

Public Abstract

First Name:Kevin

Middle Name:Dale

Last Name:Gwaltney

Adviser's First Name:Bradley

Adviser's Last Name:Curs

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

Graduation Term:FS 2012

Department:Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis

Degree:PhD

Title:TEACHER AUTONOMY IN THE UNITED STATES: ESTABLISHING  
A STANDARD DEFINITION, VALIDATION OF A NATIONALLY  
REPRESENTATIVE CONSTRUCT AND AN INVESTIGATION  
OF POLICY AFFECTED TEACHER GROUPS

This effort: 1) establishes an autonomy definition uniquely tailored for teaching, 2) validates a nationally generalizable teacher autonomy construct, 3) demonstrates that the model describes and explains the autonomy levels of particular teacher groups, and 4) verifies the construct can represent teacher autonomy in other empirical models.

The definition was used to construct the Schools and Staffing Survey Scale for Teacher Autonomy (SASS-STA). After construct validation, the SASS-STA was then used to explore autonomy differences between groups of teachers who are differently affected by particular policies and to examine how autonomy may impact teaching's motivating potential.

Findings suggest leaders can more effectively increase autonomy levels by creating opportunities for teachers to participate in policy making. Teachers of NCLB assessed subject matters (mathematics, English/Language Arts) and public school teachers perceived lower levels of autonomy than teachers of non-NCLB assessed disciplines and teachers who worked in charter and private schools. Also, anecdotal evidence suggested that autonomy may have become more important to the motivating potential of teaching among public school teachers since the implementation of NCLB.