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A CASE STUDY TO IDENTIFY THE MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS AND
STRATEGIES USED TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN A TEXAS
URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

Committee:

Rubén Olivárez, Supervisor

Julian Vasquez Heilig

Urton Anderson

Roxanne Rosales

Cathy Jones

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STRATEGIES USED TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN A TEXAS
URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

Antonio Juárez, B.B.A, M.B.A.

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Dedication:

To almighty who gave me the willpower and strength to prevail over obstacles and barriers during this journey, and my late mother Audelia Juarez, who instilled in me integrity, respect for others, and the road to success is education.

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journey and they were always willing to help and motivate me to complete the journey. Thank you to all of you this doctorate was earned as a team.

A Case Study to Identify the Management Concepts and Strategies Used to Improve
Student Performance in a Texas Urban Public School District

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Supervisor: Rubén Olivárez

Transformation is change—especially under challenging circumstances—that is significant, systematic, and sustained, resulting in high levels of achievement for all students in all settings (Caldwell, 2006). Urban education is the primary focus and target of the school reform movement. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) includes explicit requirements to ensure that students served by Title I are given the same opportunity achieve to high standards and are held to the same high expectations as all other students in each state. Urban public school superintendents confront social and economic challenges unique to urban districts and are under pressure to meet NCLB’s accountability standards and mandated policies.

This study started with a broad question about effective urban public school superintendent management concepts and strategies. The study was designed and conducted to (a) identify the prevailing management concepts and strategies initiated

by the superintendent to attain organizational clarity and effectiveness in improving student performance; (b) examine the degree to which the superintendent's leadership and management concepts and strategies were understood, supported, and embraced by key members of the organization; and (c) examine how the management concepts and strategies used by the superintendent align with a business management concept that may be useful to district leaders and administrators seeking a concept or strategy to sustain organizational change.

This researcher used a single-case study to examine the management concepts and strategies used by an urban public school district superintendent. This study was conducted in the largest urban public school system in Texas. The superintendent, 6 members of the district's leadership team, and five principals were interviewed and answered online questionnaires. A board member was also interviewed. Finally, student achievement data were examined. The study found the superintendent implemented management leadership concepts and strategies that prevailed over the social and economic barriers faced by urban students. Use of these strategies increased and sustained student performance.

Despite limitations, this study opens opportunities for further research in management leadership. Opportunities include further research within this urban district, outside the school district, or on each management leadership concept or strategy identified in this study.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION OF STUDY

Educational reform is an attempt to redefine and reconfigure public schools that are complex, conservative, and bureaucratic in order to meet the challenges of a dynamic society (Jazzar & Algozzine, 2006). The growth of public schools, urban city social and economic obstacles, the increased diversity of student population, and the public outcry for more accountability have further added to the complexity of urban education. According to Hunter and Brown (2003), urban education continues to receive considerable attention and is the primary focus and target of the school reform movement. Because of this focus, educational leaders and concerned citizens are coming together for genuine and sustained discussions about their expectations of educational organizations and the strategies that they are willing to support for creating and sustaining change (Contreras, 2003).

However, sustaining change is a difficult challenge for educational leaders because public schools as organizational public service entities are considered the most difficult of all social inventions (Hanson, 2003). According to (Hanson, 2003), schools deal with the tasks of structuring, managing, and giving direction to a complex mix of human and material resources. Bolman and Deal (2003), whose writings in reframing organizations include public schools, declared that an environment filled with complexity, surprise, deception, and ambiguity makes it difficult to extract lessons for future action.

The recent history of America's public school system points to numerous state and federal legislative attempts to bring about major sweeping reforms. Among these

are the compensatory and special education laws of the '60s and '70s. The most recent demonstration of America's discontent with the condition of urban public schools has been the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). Patterned after the Texas blueprint for educational accountability, President George W. Bush launched this high-stakes testing educational accountability system. The goal of NCLB was to raise significantly expectations for America's public schools stipulating that all students are expected to meet or exceed state-adopted standards in reading and math within 12 years (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The NCLB accountability system and its accompanying performance sanctions and consequence have brought upon inordinate amount of pressures on the current leadership of public school; school boards, superintendents and principals. Among these are the inadequate federal and state levels of funding to support the interventions, training, technology, infrastructure development, and those who question the political will to take on the teacher organizations and the ability of the leadership at all levels to introduce and manage the transformation reform efforts.

Ensuring that schools are held accountable for all students' meeting state standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), NCLB's accountability standards and policies formed by state and federal legislation represent monumental reform challenges for urban public school leaders. Bringing about this transformation within a stipulated timeframe has casted yet another questionable dimension to the feasibility of this expectation.

The problem, according to House (1998), is that educational policymakers do not take into account how schools function and forget that teachers and educators are much like everyone else. House asserted,

The types of policies proposed for schools would rarely be proposed for business enterprises because policymakers have a more realistic view of how businesses operate. One can hardly imagine the president formulating national goals for American business and expecting businesses to follow the goals simply because the president enunciated them. Yet such is the case for American education. Hence, the educational policies proposed usually fail in what they intend. (p. 1)

House (1998) noted that stakeholders have little input about the policies, except as critics, and their criticisms are interpreted as resistance to change and dismissed accordingly. According to House, after repeated failures, teachers become cynical about educational reforms, refuse to cooperate, or participate without commitment. Peterson and West (2003) claimed NCLB would not transform American schools overnight. They asserted this legislation imposed a policy framework, like the earlier compensatory and special education laws that demonstrated how federal intervention altered school practices in unexpected and potentially unintended ways. Peterson and West noted that such intervention leaves schools burdened with rules and regulations that may diminish rather than enhance educational effectiveness.

What remains to be seen is whether or not the public school systems in general, urban school districts in specific, can draw the necessary leadership to bring about the transformational changes implied in the reforms. As of January 2009, 39 states have implemented high-quality standards and assessment systems that have

received the status of full approval or full approval with recommendations (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

To implement NCLB's policy framework and achieve high performance standards, the Texas Education Code (2008) delegated to public school superintendents administrative and leadership responsibilities. These responsibilities include planning, supervision, and attainment of improvement of student performance in the district based on performance indicators mandated by Texas Education Code Section 39.051 and other indicators adopted by the State Board of Education or the district's board of trustees and evaluation of the educational programs.

Among the challenges faced by educational leaders is the assertion by some that the American educational system is grounded in a few principles that have been in place for a very long time (Jazzar & Algozzine, 2006). Jazzar and Algozzine claimed that these principles are the box that forms foundations and paradigms that give the system a structure for organizing, managing, and providing educational experiences to all children. Educational leaders carry the box and must look into it periodically to ensure that schools are doing the right things. Jazzar and Algozzine noted that successful educational leaders address questions about conditions that make administering education programs increasingly difficult and different from similar work in other fields.

In education, Hanson (2003) explained people often see strong leaders with grand ideas about sweeping reforms or innovative new programs and offer enthusiastic support. Long after attempting the execution of the changes, the vision

begins to crumble. By this time, according to Hanson, the strong leaders have a better job somewhere else and are creating a vision for another audience; those left behind are in deep water. Hanson claimed, “There is a certain magic that surrounds the word *change*. For many the force of that word seems to tap a well of hope—that events, conditions, and people will somehow be better than they are now” (p. 296).

The leadership task, according to Hanson (2003), does not simply involve selecting the proper course of action by making the right decision for the school district. Hanson noted that the task is “to select among the many right demands; the nature of what is right lies in the eyes of many beholders” (p. 161). The leadership environment, Hanson stated, calls for compromising between differing demands of various pressure groups both inside and outside the school district. As a decision-making process, however, the device of compromise is an essential management tool.

Educational reform will have common themes such as customer service, a shift from a rule-driven to result-driven system, and a push for value-added measures of performance (Marsh, 2000). As the competition for students and school choice becomes more prevalent, customer satisfaction will matter more. According to Marsh, customer satisfaction and school performance will become more synergistic because customers care about student performance, and the value a school adds to student performance will matter more than before to customers. Education reform will gradually shift rule-driven systems to result-driven systems. Teaching and learning will change because there will be a push for value-added schooling and much higher student performance expectations, according to Marsh, forcing schools to make

significant changes to the way teaching and learning takes place. Technology, for example, will act both to push schools and to provide the assessment support needed to clarify how students are doing.

Leadership and reform literature have pointed out traditional leadership preparation programs have failed to make the necessary changes to match the real condition of urban school settings. Despite the educational reform movement, Valverde (2003) observed that the preparation for the role of principal or superintendent has been generic, regardless of location or setting. The assumption is that the performance of the role does not differ substantially in schools situated in rural, suburban, or urban contexts. Valverde stated that the preparation of urban education leaders should be differentiated from the preparation of rural or suburban educational leaders. According to Valverde, traditional courses such as school finance, school law, organizational theory, and others should have a specialized focus that represents varying public school settings.

The quality and effectiveness of educational leadership long has been recognized as the key factor in bringing about the implied change of reform. According to Kelley and Peterson (2007), recent studies on implementing reforms have demonstrated the vital role of principals and other leaders for successful change. They claim that principals are the key to initiating, implementing, and sustaining high-quality schools.

The educational reform movement of the past two decades focused a great deal of attention on new paradigms for educational leaders (Jazzar & Algozzine,

2006). The recent interest in school leadership follows many years of relative negligence (Kelley & Peterson, 2007). During the 1990s, according to Kelley and Peterson, educational rhetoric and reform efforts focused on empowering teachers and other stakeholders, with particular attention to elevating the role of the teacher and on restructuring schools, especially school governance.

According to Bolman and Deal (2003), individual skills and confidence cannot guarantee success unless the structure of schools is re-aligned to the new initiatives. Change often undermines existing arrangements, creating ambiguity, confusion, and distrust. It sometimes leaves people unclear about what is expected or what to expect from others, creating conditions in the organization where everyone may think someone else is in charge when, in fact, no one is (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

According to Hanson (2003), planned change is often seen as a tool for adopting an exciting new innovation, resolving conflict, clearing communication channels, upgrading instructional quality, and so forth. These are all important targets of change, but taken as singular efforts they are limited in scope. According to Hanson, a more expansive approach to planned change does not simply facilitate the dissemination or adoption of an innovation but seeks to establish built-in problem-solving capabilities that provide for creative experimentation in educational organizations.

Bolman and Deal (2003) claim structure confers clarity, predictability, and security. Formal roles prescribe duties and outline how work is to be performed. They state policies and standard operating procedures synchronize diverse efforts into well-

coordinated programs and systems. Formal allocation of authority lets everyone know who is in charge, when, and over what (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Bolman and Deal (2003) asserted that major organizational change inevitably generates four categories of issues:

1. First, organizational change affects an individual's ability to feel effective, valued, and in control. Without support, training, and a chance to participate in the process, people become a powerful anchor and make forward motion almost impossible.

2. Change disrupts existing patterns of roles and relationships, producing confusion and uncertainty. Structural patterns need to be revised and realigned to support the new direction.

3. Change creates conflict between winners and losers—those who benefit from the new direction and those who do not. This conflict requires creation of arenas where the issues can be renegotiated and the political map redrawn.

4. Finally, change creates loss of meaning for recipients rather than owners of the change.

Transition rituals, mourning the past, and celebrating the future help people let go of old attachments and embrace new ways of doing things, according to Bolman and Deal. Successful change requires an ability to frame issues, build coalitions, and establish arenas in which disagreements can be forged into workable pacts in order to improve an educational institution's performance (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

In Texas, the mission of the public education system of the state is to improve the performance of educational institutions to ensure that all children have access to a quality education that enables them to achieve their potential and fully participate now and in the future in the social, economic, and educational opportunities of our state and nation (Texas Education Code, 2008). To accomplish this mission, the Texas Education Code Subchapter E, "Superintendents and Principals," directs the duties of the superintendent and principals. According to Subchapter E, the superintendent's duties include assuming the administrative responsibility and leadership for the school district; planning, operating, supervising, and evaluating educational programs and facilities; and providing the leadership for the improvement and attainment of student performance. Subchapter B of the Texas Education Code states that the principal is the instructional leader of the school and shall have adequate training and personnel assistance to assume that role and set specific education objectives for the principal's campus.

In addition to these state requirements, the roles of superintendents and principals are affected by NCLB, which emphasizes the use of educational programs, practices, and teaching methods that have been proven to be effective through rigorous scientific research (Jazzar & Algozzine, 2006). Furthermore, NCLB attempted to reform federal educational programs to support state efforts by establishing standards to develop aligned assessments and to build accountability systems for districts and schools that are based on educational results (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). In particular, NCLB includes explicit requirements

to ensure all students are given the same opportunity to achieve high standards and are held to the same high expectations as all other students in each state (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

The dynamic growth of public school systems and the need for educational reform have changed the public's view on how they should be managed and held accountable. The multifaceted functions of school districts have likened them to complex business enterprises striving to carry out a mission and attain customer satisfaction. Similar to business conglomerates, urban school systems must adapt and change to meet the expectations of their clientele.

Businesses are expected to compete and are evaluated according to the company's financial indices, such as sales, account receivables turnover, inventory turnover, net income, and the company's profit margin. Public education as an enterprise is expected to compete and is evaluated and judged by state and national standards that measure student achievement and efficient use of financial resources. These expectations are accomplished by business and public school organizational structures that are traditionally and fundamentally similar. Both organizational structures (a) entrust the adoption of policies and rules and performance oversight to a governing board, (b) delegate the achievement of the organization's mission and performance standards to a chief executive officer, and (c) strive to increase the organization's value by meeting customer expectations.

Therefore, to survive more than a few years in the 21st century, there must be fundamental changes in the operation of schools that are organized along traditional lines (Caldwell, 2006). Thus, the challenge for a Texas urban school superintendent is identifying prevailing management leadership concepts and strategies that will simultaneously deal with the social and economic barriers faced by urban students and increase student performance. A bold reform that is poorly planned and executed will be controversial and have little impact, according to Caldwell (2006); there will be no change at all if the reform is timid and poorly implemented.

Transformation is change, especially under challenging circumstances, that is significant, systematic, sustained, and results in high levels of achievement for all students in all settings (Caldwell, 2006). Caldwell claimed taking on the agenda for change and success will require boldness in design and quality in execution. The idea of school transformation is expressed freely and with many claims to achievement of transformation. Caldwell claimed important changes have been made, but few reformers can claim the outcomes have been significant, systematic, and sustained, and even fewer changes have an impact that resulted in high levels of achievement for all students in all settings.

The focal point of leading change in an organization is one of the most important and difficult leadership responsibilities (Yukl, 2006). According to Yukl, the efforts to implement change in an organization are more likely to be successful if a leader understands the reasons for resistance to change, sequential phases in the

change process, different types of change, and the importance of using appropriate models for understanding organization problems.

The organization's formal leader is in a unique position to set the tone in schools, because of his or her broad mandate to carry out the mission (Hanson, 2003). *Educational leadership* is a broad term reflecting analytical, critical, and innovative thinking to improve the performance of educational institutions (Jazzar & Algozzine, 2006). In the quest for improving student performance and achieving educational excellence, educational leaders should focus both on the school and on the system in which the school is a part, according to Jazzar and Algozzine. The complexity of urban public schools, social and economic obstacles, and NCLB's accountability mandates have placed enormous reform challenges for urban public school leaders to close achievement gaps between student ethnic groups.

Purpose of the Study

Research has identified common elements of successful school and district reform; however, an important piece is missing from the body of research on districts that have made progress in closing the achievement gaps (O'Doherty, 2007). According to O'Doherty, the elements present in successful districts have been described, but the process that districts have used to put these elements in place is not well documented.

The rationale for this study was to identify the Texas, urban school district superintendent's management leadership concepts and strategies initiated and implemented to address urban public school challenges and improve student

performance. This study was designed to (a) identify the prevailing management concepts and strategies initiated by the superintendent to attain organizational clarity and effectiveness in improving student performance; (b) examine the degree to which the superintendent's leadership and management concepts and strategies were understood, supported, and embraced by key members of the organization; and (c) examine how the management concepts and strategies used by the superintendent align with a business management concept that may be useful to district leaders and administrators seeking a concept or strategy to sustain organizational change. This research may be useful to educational leaders who are seeking a management strategy to improve customer service that results in increased organizational and student performance.

Research Questions

Before people support radical change, a clear and compelling vision must be created. Transformational leadership as a strategy is useful to guide such change in an organization (Yukl, 2006). Thus, the essential role of top management—a superintendent in the case of an urban public school district—in implementing change is to formulate an integrating vision and general strategy, to build a coalition of supporters who endorse the strategy, and then to guide and coordinate the process by which the strategy will be implemented (Yukl). The following three research questions directed and shaped the content of this study:

1. What are the prevailing educational management concepts and strategies used by a Texas, urban school district's superintendent to address effectively and efficiently urban school challenges?

2. To what extent were these concepts and strategies perceived as effective and embraced by key members of the organization?

3. To what extent are the superintendent's management concepts and strategies aligned with business management concepts?

Methodology

This study involved a qualitative research method for a case study of a Texas, urban public school district. The research evolved and took on a definite shape as the study progressed. This study used a single-case design that examined the management concepts and strategies used by a Texas, urban public school superintendent. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), theory evolves from qualitative data, and thus grounded theory was an important method of generating theory from data for this study.

Definition of Terms

The terms used in this study hold a specific meaning in research literature. These terms and their definitions follow.

Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS): The AEIS is a comprehensive reporting system defined in state statute. Since 1990–1991, Texas campus and district academic performance reports have been generated and published annually by the

Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2007b). All indicators used for accountability are reported in the AEIS for each grade level and different student populations. The reports also show participation rates on the state-administered tests. Additionally, the AEIS shows demographic information about students and staff, program information, financial information, and all provide context for interpreting accountability results (TEA, 2007a, 2007b).

Effectiveness: To be effective means to achieve results, to make the right decisions, and successfully to carry them out so that they achieve the organization's goals (Kinicki & Williams, 2003).

Efficiency: To be efficient means to use people, money, and raw materials wisely and cost effectively (Kinicki & Williams, 2003).

Incremental plan: Organizational leaders using this model take small steps, learn through feedback, hedge their bets, and avoid disaster in the short run. This model uses a democratic approach that allows feedback from many sources, such as parents, teachers, principals, and teacher unions; this participation leads to buy-in that sustains long-term change.

Management: Management is the pursuit of organizational goals efficiently and effectively by integrating the work of people through planning, organizing, leading, and controlling the organization's resources (Kinicki & Williams, 2003).

Management concepts and strategies: For the purpose of this study, management concepts and strategies refer to the superintendent's method for planning, organizing, and controlling the district's resources for school improvement.

School improvement: Efforts that focus on educational policy, administration, and teaching and learning to provide a framework for sustaining district-wide success for all children (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004).

Six Sigma: Six Sigma is a customer-based approach and a continuous improvement process generally known as define, measure, analyze, improve, and control (DMAIC). Continuous improvement covers a spectrum of cost-reduction and quality-improvement processes (Kumar, 2006).

Six Sigma measure: This measure can be quantitative or qualitative. A quantitative measure is a reference or numerical standard used for the quantitative comparison of performance and service quality, and a qualitative measure involves variables such as sex, race, or job title (Kumar, 2006).

Transformational leadership: With transformation leadership, followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect toward a leader, and they are motivated to do more than they originally expected to do (Yukl, 2006).

Transactional leadership: This type of leadership involves an exchange process resulting in follower compliance with leader requests and is not likely to generate enthusiasm and commitment to task objectives (Yukl, 2006).

Urban area or city: This term refers to all territory, population, and housing units located within urbanized areas or an urban cluster. The U.S. Census Bureau (2000) delineates urbanized area and urban cluster boundaries to encompass densely settle territory, which consists of: core census block groups or blocks that have a

population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile and surrounding census blocks that have an overall density of at least 500 people per square mile.

Limitations of the Study

This research is limited to one case study using the qualitative research method. A limitation of this single case study is not comparing information with other urban school districts of similar student population size and student and staff demographics. A further limitation is the small sample size of respondents. A statistical sample size calculation method was not used to determine the sample size. The online questionnaire and interviews were conducted with only a small portion of the school district's staff population. Thus, another limitation is the respondents' responses represent the personal point of views and perceptions of a small portion and do not represent the district as a whole. Using a larger sample size could yield different perspectives on the management leadership concepts and strategies used by the superintendent.

Finally, other limitations include how the respondents interpreted the online questionnaire and interview questions and how the researcher interpreted the respondents' responses and the data. The purpose of this study was not to support a hypothesis but to create a hypothesis and assemble theory based on the study involving a superintendent from a Texas, urban, public school district. This urban public school district is led by a superintendent serving in the 5th year. The superintendent for this Texas, urban public school district volunteered to participate in this study and was not selected randomly.

Significance of the Study

Urban public school superintendents confront social and economic challenges unique to urban districts and are under pressure to meet NCLB's accountability standards and mandated policies. These challenges and performance standards compel them to bring about organizational reform initiatives in an effort to achieve high academic standards and educational excellence and equity. Such superintendents must make the necessary organizational changes to achieve national, state, and local accountability standards. Jazzar and Algozzine (2006) stated that the effectiveness of the superintendent or principal centers on administrative responsibilities, such as maintaining facilities, ensuring student discipline, and meeting state reporting requirements. Thus, an urban public school superintendent advances organizational transformation and reform vision and ideas to make certain that all schools achieve the student performance standards set by NCLB, state, and local accountability mandates.

In the pursuit of the best solution and to be effective for influencing change in the organization, a leader must understand and read school and community culture (Deal & Peterson, 2007). Further, to formulate a deeper explanation of what is truly going on, a leader must inquire below the surface to determine what is happening.

Reframing leadership, according to Bolman and Deal (2003), offers a way to get beyond narrow and oversimplified views of leadership. Bolman and Deal identified four frames that present a distinctive image of the leadership process: (a) structural, (b) human resource, (c) political, and (d) symbolic. Bolman and Deal

stated that, depending on the leader and circumstance, each leadership view can lead to compelling and constructive leadership images, but none is right for all times and seasons. The key to how well an organization performs depends on an organizational structure that provides clear, well-understood roles and relationships and adequate coordination (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

The risk is that organizations spend millions of dollars on change strategies that either produce no change or make things worse (Bolman & Deal, 2003). To mitigate this risk, Senge (2007) suggested that organizations tear down the illusion that the world is created of separate and unrelated forces, thereby enabling people to build learning organizations. According to Senge, learning organizations allow people continually to expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together. According to Senge, this enables the organization to learn faster and not lose ground to competitors.

Just as American companies lost market share, Americans discovered that the United States fell behind many countries, and well-regarded international surveys of educational achievement routinely revealed that U.S. students trailed their peers abroad (Peterson & West, 2003). As a result, school leadership that once changed at a measured pace now seems to change rapidly to deal with new standards, new policy mandates, and new standards for accountability (Smith & Piele, 2006). Smith and Piele pointed out efforts to find answers have led to an overabundance of policies, experiments, theories, and proposals aimed at improving leadership practice.

According to Smith and Piele (2006), the evidence of the leader's effectiveness centers on behaviors in four major roles: (a) providing direction, (b) developing the capacity of others, (c) pioneering change, and (d) establishing an orderly environment. Smith and Piele asserted one of the strongest themes to emerge from research studies is the importance of the leader's role in providing focus, direction, and goal orientation. This notion showed up in the first generation of school-effectiveness studies in the 1970s and 1980s; Smith and Piele's analysis of these studies reflected the leader provided the direction by creating ambitious goals, communicating them to the staff, and then monitoring to ensure they were achieved. According to Smith and Piele, today the discussion is more likely to invoke concepts such as visions, learning communities, and distributed leadership, but the core conclusion remains the same: Effective leaders keep the school focused on essential outcomes.

Another significant reason for the current study is that over the years business leaders have participated in events in which they have provided educational leaders advice on how to lead public schools (Schlechty, 2008). Schlechty claimed some of these events were successful and others were disastrous, because many business leaders do not understand the conditions of schooling well enough to provide advice. Businesses are not schools, students are not products, and schools are not businesses. Schlechty noted that business leaders are concerned with improving the bottom line, product quality, and return on investment; further, they can dismiss underperforming staff and do not encounter the same politics as superintendents.

For educational leaders, students and student learning have been the center and focus of school reform initiatives for more than 10 years, and NCLB standards for Adequate Yearly Progress have elevated student performance concerns to unprecedented heights (Lashway, 2006). As their business counterparts searched for ways to improve customer service and their bottom line, educational leaders turned to business leadership strategies and theories such as total quality management (TQM) and transformational leadership to increase student and organizational performance.

In the pursuit of exemplary student performance, urban public school leaders could consider looking at educational structures and programs from the customers' perspective. This requires looking at an educational organization from the outside in, organizing the educational structures from the customers' needs, and finding out what the customers see and feel. With this understanding and knowledge, educational leaders can develop a clear vision to identify the organizational structure and programs that can add significant value or improvement to all students. This notion is supported by Schlechty's (2008) suggestion that district-wide transformation requires leaders to have a clear vision of the systems they want to create and the ability to communicate their vision to others in ways that gain commitment and support.

A customer-driven leadership strategy, according to Pande, Neuman, and Cavanagh (2000), Six Sigma offers a simple and consistent way to track and compare performance to customer requirements (the Sigma measure) and an ambitious target of practically perfect quality (the Six Sigma goal). Customers and competition inspire

innovation; therefore, Six Sigma in organizations is built around the customers' needs.

In the search for excellence in business performance, Six Sigma was introduced in the 1980s by an engineer of a leading microchip manufacturing company (Thomsett, 2005). This theory focuses on customer knowledge (Summers, 2007). Companies implementing Six Sigma have improved their processes by as much as 100% (Adams, Gupta, & Wilson, 2003). Six Sigma improves customer relations and processes through employee participation and improves employee morale, according to Adams et al. Thomsett noted that other quality systems measure performance, but the Six Sigma approaches change procedures so that overall performance improves permanently—at every level within the company. Thomsett claimed,

So many quality programs have been devised, named, and put into effect over many years. Most fail after a while because employees lose faith in those programs. It becomes obvious that “quality control” to employees represents management's attempt to cut costs and expenses and get more work from its labor force. In other words, the program applies to the worker but there is no change in management itself. If the result of a quality program is to achieve increased efficiency, and that results in layoffs, who benefits? With Six Sigma, everyone is involved and everyone is expected to change (for the better) as part of one overall team. The purpose is not assigned to the rank and file but is shared from top to bottom. (p. 9)

In the Six Sigma process, according to Dedhia (2005), leaders recognize performance gaps through the DMAIC process before trying a solution. Dedhia stated that DMAIC involves five steps:

1. Define: The problem has to be defined clearly and explicitly. A well-defined problem clearly sets ground rules for improvement.

2. Measure: Measurement points, sources, tools and equipment, and precision and accuracy play a vital role in the project. Without measurement, control does not exist. Measurements are essential to collect data.
3. Analyze: The right approach in using analytical tools or methods will help to find a clearly defined solution. Data are analyzed into information to create a knowledge base and make decisions for actions.
4. Improve: Selecting the best alternative solution and implementing to remove the cause of a problem will bring the desired result. Improvements can be in the form of efficient equipment, new process, enhanced training to the employees, or new material. Improvements are actions, both corrective and preventive.
5. Control: After the implementation of improvement activities, monitoring becomes essential to control the processes. (p. 570)

This study expands on the knowledge of the essential leadership acts and roles by identifying the management concepts and strategies used by a Texas, urban school superintendent to improve student performance. Additionally, this study was designed to determine if the identified management concepts and strategies are aligned with a business management theory. This study provides information on Six Sigma, a business management concept used by some prominent businesses in the private industry to increase the quality of customer service and organizational and employee performance. Results of this study may be useful to district leaders and administrators seeking a concept or strategy to sustain organizational change and improve organizational and student performance.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the reform-minded environment that has to sweeping legislative reforms in public education in general and urban public schools in particular. It also introduced related research on the nature of public service

organizations and the leadership strength needed to bring about the implied transformations of the educational system. Finally, it established the purpose for the study of a Texas urban school district superintendent's management concepts and strategies to reform the organization and improve student performance. Specifically, this chapter included the study's introduction, description, research questions, definition of terms, and the limitations of the study.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 presented the background, statement of the problem and areas of research to be examined. Chapter 2 presents the review of literature related to challenges faced by urban public school superintendents and the management concepts used in an attempt to reform educational organizations and student performance. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research study, design, methodology, and data collection procedures. Chapter 4 presents the research findings. Chapter 5 concludes the study with a summary of findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Urban educational leaders have used various management concepts and strategies in an attempt to reform educational programs and organizational structures to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Reform for urban public school leaders is complex because they face many challenges and problems that have a far-reaching effect on student learning. These challenges and problems require innovative educational leadership to bring about organizational and educational program reform that focuses on understanding and addressing the needs of urban students and the community. According to Obiakor, Harris-Obiakor, Garza-Nelson, and Randall (2005),

It is imperative that reformers understand traditional educational problems before initiating change policies in urban schools. Issues related to equal education for all cannot be discussed without acknowledging that traditional educational programs foster historical inequities. As a result, it is important to ask, what efforts must be made to design general and special programs that foster quality and equity? How can urban educators understand the relationship between what they do and what happens to students in their classes? (p. 23)

To develop an understanding of the complexities, difficulties, and dilemmas faced by urban public school leaders in initiating educational leadership reform, this chapter first presents some urban challenges and problems faced by urban school leaders. Next, this chapter presents some of the management concepts and strategies used by educational leaders in an attempt to reform the quality of teaching and increase student achievement. Finally, this chapter presents Waldman's (as cited in Sosik & Dionne, 1997) specific TQM behavior factors and how they connect with the

core leadership behaviors cited by Smith and Piele (2006) and presents the key components of a best-practice management model identified using the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award program criteria.

Challenges of Urban Public School Reform

Initiating urban educational reform initiatives is difficult because urban school leaders lack political influence and confront issues such as gang violence, teen pregnancy, and drug abuse in schools (Obiakor & Beachum, 2005). In addition, urban public school leaders must overcome problems related to student diversity, urban school inequities and inefficiencies, language diversity, and inadequate finances to bring educational leadership and organizational reform to improve the educational institution and student performance.

The troubled state of urban schooling has been at the heart of national efforts to address poverty, inequality, and urban blight (Hess, 2005). According to Hess, despite the occasional apparent success and progress in urban performance in the past few years, the nation's urban schools remain an area of pressing concern, and concerted efforts to reform these systems have accomplished little. Hess stressed that the need to improve dramatically the quality of urban schooling has been accepted as one of the primary tests of the American commitment to equality and opportunity. Efforts to improve an urban school's quality of teaching and learning are challenged by an urban city's diverse population, demographics, student stereotypes, and poverty.

Urban Diversity and Poverty

According to Valverde (2003), urban cities are composed primarily of persons of color: African American, Hispanic, Asian, and a constantly shrinking number of Whites. Valverde observed that these urban demographic trends, diverse population composition, and low-income levels have not been matched with commensurate changes by the educational systems.

Obiakor and Beachum (2005) asserted that urban education is deeply and negatively affected by interrelated urban characteristics such as parental employment, educational status, and earnings that reflect poverty. Other urban dynamics, according to Obiakor and Beachum, with far-reaching implications for urban education are high-density populated areas that are increasingly inhabited by ethnically diverse people, poverty, and lack of resources. According to Contreras (2003), 50% or more of the student population in the District of Columbia and Texas is non-White, and Black, non-Hispanic students comprise more than 50% of all the students in the District of Columbia and Mississippi. Contreras maintained that the shifting demography represents new kinds of challenges for education, many of which are being addressed within the educational reform movement. Variety in student backgrounds can enhance the learning environment, but this variety also can create challenges for schools, Contreras noted.

Urban public school leaders are challenged to retain the hundreds of thousands of diverse students who leave the educational system each year without successfully completing high school (Contreras, 2003). Contreras observed that

44.2% of Hispanic youth born outside the United States drop out of high school, 27.8% of Hispanic youth born in the United States drop out, 13.1% of Blacks drop out, and approximately 3.8% of Asians or Pacific Islanders drop out of high school.

Another challenge for urban leaders is the nontraditional student.

Nontraditional students include Hispanic immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and South America and Asian immigrants from Vietnam, Korea, Laos, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and the Philippines (Contreras, 2003). Numerous nontraditional students in schools underachieve academically, enroll in fewer academic courses, and fall behind in literacy skills. According to Contreras, many explanations for the educational failure of minority and nontraditional students are shaped by the assumptions that the student's sociocultural background is deficient and impedes academic success. Contreras explained that nontraditional students are economically disadvantaged and may be limited English proficient. According to Contreras, this deficiency in English skills is equated with the lack of academic potential, and immigrants receive the least demanding curriculum. Tests do not consider language and cultural differences, and Hispanics have been placed mistakenly in special education, where they are overrepresented, according to Contreras.

Adding to the complexity of educating this diverse student population are school personnel who still harbor stereotypes about students of color, low teacher expectations, and ignorance of the minority students' learning styles (Valverde,

2003). Valverde explained that schools have neither overcome the inequities nor systemically changed the educational programs for such students.

These urban misconceptions and characteristics redirect an educational system's failure to the assumptions that urban students cannot perform at high levels. Hunter and Brown (2003) claimed that considerable attention is focused on reforming public education because American children have failed to demonstrate basic educational skills. This conclusion of failure is supported by comparisons of U.S. elementary and middle school students across other industrialized nations. According to Hunter and Brown, educational system failures are worse in large urban centers, which have high demographic changes and percentages of poor African American, Hispanic, and Asian American students.

Hunter and Brown (2003) noted growing recognition today that a variety of factors, including the current demographic changes in schools, challenge every segment of society, including educators, parents, and the greater community, to work together in partnerships to forge needed educational improvements. According to Contreras (2003), reform movements provide an opportunity to bring communities and schools together and develop a common understanding among all segments of society regarding educational missions, goals, and ways of measuring progress. However, Contreras declared that most reforms are likely to be short lived and ineffective, at least with regard to the needs of underserved students. The success of the reform movement, according to Contreras will be measured by how accurately educators determine and respond to the needs of all students. Contreras maintained

that the magnitude of the current demographic changes in educational programs, coupled with the assumption that the process of education involves every segment of society, requires educators, parents, and the extended community to come together in new roles and partnerships.

The contemporary system faces two major problems as leaders consider reform amid the needs of diverse students: large numbers of minorities and recent immigrants whose first language is not English and the educational system's historical failure to provide for academic success for many minority students (Contreras, 2003). Additionally, systematic change is difficult because most of the teaching force, administrative personnel pool, education state departments, state legislators, and to a lesser extent the local governing boards are middle-class Whites, which could have a bearing on determining the needs of the diverse, urban student population (Valverde, 2003).

Racial and ethnic minorities in the United States have fought for decades to improve the quality of education for themselves and their children; this battle has centered on issues such as equal funding for segregated schools, school desegregation, community control of neighborhood schools, and the need for multicultural education (Brown, 2003). In general, the problem is how best to educate poor minority children in urban centers across the country. Brown noted that urban educators attempt to teach large numbers of at-risk students without adequate financial, human, and political resources, and these urban schools are increasingly becoming socially segregated.

School Segregation and Desegregation

The country's minority population is increasing, and the European American majority is decreasing in percentage, which changes the politics of education and living patterns in America (Brown, 2003). This shift, according to Brown, has made most large urban cities and many suburban communities racially segregated. Many minority groups are less motivated to fight to live in White communities where they are not welcome, and the national trend toward suburban segregation would be difficult to reverse. Brown stated that this national trend started in 1960, when Whites left the inner cities for suburbia in large numbers to escape school integration; for Whites who remained in the cities, intradistrict segregation became the norm, with ability grouping or tracking and the placement of minority students in special education classes. The migration from the inner city, according to Brown, has resulted in a high concentration of minority children in one-race urban schools where resources are limited and crime control is a major safety and political issue. This concentration makes it easier to target minority children for criminal behavior, Brown stated.

School segregation presents a challenge for urban education leaders to reform an educational system that provides all students an equal, equitable, and efficient learning opportunity. Equity and liberty as the foundation of reform are financially and politically expensive in today's environment (Brown, 2003). Brown declared that change in a school's decision-making structure is designed to improve organizational efficiency, exclusive of equity and liberty. The strategy for this change is not to

identify new money, bus students to promote desegregation, or change urban school boundaries to improve the balance among students from different economic and social classes. Brown noted that a society stratified by unequal positions of power, income, and social status hardly can alter these conditions, and the restructuring of schools is a political process controlled by ruling elites who favor the status quo when it comes to providing access to knowledge for minorities.

Public education in America remains unequal in virtually every public school institution that serves a diverse population of students (Epps, 2005). Ethnic inequality in public education opportunities exists in a different form; today, African American and Latino families are concentrated in urban areas, whereas Whites live in relatively affluent suburbs. Epps noted that this form of inequality affects social-structural factors such as size of school district, family wealth, and the families' educational and occupational levels. These social-structural factors affect the quality of education available to children, school assignments, racial composition of schools, and the human and financial resources allocated to education. In addition to the social factors, Epps noted the quality of education is affected by public education advocates, educators, and policymakers who continue to debate about what kind of educational experiences are most appropriate for a diverse student population. Epps claimed that the basic educational issues have centered on three questions: (a) Can culturally diverse students be educated to the same level as Whites; (b) should they be educated to the same extent as Whites; and (c) if they are to be educated, should they be educated along with Whites, or should they be educated separately in segregated

facilities? Other factors affecting the quality of education and educational opportunities are the pervasive attitudes of racism and stereotyping towards diverse children. Efforts to address racial inequalities started in the 1970s.

In the 1970s, heated debates were held over issues such as busing for school desegregation, community control of public schools, inappropriate use of standardized tests, and compensatory education (Epps, 2005). The political response to court-ordered desegregation presented another challenge for urban school reform. In response to the courts, the political movement of the 1970s and 1980s suggested that parents should have a choice in the school their children attend and proposed other school reform measures for those not interested (Brown, 2003). Today, according to Epps, school desegregation and community control issues are immersed in the school choice movement and have prompted debate about vouchers and charter schools. Epps claimed that racial inequalities result in unequal education, income, and housing discrimination. He asserted that racially segregated, African American, urban campuses are more likely than segregated White campuses to experience poverty, and segregated schools with high poverty are identified by state testing programs as low performing.

Additionally, urban cities' cultural changes, such as languages other than English, traditional foods for multiple cultures, and formal and informal religious practices, typically are not valued, ignored, and suppressed by formal public institutions, including schools (Lawton, 2003). These demographic differences affect urban student performance; according to Lawton, in New York City 30% of students

entering the ninth grade do not graduate and a third of these students pass the General Education Development test. According to Lawton, fewer than 2% of the students obtaining a diploma via the General Education Development test attend college but do not graduate. Epps (2005) stated,

Anyone who wants to explore the continuing inequalities needs only to examine the test scores, dropout rates, and other statistics for various schools in a metropolitan community and relate them to statistics for school poverty (free lunch) and race (percent black) to see a distressingly clear pattern. (p. 225)

Hunter and Brown (2003) asserted that reforming public education in America requires a substantial amount of focus. Reforming public educational organizations to improve student achievement depends on how educational leaders address racial inequalities, social-structure factors, and urban economics.

Urban Economics and Funding

Urban economies differ from one region or state to another and determine the success or failure of inner-city education (Lawton, 2003). Lawton wrote that some urban cities have experienced double-digit growth income and population, while others have stagnated and then slipped backwards. The stagnated communities, according to Lawton, are homogeneous, minority communities amid interconnected transportation systems of the pre- and post-World War II periods with three different populations and cultures. During the prewar period, central high schools of the era were planted centrally as symbols of civic pride, and urban cities were both the generators and home to economic wealth. According to Lawton, the postwar era was the start of the movement to escape from crowded urban areas to idyllic suburbs; high

schools along with post offices ceased to be civic buildings of stature, and businesses also relocated to the suburbs. This redesign of American cities was accompanied by a resettlement of populations that, combined with secular trends related to family formation and family structures, increasingly differentiated central cities from suburbs.

African Americans, other minorities, and women migrated to the dominantly European American cities in the North, Midwest, and West during World War II, as the industrial expansion accompanying the defense build-up created a demand for labor and roles from which these populations previously had been excluded (Lawton, 2003). This urban city migration, along with immigrants from European and Spanish-speaking countries, created an incredible diversity of race, language, religion, and talent. Lawton noted that, economically and demographically, urban America has become a different nation from suburban and rural America. Urban America is less wealthy and more diverse. Lawton observed these differences are magnified in the urban public school systems, where students are more likely than the population as a whole to be poor and members of a minority group.

The economic and demographic shifts brought changes in nonmaterial assets such as human, social, and cultural capital (Lawton, 2003). According to Lawton, economists measure an urban city's human capital in years of schooling. An individual or group with more years of education has the skills and knowledge that add value to the region and community; conversely, a region with a high proportion of school dropouts would be identified as one with an accumulation of declining

human capital. Lawton proclaimed that years of education, dropout rates, and test scores are valid measurements of human capital. Vesley and Crampton (2005) also mentioned that lower achievement levels and higher dropout rates in property-poor urban schools assure high levels of unemployment and the underdevelopment of human capital. Thus, the community's expectation is for urban public school leaders to provide an educational system that reduces high school dropout rates; prepares students for the workforce or college; and emphasizes national, state, and local student test scores (Lawton, 2003). Vesley and Crampton suggested that urban public school districts with limited resources are challenged to address these expectations and increase student achievement.

Current education funding systems do not provide sufficient state and federal funding (Vesley & Crampton, 2005). To make up for this deficiency, some urban school districts tap into local property taxes generated in urban areas that are maintained by a poorly educated workforce, with low-paying employment and lower valued housing. Vesley and Crampton noted that this lower valued property tax base in turn yields fewer dollars for the same tax effort (or rate) than that of more property-wealthy communities. Even if urban voters are willing to pay higher property taxes, they must tax themselves much more compared to their suburban counterparts, because the urban school district has a lower valued property base on which to draw (Vesley & Crampton, 2005). In addition to economics, school governance is a significant and vital dynamic that affects urban school systems.

School Governance

Usdan (2005) stated, “Controversial issues relating to the current capacity of urban boards to govern have attracted great attention in large metropolitan areas throughout the country” (p. 12). In an increasing number of urban school systems, the division between schools and general-purpose government either has collapsed or has been broken down substantially. Conflict-ridden, elected boards cannot govern effectively; thus, Usdan claimed, the trend for a number of the largest and most visible national school districts is to move away from elected to appointed boards. Changing to an appointed board system could bring stability to school governance, and this stability is necessary to sustain progress. Usdan suggested that educational reformers should not ignore the significance of assessing the current roles and responsibilities of school boards and should view them as part of the solution and not the problem.

Usdan’s (2005) analysis of the San Diego City School’s board of trustees illustrated the significance of school governance. Usdan’s analysis focused on the role of the elected San Diego board, relationships with external constituencies, and how these relationships influenced school board politics and elections as well as the superintendent’s reform. Three of the five school board members supported the superintendent’s reform agenda. The two opposing members’ personal and professional antipathy toward the superintendent filtered through the school district and adversely affected the school district’s relationships with the parents and minority groups, elected officials, business community, and the powerful teachers’ union.

Thus, Usdan's San Diego analysis illustrated two key schools of thought that dominate education reform debates throughout the country. The first school of thought, supported by San Diego's board majority, is the assumption that large-scale organizational change must be catalyzed initially by strong top-down leadership approaches. The second school of thought, embraced by the board minority, teacher union, and staff members, is that buy-in from the teachers in the classrooms and principals in the schools could sustain meaningful education improvement (Usdan, 2005).

The most challenging problem is how to restructure, reform, or revolutionize instruction for students in schools with high concentrations of children from poverty-level families located in neighborhoods that have been devastated by unemployment, unstable families, and high crime rates (Epps, 2005). Epps noted that after an educational leader makes a decision on the structural and instructional changes to address the problem, the challenge is how to sustain these changes for school improvement. To respond to urban school challenges and to reports declaring the failure of U.S. public education, educational reform commenced with immense enthusiasm and determination (Jazzar & Algozzine, 2006).

Reform Management Concepts and Strategies

Public policy mandates and inducements were the first attempts of restructuring efforts to increase the effectiveness and quality of education. Jazzar and Algozzine (2006) stated these attempts adhered to the Industrial Age model of management, because they were authoritarian, highly autocratic, accountability

driven, and linear and stressed uniform minimum standards. These forceful initiatives did not revolutionize education or change the public perceptions of the condition of U.S. schools. According to Jazzar and Algozzine,

Change management has no firmly established foundation from which one can analyze its values and assumptions. Very little is written to reveal the conceptual framework and values from which organizations are working from but a few books give an overview of their approach to organizational change. (p. 10)

Urban educational leaders have made efforts to restructure, reform, and revolutionize educational organizations to improve instruction for diverse students, using different programs, practices, instructional methods, and philosophies. These efforts have included decentralization of authority and participatory decision making for solutions (Vesley & Crampton, 2005). Additionally, intervention programs such as Comer's School Development Program and Boykin's (2000) talent development model have shown promise and effectiveness in some settings (Epps, 2005). Epps described teacher preparation programs to serve low-income urban learners as extremely important. Other instructional methods mentioned by Epps that have produced positive student performance are the Core Knowledge Program used in San Antonio and the Paideia Program implemented in Chicago. Additionally, Jazzar and Algozzine (2006) claimed TQM and site-based management (SBM) are models that have gained some favor with effective educational leaders.

Total Quality Management (TQM)

According to Jazzar and Algozzine (2006), because of the perception of the inability to educate students in the 20th century, educators turned to Deming's TQM

in an attempt to transform educational institutions into supportive environments where all students learn. Teachers were empowered and received professional training to understand the processes, systems, and challenges for continual growth and improvement. TQM provided schools with the means to improve continually the product (student achievement), and schools regained some prominence (Jazzar & Algozzine, 2006).

However, Jazzar and Algozzine (2006) claimed an organization may take 5–10 years to fully implement TQM, and many organizations are not willing to make the major commitment required. Implementations of long-term organizational changes are not favorable during times of recession, downsizing, and layoffs.

Unfortunately, Jazzar and Algozzine (2006) asserted, TQM is considered a panacea, but the management strategy cannot solve deep-rooted problems that affect an organization's mission and long-term objectives. Further, in practice many organizations dilute the TQM philosophy by implementing only certain parts (Bolman & Deal, 2003); the implemented parts are usually the easiest and least disruptive to the status quo.

Studies by Ernst and Young (as cited in Jazzar & Algozzine, 2006) suggested the implementation of TQM has failed to improve and has hampered productivity. In one survey cited by Jazzar and Algozzine, only 36% of 500 company executives felt TQM had a significant role in improving their organization's competitiveness. Jazzar and Algozzine concluded, "For educational leaders, there is little evidence illustrating

that the principles of TQM offer promising alternative practices for those charged with administering, managing, and improving programs in U.S. schools” (p. 12).

Decentralization

According to Vesley and Crampton (2005), decentralization in school districts is contingent on two major assumptions. The first assumption is that education will improve by moving decision making and accountability closer to the student and classroom. This change redistributes the decision-making power among the district’s key stakeholders, such as principals, teachers, parents, and other advocates with an interest in the quality of education. Proponents, according to Vesley and Crampton, maintain that redistributing power and authority to key stakeholders makes education more responsive to the needs of local communities; benefits include the knowledge, creativity, and energy of people at the school level.

The second assumption is that to reform and improve education the traditional ways of arranging and delivering instruction services, which are entrenched in regulations and statutes, must change. Reformers maintain the most persistent problems in education can be attributed to the structure of education, and the educational structures are the root of education’s problems (Vesley & Crampton, 2005).

Site-Based Management (SBM)

Business and industry leaders began to advocate several trendy types of shared decision making or school-based management, and among them, SBM

attracted support (Brown, 2003). According to Brown, this support led to mandates in most states for some form of SBM. As a concept, SBM is designed to reform schools into communities in which people participate in the decision-making process (Jazzar & Algozzine, 2006). SBM is a process of decentralization and deregulation in which individual schools become the focal point of school leadership (Lyons, 2003). To improve student achievement, this concept is designed to maximize the number of individuals in the decision-making process.

Lyons (2003) suggested that school-based management is synonymous with SBM, which can function effectively if site councils receive training in group process skills, consensus decision making, and conflict resolution. According to Lyons, school-based management has failed due to limited participation, principals' exercising excessive influence, excessive time being wasted and few decisions made, failure to manage and stick to the agenda, and participants' having different agendas and inadequate training. Lyons also found that SBM fails because participants do not commit and spend the time needed to address difficult educational issues, practices, and innovations; participants often resort to less complicated and understood issues such as discipline and extracurricular activities. Jazzar and Algozzine (2006) noted that SBM is implemented in an attempt to increase and improve efficiency through decentralization.

Evidence-Based Approach for Decision Making

Rebore and Walmsley (2007) have offered an evidence-based approach for decision making at the governance and administrative levels within a school or school

district. This approach uses two types of evidence, qualitative and quantitative, in making critical decisions about the schooling of children. According to Rebore and Walmsley,

Educational leaders are expected to develop a modus operandi that values evidence to such a degree that they strategize the production of evidence. Thus the responsibility of superintendents, principals, and other administrators is not only to be a consumer of evidence but also a producer of evidence. (p. 1)

Evidence-based decision making, according to Rebore and Walmsley, should be the foundation of the governance function. The board of education has two primary roles: to formulate policies and to evaluate every function of the school district. Therefore, using qualitative and quantitative data to make decisions is a quality-control mechanism that could prevent trustees of the board of education in making decisions on personal impulses. Additionally, Rebore and Walmsley noted that data can be used to weigh the consequences of the board's decision on the entire school and school district.

Superintendents and principals receive criticism for substandard student performance on standardized tests and teacher performance, student violence, obsolete curriculum, and lack of financial stewardship (Rebore & Walmsley, 2007). In spite of this criticism, most administrators search for a management concept or strategy to reform the educational structure. According to Rebore and Walmsley, the evidence-based leadership approach may lead to transcendental administrative leadership. They say the basic principle of transcendental leadership theory is that an individual acts from the entirety of whom he or she is as a human being. Rebore and

Walmsley pointed out that the educational administrative decision-making process and the ramifications of the decisions that individuals make have both a quantitative and qualitative effect and may affect how individuals react in future circumstances. In order to guarantee that effective leadership is practiced, the following six evidential elements of the transcendental leadership theory must be activated, according to Rebores and Walmsley: (a) use a reflection paradigm, (b) practice the principle of subsidiarity, (c) act from a political base, (d) act from a sense of duty and responsibility, (e) advocate social justice, and (f) formulate professional positions through discourse.

To explain these six elements, Rebores and Walmsley (2007) first described the reflection paradigm: Reflection is a process, and paradigm is the method that helps administrators understand the reciprocal relationships among practice, theory, and philosophy. By implementing the principle of subsidiarity, individuals at the lowest possible level in a school or school district are empowered to make decisions as they carry out their responsibilities. The third element, act from a political base, refers to the manner in which educational leaders handle tensions between the school district and individuals of the community and how individuals minimize the effects that their actions and decisions will have on the actions and decisions of others. Rebores and Walmsley explored the fourth element, sense of duty and responsibility, through perspectives of three philosophers: (a) Immanuel Kant, (b) Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and (c) John Dewey. According to Rebores and Walmsley, from Kant's perspective the practice of reflection is key in the decision-making process;

Antoninus's basic principle is that experiencing life will give an individual self-control and courage in the pursuit of truth and justice; and Dewey believed in the empowerment of parents, students, and school staff and that education was a lifetime process and should be developed along thematic and problem-solving bases. Social justice suggests that every individual has access and a right to a system of liberties that is available to all individuals, and every individual should have an equal chance to obtain positions and offices that are open to all. The fundamental theory of public discourse is that in the decision-making process each administrator and participant must be willing and able to appreciate the fairness of evidence and the perspective of all individuals. Rebores and Walmsley declared that different leadership theories have comparable elements, but the effectiveness of a theory is determined by the combination of elements used and the individual's disposition using the theory.

San Diego School Reform

Many education reforms are symbolic and do not affect on what goes on in schools; however, the core mission of the San Diego City Schools Blueprint for Student Success reform plan was to improve student performance and close the achievement gap by supporting teaching and learning in the classroom (Hannaway & Stanislawski, 2005). This highly centralized plan sliced right into the inner workings of schools and focused on what happens in classrooms daily, student achievement, and classroom instruction. The key features of the plan involved teacher and administrator professional development, centrally directed spending, centrally directed school staff, and the involvement of principals as instructional leaders in the

classroom. According to Hannaway and Stanislawski, San Diego's educational reform approach was to build a coherent philosophy of effective teaching practice with literacy as the basic building block of learning. San Diego's reform plan was implemented in two phases. Three Phase 1 attributes marked the superintendent's bold reform approach: (a) Do it fast, (b) do it deep, and (c) take no prisoners (Hannaway & Stanislawski, 2005).

This approach is known as a centrally directed or a social-engineered model for instituting educational reform. According to Hannaway and Stanislawski (2005), this model presumes that "the center has the requisite information about alternative actions and their consequences to make good decisions and that it is efficient to proceed comprehensively with a centrally determined direction" (p. 55). Hochschild (as cited in Hannaway and Stanislawski, 2005) made a strong argument for this type of reform approach, and her studies of desegregation in school districts found that incremental reform approaches alleviated conflicts, tensions, and uncertainties; caused effective resistance; and did little to promote desegregation. A similar argument can be made that teacher autonomy, low expectations for students, or even particular pedagogical techniques are deeply engrained in school systems; therefore, incremental policies to promote student achievement through change in classroom behavior or teacher expectations likely would be undermined, even though everyone's intention might be to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap (Hannaway & Stanislawski, 2005).

Kenneth Clark (as cited in Hannaway & Stanislawski, 2005) concluded that longer time periods for preparation may come with greater rather than lesser difficulties, and that gradual desegregation does not insure effectiveness but increases the chances of resistance and resentment. Hannaway and Stanislawski mentioned that most analysts would not consider the notion that under the right conditions information alone is sufficient for reforming large school systems, due to substantial uncertainty about what works in education.

Teacher Empowerment and Preparation Programs

According to Rebore and Walmsley (2007), teacher empowerment “is based on the belief that professional educators are skilled and dedicated professionals who are capable of making their own decisions, not only about their classrooms and disciplines, but also about what works best in education” (p. 24). Rebore and Walmsley pointed out John Dewey’s belief in the empowerment of parents, students, teachers, staff members, and administrators. According to Rebore and Walmsley, teacher empowerment is to allow teacher participation in the decision-making process about policy and procedural matters that impact a school or the school district as a whole. Teacher empowerment gives teachers the authority and responsibility to design their short- and long-term plans and their own growth and development plans. In essence, Rebore and Walmsley defined teacher empowerment as sharing leadership responsibility with the teachers.

Epps (2005) claimed that preparing prospective teachers to work in schools serving low-income urban learners represents a challenge that few traditional,

postsecondary schools have been able to meet. He suggested that the preparation programs should steer White prospective teachers from their background of middle-class isolation, prejudgments, and stereotypes towards an understanding of the public school system's power, privilege, equality, and inequality. Vesley and Crampton (2005) stressed the importance for urban school district leaders to design and implement policies to focus on building teacher capacity and the role of the school and other communities of practice in teacher learning and educational improvement.

Paideia Program

Some educational leaders use the magnet school concept to restructure, reform, and institute educational and organization reform. According to Epps (2005), research on magnet schools has shown that students of all ethnic groups attending these schools have higher achievement compared to students who attend neighborhood schools. Student performance is improved, but the concept has some shortfalls. According to Epps, magnet schools attract an excessively high number of White, middle-class students as well as a high allocation of resources.

Epps (2005) suggested that magnet schools, charter schools, and vouchers separate children by race and social class. Critics, according to Epps, claim that magnet schools drain both financial and human resources from neighborhood schools and create a dual education system within public schools of a district. These magnet schools get both the best students and teachers, along with the best facilities and educational materials and equipment.

So far, this study has illustrated some urban public school district superintendents' leadership concepts, strategies evolving from their visions and ideas in an attempt to address many urban challenges and problems, and efforts to reform urban school systems to improve student performance. In the attempt to initiate reforms to improve student performance, school leaders have turned to business leaders over the years for advice on how to lead schools (Schlechty, 2008). The results have been dismal, Schlechty maintained, because public school superintendents have a strong belief that schools are not businesses, students are not products, and business leaders do not deal with politics. Business leaders provide few useful lessons on how to lead schools. Although business leaders have provided educational leaders advice on how to lead schools (Schlechty, 2008), little research exists for illustrating and connecting the relationships between educational and business leadership styles.

Relationship Between Educational Leadership Styles and TQM Behavior Factors

Educational leaders should understand the relationship between their leadership styles and those of the business leaders. This study provides information of Sosik and Dionne's (1997) study of the relationship between a full range of business leadership styles and specific TQM behavior factors. Sosik and Dionne cited five TQM behavior factors: (a) change agency, (b) teamwork, (c) continuous improvement, (d) trust building, and (e) short-term goal eradication.

Change agency is defined as organizational advocacy of active productive change initiated by all employees (Sosik & Dionne, 1997). Leaders initiate and guide

the change effort through five phases: (a) analyzing the organization's need for change; (b) isolating and eliminating invalid structures and routines; (c) creating a shared vision, common direction, sense of urgency, implementing plans, and enabling structures; (d) fostering open communication; and (e) reinforcing the change (Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992).

Teamwork implies the use of teams within and across internal and external organizational boundaries to perform inter- and intraorganizational tasks (Sosik & Dionne, 1997). Teams consist of two or more individuals with similar skills who interact to achieve a common tasks or goals and who consider themselves accountable for the attainment of their goals. Sosik and Dionne claimed teams are created to serve the organization's interests within and across departments and divisions, and teams foster TQM outcomes among the organization, suppliers, and customers.

Continuous improvement is a persistent quest to satisfy all customers through constant refinement of the organizational processes and the financial and human resources (Sosik & Dionne, 1997). Continuous improvement can be viewed as (a) a shared relationship between product and service improvement and increased customer expectations; (b) constant enhancement of customer satisfaction by fostering a culture of trust, teamwork, high expectations, and open communication with employees, customers, and suppliers; and (c) a systems approach that uses objective data for analyzing and enhancing processes to satisfy both internal and external customers (Meisenheimer, 1992).

Trust building is the process of creating respect and instilling faith into followers based on leader integrity, honesty, and openness (Sosik & Dionne, 1997). Marlow (as cited in Sosik & Dionne) stated employees who understand the internal and external factors influencing the team, department, and organization are more likely to trust management. According to Sosik and Dionne, employees who trust each other enjoy clear communications, empathy, synergy, and productive interdependency.

Short-term goal eradication eliminates management by expectation, numerical quotas, and targets that ignore the continual improvement of the production or provision processes (Sosik & Dionne, 1997). Short-term goals can be derived and numerical quotas can be replaced with a clear leadership vision concerning how the organization can achieve quality by focusing on a long-term customer relationship based on trust and continuous process improvement (Gabor, 1990; Sosik & Dionne, 1997). These TQM behaviors can help urban school leaders understand the relationship between the educational leadership styles and business leadership styles presented in this paper. Whether the leadership management concept is decentralization (Vesley & Crampton, 2005), SBM (Brown, 2003), evidence based, or teacher empowerment (Rebore & Walmsley, 2007), five TQM factors are involved: (a) change agency, (b) continuous improvement, (c) teamwork, (d) trust building, and (e) short-term goal eradication (Sosik & Dionne, 1997).

Smith and Piele (2006) claimed a school leader's effectiveness centers on core behaviors in four major roles: (a) leading change, (b) developing people, (c)

providing managerial order, and (d) setting and providing direction. Table 1 suggests a connection between TQM's five specific behaviors and the core leadership behaviors associated with student learning mentioned by Smith and Piele.

Specifically, this study introduced in chapter 1 Six Sigma, a data-driven and customer-driven business management concept used by high-profile American companies to bring about organization change. By introducing the Six Sigma strategy, the author provides urban public school superintendents another business model for reforming educational leadership in urban public schools. Urban public school districts could consider looking at educational structures and programs from the customers' perspective. To find out what the customers perceive and believe requires looking at the educational organization from the outside in and then organizing each educational structure to focus on the identified customer wants and needs. A key difference between Six Sigma and all other previously developed quality systems and methods, such as TQM, is that Six Sigma is a strategy for the whole quality (every quality dimension concurrently), which is a dramatic improvement for the whole educational operation (El-Haik & Roy, 2005).

In addition to the Six Sigma a data-driven and customer-focused business model, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award program identifies key components of a best-practice educational management model.

Table 1

Linking Total Quality Management (TQM) Behavior Factors to the Core Leadership Behaviors Associated With Student Learning

TQM behavior factors	Core leadership behaviors
<p>Change agency: A leader actively looks for and finds opportunities for change.</p>	<p>Leading change</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A leader is aware of the readiness for change and tailors the strategy to the school's changing dynamics 2. A leader develops a shared vision of rigorous standards for all children 3. A leader advocates and promotes cooperation and a sense of well-being among staff
<p>Continuous improvement, teamwork: A leader encourages employees to find ways to fine-tune organization systems. A leader provides both task and socioemotional support.</p>	<p>Developing people</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An effective leader shares new ideas, and points out new strategies to explore 2. A leader provides intellectual stimulation 3. An effective leader seeks to develop the capacity of those he or she works with 4. A leader understands the importance of human relationships and affirmation
<p>Trust building: Leaders understand the needs of followers in open task and socioemotional discourse.</p>	<p>Managerial order</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A leader establishes moral order and cultivates responsibility 2. A leader promotes consistent policies, rules, and safe environments
<p>Short-term goal eradication: A leader transforms operating paradigms from short-term to a long-term range. The status quo will not do.</p>	<p>Setting and providing direction</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A leader provides focus, direction, and goal orientation 2. Communicates focus, direction, and goal to staff and monitors to ensure they are accomplished

Note. Core leadership behaviors derived from *School Leadership: Handbook for Excellence in Student Learning* (4th ed.), by S. C. Smith and P. K. Piele, 2006, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Baldrige National Quality Award

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, manages the Baldrige National Quality Program. NIST (2008c) promotes U.S. innovation and industrial competitiveness by advancing measurement science, standards, and technology in ways that enhance economic security and improve our quality of life. The Board of Overseers advises the U.S. Department of Commerce and evaluates all aspects of the award program, and the Board of Examiners evaluates the award applications and provides feedback (NIST, 2008c).

A unique aspect of the award program is the requirement for award recipients to share information on their successful performance and quality strategies with other U.S. organizations (NIST, 2008c). Over the last 20 years, award recipients have shared information with many businesses including educational organizations (NIST, 2008c). The Quest for Excellence Conference, held annually, is the principal mechanism for sharing information (NIST, 2008c).

The Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence are about students excelling and about an organization that is high-performing; has high integrity; and is characterized by the ethical behavior of its students, faculty, and staff (NIST, 2008c). Additionally, the criteria provide a valuable framework that can (a) help school districts measure performance and plan in an uncertain environment; (b) align resources with approaches such as Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles, a Balanced Scorecard, and accreditation self-studies; (c) improve student achievement; (d)

improve communication; (e) increase productivity; (f) increase effectiveness; and (g) achieve strategic goals (NIST, 2008c).

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is traditionally presented by the President of the United States in a special ceremony held in Washington, DC and is the highest national recognition for performance excellence that a U.S. organization can receive (NIST, 2008c). This award is given annually in the categories of education, service, manufacturing, small business, healthcare, and nonprofit (NIST, 2008c). The award criteria and requisites of the Education Criteria for Performance Excellence are embodied in these seven categories: (a) leadership; (b) strategic planning; (c) student, stakeholder, and market focus; (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; (e) workforce focus; (f) process management; and (g) results (NIST, 2008c).

Leadership category

The leadership category examines how the organization's senior leaders guide and sustain the organization. It also examines the organization's governance and how the organization addresses its ethical, legal, and community responsibilities (NIST, 2008c).

Strategic Planning Category

The strategic planning category examines how the organization develops strategic objectives and action plans. This category examines how the strategic

objectives and action plans are deployed and changed if circumstances require, and how progress is measured (NIST, 2008c).

Student and Market Focus Category

The student and market focus category examines how the organization determines the requirements, needs, expectations, and preferences of students, stakeholders, and markets. It also examines how the organization builds relationships with students and stakeholders and determines the key factors that lead to student and stakeholder satisfaction and loyalty, student persistence, increased educational services and programs, and organizational sustainability (NIST, 2008c).

Measurement and Knowledge Management Category

The category of measurement and knowledge management examines how the organization selects, gathers, analyzes, manages, and improves its data and information as well as how the organization manages information technology. The category also examines how the organization reviews and uses reviews to improve its performance (NIST, 2008c).

Workforce Focus Category

The workforce focus category examines how the organization engages, manages, and develops the workforce to use its full potential in alignment with the organization's overall mission strategy and action plans. This category examines senior management's ability to assess the workforce capability and capacity needs and to build a workforce environment conducive to high performance (NIST, 2008c).

Process Management Category

The process management category examines how the organization determines its core competencies and work systems. This category examines how the organization designs, manages, and improves its key processes for implementing work systems to deliver student and stakeholder value and achieve organizational success and sustainability and the organization's readiness for emergencies (NIST, 2008c).

Results Category

The results category examines the organization's performance and improvement in all key areas: (a) student learning outcomes; (b) student- and stakeholder-focused outcomes; (c) budgetary, financial, and market outcomes; (d) workforce-focused outcomes; (e) process-effectiveness outcomes; and (f) leadership outcomes. The organization's performance levels are examined relative to those of competitors and other organizations providing similar programs and services (NIST, 2008c).

These seven categories, according to NIST (2008c), are connected and integrated. This connectivity and integration is provided through a performance framework consisting of these basic elements: (a) organizational profile, (b) system operations, and (3) the system foundation (NIST, 2008c).

Organizational Profile

The organizational profile is a snapshot of the organization and formulates the framework for the way the educational organization operates (NIST, 2008c). An organization's performance management system is guided by the organization's strategic challenges and advantages, environment, and key working relationships. The center of the performance framework is system operations (NIST, 2008c).

Systems Operations

System operations include the leadership and results triads which define the organization's operations and the results achieved by the organization (NIST, 2008c). The leadership triad is represented by three categories: (a) leadership; (b) strategic planning; and (c) focus on the student, stakeholder, and market (NIST, 2008c). Together, these categories illustrate and emphasize the importance of leadership focusing on strategy, students, and stakeholders. The organization's senior leaders have the responsibility of setting the organization's direction and seeking future opportunities (NIST, 2008c).

According to NIST (2008c), the results triad is represented by the workforce focus, process management, and results categories. The overall performance results are achieved by the workforce and key processes of the organization. The leadership and results triads are linked, and this linkage is critical to the success of the organization and suggests a central relationship between leadership and results. This linkage indicates the importance of feedback in an effective performance management system (NIST, 2008c).

System Foundation

Finally, the measurement, analysis, and knowledge management category is critical for the effective management of an organization and a fact-based and knowledge-driven system to improve performance. This category serves as the foundation for the performance system (NIST, 2008c).

The organizational profile, system operations, and system foundation management concepts and strategies created and promulgated by NIST offer urban superintendents an integrated performance framework and goals to improve and sustain student and organization performance. The Education Criteria for Performance Excellence are designed to provide organizations with an integrated approach to organizational performance management that results in (a) delivery of ever-improving value to students and stakeholders, contributing to education quality and organizational stability; (b) improvement of overall organizational effectiveness and capabilities as an education organization; and (c) organizational and personal learning (NIST, 2008c).

According to NIST (2008c), the criteria are also built on a set of 11 interrelated core values and concepts: (a) visionary leadership, (b) learning-centered education, (c) organizational and personal learning, (d) valuing workforce members and partners, (e) agility, (f) focus on the future, (g) managing for innovation, (h) management by fact, (i) social responsibility, (j) focus on results and creating value, and (k) systems perspective. These values and concepts are embedded beliefs and behaviors found in high-performing organizations. They are the foundation for

integrating key performance and operational requirements within a results-oriented framework that creates a basis for action and feedback (NIST, 2008c).

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

The literature review sought to inform urban school superintendents on the social and economic obstacles faced by urban students and the educational transformation and reform models implemented to improve student performance.

Figure 1 shows the reform models implemented by education administrators and their business counterparts and reflects the common elements among the models.

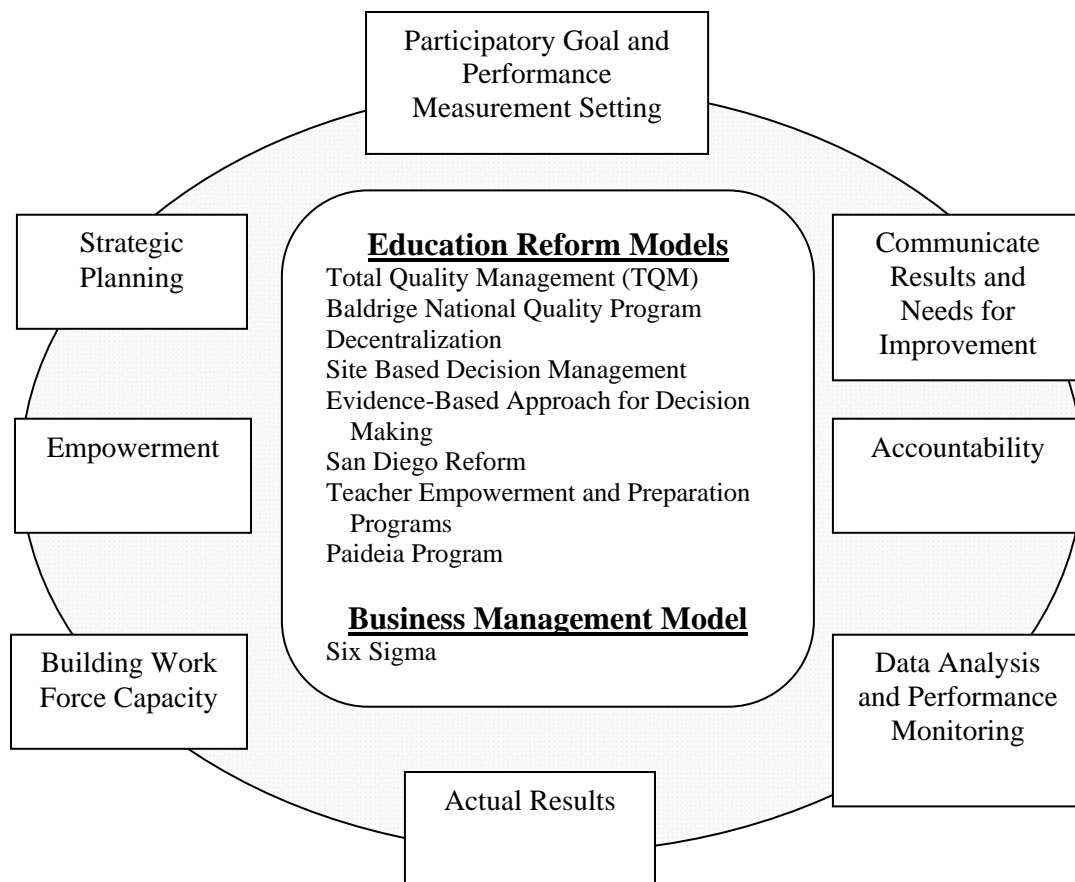


Figure 1. Education reform models' common elements

These educational reform models can be viewed through Bolman's and Deal's structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames to obtain a clear understanding of the models' common elements and strategies. The literature review presented various educational reform models; however, this study focused on Bolman's and Deal's four lenses for reframing an organization and the TQM and Baldrige National Quality Program reform models.

The educational reform models presented in this chapter offer a different reform approach compared to the traditional reform approach. The traditional reform approach is for urban school system governing boards to appoint superintendents to bring about school improvement and changes in personnel, reorganization, and installment of new programs (Valverde, 2003). This appointment, according to Valverde, causes existing staff members to resist openly accepting changes and on occasion to refuse to accommodate the proposed changes. Groups organize to reject changes and make formal complaints to the governing board; the board gives in to the political pressures and in the end does not sufficiently support the superintendent (Valverde, 2003).

Urban public school superintendents face many challenges and problems that have a far-reaching effect on urban student learning. These challenges and problems require innovative educational leadership to bring about organizational and educational program reform that focuses on understanding and addressing the needs of urban students and the community. In spite of these dilemmas, educational administration is the part of educational leadership that addresses the moral

dimensions of overseeing schooling, the stewardship of the public's trust in leading its schools, the complexities of serving as the instructional leader of the schools, and the services associated with leading those who have chosen schools as their workplace (Jazzar & Algozzine, 2006).

Superintendents have implemented various management concepts and strategies in an attempt to reform education programs and organization structures to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Six Sigma is another management concept and strategy that may be useful to urban public school leaders seeking a way to improve and sustain to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Contreras (2003) pointed out that the success of the reform movement will be measured by how accurately educators determine and respond to the needs of all students and the community.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

Qualitative research begins with a broad question, and concepts are identified in and constructed from data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). According to Corbin and Strauss, qualitative analysis is a process of examining and interpreting data to bring forth meaning, gain an understanding, and develop practical knowledge and methods. Qualitative research can describe or provide further understanding of a subject and its appropriate setting, provide explanation of reasons and associations, evaluate effectiveness, and aid the development of theories or strategies (Office for National Statistics, 2008). Qualitative research can stand alone or alongside quantitative research to complement this inquiry to provide depth and richness to an investigation (Office for National Statistics).

This study started with a broad question about effective urban public school superintendent management concepts and strategies. The chapter provides a description of the methodology and methods used to answer the research questions that evolved from this broad question and presented in this study. Additionally, this chapter includes the purpose of the study, the research questions, the site and participant selection, the study design, and data collection.

Purpose of the Study

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2002), raising academic standards for all students and measuring student achievement to hold schools

accountable for educational progress are central strategies for promoting educational excellence and equity in our schools. NCLB reformed federal educational programs to support state efforts to establish challenging standards, to develop aligned assessments, and to build accountability systems for districts and schools that are based on educational results. In particular, NCLB includes explicit requirements to ensure that students served by Title I are given the same opportunity to achieve to high standards and are held to the same high expectations as all other students in each state (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Thus, the purpose of this study was to identify the superintendent's management concepts and strategies used to improve and sustain student performance.

Research Questions

The literature review helps develop a historical perspective on the intended research and enables the researcher to develop a conceptual framework from which questions are generated to guide the design and conduct of the research (Mertens, 2005). Mertens recommended that qualitative researchers begin with broad questions that can be modified in response to discoveries made during the study. How a researcher frames the questions is important because it determines to a large extent the research methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Research questions must be framed in a manner that provides the investigator with sufficient flexibility and freedom to explore a topic in some depth using qualitative data, according to Corbin and Strauss. Mertens noted that research questions focus on the hypothesis and clarify what information must be collected, from what resources, and under what conditions. The

three research questions of this study directed and shaped the content of this study and the data collection:

1. What are the prevailing educational management concepts and strategies used by a Texas, urban school district's superintendent to address urban school challenges?
2. To what extent were these concepts and strategies perceived as effective and embraced by key members of the organization?
3. To what extent are the superintendent's management concepts and strategies aligned with a business management concept?

Research Design

One of the most difficult aspects of doing research is deciding on a topic for investigation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Corbin and Strauss asserted that when choosing a topic a researcher must answer two major questions: (a) how do I identify a problem that I would like to research, and (b) how then do I narrow the problem down sufficiently to make it into a workable project? Research design is a framework for answering the question of whom gets what, when; the design involves decisions about how many groups to have and controlling threats to validity (Mertens, 2005). Mertens stated that the methodology can include one of three types of research designs: (a) single-group, (b) experimental, and (c) quasi-experimental.

Methodology

Qualitative research and data analysis allow researchers to study the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through discovery rather than testing variables (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A researcher deciding to use a qualitative approach must still determine which method among the many qualitative approaches should be used, Corbin and Strauss noted.

Of these qualitative approaches, Cohen et al. (2007) mentioned two forms of qualitative data analysis: content analysis and grounded theory. Cohen et al. summarized and defined content analysis as the process of examining, summarizing, and reporting written data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined grounded theory as follows:

[Grounded theory] is derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another. A researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind. Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data. Theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the “reality” than theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation which is how one thinks things ought to work. (p. 12)

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was selected for this study because this theory draws from data to offer insight and to enhance and provide a meaningful understanding of the actions of an individual or organization (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory would enable the researcher to develop and build theory about an urban public school

superintendent's management concepts and strategies and their effects on organizational and student performance.

As Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicated, theory derived from data resembles the reality. Cohen et al. (2007) ascertained that everyday life actions are interrelated, and people make connections naturally, as part of everyday living. Hence, grounded theory catches the naturalistic element of research and formulates it into a systematic methodology.

The defining characteristic of grounded theory, according to Mertens (2005), is that the hypothetical intentions are not stated at the beginning of the study. Mertens stated that generalizations (theory) emerge out of data and not prior to the collection of data. Thus, the emergent theory is grounded in the current data collection and analysis efforts.

Single-Case Study

This researcher used a single-case study to examine the management concepts and strategies used by an urban public school district superintendent. A single-case study design allows the researcher to develop the focus of the study as well as what will not be studied (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, a case may be created out of any phenomenon as long as it has identifiable boundaries and comprises the primary object of an inference (Gerring, 2006). Thus using a single-case study enabled the researcher to focus on one Texas, urban public school district superintendent and to examine the management concepts and strategies employed by the superintendent over time. Because this study is about implemented management concepts and

strategies, the case study design allowed the researcher to conduct an intensive study of a single case to shed light, elicit, and explain how the study's superintendent selected and implemented these management concepts and strategies (Gerring, 2006). Additionally, in case study research, theory development is one essential part of the design phase. The intent of this study was to identify the management concepts and strategies used by a Texas urban public school district superintendent to improve student performance and provide a business management concept that could be used for organizational reform and to improve student performance.

Urban Public School District Selection

In 1993, Texas Senate Bill 1377 was enacted to establish the Texas public school accountability system to give all students access to an education of high quality and to close the achievement gap between economically and educationally disadvantaged students. The bill was designed to reduce the dropout rate and increase the graduation rate by improving instruction through research that identified creative and effective methods. Since 1993 and the passage of Senate Bill 1377, Texas students have made steady improvements on the state's exams and are among the nation's biggest gainers on the National Assessment of Education Progress (Education Trust, 2008).

Numerous organizations such as the Charles A. Dana Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, and the Support for Texas Academic Renewal Center have conducted studies to identify how school boards and superintendents sustain high-performing schools in high-poverty Texas public school districts (Parramore,

2004; Patton, 1999). In addition, the Broad Foundation (2008a) advances the improvement of urban kindergarten through Grade 12 (K–12) public education. The Broad Foundation’s (2008a) education work focused on dramatically improving urban K–12 public education through better governance, management, labor relations, and competition. Every year the foundation reviews the performance of urban public schools and selects 100 urban school districts for the Broad Prize.

To be eligible for the Broad Prize, a school district must meet certain criteria, such as sustaining overall student performance over time, student enrollment and attendance size, poverty, and location in an urban city (Broad Foundation, 2008b). The Broad Foundation’s 2008 list included 100 school districts from across the United States that met the criteria for the Broad Prize.

Thus, the Broad Foundation’s 2008 list and criteria were used to select a superintendent of a Texas, urban public school district that has sustained overall performance and achievement of both state and national performance standards. This case study’s single participant, the superintendent of a Texas urban public school district, was selected based on the Broad Foundation’s (2008b) eligibility criteria:

1. This Texas K–12 urban public school district serves more than 100,000 students.
2. The Texas urban public school district is on the Broad Foundation’s 2008 list of 100 eligible school districts; if needed, the choice would be the largest urban district that has either 40% free and reduced-price student lunch program or 40% minority and is larger than 20,000 students.

3. The urban school district overall sustained high performance and improvement on state and national standards.

This case study's urban public school district superintendent met the eligibility criteria and appeared on the Broad Foundation's 2008 list. The purpose of this study was to identify the management concepts and strategies used by the superintendent to sustain the district's overall performance and achievement of state and national student performance standards and to compare those concepts and strategies to a business management model. Identifying the management concepts and strategies deployed by the superintendent would give the researcher and other superintendents an understanding of management concepts and strategies that can be used to implement state and national reform initiatives. This case study's subject provided an excellent opportunity to examine how the superintendent's leadership navigated through the state and national accountability systems to reform the organization to increase overall student performance in this high-poverty, urban school district.

Participant Selection

To obtain and gain an understanding of the perceptions of the effectiveness of the superintendent's management concepts and strategies, former and current Board of Trustees members and staff members from different levels of the school district were selected for interviews. The selection process required the assumption that interviewees had an adequate understanding and information about the study's purpose and research questions. Additionally, participants volunteered.

Ultimately, participants who were interviewed and took an online questionnaire included the superintendent, six members of the superintendent's leadership team, and five school principals. Additionally, a board member was interviewed.

Data Collection and Procedures

A researcher may use various types of data collection methods, such as tests, mail surveys, checklists, observations, records and document reviews, and interviews (Mertens, 2005). Mertens stated that data analysis is generally considered to be an ongoing process during a qualitative study. Collecting data enabled the researcher to focus on particular attributes or qualities of the superintendent. According to Mertens, in the preliminary phases of planning data collection the first challenge for the researcher is to identify the attributes of interest; the second challenge is to decide how to collect data about these attributes. The purpose of collecting data for this study was to identify and learn about management concepts and strategies used by the urban public school district superintendent to improve student performance.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation consists of specific methods for collecting data, and these methods can be either structured or loosely structured (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Miles and Huberman, the instrument's structure depends on the nature of the study. Knowing in advance what the researcher is after enables the researcher to plan in advance how to collect information. Miles and Huberman stressed that the

majority of the fieldwork consists of taking notes, recording events (conversations, meetings), and picking up documents. Mertens (2005) cautioned that instrumentation can be a threat to the validity of the research when an instrument used for data collection changes from one observation period to the next. Mertens provided two examples: The researcher uses a different test for pre- and posttesting, or data collection observation is associated with changes in the researcher's instrument. This study's fieldwork involved surveys, interviews, document reviews, and a field journal to take notes.

Surveys

Surveying is a research method that is used to obtain information about certain groups of people who are representative of some larger group of people of interest to the researcher (Berger, 2000). Berger asserted surveys are used to gather information to determine what people know, what people think, what people's attitudes are, and what people's beliefs and values are. According to Berger, descriptive and analytic surveys are the two basic kinds of surveys.

Descriptive surveys are used to gather information about demographic attributes such as age, gender, marital status, occupation, and ethnicity and relate this information to opinions, beliefs, values, and behaviors of some group of people (Berger, 2000). Analytical surveys try to find out why people behave the way they do. Researchers use this type of survey to develop hypotheses and test their hypotheses about what causes certain kinds of behavior (Berger, 2000).

This study collected data by administering two online analytical surveys created by NIST (2008a, 2008b). According to Berger (2000), questionnaires distributed freely via the Internet are categorized as unsupervised self-administered questionnaires.

Interview Protocol

Interviews in a qualitative study are conducted with an unstructured or a minimally structured format (Mertens, 2005). Mertens indicated that interviews can be conducted as a part of participant observation or even as a casual conversation. Unstructured interviews can be the most data intense, because they are not dictated by a predetermined set of questions (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

To discover individual perspectives of the superintendent's management concepts and strategies, the researcher used an unstructured interview protocol to gather data (Appendix A). The interviews were one-on-one, and the agenda was set by the participant by stories and events each chose to tell. The researcher enhanced the data collection process by actively listening and asking questions (Corbin & Morse, 2003). Initial interview questions developed by the researcher were adjusted after a pilot interview with a principal employed by the case study school district and an interview with a board member.

Document Review

An organization's history and status can be studied through documents and records (Mertens, 2005). The qualitative researcher can turn to documents such as

reports, plans, memos, computer files, or videos to obtain the necessary background to get an understanding of the organization's situation and its everyday dynamics.

Mertens noted that in reviewing documents, researchers have the challenge of how to interpret the meaning of these documents and records; this challenge can be mitigated by examining patterns and inconsistencies.

To obtain a background and understanding of the superintendent and district's historical and current settings, the document review included the district's strategic plan, improvement plan, and plans for the delivery and design of curriculum and instruction. The superintendent, central administrators, campus principals, and the district's Web site were the sources for these documents and records.

Data Analysis

Many factors contribute to the quality of analysis, but one of the most important factors is the quality of the materials a researcher is analyzing (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Cohen et al. (2007) stated that an analysis of qualitative data entails organizing; accounting for and explaining the data; and making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories, and regularities. Cohen et al. also claimed that qualitative data analysis is heavy on interpretation, and frequent multiple interpretations are made of the data throughout the analysis process.

Data analysis of qualitative studies is an ongoing process and does not occur only at the end of the study, but throughout the study (Mertens, 2005). Because data analysis is ongoing, Corbin and Strauss (2008) recommended coding materials soon

after the first interview or observation, as these first data serve as a foundation for further data collection and analysis.

Grounded Theory Coding

Coding is used to disassemble and reassemble the data. Data are dissembled when they are broken apart into lines, paragraphs, sections, and these fragments are rearranged through coding to produce a new understanding that explores similarities and differences (Cohen et al., 2007). Cohen et al. recognized that the early part of coding is confusing, but that as the coding progresses and themes emerge the analysis becomes more organized and structured.

The three types of coding models used in the grounded theory are open, axial, and selective coding (Cohen et al., 2007). These coding models enable the researcher to deconstruct the data into manageable chunks to facilitate an understanding of the phenomenon. According to Cohen et al.,

The open coding model allows the researcher to explore the data and code for meanings, feelings, actions, and events. Axial coding seeks to make links between categories and codes to integrate codes around the axes of central categories, and selective coding identifies the story line and the story integrates the categories in the axial coding model. (p. 493)

Applying these coding models implements a method of constant comparison to enable the researcher to compare new data with existing data and categories so that the categories achieve a perfect fit with the data (Cohen et al., 2007). Cohen et al. noted that this constant comparison enables the researcher to analyze, confirm, and valid the data throughout the process to generate the theory or alternative theories for the phenomena under investigation.

Technology Use

Throughout this study the researcher used several software and hardware systems. Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Using this recorder enabled the researcher to listen to interview conversations as needed, confirm and valid interview notes, and transcribe the responses.

Managing the collection and analysis of data was accomplished through the use of Microsoft Word and Excel. The use of these two software tools enhanced the research by assisting with data classification, coding, and sorting and arranging the data to identify emerging theories of the phenomenon being investigated. The software assisted with validating and confirming the reliability of the data.

Credibility, Validity, and Confirmability

The quality of a qualitative research study is determined if the emerged theories and findings are reliable, valid, credible, transferable, dependable, confirmable, and authentic (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Mertens (2005) described credibility in qualitative research as providing evidence from multiple sources. Mertens stressed the importance for qualitative researchers to show research credibility through the use of multiple strategies. The creditability test proves a connection between the way the respondents perceive social constructs and the way the researcher portrays their viewpoints. According to Mertens, internal validity means the attribution within the experimental situation that the independent variable caused the observed change in the dependent variable.

To show the credibility and validity of this study, the researcher started preparing for the research in January 2007 by reviewing public information about the urban public school district's Broad Foundation information, AEIS reports, and Adequate Yearly Progress reports and results. This review process continued until receiving approval to conduct the study by the Institutional Review Board and consent to conduct the study at the urban public school district from the district's officials. Various on-site trips were made to the district between March 26 and March 27, 2009. The researcher stayed on site until a confidence level was reached that themes and examples repeated and did not extend or provide new data (Mertens, 2005).

Debriefings immediately after the interviews were held with peers to discuss findings, conclusions, analysis, and the hypotheses. Triangulation of data involved checking information collected through the online surveys, interviews, and document reviews for consistency of evidence across these sources of data (Mertens, 2005).

According to Mertens (2005), confirmability means that the data and their interpretation are not creations of the researcher's imagination. Qualitative data can be tracked to the source, and the logic that is used to interpret the data should be made explicit, according to Mertens. To provide readers a sufficient confidence level of the study's confirmability, the researcher's raw data can be traced to digitally taped interviews, field notes, coded interview and observation notes, transcribed notes, and document review notes.

Transferability

Mertens (2005) stated that in qualitative research, “the burden of transferability is on the reader to determine the degree of similarity between the study site and the receiving context, and it is the researcher’s responsibility to provide sufficient detail to enable the reader to make such a judgment” (p. 256). Chapter 4 provides the reader sufficient detail to enable the reader to determine the similarity between the superintendent under study and other contexts.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify the superintendent’s management concepts and strategies used to improve the district’s student performance. A qualitative research method was used because this type of research assists in developing theory that provides the reasons and associations for understanding a subject and its contextual setting (Office for National Statistics, 2008). This study used a single-case design and grounded theory. Grounded theory’s open, axial, and selective coding models were used to enhance the data analysis throughout the study. This enabled the researcher to provide readers a sufficient confidence level of the study’s credibility, reliability, validity, transferability, and confirmability.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

To increase student performance urban school superintendents must overcome two crucial urban school challenges. The first challenge faced by an urban superintendent is overcoming the social and economic challenges confronted by urban students. Secondly, a superintendent must identify and select effective management concepts and strategies that simultaneously deal with the social and economic barriers and increase student performance. These two challenges place undue pressure on urban school superintendents and staff. This study focused on three key research questions:

1. What are the prevailing educational management concepts and strategies used by a Texas, urban school district's superintendent to address urban school challenges?
2. To what extent were these concepts and strategies perceived as effective and embraced by key members of the organization?
3. To what extent are the superintendent's management concepts and strategies aligned with a business management concept?

Before addressing these questions, the study first focused on identifying and examining an educational management model that is recognized as an acceptable national standard and best practice. This focal point and identification process led to the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award program, which is highly regarded as

establishing best-practice educational management standards for excellence in performance.

The key components of a best-practice educational management were identified using the Malcolm Award program criteria. A narration of the 2008 Baldrige National Quality Program's Education Criteria for Performance Excellence is presented in this chapter. For this single case study, the Broad Prize for Urban Education criteria was used for the selection of Dr. J. T. Canales and the Urban Independent School District (UISD; both are pseudonyms). This study is limited to a single case study of Dr. Canales.

The management concepts and strategies implemented by Dr. Canales were identified through two online questionnaires, interviews, and reviewing various types of documents from the school district. Management concepts and strategies evolving from the online and interview responses were validated through the document review process.

In 1987, the U.S. Congress established the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award to recognize U.S. organizations for their achievements in quality and performance and to raise awareness about the importance of quality and performance excellence (NIST, 2008c). This award is given annually in the categories of education, service, manufacturing, small business, healthcare, and nonprofit (NIST, 2008c).

According to the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Program, aligning the organization's processes, staff, and resources to the needs of students and

stakeholders' needs is critical and necessary to improve student performance (NIST, 2008c). The Broad Prize is given to five large, urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing income and ethnic achievement gaps (Broad Foundation, 2008a).

According to the Broad Foundation (2008a), school districts cannot apply for the Broad Prize and must meet eligibility criteria related to student performance, size, poverty, and urbanicity. UISD was selected as the national winner of the inaugural 2002 Broad Prize for Urban Education. In addition to this honor, UISD was one of 100 urban school districts eligible for the 2008 Broad Prize. UISD met the 2008 Broad Prize school district eligibility criteria of being a K–12 school district serving more than 100,000 students (Broad Foundation, 2008a).

Other key performance criteria, instituted by the Broad Foundation (2008a) and reviewed and used by the Broad Foundation's review board, included (a) performance results on mandated state tests in reading and math for elementary, middle, and high schools; (b) district improvement and comparison with similar state districts (based on poverty levels); (c) reduction of achievement gaps for ethnic minority and low-income students; (d) graduate rates; (e) AYP results; and (f) and district demographic data. Dr. Canales was selected for this study because UISD met the Broad Foundation's urban school performance criteria.

Two distinct online questionnaires, interviews, and the review of various types of school district documents were the primary sources used to compile the data needed to identify the prevailing management concepts and strategies. These sources

and data were used to determine to what extent these concepts were perceived as effective and embraced by a board member, executive leadership team, and the randomly selected principals.

SurveyMonkey, an online survey site, was used to collect and analyze the responses of the online questionnaires' statements. The questionnaires were designed to keep respondents' information and responses confidential, restrict responses by Internet protocol addresses, and require a response for each category statement. SurveyMonkey generated a unique Web-site link for each online questionnaire. The researcher found the questionnaire design useful in pointing out and comparing differences in perceptions between the leadership team and the principals.

The two online questionnaires used in this study, *Are We Making Progress?* (NIST, 2008a) and *Are We Making Progress as Leaders?* (NIST, 2008b). These questionnaires were organized according to Baldrige's Performance for Excellence criteria categories: (a) leadership; (b) strategic planning; (c) student, stakeholder, and market focus; (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; (e) workforce focus; (f) process management; and (g) results. Statements in each category required respondents to select one of these responses: strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, or strongly agree. UISD's superintendent and six members of the superintendent's leadership team responded to the *Are We Making Progress as Leaders?* survey (NIST, 2008b). Five randomly selected principals responded to the *Are We Making Progress?* survey (NIST, 2008a).

In addition, semistructured interviews were held with one board member, the superintendent, six leadership team members, and five principals. Student and achievement results were reviewed and analyzed through the examination of TEA and district documents.

Strauss and Corbin's (1998) coding methods were applied to facilitate the data analysis. Findings are supported through the triangulation of the online questionnaires, interviews, review of school district's documents, and the student performance and achievement data from the AEIS (TEA, 2007b). Triangulation of all these data sources informed the findings (Mertens, 2005). From the researcher's perspective, reviewing internal and external documents is important to validate the theory emerging from the online questionnaire and interview responses. Internal documents included those documents obtained from the superintendent, leadership team, and UISD's Web site. The external documents included the Baldrige's Education Criteria for Performance Excellence Criteria framework, documents obtained from NIST, and the TEA Web site. Documents from the Baldrige's Education Criteria for Performance Excellence program were reviewed and analyzed to triangulate the key management concepts and strategies identified through the online questionnaires and interviews.

Respondent Demographics

Ultimately, participants who were interviewed and took an online questionnaire included the superintendent, six members of the superintendent's leadership team, and five school principals. Additionally, a board member was

interviewed. Of the 13 participants, 5 were male. Ethnically, three self-described as Hispanic, seven as White, and three as Black.

According to the leadership online questionnaire's respondent demographics section, 71.40% of the leadership team members were in their current position 5 or fewer years, and 28.6% were in the current position between 5 and 10 years. However, 42.9% of the respondents had 20 or more years of work experience with the district, 14.3% had 15–20 years of experience in the district, 28.6% had 5–10 years of experience, and 14.3% had 5 or fewer years of working experience in the district. Of the principals who responded, 71.4% were in the current principal position 5 or fewer years, 14.3% for 5–10 years, and 14.3% for 15–20 years. Further, 14.3% of respondents were high school principals, 14.3% were middle school principals, and 71.4% were elementary school principals. The following sections, starting with the leadership category, provide the results of the online questionnaire and interview responses.

Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, What are the prevailing educational management concepts and strategies used by a Texas, urban school district's superintendent to address urban school challenges? The following sections are organized according to Baldrige's Performance for Excellence criteria categories: (a) leadership; (b) strategic planning; (c) student, stakeholder, and market focus; (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; (e) workforce focus; (f) process management; and (g) results.

Leadership

The leadership category, according to NIST (2008c), examines the senior leaders and principals' perceptions of how the organization is guided to sustain performance and how the organization's vision and values are communicated across the district. A superintendent in a large, urban public school district must promulgate and disseminate the school district's overall mission, vision, and values to the leadership team and staff to improve student and organizational performance.

Questionnaire and Survey Data

The researcher's focus was to examine the leadership team and randomly selected principals' perceptions of the superintendent's leadership. Tables 2–15 present the online questionnaire responses for the leadership category. Responses presented in Tables 2 and 3 from the leadership team and principals suggested the superintendent communicates the district's mission and vision. He used the district's mission and vision to guide the district's strategic plan and provided employees an opportunity to give input. The responses revealed leadership as one of the superintendent's characteristics and qualities.

Table 2

Executive Team Percentage Responses to the Leadership Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree
Our workforce knows our organization’s mission.	14.3	85.7	—
Our workforce knows our organization’s vision.	14.3	85.7	—
Our leadership team uses our organization’s values to guide our organization and employees.	28.6	71.4	—
Our leadership team creates a work environment that helps our employees do their jobs.	14.3	85.7	—
Our leadership team shares information about the organization.	14.3	85.7	—
Our leadership team asks employees what they think.	14.3	71.4	14.3

Note. N = 7.

The superintendent stated,

One of the most challenging things for a principal or superintendent is being able to articulate the mission and vision. It took me 1 to 2 years to internalize the vision. The board, chief executive officers, and principals embrace our vision. Our vision and idea is a college bound culture and belief that every child will be prepared and succeed in higher education or be career ready. To communicate this belief we place a graduate symbol or student in our employee identification cards and just about every school district document. We communicate this common belief to indoctrinate in the district that every child can go to college or a career and technology program and succeed.

The online questionnaire and interview responses indicated the superintendent communicated, promulgated, and disseminated the organization’s mission, vision, values, and shared information to guide and foster a positive work environment that promoted high performance. These attributes possessed by the superintendent are

aligned with Bolman and Deal’s (2003) assertion, good leaders must possess qualities such as vision, strength, and commitment, and effective leaders help articulate a vision, set standards for performance, and create focus and direction.

Table 3

Principal Percentage Responses to the Leadership Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided
I know my organization’s mission.	40.0	60.0	—
I know my organization’s vision.	40.0	60.0	—
My senior (top) leaders use our organization’s values to guide us.	20.0	60.0	20.0
My senior leaders create a work environment that helps me do my job.	40.0	40.0	20.0
My organization’s leaders share information about the organization.	20.0	80.0	—
My organization asks employees what they think.	40.0	60.0	—

Note. $N = 5$.

Leadership addresses how senior leaders guide and sustain the organization, setting organizational vision, values, and performance expectations (NIST, 2008c). From the researcher’s point of view, a superintendent should possess the ability to develop a plan to guide and coordinate the mission and vision to effectively meet the organization’s challenges and aligns resources to achieve established goals and objectives.

Document Review Data

Through the review of UISD documents, the researcher found Dr. Canales embraced and communicated throughout the school district during the 1990s the belief and vision statement from the beginning. The Board of Education's 1990 "Declaration of Beliefs and Visions" statement provided the foundation to ensure the highest quality education for all students. In addition he supported the 2001 Addendum and 2004 Reaffirmation to the Beliefs and Visions that strengthen the Declaration's philosophy and vision and proclaimed the district's continued pursuit of the goals and ideals set forth in 1990.

The documents reviewed showed the superintendent supported and communicated the district's core ideology, organizational purpose, core values, and strategic objectives. Furthermore, the superintendent strongly believed in the district's purpose to strengthen the social and economic foundation of the city by assuring its youth the highest quality elementary and secondary education available anywhere.

In addition to this purpose, the superintendent communicated and shared six strategic goals: (a) increase student achievement, (b) provide a safe environment, (c) increase management efficiency, (d) improve public support and confidence in schools, (e) create a positive district culture, and (f) bring facilities up to standard. This study mentions these six strategic goals but focused on the first goal of student achievement. The first goal, presented on the district Web site, simply stated, UISD student performance will demonstrate gains as evidenced by scores on Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), SAT, and other state and national

tests, while performance gaps between minority and nonminority students will narrow.

Strategic Planning Category

Bolman and Deal (2003) defined strategic planning as creating strategies to set objectives, coordinate resources, and promote participation; an arena to air conflict and realign power, and a ritual to signal responsibility and negotiate meanings.

Strategic planning addresses how planning deploys plans, how adequate resources are ensured to accomplish the plans, and how accomplishments are measured and sustained (NIST, 2008). The online questionnaire's strategic category responses assisted the researcher to examine how the respondents perceived the superintendent's strategic planning. Tables 4 and 5 reflect the leadership team and principals' responses to the strategic planning category statements.

Except for one statement, "Our employees know how to tell if they are making progress on their work group's part of the plan," receiving a response percentage of less than 50%, the leadership team responses suggested strategic planning is one of the superintendent's prevailing management concepts and strategies. The researcher used the leadership team interviews to examine why the aforementioned statement received a response percentage of less than 50%. The researcher found through the leadership team interviews the district was in the process of developing a performance management and evaluation system to evaluate

the performance and progress of departments. This initiative would allow management to analysis and evaluate a department’s performance and progress.

Table 4

Leadership Team Percentage Responses to Strategic Planning Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
As our leadership team plans for the future, we ask our employees for their ideas	14.3	57.1	—	28.6
Our employees know the parts of our organization’s plans that will affect them and their work	—	57.1	14.3	28.6
Our employees know how to tell if they are making progress on their work group’s part of the plan	—	42.9	28.6	28.6
Our organization is flexible and can make changes quickly when needed	—	71.4	14.3	14.3

Note. N = 7.

In the interview a leadership team member expressed,

The superintendent and board of trustees meet once a year to set annual priorities and discuss the resources needed such as human capital to achieve the priorities. He meets with the leadership team to discuss the priorities and strategies to achieve the priorities. During these meetings we determine who is responsible for each strategy, and assign the roles and responsibilities. The three high priorities set by the superintendent for this school year are reducing the dropout rate, graduating every child, and hiring the best and brightest.

The superintendent stated,

During my general and planning meetings I encourage the leadership team to dialog and debate for lack of a better term, and engage in the conversations. Feel free to throw out ideas and be able to support your ideas. I make every attempt to not give my opinion because once I give my opinion staff holds back. I rather listen and let them engage with each other. I do not prepare

meeting agendas. This is done through the chief of staff's office. Every leadership team member has an opportunity to submit an agenda. We make decisions on what is best for students.

Table 5 presents the principals' responses to the strategic planning category. Although the principal responses ranged from undecided to agree, the responses indicated principals perceived the superintendent strategically plans the district's mission, values, and resources. Principals' responses suggested the district encouraged new ideas, they knew if progress was made, and the district was flexible to make changes when needed.

Table 5

Principal Percentage Responses to Strategic Planning Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided
As it plans for the future, my organization asks for my ideas	—	40.0	60.0
My organization encourages totally new ideas (innovation)	20.0	60.0	20.0
I know the parts of my organization's plans that will affect me and my work	20.0	60.0	20.0
I know how to tell if we are making progress on my work group's part of the plan	20.0	60.0	20.0
My organization is flexible and can make changes quickly when needed	60.0	—	40.0

Note. $N = 5$.

The superintendent provided an example of an issue solved in a principal's planning meeting:

When I came in, the district did not serve all eligible prekindergarten students. Principals mentioned during the planning meetings there was not sufficient space to serve all eligible students. The first thing we agreed on was to make space and move 10 portable buildings across the district. Now we are providing a full day program for all eligible 4-year-old students.

Based on the strategic category and interview responses, the superintendent strategically deployed plans to guide the district, encouraged innovation, and remained flexible to make the changes needed to accomplish the district's mission, goals, and objectives. Understanding and meeting the needs of customers such as students and district stakeholders is critical to the overall strategy to improve student and organizational performance.

Customer and Market Focus

A student, stakeholder, and market focus is an integral part of the overall listening, learning, and performance excellence strategy (NIST, 2008c). This focus addresses how the organization seeks to understand the voice of the student, customer, market, and focuses on meeting the customers' needs and expectations and building loyalty (NIST, 2008c). To mitigate school funding declines and student recruiting competition from private and charter schools, from the researcher's point of view, urban school districts should focus on understanding and meeting student and stakeholder needs.

Questionnaire and Survey Data

Tables 6 and 7 present the leadership team and principals' responses to the customer and market category. The responses suggested the superintendent delegated

the appropriate authority to the leadership team and principals to address customer concerns and problems. The responses further suggested the leadership team and principals were sensitive to the importance of identifying customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Table 6

Leadership Team Percentage Responses to the Customer and Market Focus Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Our employees know who their most important customers are	14.3	57.1	14.3	14.3
Our employees regularly ask their customers what they need and want	—	57.1	—	42.9
Our employees ask if their customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with their work	—	14.3	42.9	42.9
Our employees are allowed to make decisions to solve problems for their customers	—	100.0	—	—
Our employees also know who our organization’s most important customers are	—	57.1	28.6	14.3

Note. N = 7.

Interview responses supported the online questionnaire responses and indicated the superintendent was customer driven. A leadership team member stated,

An outside entity is presently completing a research-based community and parent satisfaction survey. Another project directed by the superintendent is the performance management initiative. The purpose of this initiative is to evaluate both external and internal customer satisfaction, and evaluate the district’s support services.

According to another leadership team member,

This department has many customers and all the customers are very important. Customers include the board of trustees, superintendent, regional superintendents, principals, chief officers, and community. They are interested in data. The department must make sure the data [are] accurate and provided on time. Principals usually call directly and request their student data.

Table 7

Principals Percentage Responses to the Customer and Market Focus Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree
I know who my most important customers are	80.0	20.0	—
I regularly ask my customers what they need and want	60.0	20.0	20.0
I ask if my customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with my work	20.0	80.0	—
I am allowed to make decisions to solve problems for my customers	40.0	60.0	—
I also know who my organization's most important customers are	60.0	40.0	—

Note. $N = 5$.

The leadership team interview responses advocated for a customer-focus driven school district. The customer-focus advocacy is illustrated by a leadership staff member's assertion,

This department's customers are the campuses and other support service departments. Our customers include just about everybody the children, parents, and taxpayers. They entrust their children and money to the district. We need to be transparent.

The principal interview responses revealed their customers are the students, parents, and campus community. The students come first, and the principals are

advocates for students. Surveys at the beginning and end of the year are used to identify student and parent needs. Principals are given the authority to make decisions to solve problems. To better serve the customers and meet their needs, according to the superintendent,

We reduced the number of regions from 13 to 5 regions. Each of the five regions has a regional superintendent and executive principal. The executive principals oversee their feeder schools. Regional offices handle communications between the campus community and parents. To improve the district's public image the district implemented an automated system to track complaints and responses. This system provides some assurance each complaint receives a response.

Identifying specific areas affecting customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction improves the district's capability to make the necessary changes to (a) modify instructional programs and delivery methods; (b) improve student and department support services; and (c) develop positive relationships with the students, parents, and community. Implementing a system and process for measuring and analyzing performance is another key strategy for improving student and department performance.

Document Review Data

The superintendent's belief in community involvement with UISD schools benefits everyone by giving both companies and individuals a chance to grow through reaching out to others. UISD offers a variety of ways for parents, business leaders, and other members of the community to get involved in public education, including volunteer opportunities, financial contributions, and advisory committees. The

diverse students' needs are addressed through UISD's volunteer in public schools program.

Volunteer in public schools. Each year, thousands of parents, students, and community partners support UISD students and teachers by volunteering their time. The program represents all economic, ethnic, and educational backgrounds. Caring adults tutor students; serve as classroom assistants to teachers; provide enrichment and hands-on experience with computers; work in the library, clinic, office, and cafeteria; and provide other support. Another mechanism for addressing the community's needs is the use of advisory committees.

Advisory committees. Parents, students, and other community members who wish to be a part of the decision-making process volunteer to serve on one or more of the district's advisory committees. The advisory committees include (a) district advisory committee, (b) principal advisory committee, (c) shared decision-making committee, (d) student ad hoc advisory committee, (e) superintendent's parent advisory committee, and (f) superintendent's public engagement committee. These committees provide suggestions to the superintendent on key issues affecting the district.

Community partnerships. UISD engages closely with a number of local organizations to give students the best educational experience possible. This community engagement, according to the district Web site, promotes involvement by providing resources and opportunities designed to foster student success. Establishing, maintaining, and extending ongoing relationships among

stakeholders. Seeking to enrich the academic environment and engaging in efforts designed to incite or motivate students to reach their fullest potential.

The Texas Scholars Program is one of the most important volunteer programs in UISD. This program is a joint effort between UISD and the business community to demonstrate to students the vital link between a strong academic foundation and success in the workplace. Through the Texas Scholars Program, companies provide role models for students to help increase the graduation rate and to prepare the next generation to be a top-quality workforce. The success of this program is attributed to business professionals who make presentations to 8th and 10th grade students. The presentations emphasize that students who complete the Texas Scholars curriculum are better prepared for college, technical school, or the workplace. The Texas Scholars Program has been endorsed by colleges and universities, the TEA, and the Texas Business and Education Coalition. Tables 8 and 9 present UISD's community partnerships and initiatives implemented through the partnerships.

Table 8

Partnerships With City Mayor

Initiative	Purpose
Expectation Graduation	Annual walk to reach out to dropouts and help students stay in school until they graduate
Summer Opportunity Session	To prevent students from losing academic progress over the annual break.
Link-up Community Assets Conference	Gives students tips on how to improve both their lives and lives of other young people
Spark School Park Program	Enables communities to create school parks where none existed or renovate old ones

Table 9

Other Community Partnerships

Partnership	Initiative	Purpose
Community Education	Southeast Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program	Serves the city’s southeast side students who were expelled from their school and are in Grades 6–12
	Southwest Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program	Serves the city’s southwest side students who were expelled from their school and are in Grades 6–12
Community Collaborative	Project Grad	Offers 4-year college scholarships to children graduating from one of the four designated high schools located in economically disadvantaged communities

Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

The objective of a performance measurement, analysis, and review system is to identify and modify essential processes needed to achieve key organizational results and strategic objectives and to help the organization anticipate and respond to rapid or unexpected organizational or external changes (NIST, 2008c). Using comparative data and information allows district staff to know where the district stands relative to comparable educational institutions and best practices. Comparing performance information frequently leads to a better understanding of the district's processes and their performance (NIST, 2008c).

Questionnaire and Survey Data

Tables 10 and 11 show the leadership team and principals' statement responses in the measurement, analysis, and knowledge management category. In general, the leadership team responses presented in Table 10 suggested employees received all the performance data and information needed to do their work. The responses suggested the leadership team members are indecisive and are not sure if employees know how to measure the quality of their work, use information to make necessary changes or to determine how their measures fit in the overall measures and improvement, and how the organization is doing as a whole. The researcher investigated the response results during the leadership team interviews and discovered the indecision resulted from not knowing whether the online survey statements were directed towards their respective departments, the campuses, or the district as a whole.

Table 10

Leadership Team Percentage Responses to the Measurement and Analysis Category

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Our employees know how to measure the quality of their work.	—	14.3	57.1	28.6
Our employees use this information to make changes that will improve their work.	—	28.6	42.9	28.6
Our employees know how the measures they use in their work fit into our organization's overall measures and improvement.	—	42.9	28.6	28.6
Our employees get all the information they need to do their work.	—	57.1	28.6	14.3
Our employees know how our organization as a whole is doing.	14.3	71.4	—	14.3

Note. $N = 7$.

The leadership team interview responses showed an overwhelming consensus that the superintendent required the use of comparative and data analysis to measure and evaluate student and district performance. Interviewees stated data and information measurement and analysis were not options but requisites to sustain student and district performance. Measurement and data analysis are prevalent in the district and practiced by the Board of Trustees, superintendent, leadership team, and principals. The board's monitoring system was mentioned during an interview with a leadership team member. This member asserted,

The superintendent is on a one-year contract, unlike other superintendents who have multiyear contracts, and his contract renewal is performance based and the achievement of the board established benchmarks and targets.

More information about this system is provided in the section on the results category.

Table 11

Principal Percentage Responses to the Measurement and Analysis Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
I know how to measure the quality of my work.	80.0	—	20.0	—
I can use this information to make changes that will improve my work.	80.0	—	—	20.0
I know how the measures I use in my work fit into the organization's overall measures of improvement.	—	40.0	20.0	—
I get all the important information I need to do my work.	20.0	60.0	20.0	—
I know how my organization as a whole is doing.	20.0	60.0	20.0	—

Note. N = 5.

According to a leadership team member, the superintendent has embarked on a performance management initiative because

The superintendent wants to know, how are departments adding value to the district and schools and are the departments meeting the needs of schools? Campuses have state and national performance measures, and now the superintendent is looking on how departments add value to student performance.

This statement was the underlying theme of the leadership team interviews.

According to a leadership team member, the district looked at the Tennessee Value

Added System. The goal is to integrate UISD's new performance management system with the student and campus performance system.

Another interviewee stated,

Businesses long ago recognized the need for performance measurement. The district implemented ASPIRE [Accelerated Student Progress Increasing Results and Expectations]; this system was created around student and campus performance. However, the superintendent saw the need to revamp this system and integrate central services and departments' performance data to determine how the departments fit in the overall performance measurement system.

The need to revamp the current performance system was mentioned by more than one leadership team member.

The superintendent's interview comments yielded the same theme: "Data and information measurement and analysis is a requisite and requirement for every staff member in a leadership role." According to the superintendent,

Staff does not speak of being exemplary, recognized, or acceptable. They stopped chasing the Academic Excellence Indicator System ratings. Their focus is value added and how much growth did we get out of every student. Because we changed the focus, [the district] is doing well; the percentage of college ready students increased, and the rate of improvement doubled in math, reading, and language arts.

Additionally, the superintendent stated,

Classroom teachers are analyzing data, and board members understand data analysis because every parent want their children to have at a minimum one-year growth in their children performance. [The district] this past year had 15 Unacceptable campuses out of 300, and 57% of the campuses were either Recognized or Exemplary. This is attributed to looking at all values of performance.

Table 11 presents the principals' point of view to the extent data analysis is used to enhance and improvement student and campus performance. Like the leadership team responses, the principals' responses suggested they used data to

measure the quality of their work, make changes to improve, and know how their measures fit into the overall measures of improvement. They reportedly received all the necessary data needed to get the work done and knew how the organization was doing as a whole.

The interview comments reflected a consensus that the superintendent required principals to use data analysis, and principals embraced this requirement. A principal stated, “I use biweekly assessments, 9-week assessments. Assessment outcomes are used to develop instruction, meet district goals, and measure my campus performance. Data analysis is used to determine interventions needed by students.” Responses to statements in this category suggested the superintendent emphasized the importance of using data analysis to improve student and campus performance.

The superintendent’s expectation to use data analysis was captured in this principal’s interview comment: “The superintendent expects students to make at least one year’s growth. Data allows me to use small-group instruction if needed and allows me to focus instruction differently for high-performing students.”

Based on the online questionnaire and interview responses, the superintendent emphasized the importance of using data analysis to measure student and campus performance and make changes to improve performance. The superintendent communicated how the district was doing in student performance and financial performance.

Document Review Data

Document review data corroborated that the superintendent has embarked on an initiative to develop and implement a performance management system to evaluate how and how much value a department adds to student and campus performance. To emphasize the importance of the six strategic district goals, in 2003, under the leadership of then-president, the board created the Board Monitoring System to measure the district's effectiveness in meeting its goals. This system is discussed later in this chapter in the section on the results category. In addition to using data analysis, a school district needs a superintendent who values, develops, and retains a workforce focused on student learning and organizational performance.

Workforce Focus

Workforce focus addresses key work practices that are directed toward creating and maintaining a high-performance workplace. A strong focus on students and learning and toward engaging the workforce enables the district to adapt to succeed (NIST, 2008c).

Questionnaire and Survey Data

Tables 12 and 13 present the online questionnaire responses to the workforce focus category. The responses illustrated a positive leadership team and principals' perception on the superintendent's emphasis for valuing, developing, and retaining a workforce focused on student learning and organizational performance. The leadership team responses confirmed high cooperation and teamwork among

employees in the school district. Employees received recognition, they found their workplace to be safe, and managers cared about the workforce. In addition, the leadership team perceived the workforce to be committed to the organization's success.

Table 12

Leadership Team Percentage Responses to the Workforce Focus Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Our employees cooperate and work as a team.	—	100.0	—	—
Our leadership team encourages and enables our employees to develop their job skills so they can advance in their careers.	—	57.1	28.6	14.3
Our employees are recognized for their work.	—	85.7	14.3	—
Our organization has a safe workplace.	42.9	57.1	—	—
Our managers and our organization care about our workforce.	14.3	85.7	—	—
Our workforce is committed to our organization's success.	42.9	57.1	—	—

Note. N = 7.

Interview responses from the leadership team suggested the district's workforce cooperates, works as a team, and has a strong commitment to the district's success. The leadership team interview responses supported the results of the online questionnaire.

Table 13

Principal Percentage Responses to the Workforce Focus Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The people I work with cooperate and work as a team.	40.0	60.0	—	—	—
My bosses encourage me to develop my job skills so I can advance in my career.	20.0	40.0	20.0	20.0	—
I am recognized for my work.	—	40.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
I have a safe workplace.	20.0	80.0	—	—	—
My bosses and my organization care about me.	—	60.0	20.0	—	20.0
I am committed to my organization's success.	80.0	20.0	—	—	—

Note. $N = 5$.

The interview responses supported the online questionnaire responses and suggested the superintendent encouraged principals to cooperate and work as a team with their staff. In an interview a principal was asked if the superintendent recognized principals for their work. The principal stated, “Yes, I get recognition from the superintendent. He recognizes principals for high student performance growth and campus financial performance. Recognitions take place during principal meetings. I believe that celebrations and recognitions are very important for the superintendent.” One principal mentioned, “Yes, he recognizes me and other principals as needed and

frequently. I guess working an average of 70 hours per week shows my commitment.”

Document Review Data

Since 1990, UISD made the commitment to decentralize resources and decision-making authority to the school level, where student academic success is the highest priority. Schools have been given direct authority for approximately 65% of all district funds, making UISD one of the few school districts in the nation with such a high level of decentralization.

In addition to the decentralization of funds, UISD is dedicated to giving every student the best possible education through an intensive core curriculum and specialized and challenging instructional and career programs. This dedication is demonstrated through UISD’s educational structure that fosters relationships between the teacher and the student, features shared decision making through a decentralized system, focuses on performance rather than compliance, and offers a common core of academic subjects for all students. UISD’s district improvement plan provided detailed information about district progress toward achieving specific objectives such as improving student attendance, improving academic performance, reducing the dropout rate, and other goals.

Innovative teacher support is one way UISD demonstrated appreciation for the teachers’ value and classroom performance. Support was demonstrated by providing each teacher with a laptop computer, creating the Clarifying Learning to Enhance Achievement Results curriculum, and providing the “teacher toolbox.” Another work

system was the development of UISD’s training academy for principals. The district was among the first in the nation to adopt an alternative certification program for professionals with degrees in fields other than education to become teachers.

According to NIST (2008c), many studies have shown that high levels of workforce engagement have a significant, positive impact on organizational performance. Research has indicated that engagement is characterized by performing meaningful work; having organizational direction, performance accountability, and an efficient work environment; and having a safe, trusting, and cooperative environment (NIST, 2008c). Meaningful work is a result of process management. Process management is an integral component of the overall strategy to improve student and organizational performance.

Process Management

Key to the success of an organization is identifying the critical processes relating to the organization’s success. For a school district, these are the processes related to district core competencies for student learning and support processes that support daily operations and instructional programs.

Tables 14 and 15 present the leadership team and principals’ perceptions on process management. Overall, the leadership team responses illustrated the superintendent’s commitment in providing employees the necessary resources to get the job done, and authority and control over their work processes. Furthermore, the district implemented support services such as technology, business operations and finance, human resources, public relations, facilities management, technology to

support student learning, daily operational needs, and services for handling emergencies.

Table 14

Leadership Team Percentage Responses to the Process Management Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Our employees can get everything they need to do their jobs.	—	71.4	14.3	14.3
Our organization has good processes for doing its work.	—	85.7	14.3	—
Our employees have control over their personal work processes.	—	71.4	28.6	—
Our organization is prepared to handle an emergency.	57.1	42.9	—	—

Note. $N = 7$.

Table 15

Principal Percentage Responses to the Process Management Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
I get everything I need to do my job.	—	60.0	—	40.0
We have good processes for doing our work.	—	60.0	40.0	—
I have control over my work processes.	—	80.0	20.0	—
We are prepared to handle an emergency.	20.0	60.0	20.0	—

Note. $N = 5$.

The interviews with the leadership team upheld the online questionnaire responses. “The superintendent provides the necessary resources,” stated a leadership team member, “and several times I have heard him say, just do it, take care of it.” Another leadership team member commented, “Yes he does provide the resources, authority, and control, but it is working through the bureaucracy in trying to figure out how to move the ocean liner and get the right people to make things go. Getting the right person will get what you need.” This leadership team member noted two issues that are beyond the control of the superintendent:

Resources are limited by the state legislature, and this hampers what we need to get done, and the district is considered a Chapter 41 school district; as a result, school district funding is sent to the state. This restricts what the district can do.

The superintendent stated during the interview,

I try not to superimpose authority, but sometimes I need to be more hands-on, at times I probably exercise more hands-on than other large urban school superintendents. I want senior staff members to make recommendations and then let’s speak of the recommendations. I do not want senior staff members to ask how the assignment should be done. After discussing the recommendation, I make the final decision and determine if I need to notify the board members.

Table 15 summarizes the principals’ responses. The principals’ responses revealed a consensus that the superintendent made a commitment to provide them the necessary resources and good processes to get the job. They are given the authority and control over their campus and work processes, and support services are in place to handle emergencies.

Results Category

Questionnaire and Survey Data

The final category in the study's online questionnaire is the results category. Tables 16 and 17 present the leadership team and principals' responses to the results category.

The responses suggested the leadership team perceived the district's work, programs, and services met all requirements. In addition, the leadership team perceived the district's customers are satisfied, the workforce is well informed about student and financial performance, the district has the right people, and barriers are removed. Furthermore, the leadership team viewed the district as obeying laws and regulations, practicing high standards and ethics, and supporting employees to help their community. They stated they believed the district is a good place to work.

Online questionnaire responses were supported by the leadership team interview comments. The interview comments suggested the superintendent's focal points were achieving results and meeting requirements. A leadership team member noted, "The superintendent is focused on results. He approved a principals' survey to evaluate how departments are doing and how schools perceive the departments." Another leadership team member stated, "to the extent resources are available and provided by the state the departments run effective and efficient." From the researcher's point of view the interview comments confirmed the leadership team consensus that the superintendent focused on results.

Table 16

Leadership Team Percentage Responses to the Results Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Our employees' work products, programs, services meet all requirements.	—	71.4	28.6	—
Our employees' customers are satisfied with their work.	—	57.1	42.9	—
Our workforce knows how our organization is doing financially.	42.9	42.9	14.3	—
Our organization has the right people and skills to do its work.	14.3	57.1	28.6	—
Our organization removes things that get in the way of progress.	—	42.9	28.6	28.6
Our organization obeys laws and regulations.	66.7	33.3	—	—
Our organization practices high standards and ethics.	71.4	28.6	—	—
Our organization helps employees help their community.	28.6	57.1	—	14.3
Our employees believe our organization is a good place to work.	14.3	85.7	—	—

Note. $N = 7$.

The principals' responses to the results category are presented in Table 17. The responses exemplified the principals' confidence in their; work performance; work meeting all the requirements, customers' satisfaction with the campus programs and service, and receiving assistance from the district to help them help their campus

community. The other principals' responses indicated the district obeys laws and regulations, practices high standards and ethics and is a good place to work.

Table 17

Principal Percentage Responses to the Results Category

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My work products and services meet all requirements.	—	100.0	—	—	—
My customers are satisfied with my work.	—	100.0	—	—	—
I know how my organization is doing financially.	20.0	80.0	—	—	—
My organization has the right people and skills to do the work.	—	50.0	25.0	25.0	—
My organization removes things that get in the way of progress.	—	—	20.0	20.0	20.0
My organization obeys laws and regulations.	20.0	80.0	—	—	—
My organization practices high standards and ethics.	20.0	80.0	—	—	—
My organization helps me help my community.	—	100.00	—	—	—
My organization is a good place to work.	40.0	40.0	20.0	—	—

Note. N = 5.

Interview comments presented a similar perception. For example, a principal commented, “Yes, I do not receive many parent complaints. I am available to the parents and community. Most surveys are very positive.” On the other hand, another principal asserted, “I could use more people to help. There is always room to improve parental involvement,” suggesting barriers get in way of progress. One principal claimed, “My campus and district are a good place to work in,” supporting the online questionnaire responses.

The superintendent gave this explanation:

Yes results are important. To achieve the intended results the district implemented a decentralized system. A decentralized system allows principals to decide how many teachers and counselors are needed in their campus. The principal decides how to staff and use the campus funds. During the budget process, my objective is not to reduce campus funding. However, the budgeting process for departments is handled differently. I hold budget meetings; in the meetings the department managers are required to justify their budget. In fact, after we complete this interview I am going into a budget meeting.

Document Review Data

To examine and measure results, UISD created and implemented the Board Monitoring System, ASPIRE, and performance pay system. In addition to these systems, student and organizational performance is examined and measured through AEIS and PEIMS.

Board Monitoring System. To emphasize the importance of the six strategic goals, in 2003 the board created the Board Monitoring System to measure the district’s effectiveness in meeting its goals, especially Goal 1: Increase Student Achievement. In 2005, the Board Monitoring System was expanded to include all six

district goals. The primary purpose of the Board Monitoring System was to provide a mechanism for formal reporting to the Board of Education regarding district goals and core values on a mandated periodic basis monitor and to allow the Board of Education to efficiently monitor and measure the guiding principles of the district.

In order to efficiently maintain and measure district goals and core values, the Board of Education systemically monitored these important principles and provided district administrators clear direction. The objective is to assist current and future board members and administrators in obtaining a clear understanding of district goals and core values. According to 2007 information from the district Web site,

The Board may choose to leave the reporting structure of certain goals and core values to the discretion of the Superintendent of Schools. The duties of the Board President shall include ownership of and responsibility for the Monitoring System. Future superintendent contracts will also be amended to determine compliance with [district] goals and core values. The Board of Education will access these reports and provide direction to the Superintendent of Schools regarding the reports.

The Board Monitoring System measures the performance and outcomes of these six strategic goals. Table 18 presents a summary of the Board Monitoring System's 6 strategic goals, objectives, report timelines, and measurement goals and targets.

Table 18

Board Monitoring System

District goal	Objective	Report timelines	Measure targets
1. Increase student achievement	Eliminate any achievement gap between student groups as measured by the statewide Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).	August, September, November, December	Decrease in the achievement gap, decrease dropout rate, increase completion and graduation rate, increase promotion rate, increase commended students percentage
2. Provide a safe environment	Administration shall develop a long-range plan with specific actions to ensure the safety of everyone while on district property or participating in district events.	September	Survey results and data reflecting customer opinions
3. Increase management efficiency	Demonstrate the effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars and increase monies spent on the teaching and learning process.	Efficiency report February, effectiveness reports fall and spring semesters, teacher quality reports March	Increase in resources for instruction, program and services effectiveness, and teacher retention and attendance rates
4. Improve public support and confidence in schools	Improve the community's support and confidence in the quality of the district and make it a district of choice.	Survey results in March	Independent firm shall conduct survey and examine perceptions about the district, customer satisfaction with district and school performance, central administration, and use of tax dollars
5. Create a positive district culture	Create and maintain a strong, positive culture making this the school district of choice for educational professionals throughout the nation	Survey results in February	Independent firm shall conduct survey to examine the district's culture by surveying employees
6. Provide facilities-to-standard program	The administration will develop a long-range facilities plan in order to provide safe, clean, modern and well equipped facilities for all children.	Progress reports issued every quarter	Progress on new construction, renovations, age and condition of buildings, outstanding work orders

Some of the measurable student achievement goals and targets are the following:

1. Achievement gaps between ethnic groups in all tests shall decrease annually by 5%.

2. The graduation rate should be at least 85%.

3. Promotion rates should be at least 98.5%.

4. The percentage of students achieving the commended status will increase by 3% annually.

5. Average scale scores for Grades 3–11 on all subtests on TAKS shall increase.

6. The number of students taking Advanced Placement exams and scoring 3 or higher shall increase.

7. The percentage of college readiness students shall increase at a rate greater than the state average.

8. The percentage of students scoring at or above 45 on each of the PSAT sections shall increase by 4% annually.

9. The percentage of students scoring at or above 500 on each section of the SAT shall increase to 50% by 2011.

10. The percentage of students scoring at or above 21 on the ACT shall increase to 40% by 2011.

The Board of Education provided the superintendent discretion to change the reporting structure of certain goals and core values. According to 2007 district

documents, the board used the reports to provide direction to the superintendent and administration regarding any concerns or changes of report substance and could amend the superintendent's contract according to compliance with district goals and core values. The review of the Board Monitoring System documentation and online questionnaire and interview responses reflected the commitment of both the Board of Trustees and the superintendent to evaluating and measuring programs, services, and processes. ASPIRE is another system implemented by the school district to measure results.

ASPIRE. Through the superintendent's leadership and to support the district's strategic Goal 1—student achievement—in 2007 the Board of Trustees approved a revised teacher performance pay model called the ASPIRE awards model. The purpose of the ASPIRE awards model is to reward teachers for their efforts in improving the academic growth of their students.

The ASPIRE awards model core components are the catalyst for achieving these goals: (a) promote the retention of highly effective teachers; (b) provide incentives for highly qualified teachers to work at economically disadvantaged campuses; (c) advance efforts to ensure stability at high academically performing campuses; (d) encourage collaboration and cooperation between teachers, especially new teachers with highly qualified teachers; and (e) recognize and award exceptional student academic progress at the campus and classroom levels. This model is centered on five principles: (a) performance pay drives academic performance, (b) good teaching occurs in all schools, (c) teamwork is valuable, (d) performance pay does not

replace a competitive base salary, and (e) performance pay systems are dynamic and evolve over time. Table 19 presents the model’s different strands of academic performance.

Table 19

ASPIRE Award for Teachers Performance Strands

Performance strand	Reward
1. Value-added campus-wide improvement	Pays all instructional and non-instructional staff based on student improvement at the campus level.
2. Value-added core teacher performance	Pay individual teachers based on value-added student progress by academic subject.
3. Campus improvement and achievement	Pays all instructional staff at a campus based on how well the school has improved compared with 40 other schools with similar demographics around the state.

In addition to the teacher award model, the Board of Trustees approved the ASPIRE award for principals. The ASPIRE award for principals model revised the principals’ performance pay structure implemented in the 2006 school year. The purpose of this model is to reward principals for increased student performance in their campuses and in the same manner as teachers. Table 20 presents the principals’ three academic performance strands and rewards. According to the superintendent, the new performance model fits into the Recognizing Excellence and Sharing Best Practices component incorporated into ASPIRE, the district’s comprehensive

educational improvement model. This model rewards the top 50% of principals for campus-wide and subject improvement.

Table 20

ASPIRE Award for Principals Performance Strands

Performance strand	Reward
1. Campus value-added improvement	Pays principals on the basis of above-average campus progress on the EVAAS valued-added campus composite score.
2. Campus value-added improvement by subject	Pays principals on the basis of student progress by subject when compared with same-level campuses.
3. Campus improvement and achievement	Pays principals on the basis of how well the school has improved when compared with 40 other schools with similar demographics around the state

In a January 28, 2009, district document, the superintendent noted, “It is great to be able to have a board that supports such a cutting-edge program to recognize employees for making a positive impact on the lives of students.” In a 2009 public district document, the chief academic officer stated,

We are extremely proud of the improvements to our award program and of our 2008 value-added results. [District] staff members helped students to make strong academic gains in all quartiles of performance. These results are a testament to the high-quality staff we have on our campuses and their focus on accelerating the academic growth of all [district] children.

In the State of the Schools 2008 Annual Report the superintendent’s message highlighted the ASPIRE system. The superintendent stated,

The ASPIRE educational model connects [the district’s] improvement initiatives to make them more effective. Its value-added analysis of data

helped to produce the outstanding student academic growth that is highlighted in this State of the Schools report. [The district] is expanding the ASPIRE model to include a performance-management system that makes every member of the [district] family, no matter what role they play in the organization, more responsive in helping our schools perform at the highest levels possible and make sure every student graduates from high school college and career ready. In addition, the district is developing stronger two-way communication with the community it serves.

The superintendent further stated, “By staying focused on the goals and core values that define and guide this district, [the district] will continue to provide . . . children with the world-class education they need and deserve.”

In summary, the superintendent was committed to ASPIRE’s core components, which served as the primary catalysts to help achieve the district’s overall mission and strategic goals. Figure 2 presents the core components and depicts how these components are integrated and linked.

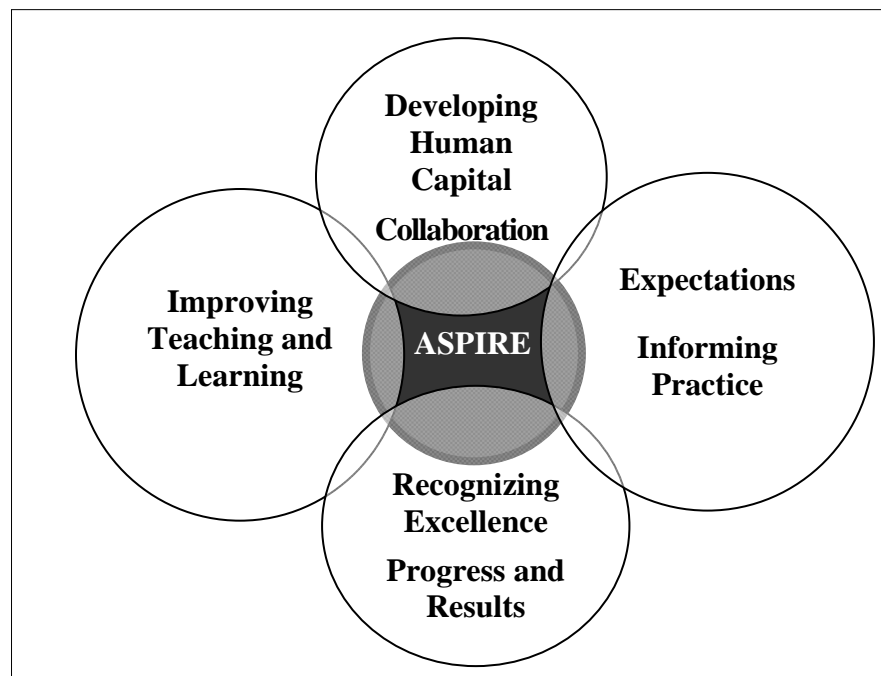


Figure 2. ASPIRE’s core components.

Results for Research Question 2

The interview and questionnaire data presented in the section on Research Question 1 also provided the data for Research Question 2. To avoid repetition, specific statements or data are presented to indicate whether the leadership team members and principals

Research Question 2 asked, To what extent were these concepts and strategies perceived as effective and embraced by key members of the organization? The following sections are also organized according to Baldrige's Performance for Excellence criteria categories: (a) leadership; (b) strategic planning; (c) student, stakeholder, and market focus; (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; (e) workforce focus; (f) process management; and (g) results.

Leadership Category

The interview responses from the leadership team supported the online questionnaire responses shown under Research Question 1 in that they embraced the superintendent's leadership qualities. A leadership team stated, "The superintendent communicates the district's mission and values through his State of Schools address, and the Board Monitoring System is used to promote high performance." Another leadership team member asserted, "Yes, the superintendent and the chief executive officers communicate the mission, vision, and values through employee newsletters, monthly and quarterly meetings, and through his new weekly newsletter." Another leadership team member stated, "Absolutely he communicates the mission, vision,

and values. His priority is to communicate both formally during regularly scheduled meetings with the board and cabinet, and informally a few times a week.”

Additionally, the interview responses from the principals supported the online responses. Responses from the principals’ suggested the superintendent communicated the mission, vision, and values. A principal pointed out, “He communicates what the district is trying to accomplish. His communications to the principals center around college bound, student achievement, best practices, and student success.” This statement was affirmed and supported by another principal’s response, “Yes, the district’s mission statement and values are used, and are the basis for making decisions. We go back to the values when making decisions.”

Another principal affirmed, “The superintendent shares information through ad hoc committees, regional superintendents, and the principal meetings.” According to another principal,

The superintendent sustains a strong relationship with the board by keeping the Board of Trustees informed. In my opinion, the superintendent needs to have a positive working relationship with the board in order to get things approved by the board and move the organization forward.

Strategic Planning Category

A leadership team member responded, “During the weekly superintendent and leadership team meetings, priorities are discussed, and the superintendent makes it a point to ask for ideas.” This staff member stated,

The superintendent likes to get things done quickly, and his approach is, if you have a new idea, get rid of the barriers and let’s do it. He will ask, “What is keeping us from doing what we need to do? Let’s do what we need to get moving on the idea.”

According to this staff member, “His plans center on what is in the best interest of students and the district.” Another staff member stated, “The superintendent is always looking for new ways of doing things, he is innovative and creative.”

A principal stated during the interview, “As the superintendent plans, ideas are channeled through committees. I participated in the incentive pay committee and the ASPIRE dash board committee.” A principal emphasized, “The superintendent encourages new ideas. Because of the size of the school district, these ideas are submitted through committees, ad hoc committees.” According to a principal, “Parts of the district’s plans affecting me and my campus are communicated through the regional superintendent, and decisions are made through the site-based decision making communicated.” Another principal stated, “Our superintendent and chief academic officer have the vision to move our school district forward. They plan monthly principal meetings in which we get the necessary information and training to share with our staff.”

Customer and Market Focus

The leadership team and principals’ online questionnaire responses reflected the superintendent conveyed to the leadership team and principals the importance of focusing in the customer. Responses suggested the leadership team and principals supported, embraced, and communicated to their staff the importance of understanding and knowing the customer.

Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

Data analysis to improve student and campus performance appeared to be the overall premise expressed by principals. Campus measures for math and science are developed by the respective regional superintendent. The principals' responses alluded to the goal that every student should make one year's growth, which was expressed by the leadership team and the necessity to use data analysis to achieve this goal. They embraced this goal. A principal stated, "Yes, data [are] needed to determine the students' deficiencies and strengthens. This allows me to use individualized instruction to address deficiencies. Allows me to identify low-performing students and concentrate moneys and efforts to meet the needs of these students."

Workforce Focus

A leadership team member without hesitation stated, "I came to work here because of the superintendent, I am here because of him." This comment shows the leadership team member's support of and commitment to the superintendent.

Another leadership team member stated, "Yes, the superintendent recognizes all of us. Good superintendent to work for. He has high expectations and sets the bar high." Another leadership team member commented, "Yes, absolutely and with no question the superintendent gives staff recognition, during food service quarterly meetings, employee of the month, and he makes it clear people are the most important asset in the organization."

Through the interview process with the leadership team members, the researcher felt a sense of support and appreciation for the superintendent's commitment to build an effective workforce and safe environment to support student learning and organizational success.

Questionnaire responses from the principals implied they concurred and agreed the workforce cooperates and works as a team, they have an opportunity to develop their for career advancement, the workplace is safe, their supervisors care, and they are committed to the district's success. However, the responses of strongly disagree, disagree, and undecided given to the statement "I am recognized for my work" suggested principals have the perception of not receiving recognition for their work.

Interviews suggested the leadership team and principals had a strong commitment for campus and district success and embraced the superintendent's commitment to the workforce. The online questionnaire and interview responses embraced and supported the superintendent's initiatives for engaging the workforce, giving recognition for the work, and providing a safe work environment for improving student and organizational performance.

Process Management

The interview responses suggested the superintendent provided the needed resources, authority, and control. One principal stated, "Yes, I am giving the control over my campus." An interviewee expressed the same message with a caveat:

I receive most of the things I need to do my job, but my campus is small, and because average daily attendance is used to fund the campus, I receive a small amount of funding. I could use more money.

Responses from the leadership team and principals suggested they embraced the superintendent's strategies in this area and suggested the superintendent took the lead to overhaul the organizational and instructional structures and work practices. This was done with the aim, as suggested by NIST (2008c), of creating value for the students, key stakeholders, and of improving the organization's educational effectiveness, preparing for potential emergencies, and achieving organizational success and sustainability.

Results Category

From the researcher's point of view, the leadership team and principals' online questionnaire and interview responses reflected their support of the superintendent's management strategies for achieving results and removing barriers to progress. A principal reiterated this support and embracement through this statement:

The principals embrace the superintendent because success breeds loyalty or at least cooperation. In schools that have turned around their performance level . . . staff that are difficult to work with eventually embrace what has worked. This is the same in most businesses and work places. The superintendent and deputy superintendent for curriculum have put the focus on students and teachers with the recognition that best practices and each individual teacher make the difference. This is why the performance pay system needs to continue.

This statement is supported by another principal's comment, "If you love your job, you do what you know is best. We are part of the success team and the superintendent is merely the head coach."

According to the board member interviewed, "The management concepts and strategies used by the superintendents are embraced by the chief executive officers and principals." This board member stated,

The leadership team members, regional superintendents, and principals embrace the superintendent because they see him as a leader. He allows them to do what they need to do and he does not micromanage them. For 10 or more years the district has worked in a decentralized platform. This allows principals to control their campus and budget that is not tied to payroll. Principals have the authority and right to hire and relieve teachers. The leadership of the superintendent and board members allows teachers to teach and perform, and allowing administrators to do their work. This leadership style allows teachers to analysis data for improving student performance.

Furthermore, the responses suggested the superintendent's high standards and ethics and obedience of laws and regulations are emulated and embraced by employees across the district.

Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, To what extent are the superintendent's management concepts and strategies aligned with business management concepts? The final research question was related to the question regularly posed from the business community: Should public school superintendents use business management concepts and strategies to run a public school district?

Due to the study's limitations, the researcher used Bolman and Deal's (2003) management framework and the TQM behavior factors, presented in chapter 3, to

determine the alignment between the superintendent's strategies and business management concepts and strategies. Bolman and Deal presented the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames as maps that aid organizational navigation and tools for solving problems and getting things done. According to Bolman and Deal,

The structural frame focuses on the architecture of organization—the design of units and subunits, rules and roles, goals and policies—that shape and channel decisions and activities. The human resource frame emphasizes an understanding of people, and their strengths and weaknesses, and their desires and fears. The political frame sees organizations as competitive arenas characterized by scarce resources, competing interests, and struggles for power and advantage. The symbolic frame focuses on issues of meaning and faith. It puts ritual, ceremony, story, play, and culture at the heart of organizational life. (p. 18)

The study's research findings suggest the superintendent's management concepts and strategies align with business management concepts.

The review of NIST (2008c) documents suggested the superintendent's management concepts and strategies, as evidenced through the online questionnaire and interview responses, were in alignment with the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence categories. These seven categories are inseparable and intertwined, and, according to NIST (2008c), provide the framework to achieve the organization's strategic goals and align resources to improve student achievement, communication, productivity, and effectiveness.

Figure 3 presents a leadership framework for improving student and organizational performance. Furthermore, NIST (2008c) classified each category in either the leadership or results triad. Figure 3 suggests the leadership triad of an

effective leader includes strategic planning and focusing on students, stakeholders, and the market (NIST, 2008c). The results triad suggests effective leaders are workforce, process management, and results focused. Further, such leaders convey the importance of measurement, analysis, and knowledge management (NIST, 2008c).

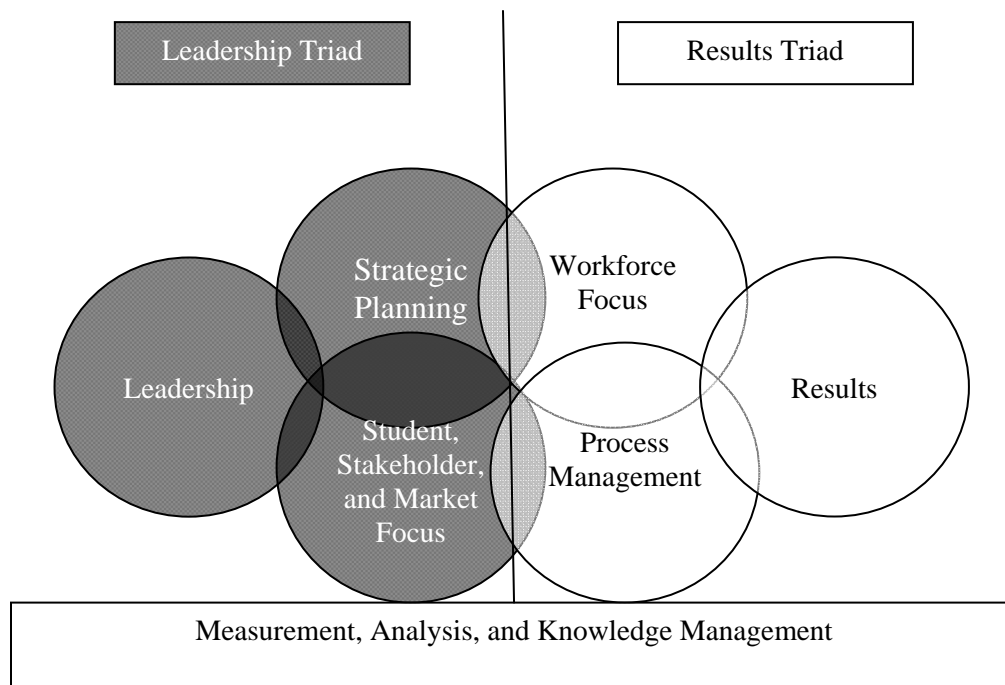


Figure 3. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) performance framework.

Leadership Triad

Leadership and Strategic Planning

The vision statement is core to a strategic plan. A vision statement, explained Pearce and Robinson (2005), presents the firm’s strategic intent that focuses the

energies and resources of the company on achieving a desirable future. The vision statement is sometimes developed to express the aspirations of the executive leadership (Pearce & Robinson, 2005). Therefore, an organization's beliefs and vision statement promulgated by the chief executive officer and supported throughout the organization is the foundation for success. In an attempt to motivate staff, a leader can either implement new or maintain existing key management concepts and strategies.

Leadership is the first management concept and strategy identified by this study. One key management strategy used by the superintendent was to effectively communicate the organization's mission, vision, and values to guide campus administrators to achieve excellence in student and organization performance. Documents reviewed during the study suggested the superintendent possessed this leadership quality.

Resource Allocation

Allocating sufficient resources for achieving the organization's strategic goals is another key leadership strategy used by the superintendent. During the superintendent's tenure, he guided the district's budget-development process to ensure sufficient resources were allocated to achieve the district's mission, vision, and six strategic goals.

The success and effectiveness of this management strategy is highlighted in the superintendent's 2009 State of the School address published on the school district's Web page. Several strategic initiatives received sufficient funding during the superintendent's tenure, with the following results:

1. The district established a full-day prekindergarten.
2. The district implemented the biggest teacher performance-pay system in the country.
3. Academic performance was increased by paying teachers and staff more than \$70 million in performance awards based on student growth.
4. The district created the Reach Out to Dropouts program to go door-to-door to get students back into school, which has been replicated nationally, returning more than 5,000 students to school.
5. The community passed the third school-bond construction program in a decade, which could result in the construction and renovation of nearly \$3 billion worth of schools over 15 years—the largest public works program in the city’s history, providing important stimulus to the local economy and benefiting students with an improved learning environment.

In addition to these accomplishments, according to 2009 information on the district Web site, UISD accomplished the following without increasing the property tax rate: (a) increased the district’s fund balance from \$98.4 million to \$224.1 million; (b) increased starting teacher salaries from \$35,000 to \$44,027, an increase of 25.8%; (c) implemented the first deferred-maintenance program in 20 years, committing \$235 million over 6 years to maintain facilities; and (d) increased the district’s bond ratings to AA+, making the district one of only two districts in the state to hold that rating.

These positive resource outcomes can be attributed to the superintendent's management strategy of recognizing the importance of allocating ample resources to both instructional and non-instructional programs. Another key management strategy is the superintendent's ability of aligning the organization's workforce structure to the organization's mission and vision. These two key management strategies are discussed in the study's results triad section. The superintendent recognized the importance of soliciting and obtaining input from the customers and staff.

Student, Community, and Market Focus

The vision statement, according to Smith and Piele (2006), is built on information about the needs of the school and the community, an understanding of trends that will influence the future, and the realistic hopes of the participants in the process (p. 367). UISD's fifth goal to create a positive district culture is aligned with Smith and Piele's assertion of a vision statement.

The fifth goal states the district "will have a clearly articulated purpose, with specific goals and objectives that support it. This goal will serve as the catalyst for creating a powerful sense of community and shared direction among HISD personnel, parents, students, and the public." The fifth goal affirms the district and superintendent's focus on the student, community, and market.

Results Triad

The primary purpose of the organizational structure is to control the way people coordinate their actions to achieve organizational goals and to control the

means used to motivate people to achieve these goals (Jones, 2007). Jones claimed an organizational structure or design has implications for a company's ability to deal with contingencies such as a changing environment or a competitor.

Workforce Organizational Structure

The organizational design and structure, according to Jones (2007), determine how effectively the organization responds to various factors and involve a constant search for new or better ways of coordinating and motivating employees. Jones asserted the three design challenges confronting managers who attempt to create a structure to maximize the organization's effectiveness are (a) determining how to link and coordinate organizational activities, (b) determining who will make decisions, and (c) deciding which types of mechanisms are best suited to controlling specific employee tasks and roles. Based on the review of UISD's organizational chart, the researcher found that the organizational design implemented by the superintendent consisted of functional and geographic divisional structures.

Functional structure. According to Jones (2007), a functional structure groups people together on the basis of their common expertise and experience or because they use the same resources. UISD's functional divisions included the offices of the chief operations officer, chief financial officer, chief of staff, chief academic officer, and the alternative and charter schools manager. These divisions reported directly to the superintendent of schools.

Geographical structure. Jones (2007) defined a geographic divisional structure in which divisions are organized according to the requirements of the

different locations in which an organization operates. UISD used a geographical structure aligned with this definition. Schools in UISD are organized within the central, east, north, south, and west geographic regions. Each region is led by a regional superintendent who is responsible for the administrative oversight, operations and service support, and parental assistance for an average of about 50 schools in each region. These five geographic regions encompass feeder patterns or vertical teams of schools in which the majority of students within a specific geographic area move from elementary school to middle school to the high school. The geographical academic structure allows each region to operate semi-independently. Regional offices are located within the communities to give students and parents personalized service and immediate assistance.

Implementing these two organizational structures allowed the superintendent to appropriately allocate resources and delegate authority to allow staff to make the necessary management and process changes to address the internal and external customer needs. UISD's nine functional divisions and geographical regional structures are illustrated in Figure 4.

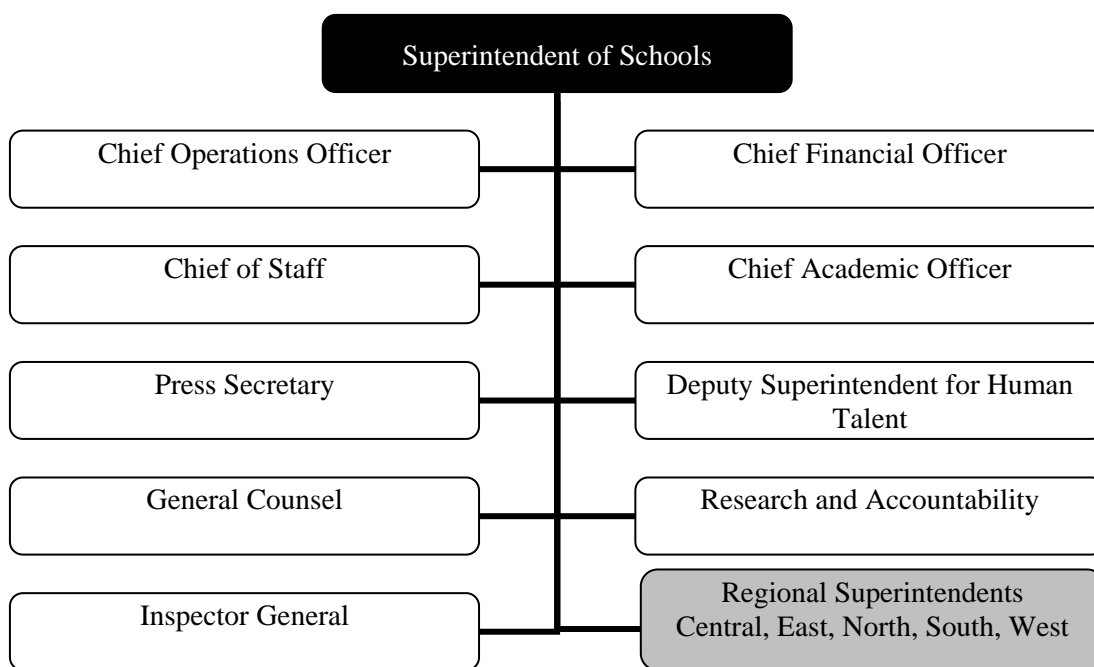


Figure 4. District organizational chart.

Process Management

The process management category, according to the Baldrige National Program Quality Program (NIST, 2008c), examines how the organization determines its core competencies. Process management determines the work systems and how the organization designs, manages, and improves its key processes for implementing those work systems to deliver student and stakeholder value and to achieve organizational success and sustainability (NIST, 2008c).

The study district’s organizational structure and process management for its core competencies are designed to achieve the state’s mission and academic goals for public schools. According to the Texas Education Code (2008),

The mission of the public education system of this state is to ensure that all Texas children have access to a quality education that enables them to achieve

their potential and fully participate now and in the future in the social, economic, and educational opportunities of our state and nation. That mission is grounded on the conviction that a general diffusion of knowledge is essential for the welfare of this state and for the preservation of the liberties and rights of citizens. It is further grounded on the conviction that a successful public education system is directly related to a strong, dedicated, and supportive family and that parental involvement in the school is essential for the maximum educational achievement of a child. (§4.001[a])

UISD's work systems are structured to achieve the Texas academic goals delineated in §4.002 of the Texas Education Code. According to §4.002, students in public education will demonstrate exemplary performance in reading and writing the English language and in understanding of mathematics, science, and social sciences. To achieve the mission and pursuit the academics, school districts created in accordance with the laws of this state have the primary responsibility for implementing the state's system of public education and ensuring student performance in accordance with this code.

Working systems are designed to deliver student and stakeholder value and achieve organizational success and sustainability (NIST, 2008c). UISD work systems and designs started with the reform efforts launched in 1990 that have made UISD one of the finest urban school systems in America and improved key processes.

Results

According to NIST (2008c). results examine an organization's performance and improvement in all key areas—student learning outcomes; student- and stakeholder-focused outcomes; budgetary, financial, and market outcomes; workforce-focused outcomes; process-effectiveness outcomes; and leadership

outcomes. Performance levels are examined relative to those of competitors and other organizations providing similar programs and services (NIST, 2008c).

To examine and measure results UISD created and implemented the Board Monitoring System, ASPIRE, and performance pay system. In addition to these systems, student and organizational performance is examined and measured through AEIS and PEIMS.

Summary for Research Question 3

The identification of the key management concepts and strategies evolved through the online questionnaire and interview responses, and the implementation and practice of these concepts and strategies were validated through the review of UISD's documents. Furthermore, this study found the superintendent's management concepts and strategies to be aligned with these Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence categories (NIST, 2008c): (a) leadership; (b) strategic planning; (c) student, stakeholder, and market focus, (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; (e) workforce focus; (f) process management; and (g) results. Table 21 presents the alignment between the superintendent's strategies and some business management concepts and strategies.

Some of the management concepts and strategies presented in Table 21 and implemented by the superintendent are named and labeled differently compared to terminology used by private entities. Nevertheless, in theory the study's identified management concepts and strategies are the same as those used by private entities.

Table 21

Alignment of Superintendent's and Business Management Concepts and Strategies

Total quality management behavior factors	Bolman and Deal's ^a framework	Superintendent's management concepts and strategies
Change agency	Structural framework	<p>Leadership triad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and strategic planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates and shares mission, vision, and values Establishes measurable goals and objectives Allocates sufficient resources • Customer focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conveys importance of focusing in the customer Delegates appropriate authority to address customer concerns
Continuous improvement teamwork	Human resources frame	<p>Results triad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational structure Teamwork focus Safe environments for students and employees • Process management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decentralized system Allocates sufficient resources Delegates appropriate authority to change processes and address concerns Customer Input • Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board Monitoring System ASPIRE Results focus Compliance with rules and regulations
Trust building	Political frame	<p>Customer focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conveys importance of focusing in the internal and external customer • Delegates authority to change processes to address customer needs
Short-term goal eradication	Symbolic frame	Graduate student is the symbol in every document

^a*Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (3rd ed.), by L. G. Bolman and T. E. Deal, 2003, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Additional Results: Student Performance

This study examined UISD’s student performance to determine the effectiveness of the identified management concepts and strategies and impact on student performance. Student performance data between the 2004 and 2008 school years were examined. In December 2004, Dr. Canales was appointed as UISD’s superintendent. Therefore, this study established 2004 as the benchmark year to determine student performance gains according to state accountability performance standards. Tables 22–26 present AEIS student performance data obtained from TEA’s 2008 accountability data tables.

Table 22

Student Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Performance in Reading 2004–2008

Student group	N taking TAKS in 2008	% meeting state standard				
		2008	2007	2006	2005	2004 ^a
All students	101,450	86	83	81	76	73
African American	28,383	85	81	80	74	72
Hispanic	60,158	85	81	78	72	69
White	9,223	97	96	95	93	92
Economically disadvantaged	76,321	84	81	78	72	69

Note. From Texas Education Agency 2004–2008 district accountability data tables.

^a2004 is the benchmark year.

Table 22 reflects all students including minority students made significant gains in the TAKS reading assessment between 2004, the benchmark year, and the

2008 school year. Except for White students, gains on the state reading assessment for minority students were at least 13% between 2004 and 2008.

In the math state assessment, each student group reflected significant gains in 2008 compared to the 2004 school year (Table 23). The percentage of Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students meeting the math performance standard increased by 21% between 2004 and 2008, and African American students meeting the standard increased by 18% during the same period.

Table 23

Student Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Performance in Mathematics 2004–2008

Student group	N taking TAKS in 2008	% meeting state standard				
		2008	2007	2006	2005	2004 ^a
All students	101,267	75	70	66	59	56
African American	28,280	66	61	57	49	48
Hispanic	60,111	75	69	64	58	54
White	9,187	93	90	89	86	83
Economically disadvantaged	76,298	73	67	62	55	52

Note. From Texas Education Agency 2004–2008 district accountability data tables.

^a2004 is the benchmark year.

Between 2004 and 2008, the percentage of Hispanic students meeting the science performance standard increased by 28%, and the percentage of economically disadvantaged students meeting the same performance standard increased by 27%

(Table 24). In 2008, 64% of the African American students met the performance standard, compared to 42% in 2004, for an increase of 22% during the same period.

Table 24

Student Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Performance in Science 2004–2008

Student group	N taking TAKS in 2008	% meeting state standard				
		2008	2007	2006	2005	2004 ^a
All students	40,638	70	56	60	48	47
African American	11,737	64	48	54	40	42
Hispanic	23,094	68	52	55	42	40
White	4,138	94	88	90	84	83
Economically disadvantaged	29,036	67	50	54	41	40

Note. From Texas Education Agency 2004–2008 district accountability data tables.

^a2004 is the benchmark year.

In the state writing assessment, student performance increased steadily between 2004 and 2008 (Table 25). The student performance percentage increase was between 4% and 5% for each minority student group and for economically disadvantaged students.

According to TEA’s accountability rating system, the number of Exemplary rated schools in the district increased from 15 schools in 2005 to 37 schools in 2008 (Table 26). UISD’s recognized schools increased from 69 to 118 campuses between 2004 and 2008. Approximately 58.9% of UISD’s campuses earned an Exemplary or Recognized accountability rating.

Table 25

Student Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Performance in Writing 2004–2008

Student group	N taking TAKS in 2008	% meeting state standard				
		2008	2007	2006	2005	2004 ^a
All students	24,210	90	88	89	87	85
African American	6,640	89	87	89	87	85
Hispanic	14,839	88	87	87	86	83
White	1,964	97	97	97	96	96
Economically disadvantaged	19,224	88	87	87	86	83

Note. From Texas Education Agency 2004–2008 district accountability data tables.

^a2004 is the benchmark year.

Table 26

Number of District Campuses Receiving Each Accountability System Campus Rating

Academic level	Exemplary		Recognized		Acceptable		Unacceptable	
	2005	2008	2005	2008	2005	2008	2005	2008
Elementary	11	28	54	107	114	46	7	4
Middle school	1	4	12	7	31	31	3	3
High school	3	5	3	4	24	19	3	5
Total	15	37	69	118	169	96	13	12

Note. From Texas Education Agency 2008 campus accountability data tables.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this study suggests the superintendent's management concepts and strategies overcame the social and economic barriers faced by urban students and improved student performance. The data gathered through the online questionnaires, interviews, and document review revealed the superintendent communicated and shared the district's mission, vision, and values and conveyed the importance of being customer focused and of using data analysis to make the necessary process changes.

Dr. Canales and the UISD Board of Education enacted several management concepts and strategies to improve student performance. The concepts and strategies enacted by the superintendent and board included the implementation of a pay-for-performance program for teachers and streamlined district administration.

The purpose of this study was to provide urban school superintendents striving for excellence in student and organizational performance some management concepts and strategies that have impacted student success and improved student performance in a large, urban public school system. The management concepts and strategies presented in this study could increase the probability for urban school reform to improve student and organizational performance.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Transformation is change—especially under challenging circumstances—that is significant, systematic and sustained, resulting in high levels of achievement for all students in all settings (Caldwell, 2006). According to Hunter and Brown (2003), urban education continues to receive considerable attention and is the primary focus and target of the school reform movement. Because of this focus, educational leaders and concerned citizens are coming together for genuine and sustained discussions about their expectations of educational organizations and the strategies that they are willing to support for creating and sustaining change (Contreras, 2003). NCLB includes explicit requirements to ensure that students served by Title I are given the same opportunity achieve to high standards and are held to the same high expectations as all other students in each state (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Urban public school superintendents confront social and economic challenges unique to urban districts and are under pressure to meet NCLB's accountability standards and mandated policies. These challenges and performance standards compel them to bring about organizational reform initiatives in an effort to achieve high academic standards and educational excellence and equity.

Restatement of the Problem

Despite the educational reform movement, Valverde (2003) observed that the preparation for the role of principal or superintendent has been generic, regardless of location or setting. The assumption is that the performance of the role does not differ substantially in schools situated in rural, suburban, or urban contexts. Thus, the challenge faced by urban school district superintendents is identifying and implementing management leadership concepts and strategies that meet NCLB requirements and sustain high levels of performance for every urban student group.

Purpose of Study

This study started with a broad question about effective urban public school superintendent management concepts and strategies. The study was designed and conducted to (a) identify the prevailing management concepts and strategies initiated by the superintendent to attain organizational clarity and effectiveness in improving student performance; (b) examine the degree to which the superintendent's leadership and management concepts and strategies were understood, supported, and embraced by key members of the organization; and (c) examine how the management concepts and strategies used by the superintendent align with a business management concept that may be useful to district leaders and administrators seeking a concept or strategy to sustain organizational change.

Research Questions

The following three research questions directed and shaped the content of this study:

1. What are the prevailing educational management concepts and strategies used by a Texas, urban school district's superintendent to address effectively and efficiently urban school challenges?
2. To what extent were these concepts and strategies perceived as effective and embraced by key members of the organization?
3. To what extent are the superintendent's management concepts and strategies aligned with business management concepts?

Methodology and Methods

This was a predominately qualitative research study (except for the brief analysis of student achievement). Grounded theory was selected for this study because this theory draws from data to offer insight and to enhance and provide a meaningful understanding of the actions of an individual or organization (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory would enable the researcher to develop and build theory about an urban public school superintendent's management concepts and strategies and their effects on organizational and student performance. As Strauss and Corbin indicated, theory derived from data resembles the reality.

Theory emerged from data gathered through two unique online questionnaires, interviews, and reviewing various types of documents from the school district and the

state education agency. Management concepts and strategies evolving from the online and interview responses were validated through the document review process.

The three types of coding models used in the grounded theory are open, axial, and selective coding (Cohen et al., 2007). These coding models enabled the researcher to deconstruct the data into manageable chunks to facilitate an understanding of the phenomenon.

Summary of Findings

Paladino (2007) expanded on the vision, management, people, and resource barriers, popularized by Kaplan and Norton, which are the primary reasons most companies fail to implement their strategies. According to Paladino, research has shown a vision barrier occurs when only 5% of the workforce understands the company's strategy. He claimed the management barrier transpires when 85% of executive teams spend less time discussing strategies and strategic issues than traditional operating results. A resource barrier is created when companies do not link budgets to strategy, and a people barrier emerges when management incentives are not linked to the company's strategic and operational plans (Paladino, 2007).

These barriers did not prevent the superintendent from implementing UISD's strategies to improve student performance. The superintendent understood the district's mission, vision, and values. Thus he was able to articulate the district's mission, vision, and values with confidence and in a manner that was understood by every staff member in the organization. The study presented various scenarios in which the board member, superintendent, executive leadership team, and principals

discussed strategic priorities, plans, and issues. Furthermore, the study revealed the superintendent's commitment to allocate sufficient resources to achieve the strategies. He implemented one of the largest principal and teacher performance-incentive plans linked to student achievement and performance.

Additionally, the study found the superintendent implemented management leadership concepts and strategies that prevailed over the social and economic barriers faced by urban students and increased and sustained student performance. These management concepts and strategies included (a) leadership, (b) strategic planning, (c) customer focus, (d) workforce focus, (e) process management, (f) results focus, and (g) symbolic focus.

These management leadership concepts and strategies led the superintendent to decentralize processes, implement data analysis and performance management systems, empower staff to make the necessary process changes to address customer concerns, and implement a teacher and principal performance-pay system. Furthermore, staff embraced these management concepts and strategies.

The management leadership concepts and strategies were in alignment with the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence categories (NIST, 2008c) and concepts used in private businesses. The superintendent communicated the district's mission, vision, and values and deployed strategic plans to direct and guide the school district.

Using 2004 as the benchmark year, the study found all students including minority students made significant gains between 2004 and 2008, according to the

state's accountability performance standards. Tables 22–26 in chapter 4 present the AEIS student performance data obtained from TEA's 2008 accountability data tables. These data suggest the management leadership concepts and strategies implemented by the superintendent closed achievement gaps and sustained performance between 2004 and 2008.

Conclusion

An urban public school superintendent must advance the organization's transformation and reform vision and ideas to make certain that all schools achieve the student performance standards set by NCLB, state, and local accountability mandates. Before advancing a transformation and reform action plan, an urban superintendent must understand the social and economic challenges faced by urban students and schools. The social and economic challenges identified in this study included urban diversity and poverty, school segregation and desegregation, urban economics and funding, and school governance.

Over the years public schools have implemented various transformation and reform and management strategies such as decentralization, SBM, and TQM. The study introduced Six Sigma, a data-driven and customer-focused model used by businesses. The study focused on identifying and examining an educational management model that is recognized as an acceptable national standard. This focus led to the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Program. The study presented the key components of a best-practice educational management model promulgated by the Baldrige National Quality Award Program. Thus, the key components were

used as the framework to establish and identify the critical components of a best-practice educational management model.

The study used this model to identify the management concepts and strategies implemented by an urban school superintendent who prevailed over the social and economic challenges unique to urban districts and improved student and organization performance during his tenure. The study's urban superintendent was selected because the school district he led met the 2008 Broad Prize for Urban Education performance criteria and improved student performance during his tenure.

The findings of the study suggest the urban superintendent implemented management concepts and strategies aligned with the Baldrige National Quality Program's categories: (a) leadership; (b) strategic planning; (c) student, stakeholder, and market focus; (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; (e) workforce focus; (f) process management; and (g) results. The study suggests the superintendent used leadership and strategic planning; communicated and shared the district's mission, vision, and values; and conveyed the importance of focusing in the customer. He delegated the appropriate authority to address customer concerns. The superintendent communicated the importance of measuring and monitoring performance and results and made the necessary changes to achieve pre-established organizational goals approved by the Board of Trustees. Furthermore, Table 21 in Chapter 4 illustrates the management concepts and strategies implemented by the superintendent aligned with business management concepts and strategies. The study suggests the identified management concepts and strategies consist of the common

elements presented in Figure 1. These management concepts and strategies sustained student performance during the superintendent's tenure.

Implications

Urban student performance continues to be an increasing concern for parents, public officials, and businesses. In pursuit of achieving exemplary student performance, an urban school superintendent must advance organizational transformation and reform vision and ideas to make certain that all schools achieve the student performance standards set by NCLB, state, and local accountability mandates. Thus, the essential role of top management—a superintendent in the case of an urban public school district—in implementing change is to formulate an integrating vision and general strategy, to build a coalition of supporters who endorse the strategy, and then to guide and coordinate the process by which the strategy will be implemented (Yukl, 2006). Before people support radical change, a clear and compelling vision and transformational leadership are useful to guide such change in an organization (Yukl, 2006). To provide the guidance needed to influence organizational change, new urban school superintendents or superintendents who are not realizing improved student performance can use the findings from this study to gain knowledge of the management concepts and strategies used by an urban school superintendent that led to improved and sustained student performance. Superintendents can use the Baldrige National Quality Award Program's key components to develop and implement an effective educational management model. Educational leaders can use the Baldrige National Quality Award Program to evaluate

the district's current organizational culture and processes and systems that are in place.

Perhaps other management leadership models such as Six Sigma should be explored. Six Sigma is a customer-driven leadership strategy, according to Pande et al. (2000), that offers a simple and consistent way to track and compare performance to customer requirements (the Sigma measure) and an ambitious target of practically perfect quality (the Six Sigma goal). Customers and competition inspire innovation; therefore, Six Sigma in organizations is built around the customers' needs. This study suggests the identified superintendent's management concepts and strategies and the five Six Sigma performance steps, specifically the DMAIC process, presented by Dedhia have common elements. The common elements for improving performance include; (a) recognizing performance gaps, (b) establishing measureable goals and objectives, (c) analyzing data, (d) improving customer service, staff capacity, and processes, (e) implementing preventive and corrective controls, and (f) monitoring and comparing actual outcomes.

The success of any management concept and strategy requires commitment and dedication from the board of trustees, superintendent, and senior management staff. Additionally, inadequate resources and district-wide support systems and inappropriate attitudes and the organizational culture impact the student and organizational performance and the success of the management concepts and strategies.

Recommendations for Further Study

This researcher used a single-case study to examine the management concepts and strategies used by an urban public school district superintendent. The single-case study appealed to the researcher because this type of research is based on an interest in the effectiveness of a particular individual (Mertens, 2005). This study was conducted in the largest urban public school system in Texas. Although a single-case study has limitations, this study opens opportunities for further research in management leadership concepts and strategies. Opportunities include further research within UISD, outside the school district, or on each management leadership concept or strategy identified in this study.

Repeating this research in one or more urban school districts would allow a researcher to compare findings between the urban school districts. Furthermore, repeating this research in other urban school settings would allow the identification and comparison of management leadership concepts and strategies implemented by urban school superintendents and their impact on student and organizational performance.

The identified management leadership concepts and strategies align with a business management concepts and may be useful to district leaders and administrators seeking a concept or strategy to sustain student and organizational performance. Additionally, this research may be useful to educational leaders who are seeking management strategies to improve customer service that results in increased organizational and student performance.

Appendix A: Semistructured Interview Questions

1. In your opinion, why is [this school district] making progress both in student and organizational performance?
2. In your opinion, how does the superintendent sustain a strong relationship between the Board of Trustees to move the organization forward?
3. In your opinion, why do the leadership team members, regional superintendents, and principals embrace the superintendent?
4. In your opinion, what do you attribute to the leadership team members', regional superintendents, and principals' long employment tenures?
5. Closing Comments

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM FOR STUDY

Title: District-Level Success: A Case Study to Identify the Management Concepts and Strategies used to Improve Student Performance in a Texas Urban Public School District

IRB PROTOCOL # 2008-01-0121

Conducted By: Antonio Juarez, Brownsville ISD, 210-264-6393

juareztony@hotmail.com

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Martha N. Ovando, The University of Texas at Austin

Department / Office: Educational Administration, Telephone: 512 475-8575

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with UT Austin or participating sites. To do so simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

The purpose of this study is to identify the management concepts and strategies used to improve student performance in a Texas urban public school as measured by the State of Texas Accountability System. It is anticipated that between 15-20 respondents representing various roles in the school district will be interviewed. If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- Participate in an interview conducted by a single researcher

Total estimated time to participate in study is approximately 60 to 90 minutes

Risks of being in the study

- The risk associated with this study is no greater than everyday life.
- The psychological risk/mental stress are no greater than everyday's life.
- This study may involve risks that are currently unforeseeable.
- Though actions will be taken to prevent the loss of confidentiality (see confidentiality and privacy protections below) there is a risk that confidentiality could be lost.

- If you wish to discuss the information above or any other risks you may experience, you may ask questions now or call the Principal Investigator listed on the front page of this form.

Benefits of being in the study: Respondents may benefit from the reflective process of answering questions regarding how the district has made improved student performance.

Compensation: There is no compensation associated with participating with this study.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

- Respondent privacy will be maintained by conducting interviews only with those individuals who have given their consent and by arranging interviews at a time and location convenient to the respondent.
- Respondents will be able to ask questions about the research and will be able to end the interview or withdraw permission to be included in the research.
- Confidentiality of respondents will be maintained by removing personally identifiable information from transcripts. Each respondent will be assigned a code number and this number will be associated with any data that is derived from the interview. Quotes included in the final report will not specify the work assignment or role of a respondent unless there are multiple respondents with the same role.
- The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.

Audio Recordings

- To make possible future analysis the investigator will retain the audio recordings.
- Audio tapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them.
- Audio tapes will be kept in a secure place (e.g. a locked file cabinet in the investigator's office).
- Audio tapes will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and his or her associates.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to

identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support and Compliance at (512) 471-8871 or email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu. You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

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VITA

Antonio Juarez was born in Brownsville, Texas, and grew up in the care of his parents, Benito Juarez and the late Audelia Juarez. He graduated from Brownsville High School. After serving in the U.S. Army, in 1982 he earned a Bachelor of Business Administration with a major in accounting from Pan American University. In 1991, he passed the certified public accountant and certified internal auditor examinations. He is licensed to practice public accounting in the state of Texas. He earned a Master in Business Administration in June 2007 from the University of Phoenix. Antonio was selected into The University of Texas Cooperative Superintendency Doctoral program as a Cycle 17 fellow. He started working towards his Doctorate in Education Administration in the summer of 2006.

In 1987, Antonio started his education career as a school financial auditor in the Texas Education Agency. Early in the 1990s he served as the business manager for Elgin Independent School District and chief financial officer for Region 19 ESC in El Paso, Texas, and Region 4 ESC in Houston, Texas. He served under Dr. Ruben Olivarez as the chief financial officer in the San Antonio Independent School District, Texas. He served in the capacity of chief financial officer and grants administrator for Brownsville Independent School District.

Permanent address: 275 Pinar Del Rio Ave. Brownsville, Texas 78526

This treatise was typed by the author.