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INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES CONDUCIVE TO THE HIGH ACHIEVEMENT OF HISPANIC LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS ON THE TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

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INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES CONDUCIVE TO THE HIGH ACHIEVEMENT OF HISPANIC LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS ON THE TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father, Teodoro Banda, a proud farm worker, who taught me that education provides us with the power to fulfill our dreams and to continue the dreams of others.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the culmination of many ideas which occurred as I sat in each of my professors' classes and worked in various school districts. First and foremost, I express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Norma Cantu, who patiently helped me identify my topic and guided me through the various stages of my dissertation. She pushed me more than I ever thought she would have time for. Her support provided the motivation to continue working on this research and move closer to achieving my doctorate. I am also thankful to Dr. Nolan Estes, Dr. Terry Clark, Dr. Ed Fuller, Dr. Richard Schott, and Dr. Pedro Reyes for serving on my dissertation committee. Dr. Schott, especially, helped me take my ideas to new levels of understanding, for which I am deeply grateful. All members, however, provided constructive criticism, useful suggestions, and other points of view for my research. The Berkman Elementary staff was awesome for encouraging me to push forward and for becoming involved in the use of the data and conclusions acquired from this study. To all my friends at UT at Austin and elsewhere: Thanks for being so helpful and supportive. A special thanks to Dr. Margarita Greer for sharing a kindred spirit and for being a motivator when graduate life was not fitting in with my personal and professional life. My deepest gratitude goes to my peers at UTPA. They nurtured me back toward optimism and determination to complete this project.

A long and strong hug goes to my family—my mom and my six brothers and four sisters, whose patience, humor, and encouragement helped me remain focused on my goal. A silent prayer goes to my deceased father, who taught me the value of maintaining

my culture, while improving my future and that of other Hispanics through education. He instilled in me a lifelong love for learning and leading others to learn. Although he will not be there to watch his "vaquera" receive her degree, he has always been the greatest source of motivation and inspiration for me. My special thanks to my four children, two boys and two girls, whose private lives challenged my own as they reminded me how important the achievement of my goal was in providing them and my grandchildren a role model to follow. OJ and Linny, especially, were always there to provide love and laughter when times got rough. They helped me get back on the saddle whenever I was off too long. Laura, thank you for helping me with the gruntwork of the paperwork, both reading and editing. Finally, I want to thank my husband for waiting four long years for me to return home.

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INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES CONDUCIVE TO THE HIGH ACHIEVEMENT OF HISPANIC LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS ON THE TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

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Abstract: The goal of current education reform is to increase student achievement (Odden & Clune, 1995). Discrepancies, however, continue to exist in the achievement between the White majority and the minorities of color, including Hispanics as seen in the results of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Although 198 Texas elementary schools received an exemplary rating in 2005 for their TAKS performance, only a handful of those schools with a high percentage of Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) student enrollment achieved this coveted academic rating (TEA, 2005).

This study attempts to answer the research questions: 1) Which, if any, instructional practices are present in the exemplary-rated campuses with high numbers of Hispanic LEP students compared to acceptable-rated campuses with the same type of

student populations? and 2) Are educators aware of and modifying their instructional practices to be more aligned with proven research-based practices?

The Best Practice and Benchmark Concept provides the framework for the study. The design includes the use of a survey, interviews, an observation checklist, and an analysis of documents to compare the practices of two exemplary-rated campuses and two acceptable-rated campuses, all spanning grades PreK-5th grade, enrolling at least 500 students, and serving high percentages of Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and LEP students.

Findings revealed differences in the consistent use of best practices, in the methods of instruction (structured and directive versus constructivist), in the positive attitude and commitment of teachers, in the type of research-based programs, and in the instructional settings of the bilingual/ESL students. The finding of mixing structured, directive instruction to promote student success before moving to a more constructivist method of teaching is a practice rarely encountered in literature. All other practices observed have been documented in literature. In addition, educators were indeed found to be modifying their practices to align with those proven in research. Other factors besides best practices which influence student achievement surfaced, indicating the difference in performance between the exemplary and the acceptable campuses could not be attributed solely to the use of best practices.

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Chapter 1: Overview

Approximately 17% of American students are of Hispanic ethnicity. In Texas, Hispanic student enrollment hovers around 45% (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2006). When Hispanic students enter an American classroom, they bring with them pre-determined obstacles toward achievement based on their socioeconomic and ethnic minority status. Zill and West (2000) discern that the education of the mother, whether the family receives welfare assistance, whether the child lives in a single-parent household, and whether the student's first language is not English are critical factors for a student's success in school and for his projected socioeconomic status as an adult. Other studies show that the two main determinant factors for student success in school are the parents' education and the family's socioeconomic status (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Loewenberg-Ball, 2000). Greenwalk, Hedges, & Laine (1996) add that a student's ethnicity and their socioeconomic circumstances are also factors in predicting whether the student will attend college and what his expected earnings will be as an adult. In addition to belonging to an ethnic minority, many Hispanic students come from an economically disadvantaged single-parent home, have parents with little or no education, and speak a language other than English, thereby placing them at risk for underachievement even before entering school. According to the Education Commission of the States (2004):

> Hispanic students remain significantly more likely than White students to enter kindergarten unprepared for learning, to have to repeat a grade, and to drop out of school. And while, today, Hispanic students who finish high school are just as

likely to enroll in college as white high school graduates, they are only about half as likely to go on to earn a bachelor's degree. (p.1)

A decisive achievement gap exists for the minority group projected to comprise 25% of the total population of the United States by the year 2050 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2000). Although various studies conclude the presence of a negative correlation between the variables previously mentioned, studies also have found positive correlations between school-specific factors and student achievement, such as high standards and expectations, school climate, instructional practices, and school leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). In order to eliminate the achievement gap, more studies must be conducted to continue exploring which specific factors facilitate academic achievement for the Hispanic economically disadvantaged and Limited English Proficient (LEP) student group.

In spite of the negative factors imposed on their students due to life's circumstances, various Texas school districts were identified in the late 1990s as eliminating the achievement gap for the students in their schools (Cawelti & Protheroe, 2001; Fullan, 1999; Reyes, Scribner, and Paredes-Scribner, 1999; Scheurich, Skrla, & Johnson, 2000a; Washington School Research Center, 2003). These researchers identify common practices among the schools that produce high academic achievement for all their students. Their studies corroborate previously established positive correlations among high student achievement and effective leadership, data-driven focused instruction, and the presence of collaborative staff that love their students and feel an obligation to ensure their success.

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In their study investigating how teacher characteristics and student demographics affect student achievement, Okpala, Smith, Jones, & Ellis (2000) state:

> Policy makers, educational leaders, and community groups are beginning to realize that student achievement is a function of variables other than per-pupil allocations of funds, and they are searching for variables that can predict and therefore impact the levels of achievement of students in public schools. (p.1)

In order to assist districts in producing high achievement for all their students, legislation to improve school conditions through the infusion of funds was initiated. It started with the passage of The Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) of 1965. The ESEA is the original legislation designed as an attempt to ameliorate the conditions and to improve the achievement of America's ethnic minority and economically disadvantaged students. Since the inception of the ESEA of 1965, Congress continues to place a high value on providing additional funds and programs to eliminate the achievement gaps in education for all student populations. In spite of the enormous amounts of money allotted, Hispanic students in American schools have not attained their goal of higher academic achievement.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), signed into law on January 8, 2002 by President Bush, is a landmark piece of legislation that funds education reform until the academic year 2007-2008. Although enrolled students are funded by local, state and federal funds, the amount of federal funds has increased almost 60% from 2000 to 2003 (U. S. Department of Education, 2003). From the introduction of the initial ESEA in 1965, a total of $242 billion have been appropriated to assist schools in providing the goal of educational excellence to minority and disadvantaged children. However, the

goal of equity in educational excellence remains elusive; a large achievement gap still exists between the children who arrive from the White middle class environment and those who arrive from the minority and economically disadvantaged environments.

In evaluating the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) achievement data from the past three years, clearly the achievement gap between Hispanic and White students only slightly decreased from 25% in 2004 to 23% in 2006. Although previous research of Texas school districts uncovered a handful of districts that implemented practices that reduced the achievement gap and produced high achievement on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), only four K-5 campuses with an enrollment over 500 students and with high percentages of Hispanic, of low-socioeconomic, and of LEP students have managed to obtain an exemplary rating based on the more rigorous Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills using the 2005 panel recommendation as the level of proficiency required to pass the test (TEA, 2005). These Texas schools have managed to provide an environment that produces high academic success for the ethnic minority and for second-language learners in their classrooms.

This study is intended to report the instructional "best practices" implemented at four schools—two rated exemplary and two rated acceptable—to determine not only which best practices are most conducive to the high achievement of Hispanic LEP students but also whether those practices have been documented in previous literature. Additionally, the study examines whether educators are adjusting their instructional practices to be more aligned with what is found in research. It is expected that interviews with school personnel will also reveal the period of best practice implementation. All

research findings from this study are intended to assist the two acceptable campuses in the study to improve student performance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Hispanic underachievement remains a perpetual source of concern, as the magnitude of that student population and their eventual impact on economic conditions of the country is ever increasing. The following are statistics taken from the National Center for Education Statistics (2003) based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress for various years:

1) Hispanics consistently score below White students at all grade levels in reading and in math.

2) Hispanics students who complete high school test at the level of White thirteen-year-olds in reading and in writing.

3) Only 14% of Hispanic fourth graders are able to meet the proficient or advanced ratings in reading, while 57% could not meet the basic rating, and 29% can meet only the basic rating.

4) Less than 10% of Hispanic eighth graders meet the proficient or advanced rating in math and 60% scored below the basic rating. The remaining 30% meet only the basic rating.

5) Although almost 20% of the nations' enrolled students in the U.S. are Hispanic, only 10% of the college enrollment is such, and only 6% of the college graduates are Hispanic.

6) Compared to White students, Hispanics remain perpetually less prepared for kindergarten, continue to have higher retention rates, have higher expulsion and suspension rates, and have higher dropout rates.

Texas statistics correlate with national trends. The TAKS results for 2005 show Hispanics lagging behind Whites in reading by 14%, in writing by 7%, in math by 20%, in social studies by 8%, and in science by 28%. Because our current Hispanic first graders will comprise the work force for the American Baby Boomers within the next twelve to sixteen years, and because Hispanics comprise 65% of the Limited English Proficient students in U.S. schools, we must maximize this ethnic group's academic success to ensure a brighter economic future, both for the students themselves and for American society as a whole.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Legislation to improve school conditions through the infusion of funds plays a significant role in assisting districts in producing success for all student groups within their schools. In Texas, as in all states, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires implementation of its four components to facilitate the educational success of all students. Standards-based accountability for all student groups is a major component of NCLB, followed by the use of research-based practices and programs, more local control of schools, and parental options if schools fail in successfully educating their children. Campuses, districts, and states are required to develop both long and short term plans to achieve success for all students by the year 2013. To work for schools receiving these federal funds, teachers are required to be "highly qualified" by the 2005-2006 academic

year, as are any hired paraprofessionals in the same institutions. This requirement is based on research findings that emphasize the impact of qualified and experienced teachers on student academic growth and success. As compensation for meeting these requirements, states, districts, and campuses are provided the flexibility of mixing funds and of using them both creatively and innovatively to reach their measurable goals and objectives, without the burden of immense paperwork. The purpose for such measures is increased availability of valuable time, which can be better used to work more closely with students to produce the desired academic achievement.

School districts ultimately are accountable for the achievement of various student groups. The groups monitored through the Texas Accountability System are African American, Hispanic, White, economically disadvantaged, Limited English Proficient, and special education. Ethnicity is determined by parental designation, while economic disadvantage is based on participation in the free or reduced-price lunch program. Due to the relationship between ethnicity and socioeconomic status to student performance, much emphasis remains on the disaggregation of data to ensure the success of previously underachieving ethnic groups (Baker, Keller-Wolff, & Wolf-Wendel, 2000).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to identify the instructional practices of high-performing schools that have successfully eliminated the achievement gap for Hispanic economically disadvantaged and Limited English Proficient students. This study examines the data collected from four campuses—two rated exemplary and two rated acceptable—to identify the best practices of the two exemplary schools. The high-

performing campuses are chosen due to their consistently high achievement on the TAKS. The researcher considers the possibility that the academic performance of the students is a direct result of the campus' implementation of best practices. The researcher chose the two acceptable campuses from her district of employment, choosing the two campuses with an acceptable rating, with the highest percentages of Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students, and Limited English Proficient students. The two exemplary campuses were selected based on the following criteria, in the order presented: 1) exemplary rating on TAKS in 2005, 2) demographics similar to the acceptable schools, 3) PreK-5 grade span, 4) enrollment of at least 500 students, and 5) convenience for visitations. Particular attention was given to exclude G/T magnet or high SES schools. Another facet of the study is to verify whether the practices uncovered in the study are documented in previous literature and whether educators are aware of and aligning their practices to these research-proven practices.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study uses quantitative data from the Texas Education Agency's Accountability Tables for the academic years 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006. Although 2005 was the first year for full implementation of the panel recommendation standard for passing TAKS, the TEA provided both the accountability results and the conversion of those results to the panel recommendation level for uniform comparison of the results from 2003 to 2005 and beyond. The results for the state assessment of previous years were unviable, due to the lack of rigor and the lack of high-level reasoning required to pass the test. Patterns in the achievement gap of the quantified student groups are noted

and graphed. Also graphed are other components of the campus' accountability tables, including the percentage of minority population, the percentage of economically disadvantaged, the percentage of LEP students, and the percentage of test exemptions for each student group under study. Patterns indicating commonalities among the four campus' data are noted as well.

The research questions for the study are:

1) Which, if any, instructional practices are present in the exemplary-rated campuses with high numbers of Hispanic LEP students compared to acceptable-rated campuses with the same type of student populations? and,

2) Are educators aware of and modifying their instructional practices to be more aligned with proven research-based practices?

Follow-up questions in the interviews are used to prompt elaboration on the topic of instructional practices addressed in the surveys and in the research questions. The results of the surveys from the two exemplary campuses are compared to the responses from the acceptable schools. The researcher looks for differences and for themes across the responses and then compares them to the responses from the interviews and from the observations for triangulation of data.

The questions used to prompt for elaboration to the survey and central questions are:

1) When and how do bilingual and ESL teachers meet to discuss how to deliver specific objectives or concepts to students?

2) How do bilingual and ESL teachers share collective responsibility for the success or the failure of students in all classrooms?

3) What curricular and instructional issues are discussed at the bilingual and ESL meetings and how are the topics chosen?

4) How and when do bilingual and ESL teachers gather with their teams to study student work?

5) How do bilingual and ESL teachers incorporate the use of the students' first language into instruction?

6) How do bilingual and ESL teachers ensure that they provide students the opportunity to master prerequisite skills before moving on to more complex concepts or applications?

7) Name and explain some "best practices" bilingual and ESL teachers use to ensure all students are learning. How did they decide to use those practices? (E.g.: cooperative learning, technology-enriched instruction, culturally responsive teaching, cognitively-guided instruction, specific strategies)

8) How do bilingual and ESL teachers ensure that they are knowledgeable on strategies that have been proven to work with LEP students?

9) What, in your opinion as a bilingual and ESL teacher, is the most important reason that the students at this campus achieve at high levels of success on the TAKS?

10) If you, as a bilingual and ESL teacher, could retain only one current method

to help your students succeed, what would you keep?

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept

The framework of the study is based on the Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept, a business improvement tool promoted by the U.S. Department of Defense (USDoD) in its 2002 publication titled *Best Practices and Benchmarking—Making Worthwhile Comparisons*. The publication states:

> A best practice is a business function, process, or system that is considered superior to all other known methods. A documented strategy and approach used by the most respected, competitive, and profitable organizations, a best practice is widely known to improve performance and efficiency in a specific area. Successfully identifying and applying best practices can save money, eliminate redundancy, and enhance organizational effectiveness. (p. 3)

The author of the article adds that a review of an organization is necessary when an outside source has already recognized the problem, there are similar activities occurring in other organizations, and the other organizations are showing success with their practices. Using the Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept, this researcher intends to identify the gold standard (exemplary campuses) and then look for best practices implemented at those two sites to improve student achievement at two acceptable campuses. The 2005 TAKS data provide the initial scores for benchmarking, the first component of the Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept.

The investigation uses qualitative methodology to examine the practices of four Texas elementary schools, two rated exemplary and two rated acceptable, to find the best practices implemented by the two high-performing campuses to produce high academic

success of their Hispanic and LEP students, compared to the two acceptable campuses..

Based on the Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept framework, the original proposal

encompasses the study of four exemplary campuses that are predominantly Hispanic,

economically disadvantaged, and high in the percentage of at-risk students, with the

intent to look for patterns of best practices used by those four high-performing campuses

to "beat the odds" thrust upon them with their student groups. The researcher planned to

use the results to help her own campus improve its TAKS results and rating. After

careful review by the researcher's committee, the committee changed the study to the

qualitative research of two of the identified exemplary-rated campuses and two campuses

from the researcher's district to look for differences, if any, in the use of best practices

between the two categories of schools.

Campuses for Study

The researcher chose the two acceptable campuses from her district of

employment, choosing the two campuses with an acceptable rating, with the highest

percentages of Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students, and Limited

English Proficient students. The two exemplary campuses were selected based on the

following criteria, in the order presented: 1) exemplary rating on TAKS in 2005, 2)

demographics similar to the acceptable schools, 3) PreK-5 grade span, 4) enrollment of at

least 500 students, and 5) convenience for visitations. Particular attention was given to

exclude G/T magnet or high SES schools. The exemplary rating based on the 2005

TAKS, was necessary as 2005 was the first year Texas implemented the panel

recommendation level of proficiency as a passing standard on all tested subjects of the

state assessment. Although numerous schools earned the exemplary rating that year, only five spanning grades PreK-5 surfaced. Many elementary schools only serve students from PreK through 3rd or 4th grade, giving them an advantage over those which serve PreK through 5th grade. The scores in 5th grade, especially science scores, keep many schools from reaching recognized and exemplary ratings. Because the researcher's campus serves 5th graders and because their scores are the lowest at the campus, it was important to examine schools that performed well at that grade level, also. After reviewing the exemplary campus data only three sites matched the criteria for the study. The two selected exemplary sites were chosen on the convenience method—they were in the same district and within five miles from each other.

Participants

The subjects for the study are the bilingual and ESL teachers at the four campuses. Because bilingual/ESL students can only be served by bilingual/ESL teachers, and because the researcher's district serves bilingual students in completely separate settings from regular education students, a truly representative sample of the bilingual/ESL program practices will include only those teachers. The qualitative research is achieved by collecting data from bilingual and ESL staff members from the selected campuses who volunteered to participate. School documents add to the description of the findings.

Data Collection

The study begins by asking for responses to a fifty-question survey, followed by interviews and observations to elicit a more accurate picture of the results. The

interviews are conducted both individually and in focus groups and last approximately one hour. Observations of the participants' classrooms and school documents provide additional data for evaluation. The collection and the analysis of all components of the study provide the basis for generalizations about the instructional "best practices" used to achieve high academic performance for Hispanic LEP students. The researcher collects all data. Survey and interview responses from the participants are coded to create themes and to serve as generalizations for the development of the research presentation (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2001). The researcher probing questions elicit elaboration from the study participants. Field notes are reviewed and combined based on themes, then are analyzed for incorporation into the findings of the study. Triangulation, through "the use of different sources of information will help both to confirm and to improve the clarity, or precision, of a research finding" (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p. 275).

The study uses the Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept framework to investigate the exemplary schools' use of "best practices" based on the National Center for Educational Accountability's Best Practice Framework and on other research-based practices conducive to academic success of Hispanic and of Limited English Proficient students. It also takes into account the use of second-language acquisition practices, due to the high number of LEP students.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Findings from this study are limited due, among other things, to the small number of schools, the means by which they were selected, the lack of significance among all the variables studied and the differences in the schools' geographic locations. The culture of

South Texas communities is quite distinct from that in Central Texas, although the campuses all serve large numbers of Hispanic and low socio-economic students. Being a qualitative study, differences in out-of-school variables and those due to the difference in the geographic locations of the schools were not factored out of the study. Due to the demographics of the schools and the specificity of some of the best practices in relation to the Hispanic culture, the results may be more applicable to similar schools with similar percentages of Hispanic economically disadvantaged and LEP students. Although the criteria for the study are met in the areas of enrollment, of achievement, and of several areas of student demographics, the percentages of LEP students at the four campuses are dissimilar. Consequently, the results may not directly transfer to a large, more diverse urban setting.

The researcher also recognizes that only the instructional practices occurring at the classroom and teacher level are being studied and that other factors, which also impact student achievement, are assumed to remain stable. Inherent also are the limitations of the qualitative methodologies and the limited number of responses; however, the instructional "best practices" of this research may be transferable if they correlate with the findings of other studies with similar student demographics on assessments with more rigor than a basic skills test. Previous studies such as those by Reyes et al. (1999) and Padron et al. (2002) were not specific to the TAKS. Reyes et al. found that high levels of teacher commitment and sense of responsibility for student success, culturally responsive instruction, cooperative learning, technology enhanced instruction, team planning/collaboration, and activity based instruction with

manipulatives were commonalities in high-performing schools. Padron et al revealed particular practices aided Hispanic students in improving academic achievement. Among them were the uses of cognitively guided instruction, instructional conversations, culturally responsive instruction, technology- enriched instruction, use of particular commercial programs, and cooperative learning to increase the academic success of Hispanic students.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Due to the continued gap in achievement of the Hispanic economically disadvantaged and LEP student population and to the growing number of these student groups in the public school system, it is imperative that educators and researchers identify and disseminate best practices to the educators closest to the student—the teachers, so that they may modify their preparation and their delivery of instruction to maximize student performance. The study makes a strong case for consistent application of best practices in instructing Hispanic and LEP students and an even stronger one for increasing teacher capacity to improve student performance. The findings from this study may support and add to previous research. Educators, administrators, and policy makers may use the results from this study to support the implementation of the resulting common, best practices to increase their students' achievement.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Achievement gap: the difference in academic performance between the various student groups, by ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or special programs

AEIS: Academic Excellence Indicator System, the performance-reporting and accountability component of the Texas Education Agency

AYP: Adequate Yearly Progress measure based on set criteria of meeting given percent of students and student groups meeting set standard expectations, having at least 95% eligible students testing, meeting set attendance criteria, and meeting set dropout rate

All Schools: a single statewide definition of AYP applies to all districts and campuses, including Title I and non-Title I districts and campuses, alternative education campuses, and open-enrollment charter schools

All Students: All students must be tested and all results must be included in the AYP calculation. (NCLB at the federal level only requires testing in grades 3-8 and once in high school.) After the 2002-03 school year, reading/language arts and mathematics results for all students will be included in the AYP calculation, including results for special education students tested on the State-Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA); Locally determined Alternative Assessment (LDAA) for students exempted from the TAKS and SDAA by the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee or the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC); and Reading Proficiency Tests in English (RPTE) for limited English proficient (LEP) students exempted from the TAKS by the LPAC.

At-Risk: at risk of dropping out of school based on state-defined criteria

Benchmarking: a system for testing in which districts or campuses test students to determine whether they are mastering a set curriculum

Best practices: scientifically proven, research-based practices

Curriculum alignment: a system whereby a campus or a district sets a scope and sequence for their curriculum and sets its testing based on the intended curriculum.

Economically disadvantaged: eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or other public assistance based on federal guidelines

Empowerment: a state or condition in which all those working in a system are involved in making decisions and providing input regarding their workplace

Exempt: status of a student who does not take the TAKS based on a decision by a special education committee or a language proficiency committee

Leadership: the leaders of a district or campus who set the vision and goals for an educational institution and provide the knowledge and steps toward reaching that vision.

LEP: Limited English Proficient— identified as limited English proficient by the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) according to criteria established in the Texas Administrative Code

Mobile: in membership at the school for less than 83% of the school year

NAEP: National Assessment of Educational Progress

NCLB: No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, federal legislation for accountability

Other measures: High schools must meet a graduation rate standard set by the state. States will individually identify an additional measure for elementary and for middle/junior high schools.

Participation: Districts and campuses must meet test participation standards of at least 95% of students taking the test as well as performance standards for students tested.

Standards: Baseline performance for Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics measures is determined using the NCLB methodology. These standards must increase over time to reach 100% by the 2013-14 academic year.

Student Groups: All African American, Hispanic, White, Economically Disadvantaged, Special Education, and LEP students must meet the same performance and participation standards. States will individually develop minimum size criteria for evaluation of student groups.

TAAS: Texas Assessment of Academic Skills

TAKS: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, more rigorous than TAAS

TEA: Texas Education Agency

SUMMARY

Although all levels of our government currently clamor for more accountability from schools to ensure the academic success of all students, an achievement gap continues to exist between minority student groups and White students, and between English-proficient and Limited English Proficient students. Federal legislation requires the use of research-based practices. This study uses the Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept framework as it investigates the common practices of four Texas schools—two rated exemplary and two rated acceptable—to find the practices, if any, that have consistently produced high achievement for the two exemplary campuses with a high

percentage of Hispanic and LEP students. It looks at all areas of the teacher's responsibilities, from preparation to the individual instructional practices, used in the classroom to find those most highly effective in closing the achievement gap of the Hispanic LEP student groups studied.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

Educational Status of Hispanics

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES] (2006), the number of second language learners, of which approximately 67% are Hispanic, more than doubled from 1979 to 2004, increasing from approximately four million to almost ten million, and comprising 19% of the student population in 2004 as compared to 9% in 1979. Because approximately two thirds of the LEP students in U.S. schools are Hispanic, this study chose to examine literature that references Hispanics in general, with reference to LEP research, when available.

Although much research has been conducted to find the reasons for the achievement gaps of minorities, little has been studied about Hispanic students in the American school system. However, Hispanics have now taken the lead as the largest and fastest-growing minority not only in school-aged children but also in America (NCES, 2003; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Spanish is now recognized as the language most spoken by school-aged second language learners at home (NCES, 2006). It is now imperative to conduct studies to improve the performance of Hispanic LEP students.

In Texas, projections show a reverse in the population shift to one of a Hispanic majority and a White minority by the year 2040, meaning the majority of wage-earners in the economy will be Hispanic adults (Murdock, 2006). The urgency to promote high achievement for Hispanic LEP students is evident. The continued pattern of increasing numbers of LEP students also dictates that we find and promote practices conducive to

their academic success and that teachers adjust their instructional strategies, based on those proven practices, to promote the academic success of this student population.

National statistics state that Hispanics accounted for approximately 18% of total K-12 public school enrollment in the United States in the year 2003 (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2004). Other reports add that Hispanics are projected to comprise 25% of the enrollment by the year 2025 (Padron, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002). In Texas, Hispanic enrollment in schools is predicted to jump to 66% of total state enrollment by the year 2040 (Murdock, 2006). Unfortunately, lack of preschool attendance, limited English proficiency, economically disadvantaged status, and less educated parents are frequently associated with Hispanic students, all of which are factors that impede success in the classroom, (NCES, 2003). In addition, 28% of these students live in poverty.

Research clearly shows living in poverty to be a negative factor in a student's chance for success in school, due to the lack of quality learning opportunities (Lippman et al., 1996). Educational disadvantages, such as less reading from parents, attendance at high-minority, low-income schools, lack of computers at home, less parental involvement, and the presence of two or more risk factors are also more frequently found in Hispanic than White families (Barton, 2004; NCES, 2003; Padron et al., 2002). All these home factors are the beginning of the achievement gap in the education of Hispanic LEP students.

The Achievement Gap

The NCES (2004) reports that although National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores in reading for Hispanics have increased from 1975 to 1999, their

performance still remains lower than White students' scores. It adds that the gap between Hispanic nine-year-olds, thirteen-year-olds and seventeen-year-olds and their White peers were twenty-eight points, twenty-three points, and twenty-four points, respectively. The NCES Condition of Education 2005 in Brief reports that the average Reading and Mathematics scores of fourth and eighth grade Hispanic, American Indian, and Black students were lower than White and Asian/Pacific Islander students, based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress of 2003. The same pattern exists in the results of the state assessments in Texas, where Hispanic children perform below White children in all areas of the state assessment (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2006).

Based on studies of various decades of data, the achievement gap between White and Hispanic students has been found to decrease during elementary school, increase during middle school, and remain the same during high school (Jacobson, Olsen, Rice, Sweetland, & Ralph, 2001). By the time Hispanic students in Texas finish their senior year in high school, only 57% of this group remains to walk across the stage at graduation (Education Trust, Inc. [ETI], 2004). As one follows the trend for Hispanics, who presently make up slightly over 45% of the student group in the Texas public K-12 system, the group decreases to 25% of the two-year-college enrollment and dwindles even further to 19% of four-year-college enrollment (ETI, 2004).

Numerous publications and presentations throughout the country recognize this achievement gap. Researchers are also interested in studying the underachievement of Hispanics (Conchas, 2001; NCES, 2003; Padron et al., 2002; Pew Hispanic Center, 2003; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI), 2003; Valencia, 2002;

Valenzuela, 1999). Even the federal government has undertaken the task of assuming leadership in eradicating this gap (Simmons, 2001; USDE, 2004; White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 1998). The Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) (2002) published various reports on the factors leading to the Hispanic achievement gap as well as possible ways to reverse that trend. However, recognition that the condition of low achievement is a conglomeration of differences in social, economic, and educational circumstances is vital to its eradication (TRPI, 2003).

Scholars vary in their reasons for the Hispanic underachievement, from attributing it to socio-economic disadvantage (Barton, 2004; Bloom, 1986; Roscigno, 1998; Trejo, 1997) to relating achievement to social stress (Alva & de los Reyes, 1999). Fashola, Slavin, Calderon, & Duran (1997) believe the two major barriers are language and socioeconomic status (p. 2). Ramirez and Carpenter (2005), also, find language and socioeconomics to be the most influential factors based on their analysis of follow-up data from the National Educational Longitudinal Studies from 1988 through 2000.

Some researchers believe it is a composite of socioeconomic status, family conditions, student behavior, and residential mobility (Lee, 2002; Ream, 2005). One study even states that low rates of Hispanic academic success were attributable to genetic inadequacies (Hernstein & Murray, 1994). However, more recent studies have accepted that the achievement gap is not solely a result of social and of cultural factors and that it can be minimized through school-based practices, such as valuing and incorporating the students' culture and home experiences into the school's curriculum and environment

(Gonzalez et al., 1995; Jimenez, 2001; Schifini, 1997; Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, and Yamauchi, 2000; Waxman, Padron, & Arnold, 2001; Weis & Fine, 1993).

Whatever reason one attributes to the performance of Hispanics and LEP students, the result is the same: an achievement gap continues to exist between Hispanic students and the White student group, even though statistics show both groups' performance has increased overall since the 1970s (NCES, 2003). The condition of public education for the Hispanic LEP student appears quite dismal unless educators implement best practices.

A CALL FOR REFORM

Recognizing the presence of the achievement gap between Hispanics and Whites and the urgency to eliminate the gap through schools' resources, Secretary of Education, Margaret Spelling, is quoted as saying, "One in every five children under 18 is of Hispanic origin. We must work together to ensure all these children stay in school and have the chance to achieve their potential" (USDE, 2005). The NCLB information site for the U.S. Department of Education states:

> In the past, too many Hispanic American students were shortchanged by our nation's schools.
> - In the greatest country in the world, we created two education systems— separate and unequal.
> - A growing "achievement gap" was evidence that some students were taught well while the rest—mostly poor and minority—were allowed to struggle or drop out.
> - Language and cultural barriers, too often left unaddressed by schools, exacerbated the problem.
>
> The No Child Left Behind law ensures that schools are held accountable for the academic progress of every child regardless of race, ethnicity, income level or zip code.

- Because of No Child Left Behind, closing the achievement gap is now a national priority.
- Schools are now held specifically accountable for the annual progress of Hispanic American students.
- Schools must have high expectations for every child—the soft bigotry of low expectations is no longer tolerated.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) channels $22.3 billion for educational assistance to schools to help equalize educational opportunity to children of poor and disadvantaged homes (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2003). It attempts to improve the education of all children through -stronger accountability for achievement of set standards, more freedom for flexibility in combining funds to accomplish measurable goals, insistence on the use of research-proven education methods and programs in schools, and the provision of more choices for parents of students in low-performing or dangerous schools (USDE, 2005).

Should a school fail to show progress for two consecutive years in the areas noted, various measures can take place, ranging from paying for supplemental support services at the school or an off-campus site, implementing corrective measures to improve performance, even to having the state take over the school, if non-compliance continues for more than five years (USDE, 2005).

The flexibility component assists schools to combine their federal funds to meet their goals. By allowing this practice, educators can spend more time with instruction and less with paperwork. This practice also allows working with more focused campus-based initiatives to improve student performance by combining funds for designated

campus initiatives. Initiatives may range from implementing research-based programs to funding stipends for teachers in areas of need.

Research based programs and practices are a large part of the NCLB initiative. This is such a strong component, that a guide is provided through the U.S. Department of Education explaining what "research-based" means. The emphasis is on equating "testing of educational practices toward the medical model used by scientists to assess the effectiveness of medications, therapies and the like. Studies that test random samples of the population and that involve a control group are scientifically controlled. To gain scientifically based research about a particular educational program or practice, it must be the subject of such a study" (USDE, 2005).

Federal legislation also provides options for parents of students who are enrolled in low-performing or dangerous schools. Once a school is labeled "low-performing" due to two years of not making adequate yearly progress (AYP) on a given measure or the parent may move his child to a better-performing school and the previous school must pay transportation costs. If the low-performing school has not met AYP standards for more than two years, the parents have access to supplemental educational services at the school's cost. If a school is labeled "unsafe" due to the number of incidents of violence reported, the student may move to another school that has not been designated as "unsafe".

In spite of all these efforts by the federal government to eliminate factors that impede their academic performance, Hispanics continue to lag in their achievement. Literature continues to find that Hispanic students perform at lower achievement levels

than students from White, Asian, or higher socio-economic groups (Aspiazu, Bauer, & Spillet, 1998; Gonzales & Padilla, 1997).

Accountabilit*y*

Implementing accountability standards is the legislators' response to closing all achievement gaps between all student groups. Standards specify precisely what a student should know or should be able to do by the end of each grade level and are used as curriculum guides and for instruction at successful schools (Haycock, 2001). Students are graded on their performance in meeting each standard (criterion referenced), rather than on how they measure up to their peers, as in norm-referenced assessments (Marsh, 1999). One benefit of accountability through standards-based assessment is that all data must be disaggregated to look at individual group performance, so all student groups must show similar success rates in order to meet accountability requirements (Johnson, 1998), including Hispanics and LEP students. Another benefit of standards-based instruction is that minority and low-socioeconomic students' scores tend to improve when schools implement standards-based curricula (Haycock, 2001), because teachers must change the way they impart the lesson itself. They must learn to emphasize student engagement and to incorporate meaningful activities and information in order for students to master the standards (Valverde & Scribner, 2001).

Some scholars, however, feel the use of accountability through standards-based testing is detrimental to minority and low-income students (Linn, 2000; McNeil & Valenzuela, 1999; Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2000). Orfeld and Wald

(2000) found that many stakeholders in the schools did not realize what some of the consequences of standards-based assessment would be. They add:

> Civil-rights advocates claim that most high-stakes testing policies, particularly those linking single standardized assessment scores to promotion and graduation, discriminate against minority youth, hamstring teachers, reduce complex learning opportunities, and punish victims, not perpetrators, of educational inequities. (p. 39)

To make room for the standards, teachers are "piling on homework, abolishing recess for young children, cheating on tests, flunking more students, teaching to the tests, and seeking to rid themselves of low performers" (Gratz, 2000).Unfortunately, too many of those low performers are Hispanic students. A commentary in a National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education report states that the public was brought to understand that society was the worse for allowing large sections of our population to lack in reading and math skills. Orfeld & Wald (2000) state that:

> . . . The phrase "higher standards" has become a rallying cry for avid school reformers and politicians alike. A broad coalition of constituencies have embraced standards-based reform as a means of improving public schools' accountability, preparing a globally competitive work force, and decreasing the achievement gap among various racial ethnic groups (p. 39).

Standards-based reform remains the strong arm of the No Child Left Behind legislation aimed at accountability for eliminating the achievement gap between all student groups by attempting to rectify several factors that contribute to the underachievement of Hispanic and LEP students, such as the lack of qualified teachers, the use of inadequate teaching practices, and the presence of ineffective school environments.

The accountability component of NCLB is causing entire schools to be labeled as not meeting requirements. In 2003, one in four schools failed to meet requirements set out by NCLB (Friel, 2003), resulting in a timeline of one year to implement reform measures to avoid more stringent efforts to force the school to demonstrate success through testing performance and through other measures as outlined in the law. One such measure requires schools to provide more opportunities for staff development and for professional growth for teachers, so they may become better qualified. This is a requirement because research acknowledges the biggest factors impeding Hispanic success in the classroom are the shortage of properly certified teachers and the insufficient preparation among those who are credentialed (Menken & Holmes, 2000). Studies also show that schools with the highest numbers of economically disadvantaged students also have the lowest number of properly credentialed teachers (Valencia, 2000; Valverde & Scribner, 2001). LEP students make up a large percentage both of the Hispanic and the economically disadvantaged population.

Because education is considered to be a cultural resource, researchers argue over equity in obtaining it. It is essential in asking for equity and for social justice, and therefore it is important to recognize its attainability from the Hispanic perspective. Anderson (2001) urges educators to seek programs that are proven to enhance student performance and which you can document as such, instead of allowing interest groups, such as scripted programs vendors and education presentations by consultants, to cause a larger testing environment for minorities, such as Hispanics. The question remains, have the new accountability measures of NCLB accomplished what they were meant to

accomplish? Have more minority, LEP, and economically disadvantaged students met the proficiency level required, and is the achievement gap between Whites and Hispanics smaller than in previous years? Both national and state results continue to show that a large gap exists in student performance between Hispanic children and White children. The gap exists from elementary all the way through high school (TEA, 2005; NCES, 2005). Research, however, is lacking in the area of full implementation of best practices to ensure the academic success of all minority groups, specifically Hispanic LEP students.

Research-based Practices

Federal legislation requires research-based reform in instructional practices and in programs used in high poverty, low-income schools. The No Child Left Behind Act expects all schools to use best practices to improve student achievement for all students. The Title I School Improvement Program for Texas answers the following question:

> *What are examples of policies and practices with the greatest likelihood of ensuring that all groups of students achieve proficiency?*
>
> The flexibility of funds is not easily or definitively observed unless one looks at a school's budget and at their allocation of funds. In an optimal situation, one would see the channeling of various policies and practices with the greatest likelihood of ensuring that all students achieve proficiency are those that affect the campus' teaching and learning program, both directly and indirectly. Policies and practices that have an impact on classrooms include those that build school infrastructures, such as regular data analysis, the involvement of teachers and parents in decision-making, and the allocation of resources to support core goals. Other policies and practices that have a more direct effect on student achievement include the choice of instructional programs and materials, the use of instructional time, and improved use of assessment results. Decisions about the specific policies and practices to be implemented should be based on a thoughtful review and analysis of their individual school's needs (TEA, 2004).

Flexibility of Funds

        Federal and local funds may be combined and assigned to a school's campus initiatives, which would be delineated in the campus' yearly improvement plan. Studies have found that "a substantially positive relation exists between educational resource inputs and academic achievement" (Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996), but the resources must be directed toward instruction; otherwise, additional funds will not increase student achievement (Clark, 1998). The federal government allows campuses and districts to mesh their funds to meet their measurable goals. This may mean smaller class sizes by paying for another teacher allocation or possibly combining bilingual and Title I funds to buy a program for the students. It might even mean allocating funds to pay for stipends for teachers certified in areas of need. Having the flexibility to combine funds enables site-based committees to focus their efforts on the students themselves, rather than wasting time determining which funds can be used, completing the forms to request the use of the funds, and waiting for approval on the requests, before being able to use the funds.

Parental Options

        Under NCLB parents also have options for involvement in their child's education. They have the option to move a child from a low-performing or unsafe campus to one which is neither. Although full implementation of this rule has not been attempted, problems are already arising. In San Marcos, Texas, the Miller Middle School did not meet the safety standard for NCLB, so parents were given the option to take their children to another middle school. The movement of thirty-nine students to the only other middle school within the district was not well accepted by the Superintendent,

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Sylvester Perez, who declared that the rating was incorrect due to miscoding by a security guard of incidents that were not major. The incident brings up the question of under-reporting of violence on a campus to avoid being labeled "unsafe" (Friel, 2003).

Although literature states that surveys of parents have indicated that when choosing a school, parents look at particular school characteristics, such as the quality of the school, the availability of courses or programs, the quality of teaching staff, discipline problems, safety, and location (Beales & Wahl, 1995; Martinez, Godwin, & Kemerer, 1995; Peterson, Myers, & Howell, 1998), it is important to note that for most families, the choice on which schools to attend was made when they moved into the chosen neighborhood (Hoxby, 1998). In addition, studies have found that the parents opting for better schools tend to be the higher socioeconomic and better educated parents, who also participate in school activities more often than the entire group of eligible families (Levin, 1998; Martinez, Thomas, & Kemerer, 1994; Rouse, 1998; Williams & Echols, 2002). Hispanics and low-socioeconomic families, however, may not have the opportunity to choose to attend the better schools as their finances and their level of education may dictate otherwise. This means that the schools serving Hispanic students are obligated to look for and implement those practices necessary to make this student group successful.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN TEXAS

At the state level, Texas schools are evaluated with the following basic accountability principles of NCLB as stated in the 2003 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Guide of Texas (p. 5):

All Schools: A single statewide definition of AYP applies to all districts and campuses, including Title I and non-Title I districts and campuses, alternative education campuses, and open-enrollment charter schools.

All Students: All students must be tested and all results must be included in the AYP calculation. [NCLB at the federal level only requires testing in grades 3-8 and once in high school.] After the 2002-03 school year, Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics results for all students will be included in the AYP calculation, including results for special education students tested on the State-Developed Alternative Assessment(SDAA); Locally determined Alternative Assessment LDAA) for students exempted from the TAKS and SDAA by the Admission, Review, and Dismissal(ARD) committee or the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee(LPAC); and Reading Proficiency Tests in English(RPTE) for limited English proficient (LEP) students exempted from the TAKS by the LPAC.

Standards: Baseline performance standards for Reading/Language Art and Mathematics measures are determined using the NCLB methodology. The standards must increase over time to reach 100 percent by 2013-14.

Participation: Districts and campuses must meet test participation standards as well as performance standards for students tested.

Student Groups: All African American, Hispanic, White, economically disadvantaged, special education, and LEP students must meet the same performance and participation standards. States will individually develop minimum size criteria for evaluation of student groups.

Other measures: High schools must meet a Graduation Rate standard set by the state. States will individually identify an additional measure for elementary and middle/junior high schools.

Corrective measures are imposed on schools and districts that do not meet adequate yearly progress as determined by showing gains in reading and math, meeting minimum performance standards, meeting participation standards, meeting attendance standards, and/or meeting graduation rate standards. Presently the group performance keeping schools and districts from higher performance ratings are those of the Hispanic, low-socioeconomic students, and Limited English Proficient students.

TESTING IN TEXAS

Texas is noted for its innovative thinking in the area of education and has been nationally recognized in successfully closing the achievement gap for its high Hispanic and African-American population as evidenced by consistent increases in performance on the state assessment, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), for multiple years (Hadderman, 2000; Washington School Research Center, 2003). This test, however, was considered to be a minimum skills test, and was replaced in the school year 2002-2003 by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), a more comprehensive and more rigorous test. The federal requirements state that students should be tested and their performance evaluated in Reading and in Math according to the NCLB guidelines and based on the new curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Texas moved into compliance without hesitation, as it already had a standards-based curriculum and assessment, which had been implemented since 1999.

In spite of the lack of constituency support and because of the rush toward test implementation, little time was left to choose the cut-off scores to show proficiency on the TAKS. While teachers prepared their third graders to take a high-stakes test in February 2003, one that would determine their passage into fourth grade, state education officers did not agree on a proficiency level until November 15, 2002, as evidenced by the State Board of Education (SBOE) meeting minutes. For input into how to choose the standards and the cut-off scores, the SBOE minutes simply stated:

> A presentation is scheduled by some members of the Technical Advisory Committee, which has been assembled to advise the board on standard-setting issues related to the TAKS. This committee is composed of prominent educational testing experts with experience in standard setting for other major testing programs across the country. (p. 6)

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The notes from the meeting do not show much discussion among the SBOE members, before a final vote and the resolution passed, electing to set an initial passing standard on the 2003 test administration for all grade levels at two standard errors of measurement below a recommended proficiency level, and phasing in the panel recommendation requirement over three years, with full implementation on the 2005 TAKS administration.

Although the lower expectations seemed to be aimed at maximizing opportunities for minorities, a more realistic reason comes from Cooper et al. (2003) who states:

> As the federal government requires states to set and meet their own standards—presumably to improve schooling nationally—the effect might be the opposite: states may actually lower standards initially, so as to make "adequate yearly progress" easier to show. (p. 299)

High Stakes Testing

In Texas, passing the TAKS is crucial for Texas students at four stages of their public education—3rd, 5th, 8th, and 11th grades. At 3rd grade, students must pass the reading TAKS to be promoted to 4th grade. At 5th grade, students must pass the reading and math TAKS to be promoted to the following grade level, and beginning in the 2007-2008 school year 8th graders must also pass the reading and math TAKS to be promoted to the 9th grade. Finally, at 11th grade a student starts taking the EXIT level TAKS in English language arts, math, science, and social studies, which must be passed by the end of 12th grade to receive a diploma and graduate from high school. As critical as passing the state assessments is, educators must find ways to ensure student success for all student groups on these standards-based assessments. The state's results on the 2006

spring administration of the TAKS, however, reveal the achievement gap between White, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and LEP students exists in Texas, also. Table 2.1 shows the state reading results by grade level taken from the 2005-06 Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) Report.

Table 2.1

State Reading Results for TAKS 2006- Percent Passing

Grades	State	LEP	Hispanic	EconDis	White
3rd	94%	89%	92%	84%	98%
5th	89%	67%	83%	71%	96%
8th	84%	32%	77%	75%	93%
11th	89%	34%	83%	81%	94%

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System Report. Austin, TX.

Table 2.2 depicts the state TAKS math results by grade level, also from the 2005-2006 AEIS reports. Scores for third grade math are not included because students at third are only required to meet standards in reading for promotion to fourth grade.

Table 2.2

State Math Results for TAKS 2006- Percent Passing

Grades	State	LEP	Hispanic	EconDis	White
3rd	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
5th	90%	76%	87%	74%	96%
8th	68%	29%	59%	56%	81%
11th	78%	43%	70%	66%	88%

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System Report. Austin, TX.

The data from these grade levels are significant as these are the school years where the students are retained or promoted based on their TAKS results in one or more of these subjects. One immediately notices the disparate performance of Hispanic and LEP students compared to Whites, although Hispanics, in general, had showed great increases and small gaps on the TAAS, the previous state assessment. So where does that leave Hispanic and LEP students? Were proficiency standards set to minimize the number of White failures, at the expense of minority groups? According to Parker (2001), a theory may be at work in the area of high-stakes testing and education reform. He states:

> Whites will indeed tolerate any policies that have a harmful impact on racial minorities, but if the tables were turned and Whites suffered under these same policies, then they would work actively to change them. Thus, Whites have no problem accepting and even advocating for higher assessment standards or grade retention policies, even though, . . .much research shows how harmful these policies are on students, just as long as they mostly affect minority students in urban schools. However, once the policies affect Whites, particularly those in the suburbs, then Whites will react to change these policies. (p. 315)

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Parker contends that if the TAAS was misconstrued as a way to help minorities improve their performance, then Whites were basically "off the accountability hook". It was not until all states initiated this new testing which can keep a White suburban child from being promoted, that middle class suburbia rallied against standards and against accountability testing. He adds that the TAAS program may have been such a political game, which was changed once the minorities starting closing the gap too tightly.

In a case study by Dr. Angela Valenzuela, from the University of Texas at Austin, the impact of the TAAS on two groups of high school students was found to be detrimental to their success in school. Valenzuela (2000) wrote, "Operating under the guise of technical rationality, high-stakes testing is thus party to a larger logic that fosters alienation toward schooling though systematic negation of these students' Mexican culture and language" (p. 524).

Hispanic children can perform well on standardized tests, if those tests are used to guide their instruction and not to punish them if they do not do well. The success stories of two of the four campuses in this research are testimony to the fact that minority and LEP students are capable of performing to the level obtained by Whites. Some critics, such as Anderson (2001), however, will use success stories to imply that too many resources are siphoned into helping minorities succeed on the test, at the expense of other important areas of education. He adds from Anderson and Grinberg (1998) "as the state takes a stronger hold of the curriculum and testing, using equity as the justification, standardized testing can become a more sophisticated technology of control—a form of official surveillance that controls populations through normalization."

In spite of all these observations from researchers, academic standards are here to stay, mandated by the state and the federal government. There is no choice but to look for those practices that effectively improve student success for Hispanic and LEP students. In order to find those practices, the focus should be the components to accountability, especially the use of research-proven practices and programs.

Passing Standards Phased In

The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) is the state assessment instrument for the state of Texas. In order to allow schools to ease into the optimum levels of performance, the state chose to allow students three years to reach the Panel Recommendation for student proficiency. The first year, 2003, students were required to meet a level of 2 Standards of Error of Measurement (SEM) below the panel recommendation set by the recommendation committee. The second year, 2004, they were required to meet a level of 1 SEM below the panel recommendation. The third year, 2005, the full Panel Recommendation standard was the level necessary to receive a "met expectations" status. The panel recommendation continues to set the standard for passing the TAKS.

Schools follow a similar pattern of adjusted performance for their school-rating designation. The four levels of school performance are Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable, and Not Acceptable. The required percentage of students successful on the test to meet each rating are 90% for exemplary, 70% for recognized, 60% for acceptable, and less than 60% for not acceptable in the subjects of reading, writing, and social studies. Mathematics and science percentages were decreased to 40% and 35%,

respectively, for the academically acceptable rating. The requirements remain at 90% for

exemplary and 70% for recognized, however, for math and science. Schools must meet

the required percentages for each individual student group: Hispanic, African American,

White, Economically Disadvantaged, and Special Education, in addition to the total

group performance labeled "ALL". Although state ratings do not require a given

percentage of students to take the TAKS test, the federal government requires that at least

95% of the eligible students take the test. All these measures are to ensure that no child

is neglected under the guise of accountability.

PRE-TAKS RESEARCH

Because the 2004 – 2005 school year was the first time the panel recommendation

was used as the passing standard, no studies are yet available on the practices of high-

performing schools with high percentages of minority and low-income students based on

TAKS results. At the district level various scholars such as Scheurich et al (2000a),

Cawelti and Protheroe (1999), and Hernandez (2003) conducted studies based on the

TAAS. Previous studies also exist from campus level studies based on the TAAS (Reyes,

Scribner & Paredes Scribner, 1999; Washington Schools Research Center, 2003), but due

to its low level of rigor, the studies' results may not be applicable. However, practices

found to produce high student success at these schools with high Hispanic enrollment, a

high percentage of LEP students, and a high percentage of economically disadvantaged

students cannot be discarded. The report from the Washington Schools Research Center

(2003) stated that student success on the TAAS was the result of various initiatives by

high performing campuses. The report states:

Excuses for poor performance are not given, nor are they accepted, and this includes limited English proficiency . . . Teachers that do not take their responsibility seriously are not welcome in these schools. . . Data are used as a matter of course to inform and modify instruction. . . Grade level teams, academic teams, and curriculum teams meet regularly to discuss student progress and to plan lessons and projects. . . Principals hold high expectations for their teachers, support their efforts, and provide direction and resources. . . professional development activities in these schools are ongoing and focused. . . Teachers are encouraged to share their knowledge and expertise, both within and beyond the school building. . . The academic success enjoyed by these schools is in part a result of their efforts to teach a focused and aligned curriculum. (p.21)

All these practices appear transferable to promote success with any student group. These schools reported that they would take whatever measures were necessary to ensure all students reached high levels of academic success. To better understand the obstacles Hispanic LEP students must overcome to be highly successful, there are various topics to review.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

There are as many as fourteen factors associated with academic achievement and in each one of them, personal experiences differed by race and ethnicity (Barton, 2004). Barton found that in eleven of the twelve where income data were available, levels of income determined the gaps in the students' life experiences. The author noted that the factors were in five specific areas: health and social development, learning opportunities at home, student mobility, parent-school connections, and school-related issues. Barton wrote that his research produced six school-related factors that affected achievement. The presence of a rigorous curriculum with all students was the first factor impacting student achievement. He notes that minorities still take a less demanding course load than White students. The second item on his list was the presence of teachers with a

minimum of five years teaching experience and good attendance. He reiterates the finding that less experienced teachers are more frequently found on high minority, low-income campuses. In addition to employing less experienced teachers, high-minority, low income schools also tend to have more "out-of-field" teachers in their classroom, which is a third factor in student achievement (Barton, 2004; Ferguson, 2001; Fuller, 2001; Haycock, 2001; Skrla, 2001). Barton finishes his list by naming small class size, safety, and the incorporation of technology into instruction as factors four, five and six in improving student achievement.

The Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence in its 2002 report, *Educating Hispanic Students: Obstacles and Avenues to Improved Academic Achievement,* notes that the lack of certified teachers, the inadequacy of teacher-preparation programs, the presence of inappropriate teaching practices, and school environmental factors affect the performance of Hispanic students. Weis and Fine (1993) add student empowerment to the list, explaining that students must be empowered through the various components of the school system in order to be successful.

Although researchers have compiled their own lists of variables impacting student achievement, the consensus is that the strongest impact comes from socioeconomic status and the factors associated with this trait. Among those are mobility, lack of resources, health and social development, and learning opportunities (Barton, 2004). The following sections present available literature on many of the factors impacting Hispanic student success from early childhood to the empowerment of Hispanics in the school setting.

Early Childhood Education

      The Hispanic achievement gap begins with the lack of early childhood education (ECE). Early childhood education is a program available to three- and four-year-old children who qualify based on Limited English Proficiency or lack of educational opportunity. Attendance at these centers better prepares children for success in elementary school (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Hispanic children, however, are enrolled in smaller numbers than are Whites and African Americans (NCES, 2003). NCES' fact sheet adds that only about 26% of Hispanic three-year olds are enrolled in preschool compared to 47% of White and 60% of African American three-year-olds. Four-year olds show a similar trend when compared with African American students, with about 64% of Hispanics enrolled, whereas, 81% of African Americans enrolled (p. 22).

      Preschool begins to emphasize literacy and communication skills in a more structured manner, similar to what is expected at the kindergarten level; enrolling in such an institution immediately exposes the child to a proactive system for academic success. Because many children are allowed to stay home during these formative years, they may not develop the skills necessary for success in an academic setting. Kagan, Moore, and Bredekamp (1995) state that a student's success for learning can be affected by the way that student approaches situations presented to him. Hispanic children have lower percentages in these skills of staying focused on their activities, on being eager to learn, and in paying attention to a speaker (NCES, 2003). The result is the continuation of a pattern of low achievement.

Retention Due to the Student Success Initiative

Once students enter elementary school, they remain at grade level academic standards with their White counterparts from kindergarten through first grade, although they lose ground in Math during their summer break (Broh, 2003). As Hispanic students continue their voyage through the Texas public education system, they are subjected to the Student Success Initiative, which is part of the reform movement leading to the use of standards and standards-based assessment. "The Student Success Initiative mandates meeting new passing requirements for promotion. The initiative is scheduled to be phased in as follows: beginning in school year 2002-2003 for the reading test at Grade 3, beginning in school year 2004-2005 for the reading and mathematics tests at Grade 5, and beginning in school year 2007-2008 for the reading and mathematics tests at Grade 8" (TEA, 2002). Because the students are provided with structured and intensive instruction in reading readiness skills, in phonics, and in reading comprehension from kindergarten through the third grade, students are expected to be on grade level and ready to prove it on a standardized reading subject test. This, then, is the reason for expecting reading proficiency by third grade. Retention is the only alternative if the student does not show proficiency within three administrations of the test. Unfortunately, according to the state's 2004 AEIS results, the group with the most retained students based on failing to meet the reading standard is the Hispanic group, with fifteen out of every one hundred Hispanics not passing, compared to only four out of every one hundred Whites not meeting the standard (TEA, 2004). While social promotion has not been proven to have a negative impact on students, research has shown that retention does cause some negative effects on those retained (Thompson & Cunningham, 2000; Wheelock, 2002).

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Retention has received much more attention than social promotion, as statistics are more readily available for the practice of retaining students (Thompson & Cunningham, 2000). In Texas, it is part of the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). According to this report, the highest number of retentions is at grades one and two, and students are retained even at the kindergarten level, yet the Hispanic students' performance at third grade is still a surprising 15% lower than the White group. Thompson and Cunningham (2000) added that retention has not improved student achievement for the retainees and has added adjustment problems for students who have been retained in kindergarten.

Thompson and Cunningham also find that retained third grade students produce lower test results that those who had been promoted in spite of much accelerated instruction for the retainees. Perhaps the biggest strike against retention is the increased risk of dropping out of the school system altogether, which is exactly opposite of the desired effect. More obstacles are presented during the transition periods between elementary, middle school, and high school in Texas, which are considered high risk for retention, due to the requirement that students pass the state assessments at those grade levels in order to be promoted. By the time students reach high school, Hispanics are retained about 15% more often than Whites (NCES, 2003). The Texas Education Agency Grade Level Retention Report of 1999 states that the highest number of retentions were those of Hispanic and Black students and that more economically disadvantaged students than those not economically disadvantaged students were retained in grades kindergarten through twelve. Retention is such a strong indicator of academic

failure that a child who is retained in a grade level is coded "at-risk" in the state database for students and does not lose that label until he graduates from high school.

Second Language Barrier

Although many Hispanic students receive their primary school education in Spanish, most Hispanic students are taught in English (Fashola, Slavin, Calderon, & Duran, 1997), in spite of having limited academic knowledge of the language. Limited English proficiency has been found to play a role in this group's inability to match White student performance on state assessment instruments (Valdes, 2001). The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, the state assessment in Texas, shows Limited English Proficient (LEP) students performing below White student groups in all subject areas and across all grade levels (TEA, 2006). Additionally, students who are in a bilingual/ESL program may not exit the program until the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee recommends the exit. Usually, that means that students must show proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in the English language. Poor test performance may mean additional years in a first language setting and less in an all-English classroom, where they can practice more English academic language that is required for success in the English curriculum, particularly on the standardized assessments. Referring to her study of Hispanic students in Seguin and of their low performance on the TAAS, Valenzuela (2000) writes "I therefore maintain that, at least with respect to LEP youths, this high failure rate may be directly attributed to the test and not to their abilities—suggesting, in particular, the formidable language barrier that the test represents" (p. 527).

Cummins (1993) agrees that a student's language can be a barrier to his or her achievement, but adds that this problem can be remedied. He states:

> Considerable research data suggest that, for dominated minorities, the extent to which students' language and culture are incorporated into the school program constitutes a significant predictor of academic success. As outlined earlier, students' school success appears to reflect both the more solid cognitive/academic foundation developed through intensive L1 instruction and the reinforcement of their cultural identity. Included under incorporation of minority group cultural features is the adjustment of instructional patterns to take account of culturally conditioned learning styles. (p. 107-108)

Socioeconomic Status

The impact of poverty on schools is well documented. Studies of hundreds of schools conclude that the socioeconomic status (SES) of a school is the single largest factor impacting student achievement, even stronger than individual student SES (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). The socioeconomic status of a school is determined by the number of students at that school receiving free or reduced lunch. Studies conducted using data from elementary, middle, and high schools reveal that the impact of poverty was so pronounced that it could cover up other variables' effects (Stevenson, 2001, in Stevenson, 2006, p. 2). One study of 334 elementary schools in South Carolina finds that the greatest predictor of student achievement is the percentage of low SES students of the school (McCathren, 2004, in Stevenson, 2006, p. 3). White's (2005) study of 267 schools adds that the severity of the school's SES also negatively impacts school variables such as school climate (as cited in Stevenson, 2006, p. 3). Rumberger and Palardy (2005) agreed with White, adding teacher expectations, amount of student homework completed, school safety, and the number of advanced courses taken to the list of variables affected by school poverty. Understanding the effects of low school SES is crucial to the

improvement of schools with high percentages of students on free and reduced lunch, such as the schools in this study.

Mobility

Poverty and mobility are strongly correlated based on a study by Wright (1999). Students may move from one home to another as financial resources diminish, as parents move to new jobs, or as they become homeless. Mobility produces a home and school environment correlated to low academic achievement. A study by Stover (2000) found that teachers in highly mobile classrooms found themselves remediating and trying to bring new students up to speed with their curriculum instead of presenting high-level thinking lessons. Fitchen (1994) concluded that high mobility was inversely related to the presence of support networks for students. Support networks can be church groups, social agencies, community services, and even circles of friends. A study by Parke (2006) related mobility to low achievement in reading and math in all levels of school—elementary, middle, and high school. In addition, frequent movement by students has been found to place those students at risk for various social and health problems (U.S. Government Accounting Office, 1994). The only positive effects of movement may be those initiated by more affluent parents who move their children to better schools. In that situation, the move may produce positive results.

Effective Schools Environment

As noted previously, the school environment is a crucial piece in completing the puzzle of academic success for Hispanics. Three of four variables impacted by a school's SES are components of The Correlates of Effective Schools. The variables, as

noted by Rumberger & Palardy (2005) are: 1) student safety, 2) teachers' high expectations, and 3) student participation in advanced courses. The Correlates of Effective Schools are characteristics found to be common among schools that believe all children are capable of learning and that create the school environment for that process to occur (Lezotte, 1997). Common characteristics of effective schools begin with the requirement for a safe and orderly environment for all students. A safe environment entails freedom from violence, in addition to freedom from obstacles to teaching and to learning for students and for adults. Under current legislation, when a parent or a child does not feel his school's environment is a constructive contribution to his path to success, a parental option allows the parents to request intervention or to transfer to a school that will foster success for their child. The Effective School Correlates also include the importance of a positive school climate to promote student achievement.

Teachers' Expectations and Sense of Responsibility

Teachers play a crucial role in creating an environment conducive to student success. Not only must they be knowledgeable in their area, their attitudes can make or break children's aspirations. Reyes et al. found high teacher expectations and a universal sense of responsibility for the success of all students to be a common factor in high performing schools in Texas. The importance of teachers' expectations for student learning and their sense of responsibility for student success were also noted by other researchers such as Rumberger and Palardy (2005). Brantlinger (2003) added that a strong correlation existed between teachers' expectations of their students and student performance (as cited in Rumberger & Palardy (2005). This is a message that must be

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sent to educators, because of their influence on children and their success in school. Scheurich (2001) explains that children of color are presently in a gloomy situation where educational success is concerned. Scheurich writes:

> Let's be honest, no matter how uncomfortable it might make us. Although the nature of racial prejudice has changed, and it is rarely public and overt, extensive evidence, data, and research clearly indicate that children of color do not get an equitable chance to be successful in school. We educators can say that we are "color blind," that we treat all children equally and we can repeatedly blame factors external to education—parents, student attitudes, neighborhoods, home cultures and languages, and so on—for our failure to do better with children of color. (p. 323)

He points to the high number of minority children in special education programs and to the small numbers that are chosen to participate in honors and in higher level courses which lead to college preparation. Scheurich asserts that not the students' intelligence, but the educator's application of his/her own views about the students' values, beliefs, and other facets of his culture are what lead to the tracking of students in this manner. He comments on the high numbers of Hispanics who are forced out of the system due to their behavioral problems, when no consideration is given to the possibility of the friction stemming from teachers' own prejudices or biases.

Finally, he examines the issues of honors classes and tracking, another variable affected by poverty. He notes that White middle-class students usually make up the largest percentage of Gifted and Talented (G/T) and honors programs, yet poor children of color are relegated to the "slow" track, where they remain throughout their educational years. Statistically, 5-10 % of all students should qualify for the honors track, without regard to race and economic status. This means 5-10% of African American, 5-10% of Hispanics, and 5-10% of Whites should comprise these two programs. Where does the

discrepancy arise? The students that are tracked as successful since kindergarten and first

grade continue to be guided toward the college prep courses. Those who need the most

assistance are frowned upon because of the time required to catch up with the rest of the

class, despite the challenges presented by a language barrier or by having different "basic

need" priorities.   This is where the educator must put aside his/her prejudices and act as a

true educator. The educator must provide all children the maximum opportunity to shine

and to develop a deep sense of self-worth and of success.

The remaining correlates, a clear and focused mission, the opportunity to learn,

time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress, strong instructional leadership, and

a positive and strong relationship between the school and the home, all contribute to the

school's accountability for each student's performance.

Teacher Credentials

The availability of certified teachers and effective programs for teacher

preparation are crucial to at-risk student success (Menken & Holmes, 2000). Yet, less

qualified teachers are more likely to be found in high minority or economically

disadvantaged schools (Valverde & Scribner, 2001). Valencia (2000) states:

> . . . non-certified teachers are more likely to be found in schools with lower TAAS
> scores. Given these findings, it is my conclusion that there is a connection
> between teacher certification status and students' TAAS performance. For
> African-American and Mexican-American students, this linkage works against
> them. (p. 454)

Not all research, however, has produced a positive correlation between teacher

credentials and student achievement. Boyd, Goldhaber, Lankford, & Wychoff (2007)

concluded that teacher certification and preparation produced small positive effects in

student achievement and that the net effects were negligible based on their study comparing programs and performance results from various states. They found that even teacher experience does not produce a large difference in student achievement.

That many Hispanic students are also Second Language Learners of English is an additional complication (Gersten & Jimenez, 1998). Bets, Zau, & Rice (2003) studied a large group of schools in the San Diego district. They concluded that being a second language learner and being economically disadvantaged were factors causing most of the achievement gap for Hispanics. Federal legislation now measures achievement growth of LEP students as part of the accountability system. The employment of certified bilingual and ESL teachers can only help these LEP students. Legislators' response to the lack of properly prepared teachers is to require that Title I schoolteachers be properly certified before being hired. Their goal is that all schools with high percentages of minority and economically disadvantaged students be staffed with certified teachers in all classrooms. Interestingly, recent research shows that the level of teacher credentials is negligibly correlated to student achievement in elementary schools, but much more positively correlated to performance at the middle and high school level, especially in mathematics (Bets, Zau, & Rice, 2003). Bets et al. (2003) added that their research found that teacher experience followed the same pattern of effect and that student achievement of economically disadvantaged students and LEP students showed the largest gains from one year to the next, in spite of receiving instruction from less experienced teachers.

Instructional Practices

In spite of legislative attempts to eliminate achievement gaps among all student groups by requiring the use of best practices and research-based programs, literature indicates the continued variance in the achievement of students from different ethnicities, races, and socioeconomic groups (Jacobson et al., 2002; Fuller, 2001; Ream, 2001; Skrla, 2001). The use of effective teaching practices is an element of being properly prepared to meet the needs of a diverse population, yet it is another obstacle toward achievement for Hispanic students. The use of whole group instruction, with the teacher as the decision-maker in control of all learning and with the student as the passive listener, is still the most commonly practiced delivery of instruction, but is not what research shows to work for Hispanics. Waxman, Huang, & Padron (1995) name this type of instruction a "pedagogy of poverty" because of its perpetuation of low level skills and uninvolved students. They noted that their study's observations showed little interaction between the teachers and the students or amongst the students themselves and that group activities were used sparingly. Observations in math and science classrooms revealed the same results. To provide alternatives to the use of inappropriate instructional practices, various researchers have published their own lists of instructional practices which they found to be effective in improving Hispanic academic success (Barton, 2004; Kober, 2001; Padron, Waxman, and Rivera, 2002).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Padron et al. (2002) started their list of best practices with the use of "culturally-responsive teaching", which they explained as the introduction of students' issues and concerns into the school's curriculum, in agreement with Cummins' (2000) and

Gonzalez' (1996) suggestion of the same instructional practice. Padron et al. (2002) referred to previous findings by Peregoy & Boyle (2000) that this strategy would increase the comfort level for Hispanic students, and added that using culturally-responsive teaching would increase the students' retention of the material presented.

Cooperative Learning

Another strategy suggested by Padron et al. (2002) was cooperative learning, which incorporates the use of small heterogeneous student groups during instruction to facilitate discussion and higher order thinking. They believe that cooperative learning is especially significant for Hispanic students who lack the social skills necessary for academic success due to an economically disadvantaged home environment. Various skills the students acquire as a result of this practice include the development of real life skills, such as using context to find meaning and developing their level of English language proficiency (Christian, 1995).

Instructional Conversations

The third strategy to increase the academic performance of Hispanics was the use of instructional conversations, which consist of dialogue between the teacher and the student to elaborate on the topics of classroom instruction. The authors refer to Tharp et al. (2000) to explain that the student him/herself initiates this type of conversation, and it improves the students' language development and their ability to reason at higher cognitive levels.

Cognitively Guided Instruction

Cognitively guided instruction is the fourth activity suggested to improve Hispanic student performance. This practice uses modeling of the thinking process required to work through a mathematics problem or a reading selection. Direct instruction is provided in cognitive thinking to use for self-monitoring of student acquisition of knowledge. Other proponents of teaching cognitive strategies were Chamot & O'Malley (1994) in their CALLA approach to teaching.

Training on Effective Practices

Padron et al. (2002) suggested that incorporating literature on effective practices into campus staff development would lead teachers to alter their instruction to maximize Hispanic student achievement. Long-term staff development, complete with follow-up training and with discussions of progress, were suggestions offered by teachers in their study. Other requests from participants in their study were for more information on how to teach Hispanic students, for more time for training and planning, and for more collaborative opportunities with colleagues (Padron et al., 2002). Lee and Oxelson (2006) maintained that teachers who did not receive training on students with languages other than English expressed negative attitudes or were indifferent toward the heritage of the students' language, thereby resisting its use to improve student achievement.

Technology Enriched Instruction

The last strategy in these authors' brief was the use of technology-enriched instruction. The authors believe using picture cues, web-based libraries, multidimensional presentations, and allowing student-driven acquisition of knowledge

will prove rewarding to the students and help them make real-life connections to their classroom content (Bermudez & Palumbo, 1994; Means & Olson, 1994 in Padron et al., 2002). Cooper et al. added their support to this strategy, elaborating that social injustice and inequity are worsened with the advent of new technology such as computers because the middle class students have the advantage in this area, since they can afford the latest technology available, whereas minorities, such as Hispanics may sometimes not even have a phone, limiting their level of communication.

Teaching to the Learning Styles of Hispanics

The Hispanic culture teaches obedience and following a hierarchical model of power, translating to the recognition of the teacher as the person in charge of their learning, rather than the students being responsible for their own learning. Hispanic children must accommodate their learning to the school setting. Laosa (1980) found that Hispanic mothers teach very differently at home compared to classroom instruction, making it difficult for their children to be academically successful upon entering school. Griggs and Dunn (1996) noted that Hispanic students tend to prefer: 1) a cool environment, 2) field dependent instruction, 3) learning in the morning hours, 4) frequent reassurance of success for their work, 5) working in groups, 6) modeling, and 7) structure. Kagan, Moore, and Bredekamp (1995) state that a student's success for learning can be affected by the way that student approaches situations presented to him. Hispanic children have lower percentages in these skills of staying focused on their activities, on being eager to learn, and in paying attention to a speaker (NCES, 2003). The result is the continuation of a pattern of low achievement, unless the teacher

recognizes the need for structure and directive instruction until the child reaches success and is motivated to initiate his own learning, when he can be guided into a constructivist setting.

Direct Instruction vs. Constructivism

  Direct instruction. The direct instruction teaching method is based on B.F. Skinner's behaviorist theories endorsing modification of behavior that is observable through the use of rewards. Other theorists connected to this method are R.F. Mager, R.M. Gagne, and M.D. Merrill. This teacher-centered model breaks down objectives or skills into small tasks which are monitored and rewarded by the teacher. The teacher is in control of the learning and must know the material well in order to plan the steps based on what her students are capable of understanding. A familiar lesson planning device that follows the direct instruction model is the Madeline Hunter lesson planning process. The basic steps are: 1) the teacher uses a focus to grab the students' attention and explains the objective to be learned; 2) the teacher models how to implement a skill or process; 3) the teacher monitors and corrects or re-teaches during guided practice; and 4) the students work on their own on independent practice, which is graded by the teacher. The reinforcement for completing the tasks correctly comes from verbal praise and a good grade.

  Price, Mayfield, McFadden, and Marsh (2001) provided some pros and cons in their book on instruction for inclusive classrooms. The authors state that among the negative remarks from critics of direct instruction are that "it emphasizes memorization and computation rather than conceptual development; it teaches isolated skills through

mindless repetition, is decontextualized, and has no connection to students' lives." Price et al. add that constructivists criticize the idea that learning can be broken down into incrementally small skills which must be mastered before attempting further learning. Students are looked upon as passive recipients of knowledge.

Price et al. added that the advantages to direct instruction include that the teacher is able to focus on those who need help immediately and help them reach mastery. The teacher is also able to present much needed information at the beginning of the lesson to help the students understand the concept by the time they actually start practicing. Finally, direct instruction is based on research which has been documented in various management areas and in lesson planning.

Constructivism. Constructivism is based on research by Jerome Bruner and other cognitive scientists such as Vygotsky, Dewey, and Piaget. The principle behind constructivism is that it is learner-centered. Students construct new knowledge by building on previous knowledge. The role of the teacher is to facilitate the learning by providing the necessary materials and curriculum at a level understandable by the students. The students, however, develop their own ideas, hypotheses, and methods for investigation of problems or objectives presented to them. Dialogue in the form of Socratic learning should be a component of the engagement of the students. The expected result is the development of concepts at high levels of understanding.

One comparative study of teacher-centered learning (direct instruction) versus student-centered learning (constructivism) indicated that the students in the constructivist classrooms had more growth in process skills. The students in these classrooms also

reached higher levels of understanding in science. In addition, the students were more independent compared to their counterparts in the direct instruction classroom who became more teacher-dependent to complete their work (Shymansky & Matthews, 2003). A study in Sweden found that the various components of constructivism were "conducive to effective preparation of workers and citizens for the post-industrial economy and to live in a participatory democracy." (Nordgren, 2006)

Finally, a study by the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning in Colorado reviewed fifteen studies which were classified as either behaviorist or constructivist. Their findings were inconclusive as to which teaching method produced the better results in the students' learning. Some of the studies produced better results for the explicit teaching of concepts and skills and others showed better gains for the cognitive-based learning of constructivism.

Best Practice Framework

The National Coalition for Educational Accountability developed its own Best Practice Framework, which listed strategies that they found necessary to produce high academic success. The framework is divided into five categories: 1) Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment, 2) Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data, 3) Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements, 4) Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building, and 5) Curriculum and Academic Goals. Each category is then divided into three columns—district, campus, and classroom-- designating the level of implementation for the specific practices. Each category also has surveys, which may be used by each of the three entities to conduct a self-evaluation. The practices, identified

after studying almost 500 schools over a period of more than five years, are "the broad principles of a school system's work that are most directly related to teaching and learning"(National Coalition for Educational Advancement, 2006).

At the classroom level, the five components of the NCEA Best Practice Framework are:

1) Ensure teaching content is based on specified academic objectives,

2) Collaborate in grade/subject level teams focused on student work,

3) Use scientifically based/evidence-based programs, practices, and arrangements,

4) Monitor student learning, and

5) Recognize, intervene, or adjust based on student performance.

Various questions are presented under each category to determine the level of implementation of activities associated with each component. By using the survey to understand the current status of implementation, a classroom teacher can use the results of the survey to request assistance or staff development in the areas noted to be low. An administrator can aggregate the results for all classroom teachers and use the results to plan staff development necessary to move the classrooms toward the high-performance goal. Table 2.3, taken from NCEA's website, depicts the Framework and the sections and levels of implementation for its best practices. The chart is read from the bottom up to follow a natural progression from setting goals by an organization to adjusting practices for optimal student performance.

Table 2.3

NCEA's Best Practice Framework

	District	Campus	Classroom
Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment	Recognize, intervene, or adjust based on school performance	Recognize, intervene, or adjust based on teacher and student performance	Recognize, intervene, or adjust based on student performance
Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data	Develop student assessment and data monitoring systems to monitor school performance	Monitor teacher performance and student learning	Monitor student learning
Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements	Provide scientifically based/ evidence-based instructional programs	Ensure the use of scientifically based/ evidence-based programs, practices, and arrangements in every classroom	Use scientifically based/ evidence-based programs, practices, and arrangements
Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building	Provide strong instructional leaders, highly qualified teachers, and aligned professional development	Select, develop, and allocate staff based on student learning	Collaborate in grade/subject level teams focused on student work
Curriculum and Academic Goals	Define and unpack clear and specific academic objectives by grade and subject	Center school plan on explicit improvement of specific academic objectives	Ensure teaching content is based on specified academic objectives
	District	Campus	Classroom

Source: Just for the Kids website. Best Practice Framework. Retrieved from:
http://www.just4kids.org/en/research_policy/best_practices/classroom_capacity_building.cfm
*Table is read from the bottom up.

Research-Based Programs

In addition to individual strategies, Padron et al. (2002) identify a few instructional programs already proven effective in improving Hispanic academic achievement. Before selecting the programs, the authors set criteria for their consideration. That criteria state that: 1) a classroom establish a sense of community; 2) all stakeholders be empowered in the classroom; and 3) the programs be based on goals developed by the targeted group and the program developers. These elements are important in incorporating the NCLB guidelines for site-based decision-making at schools, sustenance of high standards, and empowerment of all stakeholders of the educational system.

The programs that met the predetermined three criteria were Success for All and Reading Recovery. Success for All incorporates twenty-minute blocks of Reading instruction by certified teachers, with the expectation that all students will be on grade level in reading by third grade. The program requires buy-in from at least 80% of the staff before the program developers will consent to its use on a campus. Intense parental involvement is a component of the program, in addition to frequent assessments for placement and acceleration. Success for All has been proven effective with minority groups and with English language learners (Lockwood, 2001; Slavin & Madden, 2001).

Reading Recovery, the second elementary program chosen for its consistent results, focuses on first grade students at the bottom percentile of reading success (Pinnell, 1989). Students are taught by reading specialists trained in this program and will stay in the program for twelve to twenty weeks, depending on how quickly they achieve grade level status in their reading. Leveled books and intense, individualized

instruction are practiced. The authors noted that its effectiveness has been documented by Fashola, Slavin, Calderon, & Duran (2001).

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement remains a notable factor in student performance, although it is not entirely a school environment issue. In accordance with NCLB's requirement that parents and the community be involved in the campus decision-making, it is important to review the literature on that topic. Research overwhelmingly cites the importance of parental involvement to student success in school. The study of high achieving Texas schools by the Washington School Research Center (2003) found that the educators at those schools stressed the importance of parents knowing their students' "academic expectations, the grading system, behavior guidelines, and the instructional program" (p. 19). The results in the schools' performance provided evidence that this type of parental involvement worked.

Not all studies, however, conclude that parental involvement correlates positively to student achievement. Hallinger and Heck (1996) reviewed 22 original studies, looking for a relationship between parental involvement and student performance. The pair concluded that of the 22 studies, 6 revealed positive effects, 7 produced mixed effects, and 9 showed no direct effect between the two variables. Okpala, Okpala, & Smith (2001) found no statistical significance between parental involvement and instructional expenditures to student achievement. However, they added that perhaps his use of volunteer hours at school as the measure of parental involvement may have skewed the

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results. He surmised that parental involvement indicated by assistance with schoolwork at home may produce different results.

Class Size

Class size is one factor which cannot be controlled by the teacher; however its impact is well documented. Various studies, for example, the Tennessee Project STAR, the Lasting Benefits Study, and Project Challenge, have concluded that having a class size of approximately 15 students promotes larger achievement gains than one with 22 students or more. Funded by the Tennessee legislature, Project STAR was the first phase of a three-part study. The Lasting Benefits Study provided the second phase, and Project Challenge finished off the studies as the third phase of investigating the effects of small class size on student achievement.

Project STAR, a well designed study of 79 elementary schools in Tennessee spanning four years from 1985 to 1989, examined the achievement of three groups of students who were randomly assigned to three types of classrooms. Small classroom groups were limited to 13 to 17 students and one teacher. Regular classrooms designation meant 22 to 26 students and one teacher. Regular-with-an-aide classrooms enrolled 22 to 26 students and were instructed by a teacher with a fulltime aide. The results of the study were impressive. The students in the small classrooms outperformed all other groups in the study. The longer a student was in a small class size classroom, the larger the difference in the achievement compared to the other two study groups.

The Lasting Benefits Study followed the same group of students into high school and found that the small class size students were still outperforming the other two student

groups of the study. It is important to note that the initial study was only conducted with students in Kinder through third grade, but the effects lasted even to their high school years.

Project Challenge took the 17 most poverty stricken schools and provided them with funding to implement small size classrooms in Kinder through third grade. The findings showed similar results to the Project STAR results. The students' achievement scores improved the school's academic rating significantly, leading to researchers lauding the benefits of small class size for students in the early childhood grade levels.

Segregation by Language and Ethnicity

An unspoken problem encountered by Hispanic and LEP students is segregation by ethnicity and language (Laosa, 2001). The courts have attempted to rectify unequal treatment of students due to race through legislation recognizing that separate was not equal. Laosa (2001) explains that the courts have now recognized Hispanics as a class of its own and that schools serving predominantly Hispanic students may be considered segregated. Laosa conducted a study of Puerto Rican children who spoke Spanish. He tracked their enrollment to determine the conditions of the schools that served the students. He concluded that segregation by ethnicity and language still occurs and brings with it additional factors that impede student success and English proficiency. He wrote,

> The correlations show that separate is not equal. School segregation by race/ethnicity and language is closely associated with school segregation by poverty and by parental education. Furthermore, racial/ethnic and linguistic segregation are associated with crowded schools. A focal child in a school with a relatively high concentration of pupils who are Hispanic/Latino or native speakers of Spanish is more likely to be in a school with a high concentration of pupils

from economically impoverished and poorly educated families, and a crowded school located in a poor inner-city area.

He added that the segregation took away the students' opportunity to interact with children of other ethnicities, which would help them be more successful in similar societal situations later in their adult lives.

Empowerment

A final factor in the success of Hispanic and LEP students is their empowerment in the school system. Cummins, in Weis and Fine (1993) identifies four areas of interaction that affect student empowerment. The four areas are:

> . . . (1) minority students' language and culture are incorporated into the school program; (2) minority community participation is encouraged as an integral component of children's education; (3) the pedagogy promotes intrinsic motivation on the part of students to use language actively in order to generate their own knowledge; and (4) professionals involved in assessment become advocates for minority students rather than legitimizing the location of the "problem" in the students. (p. 104)

Although a teacher cannot control external factors such as parental involvement or class size, the educator has critical input in providing an environment conducive to learning and empowerment, in consistently using sound best practices, in advocating research-based programs, and in ensuring appropriate preparation for her profession through proper certification and staff development appropriate for the student populations being served.

Valdes (1996) and Cummins (2000) believe that a social group's success in a school is determined by their view of their status in that organization. Additionally, Cummins believes in the distribution of power among the various stakeholders of a

campus, such as the staff, the parents, the students, and members of the community. He also proposes the use of the students' languages and culture in the school curriculum and the inclusion of parents and of community members in the decision-making of the school, along with changing teaching practices and assessment to qualify what students can do, rather than what they cannot do. Both Valdes and Cummins agree that minorities must be included in the decision-making process. Minorities have not been able to join in the dialogue due to the lack of power, much of which comes simply by being allowed access to the discussion at all. The effects of such a partnership can be found in studies such as Griffith's (1996) study of parental involvement, empowerment, and school traits of 42 schools. Griffith found that parental involvement, coupled with empowerment created the largest variance in student achievement, in contrast to a negligible effect from school variables. Hispanic parents can and will contribute to their children's success if given the opportunity as stakeholders in the schools.

Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept

Another factor, and one studied here, is the need for self-evaluation of schools to improve their effectiveness in maximizing student achievement. One means to achieve this feat is through the Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept. The U.S. Department of Defense promotes the Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept, recognizing it as a business improvement tool. Its publication, *Best Practices and Benchmarking—Making Worthwhile Comparisons* (2002) states:

> A best practice is a business function, process, or system that is considered superior to all other known methods. A documented strategy and approach used by the most respected, competitive, and profitable organizations, a best practice is

widely known to improve performance and efficiency in a specific area. Successfully identifying and applying best practices can save money, eliminate redundancy, and enhance organizational effectiveness (p.1).

The author of the article adds that a review of an organization is necessary when an outside source has already recognized the existence of a problem, when there are similar issues occurring in other organizations, and when those organizations are showing success with their practices. A problem has been recognized by TEA at the acceptable campuses as evidenced by the accountability school ratings. The exemplary campuses, on the other hand, are showing success with their practices.

A benchmark is defined by the article as "a standard of performance". A business or agency can look for "gold standards" set by other similar units, identify the practices used to perform at that level, then implement them within their own organization to maximize their own performance. Benchmarking incorporates knowing where one's organization stands in comparison to high performing units, and where it wants to rank in its industry. The gold standard in this research is set by the two exemplary-rated schools in this study. It is the desire of the two acceptable campuses to join the ranks of the exemplary elite. To reach the gold standard, an institution is encouraged to use the following process:

- **Understand the government process you want to improve.**
  Choosing an optimal benchmarking partner requires a deep understanding of the process being studied and of the benchmarking process itself. By thoroughly grasping the process you are reviewing, you establish a reliable baseline of comparison. Your interview questions will have more focus this way, and you also will feel confident that you have selected appropriate comparison companies or organizations. A great way to facilitate data gathering is by discussing the process in detail with agency officials and then depicting the process in a flowchart.

- **Research to plan the review.**
  Before selecting comparison organizations, you should research not only the organizations themselves, but also current industry trends and developments. There are many avenues of research at your disposal:

    o literature—government documents, newsletters, and previously published performance reports;

    o internet and library searches; and

    o conversations, surveys, or interviews with consultants, academics, and industry experts (this includes watchdog organizations, professional associations, oversight commissions, etc.)

- **Select appropriate organizations.**
  Your research should yield a list of best practice organizations. Now you must determine how many and which ones to visit. Experts suggest you keep the list to a manageable number, which can be as low as five. You will need to establish your own selection criteria. For instance, if you decided to benchmark your organization's snow removal process, you might determine that hilly terrain is a significant criterion in selecting a best practices partner. If you were going to benchmark DoD's inventory system, you might decide that geographical diversity is an essential evaluation criterion. In any case, what is most important is that you find companies that are considered by experts to be among the best at the process you are reviewing.

- **Collect data from selected organizations.**
  Develop a standard list of questions that will structure the interview process and guide your discussions. This list may need to be revised after you obtain feedback from the first interview. Remember, your questions should be geared to discovering common practices and characteristics among the organizations you have identified for benchmarking. Site visits are often a part of this process, and can give you first-hand opportunities to observe a process in action. This is where synergy between organizations can occur—a mutual sharing of ideas and innovations.

- **Identify barriers to change.**
  With your solid list of best practices in hand, you are almost ready to make your recommendations, but first you should identify the barriers to implementation within your organization, whether real or perceived. Some of these barriers may be beyond your ability to control, such as regulatory and statutory requirements, where as others may be more deep-seated, residing within the organizational culture itself. You should be aware of some of the difficulties these barriers may pose to implementation. You should also consider the impact certain changes may have on the organization itself. What will be the effect of a particular recommendation on the agency's ability to deliver a service?

- **Make recommendations for change constructive and convincing.**
  It is recommended that you give your agency a "basket of ideas" from which to choose. Flexibility should be built into the recommendations, as your agency will need to adapt them to its unique needs and functions. It also helps to outline the benefits as well as the key steps that should be taken in order for implementation to be successful. A pilot project can be an excellent way for your agency to work through any obstacles or concerns, and to develop reliable cost estimates for full implementation. Finally, it is important to remember that in any benchmarking process you must ensure that your organization is in a position—both technically and psychologically—to implement change recommendations. (p. 5-6)

This Best Practice and Benchmark framework is the qualitative methodology used for this study.

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

Because the year 2005 was the first year the "panel recommendation" level of performance was implemented to determine student proficiency on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, research is lacking in the area of what "best practices" are helping predominantly economically disadvantaged Hispanic and LEP elementary campuses in Texas achieve "exemplary" status.. Although previous studies have been conducted on high-performing campuses and districts based on TAAS results, the rigor of the new TAKS test has decreased the number of schools reaching exemplary status to a mere handful.

Current legislation demands high academic achievement for all student groups and uses accountability, flexibility with funds, research-based practices, and parental choice to ensure elimination of the achievement gap. Perhaps the most visible means of verifying the importance of consistent use of best practices is by collecting data, by conducting observations and interviews, and by finding the common practices of high-

performing schools. The Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept blends well with this methodology. Since the number of Hispanic and LEP students is expected to increase substantially by the year 2040, it is imperative that administrators, policymakers, and educators look for those best practices that are common to the high-performing campuses.

The two high-performing schools in this study are meeting high standards of performance as evidenced by their exemplary rating. This study will use the Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept to try to identify which best practices, if any, are being used by the high-performing campuses, based on NCEA's Best Practice Framework and a list of research based practices from this literature, including those identified by Padron, Waxman, and Rivera (2002) and Reyes, Scribner, and Paredes-Scribner (1999). The study will identify those best practices to encourage their use by other schools with high numbers of Hispanic LEP and economically disadvantaged students. It is hoped that the results will provide other students in schools with similar demographics the opportunity to reach a high level of academic achievement. Only then can the achievement gap be truly eliminated for Hispanic LEP and economically disadvantaged students.

Chapter 3: Methodology

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, the sampling, and the data collection techniques used in studying the best practices used by four schools, two high performing and two average-performing, with high percentages of Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and Limited English Proficient students. Following the Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept, disaggregation of student performance data was used to identify the schools achieving at high levels of performance. A qualitative case study of the four schools was warranted to examine the factors possibly associated with the high academic performance. Ritchie & Lewis (2003) define qualitative research as "conducting naturalistic inquiry in real-world rather than experimental or manipulated settings (p. 4)" and that it allows for a "flexible research strategy, (p. 4)" making it quite appropriate for this study. Additionally, the use of a case study brings the researcher into "immersion in the setting and rests on both the researchers' and the participants' world views" (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 61). Through a case study, one can gather in depth and complex information about the unit of study of the selected schools (Patton, 2002). By looking at the commonalities and the differences, this researcher expects to generalize the positive findings from the high performing schools.

The use of quantitative data in this research was necessary in order to disaggregate and to compare the collected data with other campuses' data, to complete the initial identification of the units, and to determine whether the differences among the campuses were statistically significant. In order to "address research questions that

require explanation or understanding of social phenomena and their contexts. . .and to explore issues that hold some complexity and to study processes that occur over time" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003), the major thrust of this investigation was achieved through qualitative inquiry.

In conducting research it is sometimes necessary to "examine both the number and the nature of the same phenomenon. . . Other times the phenomenon is too complex or delicate to be captured fully in statistical enquiry and qualitative research is needed alongside to provide the detail or understanding" (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 41). Some researchers suggest a "toolkit" approach, or a "choose what you need based on your research question" approach (Ritchie & Lewis, p. 15; Seale, 1999). In this report, the qualitative data in the form of survey results provided the initial story of the report and additional qualitative data, in the form of interviews and observations, supported it. This researcher chose to triangulate data from interviews, observations, and a survey to produce a more complete picture of the examined phenomena. Triangulation of data is described as the process of collecting various sources of data to improve the trustworthiness of the data itself (Glesne, 1999).

Qualitative analysis was needed to access the respondents' varied views of reality and to present a richer picture of their combined reality once the many views were incorporated. The need for detailed information about the participants' lives through direct questioning and through observations, in addition to analysis of documents, also rendered the qualitative analysis necessary. The research question lent itself to this type

of investigation, with the findings being of the type resulting from this type of social research. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) state that qualitative research possesses the potential to relieve social problems by developing new or innovative solutions to social problems or by identifying strategies to overcome those problems. As such, it is termed generative and applied social research. Applied social research is widely used to investigate, to evaluate and to make recommendations of various types of policies or programs, such as the implementation of research-based practices to improve education, as required by the No Child Left Behind Act.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study was designed to uncover the best practices, if any, of two high-performing schools with high percentages of Hispanic economically disadvantaged and Limited English Proficient students. The results were compared to the practices of two acceptable-rated campuses to find which practices might be responsible for the high achievement of these student groups at the exemplary-rated campuses. The researcher uses a qualitative analysis that implements a fifty-question survey followed by structured interviews, by classroom observations, and by a review of school-related documents from the campuses themselves and from the Texas Education Agency.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Comparable School Selection

Based on the Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept framework, the original proposal encompassed the study of four exemplary campuses that are predominantly Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and high in the percentage of at-risk students. It

was the researcher's intent to look for patterns of best practices used by those four high-performing campuses to "beat the odds" thrust upon them with their student groups. The researcher planned to use the results to help her own campus, Bird's View Elementary, improve its TAKS results and rating. After careful review by the researcher's committee, the committee changed the study to the qualitative research of two of the identified exemplary-rated campuses and two campuses from the researcher's district to look for differences, if any, in the use of best practices between the two categories of schools.

Acceptable and Exemplary Campuses

The researcher chose the two acceptable campuses Victory Elementary and Bird's View Elementary from her district of employment, choosing the two campuses with an acceptable rating, with the highest percentages of Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students, and Limited English Proficient students. The two exemplary campuses, Battle Cry Elementary and All Saints Elementary were chosen through the 2005 Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) to match, as closely as possible, the student demographics, the total enrollment, the PreK-5 grade span of the acceptable campuses to maximize research conditions for the study. An exemplary rating and convenience for research were two additional criteria.

A 2005 AEIS exemplary school rating based on the TAKS was the initial criteria as 2005 was the first year the Texas implemented the panel recommendation level of proficiency as a passing rate on all tested subjects of its state assessment. Although numerous schools earned the exemplary rating that year, only five spanning grades PreK-

5 surfaced. Many elementary schools only serve students from PreK through 3rd or 4th grade, giving them an advantage over those that serve PreK through 5th grade. The scores in 5th grade, especially science scores, keep many schools from reaching recognized and exemplary ratings. Because the researcher's campus serves 5th graders and because their scores are the lowest at the campus, it was important to examine schools that performed well at that grade level, also. After reviewing the exemplary campus data, however, one exemplary campus was found to be a G/T campus and another did not reach the 500 or greater student enrollment criteria required for the study, leaving the researcher with only three choices for the study sites. The resulting exemplary sites were chosen on the convenience method—they were in the same district and within five miles from each other.

In evaluating the TAKS achievement data from the past three years, the achievement gap between Hispanic and White students overall only slightly decreased from 25% in 2004 to 23% in 2006. Although previous studies of Texas school districts have identified a small number of districts that implemented practices which reduced the achievement gap and produced high achievement on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), at the campus level only four K-5 campuses have managed to obtain an exemplary rating based on the more rigorous Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and on the 2005 panel recommendation of approximately 70% on the reading test, 68% on the math test, and 77% on the science test as the level of proficiency required to pass the test. In 2003, a student could pass the TAKS test by correctly answering only 56-60% of the test items on the reading test, 53-55% on the math test, and

60% on the science test. The Texas schools in this study have managed to foster an environment that produces high academic success for the ethnic minority and the economically disadvantaged students in their classrooms. This study is intended to evaluate and compare two of those exemplary schools' common practices, along with the practices of two schools rated acceptable to find the best practices, if any, responsible for producing the high scores.

The researcher qualified the schools' practices based on the Best Practice Framework of the National Coalition for Educational Accountability and other best practices conducive to the high achievement of Hispanic LEP students as noted in the literature. The list of practices includes findings from studies by Padron, Waxman, & Rivera (2001) and Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner (1999). Best practices served as the foundation for the survey, the interview, and the observational data collection.

Purposeful Sampling

Campuses.   This researcher aimed to identify the units of study through purposeful sampling. Quantitative data from the Texas Education Agency's Accountability Tables for the school years 2004, 2005, and 2006 proved instrumental in identification. First, all schools that received an exemplary rating from TEA in 2005 were identified, producing a list of 198 schools. Narrowed parameters were performed by applying criteria based on total enrollment of the campus, the percentage of Hispanic students, the percentage of Limited English Proficient students, and the percentage of economically disadvantaged students enrolled on each campus, in addition to requiring

that the schools serve students in grades PreKinder-5, in order to locate schools with similar student characteristics as the two acceptable campuses under study.

Using data from the Texas Education Agency, patterns in the achievement gap of the various student groups were noted and graphed. Also graphed were other components of the campus' accountability tables including the percentage of minority population, percentage of economically disadvantaged students, and percentage of student exemptions from the test. Patterns were noted to look for commonalities among the four campus' data.

Participants. The principals from the four campuses were contacted and schedules were developed to address all bilingual and ESL teachers on the campuses. The purpose, design, and methodology of the study were presented to the bilingual/ESL staff to request volunteer participants. Fifteen participants were expected from each campus, thirty from each campus group, for a total of sixty for the entire study. Because bilingual/ESL students can only be served by bilingual/ESL teachers, and because the researcher's district serves bilingual students in completely separate settings from regular education students, a truly representative sample of the bilingual/ESL program practices would include only bilingual and ESL teachers. An important component to this study is investigating the successful exit of LEP students into the English curriculum.

Data Collection

Surveys. The survey was field tested by various educators to ensure it served the purpose intended. Once the volunteers were obtained, schedules were developed for the administration of the survey for bilingual/ESL teachers developed by Dr. Omar Lopez

based on the NCEA's Best Practice Framework. Responses were tallied and averaged by each of the five sections of the Framework to look for differences in the frequency and consistency of implementation of the selected practices. After the survey responses were summed and graphed by campus group, the interview questions were revised to elaborate on the findings of the surveys and on the research questions. Schedules were set for the observations and the interviews. Four visits were scheduled for each campus to collect data and review documents.

The fifty-question survey produced initial responses for the qualitative research to answer the questions:

1) Which, if any, instructional practices are present in the exemplary-rated campuses with high numbers of Hispanic LEP students compared to acceptable-rated campuses with the same type of student populations? and,

2) Are educators aware of and modifying their instructional practices to be more aligned with proven research-based practices?

The results of the surveys from the two exemplary campuses were compared with the responses from the acceptable schools. The researcher looked for themes across the responses and used triangulation of data to provide a clearer, more accurate picture of those practices possibly linked with high academic achievement. Triangulation of data is described as the process of collecting various sources of data to improve the trustworthiness of the data itself (Glesne, 1999).

Interviews. Interviews were conducted to prompt for elaboration to the survey results. The following questions were used for that task.

1) When and how do bilingual and ESL teachers meet to discuss how to deliver specific objectives or concepts to students?

2) How do bilingual and ESL teachers share collective responsibility for the success or the failure of students in all classrooms?

3) What curricular and instructional issues are discussed at your bilingual and ESL meetings and how are the topics chosen?

4) How and when do bilingual and ESL teachers gather with their teams to study student work?

5) How do bilingual and ESL teachers incorporate the use of the students' first language into instruction?

6) How do bilingual and ESL teachers ensure that they provide students the opportunity to master prerequisite skills before moving on to a more complex concept or application?

7) Name and explain some "best practices" bilingual and ESL teachers use to ensure all students are learning. How did you decide to use those practices? (Ex. cooperative learning, technology-enriched instruction, culturally responsive teaching, cognitively-guided instruction, specific strategies)

8) How do you ensure that you are knowledgeable on strategies that have been proven to work with your student population?

9) What, in your opinion as a bilingual and ESL teacher, is the most important reason that the students at this campus achieve at high levels of success on the TAKS?

10) If you, as a bilingual and ESL teacher, could retain only one current method to help the students at your campus reach high achievement, what would you keep?

Patton (2002) identified interviews as detailed descriptions evidenced by statements linked to an individual's persona. In that context, loosely structured interviews were conducted both with individuals and in focus group settings. Participants listened to each other's responses and could elaborate on those responses when interviewed in groups, resulting in more detailed and duplicated data. Administrators were interviewed individually due to the logistics of their schedules and of their geographic locations.

Best practice observation checklist. The participants' classrooms were observed and documentation of best practices as identified in literature was tallied. The results of the checklists were compared to the results of the surveys. The survey questions that showed marked differences were noted and subsequently compared to the themes found in the interview responses.

Document analysis. Following Patton's (2002) strategies for data collection, documents provided insight into the processes of a unit and to the origin of those processes; therefore records and documents required analysis. By examining documents,

more evidence was gathered to reinforce or to negate the information amassed from the interviews and from the surveys.

Triangulation of data. What resulted was purposeful data collection for triangulation of data. Personal interviews, surveys, observations, and examination of documents all helped achieve a complementary spectrum of techniques and therefore, triangulation.

SUMMARY

Based on the Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept the researcher used a qualitative approach to answer the research questions of the study. Data from the Texas AEIS tables was used to select the four campuses to be studied. The qualitative research was achieved by interviewing volunteer bilingual and ESL professionals from the selected campuses and asking for their responses to a fifty-question survey, followed by interviews to elicit elaboration of their survey responses and elaboration on the research questions. The interviews were conducted both individually and in focus groups and lasted approximately one hour. Observations of classrooms and documents also provided data for evaluation. The collection and analysis of all components of the study provided the basis for generalizations about "best practices" used to achieve high academic performance for Hispanics and Limited English Proficient students. The researcher collected all data. Survey and interview responses from the participants were coded to create themes and to serve as generalizations for the development of the research presentation (Emerson et al., 1995). Probing questions were used to elicit elaboration from the participants of the study. Field notes were reviewed and combined based on

themes, then analyzed for incorporation into the findings of the study. Triangulation of data was used to produce a more accurate description of the findings. Member checks were used to verify the accuracy of the data collected. Member checks consisted of verifying dialogue with the corresponding participants, and allowing for further clarification immediately after the interviews, since most dialogue was provided in a focus group setting. The findings and conclusions were based on the compendium of data.

Chapter 4: Background for the Study

CONTEXT

Qualitative data from various sources can provide rich detail to the descriptions of the units under study. Appendices B-1 through B-5, which can be referenced in the appendices section of this paper, use Census 2000 data to provide a glimpse of the characteristics of the communities surrounding and being served by these four Texas schools.

Selected Economic Characteristics

The lack of financial resources contributes to a myriad of obstacles for students. Reviewing those conditions in the communities serves to better understand the accomplishments of the schools. Table 4.1 below reveals that the higher levels of education and higher paying jobs acquired by the residents of the Victory Elementary community members produced the highest income of the four campus areas. The median family income for VE was $61,135. The median income at the three remaining campuses was approximately half of that. The low incomes in the South Texas communities produced the highest percentages of families and female headed households in the "below poverty" economic level. Economic data is presented in Appendix B-4.

Table 4.1 also reveals that a much higher percentage of the population was in the labor force at the Central Texas locations with 80% at Victory Elementary and 64% at Bird's View Elementary compared to 40% and 55% at the two South Texas communities. A higher percentage of the workforce was also actually employed at the Central Texas areas, producing lower unemployment rates at those locations. Victory Elementary's data

differs from the other three campuses' data in the occupations of its residents, with management and professional level occupations accounting for the highest percentage of jobs followed by sales and office jobs. Sales and office positions comprise the largest percentage of jobs in the three remaining neighborhoods under study. Service occupations are prominent in three of the four campuses, but account for the lowest category at Victory Elementary. The industries of choice in the Battle Cry and All Saints Elementary communities are education, health, and social services, in contrast to manufacturing, which is the highest provider of jobs in the Victory and Bird's View Elementary vicinity.

Table 4.1

Selected Economic Characteristics for the Four Communities Under Study

Schools	Battle Cry	All Saints	Victory	Bird'sView
Employment Status				
Population 16 years and over				
% In Labor Force	40.3	55.2	79.7	63.9
% Not in Labor Force	59.7	44.8	20.3	36.1
% Employed	35.1	48.9	76.9	61.5
% Unemployed	5.3	6.2	2.6	2.5
Females 16 and >				
% In Labor Force	33.6	41.0	73.2	56.0
% Employed	29.3	36.9	70.6	53.1
Selected Occupations				
% Mgmt, Prof'l, and related	15.2	12.4	41.2	22.3
% Service Occupations	20.9	19.3	7.7	15.7
% Sales and Office	24.4	27.2	30.7	30.0
% Const'n, extract'n, and maint.	14.1	18.5	9.9	14.2
% Prod'n, transpt'n, mat'l moving	18.4	17.3	10.6	17.9
Industries				
% Educt'n, health, soc.services	21.8	20.5	16.5	14.0
% Retail Trade	16.2	12.9	11.2	15.8
% Arts, Entertainm't, recreation, Accommodation, food services	10.4	7.2	5.6	11.3
% Manufacturing	8.0	8.2	22.3	20.2
% Construction	7.9	13.4	6.3	14.0
% Public Administration	5.3	2.1	8.4	3.8
% Finance, insurance, rent/lease	2.5	4.0	8.2	1.8
Income by Household				
Median (dollars)	23,513	20,971	61,135	36,447
Median male (dollars	19,375	17,622	41,161	30,165
Median female (dollars)	14,702	14,375	30,853	24,550
Poverty Status (below poverty level)				
% Families	29.5	36.5	1.4	10.0
% Female householder, no husband	52.9	39.1	12.1	14.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 American FactFinder File DP3.

Selected Social Characteristics

In Table 4.2 noted below, the social characteristics reported by the residents showed both similarities and differences among the campuses. For example, a large difference appeared between the educational level of the community members surrounding the exemplary campuses and those near the acceptable campuses, with the acceptable-performing campuses showing much higher percentages of residents with a high school or college degree. Language was another variable noted, with Spanish as a first language for numerous families, ranging from 75% to 96% by the high performing campus families to approximately 16% to 37% at the acceptable campuses. The statistics added that approximately two-thirds of the children in the South Texas communities had resided in their present homes since 1995, while only 25-40% of the Central Texas children maintained that stability. A similarity surfaced in the role of grandparents as caregivers throughout the campuses, although with a more pronounced practice of this responsibility in the acceptable campus neighborhoods. Grandparents can be a support structure for families when both parents work.

Table 4.2

Selected Social Characteristics for the Four Communities Under Study

	Battle Cry	All Saints	Victory	Bird'sView
School Enrollment				
Population 3 years and over, enrolled				
%Nursery/Preschool	6.3	6.3	11.2	1.3
% Kindergarten	9.7	6.1	6.0	4.7
% Grades 1-8	47.6	49.5	45.5	62.2
% Grades 9-12	22.8	28.6	20.5	18.1
% College or >	13.6	9.6	16.8	13.8
Educational Attainment				
Population 25 years old and over				
% < HS Graduate	49.1	67.2	7.8	38.3
% HS Graduate	23.0	17.9	3.8	31.0
% Some College, No Degree	18.5	9.0	30.7	14.7
% Associate Degree	2.0	3.3	7.6	3.7
% Bachelor's Degree	6.5	1.7	25.4	6.8
% Graduate or Prof'l Degree	1.0	0.9	4.7	5.5
Grandparents as Caregivers				
% Grandparents Responsible	41.3	25.4	52.6	47.0
Residence in 1995				
Population 5 years and over				
% Same House in 1995	65.3	71.3	25.9	40.7
Language Spoken at Home				
%Spanish	74.2	95.5	15.7	36.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 American FactFinder File DP2.

General Housing Characteristics

  The quality and stability of housing is an integral part of a student's life, which can affect his academic and social success in school. Appendix B-3 elaborates on the general housing characteristics surrounding the four campus locations. The two acceptable school communities showed higher occupancy rates overall compared to the exemplary school neighborhoods, but a larger population lived and owned their own homes in the acceptable campus area. In addition, over half the heads of household were over forty four years old at the Battle Cry and Bird's View schools, while the data from the other two campuses was fairly evenly distributed over all age groups in the table.

Household and Families Data

  The size and quality of the family environment adds to a student's chance for high achievement. The information in Appendix B-4 explains the home environments of the four campus neighborhoods. A larger percentage of children lived with married parents and in family type households in the South Texas communities compared to the areas near the Central Texas schools. In family size, only the All Saints Elementary community averaged a slightly larger family of 4.54 members compared to 3.35, 3.44, and 3.96 for the three comparison communities.

Selected Housing Characteristics

  Awareness of housing data also helps to understand the mobility rate and the presence of home conveniences, such as having a place to cook, sleep, and study. Appendix B-5, presents housing information about the four observed communities. Home construction was almost non-existent for the Bird's View Elementary neighborhood since

1990, with over 96% of the homes built before that year. On the other hand, 1999 was the only year when very little construction occurred in the Battle Cry Elementary area. The All Saints Elementary location was the only area where construction maintained a steady rate since 1990. This campus is also the largest campus in the study with close to 800 students. In summary, BCE, VE, and BVE had more than 60% of their homes built before 1990, perhaps indicating a more aged and stable community leading to students with more exposure to American experiences and culture.

The higher economic situation in the Victory Elementary region was reflected in the larger and more expensive homes in that same area. VE's homes, with a median value of $95,000, were worth almost twice as much as the homes near the two South Texas schools, which had median values of $45,700 and $48,900. Homes in the Bird's View vicinity fell between BE's and the South Texas values, at $79,700. The monthly costs to pay for housing took a bigger portion of income—over 30%— of those renting in all school areas except the area near Victory Elementary. Only 17% of the renters in the VE neighborhood paid more than 30% of their income for housing costs compared to more than 50% of renters near the other three schools.

CAMPUS PROFILES

This second section provides the context of the research by painting a snapshot of the units of study during the timeframe under examination. By understanding the background of each campus it is easier to understand and comprehend the findings and conclusions the researcher presents. The information is presented by campus to allow a comparison of the various components that qualified these schools for the study. The

study aims to find the practices that have assisted the high-performing campuses to reach their exemplary status based on the results of the TAKS test.

EXEMPLARY CAMPUSES

All Saints Elementary

Campus Profile

All Saints Elementary (ASE) is a neighborhood school in a school district composed of several small to medium-sized towns located within five miles from the border with Mexico. Upon visiting the school a positive school climate is immediately evident, with staff members working collaboratively in groups to discuss instructional issues and students eager to show how much they know. Its fifty professional staff members consist of forty-four teachers, one principal, one instructional facilitator, and four support professionals. Seventeen paraprofessionals assist teachers in the classrooms. The principal has been at this campus for over ten years. The staff is 95% Hispanic. All teachers are bilingual/ESL certified, although not all may be teaching in a bilingual classroom. Bilingual/ESL certification ensures that all students receive language support, since almost 100% of the students are Hispanic and from Spanish-speaking homes. The average years of teacher experience are 11.5, which mirror the state average and are higher than the other three campuses in the study.

The average number of students per classroom teacher is 20.4, translating to more students per teacher than both acceptable schools. All Saints Elementary enrolls the largest percent of Hispanic students and economically disadvantaged students of all four schools in the study group. ASE ranks second highest in the percentage of LEP students

not testing with approximately 9% in this category. Total expenditures per student for ASE are the lowest of the four campuses being examined, with a total of $5,187 from all funds. Selected 2006 information is presented in Table 4.1 for easy comparison of the four schools in the study and the state averages where available. ASE's data is in bold for easy identification.

Table 4.3a

Selected 2006 Data for Comparison of Campus Profiles of Four Schools in the Study

Data Description	All Saints El	Battle Cry El	Victory El	Bird's View El	State
Avg. Yrs. Tchr. Exp.	**11.5**	5.9	6.3	9.3	11.5
% Certified Teachers	**100.0**	100.0	100.0	100.0	*
Stud/Tchr Ratio**	**17.7**	16.9	13.9	13.7	14.9
Avg Class Size***	**20.4**	21.4	19.6	17.0	*
Per Pupil Expenditure	**$5,187**	$5,891	$6,697	$5,933	$7,229
% Econ. Dis.	**87.7**	82.9	74.0	83.8	55.6
% LEP	**44.5**	34.5	49.6	58.9	14.6
% Hispanic	**99.7**	98.3	74.8	81.7	45.3
% White	**0.1**	1.4	18.0	12.1	36.5
% At-Risk	**72.9**	61.3	63.4	74.5	48.7
% Not Tested	**3.5**	2.9	4.4	2.2	3.0
% LEP Not Tested	**8.9**	10.3	10.1	2.9	*
% Retention	**2.6**	5.1	2.6	2.6	*

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2006).   Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.
*No data available.
**Student-Teacher ratio based on all teachers on campus
***Avg. class size based on actual classroom teachers only.

Student Demographics

The school's 780 students are almost 100% Hispanic, with 88% economically disadvantaged, 73% at-risk of dropping out, 20% mobile, and 45% LEP. Approximately half of the students begin their education in bilingual or ESL classrooms. A strong literacy background in the first language is emphasized in this school. Students are expected to be fully proficient in reading and writing Spanish as they transition into English. Full proficiency in both languages is expected by third grade. By the time the students enter fifth grade over 90% of the students have mastered the state standards in reading and writing well enough to exit the bilingual program, resulting in only a handful of students requiring Spanish instruction or a bilingual setting in fifth grade. It is important to note that bilingual students are served with regular educations students in a mixed classroom setting. Figure 4.1 shows the student demographics for the school. The pattern of consistently high numbers of Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and LEP student enrollment is easy to view on the graph.

All Saints Elementary Student Demographics- Percent Total
Student Enrollment 2003-2006

	2003	2004	2005	2006
■ Afr. Am.	0	0	0	0
■ Hisp.	99.2	99.6	99.7	99.7
□ White	0.8	0.4	0.1	0.1
⊟ Nat. Am.	0	0	0	0
▩ As. Am.	0	0	0.1	0.1
▨ LEP	40.8	44.6	44.9	44.5
■ Ec. Dis.	90.9	89.8	88.2	87.7
□ Mobile	17.6	21.1	27.2	19.3
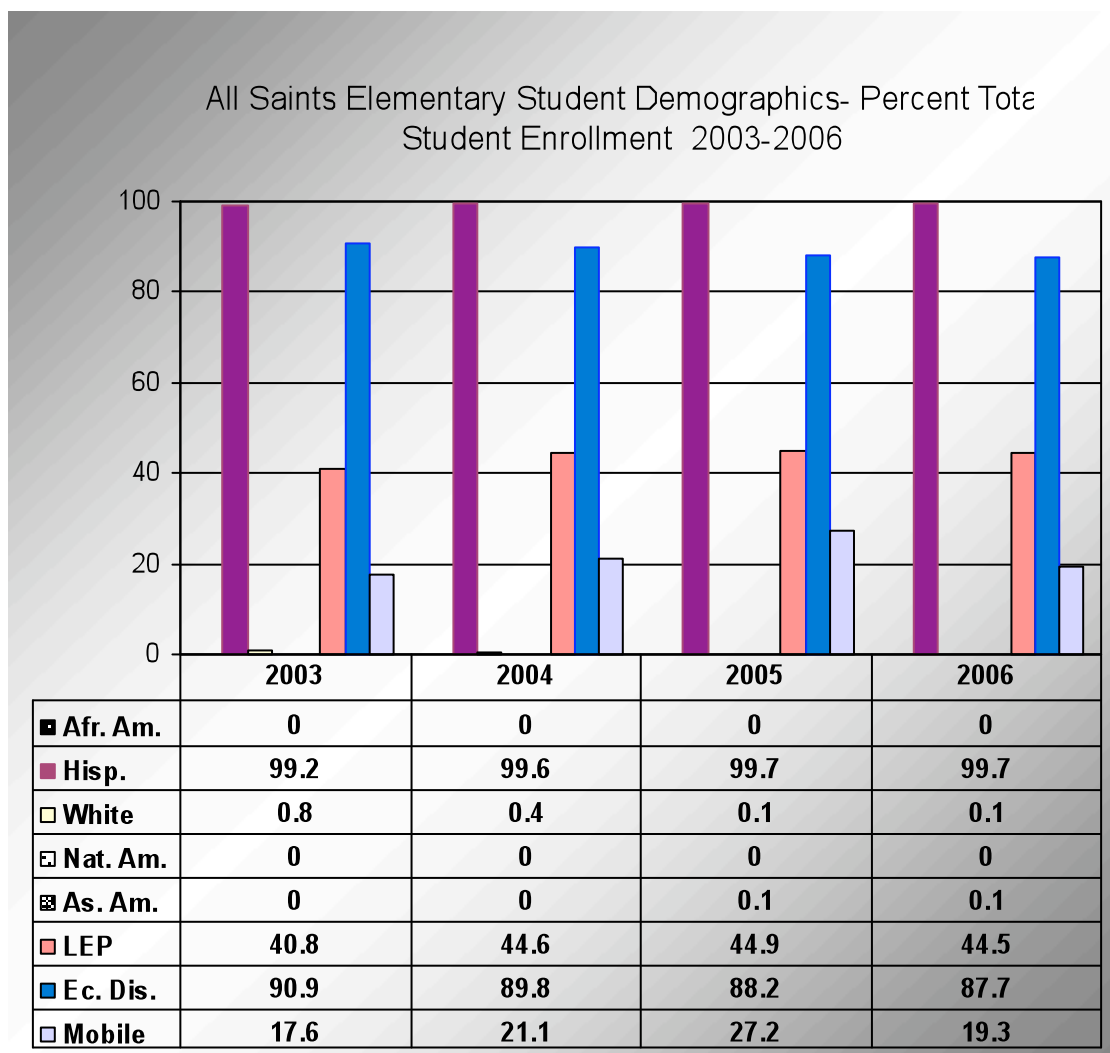
Figure 4.1. All Saints Elementary Student Demographics- Percent Total Student
    Enrollment

**Source: Texas Education Agency. (2003-2006).   Academic Excellence Indicator System
reports. Austin, TX.**

Student Performance

   Hispanic student group. All Saints Elementary's TAKS results have rendered it

an exemplary campus since 2003 with the exception of a recognized rating in 2004, when

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the TAKS was first used as the basis for a school's rating. Prior to the TAKS standard, ASE had consistently reached the exemplary level since the 1997-1998 school year based on the TAAS, a basic skills assessment. Because ASE was rated exemplary in 2002, it retained its exemplary rating in 2003, even though the scores did not merit the rating. All schools had been allowed to keep their 2002 TAAS-based ratings in 2003, although many of their actual scores did not merit the higher rating. However, in 2004 the TAKS became the standard for rating a school's performance. Many schools' 2003 ratings dropped in 2004 due to the novelty and rigor of the test items and the higher standard for passing the test.

All Saints Elementary's continuously improving TAKS performance from 2003 to 2006 is charted below in Figure 4.2. Because the school's Hispanic population accounts for approximately 100% of its entire student population, its "ALL" scores and its Hispanic scores mirror each other. One can see the upward trend in its ALL/Hispanic scores in Figure 4.2. The 2003 TAKS results were the first to be evaluated using the 2 SEM below panel recommendation (approximately 58% in elementary level reading and 53% in elementary level math) as the level for passing. The level was raised to 1 SEM below the panel recommendation (approximately 61% in elementary level reading and math) in 2004. The year 2004 was also the first year the TAKS tests were publicly released, aiding in the preparation for the following year's assessment of the state curriculum. The 2005 school year saw the full panel recommendation level (approximately 70% for elementary reading and math and approximately 75% for

elementary level science) for passing TAKS implemented for the first time. The panel recommendation standard for passing remains in force from 2005 forward.

ASE's principal emphasized the steady improvement on the TAKS due to a focus on alignment of the curriculum by the teachers, resulting in a sense of ownership and commitment by everyone and ensuring uniform implementation of the curriculum. Best practices were already being implemented since TAAS was in place, but recognizing the rigor and high level reasoning required on the TAKS, the staff decided to review and study the TEKS carefully in order to familiarize themselves well with the changes in the state curriculum. The principal reported that the campus' use of best practices went as far back as the 1995-1996 school year, which is when the TEKS were first introduced, although not tested. Some best practices she mentioned were the use of manipulatives, computer-enriched instruction, vertical alignment, culturally-responsive teaching, cooperative grouping, and using research-based programs. According to the principal, the practices were critical to achievement on the TAKS, but they added the close examination and understanding of the TEKS to their list of strategies to continue the high performance after TAAS.

The following year, the 2003 TAKS assessment was released to the public in May 2003, adding further insight into the format and level of questioning on the state assessment. The release of the test items helped most districts improve their 2004 scores by allowing educators to develop similar test questions. Commercial educational companies also took the released items and immediately developed practice tests to assist schools with assessments aligned to the TEKS and TAKS.

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The TEKS were not fully integrated into the TAKS until 1999. Before then the TAAS was only partially composed of higher level questions. Schools were not privy to the rigor of the test until the 1999 administration of the TAKS. Then they had to wait until TEA released a sample of a test to fully comprehend the level and format of the questions. Once the tests were released educators quickly examined the questions and developed test banks with similar questions for practice. Children received the benefit of such district initiatives. Before then, all educators could do was guess at the types of problems used to test student expectations on the TAKS. The principal at All Saints Elementary stated that her staff's effort at aligning their curriculum, a very effective best practice, is one strategy that has helped them remain high performing for nine years.

All Saints Elementary Hispanic Student Percent Passing TAKS 2003-2006

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Reading	76	80	95	96
Math	84	88	96	95
Writing	93	95	99	99
Science	60	71	94	94

Figure 4.2. All Saints Elementary Hispanic Student Percent Passing- TAKS 2003-2006

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2003-2006).   Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.

LEP student group.   The results for the LEP student population are charted in Figure 4.3 to show the improvement in that group's achievement scores.   Approximately 40% of the tested student group is composed of LEP students and almost 9% of those LEP students did not get tested.   Although the LEP student group started and ended at approximately the same scores, the group's path to the exemplary range was not as

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smooth as the Hispanic group's. Scores in 2004 dropped as the 2 SEM standard for passing increased to 1 SEM, making it more difficult for LEP students to reach proficiency on the assessment.

All Saints Elementary LEP Student Percent Passing TAKS 2003-2006

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Reading	81	73	93	95
Math	88	90	93	93
Writing	*	91	99	95
Science	60	40	79	92

Figure 4.3. All Saints Elementary LEP Student Percent Passing- TAKS 2003-2006

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2003-2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.

Percent students not testing on the TAKS. The number of students not testing on the TAKS test ranged from 2% to 3.5% for ASE, while LEP exemptions ranged from approximately 6% to 12% for the four-year period from 2003-2006. The following graph in Figure 4.4 shows the four-year data for the total and LEP student groups on the campus compared to the state when available.

All Saints Elementary Percent Students Not Testing TAKS 2003-2006				
	2003	2004	2005	2006
☐ Campus Total	3.4	2	2.8	3.5
☐ State Total	5.1	4.6	3	2.9
⊞ LEP Not Testing	11.9	5.7	7.8	8.9
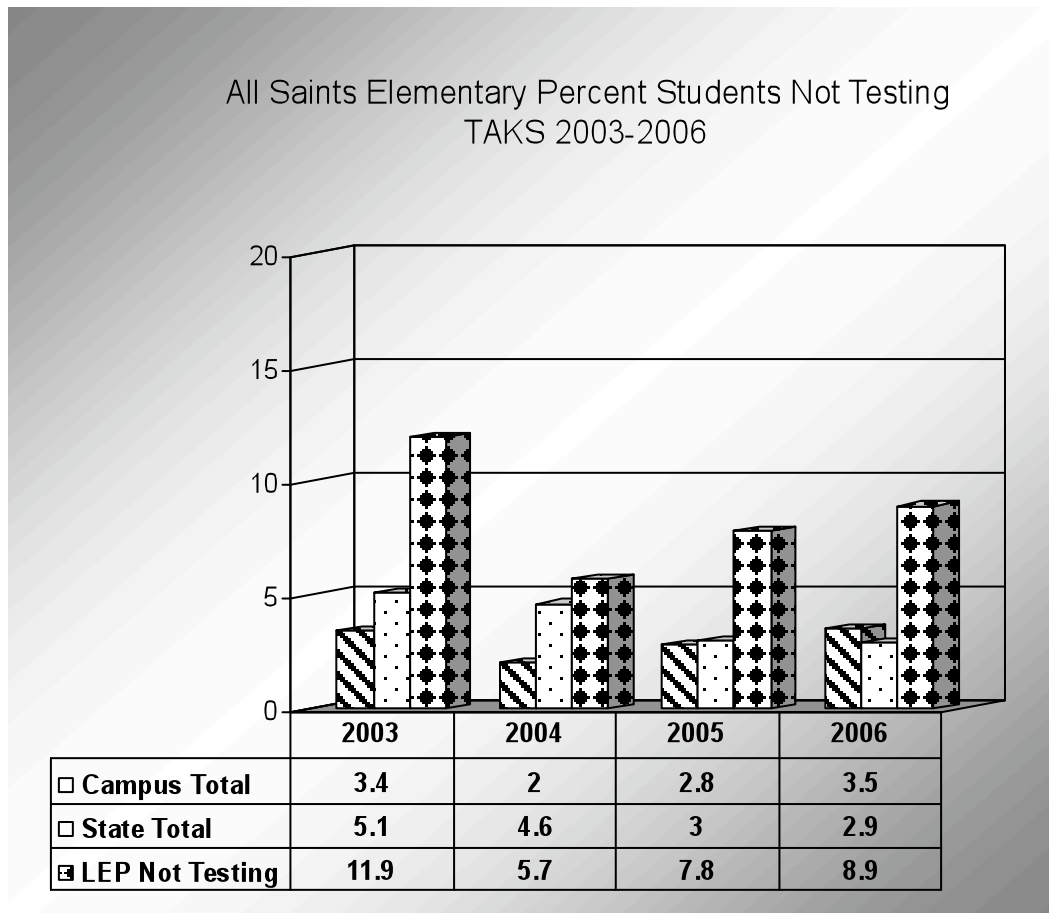
Figure 4.4. All Saints Elementary Percent Students Not Testing- TAKS 2003-2006

Battle Cry Elementary

Campus Profile

Battle Cry Elementary (BCE) is also a neighborhood school. It is located within five miles of the U.S. border with Mexico. Observations revealed a cheerful and helpful disposition displayed by the staff and students creating a school climate very conducive to teaching and learning. Its forty professional staff consists of thirty-four teachers, four professional support teachers, one principal, and one instructional facilitator. Teachers are assisted by seventeen paraprofessionals. The principal has been an administrator at this campus for more than ten years. The staff is 91% Hispanic. All teachers are bilingual or ESL certified, although not all may necessarily be teaching bilingual or ESL children. Bilingual/ESL certification is encouraged since 98% of the students are Hispanic and from Spanish-speaking homes and therefore, benefit from language support. The average years of teacher experience are 5.9, which is below the state average and below the averages of the other three campuses under study.

The average number of students per classroom teacher is 21.4, which is a higher rate than any of the four schools being examined. Battle Cry Elementary has the lowest percentage of LEP students and at-risk students enrolled of all four campuses studied. BCE retains the highest percent of its students, holding students back at almost twice the rate of the other three campuses. In addition, about 10% of BCE's LEP students do not take the state assessment, making it the school with the highest percent of LEP students not testing. Total expenditures per student for BCE are lower than the state and the two acceptable schools, with a total of $5,892 from all funds. Selected 2006 information is

presented in Table 4.3b for easy comparison of the four schools of the study and the state

averages where available. Data for BCE is bolded for easy identification.

Table 4.3b

Selected 2006 Data for Comparison of Campus Profiles of Four Schools in the Study

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Data Description	All Saints El	**Battle Cry El**	Victory El	Bird's View El	State
Avg.. Yrs. Tchr. Exp.	11.5	**5.9**	6.3	9.3	11.5
% Certified Teachers	100.0	**100.0**	100.0	100.0	*
Stud/Tchr Ratio**	17.7	**16.9**	13.9	13.7	14.9
Avg. Class Size***	20.4	**21.4**	19.6	17.0	*
Per Pupil Expenditure	$5,187	**$5,891**	$6,697	$5,933	$7,229
% Econ. Dis.	87.7	**82.9**	74.0	83.8	55.6
% LEP	44.5	**34.5**	49.6	58.9	14.6
% Hispanic	99.7	**98.3**	74.8	81.7	45.3
% White	0.1	**1.4**	18.0	12.1	36.5
% At-Risk	72.9	**61.3**	63.4	74.5	48.7
% Not Tested	3.5	**2.9**	4.4	2.2	3.0
% LEP Not Tested	8.9	**10.3**	10.1	2.9	*
% Retention	2.6	**5.1**	2.6	2.6	*

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.
*No data available.
**Student-Teacher ratio based on all teachers on campus
***Avg. class size based on actual classroom teachers only.

Student Demographics

The school's 574 students are approximately 98% Hispanic, with 83% economically disadvantaged, 61% at-risk of failing, 20% mobile, and 35% LEP. Approximately half of the students begin their education in bilingual classrooms. However, by the time the students reach fourth grade over 90% of the students have mastered the state standards in reading and writing well enough to exit the bilingual program. Less than five students test in Spanish in grades three through five. Bilingual students at this campus are also served in classrooms with regular education students. Student demographics have remained fairly constant for the past three years at BCE. The graph depicted in Figure 4.5 illustrates the percentages of student groups at this school. Although the percentage of Hispanic enrollment has remained steady, the economically disadvantaged and LEP students groups seem to be decreasing. All other groups have remained approximately the same.

Battle Cry Elementary Student Demographics- Percent of Total Student Enrollment 2003-2006

	2003	2004	2005	2006
■ Af. Am.	0.4	0	0	0.3
▨ Hisp.	98.7	98.8	98.7	98.3
▢ White	0.9	1.2	1.1	1.4
▨ Nat. Am.	0	0	0	0
▨ As. Am.	0	0	0.2	0
▨ LEP	40	41.7	34.9	34.5
■ Ec. Dis.	92	88.7	86.3	82.9
▢ Mobile	24	19.9	21.6	20.3
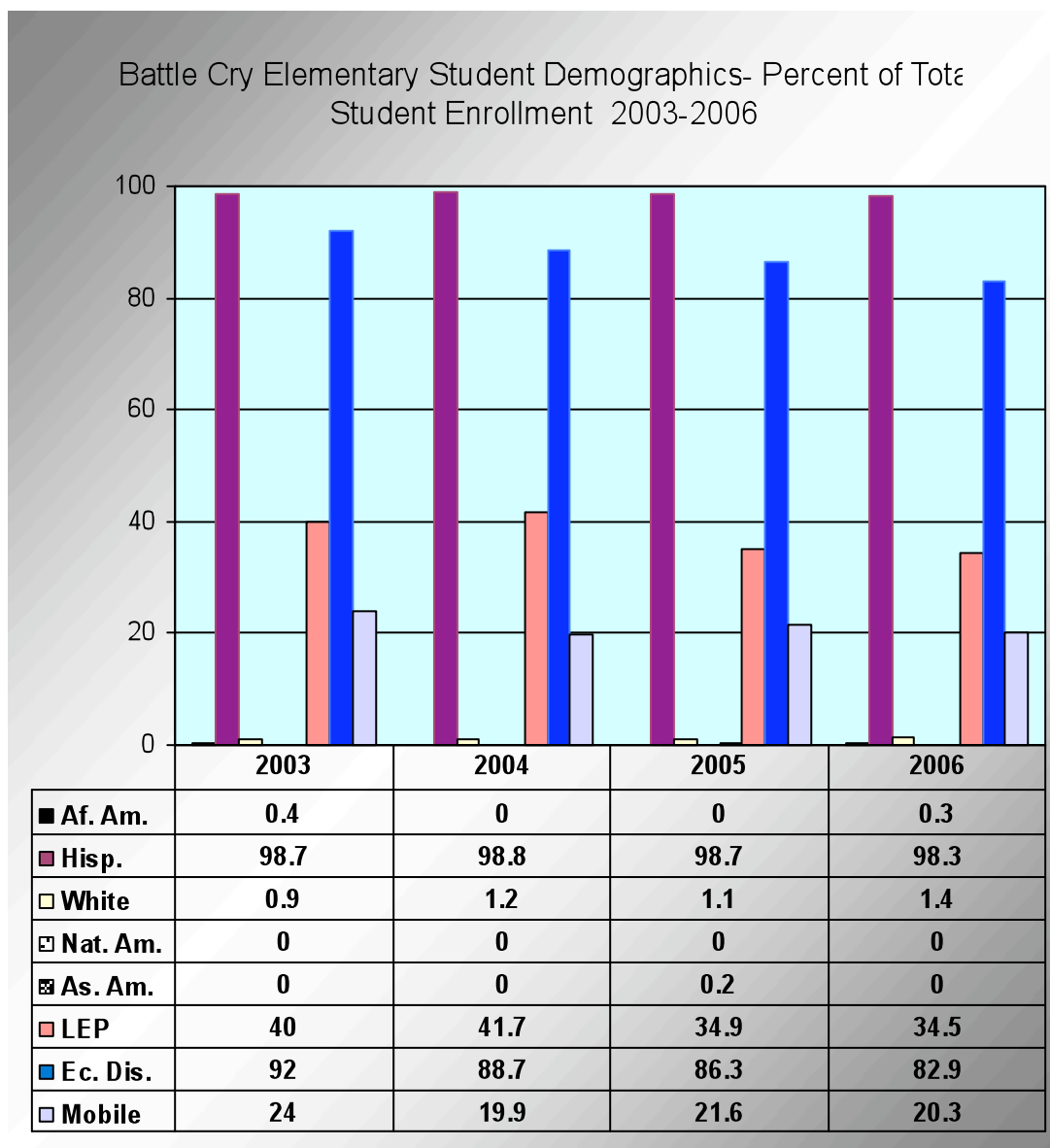
Figure 4.5.   Battle Cry Elementary Student Demographics- Percent Total Student
         Enrollment 2003-2006

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Student Performance

Hispanic student group. Battle Cry Elementary's TAKS scores remained in the exemplary 90% range based on the TAAS, a basic skills test. BCE retained its exemplary rating in 2004 when the first level of 1 SEM below panel recommendation standard was first implemented. BCE's Hispanic scores for the years 2003-2006 are graphed in Figure 4.6 to show their three- year trend. The high percentage of Hispanic student enrollment reflects how the ALL student group performs for the school achievement data.

The principal explained that the staff has been using best practices since 1994-1995 when the school opened and have obtained the exemplary rating since then. The graph below shows how 2003 scores improved after the teachers sat together to analyze the TAKS objectives in order to better understand the student expectations for each grade level and to adapt their teaching practices for higher student performance. By 2004 the teachers had administered the TEKS-based TAKS and knew the rigor and level of thinking expected on the assessment. The released TAKS provided sample items to develop tests banks with higher level questioning than the TAAS. The teachers planned together and aligned their teaching strategies, leading to improved scores on the 2004 administration, the second year of TAKS implementation. The principal added that the staff monitored and adjusted their practices each year as they added or changed strategies based on their students' needs.

Battle Cry Elementary Hispanic Studen
Percent Passing- TAKS 2003-2006

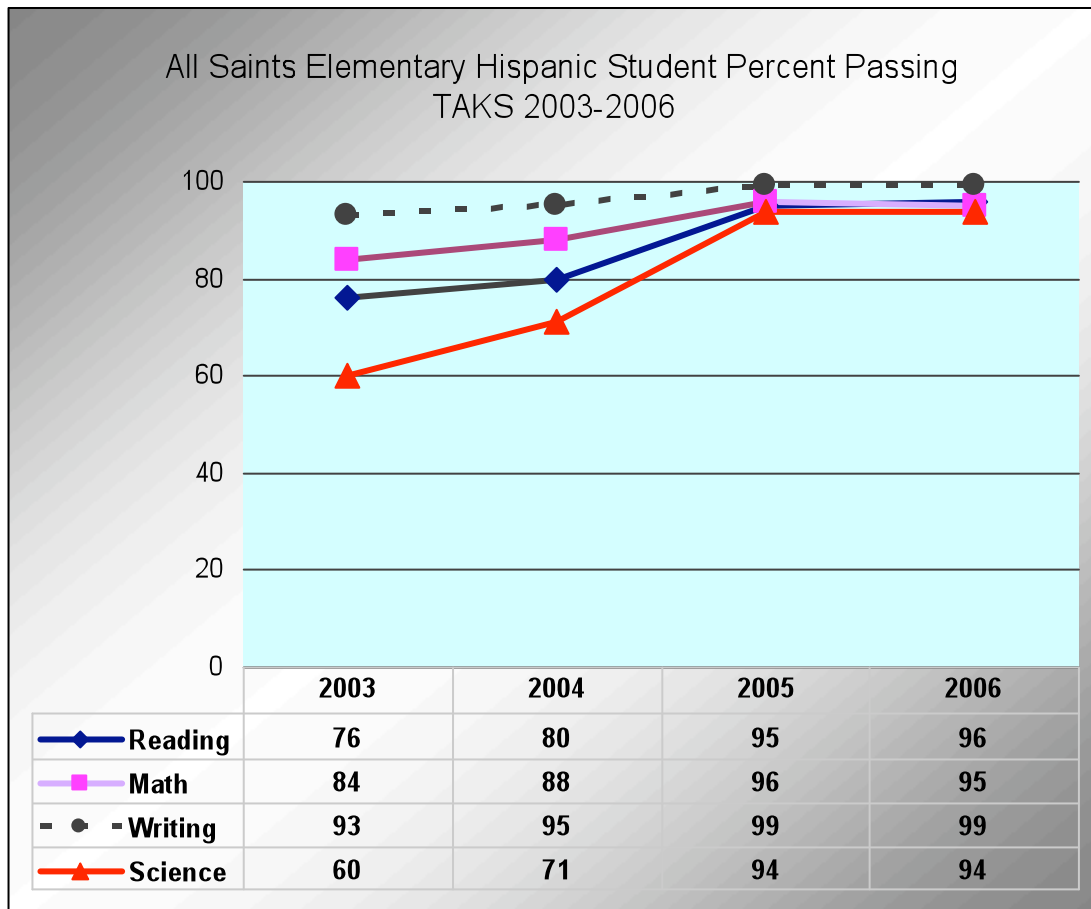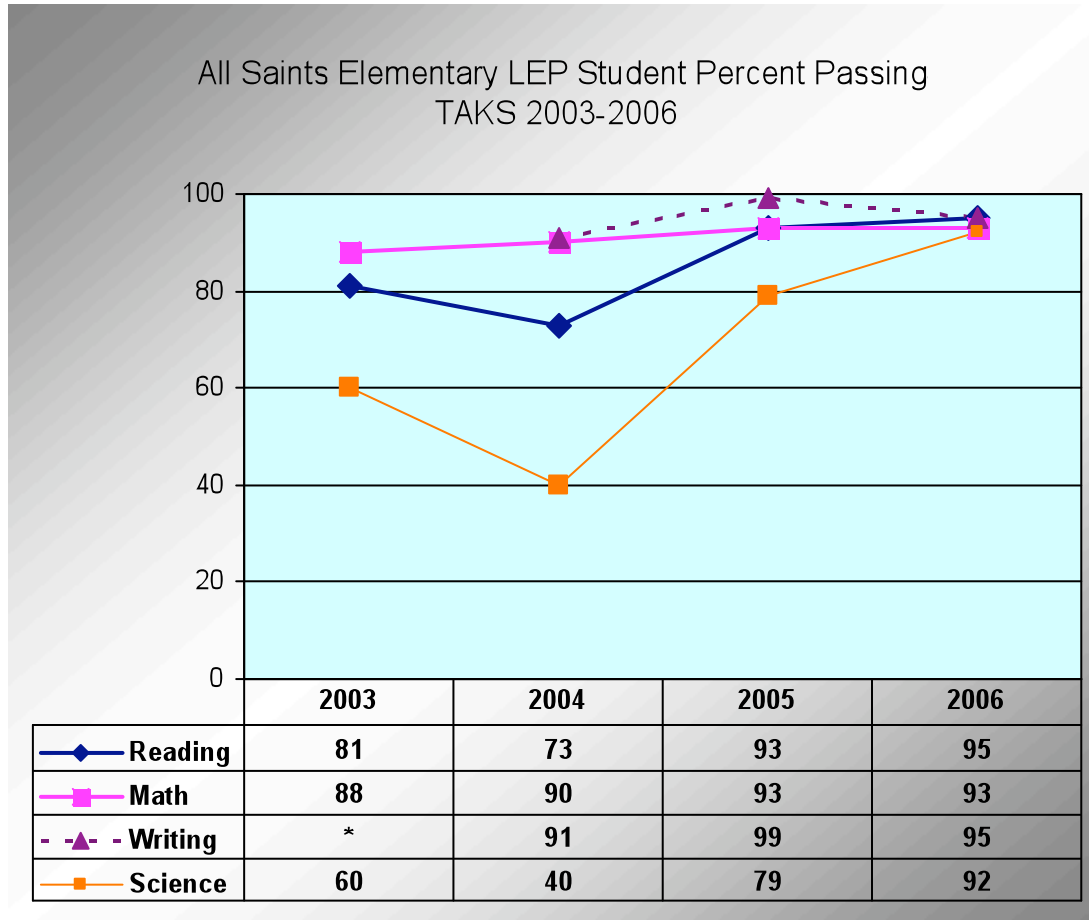|	2003	2004	2005	2006
Reading	79	93	95	97
Math	83	92	94	97
Writing	95	99	96	98
Science	37	84	94	94
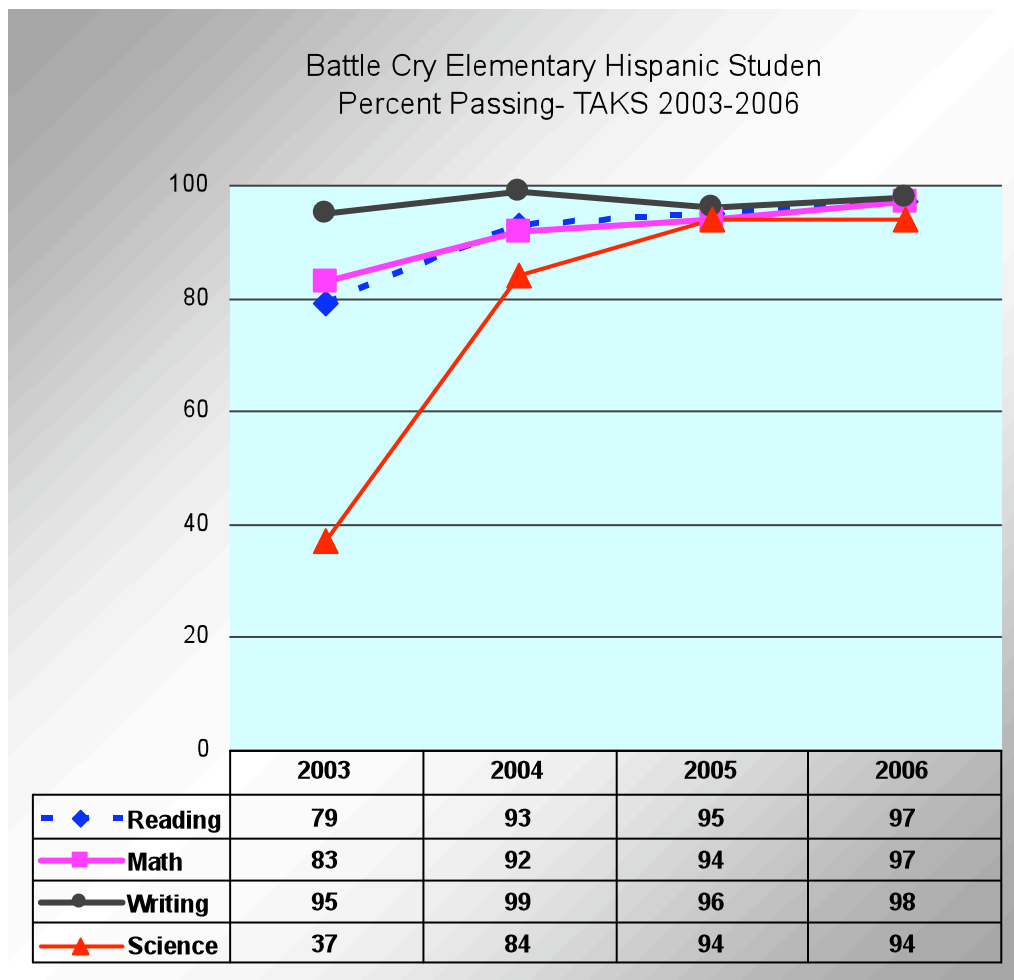
Figure 4.6. Battle Cry Elementary Hispanic Student Percent Passing- TAKS 2003-2006

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2003-2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.

LEP student group. Battle Cry Elementary's tested student group is composed of approximately 28% LEP students. Scores for students who are LEP have remained high at this campus, as noted in the graph in Figure 4.7. Interestingly, the LEP student scores showed a smooth increase toward their high performance. Some science scores were

lacking for this graph as less than five LEP students tested and therefore, were not reported by the state. The increase in performance from 2003 to 2004 is evident for the LEP student group as it was for the ALL group. The principal attributed the improved performance to her teachers' adaptation and uniform implementation of best practices, especially those mentioned in the Best Practice Framework. It is important to note that about 10% of BCE's LEP students were not tested.

Battle Cry Elementary LEP Student Percent Passing TAKS 2003-2006

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Reading	66	90	88	97
Math	84	89	87	98
Writing	60	99	99	99
Science	*	*	75	83

Figure 4.7. Battle Cry Elementary LEP Student Percent Passing- TAKS 2003-2006

Percent students not testing on the TAKS. The number of students not testing on the TAKS test ranged from approximately 2% to 5%, while LEP exemptions ranged from 4% to 13% for the four-year period from 2003-2006. The following graph in Figure 4.8 shows the four-year data for the total and LEP student groups on the campus compared to the state when available.

Battle Cry Elementary Percent Students Not Testing
TAKS 2003-2006

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Campus Total	4.8	3.2	1.9	2.9
State Total	5.1	4.6	3	2.9
LEP Not Testing	13.3	9.6	3.8	10.3

Figure 4.8. Battle Cry Elementary Percent Students Not Testing- TAKS 2003-2006

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2003-2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.

ACCEPTABLE CAMPUSES

Victory Elementary

Campus Profile

Victory Elementary (VE) is located in an urban setting in central Texas. The staff at this campus were observed quiet and reserved, as they stopped their line of children to allow a visitor to cross the hallway, without offering assistance. Its teaching staff consists of fifty professional staff, of which thirty-seven are teachers, one is a principal, one is an assistant principal, and eleven are additional support staff. Five paraprofessionals assist with instruction. The principal has been at this campus for six years. The staff is 44% Hispanic and 54% White. Approximately 60% of VE's teachers are bilingual or ESL certified. The average years of teacher experience at VE are 6.3, which is less than all other entities except BCE.

The average number of students per classroom teacher is 19.6, making VE lower in this ratio than the exemplary campuses. Of the group Victory Elementary has the lowest percentages of economically disadvantaged students and Hispanic students, but has the highest percent of White students and of students not tested with the state assessment. Additionally, a little more than 10% of VE's LEP students are left out of testing, accounting for most of the total students not tested. Victory Elementary serves children from its own community, in addition to other bilingual students who are bused from four other district campuses to this bilingual site. Based on district policy the bilingual students remain at VE until they pass their state reading assessment in English. Once this is accomplished, they return to their home campus. Those students not meeting

standards must remain on the campus, due to the lack of a bilingual program on their home campuses. Total expenditures per student for VE are the highest of the four schools, but lower than the state, with a total of $6,697 from all funds. Selected 2006 information is presented in Table 4.3c for easy comparison of the four schools of the study and the state averages when available. VE's data is bolded for easy identification and comparison.

Table 4.3c

Selected 2006 Data for Comparison of Campus Profiles of Four Schools in the Study

Data Description	All Saints El	Battle Cry El	**Victory El**	Bird's View El	State
Avg.. Yrs. Tchr. Exp.	11.5	5.9	**6.3**	9.3	11.5
% Certified Teachers	100.0	100.0	**100.0**	100.0	*
Stud/Tchr Ratio**	17.7	16.9	**13.9**	13.7	14.9
Avg. Class Size***	20.4	21.4	**19.6**	17.0	*
Per Pupil Expenditure	$5,187	$5,891	**$6,697**	$5,933	$7,229
% Econ. Dis.	87.7	82.9	**74.0**	83.8	55.6
% LEP	44.5	34.5	**49.6**	58.9	14.6
% Hispanic	99.7	98.3	**74.8**	81.7	45.3
% White	0.1	1.4	**18.0**	12.1	36.5
% At-Risk	72.9	61.3	**63.4**	74.5	48.7
% Not Tested	3.5	2.9	**4.4**	2.2	3.0
% LEP Not Tested	8.9	10.3	**10.1**	2.9	*
% Retention	2.6	5.1	**2.6**	2.6	*

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.
*No data available.
**Student-Teacher ratio based on all teachers on campus
***Avg. class size based on actual classroom teachers only.

Student Demographics

The school's 516 students are approximately 75% Hispanic, with 74% economically disadvantaged, 63% at-risk of failing, 22% mobile, and 50% LEP. Approximately two thirds of the students begin their education in bilingual classrooms. The goal at the campus is to exit the students from the bilingual program at the end of third grade, after the students show reading proficiency on the state assessment. About one third of the students in fifth grade still need bilingual instruction. It is important to note that bilingual students are served in bilingual classrooms separate from regular education students. The majority of bilingual students at each grade level are tested in English. The number of students still testing in Spanish is smallest at fifth grade.

The student demographics of Victory Elementary are depicted in the following graph, Figure 4.9. The graph shows a pattern of the economically disadvantaged and LEP student groups increasing in enrollment as the Hispanic group also increased.

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Af. Am.	6	5.6	6.9	4.8
Hisp.	64.1	69.7	79.4	74.8
White	28.5	22.2	13.2	18
Nat. Am.	0.4	1	0	0.6
As. Am.	1	1.5	0.5	1.7
LEP	36.5	46.5	54.2	49.6
Ec. Dis.	61.6	69.7	82.1	74
Mobile	19.9	20.6	23.6	21.7
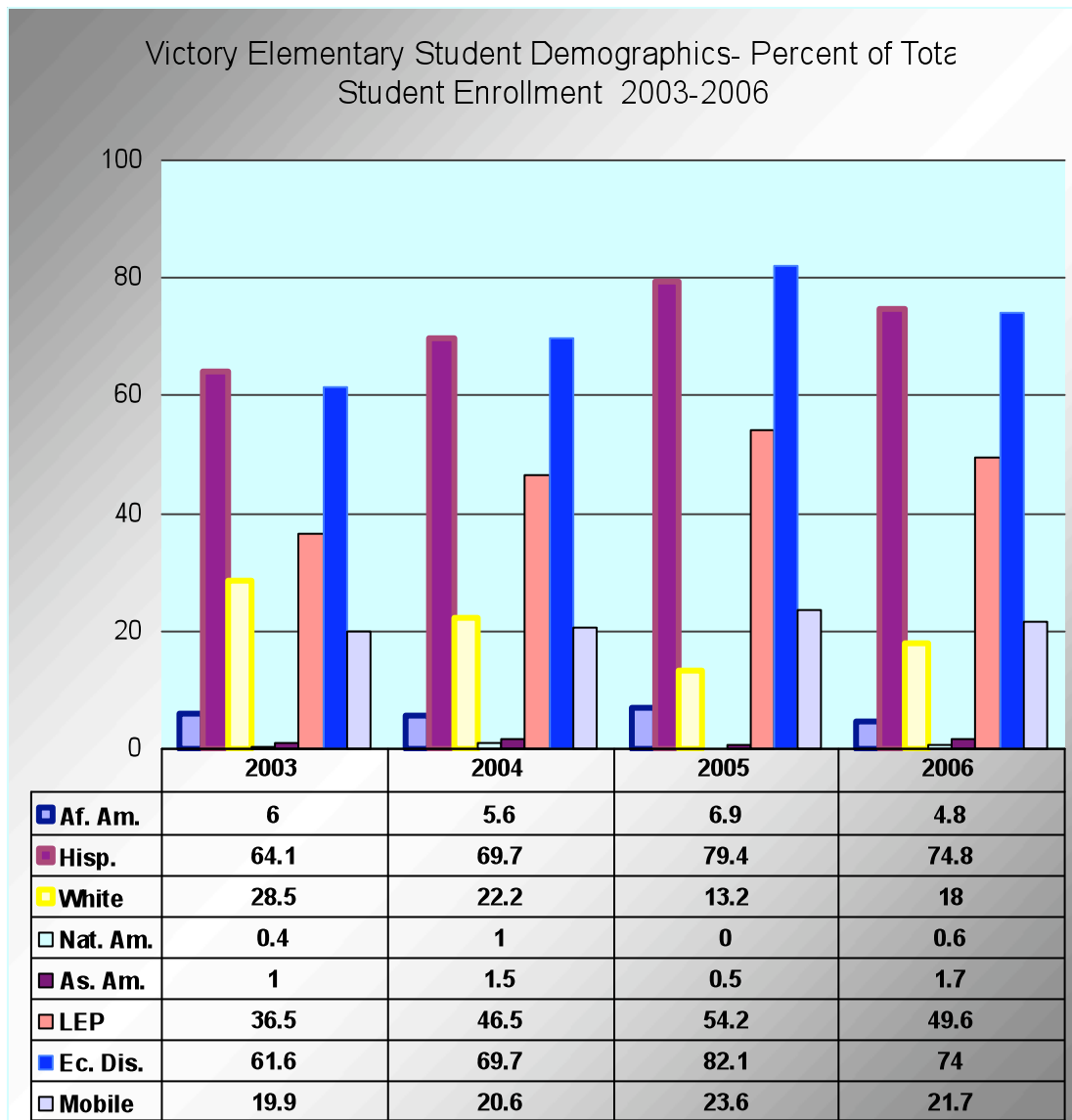
Figure 4.9.   Victory Elementary Student Demographics- Percent of Total Student
　　　　　　Enrollment 2003-2006

**Source: Texas Education Agency. (2003-2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System
reports. Austin,TX.**

Student Performance

Hispanic student group. Victory Elementary student performance in Reading, in Math, and in Science has consistently increased from 2003-2006. The following graph, Table 4.10, shows the Hispanic student performance scores on the state assessment. Because of the high number of Hispanic students, this group generally determines the overall campus scores. The campus scores have increased continuously since 2003, except for a decrease in Writing in the year 2005 as noted in the graph.

The administrator attributes the steady increase in scores to the use of best practices since before 2003 until the present. He states that the school has emphasized best practices through staff development. The campus also implemented a Pyramid of Interventions to catch students in danger of failing and Total Quality Management Principles for school improvement. Monitoring notebooks and student data binders were another component to the improvement effort as teachers analyzed data to guide their instruction. Extra tutoring time was accomplished through the use of support staff during "Intervention Time". These practices were instituted in response to meeting the rigor of the TEKS in preparation for the TAKS.

Victory Elementary Hispanic Student Percent Passing- TAKS 2003-2006

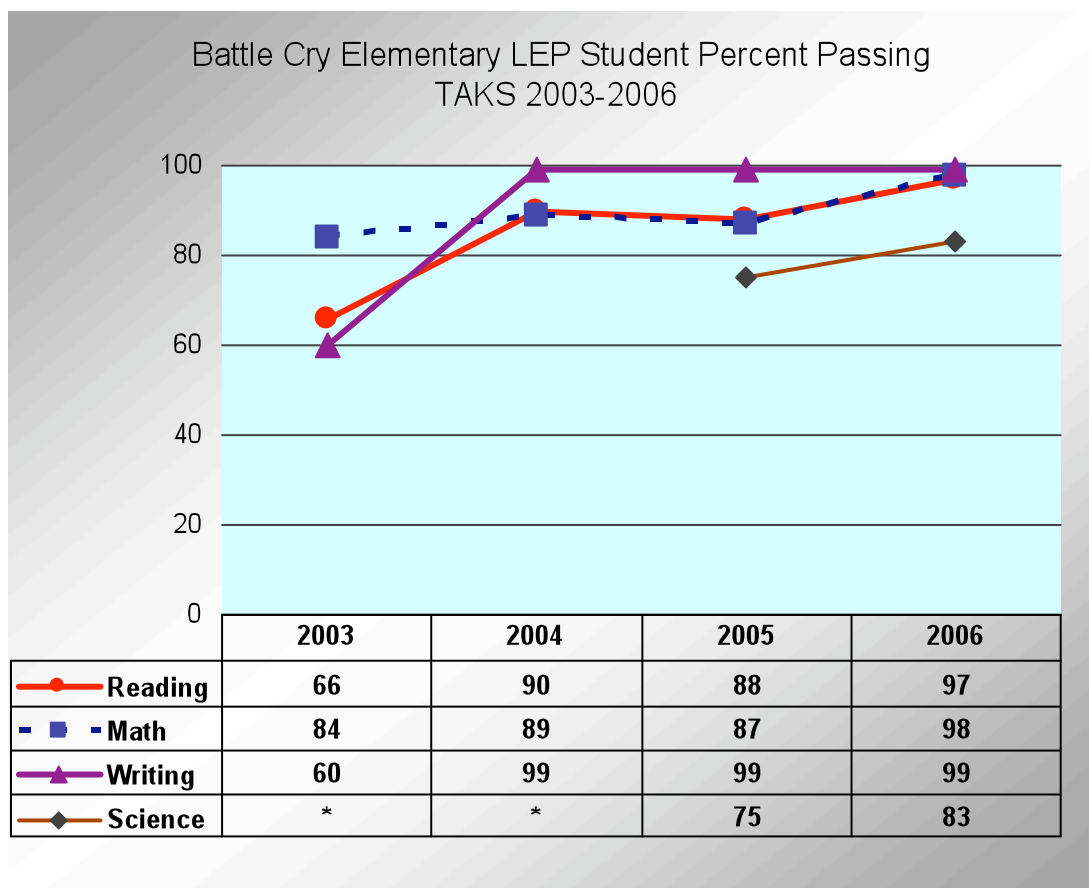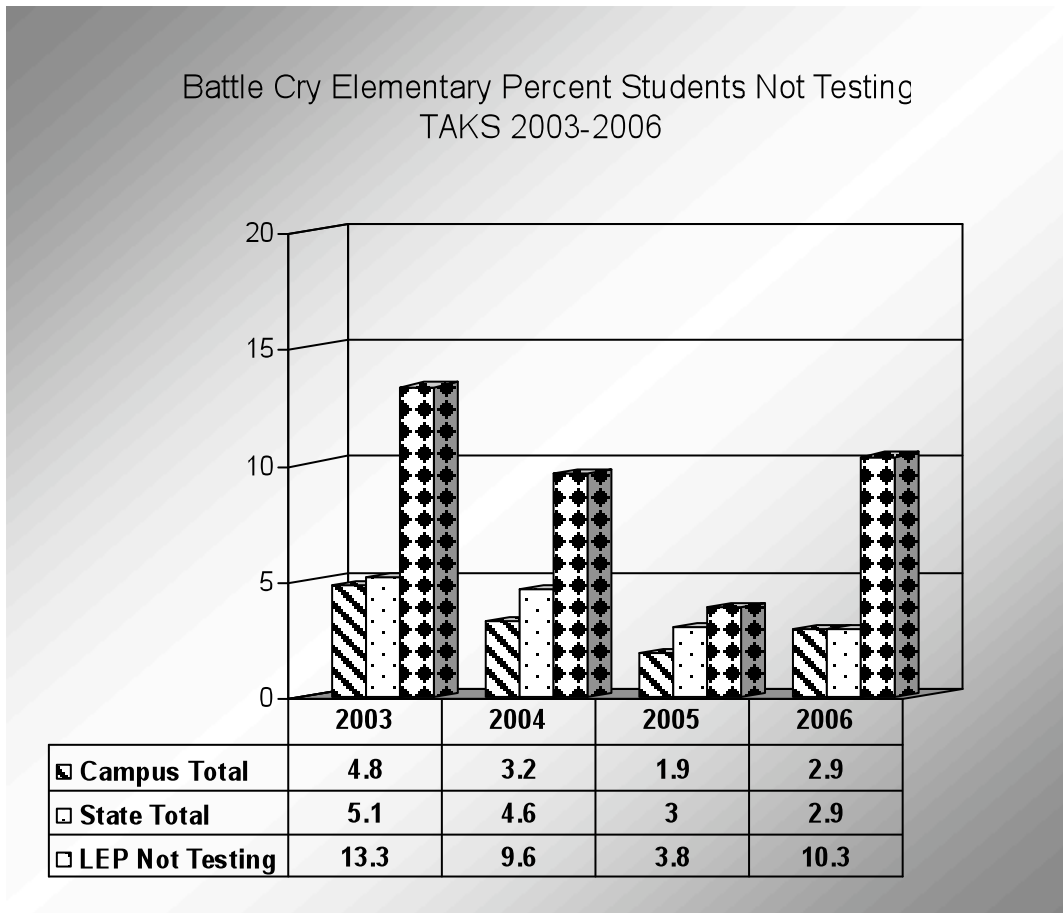|	2003	2004	2005	2006
Reading	68	72	83	85
Math	52	61	72	78
Writing	81	96	81	92
Science	18	31	48	51
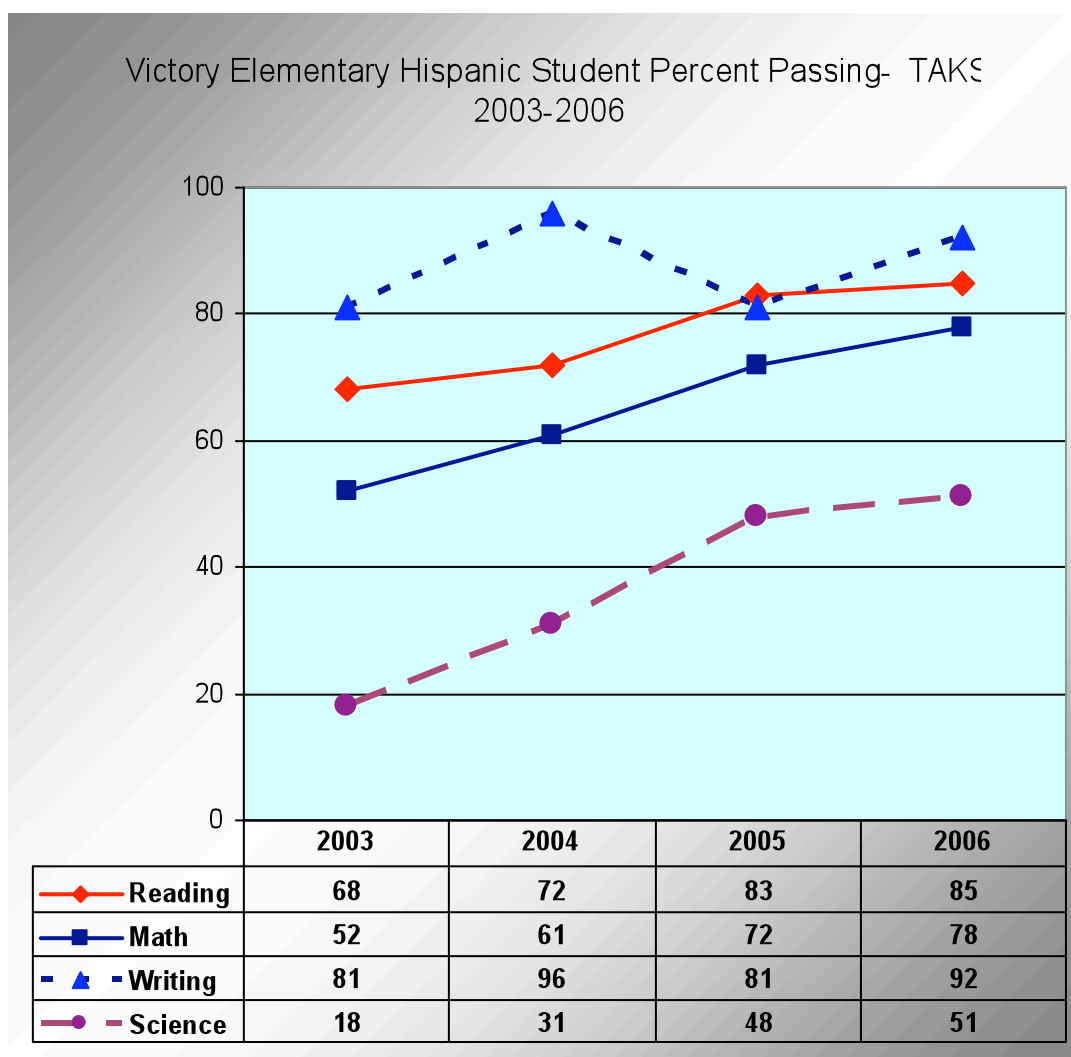
Figure 4.10. Victory Elementary Hispanic Student Percent Passing- TAKS 2003-2006

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2003-2006).   Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.

LEP student group. LEP students accounted for approximately 44% of the tested

students at Victory Elementary.   A little more than 10% of the LEP students are not

tested. The pattern of the LEP students' scores has been comparable to the Hispanic

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results. The following graph, Figure 4.11, demonstrates this group's achievement. The

group's Science scores have been consistently lower than the Hispanic student group's

scores.

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Reading	68	68	78	84
Math	41	62	75	74
Writing	80	99	80	89
Science	1	7	17	45
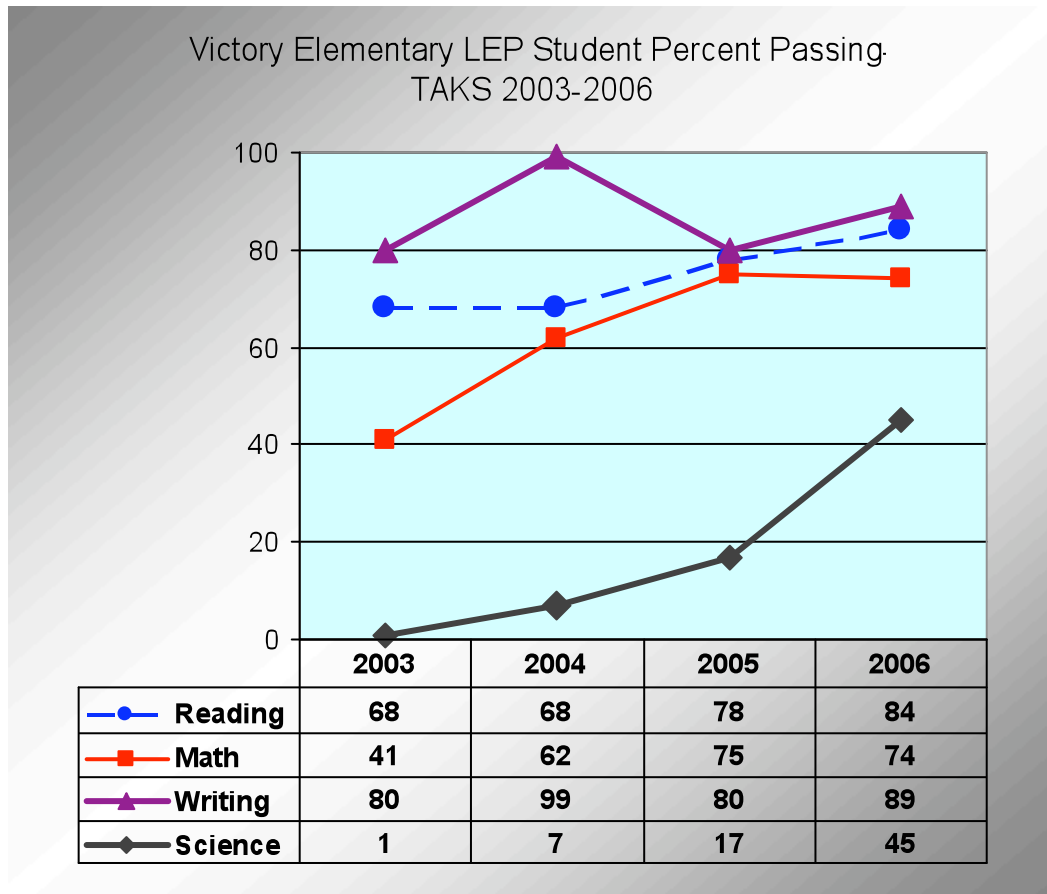
Figure 4.11. Victory Elementary LEP Student Percent Passing- TAKS 2003-2006

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2003-2006).   Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.

Percent students not testing on the TAKS. The number of students not testing on the TAKS test ranged from approximately 4% to 6%, while LEP exemptions ranged from 8% to 19% for the four-year period from 2003-2006. The following graph in Figure 4.12 shows the four-year data for the total and LEP student groups on the campus compared to the state when available.

Victory Elementary Percent Students Not Testing TAKS 2003-2006

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Campus Total	5.6	4.5	4.3	4.4
State Total	5.1	4.6	3	2.9
LEP Not Testing	19.3	8.6	8.3	10.1
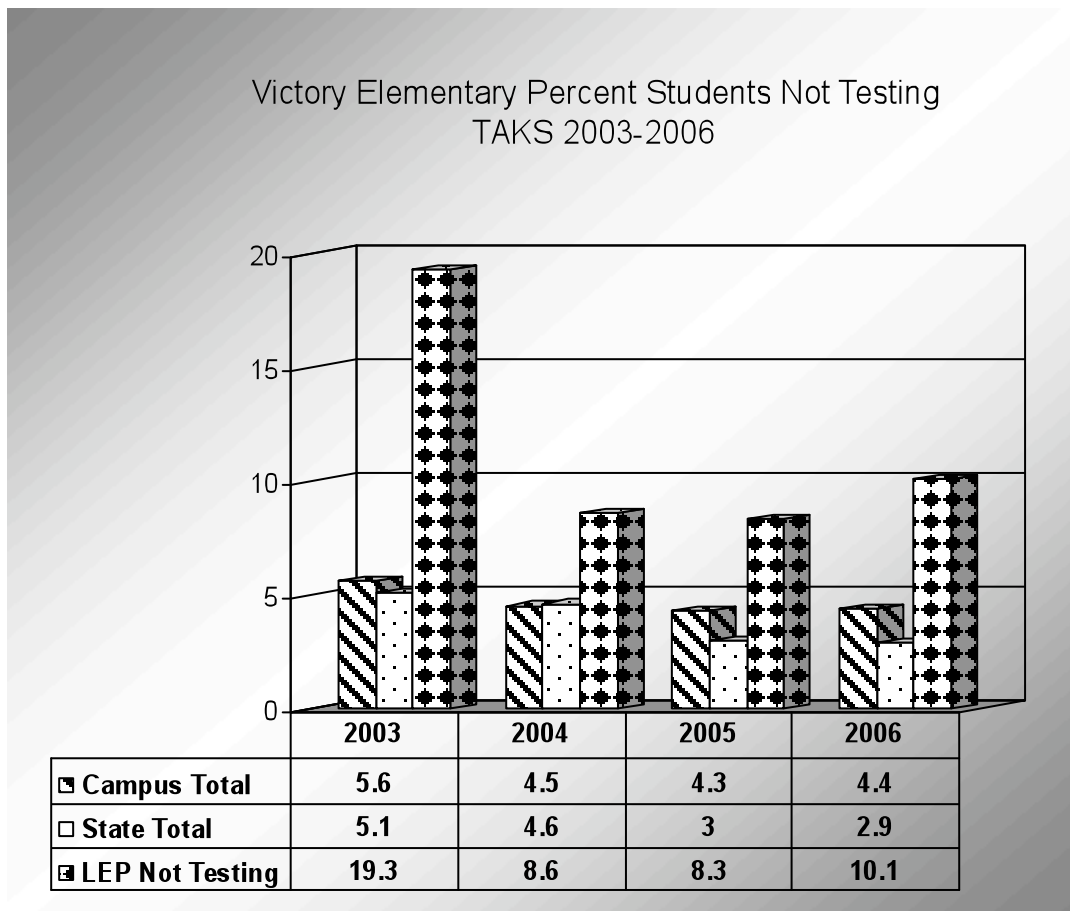
Figure 4.12. Victory Elementary Percent Students Not Testing- TAKS 2003-2006

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2003-2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.

Bird's View Elementary

Campus Profile

Bird's View (BVE) is an elementary school situated in an urban setting in central Texas. Upon entering the school, a sense of urgency is pervasive. Staff members quickly offer visitors assistance to the office, but children tend to look away and walk off quickly. The instructional faculty consists of fifty-six professional staff, of which forty-eight are teachers, one is a principal, one is an assistant principal, and six are additional support staff. Six paraprofessionals assist with instruction. The principal of this campus has been at this school for two years. The staff is almost 44% Hispanic and 54% White. Approximately 90% of BVE's teachers are bilingual or ESL certified. The average years of teacher experience are 9.3. Only the state average and ASE have a more experienced set of teachers than BVE.

In addition to serving the students from its own community, bilingual students are bused from four other campuses within the district to this bilingual site. The school also receives students from a local children's home, contributing to the school's mobility rate as children are placed on the campus while arrangements are made for permanent placement. A school's mobility rate is determined by the number of children who remain at the school less than 83% of the school year.

The average number of students per teacher is 13.7, making it the campus in this study with the lowest student-teacher ratio. Total expenditures of $5,933 per student for BVE are lower than the state and the other acceptable school, but higher than the two exemplary schools. Bird's View Elementary has the largest percentage of LEP students

and at-risk students of the four schools under study, in addition to having the second largest percentage of low SES students. This school tests the highest percentage of all students of all four campuses, in addition to testing the highest percentage of its LEP students. Selected 2006 information is presented in Table 4.3d for easy comparison of the four schools of the study and the state averages where available.

Table 4.3d

Selected 2006 Data for Comparison of Campus Profiles of Four Schools in the Study

Data Description	All Saints El	Battle Cry El	Victory El	Bird's View El	State
Avg.. Yrs. Tchr. Exp.	11.5	5.9	6.3	**9.3**	11.5
% Certified Teachers	100.0	100.0	100.0	**100.0**	*
Stud/Tchr Ratio**	17.7	16.9	13.9	**13.7**	14.9
Avg. Class Size***	20.4	21.4	19.6	**17.0**	*
Per Pupil Expenditure	$5,187	$5,891	$6,697	**$5,933**	$7,229
% Econ. Dis.	87.7	82.9	74.0	**83.8**	55.6
% LEP	44.5	34.5	49.6	**58.9**	14.6
% Hispanic	99.7	98.3	74.8	**81.7**	45.3
% White	0.1	1.4	18.0	**12.1**	36.5
% At-Risk	72.9	61.3	63.4	**74.5**	48.7
% Not Tested	3.5	2.9	4.4	**2.2**	3.0
% LEP Not Tested	8.9	10.3	10.1	**2.9**	*
% Retention	2.6	5.1	2.6	**2.6**	*

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System repors. Austin, TX.
*No data available.
**Student-Teacher ratio based on all teachers on campus
***Avg. class size based on actual classroom teachers only.

Student Demographics

The school's 655 students are approximately 82% Hispanic, with 84% economically disadvantaged, 75% at-risk of failing, 27% mobile, and 59% LEP. Approximately two thirds of the students begin their education in bilingual classrooms. About one half of the students in fifth grade still need bilingual instruction. Bilingual students are grouped homogeneously and served in classrooms without mainstream education students present. Approximately one half of the bilingual students are tested in Spanish in third, in fourth, and in fifth grade. Bused students from four other campuses return to their home campus once they meet the proficiency standard on the state reading assessment in English. Those who are not successful remain on the campus in order to continue participating in the bilingual program, which is not available on their home campus.

Campus demographic data show a steady and similar yearly increase in the percentage of Hispanic, of LEP, and of economically disadvantaged students. Contrastingly, the White student group has decreased yearly from 2003-2006. These trends are demonstrated in the following graph, Figure 4.13.
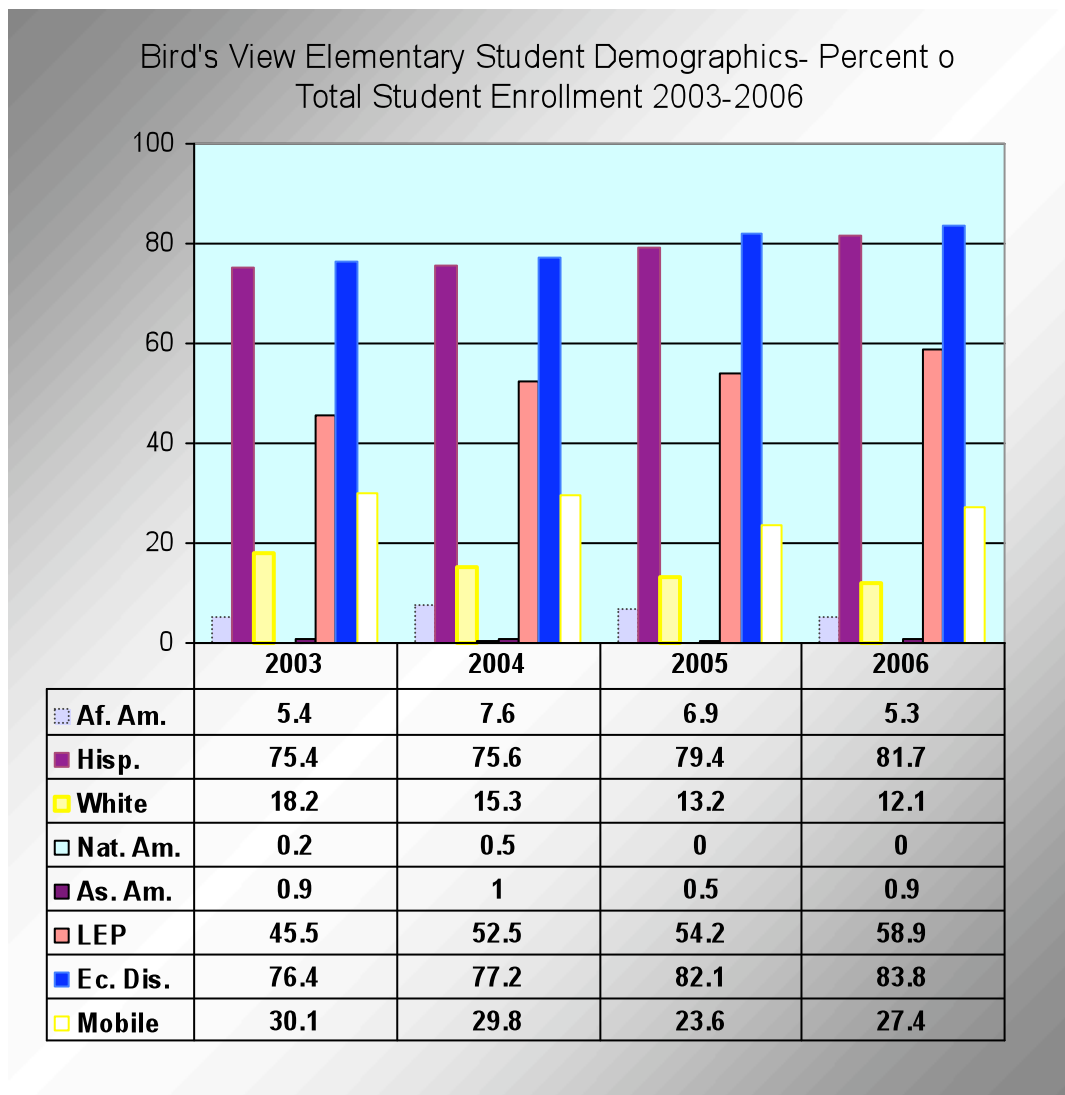
Bird's View Elementary Student Demographics- Percent o Total Student Enrollment 2003-2006

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Af. Am.	5.4	7.6	6.9	5.3
Hisp.	75.4	75.6	79.4	81.7
White	18.2	15.3	13.2	12.1
Nat. Am.	0.2	0.5	0	0
As. Am.	0.9	1	0.5	0.9
LEP	45.5	52.5	54.2	58.9
Ec. Dis.	76.4	77.2	82.1	83.8
Mobile	30.1	29.8	23.6	27.4

Figure 4.13. Bird's View Elementary Student Demographics- Percent of Total Student Enrollment 2003-2006

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2003-2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.

Student Performance

Hispanic student group. Student performance at Bird's View Elementary has increased overall from 2003 to 2006. The following chart, Table 4.14, graphs the performance results for the Hispanic student group. The Hispanic performance chart shows an overall increase in all subject areas, although increases have not occurred on a yearly basis in the areas of math and writing, and science scores are dismally low in spite of yearly increases. The principal explained that she and her staff instituted a conscious effort toward best practices in 2004-2005.

The principal noted that when she came on board the teachers and parents did not know their scores were low. Teachers also revealed to her that science and social studies were not being emphasized, and in some classrooms not taught at all because the campus did not emphasize those subjects. The concentration was on the arts, on a microsociety, on reading, and on math. The incoming principal initiated intensive staff development in the use of best practices after much reading and observing of other campuses, in addition to her own experience with improving student performance of Hispanic students. Staff development included curriculum alignment, teaching to the level of rigor of the TEKS, the use of manipulatives, using the first language for primary instruction, using culturally responsive teaching, technology-enriched instruction, cooperative learning, and increasing teacher responsibility for student achievement. A plan to encourage parents to participate in parent information sessions, to visit the campus, and to request frequent progress reports from teachers was also put into place. The increase in student performance was quite noticeable due to the low initial scores.
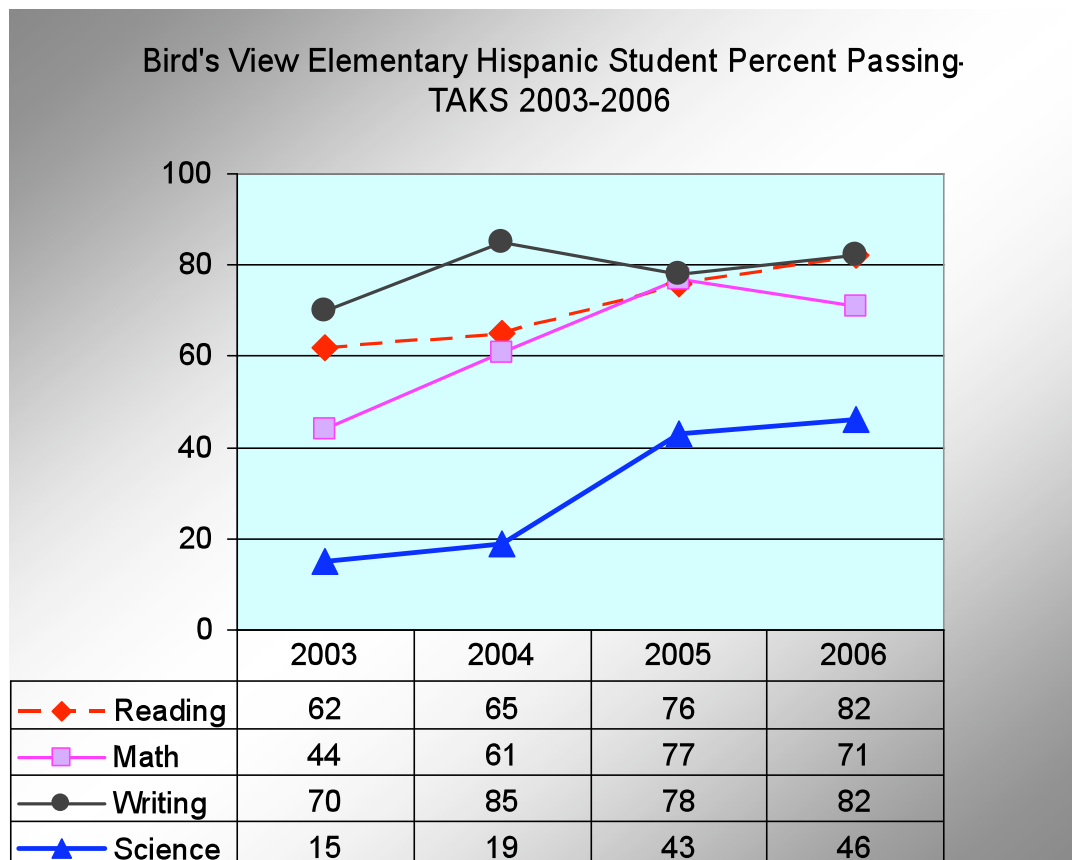
Figure 4.14. Bird's View Elementary Hispanic Student Percent Passing- TAKS 2003-2006

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2003-2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.

LEP student group. LEP students account for approximately 51 percent of the tested students at BVE.   Approximately 3% of the LEP students were not tested. LEP student achievement has been inconsistent in Math, in Writing, and in Science, as depicted in Figure 4.15, although all scores have increased over the three-year period. Only Reading has shown steady increases from one year to the next.   The principal

attributes the inconsistency to the large teacher turnover due to the change in leadership. New teachers lacked the experience and training to immediately make a difference with this student group.

Bird's View Elementary LEP Student Percent Passing-TAKS 2003-2006				
	2003	2004	2005	2006
Reading	55	63	74	81
Math	32	63	76	63
Writing	60	85	63	84
Science	12	4	29	33
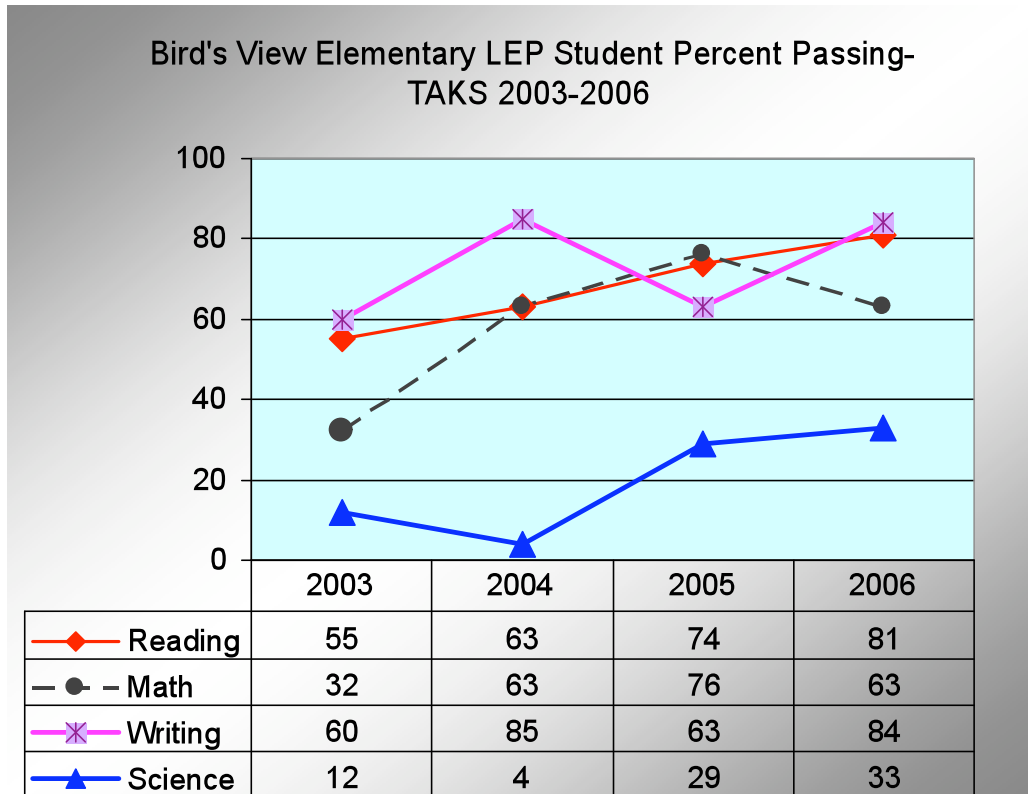
Figure 4.15. Bird's View Elementary LEP Student Percent Passing- TAKS 2003-2006

Source: Texas Education Agency.   (2003-2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System reports.   Austin, TX.

Percent students not testing on the TAKS. The number of students not testing on the TAKS test ranged from almost 2% to slightly over 3%, while LEP exemptions ranged from almost 3% to almost 9 1/2% for the four-year period from 2003-2006.   The

following graph in Figure 4.16 shows the four-year data for the total and LEP student groups on the campus compared to the state when available.

Bird's View Elementary Percent Students Not Testing
TAKS 2003-2006

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Campus Total	3.3	1.8	3.1	2.2
State Total	5.1	4.6	3	2.9
LEP Not Testing	9.4	4.1	6.1	2.9
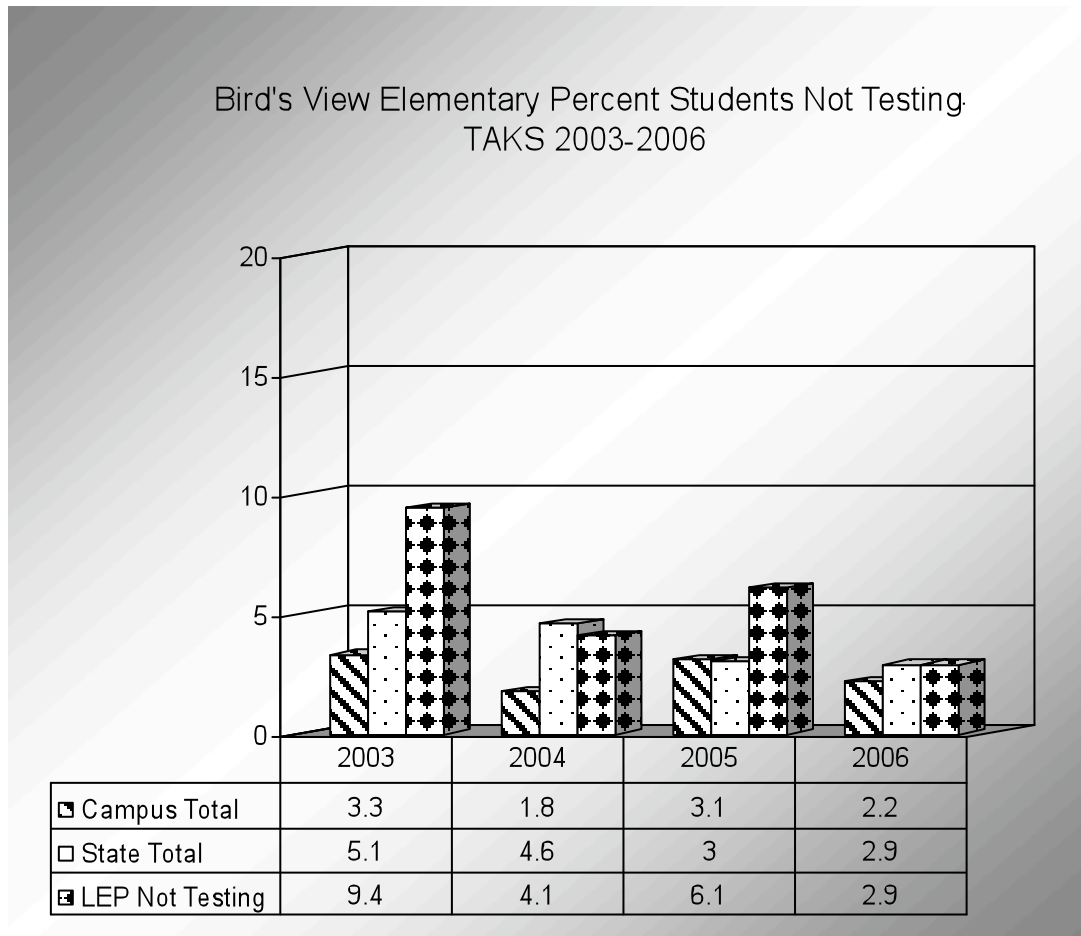
Figure 4.16. Bird's View Elementary Percent Student Not Testing- TAKS 2003-2006

Source: Texas Education Agency. (2003-2006). Academic Excellence Indicator System reports. Austin, TX.

Factors Impacting Student Achievement and Within Control of Schools

 Data on two teacher-level variables surfaced as noted on Table 4.17. A higher percentage of teachers at the exemplary schools were bilingual and ESL certified and used best practices in their classrooms. Knowing the language of the children's homes helped the educators communicate with the parents of the students. In addition, hearing the teachers use the Spanish language in a positive light showed the students that their language was valued and was an asset to them, thereby validating their culture. By removing the stigma of so many projected obstacles due to their language and ethnic membership, the teachers allowed the students to concentrate on their learning. Finally, by using best practices more frequently and consistently, the teachers provided a high level of education to all students, no matter which classroom they were in. Their determination to make the students successful did not allow many students to slip through the cracks of failure.

Table 4.17

Summary of Factors Which Impact Student Achievement of Four Campuses in the Study and Which Are Within the Control of Schools

Campus Data	Battle Cry Elementary	All Saints Elementary	Victory Elementary	Bird's View Elementary
State Ratings based on TAKS	Exemplary 90% or > met standards	Exemplary 90% or > met standards	Acceptable 25-69% met standards	Acceptable 25-69% met standards
% Using Best Practices	**97**	**97**	85	85
% Teachers Bilingual or ESL Certified**	**100**	**100**	42	92

Factors Impacting Student Achievement but Outside the Control of Schools

Poverty

Although researchers have compiled their own lists of variables impacting student achievement, the consensus is that the strongest impact comes from a student's socioeconomic status and the factors associated with this trait. Among those are mobility, lack of resources, health and social development, and learning opportunities (Barton, 2004). The school's SES plays an even larger role than individual student SES by impacting school variables such as school climate, teacher expectations, and school safety (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). A school's SES is determined by the number of students at that school receiving free or reduced lunch. Based on these studies, the exemplary schools with their high numbers of economically disadvantaged students should be lower-performing than the acceptable campuses, yet their school rating based on the Texas state assessment results was quite the opposite.

Readiness for Learning

Readiness for learning is promoted through enrollment in early childhood classes. Early childhood education (ECE) is a program available to three- and four-year-olds who qualify based on Limited English Proficiency and lack of education opportunity. ECE begins to emphasize literacy and communication skills in a more structured manner, similar to what is expected at the kindergarten level; enrolling in such a program immediately exposes the child to a proactive system for academic success. Attendance at these centers better prepares children for success in elementary school (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The exemplary campuses had less students enrolled in early childhood

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classes than the acceptable schools, again predicting lower student performance. Student achievement, however, was higher than the acceptable schools' whose rates of children with ECE were higher.

Class Size

Class size impacts student learning. The Tennessee Project Star, funded by the Tennessee state legislature, concluded that lower class size produced a substantial increase in student scores in math and reading. Follow-up studies to Project Star added that the students maintained their academic gains through high school. The exemplary campuses' class sizes were larger than the acceptable schools' classes, yet their student performance was higher.

Parents' Educational Level

The parent educational level impacts a child's success in school by creating a difference in the amount of resources for learning that are available in the home.   Higher educational levels correlate to higher incomes and higher levels of vocabulary, valuable resources for student success. Although approximately half of the parents of the students in the exemplary campuses had less than a high school education compared to the high percentage of post secondary education of the parents at the acceptable schools, the high-performing schools overcame the impact of that factor on the students. The staff was able to identify and meet the needs of their students to promote academic success.

Per Pupil Expenditures

Research shows that higher levels of funding for schools correlates to an increase in student achievement by providing money for additional resources and personnel. The acceptable schools received more money per pupil than the exemplary campuses, but the exemplary campuses outperformed them by large differences in the percentage of students passing the state assessment.

Percent Hispanic Enrollment

Higher enrollments of Hispanic students usually correlate to lower academic performance. The state averages show this trend between White student TAKS scores and Hispanic student scores. The exemplary campuses enrolled approximately 99% Hispanic students. Not only were they from an ethnic minority, a high percentage of the students lived in poverty conditions. However, the high-performing schools were able to adapt their teaching strategies and practices to meet the students' needs, resulting in increased academic success on the state assessment.

Percent White Enrollment

A higher percentage of White students on a campus is a positive factor in increasing achievement scores because of the students' familiarity with the language and the culture of education. One only has to look at the yearly TAKS results to see the discrepancy between these two student groups. Although the number of White students at their schools was minimal, the exemplary group outscored the acceptable campuses which had higher ratios of this student group.

Home Language

The last common negative factor overcome by the exemplary campuses was having high percentages of students with a language other than English spoken at home. Such circumstances may create problems when parents try to help their children with their English language development. In addition, if the parents only speak Spanish at home, the home is probably a low-income home, compounding the lack of resources available to facilitate student success at school. However, although Spanish was the language spoken in 75-95% of the students' homes in the South Texas schools compared to 15-36% of the Central Texas students' homes, the exemplary campus groups still met the standard of 90% or more students passing the TAKS to receive the exemplary rating.

Favorable Variables

The exemplary campuses did have several variables in their favor. Two factors, higher levels of implementation of best practices and higher levels of teachers certified to teach bilingual and ESL students, are within the control of the schools. The following factors, however, are not within the schools' control. The percentage of LEP students entering Kindergarten was lower providing a smaller group of at-risk children attributable to lack of language proficiency. The campuses provided a strong climate for teaching and learning and were led by stronger leaders than the acceptable schools. Both these variables have been noted in the Effective Schools literature as instrumental to the academic success of the school. Less student mobility assisted in providing consistency in the delivery of instruction, thereby, promoting student success. Table 4.18 provides a more detailed view of the number of positive variables each campus possessed. When both schools with the same rating showed a level of the variable indicating an advantage

over the other group, the data was coded in red. The number of positive factors for each school is totaled at the bottom of the table. The higher the number of positive factors that are present, the higher the expectation that that school's achievement data would surpass the other schools' data.

Table 4.18

Summary of Factors Which Impact Student Achievement of Four Campuses in the Study and Which Are Out of the Control of Schools

Campus Data	Battle Cry Elementary Exemplary	All Saints Elementary Exemplary	Victory Elementary Acceptable	Bird's View Elementary Acceptable
Regions	SouthTexas	SouthTexas	Central Texas	Central Texas
% LEP in PreK**	**49**	**43**	70	73
Readiness for Learning (Prek/K ratio)*	67.6	87.2	**97.5**	**95.7**
Avg.. Class size per teacher**	21.4	20.4	**19.6**	**17.0**
Parent Educational Level*** < = less than HS HS= HS Grad > = higher than HS	49%<HS 23%=HS 28%>HS	65%<HS 18%=HS 15%>HS	**8%<HS 24%=HS 58%>HS**	**38%<HS 32%=HS 31%>HS**
Family Environment*** C=Couple Household F=Female Household	C= 79% F= 21%	**C= 85% F= 15%**	**C= 84% F= 16%**	C= 71% F= 29%
% In Same Home in 1995***	**65.3**	**71.3**	25.9	40.7
Second Language Spoken at Home- ***	74.2	95.5	**15.7**	**36.9**
Avg.. Yrs. Tchrs Exp.*	**11.5**	5.9	6.3	**9.3**
Per pupil Expenditures*	$5,187	$5,891	**$6,697**	**$5,933**
% Economically Disadvantaged*	87.7	**82.9**	**74.0**	83.8
% LEP*	**44.5**	**34.5**	49.6	58.9
% Hispanic*	99.7	98.3	**74.8**	**81.7**
% White*	0.1	1.4	**18.0**	**12.2**
% At-Risk*	72.9	**61.3**	**63.4**	74.5
% Mobility*	**19.3**	**20.3**	21.7	27.4
Total Higher Level of Positive Factors	**(7)**	**(9)**	**(10)**	**(8)**

■ Higher Level of Positive Factors

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SUMMARY

The four schools in this study are situated in dissimilar geographic locations which possibly accounts for many of their differences in variables which may impact student success on the campuses. From differences in the number of students who attend preschool to differences in the economic conditions of the students and the communities, variables were not all exclusive to each region, as demonstrated on the tables comparing the four campuses. Similarities of the campuses described in this section included high percentages of Hispanic, LEP, and economically disadvantaged students. A high percentage of students entering all four campus PreKs enrolled in bilingual/ESL classes. However, the number exiting the bilingual program by the end of third grade was quite different between the acceptable and exemplary campuses. Very few students remained in Spanish instruction classrooms in the exemplary campuses by the time they reached the fourth and fifth grades. In addition, the exited LEP students continued to be successful on the English TAKS, the Texas state assessment.

Bilingual/ESL students at the acceptable campuses, on the other hand, remained in Spanish instruction in high percentages even at the fourth and fifth grades, when most students in an early exit transitional bilingual program are scheduled to be with their non-LEP peers. Also, the success rate on the English and Spanish TAKS was much lower at the acceptable campuses than at the exemplary campuses. Close examination of the state accountability reports showed close to 10% of the LEP students not being tested on the three campuses which enrolled the lowest percentages of this student group.

Observation of the school climate at each of the schools revealed that the exemplary campuses displayed more positive characteristics, such as friendliness, collegiality, and genuine caring of the students. All variables considered, the units provided interesting data for examination in this research.

Chapter 5: Research Findings

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports the results of the survey instruments, observations, interviews, and other data collected from the four participating schools, in addition to explaining the utilization of the data to reach the goal of this study. The purpose of the study was to find those instructional strategies conducive to high performance of Hispanic LEP students on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills.

The qualitative study focused on four elementary schools in Texas. The research entailed comparing the data collected from four campuses with predominantly Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and LEP students. Two campuses demonstrated high performance and two campuses demonstrated average performance as denoted by the TEA's exemplary rating for the high performing schools and an acceptable rating for the average performing schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study attempted to answer the research questions:

1) Which, if any, instructional practices are present in the exemplary-rated campuses compared to acceptable-rated campuses with the same student population? and,

2) Are educators aware of and modifying their instructional practices to be more aligned with proven research-based practices?

The researcher examined the data gathered from the interviews, the surveys, and documents from the schools and from the state accreditation agency to answer the research questions of the study. Although not anticipated, other findings surfaced which impact the conclusions and recommendations in the following chapter.

FINDINGS

Findings from all sources revealed various similarities among the practices commonly implemented at all four campuses in the study. The aggregated responses of the Best Practice Framework produced statistically significant differences between campus groups in the levels of implementation of its strategies and the campus ratings, with a weak relationship suggested by a Cramer's phi statistic of .180, but a stronger relationship suggested by the gamma value of .561. Although the correlation statistics were small or nonexistent for four of the Framework sections, a larger difference surfaced in responses to the survey section titled "Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building", which translates at the campus level, to "Collaborate in grade/subject level teams focused on student work" (see Table 2.3 in Chapter 2). Appendix C1-C5 displays the complete results by Framework Section.

Notable differences from the interviews and observations also existed between the two groups in the consistent and the systematic implementation of all the practices revealed in the study, in the collective responsibility of teachers for all students, in the commitment and positive attitude voiced and modeled by teachers, in the instructional methods and research-based programs used at the campuses, and in the instructional setting of the bilingual/ESL students. Bilingual students were served homogenously on

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the acceptable campuses versus being served alongside their English-speaking peers on the exemplary campuses. In addition students were bused in from other campuses and remained at the acceptable campuses until they passed the state assessment, whereas the high-performing campuses only served children from their neighborhood.

Measure of Significance

In order to determine if a relationship existed between the use of the Best Practices in the survey and school performance the entire survey results were aggregated for each campus group and the Chi-square was computed, along with its significance level. Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero (2002) explained that "a Chi squares test is an inferential statistics technique designed to test for significant relationships between two variables organized in a bivariate table" (p. 506). A Chi square statistic with a p-value less than .05 was used to indicate that the differences found between the best practices and school performance were statistically significant. Table 5.1 provides the data.

Table 5.1

Campus Ratings by Use of Best Practices: Aggregated Results With Significance Levels

Survey	Were Best Practices Used?	Exemplary Campuses	Acceptable Campuses	Chi square	p
Best Practice Framework	Yes	1375	1089	88.77	<.0001*
	No	75	211	Significant	

*p value <.05 indicates a statistical significance

To determine whether each individual section of the survey produced statistically significant differences in the implementation of its best practices and school ratings, the Chi squares test was used on the results of each section by campus group. Table 5.2 shows the frequencies, the Chi square statistic, and the significance level for each section of the survey. The degree of freedom is 1. Four sections of the Best Practice Framework showed significance levels below .05, indicating statistical significance between their practice and school performance. Only Section 4 resulted in a p value greater than .05, indicating no statistical significance. The interviews elaborated on each section of the survey results and provided data to help answer the second and third research questions of the study.

Table 5.2

Campus Ratings by Use of Best Practice by Framework Section with Significance Levels

Framework Sections	Were Best Practices Used?	Exemplary Campuses	Acceptable Campuses	Chi square	p
Curriculum And Academic Goals	Yes	261	215	5.68	.017*
	No	29	45	Significant	
Staff Selection, Leadership, Capacity Building	Yes	259	151	68.84	<.0001*
	No	31	109	Significant	
Instructional Programs, Practices, Arrangements	Yes	285	233	17.22	<.0001*
	No	5	27	Significant	
Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, Use of Data	Yes	286	253	.63	.427
	No	4	7	Not Significant	
Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment	Yes	284	237	11.29	.0008*
	No	6	23	Significant	

*p-value <.05 indicates statistical significance.

Measure of Association

Gamma, a measure of association for dichotomous variables was also calculated. Gamma may vary between -1 and +1, with a stronger relationship indicated by a measure closer to -1 or +1. A measure of 0 relates no association between the variables. The gammas between the practices of each section and being high performing ranged from 0.306 in Section 1 to 0.737 in Section 3, indicating moderate to strong positive relationships between the two variables. Gamma for the entire survey results was 0.561, indicating a strong positive relationship between the variables school performance and use of the Framework's best practices. The following table shows the survey responses by Framework section and the corresponding gamma values. White and Korotayev (2003) wrote that, "If our hypothesis implies the presence of conditions that are necessary, but not sufficient (to be accountable for the entire change in the dependent variable), the appropriate measure of correlation strength is gamma" (p. 11). Bearing this thought in mind, the gamma value was chosen to show correlation based on the belief that the practices espoused by the survey are necessary but not sufficient to account for all the high performance of the units of study.

Cramer's phi, on the other hand, which only shows the correlation if the practices of the survey are the sole predictors of the high performance, showed a weak correlation for the aggregated results of the survey and for all individual sections other than Section 2, which showed a slightly moderate correlation between the use of its strategies and high performance. Cramer's phi ranged from 0.11 on Section 1 to 0.36 on Section 2 of the survey. The other variables possibly contributing to the performance levels of the

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schools in the study include the practices on the observation list and the variables noted

on the various tables presented in chapter four.

Table 5.3

Campus Ratings by Use of Best Practices by Framework Section with Correlation Levels

Framework Sections	Were best practices used?	Exemplary Campuses	Acceptable Campuses	Gamma	Cramer's Phi
Complete Best Practice Survey	Yes	1375	1089	0.561	0.18
	No	75	211		
Curriculum and Academic Goals Goals	Yes	261	215	0.306	0.11
	No	29	45		
Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building	Yes	259	151	0.716	0.36
	No	31	109		
Instructional Programs, Practices Arrangements	Yes	285	233	0.737	0.19
	No	5	27		
Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, Use of Data	Yes	286	253	P-value showed not statistically significant difference	0.05
	No	4	7		
Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment	Yes	284	237	0.642	0.15
	No	6	23		

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Which, if any, instructional practices are present in the exemplary-rated campuses with high numbers of Hispanic LEP students compared to acceptable-rated campuses with the same type of student populations?

To answer this question, the researcher examined information about the participating schools from the Best Practice Framework Survey, the walkthrough observations, and the interviews. The findings are presented by campus and then by campus group. Each campus' findings begin with Section 2: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building because it produced the largest difference between campus groups in implementation of its practices. Section 4, Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data, is not included in the discussion, since its p value was >.05, indicating the differences between campus groups were not statistically significant.

Exemplary School- All Saints Elementary

Findings from Best Practice Framework, Interviews, and Walkthroughs

Staff selection and capacity building. Various practices were in place at ASE to ensure staff success in meeting all the students' needs. Final selection of teachers was the responsibility of the grade level teams. Applicants were made aware of the campus expectations and held to those high levels upon hiring. Because applicants knew the expectations upon employment, they were not surprised by the stringent workload required to meet those expectations, thereby minimizing teacher turnover. Interviews revealed that the principal and staff met regularly through grade level meetings and through faculty meetings to discuss their instructional issues, to discuss student work, to

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collaborate on strategies and materials, and to plan staff development. Teachers reported that specialists were asked to model and to assist with staff development to ensure smooth delivery of instructional models.

Additionally, teachers voiced a strong commitment to collective responsibility for the achievement of all the students at their campus. Observations and interviews showed that the teachers felt free to observe each other to improve their own teaching skills and to ensure student achievement. Teachers modeled a cheerful "can do" attitude and spent time before school, after school, and on weekends in collegial discussions of the curriculum, of the students, and of modification of instruction to meet the students' needs. These actions led to a positive and caring campus climate. The principal's role as motivator and facilitator surfaced as she observed daily in the classrooms, assisted with intervention groups to model collective responsibility, and questioned what she saw if it was extraneous and unrelated to learning.

Curriculum and academic goals. Although the entire district will be moving to an electronic curriculum planning tool, the principal and the teachers reported during interviews that the staff at All Saints Elementary developed its own Reading curriculum, which later was offered to the entire district. Teachers worked throughout the summer to prepare curriculum documents for the following year that they then shared with the rest of the district, to help improve campuses with similar demographics. The reading assessments at this school were all derived from state assessment sources and were aligned to the campus-based curriculum. All these strategies ensured their taught

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curriculum was based on the state objectives, as noted in this section of the Best Practice Framework.

Observations of the classrooms showed that teachers collaborated both horizontally and vertically during grade level meetings and during regular extended planning periods to ensure no gaps existed in meeting their curriculum goals and to become knowledgeable of the grade level objectives before and after their own grade level. Teachers meet horizontally when they meet with other teachers in the same grade level. They meet vertically when they collaborate with teachers from other grade levels. The principal, too, was observed meeting with the teachers by grade level and as a campus to discuss how each team could help ensure consistency with their understanding of the grade level expectations and concept development in all subject areas. Again, these practices ensured that the teaching was based on TEKS objectives as required by the Best Practice Framework.

Instructional programs, practices, and arrangements. The principal related that All Saints Elementary students were grouped by language of instruction at grades kinder through second, but beginning at third grade the bilingual/ESL students were integrated into mainstream classrooms. She added that bilingual students received instruction in Spanish with the exception of Math, which the district required to be taught in English. Observations verified that both English and Spanish instruction occurred daily in every kinder through second grade classroom. The principal related a strong focus on Spanish language proficiency before transitioning students into English. Exiting from the bilingual program was targeted for the end of third grade.

Flexible groups were observed at all grade levels and were based on assessment results. Flexible groups are temporary groups of students formed for short-term instruction based on the group's specific academic needs. A walk through the classrooms corroborated that a low-risk environment provided students with opportunities to discuss concepts and skills either in English or in Spanish. The walkthrough also provided an opportunity to observe students finding solutions to their questions and justifying their answers in cooperative learning groups.

Teachers worked by grade levels to plan their timelines for the delivery of the state curriculum. Interview responses revealed that frequent monitoring, both formal and informal, provided the grade level teams with the necessary information to adjust their timelines for re-teaching and to group students for additional assistance to ensure mastery of prerequisite skills in preparation for more difficult concepts. Teachers were observed discussing students' needs and stated they felt free to send students back and forth between classrooms to work in groups with other teachers.

Teachers reported that the principal monitored classroom instruction daily, evaluated weekly testing, and assisted teachers by working with student groups. Interview responses confirmed that the principal expected students to learn at a high level of understanding, accepted no excuses for faculty failure to meet student needs, but listened to suggestions for new materials or strategies to employ with the students themselves.

Programs, such as "Voyager", "Sing, Spell, Read, and Write", the "Waterford Reading Program", and "SuccessMaker" were used for grouping and for consistent

instructional delivery. All these programs were research-based to work with this population of students. Teachers reported that they looked to their principal for the research on the programs at the campus and that the district also provided research information at their staff development meetings during new program implementation.

ASE's principal emphasized the steady improvement on the TAKS due to a focus on alignment of the curriculum by the teachers, resulting in a sense of ownership and commitment by everyone and ensuring uniform implementation of the curriculum. Best practices were already being implemented since TAAS was in place, but recognizing the rigor and high level reasoning required on the TAKS, the staff decided to review and study the TEKS carefully in order to familiarize themselves well with the changes in the state curriculum. The campus' use of best practices went as far back as the 1995-1996 school year, which is when the TEKS were first introduced, although not tested.

Recognition, intervention, and adjustment. ASE teachers were quick to offer their own meticulousness regarding the strategies and the programs they used to maximize student learning. They articulated during interviews that they benefited and enjoyed observing each other and the campus/district specialists because they trusted what they saw worked with their students. Because they all met regularly to determine how to teach particular skills or objectives, the meetings also provided them the opportunity to discuss the students who were having trouble achieving mastery and to collaborate by sharing strategies and by sharing students into groups. Communication with parents regarding student progress occurred regularly and was monitored through a phone log. Parent-teacher communication was an expectation, especially the weekly progress reporting of

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students receiving interventions. The principal expected teachers to provide her with a report on how at-risk students were progressing with the extra instruction being provided.

Technology was instrumental daily in a small group format for reinforcement of skills and concepts and to extend learning through research or presentation of subject matter. Students were observed practicing their reading and their math skills on "SuccessMaker", a software program that incorporates instruction, assessment, and monitoring. The teachers and administrators praised this program in helping them meet student needs.

Exemplary School- Battle Cry Elementary

Findings from Best Practice Framework, Interviews, and Walkthroughs
Staff selection and capacity building. Hiring quality teachers was an absolute priority at Battle Cry Elementary. The process started with the selection of educators committed to student success. The principal and the teachers both revealed that prospective teachers were first interviewed by the principal and then brought before the campus grade level teams for final selection, to facilitate collective responsibility for grade level achievement and collaboration. Collective responsibility was also demonstrated through the rotation of student groups in PreK through second grade, according to the principal.

Teachers reported that collaboration and teamwork were also instrumental to their success as a campus, and gave examples of working late into the night to help new co-workers understand their programs and remain consistent in their delivery of instruction. In third through fifth grade, teachers explained that they worked with flexible groups

from each other's classrooms as needed, to allow teachers to work with smaller groups of children and to share the responsibility for this group of students. The campus climate was extremely positive and promoted collaboration for student success.

Staff development was requested by the teachers based on what they felt was needed on their campus. The principal related that she brought in specialists or consultants based on teacher requests and needs to provide a consistent and a high-level curriculum to the students. In addition to learning how to deliver concepts, teachers explained that they also learned from the presenters how to adapt the programs' materials for different levels of students.

Curriculum and academic goals. Teachers at Battle Cry Elementary reported meeting regularly to discuss their instructional strategies, their student groups, and the progress on their curriculum goals. The principal ensured at least one extended planning time per six-week period to allow teachers time to collaborate on their curriculum goals, which they monitored through frequent testing for adjustment of instructional strategies.

Interviews depicted all the teachers having high expectations for all the students and voicing this expectation to their students as they discussed their campus goals. Following their campus timelines and curriculum remained a frequent topic in the teachers' daily meetings, due to campus and district assessments. Campus documents showed that all classrooms had some method of assessment to assess progress and the need for intervention.

Instructional programs, practices, and arrangements. Teachers stated they constantly adapted their materials, their pacing, and their instruction to meet the students'

needs. Before students exited a grade level, teachers reported that they reviewed student assessment scores to prepare for summer school. At the beginning of the following school year, the students were listed in order of achievement by grade level, so the teachers immediately, once school started, could learn the names of the students in that grade level that needed additional assistance. Because teachers rotated their groups, they felt it was important to know, to monitor, and to stay abreast of all the students' results by grade level. Programs and strategies were discussed daily to ensure all teachers knew students progress in all subjects and to maintain continuity of instruction at the appropriate level.

The principal explained that both bilingual/ESL and regular education students were grouped together in the classrooms and that the students' first language was used for instruction according to their scored level of proficiency on an oral language test. Teacher interviews revealed that students were allowed to respond either in English or in Spanish, as long as they demonstrated a sincere grasp of the presented concepts. Principal monitoring created a climate of high expectations for all students. The principal reported that her teachers knew the students and their families, making it easier to communicate the students' goals and expectations to the parents to receive additional support in reaching all students.

Observations noted programs such as the Waterford reading program proved key to providing a consistent delivery of instruction in the English language to students who were identified as needing additional assistance. The SuccessMaker software program assisted the teachers with small group instruction and with ongoing assessment of the

students' Reading and Math skills after instruction. Teachers stated they learned about program effectiveness from their peers and from staff development meetings with new program introductions. They did not refer to research-based programs by category.

The principal explained that the staff has been using best practices since 1994-1995 when the school opened. The teachers sat down together to analyze the TAKS objectives in order to better understand the student expectations for each grade level. Their planning together was important in improving scores in 2003-2004. She added that they monitor and adjust each year as they add or change strategies based on their students' needs.

Recognition, intervention, and adjustment. Analysis of student achievement data remained vital throughout the year for flexible grouping and for adjustment of instruction. Expecting high achievement from all students, educators stated that they discussed the "failure is not an option" belief with students and students did not let them down. Both teachers and administrators added that they communicated student progress regularly with parents by phone and via notes sent home. Since they knew the families well, they had developed rapport with the parents, who, in turn, provided strong support for their efforts.

Students were the primary focus of instruction. Interviews revealed how students' needs were addressed individually in the classroom and during meetings. Teachers and administrators were observed talking to students about their work and progress in the classroom. Teachers collaborated with each other to find ways to help individual students in each other's classrooms as evidenced by teacher responses to interview

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questions. Because lessons were developed together, consistency and alignment occurred regardless of which instructor re-taught the students.

Acceptable School- Victory Elementary

Findings from Best Practice Framework, Interviews, and Walkthroughs

Staff selection and capacity building. This section of the survey showed the highest number of negative responses for its ten best practices. A high number of new teachers and teachers with zero to five years experience comprised this campus. Some of the new teachers related that they did not feel knowledgeable of the district's bilingual program and had not visited other teachers' classrooms to acquire strategies from master teachers. They also felt they needed to study student work together more frequently in collaborative meetings. Another concern that surfaced at their meetings was the lack of visiting each other's classroom for consistency of delivery of instruction and high expectations. The campus climate was not as positive as the exemplary campus model. The teachers did not feel comfortable discussing achievement and spent a considerable amount of time complaining about their jobs.

Interviews revealed that this year teachers started meeting twice a week during their conference periods and sitting with district personnel during one of those meeting times. They added that they also held grade level meetings to discuss how they were going to teach and to assess the particular objectives for that week and to create lessons together. Teachers reported analyzing and disaggregating assessment results. Campus bilingual meetings were used to discuss issues vertically and horizontally as confirmed by observations, particularly if there were concerns regarding programmatic changes.

Teachers explained that the district bilingual/ESL director set district level bilingual meeting topics. Because the district bilingual program changed this year, teachers stated that after meetings, they were asked how the district could support them in implementing the program as discussed at the meetings. Staff development was based on district initiatives and campus needs as evidenced by assessment results. This statement was verified by school documents, by interviews, and by observations.

Curriculum and academic goals. Observation of documents revealed that Victory Elementary teachers followed a computer-based, district-wide curriculum to develop their instructional lessons. Timelines for the delivery of instruction and for assessment of the objectives to be covered were included in the district curriculum. Their campus performance goals were sent to them from the superintendent's office for alignment with the district goals. Teachers stated that they understood their grade level expectations well and explained them to the students, so they could set individual goals and then explained to the students how they, the teachers, would help them reach their goals.

Grade level meeting observations showed the teachers collaborating in planning the delivery of instruction and their assessments based on the district curriculum and on the expectations set in the curriculum tool. The principal and teachers related that they adhered to district guidelines in obtaining resources and materials, such as manipulatives and as instructional aids to improve the teachers' delivery of instruction, rather than worksheets or commercialized products. The highest concern voiced by teachers was that they did not have exemplars or sample problems to understand the level of conceptual understanding required of each objective.

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Instructional programs, practices, and arrangements. Walkthrough observations revealed the use of a variety of materials correlated to district initiatives. Observations and interviews also revealed district-approved best practices or programs, such as the use of the 6 + 1 Writing Program, the use of manipulatives, the use of literacy stations, the use of cooperative learning, and flexible grouping after analysis of assessments. The teachers reported that they felt uncomfortable adjusting their timelines for re-teaching and mastery of concepts after analysis of their data. However, they felt having specialists model in their classrooms would help them improve their understanding of the expectations, how to improve interventions, and teaching in general.

School documents and teacher responses established that bilingual students at VE were grouped in self-contained bilingual classrooms, but those who had reached a high level of English proficiency were sometimes grouped with regular education students during interventions to improve their English proficiency. According to teacher interviews, new district bilingual program guidelines required the use of English for all Math and Science instruction of bilingual/ESL program students. Teachers reported working diligently to prepare for the sheltered instruction necessary to secure student success. As a result of this programmatic change in the bilingual program, staff development centered on ESL strategies.

The school administrators stated that after 2003 the school instituted a Pyramid of Interventions and Total Quality Management Principles, which allowed teachers to analyze data through monitoring notebooks and student data binders. They also created a special time to allow support staff to assist classroom teachers with interventions. They

added that the school had always used best practices through professional development. Specific practices were not stated.

Recognition, intervention, and adjustment. Teachers reported interventions began immediately after the year started with identification and with focused instruction for any student who was identified as needing assistance, based on previous year's assessment results. Groups were formed and monitored both formally and informally throughout the instructional periods. Monitoring notebooks were visible in some of the classrooms, where any administrator could verify the membership and the progress of the intervention groups. Some grade levels were observed analyzing their assessment results and collaborating by planning intervention instruction and working with each others' students during interventions. Parent communication was achieved through phone calls and constant contact to develop relationships with the parents. Interviews revealed teacher commitment to work with a student until that student met success in the knowledge or skill being taught.

Administrators communicated that staff development was aimed at improving the teachers' delivery of instruction to provide strong first levels of intervention in the classroom. District support personnel assisted by providing research-based strategies and programs aligned with the district's standards to ensure the success of the bilingual/ESL students.

Acceptable School- Bird's View Elementary

Findings from Best Practice Framework, Interviews, and Walkthroughs

Staff selection and capacity building. This section of the survey showed the highest number of negative responses from Bird's View staff for its ten best practices. Every question except one had at least one fourth of the teachers responding negatively to using the practice, and six of the ten questions received "no" responses from at least half of the survey respondents. More than half of the teachers responded on the survey that they did not feel comfortable with the district's bilingual program and had neither visited other teachers' classrooms enough nor had enough modeling by master teachers to acquire strategies for successful implementation of the program. They also felt they needed to spend more time studying student work together in collaborative meetings. The survey also unveiled a concern regarding teachers having collective responsibility for school's success, although interviews revealed pockets by grade levels contributing to this finding. Most of the teachers at this campus were cheerful and helpful to each other, but a few complained about the unfairness of being responsible for all students and not just those in their classrooms. The campus climate seemed a little tense when discussions of assessment and responsibility were discussed.

Interviews revealed that teachers had started meeting twice a week during their conference periods because they used one of those meeting times to sit with district personnel. They added that they also met during grade level meetings to discuss teaching and assessment methods for the particular objectives for that week and to create lessons together. Teachers were observed analyzing assessment results. Campus bilingual meetings served as a forum to discuss issues vertically and horizontally as confirmed by

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observations, particularly if there were concerns about programmatic changes. Teachers explained that the district bilingual/ESL director set the district bilingual meeting topics. They stated that after meetings, they were asked how the district could support them in implementing the program as discussed at the meetings. Staff development was based on district initiatives and campus needs as evidenced by school documents.

Curriculum and academic goals. Observation of documents revealed that Bird's View Elementary teachers also followed the computer-based district wide curriculum to plan their units, develop their lessons, and construct their common assessments. Timelines for the delivery of instruction and assessment of the objectives to be covered were included in the district curriculum. The campus performance goals were sent to them from the superintendent's office for alignment with the district goals. Teachers articulated their complete comprehension of their grade level expectations and then, in turn, explained them to the students, so they could set their own individual goals. Teachers then explained to the students how they, as the teachers, would help them reach their goals. Observations and interviews found some grade levels discussing their grade-level TEKS in great detail and collaborating with grade levels before and after theirs to ensure gaps in instruction and student knowledge did not occur.

Grade level meeting observations showed the teachers collaborating on the planning of their instructional delivery, on their assessments based on the district curriculum, and on the expectations set in the curriculum tool. The principal and teachers related following district guidelines in obtaining resources and materials, such as math manipulatives, guided reading books, literacy videos, science materials, and other

resources to improve the teachers' delivery of instruction, rather than buying worksheets or commercial products for seatwork. The greatest concerns voiced by teachers were their lack of exemplars or sample problems to understand the level of conceptual understanding required of each objective, that they didn't have uniform standards of grading, and that they did not have enough planning across grade levels.

Instructional programs, practices, and arrangements. Walkthrough observations revealed the use of a variety of materials correlated to district initiatives. Observations and interviews also revealed district-approved best practices or programs, such as the use of the 6 + 1 Writing Program, the use of manipulatives, the use of cooperative learning, the use of Cognitively Guided Instruction, the use of literacy stations, the use of FOSS science kits, and flexible grouping after analysis of assessments. The teachers reported a concern in pacing and in adjusting their timelines for re-teaching and mastery of concepts due to the need to cover the curriculum by the dates of the district assessments.

School documents and teacher responses established that bilingual students at this campus were grouped in self-contained bilingual classrooms, but those who had reached a high level of English proficiency were sometimes grouped with regular education students during interventions to improve their English proficiency. According to teacher interviews, a new district bilingual program required the use of English for all Math and Science instruction of bilingual/ESL program students. Teachers reported working diligently to prepare for the sheltered instruction needed to make the students successful. ESL strategies were a focus of staff development as a result of this programmatic change in the bilingual program.

The principal, who had only been at the campus two years during this study, had implemented various changes. Her tenure began with the disaggregation of student data, by student group, by objective, and by student expectations. Analyses were also performed at the classroom level to identify patterns in the low achievement of the campus. She stated that simple recognition and acceptance of the problem was a large step in beginning the use of best practices. Additionally, she started focused staff development in the areas of math and science. Providing the teachers resources, such as math and science materials, helped her teachers feel more comfortable with the two subjects. Science instruction, especially, had been minimized in the curriculum due to teachers feeling inadequately prepared to teach it and the previous administration not placing a large emphasis on the subject. A large systemic change was also the employment of more Spanish-speaking teachers and staff to communicate more freely with students and parents. Finally, programs not showing success in improving student achievement were eliminated and the staff involved in those programs were placed at the discretion of regular classroom teachers to assist with small group instruction based on students' needs. The results were almost immediately visible. However, a change in central office administration caused various changes to be halted due to a difference in belief between the campus leadership and central office personnel.

Innovative technology was used in various bilingual/ESL classrooms at BVE. Promethean interactive boards served as desktops for the delivery of instruction to the entire class and as a supplemental resource for small group activities. The interactive board was used to produce visuals, pictures, diagrams, video streaming, and even as a

substitute for a document where students could highlight words, phrases, and sentences as they would on a document or a book. The teachers using this technology praised its benefits to student vocabulary and to comprehension development. Very few computers were observed in the classrooms. Computer carts that could be used for research and for whole group assessment were available.

Recognition, intervention, and adjustment. Teachers reported interventions began immediately after the beginning of the academic year, with identification and focused instruction for any student who was identified as needing assistance based on their previous year's assessment results. Groups were formed and monitored both formally and informally throughout the instructional periods. Monitoring notebooks were visible in many of the classrooms, where any administrator could check on membership and on progress of all intervention groups. Teachers were observed analyzing their assessment results and collaborating by planning intervention instruction and working with each other's students during interventions. Parent communication was achieved through phone calls, parent meetings, social worker visits, and constant contact to develop relationships and garner support from the parents. Interviews revealed teacher commitment by most teachers to work with a student until that student met success in the knowledge or skill that was missing.

Administrators communicated that the aim of staff development was to improve the teachers' delivery of instruction; thereby, providing strong first levels of intervention in the classroom. District support personnel assisted by providing research-based

strategies and programs aligned with the district's standards to ensure the success of the bilingual/ESL students.

Findings from Framework Sections Between Campus Groups

All sections of the Best Practice Framework, except Section 4, showed statistically significant differences in the level of use of best practices and the campus ratings. Section 4, Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data, showed similar levels of implementation between campus groups, leading to the differences not being statistically significant. The findings on each section are described below. The findings for Section 2: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building, which produced the largest difference in implementation, are presented in detail after Figure 5.1 below, which is a graphical representation of the differences between campus groups for each section of the survey.

Curriculum and Academic Goals

Results from the first section of the Best Practice Framework found that the teachers from the exemplary campuses responded affirmatively 90% of the time to questions asking if they used the practices in the Curriculum and Academic Goals section of the Framework and teachers from the acceptable campuses responded similarly 83% of the time. The p-value for the chi-square of this relationship indicated a statistically significant difference in practice between the campuses. Teachers from both campus groups felt knowledgeable of their curriculum and the specific objectives and TEKS for their respective grade levels. Their responses also indicated that they participated in various activities to implement the district curriculum appropriately.

Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

Teachers from both campus groups appeared adept at choosing their materials appropriately and based on district guidelines, in addition to being able to adapt their teaching to meet the students' needs. An average of 89.6% of the acceptable campus respondents indicated practicing the activities listed in this section of the Framework, compared to 98.3% of those reporting from the exemplary campus group. One area of concern, however, for the acceptable campuses, was the dissatisfaction with adapting their timeline for teaching due to the districts' timeline for testing.

The teachers from the acceptable campus felt helpless in modifying the pacing for instruction due to the district's timeline for benchmarks, which did not always allow time for campuses with high numbers of at-risk student to master all the skills for each instructional period. One teacher explained how she brought skills back into her lessons constantly to ensure students had various opportunities to show mastery. She stated:

> A lot of things that I do in my classroom are circular. We continue to grow and learn so that some students are able to master more complex concepts, but we continually come back to the basics over and over again and continue that repetition. That way hopefully more students are picking up each time the basics, I'm not a big believer in saying that every student has to master a concept before moving on to the next concept because some students are not ready to master some of them at that time. But I am a strong believer that you come back to those ideas over and over and over again and with new activities, new ideas, new ways for them to reflect and record what they see and what they're experiencing.

Other teachers used the same strategy, although they felt frustrated when their students were tested and time had not allowed appropriate coverage of the objectives tested. A general disconnect was felt with the testing timelines of the district and the campus instruction.

Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

A difference of 9.1% was found in the total average responses between the two campus groups in the last section of the Framework titled, Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment. An average of 97.9% of the respondents from the exemplary group responded affirmatively, but only 88.8% of those from acceptable schools responded in the same manner. There was one question of concern for the teachers of the acceptable campuses. The question related to being able to provide bilingual/ESL students enough time to master and to apply the taught concepts. The problem, according to the teachers, was that the district timeline for assessing did not provide for that extra time to ensure mastery. This concern was also brought up in the section titled Programs, Practices, and Arrangements.

Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data

Results of the Framework surveys showed a difference of 1.2% between the affirmative responses of the high-performing campuses and the average-performing campuses on this framework section. Both groups showed high percentages of teachers knowledgeable and already practicing the analysis, disaggregation, and use of assessment results to guide instruction. The acceptable campuses averaged 97.4% positive responses and the exemplary campuses averaged 98.6%.

Best Practice Survey: % Teachers Responding "Yes" by Framework Section and by Campus Group

	S-1	S-2	S-3	S-4*	S-5
■ Acceptable Schools	83.3	59.4	89.6	97.4	88.8
□ Exemplary Schools	90.2	89.4	98.3	98.6	97.9
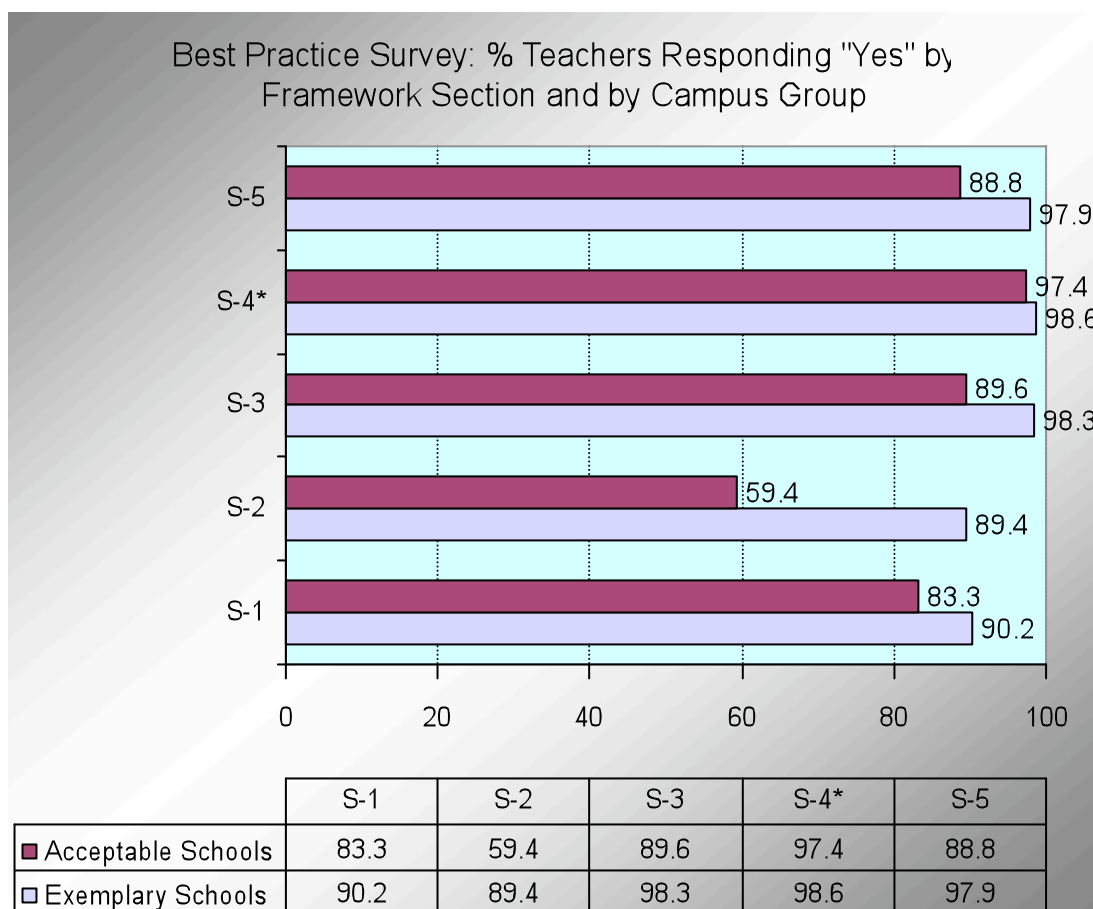
	Framework Section	Classroom Level Description
S-1	Curriculum and Academic Goals	Ensure teaching content is based on specified academic objectives
S-2	Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building	Collaborate in grade/subject level teams focused on student work
S-3	Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements	Use scientifically based/evidence-based programs, practices, and arrangements
S-4*	Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data	Monitor student learning
S-5	Recognition, Intervention and Adjustment	Recognize, intervene, or adjust based on student performance

Figure 5.1. Best Practice Survey: % Teachers Responding "Yes" by Framework Section and by School Group   ***Section with smallest difference in % practice.**

Differences from Best Practice Framework Section Two: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

Although the Chi-square statistic for four sections of the Best Practice Framework indicated a significant difference between the campus group's practices and their campus ratings, when the percentage differences were calculated they varied from 1.2% in section 4 to 30% in section 2 of the Framework. Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero (2002) explain that "some researchers limit their comparisons to categories with at least a 10 percent difference" (p. 204). This researcher decided to do the same by focusing on Section 2: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building, because of the 30% difference in practices between the exemplary campus teachers and the acceptable campus teachers. In fact, Section 2 produced the largest gaps between the high-performing and average-performing schools, with an average of 59.4% compared to 89.4% between the average-performing and high-performing campuses respectively, creating a 30% difference between the two campus groups.

At the classroom level this section emphasizes collaboration by teams to focus on student work. Elaboration of the Section 2 findings follows, with interview-related dialogue or observation information to verify the findings. The findings are discussed in order from highest to lowest percentage difference between the two types of campuses, exemplary and acceptable. A graph of the responses follows after the last question is addressed. Best Practices in this section of the Framework, as in all other sections of the Framework, lead to improved student performance. The following chart, Table 5.4, taken from the Just for the Kids website delineates the expectations to produce high performing campus results. The findings of the surveys and interviews were compared to the

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attributes on the chart. The specific activities present in the exemplary schools in this study are a testament to the importance of implementation of the attributes of this particular section of the Framework.

Table 5.4

Best Practice Framework Section 2: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

Classroom level: Collaborate in grade/subject level teams focused on student work

What differentiates these attributes in Consistently Higher Performing Schools?

MISSING THE MARK	ON TARGET
Teachers work independent of subject/grade level peers to address curricular and instructional issues.	Horizontal teacher teams (teams made up of teachers within a particular grade level or subject) meet regularly and frequently to collaborate.
If teachers do collaborate, instructional issues are not the focus of that time. Collaboration is typically described in terms of social activities.	Instructional activities, such as studying the curriculum or sharing effective teaching strategies and lesson plans, are the foundation of teacher collaboration.
New teachers are not encouraged to demonstrate skills of professional inquiry and reflection.	Through collaborative team meetings, mentor and master teachers actively demonstrate professional inquiry, reflection, and problem-solving.
Each teacher is responsible for his or her own students.	Teachers share "collective responsibility" for all students' learning.
Teachers rarely discuss instructional issues with teachers of different grade levels or subject areas.	Teachers have regularly scheduled meetings with teachers from both the year before and the year after theirs.
Teachers are reluctant to review their students' achievement with other teachers.	Comparing and analyzing student work and performance data are commonplace in collaborative meetings and are seen as development opportunities.
Levels of student learning vary widely by teacher.	Effective collaboration between teachers of different grades and subjects is marked by consistency in learning across classrooms.

Source: Just for the Kids website. Best Practice Framework. Retrieved from: http://www.just4kids.org/en/research_policy/best_practices/classroom_capacity_ building.cfm

Findings on Section 2: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

Q14: Do bilingual/ESL teachers share collective responsibility for the success or failure of students in all classrooms? 58% difference

The largest gap in positive responses was in reference to the question, "Do bilingual/ESL teachers share collective responsibility for the success or failure of students in all classrooms?" Only 42% of the average-performing campuses' teachers responded in the affirmative compared to 100% of the teachers from the high-performing campuses, leaving a 58% difference.

Exemplary campuses. Twenty-seven responses attested to the convictions of the exemplary campus staff members that they believed they were responsible for all students on the campus, not just those within the four walls of their rooms. Sharing of students was particularly convenient during scheduled reading time, as explained by this teacher:

> We all participate in the Voyager Reading Intervention program, where we disperse those students that are at a very high risk right now because of their reading. So once we take our groups in the morning, they are from not just my classroom, but any of the other three classrooms. So we work with them from 8:00 to 8:30, and then during our reading instruction as well we divide our homeroom classroom into different reading groups. So during my reading time, I'm responsible for not just those kids that stay in my classroom for reading, but some of everybody's class, you know, also, and likewise . . . I guess we take it as our responsibility if somebody is not doing well. It's not so much whether he's in your homeroom, or this is my student in reading, or this is your student, but it's second grade.

Another teacher voiced the same sentiment about teachers working together to improve the success of all the students. This teacher spoke from experience about

understanding how teachers had to help each other when their load was heavier than others. She stated:

> And I think that's a necessity for a grade level because if somebody has a need, a greater need than another teacher then that other teacher has to help the teacher with the greater need. And a lot of times it got like that. . . I got this group and we couldn't see it like that because then there's a division in the grade level and it shows on your scores, on your accountability, and the students and self-esteem, everything. So we help each other. Since we rotate, well I don't have as many needs this year . . . but if I see that you do have a greater need, I'm going to help you with a few . . . So we help each other out in that way. We help each other. And sometimes some of the teachers will even switch students or send another student to another class.

Because these campuses started with such high numbers of English Language Learners at the Pre-Kinder and Kinder level, a top concern was the literacy achievement of that group of students. The staff took collective responsibility for ELLs through rotations, meetings, and tutoring with groups, as this teacher explains:

> Again, all classrooms have the ESL-- ELL students in their classrooms and the way we work the reading here in the lower grade levels is they switch. We have groups for reading only for that hour and a half during the day that we have reading. So each six weeks the teachers adjust and if one has the students that are the most advanced one six weeks they'll move down to the next group, then the next group. They rotate. And, again, it's not their own children so they meet daily during the conference period to talk about which students need more help, what would help which students, which strategies to use, what materials to use, and things like that. In the upper grades, third, fourth, and fifth, they are self-contained throughout the entire day but they do meet as grade levels daily and they also on Saturdays we have Saturday tutoring and they group the students differently on Saturdays to try to help them with specific objectives or specific needs. All the grade levels meet and work very closely together and with that common planning period of the day it helps them and they don't leave anyone behind because they know that when we get results that it comes back as a grade level that they're not going to come back and name specific teachers but it comes back as a grade level so they take responsibility for all students in their grade level.

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The teachers consistently described their principals as strong in monitoring and assisting with the disaggregating of data and the monitoring of students. The role of the administrator as a strong and determinant factor in the achievement of the entire campus surfaced in teachers' responses as noted by this bilingual teacher:

> The other thing is that our principal since she knows the groups. She knows what they need from one year to the next because we can only see our classroom or our grade level, what we have, but she's the one that sees all the students so she knows that like my group, for example, she knows the needs of my group since already last year and since first grade, every year. So by next year she knows the needs of this group and she'll conference with that teacher and tell them, "Look, this is where this group left off." So there's no gaps and if there is a gap she'll find it and she'll fill it in.

The principal's leadership steered the teachers by bringing to their attention the patterns that she saw in the campus scores. Because the campus was an exemplary campus, the target scores were always in the nineties. The principal's dissatisfaction with anything less was evident in this teacher's response of everyone's responsibility to ensure excellence:

> The principal looks at the scores. If they're 70s she doesn't like them. She'll come and tell us, "This child is still struggling. What's going on?" And she'll intervene. I mean she's here all the time. Right now all year she tutored one group in our class. She selected five students and she selected the ones with the worst grades, the 30s, the real low and she'll tell me, "Okay, when is your reading time?" "Well it's at 10:00." "Okay." Then she'll come at 10:00 during my reading instruction time and she'll find a little group and she'll work with that group and I'll work with another group. So she's always there helping out with the classroom or the area where the need is, so she'll come in and help. And the kids are like, "The principal is here," like it's serious business. Yeah, right now she's tutoring a group of five for the math.

Vertical alignment surfaced frequently in the interviewees' conversations. Vertical alignment is a strategy that utilizes all grade levels to improve the scores of the

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upper grades by providing a proactive solution to possible student failure. This task was credited to the campus administrators at both exemplary campuses. The following statement attests to this finding.

> So we're very lucky to have an administrator who kind of-- and then another thing is that . . . during our groups we try to help each other like second grade is already aligned. They're trying to align themselves with third to help us out, to do a little bit more third grade objectives or like enrichment. She aligns the grade levels to where there's no gap, where we'll continue.

The vertical alignment component to student success continued to expose itself in teachers' responses. One teacher explained this practice in this manner:

> Where they're leaving off and where we are going to pick up. You know, that's what the majority of the teachers look at. You'll have second grade teachers come in over here and they're like, "Where are your students at?" And that way they'll pick up from where we left off and they'll continue, and that's where our meetings have been, okay, what book did you leave off? I'm speaking in English, right, in like an English book, we left off on book six, book seven. So, then they'll pick up on where we left off. That way the students won't be lost, you know, and Spanish as well. They'll come and say, okay where's your students' fluency? And that way they can work with their fluency or they'll see what they need help in.

Although all grade levels did not take the TAKS test, the teachers recognized the importance of the results to their students and to their families, not to mention to the image of the campus. The comment from the following teacher, who was not in a TAKS grade level, explained the teachers' sense of responsibility for the achievement of the test-taking students.

> We definitely do. Once the TAKS scores come in, even though we're not a task testing grade, we all feel very responsible for the success or failure of our students simply because we grow connected to them. We're a very united school. We pretty much know all the kids. Like, I've been here teaching for about five years or so, so I know kids all the way through 5th grade, most of them. Teachers have

mentioned their names to me or I know about their families. And most of us live around here as well, so we know them from our community. And not only that; Ms. B is sure to tell us. She's either very, very happy and very pleased with our scores or, she doesn't feel very, very happy about them. So she will discuss what needs to be done the following year to improve those scores. She is quick to note, "First grade, maybe we need to work a little bit more on math." And I know this whole month we're going to concentrate a lot on math because 3rd grade had a little bit of trouble, she thinks.

This final comment by another teacher summarized the general feeling of unity as the campus staff accepted the collective responsibility for the achievement of all the students at their school. The teacher explained their collaboration and unity by saying:

That would be, I guess, in a situation where we all work as a unit and help one another. So, we feel responsible for all the students at the same time and by sharing what works well, what doesn't work well, how much better can we improve this or that, I think we all share in that responsibility for the students.

Acceptable campuses. Few interview responses from teachers at the acceptable campuses noted collective responsibility from the entire staff for the success of the whole school. Only eleven responses recognized the use of this practice. The interview questions did, however, reveal implementation of steps to increase that commitment from the whole campus. The teachers expressed how certain practices on their campus helped them feel collective responsibility for the success of students throughout the school. The following conversation provides an explanation of those activities:

And then it says here success and failure of students in all classrooms. Well, I think that the way the TAKS was administered this year, and it didn't really affect us because we don't have a TAKS grade, but the whole school tutored those kids and there were mentors. Then when we all helped with the testing, I mean I went to Miss H. afterwards, like how did the kids do with their grades! Because like I just felt real connected to them because I saw them take that test all day long. . . And I taught Saturday school, so that helped too. And I was like, "Guys, you all have to do really well." And as soon as I knew that the scores were in and when I

knew that the kids knew I'd see them in the hall or they'd come and tell me, "Ms. V. like this." And so I think by getting everybody involved in one way or another--- mentoring, Saturday school, helping administer the test, then everybody feels that they are a part in that high stakes (test) and then the upper grade teachers aren't alone. We're all supporting them.

Another teacher at that campus related his way of showing collective responsibility for the success of all the students. He stated:

Yeah and one of the things I did was I asked Mrs. L. a couple of weeks ago, "What in math do you feel, if you could pinpoint it, for one thing, what do you feel that they're coming in weak in as a whole?" And she said, "It's the whole mental math thing. It's the basic facts. It's the problem solving." So I know that that's something that I need to work on. Those are things that they need constant practice and constant repetition in. And I think one of the biggest things was all the vertical collaboration that the teams have been doing and the whole campus as a whole just came together and took accountability for the test.

More ways that teachers helped each other with all the students surfaced in another teacher's response to this question. The response reiterates the steps being taken to implement more activities to ensure collective responsibility from all the staff members at the schools. She replied,

The things that we've been able to do this year is to be able to sit down and talk about our individual students and the problems that we're having and how we can help each other as teachers on what strategies to use, and what we've done in our classrooms that seemed to help, and it helps us to take responsibility for all of the students. We have also just started recently doing small grouping with different teachers, with different students, flex grouping.

This last elaboration continued to explain the limited perspective of collective responsibility at the grade level. The second grade teacher responded,

I feel like we did better this year. I felt like more responsibility when we started rotating the children around the second semester. I don't know what your opinion is, but I think that once each of our classes had to come to everybody's class, then

I felt like, okay, part of the success was Mrs. S.'s class relied on me and her class depending on my teaching, because prior to that I didn't really have anything to do with Mrs. S.'s class, aside from the fact that we were discussing what objectives we were going to be teaching.

Overall, survey responses indicated high levels of collective responsibility by teachers at the exemplary campuses for their students at the grade and the campus level compared to the pockets of teachers at the acceptable campuses voicing or demonstrating this sentiment or commitment.

Q16:   ***Do bilingual/ESL teachers study student work together? 51% difference***

On the question asking whether the bilingual/ESL teachers study student work together, a finding of 51% difference in the affirmative responses surfaced. The high-performing schools showed 93% of their teachers agreed this was true on their campuses compared to 42% of the teachers from the average-performing schools. A total of nineteen interview responses from exemplary campuses affirmed the survey finding.

Exemplary campuses. Meetings to study student work were corroborated by the exemplary campus staff responses and observations of the teachers' meetings. A second grade teacher offered the following statement:

> We get together at a grade level on a weekly basis, but we find that with some students, if they're having a difficulty, we tend to get together almost every day after school, and discuss what we could do different, or maybe if somebody in one of the classrooms is doing a different strategy that is working, we will get together and discuss it, compare notes, and then go back and try it the next day. We meet very frequently.

The teachers frequently mentioned how they met not only during conference periods, but at any opportunity they had throughout the day. All teachers related how

well they knew each other's students and their capabilities because of their flexible grouping when working with the grade level children. One first grade teacher answered the question about studying student work with:

> We also get together with our teams to study student's work by grade level meetings, during our lunchtime, or maybe after school. We also have vertical alignment for this and we base it off student's work, such as their scores on the tests, the Voyager scores, end of the year assessments, stuff like that.

A fifth grade teacher continued this response by stating:

> We get together during our conference and it's usually before or after benchmarking, yeah that we get together with our other teachers to discuss grades and objectives and the good stuff.

Administrators constantly evaluated student work. During observations, many of the teachers and administrators proudly showed their students reading and comprehension skills by calling on them to display their work or to explain what they were learning from their activities for assessment purposes. Teacher concern for student achievement was mentioned in all teachers' replies to the question about meeting to discuss student work.

Acceptable campuses. The acceptable campus group teachers also responded that they discussed some student work during their meetings. An example of a reply was:

> During our Tuesday and Thursday meetings we usually bring students' samples, especially if we have a concern about a student or we want to brag about a student, which is always fun. That's the best time. We create short cycle assessments that are the same throughout the grade level, so that we're all assessing the same TEKS and the same knowledge.

Although exemplary campus staff frequently referred to the practice of studying their students' work together, limited references were made by teachers of the acceptable

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campuses. Although observations of grade level meetings at the acceptable campuses produced evidence of teachers discussing writing samples, science journals, and problem-solving samples of student work, administrators and teachers explained that these practices were just instituted this year, with the assistance of district-level personnel.

Q15: Are bilingual/ESL meetings tightly focused on curricular and instructional issues? 46% difference

Another question with a large gap questioned whether bilingual/ESL team meetings focused on curricular and instructional issues. The high-performing campuses showed 100% agreement with this practice, while the average-performing campuses stated 54% agreement, producing a 46% gap in habitual practice. Twenty interview responses from the exemplary campuses confirmed their survey results. Acceptable campus surveys indicated that they followed this practice also, but not all grade levels exhibited this type of meeting.

Exemplary campuses. Both teachers and administrators from the high-performing campuses stated a focus on instructional topics during their bilingual/ESL team meetings. A common instructional concern was clarification of staff development trainings or presentations of instructional programs or strategies. One teacher explained:

> Well, whenever we have issues or concerns on that, we'll work with staff development, whatever issues on curriculum that we want them to assist us with, and they just try to find someone that can come from staff development.

The connection between the staff development and the teachers' needs was noted as the teachers discussed their meetings. Further elaboration on this issue was provided by a teacher who stated to the researcher,

> Like when we have our meetings, at grade level, our principal will always ask, "You know, are you having trouble with anything, do you need anything as far as extra training? You know, what we're getting everyone else is getting. It's going to make us stronger." So that's discussed in our regular meetings, too.

The remainder of the results clustered around grade level issues in instruction. As one teacher explained:

> Depending on the objective and the concepts that our students are struggling with, we decide what is a good technique to help the children work from objective 1, 2, and so on and so forth. So we go by benchmarking, by last year results, by any results that we can get.

A campus administrator provided more information regarding the topics of instruction discussed. She explained her response by stating:

> Okay, basically we discuss-- most importantly we discuss the students' reading, reading and writing, making sure that the students are our focus. We try to-- from the teachers and ourselves, we try to make sure that students are already successful, fluent in their native language to be able to tell them, we kind of guide them to say, okay, "Now let's say in November your children are doing really well in their reading fluency in Spanish they're okay." Then we say, "Okay, now, we can start the English instruction." But we make sure to monitor that they don't drop the Spanish instruction and they keep up with the English. I mean, I'm sorry, they begin with the English but they don't drop the Spanish instruction. All the way to second grade they don't drop it. Then in third grade is when they do more English.

The focus of the exemplary campus meetings remained on instructional issues and student achievement. A teacher contributed more topics discussed at the bilingual/ESL meetings as follows:

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There are times when we have 1st grade meetings with our lead teacher, and we're able to discuss some of these objectives and concepts that we need to get across to our students. There are also times when we have them during lunchtime, because we don't really have too much time during the day, and our conference periods sometimes don't correlate, so we need to find time during our lunchtime to discuss some of those things. Other times, Ms. B will pull us out, leaving one of our peers in charge, and we're able to sit down with her and she discusses the different objectives that need to be covered and concepts that students need to get a hold of before moving on to the next grade level. And she makes sure that we don't have any questions on how to deliver the lessons to our students. If we do have any questions, she's sure to come in and model for us . . . The topics are usually chosen depending on what the needs are, and there are times when we say-- I know there was a new math that came into play this year in our district, and so we were not too comfortable with it, you know, because it was different to us and it was kind of throwing things at us, all mixed up. Like, it was throwing time and money and temperature and addition and subtraction and, I mean, just a whole bunch of things all at once.

The topic of assessments was frequently heard at the meetings with teachers and administrators. The need to review assessment results provided discussion through the grade level meetings. One administrator explains it in the following manner:

Instructional issues that are addressed are having to do with the results of, again, our benchmarks or TPRI results. We look at those results and we look at the specific skills that the children are not mastering and we identify the children that are target children and we start tutoring them early in the year, twice a week, during conference period, teacher to kids, maybe five to six.

Student learning issues, along with curriculum, seemed to be the mode for topics discussed when the teachers came together by grade levels. The following response is a sample discussion topic for the meetings:

. . . We have issues of students' ability to comprehend certain concepts that maybe they're not given at a certain period of time, how fast we must do a certain curriculum at some point, finish it to start another on the concepts. It just varies on anything that we see that we need to improve on.

In order to ensure the teachers' needs were being met, administrators expected input from the teachers for their meetings. Teachers stated that they contributed to the agenda and strategies presented at the grade level bilingual/ESL meetings. The following statement confirmed this finding:

> Okay, well, again we look at our scores. We look at growth and we also talk about our programs . . . So not only do we talk about scores, we talk about curriculum. . . And we also have teachers that develop stuff, material, like Ms. V just came up with a chart. Yesterday she came by my room and she made a chart for the place value because we had a grade level meeting and Ms. M was sharing that some of them were starting to have difficulty with place value. So she came up with a chart and she came by yesterday and she's like, "Look I came up with a chart. Would you like to try it?" And it was a really good idea. So, sometimes someone just comes up with something and shares it with the rest of us.

"Collaboration" is how one principal explained how topics were chosen for the bilingual/ESL meetings. Her comment was:

> We don't have specific bilingual ESL meetings. The children are in each and every classroom and so when we do have meetings they would be more like staff meetings or grade level meetings and if there are specific issues to the bilingual students then we'll talk about them there. As for how the topics are chosen, either the teachers bring the issues to me or if it's something specific, material or information that I need to get to them, then I choose the topics, but it's collaboration.

This final statement from the exemplary campuses referred to the content of the district meeting topics, including conferences related to practices that would help teachers in their delivery of instruction to bilingual/ESL students. The teacher stated:

> And they also talked about what conferences we could attend to improve their reading and English. Also, there were several things that the bilingual/ESL kids were able to do as far as extracurricular activities.

Acceptable campuses. Responses from the teachers at the acceptable campuses verified their own commitment to structuring their meetings around curricular issues. Both administrators and teachers agreed, however, that this year was a first year for instilling consistency of this practice with all grade levels. One teacher stated:

> This year we've definitely established meeting at least two times a week to be able to discuss what we are doing with the students for the ESL as well as bilingual. We use time during those two times a week to collaborate on what we want to teach as well as create lessons together.

Elaboration by another teacher demonstrated a focus on planning collaboratively for instruction. The strong emphasis on curriculum is evident in the following statement:

> When we did have time to meet, some of the things that we discussed, for example in math, when we were going to introduce a specific concept we talked about some of the ways we could introduce it. A lot of us decided to introduce it through literature. For example, with regrouping we read Fair Bear Share and then we did an activity. We also did an activity with fractions. We read a couple of literature books on fractions. So those were some of the things that we discussed.

A third teacher from the same campus contributed the following explanation for their need to work on the assessment part of the curriculum:

> Well, in math, because we had to come up with a common assessment this year. We were discussing the type of format that we needed to put down, the length of the test, how after we tested we would kind of come back and look at how well do we think it did? Was it too lengthy? Was it too easy? I remember at the very beginning it was way too hard.

The high incidence of focusing meetings on instructional issues at the high-performing campuses was verbalized and observed in all the visitations, compared to a

more congenial atmosphere observed in more instances at the average-performing campuses.

Q19:   Do bilingual/ESL teachers observe other bilingual/ESL teachers' instruction in this school?   38% difference

This question had a 38% gap between responses with the acceptable campuses acknowledging only 38% usage while 76% of the teachers at the exemplary schools reported this practice occurred on their campus.

Exemplary campuses. Although both campus groups showed low occurrences of this practice, the teachers did state enjoying this type of staff development. One administrator from an exemplary campus confirmed that teachers on her campus observed each other in order to learn from each other. When asked if her teachers observed each other, she stated:

> Yes they do. Basically at the beginning when they first come in. After that if there's a particular item that I see that one teacher is doing really well, yes we'll have her share with them.

Acceptable campuses. Teachers at the acceptable campuses explained that visiting each others' classrooms was something they really enjoyed doing, however, they had observed more often last year than this year due to staff changes. An example of an interview response came from a teacher at an acceptable campus. She was new and had asked for modeling to improve her teaching. Her statement follows:

> I had a few lessons that were modeled with math and having those model lessons really helped to build on and for new strategies that I would still use in my own room.

Another teacher explained why he liked visiting the actual classrooms when looking for ideas for effective teaching. He had already visited other teachers and campuses. He stated:

> I like getting the real life experience, going and visiting campuses that have similar student populations that we have and seeing what's working for them, what are they doing in science? What are they doing in reading? What are they doing in math? And talking to other teachers, talking to the administrators. That's really helped me a lot, looking at the strategies that have been implemented. This is what's working in that student population.

Q12: ***Do bilingual/ESL teachers demonstrate the skills to use this collaborative planning time effectively? 31% difference***

All respondents from the exemplary campuses responded on the survey that they felt their peers displayed the skills necessary to plan effectively. However, only 69% of the acceptable campus teachers felt this was true at their schools, resulting in a 31% difference in responses. Observations verified the difference in these findings.

Exemplary campuses. Every observed meeting at the high-performing campuses revealed teachers focused on their instructional planning or modification of their strategies, along with sharing of materials and ideas. One principal commented that her teachers did not waste time talking about each other or complaining, confirming their ability to set aside personal differences to maximize planning efficiency. A teacher started discussing how easy it was for the teachers to talk to each other and help each other. Her responses explained that relationship. She said:

> We all help each other. She'll say like reasonableness…how are you teaching it? Don't do it like this. And then she'll say, "Well I'm doing it this way" and that

comes out again when we're analyzing our results. We're looking at whatever the children are weak on. And then like she has a real high percentage on that certain problem. And the rest of us might have a low percentage, so then we'll ask her, "Well what are you doing? What did you do that you had such a high percentage?" And then she'll share with us, "Well I'm doing this or I made this chart." And so we all share from each other. We learn from each other.

Acceptable campuses. One administrator from the acceptable campuses explained that the campus had many new teachers, in addition to some teachers moving from one grade level to another. This situation caused some communication problems among the grade level members. Also verbalized was the inconsistency in commitment, which caused some groups of teachers to lose effectiveness in their meetings. The administrator elaborated as follows:

> We have some grade levels on this campus who are awesome in working together. They embrace the new additions to their team and guide them into becoming great teachers, just like them. However, we also still have some grade levels that are having communication problems because some of the members of the team feel that others are not carrying their fair share of the load as far as planning and being consistent with the grade level's expectations. They were used to the previous members' personalities and levels of knowledge of the curriculum. I think each year our teams will get stronger, because all the grade levels now have their grade level expectations and our teams are more stable, so the teams will learn to communicate and work hard for the sake of the students. Also, I see the leaders of the grade levels having high expectations, not only for all the members of their teams, but for the other grade levels who may not necessarily test at the TAKS level. And those leaders are now being more assertive about verbalizing those expectations to everyone.

Interviews revealed that the type of staff development conducted for the bilingual/ESL teachers this year at the acceptable campuses had produced more opportunities and more need for the regular education and bilingual/ESL teachers to work together effectively and efficiently, compared to the exemplary campuses ingrained and already common practice of effective communication and collaborative planning skills.

Q13: Do bilingual/ESL teachers share ideas, materials, and strategies freely and easily in this school? 31% difference

This question tied for 5th place in rank order of affirmative responses. The resulting percentages were exactly the same as the previous question, with 100% "yes" responses by the exemplary campuses and 69% by the acceptable campuses, resulting in a difference of 31%. The previous question is reflective of the results to this question. Part of having the skills to use their collaborative time effectively can make the teams work with considerably more efficiency, which was not the case for many of the teams at the acceptable campuses.

Exemplary campuses. Teachers at the exemplary campuses related how they shared their materials as they planned their activities. Workshop materials were automatically copied for all the grade level members, even if they did not attend. The teachers who did attend ensured that they relayed the information and materials to their teammates. Even the way they attended workshops showed their willingness to help each other obtain the best results from their workshops. One teacher explained:

> . . . Any materials, we'll make copies and give it to each other, any information that we were given at that particular workshop. Strategies, sometimes if I do a strategy, and it didn't work for my students, I'll share with them, and we'll modify it. We're not perfect, so we'll give each other hints or tips on how to make it even better.

The teachers did not hesitate to give each other credit for their creations. They proudly explained how their co-workers' creativity helped all the team. One teacher explained how a math chart was developed and shared by another teacher. The interviewee from a high-performing school shared the following scene:

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And we also have teachers that develop stuff, material, like Ms. V just came up with a chart. Yesterday she came by my room and she made a chart for the place value because we had a grade level meeting and Ms. M. was sharing that some of them were starting to have difficulty with place value. So she came up with a chart and she came by yesterday and she's like, "Look I came up with a chart. Would you like to try it?" And it was really good the idea. So, sometimes someone just comes up with something and shares it with the rest of us.

Observations uncovered frequent instances of materials flowing between teachers within grade levels at the high-performing campuses as a result of collaborative and timely planning. Paraprofessionals and parents were observed photocopying materials for teachers during unstructured times of the day. Teachers planned weeks in advance what they would need for their instruction, allowing them time to find and share their materials in an organized and an efficient manner.

Acceptable campuses. Much more congeniality than collegiality was observed at the acceptable campuses than at the exemplary campuses. Where the teachers at the exemplary campuses were constantly working and accomplishing a task as they talked, more teachers at the acceptable campuses were observed trying to cram in other activities during their planning time. The most frequent activities observed that showed lack of sharing to work efficiently were leaving to get snacks or coffee, leaving campus for materials needed for a lesson, or having students wait on them to make or pick up materials they needed for instruction. Many times the teacher or teachers to whom the rushed teacher had just spoken had all her materials, but had not made the effort to get the materials for everyone on her team.

Some teams, on the other hand, eagerly shared instances of their working together and sharing their ideas, their effort, and their materials. Some teachers took the initiative

to find materials or ideas for the entire team, even though they were not the team leaders.

An example of sharing materials and ideas came from a second grade teacher at an acceptable campus. Her response to this question was:

> And in ASPIRE, since we get kids from all the six classes, I would get this email "What is it that their needs are?" And I think, too, that whenever I would pull kids from there, or took kids from reading in their classroom, that made me responsible too for those two students. And then as a team, we discussed several strategies on how to go about teaching particular concepts. . . Mrs. S. would look for a website. She would share it with the team. So a lot of us were doing the same activity and we discussed what specific activities we would do. And we also-- I think what was good is that we reviewed what worked and what did not work in the classroom.

The model for sharing was visible at the acceptable campuses, but it was not systemic within the school.

Q18: Do bilingual/ESL teams of teachers across grades and/or subjects meet regularly to coordinate their instruction? 22% difference

Sixth in order of group difference, this question produced 54% "yeses" from the acceptable campuses compared to 76% from the exemplary campuses on the Framework survey. The resulting difference in institutionalization of the practice was 22%. Based on campus documents, vertical teaming schedules were facilitated through the administrators by providing extended conference times, although some teams took the initiative to approach other grade levels on their own time for continuity of instruction or adjustment of future instruction.

Exemplary campuses. The exemplary campuses frequently scheduled vertical team meetings. Both schools provided time during the six-week grading period for

teachers to meet with the grade levels above and below theirs. Extended planning time

was an expectation, facilitated by the principals. The following comment reflected the

principals' involvement in ensuring the grade levels were informed of each others' needs:

> . . . and if she sees that in kinder they're having problems with a certain area then she'll come to us and tell us, "Look, kinder's having problems with this area, so when they come to you I want you to focus more on this."

Because the teachers are so accustomed to collaborating between grade levels,

they did not wait for meetings to voice their needs or their observations. This practice led

to misleading percentages on the survey responses. Because the teachers met so often

without formal scheduling, many answered "no" when asked if whether they met

regularly. One teacher explained how she approached her colleagues. She stated:

> I guess I'm more comfortable going to them, and just telling them, "You know what? We worked on this unit with the kids, and they had a lot of problems with it. So maybe like towards the end of the year, or when you all do this unit, kind of do this and do this and do this." And we've actually asked Mrs. D, and she approved it. We came in on a Saturday, and she listened in on our problem solving.

The comfort level of teachers and administrators in discussing vertical teaming

concerns gave the impression that this practice was an accepted routine by all campus

staff. One teacher stated:

> Where they're leaving off and where we are going to pick up. You know, that's what the majority of the teachers want. You'll have second grade teachers come in over here and they're like, "Where are your students at?" And that way they'll pick up from where we left off and they'll continue, and that's where our meetings have been, okay, what book did you leave off? I'm speaking in English, right, in like an English book, we left off on book six, book seven. So, then they'll pick up on where we left off. That way the students won't be lost, and Spanish as well. They'll come and see, okay where's your students' fluency?

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And that way they can work with their fluency or, they'll see what they need help in.

Acceptable campuses. Grade level teams at the acceptable campuses did not exhibit the same type of ease in taking proactive measures to avoid student failure. Although some grade levels did not hesitate to approach teachers from other grade levels, the numbers responding that this was a common practice was barely half of the teachers. The teachers did explain that they had more vertical team meetings this year than last, and that they felt the meetings had been very productive and informative to them. One campus team leader explained how her grade level met with teachers from other grade levels to coordinate instruction vertically during scheduled vertical team meetings. She was discussing math concepts as she stated:

> Yeah, because we did talk to the first grade teachers that I told you about. Every year I noticed the same thing. The kids are not really understanding the equal symbol. They come from first grade and they know that it's a symbol, but they really do not understand the meaning of that symbol. They just know it goes there, but they don't understand that it means that whatever's on one side is the same as whatever is on the other side. That concept hasn't reached them yet, so even though they may come in saying equal, it doesn't mean they know what it means. Those are the things we have to kind of figure out first before we can move on.

One of her campus peers explained how their grade level communicated and collaborated to improve each other's writing skills. Her response was:

> Especially when you have second language learners and you have a variety of levels of language. We have newcomers and students that are becoming more fluent with their English, so they're able to help each other with writing and spelling. Our class paired up with a 4th grade classroom and they did a writing piece together. That way, the 3rd graders were getting a feel of what it is to go through a paper, plan it out, what are the strategies for writing a paper. They

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worked in pairs, they were working collaboratively. I was facilitating, roaming around and watching what the kids were doing and making sure the kids were doing it themselves. Just monitoring to make sure that they were doing it.

A third teacher from this campus group added her belief that consistency in collaboration among grade levels would produce increased achievement. She stated:

I think that if there's no communication or dialogue between teams, and consistency in what we're doing . . . I don't know, like for example, you know that now that you've talked to the first grade teachers about the new writing that they are doing, that we need them to continue, because you can't just do it for one year and then stop. We talked to the third grade teachers and they will see by the fourth straight year how they've done. In the past like Mrs. S would come back and say, "You need to get them to do this so that they'll be ready when they come to third grade." I just think a lot of vertical team planning with each other and the consistency.

An administrator from this group commented that most of the vertical planning started at the beginning of the year, as the staff reviewed their previous year's assessment results and finalized their campus plan with strategies for improvement in the weak areas. Further vertical dialogue occurred mid-year to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies placed on the campus plan and to add other strategies, if needed, to improve student achievement and the delivery of instruction. A third round of vertical planning occurred toward the end of the year to evaluate the year's progress toward meeting the campus goals and to plan for the following year.

The teachers and administrators all recognized the benefits of vertical teaming and alignment for the success of all students. But the staff at the exemplary campuses protected more time for this practice than the staff at the acceptable campuses, as noted by the frequency of meetings for this purpose.

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Q17: Do bilingual/ESL teachers plan instruction collaboratively? 15% difference

The number of teachers who replied affirmatively to this question was the highest response for both the acceptable and the exemplary campus groups, with 85% of the acceptable and 100% of the exemplary campus staff answering that they believed this occurred at their school, resulting in a 15% in implementation gap.

Exemplary campuses. All the groups at the exemplary campuses demonstrated their desire and their respect for each other's contribution to the planning. When they spoke of collaboration, they meant from every member of the campus, not just their own grade level. Collaboration and collective responsibility went hand in hand for this group of teachers. Collaboration was voiced consistently when discussing planning, as noted in this response:

> We work with those students that were having difficulty already in first grade, and so that's when we said, Okay, math, and we got together. What are the things that we need to work on? . . . They're coming in low on money. They're coming in low on this.

Another teacher provided her example of collaborating with the following dialogue:

> We also help each other. She'll say like reasonableness, how are you teaching it? Don't do it like this. And then she'll say, "Well I'm doing it this way" and that comes out again when we're analyzing our results. We're looking at whatever the children are weak on and then like she has a real high percentage on that certain problem. And like the rest of us might have a low percentage, so then they'll ask her, "Well what are you doing? What did you do that you had such a high percentage?" And then she'll share with us, "Well I'm doing this or I made this chart." And so we also share from each other. We learn from each other also.

Acceptable campuses. Observations of the teachers at the acceptable campuses revealed the recent implementation of this practice on a consistent basis. Collaboration, not only among bilingual/ESL teammates, but between bilingual/ESL and regular education teachers was referred to when this teacher commented:

> And since we're pushing more on the English, the bilingual teachers can now also discuss with the regular teachers because in the past it was "Oh, well they don't understand because it's in Spanish." Because I know now I also discuss a lot with Ms. B when she stays late. We both stay late and we discuss a lot of things together about our students.

Collaboration among team members was quite evident not only for planning but also for grouping and sharing of strategies. A teacher at an acceptable campus provided the following insight:

> I think one thing that 3rd grade did to really share responsibility is we had our team time, kind of like our reading academy and math academy where the students were divided into flexible groups across the grade levels. So we were all responsible for the entire grade level, not just our homeroom class for both math and reading. Then also we departmentalized and that helps a lot. We were constantly monitoring and we were adjusting. We monitored and adjusted our instruction to allow for more time, if needed for certain groups. If we had tiers of interventions for students, if I have to meet with a group at least twice a day, we're able to cover each other. So we do work that way beginning with flexible grouping. All of this is based on data. We analyze our data, formal and informal. And team time is an acronym for tutoring. We try to give the tutoring groups help where they need it. That's the thing I saw teachers discussing, Okay, your class did better than my class did. What is it that you did that maybe I didn't do? Kind of the discussion of practices to make sure that we're learning from each other as well.

Q20: Do master bilingual/ESL teachers or content/instructional specialists model lessons for bilingual/ESL teachers in this school? 12% difference

A total of 54% of the teachers from the acceptable campuses indicated they observed specialists modeling lessons compared to 66% from the exemplary campus teachers. Although the difference in responses was small, teachers emphasized the specialists' role in helping them reach high levels of achievement.

Exemplary campuses. The exemplary campus teachers made several references to having reading strategists and specialists come to their campuses or to their district to help them discover ways with which to teach their objectives and to modify them for the different paces and needs of their learners. One teacher made the following comment:

> I know that we have a strategist, a reading strategist, and she's a former teacher. And that's one way that I think we can ensure that we're knowledgeable . . .she'll put out new materials and strategies, so then we all attend her workshop. We make sure that we're there. . . She was a teacher herself, because we've gone to in-services before, where you go in, and the representative's up there, and he presents, and you've got the whole day, and you write notes, and you do the work, and then you really can't use it in your classroom, because it doesn't pertain to our population. . . But you know what, pretty much everything that she has taught; you can come into the classroom the next day and implement it. It's that it's coming from her experience as a teacher. You can take whatever she teaches us, and you can come in and implement it. And she shows you how to modify it for students that cannot really be able to work on whatever level we're working on.

Acceptable campuses. The acceptable campuses relied on district personnel to deliver staff development. The district instructional support were former teachers who had been successful in the classroom. They assisted with reading, with math, with science, and with writing instruction. In addition, some campuses had allocated positions for campus facilitators to assist with more focused assistance on the campuses. A

principal from an acceptable campus recognized the need for this type of staff development as she commented on their newly-acquired resources in the following statement:

> We are very lucky on this campus to have a bilingual specialist and instructional facilitators who have been going into classrooms and working with teachers who have requested them in their classroom. They also go in to ensure a consistent delivery of instruction, based on district expectations. An expectation at this campus is also that every teacher visit at least two classrooms, either on this campus or another campus for collaboration and self-improvement. It is part of our campus plan, we want continuous improvement of all staff, and this is one strategy that they enjoy.

Although the implementation of this initiative during the year of this study may have caused a higher incidence of its practice at the acceptable campuses, the exemplary campuses still voiced a higher frequency and more consistent use of this strategy then the acceptable campuses.

Q11: Do bilingual/ESL teachers meet at least two times weekly to collaborate in grade-level or subject-area teams? 10% difference

Survey results produced 83% positive responses from the exemplary campuses to question 11, and 73% from the acceptable campuses, equating to a 10% difference. Based on the follow-up questions in the interviews, the exemplary campus responses appeared to be misleading. When teachers answered "no" to this question, they indicated it was because they met more often than twice a week based on student and grade level needs. Teachers and administrators confirmed that grade levels met often, although not on a specific day or at a specific time to collaborate as grade levels or subject-area teams.

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The results from the interviews indicated that the teachers at the exemplary campuses met throughout the day to collaborate, to adapt, to encourage, and to share for their instruction. When responding to the question of whether or not teachers met regularly to discuss instruction, the most frequent response was "yes" and "during conference time", with various teachers at all campuses repeating that schedule. Other responses ranged from daily to once a month.

Although conference times rang a frequent tone for meeting times, some teams felt the need to meet throughout the day, as explained by the following comment from a teacher at a high-performing campus:

> We get together at a grade level on a weekly basis, but we find that with some students, if they're having a difficulty, we tend to get together almost every day after school, and discuss what we could do different, or maybe if somebody in one of the classrooms is doing a different strategy that is working, we will get together and discuss it, compare notes, and then go back and try it the next day. We meet very frequently.

Exemplary campuses. An exemplary campus teacher added to this theme, stating, "We do not have a specific time. Usually our time's very flexible, where we'll discuss it during conference, or even during our lunchtime, because we eat together. We do everything together."

Conference periods tended to be the most frequent response to when teachers met, although other time frames were given as well. The inconsistency with scheduled times was related when this teacher responded, "During our conference period, any chance that we get after school, during lunch to discuss how things are going in the classroom."

The purposes of the meetings also would dictate when the meetings occurred and how inflexible the meeting time would be. One educator reminded the researcher how closely tied mandatory meetings were to assessment results, when she stated, "We get together during our conference and it's usually before or after benchmarking, and then we get together with our other teachers to discuss grades and objectives and the good stuff."

Because frequent meetings became a routine, the teachers found it hard to pinpoint an exact time for a "scheduled" meeting. Although the teachers met frequently, no scheduled pattern other than "regularly" and "as needed" emerged from the responses. As one teacher explained, "But it can also be daily. We talk about it at, like, random"

Administrators seemed more consistent with their meeting times because they referred to grade level meetings and post-assessment meetings to discuss results. One administrator referred to the post-assessment timeframe when she responded:

> It's ongoing. I mean there are times that we bring specific things to them like when we receive scores for benchmarks, so my assistant and I will get together with them then and bring specific issues that we see, patterns, trends, whatever, according to the benchmarks, whether it be the bilingual student or whether it be the regular ed student.

Other administrators referred to grade level meetings as the times teachers met regularly for instructional purposes. An administrator elaborated:

> Usually we have grade level meetings. That's the principal and myself, the facilitator. We meet with the teachers and we discuss based on the language assessment, and also the teachers' observation to see if the students are acquiring. . . first of all, we make sure that they're targeting the oral language development in English depending on what grade level you're talking about.

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Acceptable campuses. Responses from the acceptable campuses verified regular meetings beginning this year, due to district personnel and/or administrators meeting with them to plan for instruction on a weekly basis. The following statement explains the meeting situation:

> We meet weekly, sometimes twice a week. During our planning time, often we meet with those at-a-glances to help us plan our curriculum. We've also been given time during the week during faculty meetings. We're allowed time for science planning and we're allotted time for that. So we meet basically during our conference period weekly. This is formally and informally on a daily basis, too. And also vertically.

After school programs at the acceptable schools sometimes cut into meeting times, because some teachers worked during the regular instructional day and then continued working in the after-school programs or during extended day services for students identified for additional instruction. A response from one of the teachers interviewed at an acceptable campus produced the following explanation:

> I feel this year we haven't had as much time due to ASPIRE and how we both have to teach, so it doesn't allow for the three of us to meet all at the same time. We've been able to meet here and there whenever one of us stays late and talks with the other one or during times when faculty meetings have been cancelled.

Although the teachers at the exemplary campuses seemed to meet more often than those acceptable campus teachers, the same problem seemed to exist in the area of having "scheduled" meetings, rather than random, albeit productive, meetings to collaborate with their teams.

The findings for the Staff Selection and Capacity Building component of the Framework surprised the researcher, not only due to the difference in responses between

the two groups of schools, but also in the inconsistency of its findings to the other sections of the Framework. Once the interview data was compounded, however, the results were comprehensible. The success of these practices in helping classrooms and schools become high performing are confirmed by the two exemplary campuses in this study, who consistently implemented the practices at their schools. It is also easier to understand how to assist the acceptable campuses to improve student achievement by providing specific practices to weave into the routines of the schools. Figure 5.2 shows a graphical representation of the survey responses for this section.

% Teachers Responding "Yes" to Implementing Selected Best Practices from Best Practice Framework: Section 2 by Campus Group
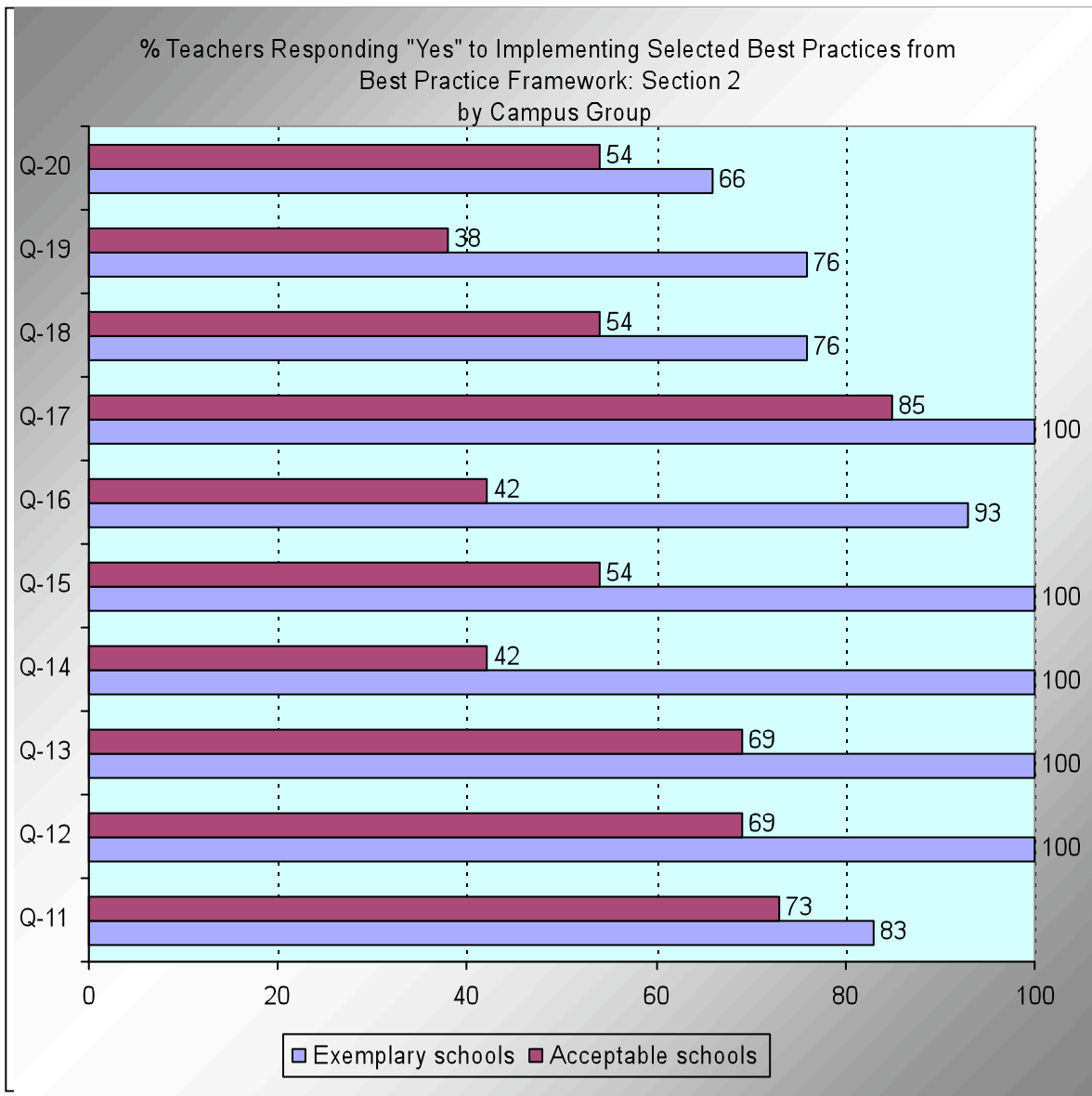
Figure 5.2. % Teachers Responding "Yes" to Implementing Selected Best Practices from Best Practice Framework Section 2 by Campus Group

Classroom level: Collaborate in grade/subject level teams focused on student work

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Table 5.5 on the following page provides the questions from Section 2 of the Best Practice Framework and the responses to the questions by campus group. The significance level is also indicated using the p-value. A significance level <.05 indicates a statistically significant difference between the responses from each campus group based on campus rating. The responses to questions 11 and 18 are misleading. Although large numbers of teachers responded no to the questions, the teachers at the exemplary campuses qualified their responses to the survey when interviewed. The teachers voiced that they met almost every day, but the meetings were not planned in advance. The meetings were based on student and grade level needs. Their responses on the survey do not reflect this additional information.

Table 5.5

Description, % Results and Significance Levels of Best Practice Framework Section 2 By
Campus Group

Best Practice Framework: Section 2 -Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building	% Yes Responses n=29	n=26	p value
Classroom Level: Collaborate in grade/subject level teams focused on student work	Exemplary Campuses	Acceptable Campuses	
Q11. Do bilingual/ESL teachers meet at least two times weekly to collaborate in grade-level or subject-area teams?	73	83	.517
Q12. Do bilingual/ESL teachers demonstrate the skills to use this collaborative planning time effectively?	100	69	.0001
Q13. Do bilingual/ESL teachers share ideas, materials, and strategies freely and easily in this school?	100	69	.0001
Q14. Do bilingual/ESL teachers share collective responsibility for the success or failure of students in all classrooms?	100	42	<.0001
Q15. Are bilingual/ESL team meetings tightly focused on curricular and instructional issues?	100	54	.0001
Q16. Do bilingual/ESL teachers study student work together?	93	42	.0002
Q17. Do bilingual/ESL teachers plan instruction collaboratively?	100	85	.04
Q18. Do bilingual/ESL teams of teachers across grades and/or subjects meet regularly to coordinate their instruction?	76	54	.10
Q19. Do bilingual/ESL teachers observe other bilingual/ESL teachers' instruction in this school?	76	38	.007
Q20. Do master bilingual/ESL teachers or content/instructional specialists model lessons for bilingual/ESL teachers in this school?	66	54	.420

_From "Survey of Best Practices in Bilingual/ESL Classrooms" developed by Dr. Omar Lopez and based on the NCEA Best Practice Framework.

*p value < .05 indicates statistically significant difference

Interview Findings

Table 5.6 shows the most frequent themes that surfaced in the interviews and the references to their use by the teachers in each campus group. The theme voiced by the highest number of educators from the exemplary campuses when discussing best practices for Hispanic and LEP student achievement was teamwork and collaboration, which is not only the central theme of the Framework section titled Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building, but also qualifies as the largest difference in practice between the two campus groups.

The practices referenced by the educators are listed in Table 5.6 in order of reference of implementation The table reflected the results of the Framework, with collaboration/teamwork and collective responsibility at the top of the list of differences. The numbers verified the findings of the observations checklist, which showed that although many of the same instructional practices were observed, they were not observed on a consistent and systematic level. The practices not referenced by teachers of the acceptable campuses, but referenced by the exemplary campus teachers, were positive attitude and commitment of the teachers, and consistency of practices. Information was self-reported by the teachers.

Table 5.6

Best Practice Reference Table from Interviews

Best Practice	**Exemplary** Campus Teachers	**Acceptable** Campus Teachers
	n=29	n=26
Collaboration/Teamwork*	29	12
Consistency of Practices**	29	0
Collective Responsibility*	27	11
Positive Attitude/Commitment**	27	0
Use of 1st Language*	26	10
Assess/Monitor*	25	16
Research-Based Programs	24	5
ESL Strategies	22	5
Parent Contact*	19	3
Flexible Grouping	15	8
Manipulative use	13	4
Technology Enriched Instruction	13	4
Vertical Alignment*	13	4
Cooperative Learning	8	7
High Expectations/Standards	8	6

*denotes practices already identified in survey
**denote practices only voiced by exemplary campuses
Note: n = # of possible responses from exemplary/acceptable campuses

Positive Attitude

Teachers from the exemplary campuses felt strongly that a positive attitude in working with the students was important in helping them be successful. Their tone of voice when speaking to the students was cheerful and spontaneous. The same type of communication was observed among the teachers and administration, yet there was a "no joke" attitude when they were discussing their lessons and their expectations for each other. They felt it was up to them to make the practices work, as evidenced by one teacher's comment. She stated:

> You can go to all the in-services you want, you can have everything, you know, and if you are not . . . if it's not what you want to be doing, if your attitude is not where it's focused on your students, then it's not going to matter.

One of the teacher's colleagues continued the conversation with the following reply:

> The whole attitude that I guess as far as school leadership, if they bring it, you know, it's on us. Then we kind of just forward that onto the kids. And the kids are—you know, the ones who have been here since pre-K, they know what's expected of them, and what level they have to perform at. And it's pretty much an attitude that whenever our principal tells us, "We need to get this done." Everybody just says, "Okay, we're going to do it."

The positive attitude was evident as the principals walked into the classrooms and called the students by name to question them about their progress in school. The teachers stated they knew what the expectations were for the staff and felt good about their impact on the students. One teacher voiced her attitude toward assessments in the following statement:

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And going back to attitudes. We take on our responsibility for our students tests. If they're doing bad, it's like, "Okay, we've got to get them up there," you know? It's sad, the whole attitude of some teachers are like, "No, well, you know, he's only here one year, who cares?" You know, no, we have to do the best that we can to get them up there.

The fourth response concerning the critical nature of attitude derived from a second grade teacher, who was commenting on how they looked at a task at hand involving their instruction. The second grade teacher explained:

So I think it's the attitude . . . even if you go to another school, or another grade level, it might be, "Now, we're going to do this, and we're going to do that," and it has to be your attitude, "Okay, whatever I have to do, let me see what I have to work with, and how am I going to make it work?"

This final comment clearly stated the strength of the conviction present in these teachers in what needed to be in place in order to have student success. A teacher responded, "I'm thinking you could have everything at your fingertips, but if as a teacher your attitude or your heart isn't into it, it's not going to matter."

This positive attitude transformed into a positive school climate for students and staff, which was observed during the campus visits. Teachers greeted visitors, students, and other staff with genuine interest in taking care of their needs before they left their campus.

Commitment

The need for commitment was an identified area credited with student success at the exemplary campuses. Previously mentioned in the Best Practice Framework, it is part of the high expectations required for success. One teacher explained why commitment was so important for her school with the following explanation:

The teachers that are here, they're very committed. They pull together as a team. If there's a group of students, even if it's not their students assigned to them they pull together and they work with them because they know again that it's not their name that goes in the paper. It's the grade level and it's the entire school.

A school administrator added the same belief about her teachers. She stated, "The commitment of my teachers. They are willing to go above and beyond on their own to make sure that their students are successful."

No task was too hard to overcome at the two exemplary campuses. While some teachers' comments at the two acceptable campuses revolved around not being able to fit certain tasks into their schedules, these teachers stated:

We start the day at 8 o'clock and we don't finish until 3:40, you know. And yes, we get tired, and yes, there are days when we're just like, okay, this is not a good day, or you know, something else is going on at home and we have things on our minds.

Although the school day did not start until 8:15, these teachers were all at school, working with the students on computers, fifteen to thirty minutes before school started. In addition, one teacher explained how her day continued past the school bell. She responded:

But we don't only work up to 3:30 or 3:40. We extend our day. We tutor after school if there's a need for it. On Saturdays. During conference. If we see the children are having certain problems we help them.

This last comment summarized why the teachers felt the need to show their commitment. The teachers explained, "Sometimes we feel like it's a lot, but I think that's why it's our job, it's the teacher's job to prepare--- to be prepared."

Systematic and Consistent Implementation of Best Practices

Consistency at the exemplary campuses was the administration's expectation in all the schools' routines in the classroom and on the campus. The teachers followed the administrators' lead. Consistency started with the use of research-based programs on a daily basis. One teacher explained how her principal communicated this practice. The teacher responded:

> Ms. B. really wants us to always be consistent with something. We're going to be doing a program, we're going to religiously do it . . . we're not going to do it one day and not do it the next day. We have to be very consistent with everything.

The principals related that they monitored closely to ensure consistency. The entire campus, from early childhood classes to the fifth grade classes, was expected to receive the same level of good teaching. One primary teacher relates, "And also it starts all the way down at pre-K, they're already good at sight words, so some are already reading. They're doing the science and teaching that, you know."

The administrators at the two campuses emphatically repeated their expectation for consistent and systematic teaching among the staff. From the assistant principals to the principals, the message was the same. One administrator simply stated the following about what practice was responsible for their high achievement, "I would have to say a couple of things. Number one, consistency from pre-K through fifth grade and along with that come the expectations."

A teacher from this principal's campus had previously explained what her campus stressed regarding the best practices in order to have successful students. She explained,

"But everything has to be very systematic and consistent. That's the most important, more than anything, systematic and consistent."

The next response in relation to consistency came from another campus administrator. Her statement communicated the importance of leadership, especially in the area of ensuring consistent implementation of best practices. The administrator emphasized:

> Honestly, I mean I think it has to do a lot with the guidance. I guess the administration you would think. I know Mrs. B is our principal and I follow with her, but we do a lot of monitoring, active monitoring and a lot of making sure that the teachers are being consistent, again consistent and systematic, being consistent and systematic with the students and, like I said, monitoring, making sure that they're—the monitoring helps a lot. We do it on a weekly basis.

The leaders' commitment and strong leadership surfaced throughout the interviews at the exemplary campuses. Reference to the principals and the principal's visibility in the classroom was mentioned by all participants. One principal was even noted to take the lowest students in first grade and provide them with the extra instruction needed for their success. She practiced this strategy to show her teachers that she was willing to work just as hard as they were to ensure student success. More importantly the staff communicated their trust in their leaders and their ability to communicate their needs with the expectation that their requests for materials, changes, staff development, or assistance would be genuinely considered.

The acceptable campus teachers, on the other hand, referred to their administrators as leading based on central office initiatives. They recognized the leaders' knowledge of best practices as instrumental to student success, but felt powerless in

decision-making regarding those practices. One principal provided the image of pushing

a cart uphill with only half the staff helping to push it, while the other half simply

watched waiting for the cart to roll back. She stated:

> The staff here has been accustomed to using a program or strategy for a year and
> then having it abandoned the following year to try something else. They are
> afraid to get something new started because they don't know if it will be kept. I
> empathize with this feeling, but I can't let it stop me from promoting what is best
> for student success. I am constantly looking for ways to get the rest of the staff to
> help push that cart.

Observation Findings

The results of the observation checklist, Table 5.7 below, unveiled for the

researcher differences in four areas between the two campus groups, although the level of

implementation of all the practices on the checklist except two showed statistically

significant differences based on a p-value < .05. The gamma value showed a moderately

strong level of correlation between the level of implementation of the practices and the

schools' ratings. The differences observed were in: 1) the consistent and systematic use

of best practices; 2) the instructional settings of the bilingual/ESL students; 3) the

instructional methods used, and 4) the type of research-based instructional programs used

at the two campus groups. Although not recognized as strategies to be examined in this

study, administrator visibility, and a positive campus climate were evident. Additionally,

future studies may be warranted on how busing LEP students from various campuses to

one central campus impacts the students' performance and the school's rating.

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Table 5.7

Results of Best Practice Observation Checklist for Classroom Walkthroughs

# of teachers observed implementing designated best practices.		Best Practices
Exemplary n=29	Acceptable n=26	
29 (100%)	9 (35%)	Technology enriched instruction
29 (100%)	14 (54%)	Cooperative Learning
29 (100%)	11 (42%)	Cultural Relevance- use of Hispanic culture references
29 (100%)	12 (46%)	Instructional Conversations
27 (93%)	7 (27%)	Cognitively Guided Instruction
29 (100%	10 (38%)	Use of Research-based Programs *Successmaker, Voyager, Sing, Spell,Read,&Write,Waterford Reading on exemplary campuses; CGI Math, SIOP, 6+1 Traits, FOSS, literacy stations on acceptable campuses*
29 (100%)	26 (100%)	Objective-based Teaching
29 (100%)	10 (38%)	Student monitoring data
29 (100%)	14 (54%)	Collaboration in grade level
29 (100%)	10 (38%)	Manipulatives for Conceptual Learning
29 (100%)	7 (27%)	Other: Explain: **Combining directive and constructivist teaching methods. LEP/Non-LEP heterogeneous grouping.**

Total: Exemplary: 288/290 (99%)   Acceptable: 116/260 (45%)

Bilingual settings different between the exemplary campuses and the acceptable campuses. Both early transition models, one exemplary campus does not promote full literacy in first language, and second one does. Bilingual students served in self-contained bilingual classrooms and divided by language proficiency in acceptable campuses. Bilingual students bused to acceptable campuses. Bilingual students served heterogeneously by bilingual teachers on exemplary campuses. Principals constantly monitoring teachers implementation of practices at exemplary campuses.

Consistent and systematic use of programs

Acceptable campuses. Although best practices were observed both at the exemplary and at the acceptable campuses, the researcher did not observe a consistent pattern of implementation of the best practices mentioned at the acceptable campuses. Consistent and systematic implementation was determined by at least 90% of the educators implementing the best practice items. Level of implementation varied throughout the two acceptable campuses and within grade levels. For example, some teachers used computers on carts, while others only had access to one or two computers in the classroom. Although there was a computer lab available, it did not have any special programs the students or the teachers could use consistently for whole class enrichment or individualized instruction or practice. Interactive boards were being used in some bilingual/ESL classrooms. Those classrooms were observed using technology-enriched instruction more often. Both the teachers and the students used the boards for enriched instruction.

The focus on ensuring the students knew which objectives they were accountable for was not always evident at the acceptable schools. Some students were able to explain to the researcher what the objective for their lesson was, while others simply stated they were doing what the teacher had asked them to do. Most students at the exemplary campuses were able to inform the researcher what objectives they were studying, which ones they were doing well on, and which they needed to improve on. Data folders were used for self-monitoring at the acceptable schools, but not all classrooms had them readily available. The exemplary campus teachers had them ready either on their desk or by the door so the principals could check without disturbing the classroom.

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The use of literacy stations for the primary grades' language arts blocks was practiced by some teachers and not by others on the acceptable campuses. Some teachers were observed using the entire classroom during their language arts instruction, whereas others were only following parts of the model, such as the guided reading station. CGI Math was observed in a few acceptable school classrooms. When the researcher asked the teachers why only a few were using the system of teaching, the teachers responded that most of the teachers who had been trained had left the campus, leaving only a few who knew how to implement this method of teaching. They did add, however, that they were in the process of receiving some instruction from those teachers who had extensive training in the using the program.

Exemplary campuses. In contrast, the exemplary campus visits provided very structured and very uniform practices at every grade level. Every classroom visited was observed using their computers as part of their instruction, through centers, and for reinforcement in the students' specific needs. Bilingual and regular education classrooms were all receiving instruction on the same objective, with the exception of small groups of students that were receiving additional assistance in their targeted areas. Approximately eight to ten computers were in every classroom, and all were used for small group instruction and for skills practice. Time on instruction was monitored closely by the administrators, with everyone on time and ready to teach or to learn before the morning bell rang. Very few students or teachers were observed in the hallways. Everyone either was teaching, was learning, or was working together.

Instructional setting of bilingual/ESL students

Exemplary campuses. The bilingual/ESL students in the two school groups were served in very different settings, based on district programmatic guidelines. Only students from within the community were served at the exemplary campuses. The students were grouped homogeneously in PK through 1st grade and heterogeneously with regular education students after first grade. However, they were grouped by language for small group instruction if needed. The emphasis was on full proficiency in English by the end of third grade, in order to exit the bilingual program at that time. Both exemplary campuses had very few students in fourth or fifth grade still needing Spanish instruction.

The bilingual students in the heterogeneous classrooms of the exemplary campuses joined the discussions and explained their work in whichever language they felt comfortable. In addition, they repeated much of the English that that the regular students were using after working in mixed groups of students. The teachers routinely asked for repetition of English vocabulary.

Teachers worked with the bilingual/ESL students by pulling them out for individual or small group instruction. One fourth grade teacher explained how she worked with her students in the classroom. She said:

> I just give instruction all in English for those that understand it. Then once they start doing it independently, I go to them. I have one whose language is Spanish, so I go and sit with him, and then I explain everything. I just translate, because his material's in Spanish. So I just kind of explain to him what I just explained to the rest of the class.

During instruction, teachers and administrators frequently referred to the cultural and familial backgrounds of the students, because all the students came from the

surrounding community and because many of the teachers also came from within the same community. The results of such an arrangement produced a strong bond between the students and the teachers, as noted by the following statement by one of the teachers:

> We're a very united school. We pretty much know all the kids. Like, I've been here teaching for about five years or so, so I know kids all the way through 5th grade, most of them, you know, because teachers, have mentioned their names to me or I know about their families. And most of us live around here as well, so we know them from our community.

The educators professed the importance and the benefits of knowing and of keeping two languages. They also forbade the ridicule of students who still needed to use their first language for communication. The teachers used personal anecdotes to ensure students valued their culture by keeping their language. The following teacher's experience details this sentiment. She explained:

> And I think that's when we talk to them, because I have that talk at the beginning of the year, too. I don't like that sometimes the students feel that speaking Spanish is inferior. And some of them, I guess they felt that, because coming in every year I have to have that talk with them. And I'll tell them the same thing, "I didn't know English. I knew Spanish." And I'll tell them, "You know, teachers who have a bilingual endorsement certificate get paid more than teachers who don't." You know, sometimes the parents, they didn't want them to be bilingual, and of course, some people only have one language. But then again, I make them feel comfortable, and . . .if they're just speaking Spanish, then yes, they can speak Spanish.

The level of comfort in using Spanish, the first language for most of the students, throughout the campuses was very noticeable. The teachers, the students, and the administrators all moved from one language to another without hesitation, depending on the setting and the need. Parents were observed on campus at every visit and communication with them was observed to be mostly in Spanish. A large difference

between the two exemplary campuses, however, was in the development of first language literacy.

All Saints Elementary. Complete literacy in the first language, was the goal of only one of the exemplary campuses, All Saints Elementary. The students were observed engaging in exactly the same activities as their regular education counterparts, but in Spanish, their first language. English was developed alongside the first language starting with oral language development at Pre-K. As a first grade teacher explained:

> Here at All Saints Elementary, we do Spanish. Like, for example, me, I'm a bilingual teacher, I do Spanish reading as well as the English and then I make sure that their Spanish reading skills are developed, very well-developed, that their fluency is at 1st grade level or above 1st grade level. Then I'll sit down with Ms. B and discuss the idea of starting on the early transition into English. All along, I'm keeping oral language in English, but I never stop doing the Spanish. And it's worked out very well. My TPRI scores and my Tejas LEE scores pretty much jive with each other. They're pretty much at the same level. A student may be reading in Spanish 80 words per minute and in English they're reading 80 words per minute as well, but I never drop the Spanish. And of course, the first language, whenever they have a question—like if I'm doing math in English, and they don't understand it, I'll sit down with them and I'll explain it to them in Spanish, but I never ever drop the vocabulary. I always keep that vocabulary in English, because they're going to need it in coming years.

Battle Cry Elementary. Battle Cry Elementary did not emphasize complete literacy in the first language once the student started transitioning into English. The Spanish was dropped except for oral language development, leaving the students with complete literacy in only one language, although they were able to speak their first language. The principal explained how the use of the first language for instruction worked on her campus. She elaborated:

> It's based on their language proficiency level on the oral language proficiency test that we give them. . . The student's first language is incorporated into instruction

depending on their LAS oral level. If they come in and they're a one in English or Spanish, then we instruct them in the language arts block in Spanish. Our district has an early transitional model for a bilingual program and we do English across the district in math. And then in the other content areas it's English and Spanish both, but the language arts is in their native language. So if they are a one and two on their LAS oral then we will instruct them in the Spanish. Of course they get English throughout the day, so as they get more and more proficient in the English we will introduce more and more English in the language arts block as well, not circumventing the law. We have to follow the law, but the law does say commensurate to their level so that's what we do. The amount that's needed for them to have success in their instruction. . . We do not re-classify them until after third grade TAKS. If they have passed the third grade reading TAKS then we are able to re-classify them. According to our district bilingual director, she said that they also have to be proficient in Spanish in order to re-classify and ours are proficient in speaking because most of them at home speak the language. They're not proficient in their writing part, and so what we're finding now since this came into play last year, she told us that they had to be proficient in the Spanish in the lectura/escritura. Then we're not being able to classify them because they're not proficient in the writing part of the Spanish because they have not practiced, then we're not re-classifying them and they'll do that at the junior high level. But they are proficient in the English.

Acceptable Campuses. Both acceptable campuses were consistent in following the same early transitional bilingual model. Students were served homogenously in self-contained bilingual classrooms in PreK through fifth grade. Instruction was provided in Spanish, the student's first language in all subject areas until second grade. Third through fifth grade students were divided into Model 1 and Model 2 classes based on English language proficiency.

The numbers of students in the bilingual program at these schools were high because the district bused bilingual students from four other campuses to each of the two acceptable campuses. The numbers in fourth and fifth grade classrooms were also high compared to the total number of children in those grade levels because students were returned to their home campuses once they passed the TAKS at the end of third grade.

Any children who were new-comers, recent immigrants, or who didn't take or pass the TAKS test in English remained at these campuses. The effect was a high number of bilingual students with limited exposure to the Texas TEKS or the English language, and a high number of fourth and fifth graders who started the year having failed the TAKS the previous year.

The integration of oral language development in English was not well understood by the teachers in the primary grades, due to the number of new teachers on the campuses and to the inconsistent implementation of the program throughout the district. The plan, however, was to develop literacy skills in Spanish, their first language, until complete literacy was achieved, typically by second grade. Transition started in first grade, but more fully implemented in second grade to enable as many students as possible to move into a ninety percent (90%) English instructional setting in third grade. Complete reading proficiency in English was the target level for students by the end of third grade in order to exit the program by passing the English Reading TAKS.

The level of Spanish used for instruction was high in Pre-K through second grade. After second grade, Spanish instruction quickly tapered off. A second grade teacher explained when she used the first language for instruction in her classroom. She elaborated:

> Well, definitely in the area of reading because in the area of reading we need to continue working on the first language and especially those students who are still stronger in Spanish. That has to be addressed in the guided reading. We do whole language together. And in their writing. And also, social studies which lends itself up to the writing which is informational writing, and then there's regular writing, fictional writing. We still use the first language. Another area I use it in is just to clarify whenever we do, especially this year with math we really

need to go into English. In science, since we didn't have enough science English books we still had to pull out the science Spanish books to go back over the vocabulary.

The upper grades, fourth and fifth, used Spanish in their instruction less frequently for the Model 1 students, providing more ESL and scaffolding for comprehension. The Model 2 students still received most of their instruction in Spanish, as their English was very limited. A fourth grade teacher explained the process saying:

We introduce new subjects in their native language just to make sure that they're comprehending and then the rest of the week we teach it in English, which is their second language. We do a lot of scaffolding. We give them a lot of support. We did do—we integrated a lot of English into the math. The majority of our bilingual children did all their math in English.

One of the teacher's teammates continued, "Just building on that, after what we were saying, in the ESL model, just using a lot of pictures, a lot of realia (real objects), hands-on to learn vocabulary in the second language."

The students in the acceptable campuses' Pre-K through third grade classrooms were observed using English spontaneously as teachers conducted English language development lessons through poems, oral language activities, and singing. The fourth and fifth grade students were observed to be more hesitant to use the language, especially those in the Model 2 classrooms, who were receiving most of their instruction in Spanish.

The homogenous grouping of the bilingual students was not conducive to integration into the English mainstream. The bilingual students in the upper grades were observed being ridiculed or being picked on by the regular education students during unstructured activities. When questioned about one incident, the students related that an

English speaking student did not understand a Spanish-speaking student, so he assumed that he was saying something bad to him. Another occurrence of bilingual students being ridiculed was observed during lunchtime, while the researcher ate with a fourth grade classroom at an acceptable campus after a classroom observation. During P.E. and recess, the regular education students and the bilingual students did not mix as they played. The bilingual students played on one section of the playground and the regular education students played on the opposite side.

The classroom settings for the two campus groups' bilingual students allowed for observation of extremely different levels of English language development, use, and proficiency, in addition to allowing observation of the general respect for language and culture. The busing from various campuses to one bilingual campus is an issue worthy of future research to determine the impact of that practice on the campus rating and student achievement.

Research-based programs

The use of research-based programs was an expectation set by the federal government to ensure the use of proven methods for school improvement. None of the commercial programs mentioned in the literature review were found on these campuses; however, programs used at the two exemplary campuses were research-based, except for the Sharon Wells Math curriculum. That program was not used by the acceptable campuses, so ultimately it would not have skewed the results against those campuses. The differences in the implemented programs on the campuses were in the method of delivery. The exemplary campuses used very structured and scripted programs and

instructed using much explaining and modeling of "how to do it". The acceptable school classrooms used constructivist type programs that encouraged creative solutions by the students, rather than structure for problem-solving. The students were expected to construct their own understanding of concepts through discovery. The teacher did not explain to the student a process to follow to complete a task or objective, many times causing frustration for students who were used to following parental directives at home and who expected the teacher to be in charge of instruction in the classroom.

Students at the exemplary campuses were observed using various commercial programs, such as "Voyager", SuccessMaker, the "Waterford Reading Program", and "Sing, Spell, Read, and Write". These programs were used consistently to help students improve their decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills in reading, their test-taking skills in Reading and in Math, and their oral language development. Classroom schedules were adapted to fit the programs into their daily delivery of instruction. Assessment results of the programs were monitored to ensure the use of the programs, to monitor student progress, and to validate the programs benefit to the students. These programs were used to supplement regular instruction from the classroom teachers.

The acceptable campus schools used programmatic research-based programs such as CGI Math, 6+1 Writing, literacy workstations, and literature circles. Two commercial research-based programs observed on these two campuses were the FOSS kit system for science instruction observed in various classrooms and the Investigations Math system observed in one classroom. Although some teachers referred to the use of the "Voyager" program, it was not observed in practice.

Table 5.8 is presented with the p-values of each item on the checklist to show the statistical significance of the results. P-values less than .05 indicate a statistical significance in the results. All items except two produced p values less than .05, indicating they were statistically significant. Cramer's phi and the gamma value are also included to determine the level of correlation between the practices and the campus rating. The closer a Cramer's phi or gamma are to +1 or -1, the stronger the correlation between the practices and the campus rating. All phi values were greater than .5 and all gamma values were close to +1, indicating a strong relationship between the high level of best practice implementation and a high performance rating.

Table 5.8

Best Practice Observation Checklist Results with Significance and Correlation Values

Best Practice	* p-value	Cramer's phi	Gamma
Technology-enriched Instruction	<.00001	0.71	1.00
Cooperative Learning	<.0001	0.56	1.00
Cultural Relevance	<.00001	0.65	1.00
Instructional Conversations	.00002	0.62	1.00
Cognitively Guided Instruction	<.00001	0.68	0.95
Research-based Programs	<.00001	0.68	1.00
Objective-based Teaching	1.0000	*	*
Student Monitoring Data	<.0001	0.68	0.95
Collaboration in Grade Level	Observed in use during non-instructional time		
Manipulatives used	<.00001	0.68	1.00
Other: Combining Instructional Methods:	<.00001	0.78	1.00
Start with directive, structured instruction;			
Then provide more constructivist environment.			
LEP/Non-LEP Heterogeneous grouping.			
Total for aggregated checklist:	**<.0001**	**0.65**	**0.99**

*p-value <.05 indicates a statistical significance

*Cramer's phi values closer to +1 and -1 indicate higher levels of correlation between best practice and school rating.

Review of Differences

Dissimilar best practices from the various sources in this study were reviewed. From the Best Practice Framework, p values indicated the difference between the levels of implementation at each campus group were statistically significant for the survey as a whole. Translating the results into percentages indicated the largest difference was in Section 2: Collaboration of Grade/Subject Level Teams focused on student work (the classroom level of Staff Selection and Capacity-Building). From the interviews the differences were in the levels of positive attitude and commitment of teachers and in the consistent and systematic implementation of the best practices. The observation checklist revealed differences in the consistent and systematic implementation of the best practices, in the types of research-based programs used, in the types of teaching methods used, and in the instructional and programmatic settings of the bilingual students. The gamma values of the survey results and the observation checklist results indicated moderate to strong levels of correlation between the best practices in the instruments and the campus ratings.

Best Practice Framework

The difference in the consistency and systematic implementation of best practices included the practices described in the NCEA's Best Practice Framework. Four of the five sections of the framework showed statistically significant differences in the levels of implementation. The gamma values of the survey results also indicated a moderate level of correlation between the practices and the schools' ratings. The Best Practice Framework is a product of the National Coalition for Educational Accountability and was developed after studying numerous high-performing schools. It has been used by various

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schools and organizations, such as the Washington School Research Center in the state of Washington. Consistency in implementation of school reform strategies was identified by Goertz, Floden, and O'Day (1996) when they conducted a three-year study of reform strategies at the state, the district, and the campus level. They found that "Deliberate, consistent, and pervasive strategies to ensure equity are necessary if the reforms are to be for all students" (p. 33). Consistency in the implementation of best practices was gauged by at least 90% of the teachers using the practice leading to systematic implementation of the practice at the school.

Positive Attitude, Commitment, and Consistency

The interview results indicated all teacher's at the exemplary campus voiced the belief that a positive attitude and the commitment of the teachers to all students on a campus was an important factor toward their high performance compared to none of the teachers voicing the same sentiment at the acceptable schools. The importance of a positive attitude and the commitment of teachers was included as a component of the Effective Schools Research under school climate. In addition, the attitudinal impact on student achievement was noted by Johnson and Steven (2006) in their study where they found a positive correlation between a positive school climate and student achievement.

Bilingual Setting

The difference in the classroom settings of the bilingual students was an item to consider in the issue of best practice. Having LEP students in homogeneous classrooms classified by language proficiency may help a teacher by allowing the delivery of instruction in one language, but having the students discuss and learn with more

proficient English speakers their own age helps the students by providing models and by fostering a more risk-free environment for oral language development as noted in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model for ESL instruction. In addition, Dolson and Mayer (1992) explained that placing students in a setting where their language is seen as a crutch or where it is not valued as much as the majority language may cause students to distance themselves from their language and their culture, resulting in further academic problems if they do not comprehend the second language well enough to be successful academically. The homogeneous setting of the bilingual students in the acceptable campuses may affect student learning in this manner.

Bilingual Setting Due to Busing Based on Language

The busing of the students from higher socioeconomic campuses to the acceptable rated campuses was another difference in instructional setting that did not appear conducive to student achievement. The parents, most of whom were poor and did not have transportation or phone service found it hard to communicate or become involved with their children's education because the schools were not in close proximity to their homes. The practice of busing LEP students almost seemed to be a subtle level of segregation based on language. Concentrating students on a few campuses due to language does not allow the opportunity for these students to interact with more English-speaking students who could model appropriate language use and appropriate sociocultural behavior and interaction (Laosa, 2001). The only time the principals from the sending schools showed interest in keeping their students was after they passed the TAKS test. Passing the state assessment meant they could return to their home campus

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because they were proficient enough to be successful in an all English setting. This district programmatic issue merits further study to determine how the school's rating and student achievement are affected by this practice.

Teaching Methods

Also connected to instruction was the combining of teaching methods to meet the needs of the students. Teachers from the high-performing campuses started with much more structured and directed instruction when Hispanic LEP students first entered school in order to match the type of instruction practiced at home due to cultural and preferred learning styles. Once the students felt successful, the teachers guided them into more constructivist learning where the students investigated, explored, and attempted to learn a skill or concept with less teacher explanation of the steps to follow. The teacher acted as a facilitator, but would monitor the learning to provide support if needed. The result was a large group of students successful in the early childhood grades and continuing that success through fifth grade when tested with the higher level questions of the TAKS test.

Research-Based Programs

Waxman, Padron, and Rivera (2002) named the Success for All and the Reading Recovery programs as showing high levels of success with Hispanic students. None of the four campuses in the study implemented either of these commercial programs. The acceptable campuses did have specialists who had been trained in this style of teaching reading, however, due to the cost of the program and the small number of children who could be served by the program, its use was not cost-effective, so it was not used.

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RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Are educators aware of and modifying their delivery of instruction to be more aligned

with proven research-based practices?

Based on the results of the survey, the interviews, and the classroom observations both the exemplary and the acceptable campuses were implementing research-based programs and various other best practices at the direction of their district and campus leadership. The exemplary campuses' history of using such best practices was much longer than the acceptable campuses'. As the Best Practice and Benchmark concept was implemented by the researcher, the use of best practices increased at the acceptable campuses.

Exemplary Campuses

The exemplary campuses used programs with a scripted, structured approach promoting a consistent, methodical sequence of delivery. They also used practices brought in by the administrators or by the district staff development office. The campus staff felt comfortable with the best practices and programs at their disposal, especially because they trusted the administrators' research into them. They were very vocal on what they liked and disliked. One teacher related how she knew about the programs and strategies she was using. She stated that she learned by:

> Reading up on strategies, a lot of the time our principal provides us with trainings on strategies that work, and like I said, sometimes it doesn't work for another child so you just pick up here and there and if it works for them you keep using it.

Another of the interviewed teachers elaborated on how her district trainings helped her obtain information to use in her classroom. She stated:

We go to trainings for that, and they give us a background on it and they show us data showing that they've used it in another school and that it's proven to do well for them and that their population matches with our population. And so, we know that it's going to work.

The responses showed their instructional delivery changed frequently to reflect their knowledge of best practices. An example of the exemplary campuses modifying their instruction to be more aligned with proven research-based practices was the introduction of the TEXTEAMS math program slated for use this coming year, after a long history using the Sharon Wells Math program. The TEXTEAMS program is a research-based program. The Sharon Wells Math had been researched, but the results did not show consistent yearly gains and started decreasing at the fifth grade, causing problems for the junior high students. One exemplary campus teacher referred to this happening in her district, although her comment did not show knowledge of the results of research conducted on the program she preferred. She stated:

Our kids, they're doing well in elementary. In fact, they're coming to fourth grade. You have to prepare them for fourth grade. If they go to fifth, they have to prepare them for fifth grade and so on. And the scores are showing that they're doing a great job. Now when they get to junior high something happens. It's not because we're not doing our job! There're other issues that are coming into play. Maybe Sharon Wells doesn't work for junior high! Maybe they need the TEXTEAMS. But it shouldn't be shoved down our throats, because it doesn't work for them. It doesn't mean it isn't going to work for us.

Acceptable Campuses

The acceptable campuses used more programs promoting independent and constructivist approaches. A constructivist approach is one where students are guided into discovering new knowledge, rather than being told how to solve a problem or accomplish a task, as in a more structured and scripted approach. The constructivist

types of programs left the delivery method, organization, and consistency of the instruction in the hands of the teachers. The teachers used the approaches suggested in programs such as the cognitively guided instruction in mathematics where students are given a problem to solve without prior instruction. The students solve their problem and present their strategies to the class, allowing all the students to be exposed to various ways to solve a problem. Some of the more constructivist type of programs may not fit the "context embedded" learning style of many Hispanic and LEP students, who may need the structure of frequent feedback from the teacher to reinforce their need for approval and develop their sense of success before continuing the task at hand.

The difference in the approaches between the two types of research-based programs used at the two campus groups may be the reason for the consistency issue. Much of the direction for the programs at the acceptable campuses came from central office, whereas the teachers at the exemplary campuses were involved in deciding which programs to pilot and which to keep. The acceptable campus teachers did not relate much involvement into which programs were brought and kept in their classrooms. By not being involved in the decision-making, perhaps the buy-in to implement the programs effectively and consistently was lacking.

In the collaboration of grade level teams focused on student work, the acceptable campuses were already moving toward using evaluation of their campus systems to improve their students' achievement scores, beginning with the use of the survey from this study to identify areas of improvement addressable through staff development. The acceptable campus educators also recognized the need to use research-based programs

which were developed by educational institutions and had been studied and proven with Hispanic students, as evidenced by some of the programs already in place, such as the SIOP model, a model to improve the language acquisition of second language learners.

The focus on using research-based strategies and programs at the acceptable campuses was the result of a district initiative promoting this practice. District and campus staff development provided the educators with the programs and the reference to the research on which the programs were based. One teacher described the introduction and implementation of the SIOP model for instruction. She explained, "I know this year we went to an ESL training and it was only a half day and they gave us a lot of good ideas and they had already tried them with our student population and that was really helpful."

Another teacher added how important the staff development was to her knowledge of best practices due to not having worked with bilingual/ESL students before. She said:

> The biggest thing is attending the staff development and making sure that I'm applying what I learn in the staff development. This demographics is, you know, newer to me for teaching and I have learned from my peers and from my colleagues on the best strategies, knowing that homework is not always the best strategy to help with enrichment or extension or even to reinforce any subjects but finding different ways in the classroom to do all those fun activities.

Although staff development was a frequent route to learning about best practices and programs that worked, some teachers took the initiative to read up on new ideas and practices. A second grade teacher told her story by saying:

And then for me well the teacher training and in-service, since they offer so many programs and I think that you have to put a little bit of time into your profession. And then I keep reading and researching the latest theories and what's out there, what comes out new, because just because you are done with college doesn't mean that you're done. You have to keep up all the time trying to learn new things.

Apparently the acceptable campus educators were in the process of consistent, systematic implementation of all the practices and programs they had studied together, as one teacher verified when she explained how she had modified her teaching to implement some of those practices. She stated, "And then the principal gave us a laminated sheet of best practices we learned about and I put that in my notebook for lesson plans and that was like a constant reminder, like am I doing these things here?"

Both campus groups were consciously moving toward using best practices and research-based programs, but the exemplary campuses first used structured and sometimes directive instruction to guide the students into being successful. Once the students developed a sense of success, the teachers led them toward higher level thinking and more risk-taking in their problem-solving. By proceeding in this manner, the teachers were able to maximize learning with their chosen programs and institutionalized use of best practices.

FROM SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RECORDS

Factors Within and Outside the Control of the Schools

As school records and community data were investigated to obtain a complete picture of the exemplary schools' path to high achievement, the findings revealed a much more complicated set of variables possibly contributing to the high performance of the

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schools.   Differences between the acceptable and the exemplary campuses' factors impacting student performance were numerous.   Surprisingly, more variables which are positively correlated to academic achievement of students, surfaced at the acceptable campuses than at the exemplary campuses.   Both acceptable campuses from Central Texas had the following factors which positively impact student achievement, although they were outside the control of the school:

1) Approximately the same or a lower percent of economically disadvantaged students,

2) A higher percent of readiness for learning for Kindergartners,

3) A lower class size,

4) A higher parental educational level,

5) Higher per pupil expenditures,

6) A lower percent of Hispanic students,

7) A higher percent of White students, and

8) A lower percent of students speaking a second language at home.

The positive factors common to both exemplary campuses, but also outside the control of the school were:

1) A lower percent of LEP students,

2) A lower percent of student mobility,

3) A lower percent of LEP students in PreK, and

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4) A higher percent of students in the same home for a longer period of time.

Two factors within the control of the school were found present in the exemplary schools but not in the acceptable schools. They were:

1) A higher percent of teachers using best practices, and

2) A higher percent of teachers with bilingual or ESL certification.

Only two of these fourteen factors mentioned can be impacted by the teacher—the percent of teachers using best practices and the percent of teachers with bilingual or ESL certification, both of which were present in the exemplary, but not at the acceptable campuses. The other twelve variables were all outside the realm of the classroom, emphasizing the need to ensure proven instructional practices are consistently used by educators. The use of the practices begins with the teacher's knowledge of specific strategies. Obtaining bilingual and ESL certification, provides a teacher the opportunity to learn about and demonstrate knowledge of the practices that promote the success of the Hispanic LEP students.

Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

Approximately 17% of students in American classrooms are of Hispanic descent. In Texas, Hispanic student K-12 enrollment approximates 45% (Texas Education Agency (TEA), 2006). When Hispanic students enter an American classroom, they bring with them factors with a high correlation to low achievement, based on their socioeconomic status and on their status as an ethnic minority. Factors such as coming from an economically disadvantaged home, being a second language learner, and being a member of an ethnic minority create academic obstacles for students. In addition, little research exists in methods or practices to help this group obtain high levels of achievement. The achievement gap between Hispanic students and White students has caused concern from federal, state, and local accountability stakeholders, who demand that schools adopt measures to close that gap.

Among the measures mandated by federal legislation is the use of research-based practices and programs in schools receiving federal funds. Literature reveals a myriad of research studies indicating schoolwide reform measures to increase student achievement. However, studies have also found that the highest level of impact on student achievement is the teacher (Marzano, 2001), and have identified numerous classroom practices specific to high-performing campuses. More importantly, the use of these practices has produced high academic success for a few schools with high numbers of Hispanic Limited English Proficient students.

The purpose of this study was to find the instructional practices conducive to the high achievement of Hispanic limited English proficient students on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. The study attempted to answer two research questions:

1) Which, if any, instructional practices are present in the exemplary-rated campuses with high numbers of Hispanic LEP students compared to acceptable-rated campuses with the same type of student populations? and,

2) Are educators aware of and modifying their instructional practices to be more aligned with proven research-based practices?

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The Best Practice and Benchmarking Concept proved ideal as the framework to conduct this inquiry. Its qualitative methodology was used by the researcher as the primary method for gathering and analyzing data. The study involved collecting data from four schools, two rated exemplary and two rated acceptable by the Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator System. The campuses were closely matched in student demographics, total enrollment, and grade span. The practices of the two exemplary campuses were compared to those of the two acceptable campuses to find those that were conducive to the high achievement of Hispanic and LEP students and possibly responsible for the difference in ratings. Quantitative analysis was used to find the Chi squares used to determine the statistical significance of the survey and of observation checklist results. Additionally, the gamma and Cramer's phi values were used to find the level of correlation of the survey and observation checklist.

The researcher analyzed data from a survey using selected questions based on those of the NCEA Best Practice Framework. Interview questions were used to elaborate on the differences found in the survey responses between the exemplary and the acceptable campuses by group. An observation checklist was used to identify and verify best practices in the classroom. Additional information was collected from school records, census data, and the schools' AEIS reports from the state. Using various sources of data collection aided in the triangulation of data, thereby ensuring a more valid interpretation of the data.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Research Question #1

Which, if any, instructional practices are present in the exemplary-rated campuses with high numbers of Hispanic LEP students compared to acceptable-rated campuses with the same type of student populations?

The study produced a very unique picture of the school settings and the best practices used at the schools. All instruments produced results indicating large differences in the consistent and systematic implementation of the best practices in the study with an average of more than 90% of exemplary teachers implementing the best practices mentioned in the Best Practice Framework and the Observation Checklist. In addition, the researcher found distinct cultural settings within the school systems based on the geographical settings of the schools being studied. A culture of very structured and uniform directive teaching and learning surfaced at the exemplary campuses, followed by guidance into constructivist instruction once the students encountered

success and became risk-takers in the classroom. The acceptable campuses, on the other hand, presented a culture of constructivist and independent teaching and learning, although it was not uniformly implemented throughout the campus. Constructivist learning promotes allowing the students to construct their own knowledge through activities that build upon their prior knowledge. Directive teaching allows for more direction from the teacher in explaining how to solve problems or how to master skills needed for success in the curriculum.

Other differences found were in the teachers' positive attitude and commitment to the success of all students, in the types of research based programs, and in the instructional setting of the bilingual/ESL programs at the two campus groups.

Combining Instructional Methods based on Cultural Relevance

The observations at the exemplary schools found that teachers mixed their methods of instruction to meet the needs of the students. They used very structured and systematically uniform teaching when students first entered school. Once the students were exposed to success, they were guided into constructivist learning, making them highly successful by the time they were tested with high level questions on the TAKS. None of the participants from the acceptable campuses indicated that the consistent and systematic use of best practices was important to the success of their school or students.

Based on the interviews, the staff was composed almost entirely of teachers of the same ethnicity as the students, making it easier to identify with the Hispanic students' background and culture, perhaps providing them with more time to focus on teaching, rather than on understanding the culture of the school and community. The result was

greater teacher effectiveness (Garrison, 2006). The familiarity with the students' families and language also made it easier for the teachers to communicate with the parents for a more uniform set of high expectations from both the home and the school. Acknowledging and bringing a student's culture into the classroom is important because "The concepts and skills children bring are encoded in the language of the home, and embedded within their culture" (Miramontes, Nadeau, and Commins, 1997).

Bilingual Setting

The observations and interviews revealed that the bilingual/ESL students in the South Texas schools were served alongside their regular education peers. Progress through the bilingual/ESL program produced only a handful of students who had not reached English language proficiency by the time they entered fifth grade, implying that the strategies practiced in the classrooms were effective in assisting students reach academic success and in successful transition to an all-English curriculum.

Consistent and Systematic Use of Best Practices

How did these teachers produce such high performance at the exemplary schools? Teachers strongly verbalized their consistent and systematic approach to meeting the students' needs. Their responses to the survey questions indicated a high level of implementation of all the sections of the Best Practice Framework with more than 90% of all respondents acknowledging awareness of and demonstrating use of best practices in the classroom. Section Two of the Framework, titled Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building was the category producing the largest difference in frequency of use

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of the stated practices. Section Two at the classroom level stated that collaboration occurred in grade/subject level teams focused on student work.

Observations of the high performing campus classrooms verified the consistent and systematic use of researched-based practices, such as cooperative learning, technology-enriched instruction, student monitoring, use of manipulatives, cultural relevance during instruction, cognitively-guided instruction, flexible grouping, cooperative learning, teaching content based on specified objectives, and the use of research-based programs for intervention. More than 95% of the teachers at the exemplary campuses were observed using the practices on the checklist. None of the acceptable school grade levels were observed to have all its teachers implementing the same practices or programs to the same level of implementation. However pockets of good instructional practices were visible during the observations.

Positive Attitude and Commitment

The interviews revealed a more intense attitude of commitment, consistency, and collaboration prevalent at the exemplary schools compared to the acceptable schools, None of the educators form the acceptable campuses mentioned the importance of these practices in the success of their students and school. An important note on this last statement is that research has found teacher responsibility for their students success has a strong effect on their performance, and "After controlling for effects of school SES, teacher expectations and the academic climate were highly correlated to student achievement" (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005).

The acceptable campuses were found to lack the cohesiveness and commitment necessary to implement best practices on a consistent and systematic basis in spite of already possessing various factors conducive to high achievement. A discreet form of segregation at the district level emerged with students bused to the acceptable campuses due to language. This situation created frustration within the staff, perhaps accounting for the lack of commitment to the success of all students by the staff.

Research-Based Programs Used

The types of research based programs observed at the high-performing campuses differed from those at the acceptable campuses. The exemplary campuses used the same computer programs in every classroom to enrich the students' curriculum. Structured and scripted commercial programs were also used to provide reading and oral language development. Instructional time was allocated daily to the use of the programs and the administrators monitored the uniform and consistent use of the programs in the classrooms.

SURVEY FINDINGS

NCEA Best Practice Framework Section Two: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

Survey Results

The Best Practice Survey revealed statistically significant differences in four of its five sections. Further analysis of Section Two: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity-Building resulted in statistically significant differences in seven of its ten items.

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- Almost one third of the teachers at the acceptable campuses did not believe they had demonstrated the skills to use their collaborative time effectively, whereas, all the teachers from the high-performing campuses responded that they did. The "can do" attitude was quite evident throughout in their interview responses and during the classroom visits.

- The same percentages agreed that they shared ideas, materials, and strategies freely at their schools. Frequent occurrences of sharing and collaboration were observed during campus and classroom visits.

- All teachers from the exemplary campuses responded that they shared collective responsibility for the success of all students in all classrooms, compared to less than half from the non-exemplary schools. The conviction with which some teachers felt this practice was not fair was observed during a staff meeting where some teachers insisted they should not be expected to assist with interventions of students who were not in their classroom, yet they wanted to benefit from any rewards the school would provide for increases in student achievement.

- All respondents from the high performing campuses answered that their team meetings were focused on curricular and instructional issues, however, only half the educators from the acceptable schools stated the same about their campus. Observations found the latter staff rushing around making copies, finding materials, or getting coffee during team meetings.

- Studying student work together was verified by more than 90% of the participant from the highly rated schools compared to less than half of those at the acceptable

rated units. Acceptable campus staff indicated that they didn't know what were considered "good examples" of student work, but did not take initiative to find out.

- The difference between campus groups in the use of collaborative planning almost did not show up as significant due to the high percentage of teachers implementing this practice at all four schools. The differences were seen in the products of the collaboration. The staff from the highly successful schools left with ideas, clarifications, and names of students needing attention. The products from the meetings at the acceptable level schools were lesson plans from each member of the group. Observations and document reviews revealed some teachers simply stored the shared plans and used their own once in the classroom.

- Finally, approximately three fourths of the teachers observed each other's delivery of instruction at the campuses with high student success compared to less than forty percent at the schools with average performance, although interviews revealed a focus on this practice initiated the year of this study at the acceptable campuses due to the new administration's expectations and the Best Practice and Benchmarking process.

Exemplary Schools. Teachers at the exemplary schools collaborated in grade/subject level teams focused on student work through grade level meetings, where they reviewed and prepared their weekly lessons and materials and discussed the progress of their students, whether the students were in their classroom or in their flexible groups. Collaboration also occurred through their vertical team meetings, in addition to informal

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meetings where they discussed problems at certain grade levels and how the grade levels

before them could help in preparing the students for those "harder to learn" concepts.

The administrators ensured that the time for the meetings was scheduled and that

coverage was provided to maximize efficiency of the allotted time. The administrators'

actions show recognition that:

> We have learned in the course of these evolving programs that teachers are
> hungry for the opportunity to collaborate and question one another about what is
> working in their classrooms. They are eager to share what is going on in their
> immediate environments. Yet the school day is not structured in ways to make
> that possible. We all know that. Although we work with teachers, building up
> their expectations about what is possible, we also recognize that we must work
> with enlightened administrators and encourage them to restructure the school day
> so that teachers can come together, be supportive of one another, and exchange
> ideas. Teachers need time to discuss the things they observe happening with their
> students, the things they are aware of in the larger community, and the things they
> discover while reading research and professional literature (Stewart, 1990, p. 157-
> 158).

Acceptable Schools. The acceptable school staff was still trying to determine

whether to get on board with the best practices being recommended by the new

administrator and central office initiatives. Although many teachers joined the systemic

changes to improve student achievement, others wanted to wait out the cycle of changes

which they expected to change yearly at the whim of others around them. The

achievement results reflected such thinking, as evidenced by the instability of scores from

year to year.

Combining Instructional Methods

An important finding, and one not previously mentioned in literature was the exemplary campuses' practice of combining instructional methods to meet the needs of the Hispanic LEP students. The teachers at the exemplary campuses provided very structured, consistent and sometimes even directive instruction to encourage success in the classroom. Once the students recognized that they could be successful in the academic setting, the teachers used more constructivist activities to encourage higher level thinking as required on the state assessment. The teachers at the acceptable campuses, on the other hand, provided a more constructivist type of classroom setting based on district initiatives promoting this method of instruction. However, because many students were still very dependent on an adult's explanation and confirmation of success as practiced in the Hispanic culture, they did not respond with high levels of participation and achievement. Teachers at the acceptable schools became frustrated with the resulting lack of progress in the constructivist classroom setting, not recognizing that the students had not yet learned to venture into risk-taking activities and to monitor and adjust their own learning as required in such an environment. The teachers who provided the structure and consistency necessary for the achievement of this ethnic group were the more successful on all campuses. Mixing teaching methods also provided the support for students to exit the bilingual program and function well in an all-English curriculum by the end of third grade. This finding was an unexpected surprise, because the district where the acceptable campuses were situated was more insistent on the use of best

practices, especially in the use of the more constructivist approach to teaching and learning, which the bilingual/ESL students did not seem to be successful with.

Collective Responsibility and Commitment

The interviews and observations revealed a lower level of collective responsibility and commitment from the teachers at the acceptable campuses for all students in the school. The types of practices and programs varied at the campuses, but the difference seemed more attributable to district initiatives than campus' decision-making at the acceptable campuses, which may have been part of the reason for the difference in levels of implementation of this practice. Various teachers felt they had no control over district timelines for testing, and felt they were not being fair to the students by implementing what they did not agree with, which in some cases was due to the shift in the bilingual program guidelines. Because they were not included in the decision-making or the changes to the program, they did not have a chance to provide input into how best to serve the bilingual students.

The friction between what teachers felt was good for students and what central office felt was good for students was evident from the conversations. The teachers felt they had lost their voice for their students and for what they felt were best practices for Hispanic and bilingual/ESL students. The teachers' responses reflected Delpit (1995) who wrote that society should refrain from allowing people who are not of color from "battling each other over what is good for "other people's children", while excluding from the conversation those with the most to gain or lose by its outcome ."(p. 6) The

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teachers at the acceptable campuses felt frustrated and powerless over the type of instruction to use with the students.

Positive Attitude and Commitment

The interviews also revealed much about the teachers' positive attitude and commitment toward the success of all students on the campuses. The teachers at the exemplary campuses seemed to have taken their role as educators into a role as a learning community for the students, teachers, and parents. The attitude of the teachers was very inviting for the students and provided a low-risk environment through the use of Spanish as needed for instruction, inclusion of cultural identities, and integration of the students' home experiences in the classroom. Some teachers commented that they belonged to the same neighborhood, so they truly felt like family, making it easier for them to gain the parents' and students' trust. They treated the students as if they were their own children. Teacher collegiality was also evident as they worked in groups to maximize the teaching effectiveness.

The teachers added to the environment by providing a climate that valued the students' home, language, and culture. They communicated this through incorporation of familiar experiences or discussions in the classroom lessons. Their efforts at providing a positive school climate provided yet another effective practice to improve student performance. Ruus et al. (2007) explains, ". . . the school climate parameters, especially the school value system and teachers' attitudes towards students as perceived by the latter, influence . . . academic success" (p. 919). The exemplary campuses exhibited this important factor.

Setting for Bilingual Students

School setting. The last area of concern resulting from the interviews was the programmatic setting for the bilingual/ESL students at the acceptable campuses. Because the acceptable campuses were designated as "bilingual" campuses, students needing bilingual instruction were bused in from other schools outside their community. The students remained on the bilingual campuses until they passed the state assessment (TAKS) in English. Passing the English TAKS meant they were successful in an all-English setting and could return to their campuses. If the students did not pass the English TAKS, they remained on the bilingual campus. This programmatic stipulation resulted in a misleading picture of the bilingual campuses' success on the TAKS. As the successful students left, and the unsuccessful stayed, the achievement rates changed inversely at the bilingual campuses, while the sending campuses scores always increased.

Classroom Setting. The bilingual students at the acceptable campuses accounted for approximately half of the enrollment at each grade level. The students were homogeneously grouped into classrooms by language, meaning they did not receive instruction with English-speaking peers. In addition, each bilingual classroom was composed of students with the same level of English proficiency. All the students who were classified as beginners were clustered together. Those who were more proficient were clustered in separate classrooms. The purpose for the settings was to vary the use of Spanish instruction based on the oral proficiency of the students. However, the teachers reported frustration with the slow progress of the English proficiency of the beginners group.

Because many teachers at the acceptable campuses were fairly new to the schools or to teaching Hispanics or LEP students, they found it hard to understand why the students did not progress at a higher pace of understanding and of language production. The teachers who did not speak Spanish, also found it difficult to communicate with the parents, creating further problems. These problems did not exist at the exemplary campuses because all the bilingual students were embedded in the regular education classrooms, allowing them a more natural setting to develop their English proficiency. In addition, 99% of the exemplary campus staff spoke Spanish and all were certified to teach Hispanic students who needed bilingual or ESL instruction. By providing the environment for strong English language development, the majority of the students qualified to exit the bilingual program by third grade, leaving only a handful to take a Spanish test in fourth and fifth grade. The students remained successful in an all English curriculum until they left to middle school.

All the common best practices observed at the high-performing campuses have been described in literature as mentioned in the second chapter of this study, except for the mixing of teaching methods to accommodate learning preferences of the Hispanic students possibly due to ethnic culture. The educators had purposely modified their instructional delivery to incorporate the practices they knew worked best with their student population. Through high levels of commitment, consistency, and collaboration, they were able to make their research-proven programs and practices work.

RESEARCH QUESTION #2

Are educators aware of and modifying their instructional practices to be more aligned with proven research-based practices?

Indeed, the faculty from all four campuses revealed knowledge of and demonstrated use of best practices. Both campus groups verbalized programs and practices they knew worked to improve student achievement with the Hispanic and LEP students. Data from the observations, the interviews, and the survey confirmed that the educators knew various best practices and were in various stages of implementation. An interesting revelation from the interviews was the high level of knowledge of best practices at the acceptable campuses. Although the teachers at the acceptable schools indicated high levels of knowledge and understanding of best practices, they differed from the exemplary schools in the level of application of those practices with the Hispanic and LEP student populations.

CONCLUSIONS

After careful analysis of the survey, interview, and observation results, the following conclusions are provided:

1) The best practices from the NCEA Best Practice Framework showed moderate levels of correlation to a high-performance rating when implemented by at least 90% of the teachers.

2) The use of cooperative learning groups, cognitively guide instruction, instructional conversations, cultural relevance, flexible grouping, manipulatives, instructional technology, and research-based programs showed a strong

correlation to a high-performance rating when implemented by at least 90% of the teachers on a campus.

3) The institutionalized practice of combining instructional methods to meet the needs of Hispanic students showed strong correlation to a high-performance rating when implemented by at least 90% of the teachers on a campus.

4) Heterogeneous grouping of bilingual students in grades two through five was strongly correlated to the high performance of the exemplary schools.

5) Educators at the observed campuses were very aware of best practices and were at various stages of implementation to improve student performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to find instructional practices conducive to the high academic achievement of Hispanic LEP students on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. Although previous studies have been conducted based on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, no studies were yet available using the TAKS results as the basis for the study. The findings from this research were highly suggestive that the Best Practice Framework items and the observation checklist practices were not the sole reason for the South Texas schools' high performance. Other variables outside the scope of schools' control, such as less LEP students, more teachers certified in bilingual and ESL instruction, and less mobility were also present but not studied. These factors have been identified in literature as positively correlated to student success. The use of the Best Practice and Benchmark concept as the framework for the study proved successful in leading a campus toward self-improvement. The identification of a benchmark

campus provided the researcher with a model to emulate after consideration of all the variables which needed to be addressed, in addition to the best instructional practices.

However, this study proved that almost all practices necessary to produce high performing campuses are already available in literature. Although no magical strategies were revealed in the study, the practice of combining structured, almost directive teaching and then guidance toward higher-level thinking has rarely been mentioned in previous literature. Also revealed from this research was the need for collective responsibility, commitment, and collaboration from the staff, consistent and systematic implementation of best practices, grouping of students to provide authentic opportunities for oral language development, use of research-based programs based on the student populations enrolled in that school, and the evaluation of obstacles outside the reach of the classroom in devising a path toward high performance. Consideration of the conclusions suggests the following recommendations:

1) *Consistent and systematic implementation of best practices.* To reach high levels of school performance, best practices must be pervasive within the entire school system. School performance can be enhanced with the systematic implementation of the best practices studied in this research. Systematic implementation would mean having at least 90% of the teachers implementing the practices in the NCEA Best Practice Framework, along with the practice of using cooperative learning, cognitively guided instruction, instructional conversations, cultural relevance, flexible grouping, manipulatives, instructional technology, and research-based programs to encourage the high achievement of Hispanic LEP students.

2) *Collective responsibility and commitment of teachers.* Providing the teachers with information on best practices and research based programs proven with their student populations will help increase student performance. In addition, allowing teachers to choose which programs to use in their school promotes commitment for the success of those programs. This practice also encourages awareness of and collective responsibility for all student groups within the school.

3) *Instructional setting of bilingual/ESL students.* Heterogeneous grouping of LEP and non-LEP students may provide LEP students with opportunities for English oral language development in a more natural and risk-free environment than an all-Spanish setting, thereby promoting higher academic performance.

4) *Research-based programs.* Student performance will benefit from research-based programs and practices that fit the population. Schools must feel free to evaluate commercially distributed programs and choose those that have been proven to work with their student groups. Piloting a program, visiting other schools that are implementing those programs, or having experts model the use of the practices in the programs can help schools make informed decisions.

5) *Combing teaching methods.* Student performance will benefit from allowing teachers to choose methods of instruction that meet the needs of students based on the students' backgrounds and experiences. Various types of instructional methods exist, which may work with one group of students and not another. In deciding which delivery of instruction to use, cultural or ethnic considerations

may be necessary. If a group of students needs more structure and guidance to be successful, teachers should not feel bound to one instructional method.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Due to programmatic differences in the two districts' bilingual/ESL program, further investigation may include studying campuses with similar programs, such as late exit transitional programs, dual-language programs, magnet campus programs, and neighborhood schools programs. Although both districts used a transitional model to deliver bilingual instruction to its Hispanic students, the students at one district were bused from their home campus to the bilingual campuses to receive their education. In addition, the acceptable schools divided their bilingual students into two English proficiency levels and served them homogeneously in those groups. Exit from the program was encouraged as quickly as possible after the end of first grade, not allowing for a slow transition into an all-English classroom setting. Heterogeneous grouping with non-LEP students was not allowed during membership in the program. The exemplary campuses, on the other hand, used heterogeneous grouping of their students in grades two through five to encourage more opportunities for engagement with English proficient students and a more natural setting for oral language development of the LEP students. In addition, studying the results from similar programs encouraging dual language proficiency and exiting students after the end of third grade or later may provide quite different results from those in this research. The effect of the two types of programs on student achievement may add further dimension to this study.

A study controlling for other variables such as those noted in the literature of this study, may also provide more conclusive findings of whether the best practices studied by this researcher continue to show correlation to the high performance of a school, or

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whether the outside variables provide obstacles too large to overcome with the use of best practices. This study concentrated on the best practices of the Best Practice Framework and the observation checklist and did not control for other variables other than choosing campuses with high percentages of Hispanic, low-socioeconomic LEP students..

Finally, a study of campuses in the same geographic region may produce more similar variables in the student and school demographic data, resulting in a more equitable comparison of the factors impacting the schools' performance.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A-1

Survey of Best Practices in Bilingual/ESL Classrooms

Dear Teacher,

I am conducting research on best practices that provide the best environment for academic success of Limited English Proficient students. Part of my study entails collecting information on educators' views of the Bilingual/ESL program on their campus. Please fill out the survey below in total honesty, knowing that no identifying information is being collected or will be revealed to anyone other than the researcher and her professor.

My assigned classroom grade level is:

    □ Pre-Kindergarten   □ 3rd Grade
    □ Kindergarten   □ 4th Grade
    □ 1st Grade   □ 5th Grade
    □ 2nd Grade

My classroom is primarily a:

    □ Bilingual Classroom   or   □ ESL Classroom

Please respond "Yes" _or_ "No" to the following questions as you reflect on your own teaching in the classroom. <u>PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE ANY OF THE 50 SURVEY QUESTIONS UNANSWERED</u>.

	Curriculum and Academic Goals		
1.	Does each bilingual/ESL teacher know exactly what students are to know and be able to do in his/her grade and subject (as identified in the district's written curriculum)?	Yes	No
2.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers have a deep understanding of the content standards for their grade and subject?	Yes	No
3.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers know and understand the specific academic expectations of the grades/subjects before and after theirs?	Yes	No
4.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers have exemplars of student work for each academic objective in order to understand the level of work required by the objective?	Yes	No
5.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers have sample problems that illustrate the depth of conceptual understanding that students should attain?	Yes	No
6.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers in this school use the same grading standards for student work (i.e., "A" level work is the same for all students)?	Yes	No
7.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers in this school use the district curriculum to guide their instructional planning rather than relying on a particular textbook or purchased program?	Yes	No
8.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers plan across grades to deepen their understanding of the objectives of their particular grade?	Yes	No
9.	Do bilingual/ESL student-learning materials and assignments reflect the stated district curriculum?	Yes	No
10.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers spend time together determining how to deliver specific objectives or to convey concepts to students?	Yes	No

APPENDIX A-2

	Bilingual/ESL Teacher Capacity Building		
11.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers meet at least two times weekly to collaborate in grade-level or subject-area teams?	Yes	No
12.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers demonstrate the skills to use this collaborative planning time effectively?	Yes	No
13.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers share ideas, materials, and strategies freely and easily in this school?	Yes	No
14.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers share collective responsibility for the success or failure of students in all classrooms?	Yes	No
15.	Are bilingual/ESL team meetings tightly focused on curricular and instructional issues?	Yes	No
16.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers study student work together?	Yes	No
17.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers plan instruction collaboratively?	Yes	No
18.	Do bilingual/ESL teams of teachers across grades and/or subjects meet regularly to coordinate their instruction?	Yes	No
19.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers observe other bilingual/ESL teachers' instruction in this school?	Yes	No
20.	Do master bilingual/ESL teachers or content/instructional specialists model lessons for bilingual/ESL teachers in this school?	Yes	No

	Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements		
21.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers select and use supplemental instructional materials based on the alignment of those materials to the district's written curriculum?	Yes	No
22.	Is bilingual/ESL classroom time tightly focused on the core academic objectives?	Yes	No
23.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers ensure that there is opportunity for students to master prerequisite skills before moving to more advanced applications or concepts?	Yes	No
24.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers ensure that the pacing of instruction enables students to master the materials over which they will be assessed?	Yes	No
25.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers provide students with immediate feedback relative to their responses?	Yes	No
26.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers ensure time has been allotted for re-teaching concepts that have not been mastered?	Yes	No
27.	Are bilingual/ESL students grouped within classrooms to ensure maximum learning for all students?	Yes	No
28.	Do bilingual/ESL student groups change as a result of continual evaluation of student progress?	Yes	No
29.	Are bilingual/ESL teachers in this school continually reevaluating all instructional materials and strategies used according to bilingual/ESL student performance?	Yes	No
30.	Does teaching in this school result in bilingual/ESL student behaviors such as raising questions, finding solutions, explaining concepts, justifying reasoning, etc.?	Yes	No

APPENDIX A-3

	Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data		
31.	Is individual student progress monitored within bilingual/ESL classrooms using a variety of assessment tools and strategies?	Yes	No
32.	Do bilingual/ESL classroom assessment tasks require students to use basic skills in more complex ways (e.g., to analyze, to synthesize, to evaluate)?	Yes	No
33.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers in this school make their instructional decisions based on student performance data?	Yes	No
34.	Do parents of bilingual/ESL students receive frequent communication regarding their students' progress toward mastering the curriculum?	Yes	No
35.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers in this school provide timely feedback to students regarding their performance?	Yes	No
36.	Is the primary use of bilingual/ESL student performance data in this school to inform teaching and learning?	Yes	No
37.	Is the progress of bilingual/ESL students who are diagnosed as below grade level monitored more frequently?	Yes	No
38.	Are bilingual/ESL students that show early mastery of academic objectives presented with more challenging assignments and opportunities?	Yes	No
39.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers disaggregate assessment data by specific skill to pinpoint objectives students have and have not mastered?	Yes	No
40.	Are bilingual/ESL students involved in monitoring their own progress toward mastering academic objectives?	Yes	No

	Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment		
41.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers select intervention strategies based upon their effectiveness with similar student populations?	Yes	No
42.	Are bilingual/ESL students in need of additional time or resources to achieve the stated academic objectives identified early in the year?	Yes	No
43.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers continually evaluate intervention programs based on their effectiveness in increasing student achievement?	Yes	No
44.	Are adjustments in bilingual/ESL students' schedules ever made in response to concerns about student performance?	Yes	No
45.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers regularly communicate with the principal about individual student progress and needed interventions?	Yes	No
46.	Do bilingual/ESL teachers regularly communicate with parents about their student's progress and needed interventions?	Yes	No
47.	Do bilingual/ESL students participate in setting their learning goals, monitoring their progress, and planning intervention strategies?	Yes	No
48.	Are bilingual/ESL classroom level interventions (re-teaching, flexible grouping, peer tutoring, etc) utilized in all classrooms in this school as a first tier of student intervention?	Yes	No
49.	Do bilingual/ESL students who are having difficulty mastering the curriculum receive extra instruction until they have mastered and can apply the knowledge?	Yes	No
50.	Is the extra instruction that bilingual/ESL students receive tightly aligned to the instruction of the bilingual/ESL classroom teacher?	Yes	No

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL 50 SURVEY QUESTIONS.
THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY.

SELECTED ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE FOUR
COMMUNITIES UNDER STUDY

Schools	Battle Cry	All Saints	Victory	Bird'sView
Employment Status				
Population 16 years and over				
% In Labor Force	40.3	55.2	79.7	63.9
% Not in Labor Force	59.7	44.8	20.3	36.1
% Employed	35.1	48.9	76.9	61.5
% Unemployed	5.3	6.2	2.6	2.5
Females 16 and >				
% In Labor Force	33.6	41.0	73.2	56.0
% Employed	29.3	36.9	70.6	53.1
Selected Occupations				
% Mgmt, Prof'l, and related	15.2	12.4	41.2	22.3
% Service Occupations	20.9	19.3	7.7	15.7
% Sales and Office	24.4	27.2	30.7	30.0
% Const'n, extract'n, and maint.	14.1	18.5	9.9	14.2
% Prod'n, transpt'n, mat'l moving	18.4	17.3	10.6	17.9
Industries				
% Educt'n, health, soc.services	21.8	20.5	16.5	14.0
% Retail Trade	16.2	12.9	11.2	15.8
% Arts, Entertainm't, recreation, Accommodation, food services	10.4	7.2	5.6	11.3
% Manufacturing	8.0	8.2	22.3	20.2
% Construction	7.9	13.4	6.3	14.0
% Public Administration	5.3	2.1	8.4	3.8
% Finance, insurance, rent/lease	2.5	4.0	8.2	1.8
Income by Household				
Median (dollars)	23,513	20,971	61,135	36,447
Median male (dollars	19,375	17,622	41,161	30,165
Median female (dollars)	14,702	14,375	30,853	24,550
Poverty Status (below poverty level)				
% Families	29.5	36.5	1.4	10.0
% Female householder, no husband	52.9	39.1	12.1	14.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 American FactFinder File DP3.

SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE FOUR COMMUNITIES UNDER STUDY

	Battle Cry	All Saints	Victory	Bird'sView
School Enrollment				
Population 3 years and over, enrolled				
%Nursery/Preschool	6.3	6.3	11.2	1.3
% Kindergarten	9.7	6.1	6.0	4.7
% Grades 1-8	47.6	49.5	45.5	62.2
% Grades 9-12	22.8	28.6	20.5	18.1
% College or >	13.6	9.6	16.8	13.8
Educational Attainment				
Population 25 years old and over				
% < HS Graduate	49.1	67.2	7.8	38.3
% HS Graduate	23.0	17.9	3.8	31.0
% Some College, No Degree	18.5	9.0	30.7	14.7
% Associate Degree	2.0	3.3	7.6	3.7
% Bachelor's Degree	6.5	1.7	25.4	6.8
% Graduate or Prof'l Degree	1.0	0.9	4.7	5.5
Grandparents as Caregivers				
% Grandparents Responsible	41.3	25.4	52.6	47.0
Residence in 1995				
Population 5 years and over				
% Same House in 1995	65.3	71.3	25.9	40.7
Language Spoken at Home				
%Spanish	74.2	95.5	15.7	36.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 American FactFinder File DP2.

APPENDIX B-3

GENERAL HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE FOUR COMMUNITIES UNDERS STUDY

	Battle Cry	All Saints	Victory	Bird'sView
Occupancy Status				
% Occupied Units	67.6	87.2	97.5	95.7
% Owner Occupied	77.4	81.1	82.6	52.5
% Renter Occupied	22.6	18.9	17.4	47.5
Race of Householder				
% White-Hispanic	83.0	97.3	21.8	41.9
% White-Non-Hispanic	16.2	2.5	68.1	49.9
% Other	0.8	0.2	11.1	8.2
Age of Householder				
% 15-24	5.2	4.9	4.0	7.1
% 25-34	19.1	27.0	32.1	19.5
% 35-44	19.0	30.9	34.2	21.5
% > 44	56.7	37.2	29.8	51.9
Household Population				
Population in Occupied Units				
% Owner Occupied	77.1	84.2	79.9	55.2
% Renter Occupied	22.9	15.8	20.1	44.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 American FactFinder Files QT-H1 and QT-H3.

APPENDIX B-4

HOUSEHOLD ANDF FAMILY DATA FOR THE FOUR COMMUNITIES UNDER STUDY

	Battle Cry	All Saints	Victory	Bird'sView
Household Type				
Family Households	89.3	94.3	81.4	72.4
Male head	64.5	73.7	59.8	46.9
Female head	24.8	20.6	21.8	25.4
Non-Family Households	10.7	5.7	18.6	27.6
Household Size				
Avg.. Family Size	3.96	4.54	3.35	3.44
Family Type				
% Married Couples	78.7	84.9	84%	71.1
% Female, no husband	21.3	15.1	16%	28.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 American FactFinder File QT-P10.

APPENDIX B-5

SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE FOUR COMMUNITES UNDER STUDY

	Battle Cry	All Saints	Victory	Bird'sView
Year Structure Built				
% 1999 and After	0.5	11.8	22.6	0
% 1995-1998	20.6	18.8	9.8	2.5
% 1990-1994	13.6	26.4	3.1	1.2
% Before 1990	65.2	43.0	64.5	96.3
Number of Rooms				
Median (rooms)	4.1	4.6	5.6	4.8
Year Householder Moved In				
% 1999 and After	10.3	29.7	37.5	22.1
% 1995-1998	32.5	22.7	30.0	41.3
% 1990-1994	11.3	24.8	18.5	10.3
% Before 1990	45.9	22.8	14.0	26.4
Value of Owner Occupied Units				
Median (dollars)	45,700	48,900	95,000	79,700
Selected Monthly Costs as % of Income				
Owner Occupied				
< 15%	52.6	32.7	22.0	53.5
15-19%	7.2	19.1	23.0	15
20-24%	14.0	13.4	25.1	15.4
25-29%	7.2	7.7	9.6	9.8
30 and >	19.1	27.2	20.3	6.3
Renter Occupied				
<15%	9.1	8	7.2	5.4
15-19%	5.7	6.8	18.1	5.8
20-24%	4.6	2.5	31.2	8.7
25-29%	17.1	5.9	26.2	9.5
30 and >	53.1	53.1	17.2	57.4

Source: U. S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 FactFinder File DP4.

Results of Survey of Best Practice Survey- % Teachers Responding "Yes"

	Curriculum and Academic Goals	*Acceptable*	*Exemplary*
1	Does each bilingual/ESL teacher know exactly what students are to know and be able to do in his/her grade and subject (as identified in the district's written curriculum)?	88	83
2	Do bilingual/ESL teachers have a deep understanding of the content standards for their grade and subject?	96	100
3	Do bilingual/ESL teachers know and understand the specific academic expectations of the grades/subjects before and after theirs?	81	100
4	Do bilingual/ESL teachers have exemplars of student work for each academic objective in order to understand the level of work required by the objective?	46	59
5	Do bilingual/ESL teachers have sample problems that illustrate the depth of conceptual understanding that students should attain?	85	97
6	Do bilingual/ESL teachers in this school use the same grading standards for student work (i.e., "A" level work is the same for all students)?	77	93
7	Do bilingual/ESL teachers in this school use the district curriculum to guide their instructional planning rather than relying on a particular textbook or purchased program?	100	97
8	Do bilingual/ESL teachers plan across grades to deepen their understanding of the objectives of their particular grade?	88	100
9	Do bilingual/ESL student-learning materials and assignments reflect the stated district curriculum?	88	76
10	Do bilingual/ESL teachers spend time together determining how to deliver specific objectives or to convey concepts to students?	77	97

APPENDIX C-2

Bilingual/ESL Teacher Capacity Building	Acceptable	Exemplary
11	Do bilingual/ESL teachers meet at least two times weekly to collaborate in grade-level or subject-area teams?	72	83
12	Do bilingual/ESL teachers demonstrate the skills to use this collaborative planning time effectively?	69	100
13	Do bilingual/ESL teachers share ideas, materials, and strategies freely and easily in this school?	69	100
14	Do bilingual/ESL teachers share collective responsibility for the success or failure of students in all classrooms?	42	100
15	Are bilingual/ESL team meetings tightly focused on curricular and instructional issues?	54	100
16	Do bilingual/ESL teachers study student work together?	42	93
17	Do bilingual/ESL teachers plan instruction collaboratively?	85	100
18	Do bilingual/ESL teams of teachers across grades and/or subjects meet regularly to coordinate their instruction?	54	76
19	Do bilingual/ESL teachers observe other bilingual/ESL teachers' instruction in this school?	38	76
20	Do master bilingual/ESL teachers or content/instructional specialists model lessons for bilingual/ESL teachers in this school?	54	66

	Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements	Acceptable	Exemplary
21	Do bilingual/ESL teachers select and use supplemental instructional materials based on the alignment of those materials to the district's written curriculum?	100	90
22	Is bilingual/ESL classroom time tightly focused on the core academic objectives?	88	100
23	Do bilingual/ESL teachers ensure that there is opportunity for students to master prerequisite skills before moving to more advanced applications or concepts?	62	100
24	Do bilingual/ESL teachers ensure that the pacing of instruction enables students to master the materials over which they will be assessed?	73	100
25	Do bilingual/ESL teachers provide students with immediate feedback relative to their responses?	100	100
26	Do bilingual/ESL teachers ensure time has been allotted for re-teaching concepts that have not been mastered?	81	100
27	Are bilingual/ESL students grouped within classrooms to ensure maximum learning for all students?	100	100
28	Do bilingual/ESL student groups change as a result of continual evaluation of student progress?	100	93
29	Are bilingual/ESL teachers in this school continually reevaluating all instructional materials and strategies used according to bilingual/ESL student performance?	92	100
30	Does teaching in this school result in bilingual/ESL student behaviors such as raising questions, finding solutions, explaining concepts, justifying reasoning, etc.?	100	100

Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data	Acceptable	Exemplary
31 Is individual student progress monitored within bilingual/ESL classrooms using a variety of assessment tools and strategies?	100	100
32 Do bilingual/ESL classroom assessment tasks require students to use basic skills in more complex ways (e.g., to analyze, to synthesize, to evaluate)?	100	100
33 Do bilingual/ESL teachers in this school make their instructional decisions based on student performance data?	96	100
34 Do parents of bilingual/ESL students receive frequent communication regarding their students' progress toward mastering the curriculum?	92	93
35 Do bilingual/ESL teachers in this school provide timely feedback to students regarding their performance?	100	100
36 Is the primary use of bilingual/ESL student performance data in this school to inform teaching and learning?	96	100
37 Is the progress of bilingual/ESL students who are diagnosed as below grade level monitored more frequently?	100	100
38 Are bilingual/ESL students that show early mastery of academic objectives presented with more challenging assignments and opportunities?	88	100
39 Do bilingual/ESL teachers disaggregate assessment data by specific skill to pinpoint objectives students have and have not mastered?	100	100
40 Are bilingual/ESL students involved in monitoring their own progress toward mastering academic objectives?	100	93

Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment	Acceptable	Exemplary
41 Do bilingual/ESL teachers select intervention strategies based upon their effectiveness with similar student populations?	88	100
42 Are bilingual/ESL students in need of additional time or resources to achieve the stated academic objectives identified early in the year?	100	100
43 Do bilingual/ESL teachers continually evaluate intervention programs based on their effectiveness in increasing student achievement?	92	100
44 Are adjustments in bilingual/ESL students' schedules ever made in response to concerns about student performance?	85	100
45 Do bilingual/ESL teachers regularly communicate with the principal about individual student progress and needed interventions?	88	100
46 Do bilingual/ESL teachers regularly communicate with parents about their student's progress and needed interventions?	96	79
47 Do bilingual/ESL students participate in setting their learning goals, monitoring their progress, and planning intervention strategies?	96	100
48 Are bilingual/ESL classroom level interventions (re-teaching, flexible grouping, peer tutoring, etc) utilized in all classrooms in this school as a first tier of student intervention?	100	100
49 Do bilingual/ESL students who are having difficulty mastering the curriculum receive extra instruction until they have mastered and can apply the knowledge?	77	100
50 Is the extra instruction that bilingual/ESL students receive tightly aligned to the instruction of the bilingual/ESL classroom teacher?	88	100

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions for
Instructional Practices Conducive to the High Achievement of Hispanic Limited English
Proficient Students on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

The questions used to prompt for elaboration to the central questions were:

1. When and how do bilingual and ESL teachers meet to discuss how to deliver specific objectives or concepts to students?

2. How do bilingual and ESL teachers share collective responsibility for the success or the failure of students in all classrooms?

3. What curricular and instructional issues are discussed at your bilingual and ESL meetings and how are the topics chosen?

4. How and when do bilingual and ESL teachers gather with their teams to study student work?

5. How do bilingual and ESL teachers incorporate the use of the students' first language into instruction?

6. How do bilingual and ESL teachers ensure that they provide students the opportunity to master prerequisite skills before moving on to a more complex concept or application?

7. Name and explain some "best practices" bilingual and ESL teachers use to ensure all students are learning. How did you decide to use those practices? (Ex. cooperative learning, technology-enriched instruction, culturally responsive teaching, cognitively-guided instruction, specific strategies

8. How do you ensure that you are knowledgeable on strategies that have been proven to work with your student population?

9. What, in your opinion as a bilingual and ESL teacher, is the most important reason that the students at this campus achieve at high levels of success on the TAKS?

10. If you, as a bilingual and ESL teacher, could retain only one current method to help the students at your campus reach high achievement, what would you keep?

Observation Form for Instructional Practices Conducive to the High Achievement
of Hispanic LEP Students
on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

BEST PRACTICE OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Look for evidence of:

_____ Technology being used

_____ Cooperative Learning

_____ Cultural Relevance- use of Spanish, Spanish Culture references

_____ CGI- Cognitively Guided Instruction

_____ Use of Research-based Programs

_____ Teaching Content based on Specific Objectives

_____ Student monitoring data

_____ Collaboration in grade/subject level focused on student work

_____ Manipulatives used for Conceptual Learning/Hands-on experience

_____ Other: Explain: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Vita

Maria Banda Roberts was born in San Benito, Texas on May 24, 1956 to Raquel and Teodoro Banda. Ms. Roberts attended grade school, middle school and high school in San Benito and continued her education at Pan American University after graduating from San Benito High School in 1973. She obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry with a minor in Biology. In 1998, she earned a Master of Educational Administration degree from the University of Texas at Brownsville.

Ms. Roberts worked as an elementary bilingual education teacher for nine years in San Benito. In 1995, she started working alongside other innovative personnel with a districtwide initiative in curriculum alignment and instructional coaching in San Benito under Dr. Felipe Alaniz. In 1999, Ms. Roberts started her campus level administrative experience as an assistant principal in Harlingen, Texas, where she remained for four years.

In June of 2003, Ms. Roberts entered the Cooperative Superintendency Program at the University of Texas and worked as a Curriculum Director for Granger ISD and later as a principal for the Round Rock ISD until 2007. Ms. Roberts continues to make her home in Harlingen, Texas.

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