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 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 teaching’s motivating potential among public school teachers since NCLB’s implementation.