to, arriving at a destination. The real work and future research investigation are to see where this type of learning occurs in Oregon K-12 schools, where it is not, and what conditions make the former more likely than the latter.

## **Conclusion**

This research study aimed to explore Oregon K-12 educational leaders' perspectives on the potential of Outcome Mapping. More and more, school districts and the Oregon Department of Education are under pressure to demonstrate that their investments result in significant and lasting changes in the achievement and well-being of their students. However, outcomes like these are almost always the product of a confluence of events for which no single factor or group can realistically claim full credit. As a result, assessing educational impacts is problematic, as many school districts continue to measure student results far beyond the reach of their district programs and investments alone. Outcome Mapping's originality, from my perspective, lies in its approach to shift away from assessing the products of a program, initiative, or investment to focus on changes in behavior, relationships, actions, and activities in the adults within the education system working with the investment or in the program/initiative. In doing so, Outcome Mapping exposes many of the myths about measuring impact that I have seen in my educational career. It has the clear potential to help a school district be specific about the adults or system it targets, the changes it expects to see, and the strategies it employs and, as a result, be more effective in terms of the results it achieves. The perspectives shared in this study and the cross-case analysis highlight critical feedback and steps in Oregon's implementation of Outcome Mapping.

As this implementation develops, I recommend that the Oregon Department of Education and the field listen to participants' experiences like those in this study for guidance and direction. As Oregon attempts to use Outcome Mapping, through the passage of the Student Success Act, it must embrace the same tenant of learning that is at the core of Outcome Mapping. Listening and adjusting based on the feedback from the field is the only way that Oregon can capitalize on the current potential of Outcome Mapping to act as a guide to essential accountability moving forward and, more importantly, as a guide to learning and increased networked effectiveness. Suppose this

learning stance is embraced at all Oregon's K-12 system levels. In that case, Outcome Mapping may be the catalyst needed to finally scale Oregon's isolated islands of district success to system-wide achievement for all of Oregon's students, especially those who have been historically underserved in it.

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## Appendices

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY HSRC INITIAL REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

221113  
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Title: A Multiple Case Study of Oregon's K-12 Accountability Transformation:  
A Journey to include Outcome Mapping

Principal Researcher(s): Shay Mikalson

Date application completed: 10/24/2021

(The researcher needs to complete the above information on this page)

COMMITTEE FINDING:

For Committee Use Only

(1) The proposed research makes adequate provision for safeguarding the health and dignity of the subjects and is therefore approved.

(2) Due to the assessment of risk being questionable or being subject to change, the research must be periodically reviewed by the HSRC on a \_\_\_\_\_ basis throughout the course of the research or until otherwise notified. This requires resubmission of this form, with updated information, for each periodic review.

(3) The proposed research evidences some unnecessary risk to participants and therefore must be revised to remedy the following specific area(s) on non-compliance:

(4) The proposed research contains serious and potentially damaging risks to subjects and is therefore not approved.

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Chair or designated member

10/25/21

Date

## Appendix B

### **Informed Consent**

Principal Researcher: Shay Mikalson

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Dane Christian Joseph, Professor of Education, George Fox University

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to provide a multiple case study analysis of Oregon K-12 educational leaders perspectives on the potential of Oregon's new Progress Marker Framework as part of the Student Success Act. The researcher's goal is to listen critically and intensely to each participants perspective and elevate the stories these participants share. The stories shared will contribute to existing research and may inform the further development and implementation of Oregon's Progress Marker Framework over the next biennium.

**Procedures:** Upon consenting to participation in this study, you will be asked to meet with the principal researcher by phone informally. The purpose of this first meeting will be to answer questions, select the pseudonym you wish to use, discuss interview formats, and get to interview dates calendared. Following this first, informal meeting, you will be asked to meet in person or by Zoom for two separate interviews with the principal researcher. Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Both interviews will be audio recorded through QuickTime software applications on my iPhone if the interview is conducted in-person or on my computer if conducted via Zoom videoconferencing. After each interview, the researcher will create a copy of the transcript, striking any personally identifiable information from it.

**Possible Risks and Benefits:** This study is expected to result in minimal risk and/or discomfort to the participants. However, the sample size is small and it is difficult to guarantee absolute anonymity. Though every effort will be made to keep research confidential, it is possible that others may recognize part of your experience.

You will not receive any financial compensation for participation in this study. Your participation will contribute to a small but growing body of knowledge around the use of Outcome Mapping through Oregon's implementation of its new Progress Marker Framework and may benefit future use of this accountability model.

### **Use of Study**

This study is being done to fulfill the requirements of a doctoral dissertation. If you are interested in seeing the final dissertation, a copy can be provided upon completion.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality will be maintained to greatest degree possible throughout the study. Steps to promote confidentiality at each step in the research process will include:

- The use of pseudonyms for participants and programs.
- Electronic files will be kept using pseudonyms.
- The researcher will strike personally identifiable information from the transcript.

- The participant may ask that any content be struck from the transcript, at any time, for any reason.
- Hard copies of research will be kept in a locked, private safe.
- All forms of data will be destroyed after 3 years of the completion of the study.

### **Withdrawal**

Participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. Participation is voluntary. Withdrawal will not affect the confidentiality of any information. If you choose to withdraw from the study, the researcher will discuss how you wish your data to be treated with you.

### **Voluntary Consent**

This consent document outlines your rights regarding participation in this research study. Please direct any question to the principal researcher, Shay Mikalson or the dissertation chair, Dr. Dane Christian Joseph. Contact information is below.

By signing this document, you are indicating that you consent to participate in the study outlined above.

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

### **Principal Researcher:**

Shay Mikalson  
[smikalson06@georgefox.edu](mailto:smikalson06@georgefox.edu)

### **Dissertation Chair:**

Dr. Dane Christian Joseph  
[djoseph@georgefox.edu](mailto:djoseph@georgefox.edu)

## Appendix C

### Interview Protocol

**Thank you:** Hi, thanks so much for being willing to sit for an interview with me today!

**Introduction:** It is good to see you again, as you know, I'm an EdD student at George Fox. I'm interested in learning more about the potential you see, if any, of Oregon's new Student Success Act (SIA) Progress Marker Framework and I'm hoping to learn from your perspective and experience through our interview today.

**Informed consent:** Before we get started, I have a few formalities to take care of. Only myself and my dissertation chair will ever see the transcript of our interview. At the end of our interview today I will ask if there is anything you would like me to strike from the record. If there is, it will not be included in my analysis. When we meet next time, I might also have some clarifying questions for you or ask you check my interpretation of your story. And most important – you can stop talking to me at any time if you wish. All of that information, and more, is on the form for you to review.

**Move into interview mode:** Okay, so now we can get on with the interview...

**\*Start recording\***

### Interview Part #1

- **Question 1:** Can you tell me about your experiences leading and implementing Oregon's K-12 accountability system at the state, district, or school level—be that No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Federal Waiver, or the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)? Tell me whatever you can about what that effort has looked and been like for you.

- **Question 2:** What would you say if I asked you what has worked under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Federal Waiver, or the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) accountability in achieving increased student outcomes and decreased disparities?
- **Question 3:** What limitations have you found under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Federal Waiver, or the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) accountability to achieve increased student outcomes and decreased disparities?
- **Question 4:** As part of the new Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework, do you believe Outcome Mapping holds promise as a catalyst to improve accountability in Oregon? Why or why not?
- **Question 5:** What are your concerns about Oregon's decision to include Outcome Mapping as part of the new Student Investment Account Progress Marker Framework in its state-wide accountability system?

## **Interview Part #2**

- **Question 1:** I wanted to follow-up on the end of our conversation last time, by simply asking you what you like about Oregon's new Student Investment Account Progress Marker framework?
  - Can you tell me more about....
  - Do you have anything to add about...
  - Can you give me an example of...
  - Can you tell me what you were thinking/feeling when...
- **Question 2:** What don't you like about it?
  - Can you tell me more about....
  - Do you have anything to add about...

- Can you give me an example of...
- Can you tell me what you were thinking/feeling when...
- **Question 3:** If you were solely in charge of implementing Oregon's K-12 accountability system, what would it look like?
  - Can you tell me more about....
  - Do you have anything to add about...
  - Can you give me an example of...
  - Can you tell me what you were thinking/feeling when...

**Give opportunity for edits:** As we wrap up our interview today, I want to give you the opportunity to pause and think over our conversation. If there is anything you'd like to add or have me strike from the record, please let me know.

**At the end of the interview:** I so appreciate your willingness to speak with me today. I'm grateful for your time, honesty, and for sharing your experiences with me. I'd like to tell you a little bit about what I will do with our interview. I am going to analyze each part of our interview along with my other interviews to reach some more general understandings about the potential of outcome mapping. Then I will use some of the material to write about what I've heard from the stories you have shared with me. Again, I am so grateful for your time and willingness to sit down with me and share!

**Adopted from:** Josselson, R. (2013). *Interviewing for Qualitative Inquiry: A Relational Approach*.

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