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**Implications of HB5 at the High School Level**

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**Implications of HB5 at the High School Level**

by

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**Treatise**

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## **Implications of HB5 at the High School Level**

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The historical, education accountability system has continued to evolve at both the state and federal level over the last 50 years in a pursuit to provide quality education for all students regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status. With the most recent policy adoption of Texas House Bill 5 (HB5) for high school graduation requirements in 2012, policymakers were focused on moving to the next qualifying level of producing college and career ready graduates. The enactment of this policy sets expectations not only from an assessment accountability aspect, as seen historically, but also expands to include procedural steps for school improvement. This action research case study used data from three Title I high school campuses within one of the largest urban districts in the state of Texas to provide insight from populations most impacted by HB5. Through a pragmatic mixed-methods research, the findings highlighted the implications of the HB5 policy at the high school campus level and the emerging outcomes. The quantitative research underwent trend analysis to identify how HB5 has impacted college readiness as measured by SAT composite scores and graduation rates among first-time test takers. In

addition, the qualitative method was utilized to determine how HB5 impacted three principals at the high school level in guiding their schools' organizational structures, on-going planning and decision-making processes, and human resource changes.

The quantitative data revealed a slight decline in SAT composite scores after the transition to the new accountability system. Also, a gap in first-time test taker passing percentage rates and graduation rates from the TAKS exit test system to the new EOC accountability system appeared. The qualitative data from the principals revealed the three dominating themes of communication, focus, and relationships. The additional driving themes included change and responsibility. The final emerging theme was conflict between financial support and campus need at all three campuses. Implications and recommendations are provided.

*Keywords:* end-of-course exam, graduate rate, superintendent, Texas, HB5, Title I

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Educational Accountability: Origin and Current**

McKenzie and Kress (2015) addressed the Big Idea of School Accountability and highlighted the legislative birth and progression of striking down political and economic inequality beginning with the landmark Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* in 1954. It was call to action designed not only break to down racial walls but also to address gaps between the academic achievement of White and minority students. This drive led to the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965, which later became known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (McKenzie & Kress, 2015). As Lyndon B. Johnson and John F. Kennedy laid the ground work for education equality and academic progress monitoring for all children, the development of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) emerged as a voluntary assessment in the 1960s. In addition, a united agenda arose among Democrats and Republicans for supporting education accountability. Education accountability meant that school districts and campuses would be held responsible by policymakers and taxpayers if they did not provide a decent education for every student. The accountability system that took shape was built around three principles: (a) creating rigorous academic standards, (b) measuring student progress against those standards, and (c) attaching some consequence to the results (McKenzie & Kress, 2015).

Over the last 30 years, the American public school system has been under intense public scrutiny causing the enactment of comprehensive and continuous educational accountability legislation. As the nation became a member of a more global economy in the 1980s, under President Reagan and Secretary of Education Bell, a charge for evaluative measures be taken and actions implemented (McKenzie & Kress, 2015). From the growing consensus of concern, the

report titled *A Nation at Risk* emerged with strong recommendations for the nation's public education system (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). President Reagan supported the report's recommendations which included raising academic standards, measure students' mastery of those standards, and improving the curriculum that schools use in their classrooms. *A Nation at Risk* brought forth a crucial realization that our educational system was on the brink of a crisis due to low standards, lack of purpose, ineffective use of resources, and a failure to challenge students to push performance to the boundaries of individual ability (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Parallel to this national evolution of accountability, the state of Texas was enacting measures to tighten expectations for all students as well. Ross Perot, a business person appointed to a state education committee under Governor White, initiated the No Pass, No Play policy enacted by Texas legislation in 1984 under House Bill 72. No Pass, No Play involved new rules for removing student athletes from participating in sports when not performing academically by passing all classes. This action gained national recognition and momentum in state standards and accountability as Governor George Bush transcended Texas policies into a national model during the 1990s implemented under No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (McKenzie & Kress, 2015).

Both educators and political leaders strive to close the achievement gap in education, thus producing college and/or career ready graduates. A realization of an imbalanced and unfair accountability system with too much reliance on student academic measures, mainly testing and other measures such as drop outs and completion rates, has risen through public and private evaluation. The argument has been advanced that other measurable factors need to be taken into consideration, which has led to mandated school improvement measures that prescribe procedures and processes for educating students and preparing them for college. A call-to-action has been

extended to produce college and career ready graduates. The acquisition of this goal brought forth the enactment HB5, which not only prescribes academic and career courses for students to obtain endorsements with high school graduation but also enlists strong parental understanding, buy-in, and approval through signed documentation (Heilig, 2014). HB5 is the first legislated policy that has dictated not only targeted outcomes but also procedural impacts that must occur on high school campuses (Cloudt, 2014).

As both state and federal legislatures pursue quality instruction, local education agencies are further driven to align what is taught to what is tested, thus test driven curriculum and instruction, while advancing organizational systems to meet the implicit new expectations of HB5. It is the goal of Texas and the nation to provide a free and public education to all children until they are 21 years of age (Heilig, 2014). However, educators at the local level are now challenged with balancing a more complex accountability system with the real-world outcomes attained by learners' diversity.

In addition, public education policy has been driven by national research around ideological preferences and is divided by competitive voucher options and charter systems. Nonetheless, the ultimate goal of producing a contributing, higher wage earning society is derived from producing citizens and residents with a post-secondary education (Smith, 2005). The college and career readiness report for the Urban Independent School District's (UISD) class of 2013 highlighted the push to gain overall higher volumes of students able to meet college readiness standards as defined by the outcomes on the SAT college readiness assessment, thus leading to post-secondary education attainment. The SAT is currently and historically the most consistently taken college entrance exam and most used for evaluation of admission candidates by universities nationwide. Over the past 5 years, UISD has maintained the district mandate that

every 11th grade student be given the SAT exam at the district's expense. The test has been given on a designated school day district-wide to serve as a symbolic stance for post-secondary education for all and to capture college readiness trend data. This mandate is just one local policy combined with the state's changing accountability policies from using the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exit level exams that were offered in 11th grade to the five multilevel end-of-course (EOC) exams students take between ninth and 11th grades in order to meet graduation requirements. High school principals must embrace ongoing policy change as they meet the differing needs of each child, ability level of faculty, and the culture of the community.

Research has consistently shown a correlation between those who do not earn a high school diploma and a lack of success in the job market and lower wage earnings, which is ultimately a measure of societal contribution (Bjerk, 2012; Jefferson, 2008; Morella, 2012). In addition, Zajacova and Everett (2014) identified that both general education development (GED) high school equivalency recipients and high school drop-outs have significantly and substantially worse health than high school graduates, lending to an additional drain of public resources. Heckman and La Fontaine (2008) stated "the high school graduation rate is a barometer of the health of American society and the skill level of its future workforce" (p. 3). Administrators and teachers have been living in a punitive model with students that often mirrors the setting from 30 years ago. This was the model that recent policy sought to change. High school students struggling with the assessment driven state of the education system actively choose to drop-out and face whatever reality of not earning a high school diploma awaits them. Upon further analysis of the research, obtaining an organizational balance or sustainable process for meeting accountability measures set by education policies and fulfilling the role of protecting and

developing students with limited resources has been an on-going struggle among campus administrators (Goldberg, 2000; Hemelt & Marcotte, 2013). A high school administrator's task involves organizing the school to support the success of all stakeholders, while meeting the data points required by the accountability policies at the end of the line.

Bolman and Deal (2008) define four frames of any organization: (a) symbolic; (b) human resources; (c) political; and (d) structural. Campus administrators are faced with working with an understanding of these four frames to produce targeted outcomes on SAT and graduation rates, thus the outcome measures of the health of the school organization, while bridging students into contributing members of society. This study analyzed the state accountability data, TAKS exit level exams and STAAR EOC exams among first-time test takers in relation to college readiness data, as indicated by SAT scores from UISD, the largest school district in Texas. In addition, three principals from UISD's high school campuses were interviewed about the impact of HB5 on their role as a principal and their campus organization.

### **Problem Statement**

Given the evolution of education accountability described in the previous section, public schools in Texas are now contending with two major measures of performance at the high school level. One is the most recent implementation of the quantitative accountability system as it relates to the state assessment EOCs along with the on-going measures of drop-outs, completions rates, etc. Currently, the new expansive state accountability system continues to serve as the gatekeeper of each student's ability to earn a high school diploma, despite its unfounded intended purpose to increase college readiness as measured by SAT (Musoba, 2011). The existing accountability requirements for graduation under HB5 in the state of Texas requires all high school students to pass five EOC exams, in addition to the course credit requirements of the

foundation plan (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2013). During the TEA update, Associate Commissioner Criss Cloudt (2014) communicated that the Commissioner of Education was waiting to finalize the EOC pass rate requirements until the released results of the summer 2014 test takers. As recently as May, 2015, the state announced an option for campus committees to graduate students who had passed three out of five of the high school EOC exams due to the high number of 2015 seniors statewide who were ineligible to earn a high school diploma.

Second, HB5 has instilled additional qualitative compliance pieces with the implementation of school improvement specific mandates (Cloudt, 2014; Heilig, 2014). The school improvement mandates force a link between campus to home, campus to community, and campus to campus. In addition, further considerations within the organization itself must be reflected upon to address the intent of the mandates. Every district and campus must meet track community measures that expand from health and social services to community partners and outreach communication. These actions are tracked and samples are to be maintained as supporting documentation for self-rating. Parental involvement is required through not only educating parents on the career pathways or endorsement options, but signatures must be obtained from the parents as an agreed commitment between parent and school in meeting each individual student's graduation plan. The necessary actions needed to educate parents must begin prior to the student attending high school during their eighth grade course selection process, thus bridging the campus to campus communication and alignment of systems. And lastly, connections with institutions of higher education for early college experiences and community partnerships to strengthen career experiences solicit a campus to community implementation plan.

Given the evolution of a qualitative and quantitative integration of accountability measures, there are questions as to whether or not the school improvement mandates of HB5 will

indeed have an impact on whether or not students will be better prepared to enter and complete a college program of studies. There is a need to investigate the effects of HB5 cost on schools to identify any emerging indicators of harm or positive impact that the new mandates and measures are having. This study addressed these two focus areas. First, what does the literature reveal about the historic and prevailing impacts of policy, specifically HB5, on student graduation outcomes and college readiness thus impacting societal outcomes? Second, what are the implications of HB5 at the high school level for campus leaders and campus organizations?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this pragmatic mixed-method study was to reveal the emerging data of the new state accountability's impact on graduation requirement rates in correlation to the intended purpose of increasing college readiness as measured by SAT scores and the impact on the campus leaders from one of the largest, urban school districts in Texas. The pragmatic mixed-methods approach provided both quantitative data from the past 5 years at the district and campus level, while the qualitative data from three high school principal interviews within the corresponding district to reveal the leadership actions taken to effectively implement HB5 at the campus level.

### **Research Questions**

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How has HB5 impacted college readiness, as measured by SAT composite scores, and graduation rates?
2. How has HB5 impacted the Principal's role at the high school level?
3. What school organizational structures, on-going planning and decision-making processes, and human resource changes have been installed to effectively implement the requirements of HB5?

## Overview of Methodology

This pragmatic mixed-methods study utilized quantitative data as a relevant baseline from a policy standpoint, while the qualitative data provides insight into trending measures taken by current educators in building their campus organizational framework to meet policy requirements. The quantitative data included 5 years of a single school district state accountability data at the high school level as well as three individual high school campuses within the district. These data included the last 5 school years of TAKS high school exit level exam scores and State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) EOC exams among first-time test takers as well as students' SAT scores.

Due to the possible variation needed in balancing a campus's organizational framework, a mixed methods case study design was used to provide depth to the data. Three interviews of three high school principals in UISD were conducted. Three principals were chosen from the third quartile of student populations found among the corresponding district data as a method for triangulating data. The interviews were transcribed and coded through attributional coding and triangulated with their own campus graduation accountability data, SAT data, various campus documents, as well as district data to provide insight into the impact of the principals' practices that met HB5 expectations.

## Definition of Terms

**Best practices.** Research-based instructional practices (U. S. Department of Education, 2010)

**End-of-course exam.** Also known as EOC. The 2007 Senate Bill 1031 required the use of EOCs to measure mastery of secondary-level Algebra I, Biology, English I and II, and United States History courses.

**First-time test takers.** The first score earned the first time a high school student takes the designated state assessment along with his/her cohort.

**Graduating cohort.** The expected 4-year graduation term from the time the student enters high school.

**NCLB.** An acronym for No Child Left Behind, the national educational reform act and policies established in 2001 to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind (U. S. Department of Education, 2012).

**Principal.** The educational leader at the school campus level, typically elementary (PreK/K to Grade 5), Intermediate or Junior High (Grades 6-8), and High School (Grades 9-12).

**SAT.** A nationally administered and timed exam designed to assess academic readiness for college; globally recognized college admissions test.

**Superintendent.** The educational leader at the school district level.

**TEKS.** An acronym for Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, which are the state standards for what students should know and be able to do for each grade level and content area (TEA, 2014).

**Title I.** Part of NCLB to provide supplemental funding from the federal government to local and state educational agencies that have high concentrations of students from low-income families to enable all children to meet the state's student performance standards (TEA, 2014).

### **Limitations**

A limitation of this study was the role of the researcher who served as a high school principal. It was essential that the researcher utilized member checking throughout the interviews and attributional coding was done to increase trustworthiness and reduce preconceived interpretations. Additionally, the years of leadership at each of the three campuses was less than

the quantitative span of the study. Due to often high turn-over among campus leadership in urban schools, the years of experience in leadership and at the specific campus varied with a maximum number of 3 years as campus Principal at each of the corresponding campuses.

An additional limitation was that the 2014-2015 school year is the first graduating class under the new accountability system. There was a limitation due to the time proximity of early implementation efforts to the legislative policy enactment date. One or 2 years of data did not allow enough time to study and describe definitive causal effects; especially given the change in new organizational visualizations, long term structural planning and sustainability of processes that become institutionalized over time. Additional research is needed to analyze the generalizability of future accountability outcomes and the long-term actions taken by campus leaders to meet the evolving impact of HB5.

### **Delimitations**

While many states reorganize both campus frameworks and district frameworks around common core standards and SAT, this study specifically targeted the accountability system designed by the state of Texas and SAT. The HB5 accountability policy was not analyzed in its entirety, but rather the single section addressing the high school assessment accountability requirement. In addition, within the state of Texas, many campuses at multiple levels are categorized within urban districts, suburban districts, or rural districts. This study solely analyzed data from a single urban district as well as data representing only the high school campus level.

### **Assumptions**

This study was initiated with the assumption by high school principals that SAT scores had not been impacted by a change in the state accountability requirements; however, graduation rates were assumed to be negatively impacted by the new accountability requirements. In

addition, the assumption was that high school principals expected changes were needed to mediate targeted outcomes or were making changes to their existing organizational framework to meet the transition to meet the new HB5 accountability requirements. Lastly, it was assumed that all principals would be honest and transparent in their responses in the interview process.

### **Significance**

This study analyzed data representing the first graduating cohort under the new HB5 accountability system, highlighting the impact of the policy changes at the high school level. This study provides an understanding of the history and evolution of our current educational policies in Texas, specifically, the impact that HB5 has had directly on graduation rates and SAT scores in one of the largest urban district. This study triangulated district and campus data to bring forth foundational trends in implications of HB5 on the principal's role as a campus leader, as well as emerging practices on the organizational framework at the high school level to meet HB5 requirements and the societal need for healthy educational organizations. This research delivers foundational implications for policymakers and other educators in bringing alignment between policy and practice.

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study with background information, problem statement, purpose of the study, targeted research questions, and introduces the methodology. The terms utilized throughout the research were defined. The limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and the impact of the study were explicated.

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth review of the literature on educational policies, school improvement, and organization frames. The literature provides the progression from the historic to the current trending impact of policies on student outcomes thus driving changes to the

organizational framework at the campus level. Chapter 3 specifies the research method with an explanation of the design and procedures used for the study. The designated sources are identified from which the data were collected and the format for data analysis.

Chapter 4 offers the results from the analysis of the data. Descriptive summaries are provided with graphic organizers of both the qualitative data and the quantitative data in relation to the research questions. Chapter 5 discusses the results. The evaluation provides relevance to the research questions set forth by this study in determining HB5 implications on college readiness, as well as campus organization and leadership at the high school level.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **State Accountability: A Movement Toward School Improvement**

The historic background in education reform has shown the intensity of progression in academic accountability at both the national and state level. The anti-testing movement has emerged throughout this endeavor in pursuit of a quality education for all students. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) was purposed “to breathe new life into the ‘flexibility for accountability’ bargain with states first struck by President George H. W. Bush during his historic 1989 educational summit with the Nation’s Governors at Charlottesville, Virginia” (Gordon, 2014, p. 128). Hays (2011) identified in his research that despite the mandates of this policy for “annual yearly progress for all students many district and schools in Texas have had difficulty elevating African American and Hispanic scores” (p. abstract). In a policy analysis on NCLB, Uzzell (2005) included the following:

The NCLB statute is a reform strategy at war with itself. It virtually guarantees massive evasion of its own intent, ordering state education agencies to do things that they mostly don’t want to do. Washington will be forced either to allow the states great leeway in how they implement NCLB or to make NCLB more detailed, prescriptive, and top-heavy.

(p. 1)

Barnow and Heinrich (2009) provided additional foundational history on the injected performance measurement to the core of our nation:

Among the most influential recent developments in public sector performance measurement was the introduction of the U. S. Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, which ‘brought the full force of the performance measurement movement to the

federal government; and invigorated research on the design, implementation, and consequences of performance measurement systems in public programs. (p. 61)

Goldberg (2000) wrote about his interview with John Goodlad, a well-researched scholar on education reforms, renewals, and initiatives from local, state, post-secondary, and federal organizations. Goldberg captured Goodlad's understanding of the root cause for doing a creditable job in schools across the nation. Goodlad cited money and assistance are needed in poor, minority, inner city schools (Goldberg, 2000). Goldberg provided insight into the on-going issues at hand with great accuracy and justified the need for alternative options outside the continuous unsuccessful cycle of punitive standardized state tests that have derived from a political and structural weighted, top-heavy system:

Renewal, not reform, is the way to improve schools because we usually cannot start over with a new building, faculty, and program. Finally, the politicians and business leaders have learned precious little from history. Seventy-four years ago, when Goodlad began his own schooling in Canada, there was a call for standards and tests. That call has failed again and again to help most students, yet we are doing it again and paying little attention to the real issues of poverty, racism, serious curriculum renewal, staff development, building a serious agenda for each school and other issues that would make a difference.

(p. 173)

Goldberg captured Goodlad's grounded research of asking the right questions about student learning to "make a difference" rather than the unsuccessful cycle of corrective actions applied based on achievement scores from standardized test (p. 173).

Musoba (2011) highlighted that states are following the national trend endorsing political and structural organizations with accountability measures built on "high-stakes high school exit

exams, standards-based reforms, and graduation curriculum requirements” (p. 451). Musoba called into question why educational leaders and politicians continue to build policies around high stakes testing as a preparation tool for college and career readiness when there is no significant evidence to support “academic readiness as measured by composite SAT scores. Math graduation numeric curriculum requirements were negatively related to SAT scores for Whites” (p. 451). From a policy standpoint, Shulock (1999) stated the following: “We invest in tremendous resources in policy analysis, yet common wisdom, political science theory, and years of empirical research suggest that analysis is not used by policymakers to make better policy” (p. 226). To further extend both the historic understanding based on student learning and policy analysis, one must recognize all things are built by starting with the end goal or product in mind (Covey, 2004).

### **School Improvement Research**

Educational leaders are now running short on time to transform campuses into effective models of organizing schools. The end result has not changed, but administrators are challenged to do more with less, as budgets have been cut, while student needs and state expectations continue to increase as communicated in HB5 (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2014). Edmonds (1979) work identified characteristics of 55 effective schools across the nation, finding several elements consistent throughout. He shares “one of the cardinal characteristics of effective schools is that they are as eager to avoid things that don’t work as they are committed to implementing things that do,” and “when necessary, school energy and resources can be diverted from other business in furtherance of the fundamental objectives.” Edmonds (1982) expanded on his prior work and provides five characteristics for effective schools, “the principal’s leadership and attention to the quality of instruction, a pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus, an orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning, teacher behaviors that convey the

expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery, and the use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation.” Edmonds (1982) identified these characteristics as inconclusive as to whether one is more powerful than the other or a leading cause. It is conclusive that all characteristics have been consistent present, indicating that all must be implemented.

Lezotte (1991) offered additional research to challenge the development of effective schools. Lezotte described moving toward learning for all students as a journey that is endless. The first correlate transcended a “safe and orderly environment” from one aimed at removing undesirable behaviors to one that progresses toward desirable behaviors, such as cooperative learning. The second of “climate of high expectations for success” moved from a belief system to a planning method with intentional instructional practices for assured success. The third correlate of “instructional leadership” moved from the administrative team serving as the instructional leaders to a broader scope that empowers teachers to serve as instructional leaders. The fourth correlate of a “clear and focused mission” had to incorporate scaffolding measures rather than the original single measure of isolated teaching and expand to intentional learning, including teachers, to ensure progression toward equally high measures of mastery for all students. The fifth correlate was “opportunity to learn and student time on task” and brought forth the concept of “organized abandonment” to determine what should be taught due to time constraints and to allow students more in depth instruction and time on-task through interdisciplinary curriculum. The sixth correlate of “frequent monitoring of student progress” evolved with the use of technology to now include more timely assessment feedback for the teacher, as well as the student. In addition, a movement was posed through extend assessments including students’ products and portfolios versus single paper-and-pen multiple choice tests. Finally, the seventh

correlate of “home-school relations” emphasized more than lip service in that an intentional defined relationship was clearly communicated with a partnership.

Fairman and McLean (2003) research reiterated that there is a necessity for educators to serve as advocates for their campus with a clear vision and mission built on preserving the institution of learning with limited resources to support both students and teachers. The evolution of branding schools to remain competitive for resources lends each campus and/or district to reflect on the overall campus organization in such a way that produces consistent results in student learning by acquiring necessary resources, establishing appropriate structures to develop teachers and students, and maintain support of stakeholders (Fairman & McLean, 2003; Kowalski, 2005). Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) provided procedural guidance for employing an intentional focus on purposeful planning for effective school leadership. Marzano et al. discussed five steps that included the following:

Develop a strong school leadership team, distribute some responsibilities throughout the leadership team, select the right work, identify the order of magnitude implied by the selected work, and match the management style to the order of magnitude of the change initiative. (p. 98)

This five step plan encompassed those characteristics captured by prior research to reinforce the “how” in a procedural manner not in isolation; however, they extend that an instructional leader encompasses 21 common skill sets or responsibilities that define his/her essential role to effectively implement the plan (Marzano et al., 2005).

### **Framing Effective Leadership as an Understanding of Organizational Frames**

Bolman and Deal (2008) provided an in depth view of the various organizational frames that formulate organizations throughout the United States; from small non-profit that are people

focused organizations built heavily on symbolic and human resource organizational frames to large business organizations that are often more structural and political. Their many examples illustrate the interchangeable frames among the various organizations and the impact or influence and/or the lack of impact or influence made outside of those organizations based on their own organizational frame(s). It is important to understand these frames as a filter in creating both a balance and/or an imbalance in the organization towards gaining a shared goal that establishes effective policies, specifically in education.

The established governmental organizational frames dictating our educational policies thrive in a political frame yet struggle to maintain a structural and human resource frame, “Delegation of policy making authority from elected officials to unelected bureaucrats is a fact of contemporary American politics. It does not, however, necessarily imply abdication, as office holders possess instruments that potentially limit bureaucratic discretion” (Balla, 1998, p. 163). Balla (1998) provided a deeper look at the tools of control used to manage the discretion of legislators in their decision making as it relates to both policies and procedures for making policies.

Bolman and Deal (2008) demonstrated the critical need of understanding how these frames work interchangeably for the positive or negative. A political organizational frame strives to balance power and conflict utilizing political skills to build coalitions both internally and externally (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A structural organizational frame focuses on organizing people to establish and maintain the processes, systems, and organization of these systems to get results (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A symbolic frame gives meaning to the organization both internally and externally by shaping the culture around a shared mission and/or purpose through ritual, ceremony, historic or personal story, etc. (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A human resource based

organizational frame is built on the people in the organization through quality human resource management that satisfies personnel needs and builds on-going, positive relationships as a group (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Identifying the influential overarching organizational structure of the political and structural frames at both the state and national level is necessary to ensure both campus and district educational organizations utilize the power of these two frames, while maintaining a balance of knowledge of the symbolic and human resource frames to gain support with local stakeholders and for needed policy changes. As Tiscareno-Sato (2009) captured the importance of how to protect interested by understanding the rules, laws, and stakeholders within the given the situation.

McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) recognized two driving forces that create a call to action for most educational organizations. Ironically, both of the identified forces communicate a united symbolic frame for not only education but in the nation as a whole. The overarching message that the United States operates as a knowledge society that is unaccepting of unequal student outcomes, thus being a nation that symbolically stands for equal and equitable education. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) captured multiple case studies and defined structural practices for developing teacher learning communities that included the deliberate framing of a campus with structures that supports sustainable teacher learning. They noted these efforts are often challenged by political influences from changes in leadership, policy, and a lack of resources. They further captured the sustainable outcomes of student success when both structural frames and human resource frames remain at the heart of the organization's work versus the impeding political frames driven by fear of falling short of the defined symbolic standard.

Tanner (2013) exposed the necessity of establishing an organization with human resources in mind. Tanner's case studies provided evidence that the teacher in the classroom is the most influential factor in student success, thus building an organization with culturally responsive educators. Tanner (2013) challenged the education system, often focused on organizational structures implemented, to address student deficits rather than building strengths and resilience. Tanner argued for broadening teacher awareness for root causes in learning disparities and cultural influences through various theory analyses with multiple case studies. Tanner highlighted that teachers can have a greater impact for success on those populations who statistically struggle the most by simply increasing their cultural awareness and responsiveness.

Likewise, Milliken (2007) highlighted the importance of human resources through his research stating, "kids learn from what they see, not just what they're taught. We can talk about values, but if we're not living them out, it won't matter" (p. 19). He expanded his research in enhancing the organizational framework of schools to include both the human resource frame countered by the political frame through advocacy for relationship building among school and community partners. Milliken argued that "every community needs a 'Champion for Children,' a neutral third party to coordinate and broker the diverse community resources into the schools on behalf of young people and their families" (p. 82).

The necessity of addressing the diverse needs of all students and sustained teacher development and support, while meeting the expectations defined by policies, often falls out of reach due to lack of necessary resources for all parties involved. A leader's ability to serve as a political leader to advocate for such resources becomes equally as important. Short and Scribner (2000) conducted case studies of superintendents and promoted the importance of the balancing act of the four organizational frames that educational leaders encounter when seeking to increase

student success at the student level, the teacher level, and the campus leader level. Short and Scribner actually referenced Bolman and Deal (2008) in one case analysis and categorized the case superintendent's necessary actions within each frame in order to increase the success of the district by addressing issues at the campus level. Due to the complexity of educating children, Short and Scribner identified the necessary complexity needed in structuring the organization as a whole, "top down communication will likely yield disappointing results" (p. 129). Deeper in the analysis was the need to understand the human resource frame, "people had beliefs, attitudes, feelings, needs, and desires that affected their behaviors and, hence the behavior of the organization" (Short & Scribner, 2000, p. 129). The analysis within the political frame revealed that coalitions are often formed around a central goal and/or position to be maintained due to some sort of conflict thus shifting desired outcomes for the overall organization focus on student learning (Short & Scribner, 2000). Furthermore, Short and Scribner revealed the symbolic impact and challenge in addressing the notion that people are not defined by roles and/or expected responsibilities but rather by followers' perceived images of people, teachers, superintendents, principals, etc. as beings. A leader's challenge, whether at the district or campus level, is to not only work within these frames but adjust next steps based on an understanding of the frames.

### **Policy to Reality**

The question becomes how do educational leaders ingest policy, political influences, best practices, data trends, and current reality to support the education organization in gaining the desired end measure of college and career ready graduates? As mentioned, the existing model adopted by the TEA (2014) for high school graduation requirements requires students to pass five end-of-course (EOC) exams and meet expectations for addressing individual student graduation plans around endorsements. The exams measure content knowledge from four core content areas.

The bulk of the five EOC exams correspond with three courses often taken by incoming ninth grade students, which include Algebra I, English I, and Biology. Next, the remaining two subsequent EOCs that must be passed to graduate from high school in Texas are English II and U. S. History. In addition, a student can earn a distinction from a specialization area if he/she completes Algebra II and a sequence of courses in one of the five specialization areas (TEA, 2013).

On the brink of the first graduating class of 2015 under HB5, the state issued a notice in mid-May of 2015. The notice allowed graduation committees at the campus level an option to graduate those seniors who had passed a minimum of three EOC exams rather than meeting the full requirement of passing all five EOC exams as initially defined in HB5 (TEA, 2014). Black (2004) reflected on the achievement, or the lack there of, by ninth grade students in 48 states and noted that they mature academically and cognitively during their sophomore, junior, and senior years of their high school studies. Black revealed the consistent results of ninth graders performing lower than juniors, yet the Texas accountability system shifted from an 11th grade exit exam to the weighted ninth grade exams, which consists of three out of the five EOCs needed for graduation.

An expansive amount of research has found that a leading contributor and/or predictor for dropping out of high school before graduation revolves around a student's self-determined motivation (Suh et al., 2007; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002; Vallerand et al., 1997). Lombardi, Seburn, and Conley (2011) "examined the psychometric properties of a measure of academic behaviors associated with college and career readiness intended for high school students" in a cross-validation study. Lombardi et al. provided the four reliable factors around college and career readiness of goal-driven behaviors, persistence, study skills, and self-

monitoring. It should be noted that current state and national assessment exams have the ability to measure these factors. Lombardi et al. supported the established research regarding the significant difference in scores from ninth grade students to 10th thru 12th grade students, with ninth grade students scoring significantly lower on these factors (Lombardi et al., 2011). These key factors, among others, have served as additional influences among the anti-testing movement arguments used by community, educational and political leaders when analyzing research, policy, and best practices; hence, the qualitative measures encompassed in HB5.

TEA (2013) identifies the second fold of HB5 to capture the intent to not only measure student academic performance, but apply measures for campus improvement that bring attention to the progression of a child's academic career. HB5 instills measures that solicit not only desired outcome, but also necessary structural and process decisions to track multiple lines of support throughout each student's progression. The HB5 requirement for individual student graduation plans with endorsement selections starting in eighth grade course selection, enforces additional actions on the campus that must be documented with parent signature by the end of the students ninth grade year (TEA, 2014). An expansive responsibility to address intentional organizational planning and monitoring between campus to campus, campus to community, campus to parent, and campus to each individual student is necessary to meet this second piece of HB5. Student interest, or buy-in, is initiated with the selection of a career path or an academic endorsement that maximizes learning opportunities (Lezotte, 1991). It becomes then a campus responsibility to meet student interest in their pathway offerings and document commitments of this selection between student and parent. On-going tracking, monitoring, and communication is expanded as the student progresses into the junior and senior years by engaging the student's career interest through internships or college partnerships for college level coursework. Lezotte (1991) reported

that home, school, and community communication efforts were as critical as well as campus efforts to frequently monitor the student's academic progress.

### **Education's Political Organization Evolution**

The literature is clear and consistent regarding the needs of student learning and the negative implications of isolated punitive policies that work against known research. Miller, Kerr, and Ritter (2008) discussed in depth that those who favor standards based policies argue "uniformity at either the national or the state levels" (p. 101). In Texas, it is apparent that the conformity to uniformity of standards and best practices is taken to the next level with the recent adoption of HB5. It would seem that state policies have strived to challenge the public school organizational system when reviewing the existing avenue of known research around student learning, graduation rates and the lack of correlating high stakes tests in isolation with increases in college and career readiness.

The actionable evidence drives policy from one side of the coin with straight testing accountability measures to an expansive quantitative and qualitative accountability policy. The recently adopted policies of the TEA (2013) around student measurement and the accountability system began by addressing various components affecting student learning and graduation outcomes. The TEA recognized the vast research that demonstrated the teacher to be the single most influential factor in student academic success and began to develop a new teacher appraisal system. Likewise, one of the largest urban school districts in Texas, the Urban Independent School District (UISD), implemented a local policy supporting a new teacher appraisal system that involved applying a rubric for 10 instructional criteria, three planning criteria, and five professional criteria. The TEA's and UISD's appraisal systems target student learning and student engagement as observed by academic behaviors and students' abilities to communicate

what they learn and how it can be applied to current, past, and/or long-term goals. This implementation among educators signaled policy makers to implement an appropriate student assessment and graduation plan with campus organization measures that mirror the expected method for assessing quality of instruction by measuring not only academic growth but academic behaviors that have been shown to increase college and/or career readiness (Musoba, 2011). HB5 has sought to capture those academic behaviors through a prescriptive school improvement plan. The actions necessary to meet the HB5 mandates support Lezotte's correlates of effective schools, which include high expectations for all and a clear and focused mission to graduate all students college and career ready, frequent monitoring of student progress with the implementation of multiple assessments over multiple grade levels and personalized graduation plans, maximizing learning opportunities within an endorsement area of opportunity, and positive communication with specific documentation between home, school, and community (Lezotte, 1991). The requirements for vertical collaboration across campuses during the transition from eighth grade into ninth grade to support career pathways selection and on-going growth within an endorsed area of focus embodies and evokes best practices captured by Edmond's essential qualities of effective schools and Marzano's professional learning communities.

### **Educators as Leaders**

True educational leaders are needed to bridge gaps between practitioners and politicians. Yukl (2009) identified the following:

I believe it is important for managers and administrators to understand the complexity of effective leadership, the source of our knowledge about leadership in organizations, and the limitations of this knowledge. Likewise, I believe it is important for academics to

think more about how their theories and research can be used to improve the practice of management. (p. preface)

Yukl (2009) shared that one should maintain a balance of leadership attributes and not exceed past the defining attributes to the depths of the negatives associated with those same attributes. Once the balance of charismatic leadership characteristics happens the leader can develop transformative leadership (Yukl, 2009). The balance toward self-sacrifice with charisma leads to being a transformational leader (Yukl, 2009). Transformational leadership appeals to the moral values of followers to attempt to raise consciousness about ethical issues and mobilize energy and resources to reform institutions, while a transactional leader motivates followers by appealing to each party's self-interest and the exchange of benefits (Yukl, 2009). Yukl's conclusions coincide with those of Bolman and Deal (2008) on organizational frames and the leader's roles within those frames.

Platt, Tripp, Ogden, and Fraser (2000) defined an educational leader's role when he/she is serving as an effective leader in a similar manner:

Skillful leaders use the levers provided by outside forces ranging from state and national testing to public interest in charter schools to chip away at the notion that teachers have the right to be left alone to do less than their very best work on a regular basis. Such forces, leaders are heard to claim, demand that all members of the professional community rigorously examine their own practices, set forth improvement goals and pull their own weight in collective endeavors. (p. 29)

McCann and Jones (2012) identified that school leaders must envision "what good teaching looks like, sounds like and feels like, measure "the current instruction against this quality or standard," and work "nonstop with the community of professional educators to move the quality of

instruction closer to the ideal” (p. xii). Finally, Yukl (2009) offered the four measures to determine the effectiveness of leaders as outcomes, perceptions of followers, perceived contributions, and career attainment.

### **Educational Research that Gained Policy Support**

Christensen (2010) substantiated that the quality of the teachers in classrooms are the most important factor for continuous improvement, as they are the front lines for goal reforms.

Darling-Hammond (1997) emphasized that it is “critical to remember that reform is never completed, because everyone continually changes, and everyone continually learns, experiencing fresh insights from practice, from research, and from the synergy of teachers, administrators, students, parents, and others inquiring together” (p. 336). Christensen (2010) demonstrated how the educational organization should be an organization of change and not be a one-size fits all, “disruptive innovation...an innovation that occurs outside of a current organization and eventually disrupts the current organization, by beginning with non-consumers.” The reference to non-consumers in the text gives meaning for starting with the teachers, not the students (Christensen, 2010). McCann and Jones (2012) reinforced this reality when arguing “the quality of teaching in classrooms is the single most important factor in advancing student achievement and in sustaining school improvement” (p. xi).

Christensen (2010) argued that school improvement should not be about formulating a narrow focus on sub-groups of struggling students, even though existing educational policies, as referenced prior, institutionalize an accountability system that is punitive in nature for students and schools. According to the TEA (2014), “campuses and districts receive an accountability rating based on all indexes for which they have performance data” (para. 4); however, the performance data is no longer isolated with single outcomes but now there is a complexity for

growth imbedded and expectations for organized structures, systems, etc. The present challenge of educational leaders with first-hand knowledge of research and school experience is to address an organizational system in transition and produce real sustainable solutions. Lopez (2003) argued the need to “confront the silence . . . in schools and to summon scholars in the politics of education” (p. abstract). Darling-Hammond (1997) argued for the:

Rebuilding the system of U.S. public education so that it can provide a genuine right to learn [because it] is not a task for publicity hunters or the faint at heart. It is exceedingly difficult work that will take many years of struggles and setbacks as well as insights and epiphanies to accomplish. (p. 337)

Christensen (2010) reiterated that disruptive innovation does not attack an existing system, but maintains an evolution to drive affordability, accessibility, capability, and responsiveness time. Hattie (2008) formulated a visual representation of the statistical effect size of 138 topics using an 800 meta-analysis for instructional leaders to align their district and campus initiatives to research. Hattie provided evidence for positive student achievement outcomes through the process of teachers using “critical reflection in light of evidence about their teaching” (p. 239).

If the teacher is the most influential factor to student success, then teachers’ learning must be on-going and evolve with student learning and consideration must be given to the influential domains of student, home, school, teacher, curricula, and teaching. Hattie (2008) stated further:

The major message is that we need a barometer of what works best, and such a barometer can also establish guidelines as to what is excellent . . . Excellence is attainable: there are many instances of excellence, some of it fleeting and some of it aplenty. (p. ix)

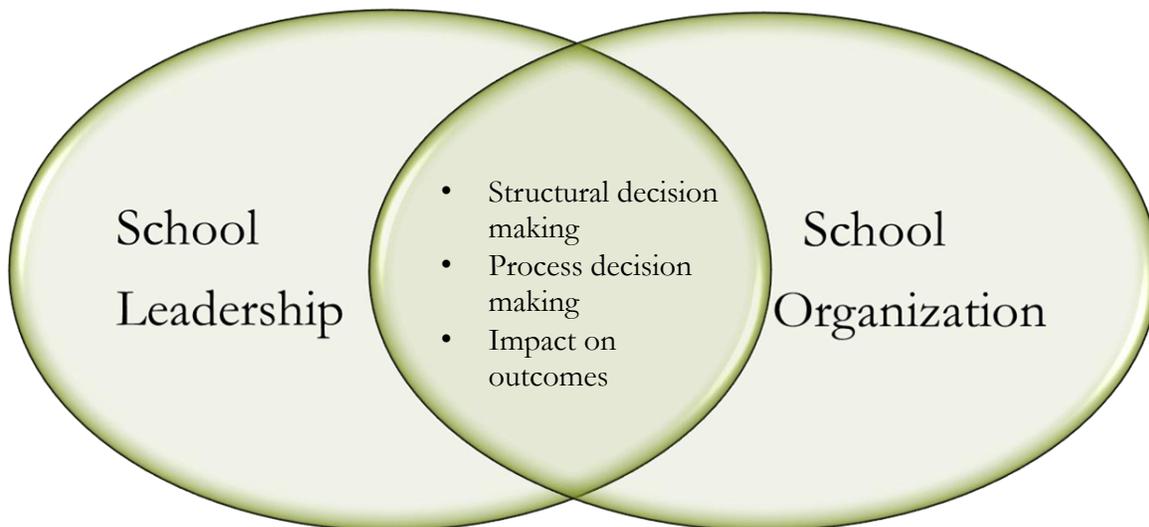
When considering Yukl’s (2009) four indicators of effective leadership, educators should pause. The prior outcomes in educational policies did not align with the core beliefs and best

practices of educators; hence, the complexity of HB5 enacted by legislation. The perception by followers and contributors among the education realm had not fared positive based on the outcomes. These groups have called to question that the complexity of education could not be captured with single assessment measurements in isolation without addressing the whole picture in the education career of each child.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework provided a visual representation of the components of this study and the relational outcomes of school leadership and school organization. While policy, best-practices, and historic research and data trends influence both school leadership and the school organization, it is the relational interaction between existing school leadership and existing school organization that produce structural and process decision making and impact outcomes. The components are presented as a Venn-diagram in Figure 2.1. These two components have demonstrated an influence on the leader's implementation practices and/or decision making as it relates to HB5 based on the reviewed literature. While the output of measure for HB5 is the college-ready high school graduate, the indicators and/or components that determine the health of the educational organization involves a school leader's ability to effectively implement policies and practices based on historic research and data trends. The administrator's role in understanding his/her responsibilities and the organizational composition is challenged due to the growing complexity of the educational expectations of HB5. Each factor and/or component serves as a layered lens or situational filter impacting an administrator's decisions among the four frames described by Bolman and Deal (2008). The analysis of these two components, as they overlap to formulate the decisions and impact outcomes, enhances the complexity of the situation in which an administrator must make structural, human resource, political, and symbolic

adjustments in his/her leadership decisions based on effective school improvement best practices to reach the desired outcome defined by HB5.



*Figure 2.1.* Theoretical framework of the relational impact between school leadership and the school organization that emerged to produce structural and process decision making, as well as an impact on outcomes..

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

A brief broad scope perspective of the political battle for resources gives a glimpse of the impact at stake. In reflecting on the history of policy, the influence of past and current stakeholders outside of education, and current financial cuts in social welfare programs, Rodgers and Welher (1986) noted the following:

Schwarz statistically demonstrated that private sector expansion cannot account for the decrease in the number of Americans in poverty between 1960 and 1980. However, the decrease in poverty was directly related to increase in government expenditures for social welfare programs.

Previously, Goldberg's (2000) interview with Goodlad discussed abstinence in addressing

the real issues of poverty through education (p. 173); however, business leaders and legislators are very much reacting with purpose of the issues. Unfortunately, their issue is different. Rodgers and Welher (1986) identified the biased driving force behind the uprising war against education, “employers whose chief interest is the continued exploitation of low-wage, surplus labor” (p. 286). The foundation was intentionally put in motion as Uzzell (2005) noted how “the NCLB statute is a reform strategy at war with itself” (p. 1). The intent to address quality education for all led to many campus improvement plans that targeted improving teaching to the test and missing the organizational shifts needs as a whole. HB5 increased the complexity of accountability “to measure students’ academic performance in core high school courses and to become part of the graduation requirements beginning with the freshman class of 2011-2012” (Givens, 2012, p. 82). The EOC assessments for lower-level courses must include questions to determine readiness for advanced coursework. The assessments for higher-level courses must include a series of special purpose questions to measure college readiness and the need for developmental coursework in higher education. There had not been a measure or indicator for career readiness, which were the intentional arguments produced by business leaders and policymakers in support of EOC exams. Since there is no evidence that the state accountability measures or SAT college ready indicator results in a stronger workforce, additional accountability measures are included in HB5 in conjunction with the quantitative state assessment measures.

The foundation has been laid of the historic misalignment of policy and product in education. The literature has shown a lack of progress when driven by isolated assessment and accountability policies in education which has drawn public scrutiny. The evolution of state accountability demonstrates how HB5 has sought to bring alignment between policy and best practices with a double book end approach. Research has provided expansive outcomes and

identified best practices in addressing key elements of an organization. The need for emerging practices in HB5 implementation to serve as models for driving both education policy and practices is needed to maintain a closing of the education gap. It is imperative that current education stakeholders learn their role in advocating for the work based on current and leading data trends. There is a need for policy makers to recognize the entities involved in maintaining our educational system and societal well-being. Educators must lead the way in holding the education system and the business of holding schools accountable, not students, by serving as model schools with effective organizational frameworks for producing successful student outcomes.

From reflecting on historic and current educational research, analyzing research on effective leadership, and recognizing current graduation requirements by state legislation, research is needed on how local administrators are impacted by HB5 and the implications on the organizational framework to meet the existing demands from the new accountability system. Additional data from educational leaders at the high school level must be analyzed to understand next steps in securing a positive progression for student outcomes, as measured by state assessment, SAT tests, and graduation rates. This study first presented a quantitative analysis of the most recent state accountability graduation initial requirement's impact on both college readiness and graduation rates compared to the prior state accountability graduation requirement's impact on graduation rates and college readiness, as measured by SAT. Secondly, this study offered a qualitative analysis of the direct feedback received from campus administrators at the high school level about what actions they have taken within their campus organizations in relation to HB5 as they diligently sought to balance student needs and policy expectations.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter outlines the methodology and procedures applied in this study. Also comprised within this chapter is the purpose of the study, research questions, and the rationale for the chosen methodology and framework. The sources of data are described, along with the sample, procedures for data collection and methods for data analysis.

### **Purpose of the Pragmatic Mixed-Method Study**

The purpose of the study is to determine the relationship and/or impact between policy, data trends, and best practices for effective HB5 implementation. An analysis between state assessments and intended outcomes of college ready graduates using the state assessment TAKS exit exams and EOC exams with SAT scores and graduation rates at the district level were compared with campus data at three designated Title I high schools that mirror the district demographics. A further analysis of qualitative data from the high school campus principal interviews and campus documents were triangulated with the quantitative data. This mixed-methods case study was used to determine the impact of HB5 and implementation practices in the schools' organizational structures, on-going planning and decision-making processes, and human resource changes that have been installed to effectively implement the requirements of HB5.

The significance for further analysis is whether or not the existing assessments truly determine/measure college readiness as measured by SAT scores compared to prior state assessment. In addition, what does the emerging data reveal regarding the new state assessment's impact on graduation rates compared to the prior state assessment and implementation practices for high school principals. This analysis could further lead to whether an alternative policy to support students into the next phase of life pass high school that fall short of the accountability requirements.

An alternate assessment or option outside of high stakes testing would give way for an alternate graduation plan that reflects the various career pathways for students rather than just the focus on college readiness. Heilig (2014) urged Texas educators to gain momentum in developing a community based accountability system. As noted, the existing policies ensured that failure to meet the passing rate established by the state on the designated EOC exams would prevent a student from gaining a high school diploma, thus limiting his/her competitive ability to succeed in the next phase of life. Currently, the state has been incorporating a phasing measure, which were the standards utilized in this research. In addition, the state provided a temporary alternative in May of 2015 for seniors graduating in 2015 that failed to pass all five EOC exams by setting a minimum of three exams meeting standard with campus graduating committee guidelines.

### **Research Questions**

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How has HB5 impacted college readiness, as measured by SAT composite scores and graduation rates?
2. How has HB5 impacted the Principal's role at the high school level?
3. What school organizational structures, on-going planning and decision-making processes, and human resource changes have been installed to effectively implement the requirements of HB5?

### **Research Methods**

#### **Pragmatic Paradigm**

The research paradigm presented in this study is a mixed-methods approach. The pragmatic theoretical perspective arose out of a call for action due to a changing accountability

system and the impact on education and society. This methodology provides an emphasis to be placed on the research problem by allowing varying analysis of historic, current, and emerging data. Creswell (2014) explained that “pragmatist researchers look to the *what* and *how* to research based on the intended consequences—where they want to go with it” (p. 11) and explained that this approach allows a validation for mixed method approach by providing a purpose and reasoning for combining both quantitative data and qualitative data. The analysis of the relationships, if any, between prior and existing state accountability requirements and SAT scores as well as the impact on graduation rates among first-time test takers from a quantitative approach provided information about the existing direction of the state accountability assessment system goal to increase the number of college ready graduates. The qualitative analysis captured emerging trends for the interviewed high school principals’ efforts to balance their organizational frameworks to meet the transitioning state accountability system (Creswell, 2014). The mixed-method was most appropriate not only to capture raw data from a quantitative method but also to use qualitative data to bring forth influential solutions for future repetitive outcomes.

Reeves (2003) quoted Patton (1987) when arguing for the value of qualitative methods as “particularly useful for studying variation in program implementation” (p. 39). Moreover, this research sought to illuminate the voice of those most affected, the urban high school, by current educational policies. Creswell (2014) highlighted that this mixed methodology provides a theoretical lens “reflective of social justice” as adopted by many in the field of education and social sciences (p. 11). This methodology pushes back against the growing norm to accept the creation of a permanent underclass among the underprivileged and minority subgroups that could be on the horizon if effective organizational frameworks are not established in the midst of the new accountability system.

## **Quantitative Research Methodology**

Quantitative research brings a scientific measure often sought by positivist. Reeves (2003) explained that “the ‘positivist’ aspect represents a faith in scientific progress and the perfectibility of humanity” (p. 30). Quantitative data offered a factual stance to triangulate with unbiased outcomes. The state assessments and SAT scores over time were visually analyzed to determine if graduates were college ready.

## **Qualitative Research Methodology**

As mentioned previously, qualitative data allowed insight about principals’ efforts to meet the demands of accountability. Historically, quantitative data has been a leading source in the realm of education accountability to push the system further into this punitive accountability organizational system. By identifying patterns of both intended outcomes of the accountability system and actual outcomes of the accountability system, one can only recognize the expectation and/or problem; however, qualitative data provided a deeper explanation for action to be identified. The qualitative analysis provided an opportunity to identify mediating variables based on the self-reported actions of the campus administrators intending to achieve the outcomes established by HB5’s accountability policy. The data provided by campus leaders’ practices in implementing HB5 sought to expose the strengths and weaknesses for attaining intended outcomes.

## **Case Study Site Selection**

The location of the study was conducted in one of the largest urban districts in Texas. Three high schools within the corresponding district were selected, which consisted of student demographics that mirrored the overall district population and serve among the largest comprehensive high schools in the district with those targeted demographics. This selection was

made with purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used to determine the participants due to several common elements chosen for the basis of this study which included socio-economic status, size, and ethnicity (Hays & Singh, 2012). The principal at each high school was interviewed in their office setting located on each of their corresponding campuses. All three high school are in an urban environment. In comparing campuses, three were chosen randomly from the third quartile that met the criteria of the purposive sampling, which included the term of leadership in addition to the demographics and designation as Title I campuses.

### **Sampling and Participants**

The campuses within the designated district were divided in quartiles based on size. The third quartile was selected based on the reasonably large campus size for an urban school compared to the last quartile of the largest high school, which did not meet the criteria of mirrored demographics to the district nor Title I status. Five campuses within the third quartile met the criteria established for the purposive sampling. Three of the five campuses were randomly selected as participants for this study, which included interviews from the high school campus principals within the designated district, as well as campus documents. All three principals have been at their corresponding high school campuses for a minimum of 2 years and in leadership positions for more than 5 years. Each campus principal was interviewed to gather historic organizational framework, current organizational framework, and any changes to the existing organizational framework in response to accountability requirements. In addition to the interviews, campus improvement plans/school improvement plans, master schedules, bell-schedules, meeting schedules, graduation rates, and aggregated campus state accountability and SAT score data were collected from each of the campuses.

## **Sources of Data**

The sources of data included qualitative analysis from the coded interviews from each of the three high school principals, as well as the triangulation of the interviews, campus data, and district data. Quantitative data were gathered from the district and the campuses over the last 5 years to include three measures within each graduating cohort, starting from the graduating cohort of 2009-2010. The three quantitative measures that were collected for each cohort were the passing percentage of first-time test takers on their designated state assessments, the SAT composite average of each cohort in their junior year, and graduation rates of each cohort. The equivalent data were collected from each of the three individual campuses that are led by the designated principals as interviewees in this study.

## **Procedures**

### **Institutional Approval**

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval at The University of Texas at Austin was required and filed with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. By filing for IRB approval, the researcher ensured appropriate practices were taken to protect the rights, privacy, and welfare of participants. All the appropriate paperwork for each participant was obtained to conduct the external research. In addition, the appropriate paperwork was filed with the district according to local policy and approval obtained. The quantitative data collection was approved as exempt by the IRB.

### **Interviews**

Upon IRB approval, all interviews were scheduled and conducted at the corresponding principal's campus. The interviews occurred in the office setting on those corresponding campuses. The interviews were recorded with member checking to increase accuracy and build

trustworthiness. The recorded interviews were transcribed utilizing the REV app. Attributional coding was applied to reveal patterns in HB5 implications on the principal's role and implementation practices, as it relates to the four organizational frames to meet targeted results on the state assessment, SAT, and graduation.

### **Data Analysis**

The quantitative data were analyzed by graduating cohorts over 5 academic years. The first cohort was 2009-2010, which graduated under TAKS in 2012-2013 and continued with three additional cohorts under EOC with the first EOC graduating cohort of 2011-2012, graduating in 2015. The data were compiled for each cohort and a trend analysis determined the initial outcomes from the shift in the prior state assessment accountability to the recent HB5 accountability policy. A three-pronged analysis for and between each cohort included the percentage of first-time test takers passing the state assessment at the high school level, the average SAT score for the corresponding cohort taken in during the junior year of that cohort, and 4-year graduation rates for each designated cohort.

In order to analyze the qualitative data, attributional coding was applied to each of the three transcribed interviews. Causes and consequences were identified with the accountability measures serving as driving forces/causes of change, which include TAKS, EOCs, SAT, and graduation rates. A sequential numbering system was assigned with 1 identifying TAKS, 2 identifying EOC, 3 identifying SAT, and 4 identifying graduation rates for each of the causes/drivers of change. A color coding system was utilized for the causal impacts that emerged, as it related to organizational campus changes. As themes emerged, frequency counting was used to determine the relational impact/causal dimension of each driving force on the campus organizational framework and/or changes in practice. The frequency and/or causal dimensions

were then analyzed to determine any emerging themes of practice across the three campuses within the existing the four organizational frames: political, structural, human resources, and symbolic.

### **Data Quality and Confirmability**

The research considered respect, beneficence, and justice. Anonymized data were used in both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis from one of the top five largest districts in the state of Texas. Informed consent was obtained by the three participants as specified by IRB and the identity of each interviewee was kept confidential to minimize any psychological, social, or economic risks. The case study focused on one of the largest urban districts in the state of Texas and repeating that selection in campus selection provides an equitable target for the research to impact those most impacted by this recent transition in accountability.

The data were triangulated to increase quality analysis and confirmability. Applying the attributional coding helped triangulate interview and artifact data with district accountability data district level and campus-level data for the schools led by the interviewed principals. After coding the transcriptions, participant checks and document reviews were conducted to ensure appropriate meanings and representations were captured through the interviews' content analysis. Cross checking and member checking increases trustworthiness and quality of research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

### **Summary**

This chapter specified the research method, including the paradigm, site selection, participants, and sources of data for the study. An elaboration of the procedures for interviewing each of the three participants is outlined. The interviews capture the qualitative data for the campus case study. In addition the data analysis, data quality, and data confirmability procedures

were provided. Chapter 4 and 5 provide the quantitative and qualitative data collected for both the campus case study, as well as the district data. Lastly there is an analysis of the data lending to further study.

## Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a correlation between the intended outcomes and actual outcomes as related to the transition from prior state accountability system to the new HB5 accountability system (as measured by SAT scores and graduation rates), as well as HB5 implication for campus leaders at the high school level. A pragmatic mixed-methodology was utilized to address the complexity of the research. A pragmatic paradigm is a theoretical perspective that arises out of actions, situations, and consequences utilizing pluralistic approaches from both quantitative and qualitative data to gain information about the research problem (Creswell, 2014). By utilizing mixed-method methodology, this study expanded the existing research between policy, research and data trends, and best practices in one of the largest urban districts in the state of Texas.

The mixed-method research approach involved utilizing both quantitative data as well as qualitative data from three urban high school campuses with demographics that mirrored the district's student demographics. The case studies of the three high school campus principals allowed for further investigation of the specific campuses' organizational structures.

The quantitative analysis of district and campus Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) data, end-of-course (EOC) exam data, SAT scores, and graduation rates included the 2009-2010 student cohort through the most recent student cohort of 2014-2015. The student cohort of 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 graduated under the TAKS accountability system and the cohort of 2011-2012 was the first student cohort to graduate under HB5. In addition, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. How has HB5 impacted college readiness, as measured by SAT composite scores and graduation rates?

2. How has HB5 impacted the Principal’s role at the high school level?
3. What school organizational structures, on-going planning and decision-making processes, and human resource changes have been installed to effectively implement the requirements of HB5?

This chapter provides the findings of the statistical data at the district and campus levels. In addition, the findings from the qualitative analysis provide descriptive reasoning from the campus level.

### **Quantitative Results**

Urban Independent School District (UISD) is the largest school district in the state of Texas, serving over 215,000 students with 24 comprehensive high schools. The high schools were organized by size from smallest to largest and then divided into quartiles. The third quartile consisted of the largest high school campuses with similar demographics to those of the district. The student population in the third quartile ranged from 1,570 students to 2,166 students with all campuses serving a student population that was over 75% economically disadvantaged and contained a majority Hispanic student population. The majority of the campuses that fell into the fourth quartile did not mirror the district’s economic disadvantage demographics with their students representing less than 60% as economic disadvantage. Table 4.1 displays the ranges for each of the four quartiles.

Table 4.1

*Ranges for Each Quartile of Student Enrollment*

Quartile 1	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4
192-780	999-1,560	1,570-2,166	2,246-3,714

The urban ISD had an 81% economically disadvantaged student population. The district's ethnic breakdown was 62% Hispanic, 25% African American, 8 % White, and 4% Asian. The three targeted high schools were randomly selected from the third quartile and had similar demographics. Figure 4.1 displays the racial demographics for the district and the three participating high schools.

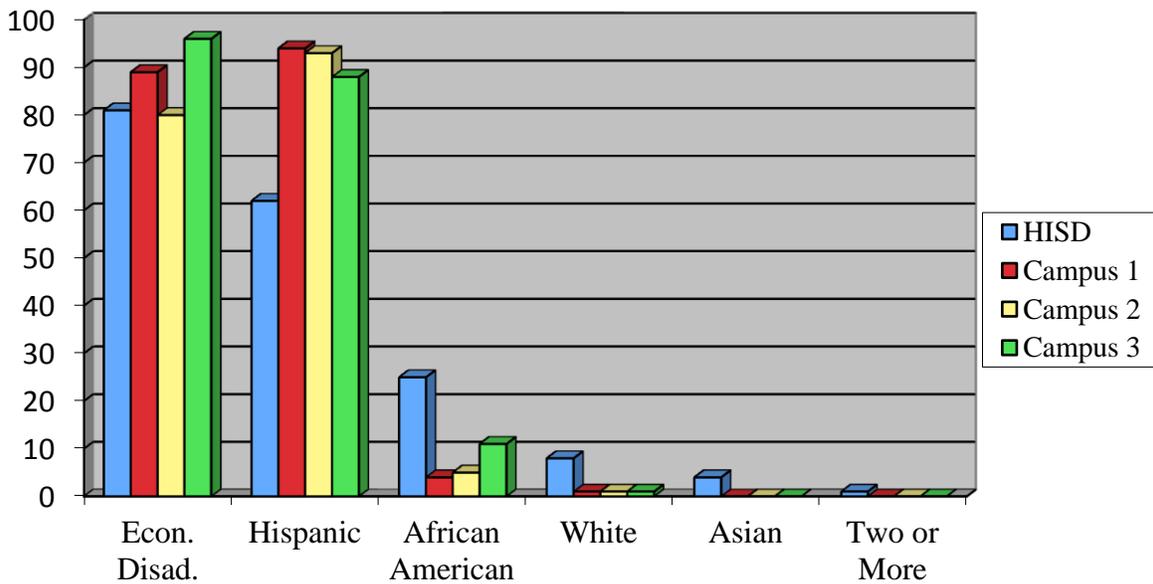


Figure 4.1. Demographic comparison between UISD and three designated high school campuses from most recent state profiles during 2013-2014.

In analyzing the quantitative data, an initial 5-year statistical analysis was performed at the district level and at the high school campus level on each of the three targeted individual campuses selected from the third quartile. Due to the varying number of state required exams year by year during the transition from TAKS to EOCs, the data analysis was performed utilizing the district database to gather the percentage of first-time test takers that met all assessment criteria to compare with final graduating outcomes of those students who passed all exams after retesting to earn a diploma within the designated 4 years including Grades 9 through 12. The required state assessments for the student cohorts of 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 were the TAKS

exit exams that assessed students in the 11th grade on the subjects of math, science, English language arts (ELA), and social studies. The required state assessments for the student cohorts starting high school in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 included EOC exams for algebra I, biology, English I and II, and U.S. history.

The 2011-2012 cohort became the first high school class to graduate under the HB5 assessment requirements. In addition, the 2012-2013 cohort was the last intended cohort to be assessed under the phase-in standards and did not include the special education student population that had been assessed separately under modified exams. Also, the 2013-2014 EOC assessments combined English reading and writing into a single-day 5-hour assessment even though they previously been held over a 2-day period. The 2013-2014 student cohort continued to be evaluated under the phase-in standards. Table 4.2 chart captures the yearly progression of data across the district and the three targeted campuses. The table shows the comparison of college readiness data as indicated on SAT average scores and the state's assessments at the high school level.

Table 4.2

*5-year District and Campus SAT and State Assessment Pass Rates*

		SAT			Math		Science		Social Studies		English Language Arts/ELA				
		Math	Writing	Verbal/ Critical Reading	11th TAKS Math	Algebra I	11th TAKS Science	Biology	11th Grade SS	US History	11th TAKS ELA	English I Reading	English I Writing	English II Reading	English II Writing
2009-2010	District	477	454	457	87	N/A	89	N/A	97	N/A	90	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Campus 1	419	372	378	76	N/A	76	N/A	94	N/A	88	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Campus 2	445	406	416	70	N/A	71	N/A	93	N/A	86	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Campus 3	433	394	399	65	N/A	69	N/A	90	N/A	87	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2010-2011	District	470	440	445	87	N/A	88	N/A	98	N/A	92	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Campus 1	421	372	373	82	N/A	82	N/A	96	N/A	88	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Campus 2	412	380	385	86	N/A	82	N/A	97	N/A	88	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Campus 3	427	384	393	79	N/A	79	N/A	97	N/A	90	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2011-2012 *1st EOC cohort	District	439	406	410	89	79	92	84	98	N/A	90	10	13	N/A	N/A
	Campus 1	388	338	342	93	75	95	69	97	N/A	90	43	24	N/A	N/A
	Campus 2	399	358	372	89	80	92	79	99	N/A	89	41	28	N/A	N/A
	Campus 3	413	378	371	80	62	85	80	93	N/A	83	50	40	N/A	N/A
2012-2013	District	440	402	410	87	75	94	82	98	N/A	92	59	42	71	45
	Campus 1	394	349	351	88	67	93	67	97	N/A	91	40	23	60	24
	Campus 2	394	359	377	82	61	94	73	97	N/A	90	49	28	58	28
	Campus 3	407	354	357	74	58	89	75	95	N/A	90	48	30	68	38
2013-2014	District	434	408	406	N/A	75	N/A	85	N/A	90	N/A	52	N/A	56	N/A
	Campus 1	398	350	342	N/A	73	N/A	73	N/A	88	N/A	36	N/A	39	N/A
	Campus 2	400	352	348	N/A	70	N/A	82	N/A	93	N/A	43	N/A	42	N/A
	Campus 3	408	362	361	N/A	69	N/A	81	N/A	92	N/A	46	N/A	50	N/A

The quantitative analysis revealed emerging data among the district and the three corresponding campuses as it relates to demographics, state assessments, and SAT national assessment. The statistical difference in demographics from the district and three campuses differed with an overall 15% range; however, the district and all three campuses serve above a 79% economically disadvantaged student population. Both the district and Campus 2 serve a 79%-80% economically student population, while Campus 1 and Campus 3 serve an 88% and 93% economically disadvantaged student population respectively. In addition, the district and three corresponding campuses serve a large minority population exceeding 82%; however, the breakdown of minority groups did vary from district to the three campuses. The district minority breakdown is 60% Hispanic and 22% African American, while all three campuses serve above an 84% Hispanic population.

In analyzing the last 5 years of assessment and graduation data, the comparative progression of national SAT scores and state assessment from year to year is captured, as well as a cohort comparison between state assessment and graduation rates. The district state math assessment scores maintained an 87%-89% pass rate under TAKS; however, shifted to 79% with a 10% drop in pass rate under the new HB5 Algebra I math assessment requirement in 2011-2012. There was an additional 5% drop to 75% pass rate for the following 2 consecutive years in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. Campus 1 increased the math pass rate under TAKS from 76% to 82% the following year and then an additional increase to 93% for those still under TAKS in 2011-2012; however, dropped to 75% math pass rate for Algebra I under HB5 in 2011-2012 and dropped again the next year to 67% in 2012-2013 but increased to 73% in 2013-2014.

Campus 2 increased the math pass rate under TAKS from 70% to 86% the following year. It showed an additional increase to 89% for those still under TAKS in 2011-2012. However, it dropped to 80% math pass rate for Algebra I under HB5 in 2011-2012 and dropped again the next year to 61% in 2012-2013 and increased to 70% in 2013-2014.

Campus 3 increased the math pass rate under TAKS from 65% to 79% the following year. It showed an additional increase to 80% for those still under TAKS in 2011-2012. However, it dropped to 62% math pass rate for Algebra I under HB5 in 2011-2012 and dropped again the next year to 58% in 2012-2013 and increased to 69% in 2013-2014.

The district and campuses began to score comparatively similar on the math assessment under TAKS beginning with the largest range difference of 22% between the district and Campus 3 and closing the gap to an 8% range difference in 2010-2011 and a 9% difference in 2011-2012. Likewise, the district and campuses made equally large drops in the performance gaps during both the first year and second year on the Algebra I math assessment scores under HB5. They began to

close the gap in performance between the district and campuses from a 17% difference in district and Campus 3 to a 6% range difference for 2013-2014.

A similar pattern is seen with the science assessment. The district was scoring at 89% in 2009-2010, dropped to 88%, and then increased with the remaining students under TAKS to 92% in 2011-2012. Likewise Campus 1 was at 76% in 2009-2010 and increased to 82% and 92% in the following years. Campus 2 was at 71% in 2009-2010 and increased to 82% and 92%. Campus 3 was at 69% in 2009-2010 and increased to 79% and 85%. Additionally, the district and all three campuses took a deep in science scores with the shift from Science TAKS to the Biology EOC exam, dipped again in the second year of 2012-2013, but then increased in the third year of 2013-2014. The district scored at 84% in 2011-2012, down to 82% in 2012-2013, and then up to 85% in 203-2014. Campus 1's Biology scores were 69% in 2011-2012, down to 67% in 2012-2013, and up to 73% in 2013-2014. Campus 2' Biology scores were at 79% in 2011-2012, down to 73% in 2012-2013, and up to 82% in 2013-2014. Campus 3's scores were at 80% with the first test takers under HB5 in Biology in 2011-2012, dropped to 75% in 2012-2013, and then increased to 81% in 2013-2014.

The most substantial decline in assessment scores was the shift from TAKS ELA to HB5's English EOC exams, which included English I Reading, English I Writing, English II Reading, English II Writing, a combined English I assessment in 2013-2014 and English II combined assessment in 2013-2014. The range in TAKS ELA scores at the district level and all three high school campuses remained in the low 90<sup>th</sup> percentile down to the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile. The greatest gap under TAKS was in the 2011-2012 administration between Campus 3 at 83% and the district and Campus 1 at 90%; Campus 2 scored at 89% in 2011-2012.

With the first administration of English I Reading and Writing in 2011-2012, the district scored at 10% in English I Reading and 13% in English II Writing. The district had an increase in the 2012-2013 test year yielding 59% in Reading and 42% in Writing. Campus 1 scored at 43% in Reading and 24% in Writing during the first administration in 2011-2012, but declined to 40% in Reading and 23% in Writing in 2012-2013. Campus 2 scored at 41% in Reading and 28% in Writing during the first administration in 2011-2012, and increased to 49% in Reading and stagnant in Writing at 28% in 2012-2013. Campus 3 scored at 50% in Reading and 40% in Writing during the first administration in 2011-2012, but declined to 48% in Reading and 30% in Writing in 2012-2013. In addition, the state began combining the English I Reading and Writing exam into one exam for the 2013-2014 administration. Under this first administration of the combined English I EOC, the district scored at 52%, Campus 1 scored at 36%, Campus 2 scored at 43%, and Campus 3 scored at 46%.

The first test takers for the English II Reading and Writing assessment was in 2012-2013. The English II Reading scores for the district was 71%, Campus 1 was 60%, Campus 2 was 58%, and Campus 3 was 68%. Then English II writing scores for the district was 45%, Campus 1 was 24%, Campus 2 was 28%, and Campus 3 was 38%. In 2013-2014, the English II Reading and Writing exam was combined into one English II exam with district scores at 56%, Campus 1 at 39%, Campus 2 at 42%, and Campus 3 at 50%.

The district and the three campuses saw a minimum shift from TAKS Social Studies to US History EOC. The district and all three campus maintained scores in the 90th percentile from 2009-2010 under TAKS thru 2013-2014 with the first US History EOC test takers outside of Campus 1 with 88% passing in 2013-2014. The US History EOC exam is the only assessment under HB5 that is typically administered in the junior year like the TAKS administration.

The SAT national assessment data were analyzed by cohort with the 2011-2012 cohort being the first cohort to take all five of the EOC exams and the SAT in their junior year, which was the 2013-2014 SAT test administration. Under TAKS, the data from the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 cohorts showed a slight decrease in composite scores for the district from 1255 to 1252 and Campus 3 from 1162 to 1118 and an observable increase in composite scores for Campus 1 from 1068 to 1094; Campus 3 only had a 1 point variation in composite score. Among the first-time test takers under HB5, there was a drop in the district, Campus 1, and Campus 2 composite scores. The district's 2010-2011 cohort scored an average composite score of 1252 and declined to 1248. Campus 1's 2010-2011 cohort scored an average composite score of 1094 and declined to 1090. Campus 2's 2010-2011 cohort scored an average composite score of 1130 and declined to 1100. Campus 3's 2010-2011 cohort scored an average composite score of 1118 and increased to 1131. In a further analysis of the SAT sections, the Math scores declined for the district from 440 with cohort 2010-2011 to 434 with cohort 2011-2012; however all three campuses saw an increase. Campus 1 cohort 2010-2011 math score was 394 and cohort 2011-2012 math score was 398. Campus 2 cohort 2010-2011 math score was 394 and cohort 2011-2012 math score was 400. Campus 3 cohort 2010-2011 math score was 407 and cohort 2011-2012 math score was 408.

Writing scores declined for the Campus 2 from 359 with cohort 2010-2011 to 352 with cohort 2011-2012; however the district and remaining two campuses saw an increase. The district cohort 2010-2011 writing score was 402 and cohort 2011-2012 writing score was 408. Campus 1 cohort 2010-2011 writing score was 349 and cohort 2011-2012 writing score slightly increased by 1 point to 350. Campus 3 cohort 2010-2011 writing score was 354 and cohort 2011-2012 writing score was 362. The decreases among the SAT categories that caused an overall downward shift

in composite scores with the exception of Campus 3 was the Verbal/Critical Reading. The district verbal/critical reading scores decreased from cohort 2010-2011 at 410 to cohort 2011-2012 at 406. Campus 1 verbal/critical reading scores decreased from cohort 2010-2011 at 351 to cohort 2011-2012 at 342. Campus 2 verbal/critical reading scores decreased from cohort 2010-2011 at 377 to cohort 2011-2012 at 348. Campus 3 was the only increase in verbal/critical reading scores from cohort 2010-2011 at 357 to cohort 2011-2012 at 361.

The comparative analysis captured the emerging trends of the transitional impact from the TAKS accountability system to the EOC accountability system with the 4-year cohort graduation rates between the district and the three participating campuses. Figures 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 depict bar graphs of the visual comparisons between the state accountability assessments among first-time test takers and the final graduation rates, which includes students who re-tested, within each cohort at the district level and among the three targeted campuses for each content assessment. The increase in percentages from initial first-time test takers and 4-year cohort graduation rates indicated an increase in those who met accountability standards after retesting. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 capture the cohorts falling under the TAKS accountability system. Figure 4.4 captures the first cohort's performance under the new EOC accountability system.

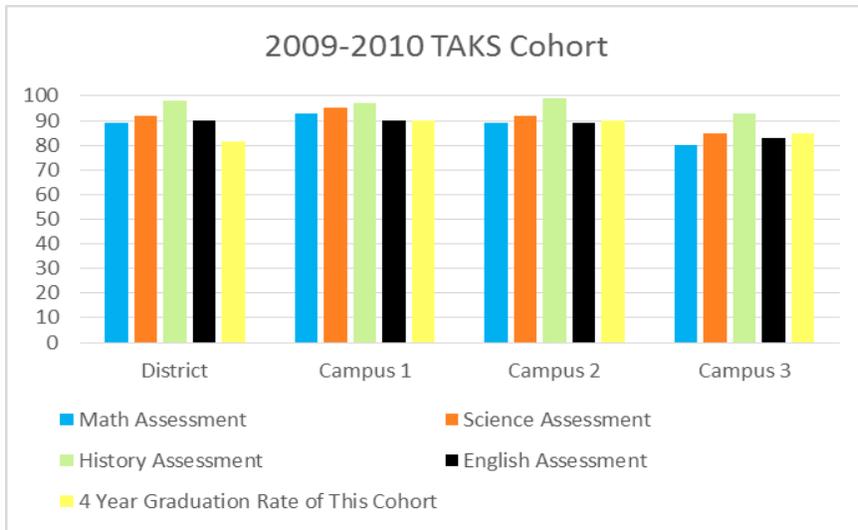


Figure 4.2. A comparative analysis of the state assessment scores of first-time test takers on-track for graduation and final graduation rates from the 2009-2010 TAKS cohort between the district level and Campus 1, Campus 2, and Campus 3.

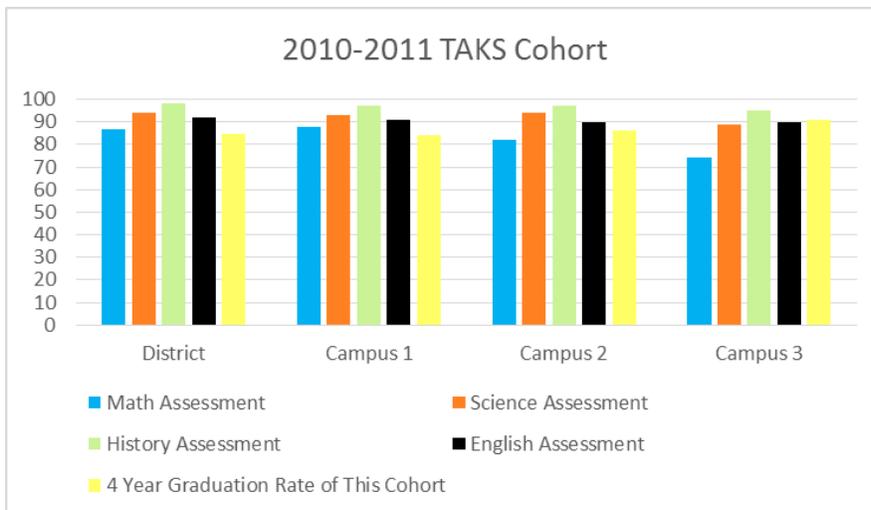


Figure 4.3. A comparative analysis of the state assessment scores of first-time test takers on-track for graduation and final graduation rates from the 2010-2011 TAKS cohort between the district level and Campus 1, Campus 2, and Campus 3.

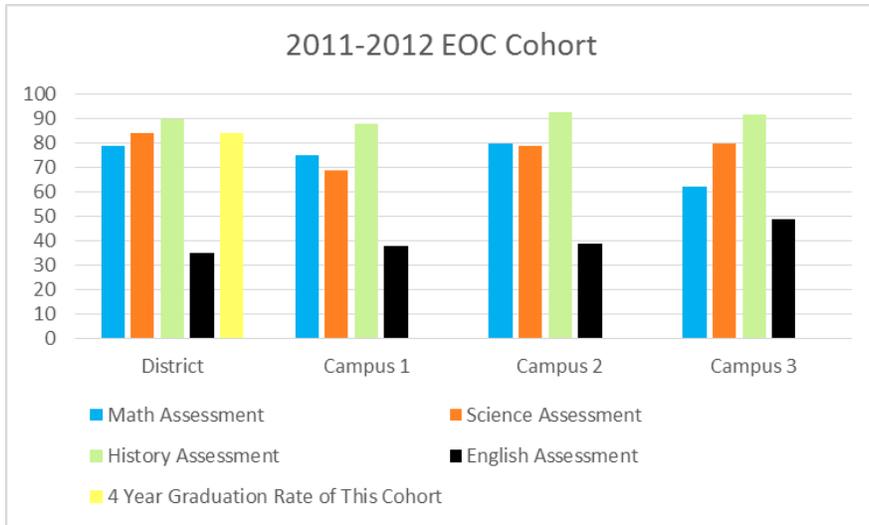


Figure 4.4. A comparative analysis of the state assessment scores of first-time test takers on-track for graduation and final graduation rates from the 2011-2012 EOC cohort between the district level and Campus 1, Campus 2, and Campus 3.

A comparative analysis was performed using the SAT composite scores between the district and the corresponding three campuses beginning with the 2009-2010 cohort through the 2011-2012 cohort. The remaining cohorts were not included in the displays because the scores were not available at the time of this study. Figure 4.5 displays the trend data for the composite SAT scores by cohort.

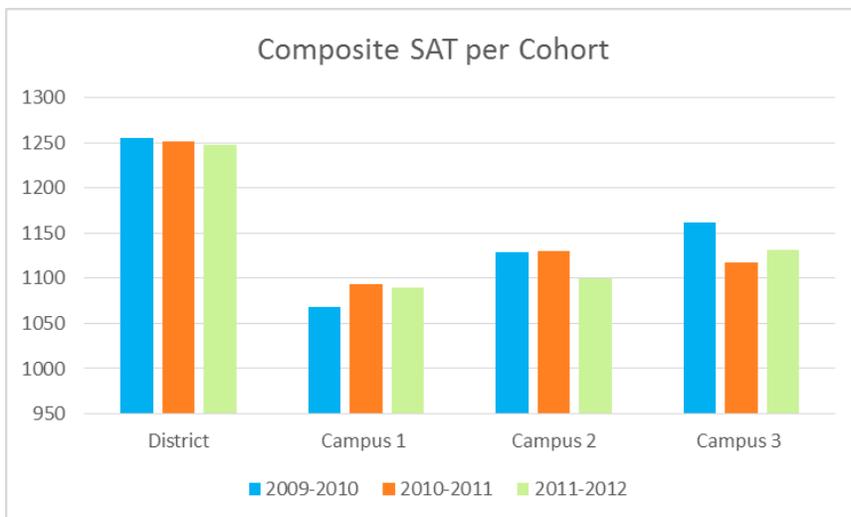


Figure 4.5. SAT composite scores trending over three cohorts at the district level and at the three selected high school campuses.

The final quantitative data analysis yielded an in-depth table displaying cohort data that included passing percentages among first-time test takers by each content area, SAT section average scores, and graduation rates. The content areas shown are those that are assessed at the high school level as a state graduation requirement. Table 4.3 identifies the average passing rates for each EOC or TAKS exit assessment content area within each of the cohorts between the district level and the three participating campuses. The TAKS exit exams demonstrated higher passing rates than the EOC assessments displayed. The district's SAT section score averages were higher than those for the three campuses. The district's graduation rate was lower than the reported rates for each of the three campuses, but the campuses' graduation rates were variable between the 2 years of available graduation data.

Table 4.3

*District Graduation, SAT Scores, and State Assessment Pass Rates by Cohort*

Cohort	Designated Year to Graduate	4 Year Graduation Rate of This Cohort	4 Year Drop Out Rate for This Cohort	SAT				Math		Science		Social Studies		English Language Arts/ELA					
				Math	Writing	Verbal/ Critical Reading	Comp	11th TAKS Math	Algebra I	11th TAKS Science	Biology	11th Grade SS	US History	11th TAKS ELA	English I Reading	English I Writing	English II Reading	English II Writing	
2009-2010	District	Class of 2013	81.6	11.1	439	406	410	1255	89	N/A	92	N/A	98	N/A	90	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Campus 1		89.8	8.1	388	338	342	1068	93	N/A	95	N/A	97	N/A	90	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Campus 2		90.2	5.7	399	358	372	1129	89	N/A	92	N/A	99	N/A	89	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Campus 3		84.8	5.4	413	378	371	1162	80	N/A	85	N/A	93	N/A	83	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2010-2011	District	Class of 2014	84.7	N/A	440	402	410	1252	87	N/A	94	N/A	98	N/A	92	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Campus 1		84.2	N/A	394	349	351	1094	88	N/A	93	N/A	97	N/A	91	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Campus 2		86	N/A	394	359	377	1130	82	N/A	94	N/A	97	N/A	90	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Campus 3		91.1	N/A	407	354	357	1118	74	N/A	89	N/A	95	N/A	90	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2011-2012 *1st EOC cohort	District	Class of 2015	84.3	N/A	434	408	406	1248	N/A	79	N/A	84	N/A	90	N/A	10	13	71	45
	Campus 1		89	N/A	398	350	342	1090	N/A	75	N/A	69	N/A	88	N/A	43	24	60	24
	Campus 2		85	N/A	400	352	348	1100	N/A	80	N/A	79	N/A	93	N/A	41	28	58	28
	Campus 3		92	N/A	408	362	361	1131	N/A	62	N/A	80	N/A	92	N/A	50	40	68	38
2012-2013	District	Class of 2016	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	75	N/A	82	N/A	86	N/A	59	42	56	N/A
	Campus 1		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	67	N/A	67	N/A	89	N/A	40	23	39	N/A
	Campus 2		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	61	N/A	73	N/A	98	N/A	49	28	42	N/A
	Campus 3		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	58	N/A	75	N/A	83	N/A	48	30	50	N/A
2013-2014	District	Class of 2017	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	75	N/A	85	N/A	*	N/A	52	N/A	53	N/A
	Campus 1		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	73	N/A	73	N/A	*	N/A	36	N/A	37	N/A
	Campus 2		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	70	N/A	82	N/A	*	N/A	43	N/A	36	N/A
	Campus 3		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	69	N/A	81	N/A	*	N/A	46	N/A	49	N/A

## Qualitative Results

The qualitative data were gathered through employing the case study approach by interviewing the principals of the three high school campuses representing the third quartile of student populations as explained in the prior chapters and illustrated in table 4.1 of this research.

Utilizing the questions for gathering the qualitative data for this study, the high school principals from each of the three campuses were interviewed for approximately 60 minutes with the five major questions from the “Principal Interview Questions” found in Appendix A. The three interviews were recorded, and member checking through restatements and reflections occurred throughout each of the individual interviews. At the time of the interviews, the transcriptions were captured with the REV.com as defined in chapter 1 on a smart phone application. All transcriptions are authentically represented in the narratives that follow. The language, expressions and sentence structures are a direct reflection of the interviewee.

The three transcripts were reviewed for clarification and understanding, and coded using the attributional coding procedure as described in chapter three. When determined necessary, follow-up discussions were held with some of the interviewees for further clarification and accuracy of the transcription summaries. The information yielded via the interview questions resulted in an identification of causes and consequences captured in the coding process. The analysis of this information provided six emerging themes across the three campus organizations. A color coding system was utilized to capture evidential support for each of the six emerging themes. Frequency counting measures were employed to identify distinctions between the themes, resulting in the dominant and weak dimensions in each of the emerging themes. This distinction isolated three dominant themes by the ponderance of the evidence identified for each of these themes. Table 4.4 illustrated, on the following page, depicts the themes and the descriptors for each.

The three dominant themes emerging with more frequency across all three campuses were *communication*, *focus*, and *relationships*. Relationships, communication, and focus were supported throughout all three interviews. The evidence supported the vital role that these themes

have in impacting each campus organization. In addition, the data revealed an interrelationship across the three themes, in which *relationships* and *focus* were impacted by *communication* and vice versa.

Table 4.4

*Campus Organizational Themes*

Theme	Campus 1	Campus 2	Campus 3
Communication (4)	*Face-To-Face *Principal/Community *Principal/Parent *Principal/Staff Staff/Community Staff/Student	*Face-To-Face *Principal/Community *Principal/Parent *Principal/Staff	*Face-To-Face *Principal/Community *Principal/Parent *Principal/Staff Principal/District Staff/Parent
Focus (4)	*Attendance Data *Career Pathway/ Post-Graduation *Ninth Graders *Tardies (Out Of The Halls) *Teaching Discipline Data Graduation Rates Mission/Vision Relationships	*Attendance Data *Career Pathway/ Post-Graduation *Ninth Graders *Tardies *Teaching Drop-Out Rates Failure Rates Graduation Rates Parent Involvement Personalization	*Attendance *Career Pathway/Post-Graduation *Ninth Graders *Tardies *Teaching Assessments Campus Support Discipline Data Parent Involvement Student Involvement
Relationship (3)	*Principal/Parent *Principal/Staff *Teacher Teams Campus/Community Campus/Student	*Principal/Principal *Principal/Staff *Teacher Teams Parent/Campus Principal/Parent	*Principal/Parent *Principal/Staff *Teacher Teams Community/Student District/Campus Principal/Principal Students/Campus
Change (2)	*Monitor *Organizational Structure Accountability Bell Schedule Focus Funding Patterns Looped Counselors	*Monitor *Organizational Structure Bell Schedule Meetings Patterns/ Focus Stakeholders Students By Houses	*Monitor *Organizational Structure Funding Patterns Staffing Student Involvement Support Structures
Responsibility (2)	*Leader Roles *Principal Community Students	*Principal *Leader Roles Parents Campus	District Parents *Leader Roles *Principal
Conflict (1)	*Funding/Needs Perceptions Visibility/Duties	*Funding/Needs Campus Need/District Support Visibility/Duties	*Funding/Needs Campus Need/District Support Program Need/Existing Staffing

*Note.* The number (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4) in the parenthesis appearing next to a theme identifies the number of shared themes across all three campuses. \* indicates the themes found across all three campuses.

**Communication theme.** Consistently all three principals held maintaining and/or strengthening communication in high value with the prominent stakeholders of the school. All three principals expressed the importance for clear and authentic communication with staff, students, parents, and community. The priority given to high quality communication by all principals was identified throughout the interviews. A variety of formats for communicating to the stakeholders were also shared by each of the interviewees. This included the creation and implementation of specific organizational structures that facilitated collaborative on-going decision making across all three campuses. For example, the principal from Campus 1 discussed strategies, structures and importance as follows:

We had a weekly administrative bulletin. In the weekly administrative bulletin, there'd be news that we would report out. We'd use our website; we used Twitter in terms of what changes we were doing. We also had a student led digital paper that was being funded by the alumni. They would write stories about the things that they were seeing on campus. In addition, Campus 1's principal strongly expressed the power of communication to overcome misconceptions and bring alignment for tackling shared goals. The principal provided the following reflection regarding issuing in-school-suspensions to enforce dress code and the tardy, or being late to class, policy as reasoning behind the importance of communication:

Maybe I should have listened to them. I made it an issue because I thought it was an issue. But maybe the kids wearing shorts at the time probably was not that important. Maybe what they wanted us to do was improve the academics first and they couldn't quite see the linkage. Just because I see the linkage in terms of students being in the classroom and not just walking around the hallway ... Somehow focusing on making sure that you're

communicating first with the parents earlier and listening to what they think is a priority is just as important as what the principal thinks is a priority.

Campus 2's principal reported using "a lot of formats" as well as the following means for communication:

For the immediate folks, obviously SDMC [site-based decision making committee] are always a face to face, APs and so forth. With the students, it's generally me on the announcement talking directly to them but asking them to feedback to me while they see me in the hallways and so forth. With the community ... the chamber of commerce, again, that's almost always face to face.

Campus 3's principal reported using the following methods to maintain and improve communication:

I use Career Pathways to have teacher leaders. We started a new teacher academy. We started a leadership academy. We make PLCs [professional learning community] meet every single day. They weren't even meeting once a week. We've done lots; especially with PowerUp, we've done lots to get training as intense as possible every Tuesday. I try to use as much teacher buy in and feedback as possible and get their opinions and insight, especially with AP or especially with intervention and stuff like that.

These foregoing transcription examples indicate all three campuses' principals were specific and very intentional in organizing their campuses to ensure high quality communications with all stakeholders. PLCs were established and consistently utilized for on-going campus planning and decision making across all three campuses. Additionally, all three principals were actively involved with community stakeholders attending community-sponsored events such as local chamber of commerce meetings, church sponsored events, and alike. Principals also

described their efforts in making their schools more inviting to community and parental stakeholders by strategically hosting events such as open house, parent information nights, and other education information nights for college and career opportunities. In addition, SDMC and open forum times with parents and students became a part of the school culture and formally recognized as part of the campus structure and organization. The communication theme that emerged reflected and closely aligned with the elements of the Bolman and Deal's organizational frames across all three campuses; symbolic, political, human resources, and structural frames. The on-going, highly spirited and authentic communication provided administrators the ability to effectively lead the school by giving attention to the four frames and applying the "ability to break the frames" or reframe, as needed to find solutions to situations that arise on a day-to-day basis (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 12). This theme was clearly related and overlapped with the other two dominant themes as well; focus and relationships.

**Focus theme.** The second theme was to share areas of focus. Each administrator communicated intentional structural and organizational decision making for purposeful outcomes, which brought forth the specific areas of focus that was shared among all stakeholders. The focus theme was validated through the redundant communication at every level within the organization and expanding outside to include the broader community. In addition, the specificity of the expectation for ownership among all stakeholders was captured as an additional area of focus. The principal of Campus 1 captured it clearly with the following statements:

The principal, he's the key communicator. You have to be positive, you have to be able to know what are the key areas that your organization is getting better on. You have to be able to communicate that to everybody. If I was invited to an alumni organization meeting, I knew the three things that I was going to say we're working on. If I was invited

to a parent meeting or I held a parent meeting I knew the three things I was going to communicate. If my assistant principals were going somewhere they knew the three things that they were going to communicate. If my teachers were asked, “What are the three things we’re working on?” They knew it. Because we would bring it up during our faculty meetings. The students would know it as well.

The second campus principal utilized opportunities to convey the focus areas because “it puts me in the situation of seeing these guys about two or three times a quarter so that we can better discuss specific issues.” The principal of Campus 3 discussed the following:

HB5 has specific pathways and we’re going to really focus on those. I have reached out to my different community members and my different community resources like the public library, like our chambers. That way we can get to have more people involved in the things we want to expose our kids to.

In order to have a direct impact on the designated focus areas and to increase relationships consistently, all three campuses’ principals indicated the intended relevance of communication and focus. Likewise, the stronger relationships among staff, students, and the community were expected to facilitate a stronger alignment to focus areas and stronger avenues for communication. Each principal was very intentional in utilizing symbolic and political appearance to gain necessary resources and support for the areas in which they were focused (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

**Relationship theme.** Relationships were critical to good communication and maintaining focus at all three campuses. By building relationships, the principals maintained communication among staff, parents, and the community. The elaboration of relationships to include personalization from one-on-one to whole group gave way for structural and process discussions that were on-going in a team approach among all stakeholders. The evolution of the organization

through the Principal's ability to build, expand, and grow relationships revealed distinctive progression to increase stakeholders in reaching desired outcomes. The principal of Campus 1 said:

I think that the best communication is when you talk to someone in person. It's important to have it in writing, but I think talking to people, picking up the phone and calling parents and talking to them. Even if it just means 20 parents a week. Or alumni members, or our teachers going by to their classrooms.

The principal of Campus 2 elaborated on have in relationships with the local churches because of the following:

They celebrate all of the elderly people. Just for me to be able to participate in all of that helps me draw more of the community in and the more of the community I can draw in, the better job I think I can do.

The principal of Campus 3 shared a story of a home visit to educate the parents on opportunities for their child as a valedictorian. The parents did not want their daughter to go off to college or even visit higher education opportunities. The principal shared how the home visit enabled the opportunity to build a relationship based on trust. This principal believed:

A home visit. Even talking with the priests in her neighborhood. We have three major churches around us and talking with them to talk to the parents, their congregation, about "You should embrace the school. You should be involved with the schools."

Relationships enabled the principals to break down barriers to a shared vision and to focus on the role of facilitating change. Both the human resource frame and symbolic frame came into play throughout the theme of relationships. Administrators sought to build capacity within their organizations and with external supports through strengthening relationships. The relationships

discussed were both symbolic in nature and framed as a human resource. Administrators sought to gain a family investment from community, and organize and support staff to accomplish the tasks at hand from the human resource side, while feeling connected to the work (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

**Change theme.** Within the theme of change, several commonalities were identified across all three campuses in relation to the desired organizational structure. Likewise, the theme of responsibility overlapped in supporting change. The structural changes led to further process discussions that ultimately impacted campus human resources in staffing and leadership selection. Two of the three principals transferred from a top-down structure to empowering teacher teams, PLCs, leadership communities, etc. For example, Campus 3's principal said, "Big, major change that you want to see, you have to get their input and they didn't ever have that." Campus 2's principal offered the following:

Well, leadership wise, it was structured very top-down. The staff was very used to just being given specific orders and so forth. . . . I think that when one person's controlling absolutely all of the decisions all of the time, it just becomes inefficient.

The change from top down to a collaborative, PLC structure was not necessary at Campus 1 because the PLC structure already existed and remained an important facet or avenue for change. The structural frame to support PLCs was a consistent desired component for each campus organization. Campus 1's principal reported as follows:

If it's real top-down, very authoritative from the principal that didn't work . . . you really want them to buy into what you're trying to say. You really want to listen to them, to insure that their ideas are being heard as well, because they are the ones that are doing it day in and day out [and] those were the people that I relied on. The leadership team, I

figured that they were people that saw themselves as leaders. The rest of the team saw them as leaders. They were respected. If I could get them to see the bigger issues on campus, then they were more likely to make that change.

This consistent reasoning about the emerging change theme coincided with the responsibility theme. Both principal roles and leader roles were seen as essential for change and ensuring support and monitoring of effective change among all three campuses. Campus 3's principal said, "Because if we're going to move forward, they need to all be involved. They need to understand why we make the decisions we make. Not just because the principal said."

The change theme established a framework and supportive structure for the next three emerging themes. Likewise, the change theme served as the driver in reformation of the organization across political, structural, human resource, and symbolic frames. All three campus organizations' principals appeared to successfully identify specific areas of concern. Each campus administrator shared different imbalances in their organizations' structural, political, symbolic, or human resource frames that could prevent progression towards their desired, shared goals. The change theme, as well as the following responsibility theme, highlight the critical need for administrators to understanding how these frames work interchangeably for the positive or the negative to gain and maintain an effective balance among the four frames for the health of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

**Responsibility theme.** Organizational structure and monitoring was expressed across all three campuses as indicators for responsibility. Each principal clearly communicated a theme of responsibility; however, the role of the principal and administrative team in monitoring and ensuring an efficient and effective organizational structure was verbalized throughout the three interviews as necessary and requiring consistency. On-going discussions were maintained with

stakeholders, again, to not only reach desired outcomes, but also to actively monitor progression towards the desired goals. Campus 1's principal discussed making organizational changes from monitoring discipline and graduation data:

We discovered or we uncovered that there were some big issues in ninth grade discipline. We allotted another assistant principal for the ninth grade. We allowed the ninth grade counselor and assistant principal to loop-up with their grade level since they had already built that relationship they would be able to ensure that they graduated. We saw a big difference in the amount of personalization on the campus.

Campus 1's principal also discussed the need to change the bell schedule to allow for more instructional time due to the onset of HB5.

Campus 2's principal discussed at length his sense of responsibility to monitor, the importance of monitoring, and the reasoning to respond and reorganize based off of the results:

To change on a dime because it just ... It does too much harm if you stick with things that aren't working for long periods of time. At the same time, you have to be innovative and try new stuff ... I knew a little bit about everything. I made sure that I was involved in just about everything. I was going to meetings that people really weren't used to me being at. I was doing home visits, which some folks weren't used to. It's taught me to back up a little bit and let my people do a little bit more of those things for me. I still want to be involved. I still want to keep my finger in just about everything but at the same time I think I hit this point where I was trying to do too much and as a result I was hardly getting anything done.

Campus 3's principal explained various scenarios that involved monitoring and reorganizing because of being responsible for the school's outcomes from discipline data to AP scores:

At the beginning the key stakeholders were only the admin team. Now, they're the department chairs, they're some of the admin team but not all. Depending on what it is we're trying to change. Different teacher leaders within the school. How it's changed? It's expanded to have more people involved because we needed more eyes on what we're doing. Are we going in the right direction? I have one person who looks at data and she'll come and tell me, "You know what? We need to do a little bit more of this," or "What we tried didn't work. Let's redo this." I filter it through her and then I feed it out through other people. Same thing with discipline. We really improved our discipline this year but did we, really? Was putting them ISS really productive? We're going to find out ... we're going to do this AP [Advanced Placement] Academy. We've got little groups of good AP stuff going on, so I want to have one teacher leader over all of AP and pumping them up with that to get our threes to a higher level. Because we've got a lot of kids who, if they just had more focus or they saw teachers working together, I think they could do better.

All three campus administrators not only discussed the monitoring and organizational factors that represent the responsibility theme but also verbalized areas of focus for improving behavior, academics, and relationships.

**Conflict theme.** The conflict theme emerged as the principals discussed a misalignment of campus needs with financial supports and funding. This theme highlighted the need for each administrator to access his or her political skills to build coalitions both internally and externally

(Bolman & Deal, 2008). Centrally, the principals produced a consensus about having to be creative to fulfill their campus' needs by utilizing prior frames as mentioned. However, they still struggled with the conflict between funding and needs. Campus 1's principal stated:

If I had more resources, I probably would have channeled more resources or another extra person here to assist with the social emotional needs of those ninth graders, because that's probably the biggest challenge in the high school, is to get them to 10th grade.

Campus 1's principal also shared that the greatest resource for compensating for this conflict was the local community. Campus 1's principal stated that reaching out to the local community sooner would have been wise as follows:

We had started tapping into, other, the alumni organization and other types of ways of doing fund raising with our parents that we started to have more resources as time went on .... I should have done this in my first year.

Both the Campus 2 and Campus 3 principals discussed advocating as important ways in addressing this funding versus needs conflict; however, neither seemed to be satisfied with having achieved the necessary goals. Campus 2's principal described the following situation:

I was advocating for funding because of just all the stuff that we were going through.

With the transition we identified something about \$600,000 in shortfalls as far as funding went. The HB5 stuff was coming at the same time, so I can't really tell you that I discerned any difference between why I was going looking for the funding. I think we ended up getting about \$150,000 out of the whole thing.

Campus 2's principal later described that one of the greatest resources involved learning and discussing with other leaders within the district how to navigate with this existing conflict between funding and needs. Likewise, Campus 3's principal expressed the following:

I'm still not happy with it because I feel like I could still do more; I could stretch that dollar more. That's talking with other principals and asking, "How do you do that?" Finding other leaders within the district that have done good work and how they're doing it and copying what they're doing and seeing how far I can get with it.

Campus 3's principal also identified struggles in addressing the funding versus needs conflict:

I mean it was like there was money there, but I didn't really know what we could all do with it. Just being new to [UISD], I didn't really know what was allowable and not allowable. Over the past year I've realized, "Oh, I can buy from this person but not this vendor." Or I can send them to these conferences and get them to come back and teach. I've been able to look at a lot wider range of people and resources that we can work with. I've also reached out to different departments within [UISD] that I'd never talked to before as part of our leadership academy. I'd get them to come talk and we'd have more talks after that about, "How could you help our students?" [or] "How could you help our teachers?" That's been a big change, like using the Career Pathways people, changing that up. Using department for CHAMPS [behavior protocol acronym: conversation, help, activity, movement, participation, success]. Getting my teachers trained on CHAMPS. I want to create a behavior specialist for next year to work on tracking little changes that will make a huge impact like tardies, like absenteeism. That if they're here and where they're supposed to be they could do more.

## Summary

This chapter displayed the quantitative data at the district and campus level. The campus level was represented by three participating high school campuses. In addition, qualitative data were gathered through interviews of the three campuses' corresponding high school principals.

The quantitative data revealed a slight decline in SAT composite scores after the transition to the new accountability system. Also, there was a gap in first-time test taker passing percentage rates and graduation rates from the TAKS exit test system to the new EOC accountability system. The qualitative data revealed the three dominating themes of communication, focus, and relationships. The additional driving themes included change and responsibility. The final emerging theme was conflict between financial support and campus need at all three campuses. In Chapter 5, a thorough discussion of how the quantitative data findings correspond to the qualitative data findings which are synthesized to answer the research questions. Chapter 5 also includes a discussion of the findings in context with the literature and provides recommendations.

## **Chapter 5: Findings, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations**

The purpose of this pragmatic mixed-method study was to reveal the emerging data of the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) accountability system's end-of-course (EOC) exams' impact on graduation requirement rates in relation to the intended purpose of increasing college readiness as measured by SAT scores and the impact on the campus leaders from one of the largest, urban school districts in Texas. The pragmatic mixed-methods approach provided both quantitative data from the past 5 years at the district and campus level, while the qualitative data from three high school principal interviews within the corresponding district to reveal the leadership actions taken to effectively implement HB5. This research captures the apparent alignment between education policies with historic literature for effective schools, data trends, implementation of best practices, as well as the initial outcome of HB5.

The most recent education policy, HB5, appeared to facilitate the onset of a growing gap with little to no evidence in securing an increase in producing college and/or career ready graduates as measured by SAT; however, the final graduation rates appeared un-impacted. The ex post facto quantitative and primary qualitative data captured in this study provided insight into administrative practices for producing successful growth in learning and/or student outcomes toward graduation and an alignment between HB5 policy for school improvement and effective school research. In addition, the incipient alignment among policy, practice, and research might shine a spotlight on additional barriers for student growth, among urban Title I students, toward college attainment and/or career development because HB5 accountability measures serve as the gatekeeper holding the key to graduation. The remainder of this chapter summarizes the study, discusses the findings and conclusions, provides the implications, and addresses recommendations.

## **Summary of the Study**

This pragmatic mixed-method study revealed in the emerging data the new state accountability law's impact on graduation requirement rates given HB5's intended purpose of increasing college readiness as measured by SAT scores and its impact on campus leaders in one of the largest urban school districts in Texas. The pragmatic mixed-methods approach provided both quantitative data from the past 5 years at the district and campus level. The qualitative data included interview with three high school principals within the corresponding district and revealed the leadership actions used for effectively implementing HB5. The study was conducted using the four organizational frames from Bolman and Deal (2008) to synthesize the themes found in the qualitative analysis. Campus administrators possessed an understanding of these four frames to produce the targeted outcomes on SAT and graduation rates.

The data provided information about the relationship between the campus organization and the campus leader in reaching desired outcomes through structural and process discussions. The process discussions, structural discussions, and impact on outcomes were dependent on the inherited organization and the leader's knowledge regarding policy, data trends, and best practices for effective HB5 implementation. An analysis between state assessment results and intended outcomes of college ready graduates involved using the state's Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exit exams and end of course (EOC) exams with SAT scores and graduation rates at the district level. The campus data at the three designated Title I high schools mirrored the district's student demographics.

The quantitative data revealed a slight decline in SAT composite scores after the transition to the new accountability system. Also, a gap in first-time test takers' passing percentage rates and graduation rates from the TAKS exit test system to the new EOC accountability system was

observed. The qualitative data obtained from the three principal interviews revealed three dominating themes: communication, focus, and relationships. Additional supporting subthemes included change and responsibility. The final emerging theme from all three campus principals addressed conflict between financial support and campus need. The research revealed the balancing of the four Bolman and Deal (2008) frames by all three administrators' efforts to reach the desired goal of graduating all of their high school students.

### **Discussion of Findings and Conclusions**

The early quantitative results call into question the long-term impact of HB5 policy due to the surfacing lack of growth observed in the SAT results among this first graduating cohort combined with the initial onset of students not on-track for graduation as first-time test takers; however, the additional requirements of HB5 targeting school improvement materialized an increase in the final graduation rates that was captured in correlation of the quantitative and qualitative data. The two fold approach enacted by HB5 brought alignment between policy, research and practice; thus securing a primary outcome of high school graduates. This data brings forth an understanding among stakeholders that is also captured in the literature which revealed targeted actions taken to meet HB5 that mirrored both the seven correlates of effective schools defined in Edmonds's (1982) and Lezotte's (1991) research and effective organizational structures and process decision making, as captured in Marzano's (2005) research. Additionally, both campus leaders and policy makers have proceeded with the intent that there is a known correlation exists between the failure to earn a high school diploma and both lack of success in the job market and the earning of lower wages (Bjerk, 2012; Jefferson, 2008; Morella, 2012). Heckman and LaFontaine (2008) argued that it has been well established that high school graduation rates serve as a barometer to the health of the American economy. District and

campus administrators hold the responsibility of organizing and maintaining the school systems and support of all stakeholders including each and every child who enters school at varying academic and socioemotional abilities.

### **Quantitative Findings**

According to the data at both the district level and campus levels, HB5 has not impacted college readiness, as measured by SAT. In fact, a decline in SAT composite scores at the district level and among two of the three high school campuses from the 2009-2010 cohort under TAKS compared to the 2011-2012 cohort under HB5 was observed during trend analysis. Campus 3 showed an increase in SAT scores; however, the campus' scores fell below both the districts' and the other two campuses' SAT levels but had shown most of the score increase or growth during the last year of TAKS. This finding is supportive of Hays' (2011) finding about the gap in 10th grade Texas Academic Achievement System (TAAS) exam scores closing until the introduction of TAKS, suggesting that switching tests from TAAS to TAKS and TAKS to STAAR does not benefit Title I campuses nor minority students.

Among scores for the SAT Verbal/Critical Reading section, a decline was observed at the district level and at two campuses. However, Campus 2 showed no growth, with scores remaining flat, from 2009 to 2010. Additionally, the district and all three campuses showed declines in SAT Verbal/Critical Reading scores under HB5's EOC system. The district and one of the three campuses showed minimum increases in SAT Writing scores, while the two other campuses showed decreases in SAT Writing scores. Two of the campuses showed increases in SAT Math scores. Additionally, two out of three campuses showed increases in SAT Math from the 2009-2010 cohort under TAKS to the 2011-2012 cohort under HB5's EOC system.

Likewise, no observable relational patterns were found between any specific state assessment scores and SAT scores. Campus 2 produced the highest met standard average on the Algebra I EOC assessment; however, Campus 2's scores considerably were lower for SAT Math. The declines in scores for SAT Writing and SAT Verbal/Critical Reading were much greater than the increases indicated in the transition from the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 TAKS cohorts to the 2011-2012 EOC cohort. In addition, the state assessment scores for TAKS English Language Arts exit exam to HB5's English and Writing EOCs showed the greatest declines with more students failing to meet state standards on the EOCs than those on-track for graduation as outlined by HB5 graduation requirements. Lastly, despite the declines in state assessment scores from TAKS first-time test takers to first-time test takers on HB5's EOC exams, little to no changes in graduation rates occurred. As Texas follows the national trend of endorsing political and structural organizations with accountability measures as an intended college and career readiness preparation tool, the results support Musoba's (2011) argument for lack of evidence to support academic readiness being measured by students' SAT composite scores.

### **Qualitative Findings**

The qualitative interview data were collected through three principals and yielded several interrelated themes. Principals did not discuss using isolated skill-sets but rather discussed balancing their efforts among the four organizational frames by Bolman and Deal (2008) using a set of common themes. Communication, relationships, and focus were the three dominant themes; however, within these three themes, the campus administrators built and maintained communication, relationships, and varying areas of focus to strengthen their schools' organizations politically, structurally, and symbolically. By learning to view and approach problems or situations through these themes, administrators essentially gained avenues for

generating new perspectives from which they formulated creative solutions within their respective organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2008). As each principal made human resource changes, again communication, relationship, and focus were the central themes.

The remaining three supporting themes that emerged were change, responsibility, and conflict. These three themes seemed to foster the sense of urgency and served as drivers for acquiring and maintaining a balance within each campus' organization. Further, the principals adjusted their pursuits for their goals regarding the health of each respective school's organization and for maintaining balance among the organizational frames due to the onset of HB5. Their efforts were targeted to specific grade levels. The exchange between leader and organization served as drivers in structural and organizational discussions, thus impacting outcomes.

The three principals used the ninth grade as a consistent factor for which all structural, political, human resource, and symbolic adjustments were made because the first cohort of ninth graders set the tone for how principals operated effectively under any new directive such as HB5. Within the political frame, communication and relationships enabled the three principals to advocate for financial and human resource support in meeting the needs of ninth grade students. Relationships with ninth grade students and ninth grade student measures, such as tardies, discipline, grade level failure rates, attendance, etc., fell consistently within the focus theme as part of the principals' efforts to establish structural changes within their campus organizations. These actions, as derived from HB5 school improvement requirements, typify the extensive research over the last 30 years on effective schools proceeded in the literature by Edmonds (1982), Lezotte (2001), and Marzano (2005). Parallel to the literature, identifying the influential overarching organizational structure of the political and structural frames at both the state and district levels is necessary to ensure campus administrators utilize the power of these two frames,

while maintaining a balance between knowledge of the symbolic and human resource frames to gain local support for change.

The principal interview data support Black's (2004) research about ninth grade as a crucial year in need of intense support. In order to reach desired outcomes, the principals recognized that results come with program maturity, and each campus administrator sought to strengthen intentional supports for ninth graders. Ironically, qualitative analysis revealed this theme was not derived from the implementation of HB5 but stemmed from each administrator's goal for ensuring high numbers of high school graduates, preventing drop outs, and increasing positive behaviors. This data signifies an onset of alignment between research and policy; however, the alignment had not yet materialized with campus administrators. Campus 1's principal stated:

We discovered or we uncovered that there were some big issues in ninth grade discipline. We allotted another assistant principal for the ninth grade. We allowed the ninth grade counselor and assistant principal to loop-up with their grade level so that they could have ... already built that relationship they would be able to ensure that [the students] graduated. We saw a big difference in the amount of personalization on the campus.

The administrator at Campus 2 added:

One of the things that we're trying to do, structurally, is we're trying to put more emphasis on the ninth grade campus and our underclassmen in general, because we've got this group of kids that we've been chasing for years. They were always offset by those 500 other kids that did real well. We think that this is going to be a real good opportunity to shape the culture in this very specific area.

The Campus 3 administrator shared that the campus personnel were looking specifically at the special populations in ninth grade to double block their academic supports in ninth grade. Also,

the campus added a college center for ninth grade and 10th grade students rather than only offering the center to 11th and 12th grade students as if common practice.

The identified patterns included the balancing of the four organizational frames at each campus to increase the overall success of the campus. Within the overarching organizational framework, the campus administrators made additional efforts targeted to the ninth grade. Specifically, the administrators pulled from best practices and research on the power of building relationships and successfully balancing a healthy organization for on-going growth and improvement. They used policies and data trends as indicators to prevent students from dropping outs, to increase graduation rates and attendance, and to reduce discipline incidents. The implementation of HB5 became a procedurally incidental outcome. Campus 1's principal communicated:

I think HB5 insured that we personalize, and we identify a career path for our students early on. Much earlier than we would have before that.... I think, [HB5] just gave us the accountability of having these end-of-course exams, of course. Holding students and teachers responsible for the courses that they were teaching even though it changed.

Campus 2's principal stated:

I took my lead counselor and made her the HB5 Counselor so that somebody's watching that as we go on. We made adjustments to the structure of the school so that we have houses that honor the HB5 requirements. I really helped, too. We were going to the houses anyway through Link Learning but this just helped to support it as well.

Campus 3's principal shared:

My dean has been very much over it, but I don't think he's shared enough with the other leaders, so that they feel confident with what House Bill 5 really is and how it impacts

freshman year, sophomore year, junior year, senior year. That we're still responsible for postsecondary and so ... I would do a lot more training on it and more hands on involved in this. Not just two people but five people because if somebody leaves, which is very often the case, then we're stuck starting over.

### **Conclusion**

The quantitative data and qualitative data revealed that each ninth grade cohort has been impacted to the greatest extent under HB5. Campus intervention played a crucial role in closing the gap among first-time STAAR EOC test takers not meeting graduation requirements under HB5 to increase the number of students actually graduated and attain a comparative rate to the graduation rates under the prior TAKS exit exam accountability system. The onset of the STAAR EOC exams led to a substantial number of students who were not likely to earn a high school diploma due to HB5's assessment requirements; however, after continuous support by campus administrators and many efforts at retesting, the at-risk students did graduate. The initial graduation rates for the first cohort under HB5 in May of 2015 were at 84% for the district, at 89% for Campus 1, at 85% for Campus 2, and at 92% for Campus 3. The data did not include the 2015 summer retest cohort nor those students who gained eligibility for graduation through SB149. The graduation rates remained consistent or increased from prior years, despite the first-time test takers' results, but no evidence was found to support any observable change in college or career readiness. The increase in graduation eligibility from the initial test results for the first cohort of ninth graders indicated instructional time was utilized effectively throughout the students' high school careers.

Both the district and the three campuses incurred a drop in state assessment scores in transitioning from TAKS exit exams to STAAR EOCs with HB5. This statistical drop of up to an

80% in pass rates indicated that at least 90% of the students across the district did not meet the HB5 state graduation requirements among first-time test takers, initially making them ineligible to earn a high school diploma. Respectively, the three campuses had up to 76% not eligible for graduation based on first-time test taker data. The emerging quantitative data also revealed no indication that the transition from TAKS to HB5 EOC exams impacted nor increased college readiness as measured by SAT scores. The overall SAT composite scores decreased for the district and two of three campuses. Campus 3, in particular, showed overall increases in all areas of SAT with the first cohort under HB5 but actually generated an observably higher score 2 years prior under TAKS with an average SAT composite score of 1162 for cohort 2009-2010 when compared to HB5's 2011-2012 cohort's SAT composite score of 1131.

The quantitative data and the qualitative data suggested that even though HB5 implementation is an outcome of policy, data trends, and best practices as identified in the literature; ironically, it was verbalized that it was not the primary motivator for each administrator's persistence in maintaining the overall health of their campus organizations and for improving behavior, attendance, etc. among their students. In addition, the qualitative data contained one emerging pattern consistent among all the of three high school campuses. HB5 implementation was part of pursuing the common goal that each student graduates high school as college and career ready. It is evident from this study that the career and college ready outcome is a result of alignment between effective school research over the last 30 years and the evolution of policy with an expansion to school improvement measures outside of single test measures. HB5 has forced an exchange between campus leaders and campus organizations to impact outcomes, structural decisions, and process decisions for an effective school system.

## **Implications for Practice**

Implications result from the findings. The data offered specific evidence in answering the three research questions and revealed possible unintended outcomes of HB5. This study took a pragmatic mixed-methods approach to analyze both emerging and historic quantitative data trends, as well as emerging and historic qualitative data.

The data provided evidence of HB5 showing little to no impact on college readiness, as measured by SAT composite scores. However, HB5 did increase the at-risk rate for a large majority of the student population who appeared ineligible for graduation as first-time test takers of the ninth grade EOCs. The principals did not communicate that their roles and actions for organizational stability were impacted by HB5 directly, but an overlap in targeted actions by administrators in addressing ninth grade students' EOC pass-rate deficits as the student cohort most impacted by HB5 was observed in the review of the qualitative data.

Data did not substantiate that policy offered any impactful weight to the application of the theoretical framework as part of HB5 implementation; however, the alignment between policy and research identified in the literature did reveal implications of HB5 as a driver in the exchange between campus leader and campus organization, as identified in the theoretical framework. HB5 was as a constant factor for the overall outcomes produced by the mixed data. The study clearly captured the end result of HB5 implementation with students graduating at the same level of college and/or career ready for the STAAR EOC system as they had during the TAKS exit exam system. The data revealed that the principals emphasized using best practices and trend data as they sought to attain goals for their campuses from uniquely different data points, which reflect actions taken by effective schools in implementing the 7 correlates of effective schools (Edmonds, 1982). They took responsibility in actively monitoring different trend data points,

maintained best practices with relationships, instilling processes for monitoring areas of focus, balanced their organizational frames through political advocacy, human resources, and structural adjustments to meet the needs of ninth graders. They implemented effective monitoring systems and nourished appropriate symbolic relationships to gain further support where financial conflict arose.

The findings showed that the weight of policy did not serve a role in helping students graduate but rather a possible hindrance to the work of the three principals who each sought to ensure their students graduated from high school. It is unclear how many times the first-time test taking students had to retest under the STAAR EOC system in order to gain graduation eligibility, but the increase in the number of students eligible for graduation from 10% during the ninth grade to 84% at the end of the 12th grade at the district level suggested a large percent of students required EOC retesting. Retesting of students impacts instructional time toward conveying new content and providing career and technical education courses. High percentages of students needing to retake EOC tests impacts staffing and the day-to-day logistics of running a high school campus.

In addition, due to the lack of substantial longitudinal trend evidence for increases in college readiness by SAT scores, this finding highlights a possible misalignment of policy intent and/or application. The findings lead to considering the merits of using alternative data points, such as attendance rates, number of times tardy, or course failure rates, that could be correlated to college and career readiness due to emerging deficits of desired outcomes between policy, colleges, and employers. For example, tardiness data could equate to high school students becoming reliable employees or college students able to arrive at work or class on time daily. Course failure rates could be equated to completing a task correctly because of following

instructions the first time versus needing to make corrections to a task or failing to complete a task due to procrastination.

The principals' intentional focus on ninth graders is an essential finding that impacts the practice of overcoming the initial deficit between those on track for graduation as first-time test takers and those that gain graduation requirement by the end of their senior year. Among the six themes, three serve as a manuscript for filtering practices necessary for moving students toward high school graduates. Defining areas of focus and fostering those areas of focus through on-going effective communication practices and relationship building with parents and community stakeholders clearly helped the principals increase graduation eligibility rates under HB5. A consistent focus on ninth graders requires intentional visibility, data monitoring, and support structures such as professional learning communities (PLC) for teacher effectiveness. Maintaining constant communication and building quality relationships with students, staff, and community members is necessary for any principal of a Title I school operating under current policies in Texas. Principals require support from district administrators for growing and ensuring the progression of ninth graders toward graduation. Superintendents may use the findings as evidence for enabling principals to access necessary financial and human resource supports to monitor and model methods for ensuring ninth graders graduate in this high accountability climate that operates between academic measures and school improvement actions.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings lead to recommendations for future research. The quantitative data supports a need for future research. The qualitative data reinforces the recommendations for future research.

The existing time proximity of early implementation efforts to the legislative policy enactment date remains an essential limitation. One or 2 years was not enough time to study and describe definitive causal effects, especially given the change in new organizational visualizations, long term structural planning, and sustainability of processes that become institutionalized over time. Further research is needed to analyze trend patterns in both qualitative measures and quantitative measures.

A resilience study to identify how campus administrators manage emerging change. Analyze the emerging leaders' development to assess any gaps in leadership preparation. Assessment scores among first-time EOC test takers and SAT scores lack analysis over multiple years because this study captured the disparities in the data for the first graduating cohort under HB5. A longitudinal study of EOC scores for algebra I and English in comparison to SAT math and critical reading scores could reveal the nature of the disconnect between policy and outcome intent for high school students who need to both graduate and become career or college ready.

This study's data revealed a negative impact on critical reading after the implementation of the STAAR EOC system by HB5; therefore, given the consistency of the SAT over time, comparisons with students' performances on the SAT versus the EOCs might enable better alignment between policy and practice. Identifying any correlations between career pathways and SAT results could have implications for course offerings. Analysis by teachers' and students' ethnicities may expose any discrepancies in performance on STAAR EOCs between ethnicity because the district and campus demographics were similar by socioeconomic status, but EOC scores differed by ethnicity which supports Hays' (2011) conclusions.

A prediction study involving grade-level academic failures and behavior measures, such as numbers of times tardy to class and all day absences as predictors of EOC scores might offer

information about moderator variables. Qualitative research as to what personalized and purposeful interactions have occurred between teachers and students or administrators and students as a result of HB5 and the impact of those interactions.

Data revealed the TAKS history exit exam and the U.S. History EOC had comparatively high passing rates and both tested students' content mastery in the junior year versus the majority of other subjects' EOCs being administered during the ninth grade year. Given the difficulties of ensuring students pass the ninth grade algebra EOC, a further study regarding the number of retests taken by each student may be used determine the possible implications of lost instructional time due to the need for EOC-related tutoring as well as lost career-related coursework or off-campus job experiences in contradiction to policy intent. Considering the greater likelihood of students passing history in the 11th grade, researching optimal grades for each EOC is needed. Knowing the optimal grade for administering any EOC may reduce the number of retests students take, improve principals' efforts to follow Bolman and Deal's (2008) model, and increase superintendents' abilities to guide and support curriculum delivery in their districts.

## Appendix A

### Principal Interview Questions

**Interviewee:**     1            2            3                    **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Campus Size:** Range 1500 - 2200

Campus Demographics:

Economic Disadvantage: \_\_\_\_\_ Title I Campus: Yes or No

Ethnicity:        \_\_\_\_\_Hispanic        \_\_\_\_\_African American        \_\_\_\_\_Caucasian

\_\_\_\_\_Other

### Open-ended Interview Questions

1. Share with me the history of this campus from when you initially became Principal until now?
  - a. What was the organizational structure like?
    - i. How has it changed?
    - ii. Why or why not?
    - iii. How do you feel about it?
    - iv. What would you do differently?
  - b. How was the staff organized?
    - i. How has that changed?
    - ii. Why or why not?
    - iii. How do you feel about it?
    - iv. What would you do differently?
  - c. Who were the key stakeholders?
    - i. How has that changed?
    - ii. Why or why not?
    - iii. How do you feel about it?
    - iv. What would you do differently?
  - d. What resources did you have available?
    - i. How has that changed?
    - ii. Why or why not?
    - iii. How do you feel about it?
    - iv. What would you do differently?
  - e. What structures, staffing, resources, etc., have you Not changed?
    - i. Why or why not?
    - ii. How do you feel about it?
    - iii. What would you do differently?

2. How has HB5 impacted your role as a Principal?
  - a. How have you adjusted?
  - b. Why have you made adjustments?
  - c. What resources do you utilize in your decisions to make adjustments?
  - d. What measures do you use to assess your role as a Principal?
  - e. Why do you use those measures?
  - f. How do you feel about where you currently measure?
  - g. What would you do differently?
3. What are the most outstanding features of HB5?
  - a. How has that impacted your organizational structure?
    - i. How do you feel about the changes?
    - ii. What would you do differently?
  - b. How has that impacted your staffing?
    - i. How do you feel about your existing staffing?
    - ii. What would you do differently?
  - c. What processes did you go through in making changes to your organizational structure and/or staffing?
    - i. Why did you choose to proceed in that format?
    - ii. How did it go?
    - iii. What did you learn from your process in making changes?
    - iv. What would you do differently?
  - d. Who did you include in your decision making?
    - i. Why did you choose those designees?
    - ii. How do you feel about it?
    - iii. Would you change designees? Why or why not?
  - e. Who are your stakeholders?
    - i. Why did you choose these stakeholders? For what purpose?
    - ii. How are your decisions communicated to stakeholders?
    - iii. How do you feel about it?
    - iv. Would you change this format? Why or why not?
  - f. How has this impacted your resources?
    - i. What have you done to advocate for necessary resources?
    - ii. How do you feel about it?
    - iii. What would you do differently?
4. What structures, staffing, resources, etc. have you initiated and/or invested in, as it relates to HB5, to define your campus focus?
  - i. Why did you choose those items?
  - ii. How do you feel about it?
  - iii. What would change?
5. What else might you share on what you have implemented in your role as a high school principal specifically to address the impact of HB5?
  - a. What have you implemented that we haven't covered?
  - b. Why did you implement it?
  - c. How did you implement it?
  - d. How do you feel about it?

- e. What are next steps?
- f. Why?

## Appendix B

### Consent to Participate in Research Study

#### Identification of Investigator and Purpose of Study

You are invited to participate in a research study, entitled, State Accountability's Impact at the High School Level: Effective Leadership - The Principal's Organizational Balance to Meet Policy and Reality." The purpose of this pragmatic mixed-method study is to capture high school principals' practices for organizational balance with the emerging data of the new state accountability's impact on graduation requirement rates in correlation to the intended purpose of increasing college readiness as measured by SAT scores from one of the largest, urban school districts in Texas. The study is being conducted by Andria M. Schur, Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Educational Administration at The University of Texas at Austin. My contact information is 281-910-2753, and aschur@[REDACTED].org.

If you agree to participate:

- You will participate in 1 interview about your role as a high school principal.
- A follow-up interview may be needed to clarify any key points.
- The initial interview will take approximately 60 minutes of your time and only 30 minutes should clarification be needed.
- The interview will be recorded and later transcribed for coding purposes.

#### Risks/Benefits/Confidentiality of Data

I will be the person interviewing you and your identifying information will remain confidential.

#### Participation or Withdrawal

Your participation is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas in anyway.

#### Contacts

If you have any questions about the study please email me at the above email address or my supervisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Ruben Olivarez at rolivarez@austin.utexas.edu.

#### Questions about your rights as a research participant.

If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

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**I agree to participate in this study and give my permission for the interviews to be recorded. I understand my participation is voluntary and that I may discontinue participation at any time.**

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Signature of Participant, Title

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Date

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