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A Superintendent and Principals: Degrees of Vision Alignment
A Case Study

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**A SUPERINTENDENT AND PRINCIPALS:
DEGREES OF VISION ALIGNMENT
A CASE STUDY**

by

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Treatise

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Dedication

This treatise is dedicated to my family who will never be able to fully appreciate their contribution to its completion.

To Betty for all the support and patience in allowing a time for us to become a time for me. Thank you, Toots.

And to the other ladies in my life, my sister, Carol, separated by miles, but close in spirit, Annie, Molly, Candice and Jac, for your support and kindnesses through the years. It is in my hopes and dreams for you and yours that I try to imagine what schools can and *should* become.

For grandsons Logan and Ashton and those to come. May you have the vision to see a better world and the heart to make it so.

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learning never ended for him and I feel this endeavor has enriched my thinking immeasurably.

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Betty and Molly offered the teachers' view. Candice became a sounding board for different ideas, directions and frustrations. Cody did transcriptions and proofreading. Jac kept us all in touch. Thank you all for your patience and support.

A SUPERINTENDENT AND PRINCIPALS:
DEGREES OF VISION ALIGNMENT
A CASE STUDY

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At the beginning of the twenty-first century, school districts face a myriad of challenges including a steady stream of calls for reform, major shifts in demographics and increasing accountability standards. Despite the calls for reform and the threat of sanctions, school districts have found it difficult to affect significant changes in the gaps between the academic success rates for those who are identified as Economically Disadvantaged or minority and their more affluent, white students.

The literature on change, on motivation, and on successful organizations quite often suggests having a “shared vision” as a prerequisite for success. The

research specifically examining vision as a critical variable in school district-level success is limited. This study sought to examine vision as a “shared” or aligned component of success as perceived from the perspectives of the superintendent and principals in a successful urban school district.

While there are questions about various aspects of vision that could be examined, this study drew its focus from three. The research questions the study considered were: What does the superintendent perceive the essential components of the district’s vision to be? What do the principals perceive the essential components of the district’s vision to be? Are the principal’s perceptions of the vision aligned with the perceptions of the superintendent?

This study used qualitative research methods to study the strategies and practices employed by the superintendent of Compass ISD to generate a shared vision of success. Data for this study was from information from the Texas Education Agency, district publications and one-on-one interviews with the superintendent and several principals.

Findings revealed a strong alignment of the superintendent’s perception of the vision for the district with those perceptions held by campus principals. The vision became a shared vision through the use of communication strategies, the establishment of desired results, setting guidelines for achieving those results, the appropriation of resources, through sharing accountability methods and measures, and by making the consequences for success or failure in achieving those

standards known. The superintendent used data as a frame for his communications and for his decisions in all areas.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

There have been calls to change the American education system for more than forty years, but efforts to change, innovate, restructure, reform or transform have rarely taken root. In 1965 the federal government enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to provide money to help students from low-income families (Educational Leadership, 2006). Eighteen years later a national report was issued that triggered great debate. *A Nation At Risk* was written by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983, and according to this report, “declines in educational performances are the result of the way the education process is often conducted” (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983, Findings section ¶ 1). The report called for restructuring of the education process, “...we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all—old and young alike, affluent and poor, majority and minority” (A nation at risk section, the risk subsection ¶2).

In 2001, eighteen years after *A Nation at Risk* and thirty-six years since its inception, the reauthorization of ESEA included *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB)

(United States Department of Education, 2004). The law's passage suggested a frustration with the education system, despite improvement in the percentages of students graduating from high school and earning bachelor's degrees. "Upon graduating from high school, few students have acquired the math and science skills necessary to compete in the knowledge-based economy" (p. 12). The law established accountability for results.

Schlechty (2001) suggested, despite the pleas of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, the public schools of today, "are not that much different from the schools of the 1970's" (p. 3). Harris and Estes (2006) argued the "form" of schooling has remained essentially the same for about 100 years. Daggett (2006) has described how American society is going through structural changes that will have significant implications for education. Changes are having an impact on the American family, workplace and local communities. The changes are being driven by four mega-trends, the first of which he labels "new and emerging technologies." Second among the mega-trends is globalization of the world's economies, followed by a third trend of changing demographics. Daggett has also suggested that new generations of Millennials and Generation Z students in the classrooms will influence the structure of American society (p. 1). As Schlechty noted "American society, the external environment for U.S. schools, has been experiencing dramatic shifts in structure" (2001, p. 1).

Daggett also asserted, despite criticisms to the contrary, the American education system is not failing, but schools have been unable to keep up with the

rate of change in the world. Most researchers agree there is a “need to provide all students with an academically rigorous and relevant education” (Daggett, 2005, p. 2). Even when most agree this is the type of public education needed, “we are finding it easy to conceptualize change but difficult to implement it” (2005, p. 2). The significant shifts in American society have not been matched by shifts in the American education system. While the mega-trends noted by Daggett may influence the need for change from an external perspective, Schlechty offered a slightly different view.

One of the changes Schlechty has cited is in the shift from a society where only the elite and intellectually gifted were expected to be successful in schools. One example noted was that fifty years ago algebra was only for students who would be attending college. Today it is a requirement to graduate from high school. The egalitarian nature of American education is unique in the world’s education systems and despite the continued expansion of this framework of equal access America has fewer dropouts than at any time in our history. This is only one of eight “seismic shifts” (p. 9) referred to by Schlechty. He has defined seismic shifts as those of such a magnitude they can destroy smaller structures.

One of the other seven shifts is that parents are no longer a majority in the United States and whites may no longer be a majority race either. Within this shift he notes the gap between the education levels of parents has widened considerably over the past fifty years with the most educated having fewer children later, while the proportion of poor children has increased. Among the

other shifts noted are: a shifting of the locus of control away from local to state and federal centers, a shift of “community” from where one lived to where one works and by the interest groups to which one belongs, and from a society where adolescents blended into lives with adults to one where they grow up isolated from adult interactions. Also making the list are: the rise of single parent homes and blended families, the increase in competition for the hearts and minds of the young by outside entities and the societal shift from standardization and efficiency to “quality, choice and customization” (p. 29). Even as NCLB has pushed for more accountability and more preparation in math and science, Pink (2006) has argued American society is moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age. Skills needed to thrive in a global economy, and in society, are much different than those currently being taught in American schools.

Schlechty asserted the main reason schools have failed to make the necessary responses is leaders do not understand the systems controlling education. Without an understanding of how systems work, efforts to foster innovation and reform are unlikely to have a significant impact on the way schools work. He has also argued that many have seen schools as averse to change. He suggested change is a constant, but schools are “change inept” (p. 39). Tyack (1991) puts it a different way, having written “educators often have embraced innovation in protective symbolic ways...while leaving the core of instruction in the classroom relatively undisturbed” (p. 4).

“When the rate of change outside an organization is greater than the rate of change inside, the continuing existence of that organization is threatened” (Schlechty, 2001, p.1). Yukl (2006) wrote, “One of the most important activities of executives is to monitor the external environment and identify threats and opportunities for the organization” (p.373). Clearly, there are threats to the public schools of the United States, but the education system has not managed to respond effectively. Given the rate of societal shifts, schools cannot afford incremental efforts, but must make significant changes in how they do their work.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

With increased accountability, there are even greater demands for superintendents to lead school districts to meet the standards of NCLB. Slater’s (1991) analysis of several studies concluded a superintendent’s leadership has an effect on organizational performance. More recently, a review of research by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) found leadership second only to classroom instruction as school-related factors that contribute to student learning. In addition, the authors contend the effects of leadership are greatest in the schools with the greatest needs. Thomas (2001) reported:

The literature on superintendent effectiveness remains sparse and leaves much to be desired. Research continues to lack a clear definition and agreed upon measures of what constitutes effective school system

leadership, and offers little information on how superintendents can improve their leadership styles. (p. 11)

More recently, Waters and Marzano found evidence in their analysis of research that affirmed “the long-held, but previously undocumented, belief that sound leadership at the district level adds value to an education system” (2006, p. 8).

One of the practices cited by Waters and Marzano (2006) and Leithwood, et al. (2004) as contributing to a district’s success involves the development of a shared vision. Slater’s findings included the conclusion that school leaders “articulate a strong vision or goal for the school which they repeat frequently” (p. 4). In examining seven leadership theories, Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996) discovered communicating a vision and implementing the vision were core components common across the theories. Leadership theorists (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Nanus, 1992; Senge, 1990; Kotter, 1996; Collins, 2001) have consistently included vision as a critical quality of effective leaders.

Much of the research on change efforts in education (Fullan, 2002; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Hall & Hord, 2001; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Louis & Miles, 1990; Reeves, 2006; Schlechty, 1990; Schmoker, 1996) has also cited the importance of a shared vision as a critical element found in successfully transformed schools. Despite the prevalence of information about vision, its relevance remains unclear to many in educational leadership roles. In fact, Lashway found research that suggests “school leaders have become ambivalent –

sometimes even cynical – about the usefulness of vision” (1997, p. 2). Perhaps the ambivalence and cynicism of educational leaders about vision come from a lack of clarity about its meaning. “Vision is a term with many different meanings, which creates widespread confusion” (Yukl, 2006, p. 295). Perhaps this is because there are so many terms used interchangeably with vision (Sikkenga, 2006) or because “vision includes several subcomponents” (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996, p. 37). The perception of a shared vision as irrelevant may also be generated by having seen or been a part of an ineffective vision (Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Reeves (2006) has described schools that have changed, become successful and sustained that success. Research suggests to generate an atmosphere conducive to change a leader must have a clear and unambiguous vision for their organization. “Before people will support radical change, they need to have a vision of a better future that is attractive enough to justify the sacrifices and hardships the change will require” (Yukl, p.314). “Those who would market change by concentrating on how it will solve current problems will create resistance at the same time they create commitment” (Schlechty, 1990, p. 89). Stating that someone should change to make things better implies that the person is doing something wrong, which threatens their self-worth and makes

them defensive of current methodologies. A vision is not a reality. “Visions are intended realities” (Schlechty, 1990, p. 89).

As the leader, the superintendent must have a clear vision for the “intended reality” of the school district. The superintendent must also be capable of communicating that vision to the stakeholders of their district, since the vision, as an “intended reality”, will not be readily achieved. A superintendent may have a clear vision and communicate it effectively, but maintaining focus may not be easy for the stakeholders. Therefore, it is imperative the superintendent be able to maintain focus on the vision to keep it sustainable.

“Vision is the manifestation of our stated values, the actualization of our common mission” (Conzemius & O’Neill, 2002, p. 230). This study will examine the seminal component of change, vision. The study will seek to develop a deeper understanding of the role vision plays in a district’s success. “Vision” will be explored from the perspective of its development, communication and the depth of its alignment. The purpose of the research is to add to the body of knowledge concerning the role vision plays in the change process of a school district.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

While there are many elements which could be considered in an examination of vision, this study will draw its focus from three. The research questions to be considered are:

1. What does the superintendent perceive the essential components of the district's vision to be?
2. What do the principals perceive the essential components of the district's vision to be?
3. Are the principal's perceptions of the vision aligned with the perceptions of the superintendent?

RESEARCH STRATEGY

The research strategy chosen to explore these questions is a qualitative approach. The methodology was reflective of a constructivist paradigm in which interpretations are constructed as a part of the research process. Case study is one of the primary forms by which knowledge is presented from the constructivist paradigm (Hatch, 2002). According to Mertens (2005) there is a difference of opinion as to "whether case study is a method or a research design" (p. 237). Mertens concluded that because case study research uses a variety of methods to collect data, case study is a research strategy.

There are five features of qualitative research described by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) common to all methods, but some qualitative studies may not reflect all traits equally. In fact, some studies may not exhibit one or more of the characteristics at all. The five features described include:

1. Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument.

2. Qualitative research is descriptive.
3. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process, rather than simply with outcomes or products.
4. Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively.
5. “Meaning” is of essential concern to the qualitative approach (p. 27-29).

This study exhibits these features in its approach to constructing meaning.

LIMITATIONS

Qualitative research and case study methodologies inherently pose certain limitations. Because of context limitations, the findings of this case study only apply to the district studied and cannot be generalized to other settings, however, findings in this case can provide a basis for future research in other settings. Not being able to make generalizations is considered a limitation of qualitative research, as is the level of involvement of the researcher in the interpretations of data. This researcher is no exception, as preconceived notions about change and a personal vision of what schools might be, may have had some influence on the researcher’s interpretation of others’ views on these topics.

SIGNIFICANCE

Many recent theories of leadership described in the literature have included vision as an attribute of the style of leadership. Transformational,

charismatic, strategic and moral leadership are all examples of visionary leadership styles found in the literature. As such it has been ascribed a variety of definitions and methods of use. Leithwood, et al. warn that “leadership by adjective” (2004, p. 6) can hide common themes of successful leadership regardless of the adjective. This study will provide insight into vision as a common theme of leadership, but without attempting to tie it to any particular type or style of leadership.

The importance of the concept of a vision needing to be widely shared runs deep in the literature, but studies of the alignment of the leader’s vision with those of organizational members are rare (Nanus, 1992). Most efforts to bring about change in schools have been targeted at the campus level and only recently have researchers begun to look at the larger district level as a locus for change efforts (Fullan, 2006). This study will generate a deeper awareness of the levels of alignment of elements of vision between superintendents and principals.

DEFINITION OF RELEVANT TERMS

Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS): The Accountability Rating System of Texas used to annually report the performance of public schools and districts in the state. The AEIS uses subset of the performance measures computed to assign a rating to each public school and district. Schools and districts have been rated since 1994 using this system.

Accountability: Which data will be used and the standards to be met in measuring progress toward vision achievement.

Average Daily Attendance (ADA): The number of students who are actually present on an average day. Average daily attendance (ADA) is usually used in school-finance calculations and is about 95 percent of the total enrollment.

Consequences: What will happen, good or bad, as a result of meeting, or failing to meet, agreed upon accountability standards.

Desired results: Goals and objectives to fulfill the shared vision.

Disaggregated data: A method of examining units of assessment data by subgroups, such as: ethnicity, economic status, gender, second language learners and special education status.

Economically Disadvantaged: The percent of Economically Disadvantaged students is calculated as the sum of the students coded in PEIMS as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or eligible for other public assistance, divided by the total number of students (Texas Education Agency).

Guidelines: Parameters within which results are to be accomplished.

Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS): PEIMS encompasses all data requested and received by TEA about public education, including student demographic and academic performance, personnel, financial, and organizational information.

Resources: The technical, human, financial or organizational support available to help achieve the desired results.

Recognized: The second highest, of four, rating categories granted by the State of Texas and the Texas Education Agency (The other three are Academically Unacceptable, Academically Acceptable and Exemplary).

State Board of Education (SBOE): The Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education (SBOE), an elected 15 member board, oversee the public education system of Texas in accordance with the Texas Education Code.

State Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA): The alternative assessment administered to some special education students in the state of Texas.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS): The statewide assessment for Texas. The test is administered annually in grades 3 through 11. Currently, students in grades 3, 5 and 8 must pass the Reading and Math portions to be promoted. Students at the Exit Level must pass in the four core areas to graduate from high school.

Texas Education Agency (TEA): The TEA and the State Board of Education (SBOE) guide and monitor activities and programs related to public education in Texas.

Vision: A term used to differentiate between what is reality and what may be an intended idealized possibility.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

There are pressures on schools to make changes. America's economy in the twenty-first century will not be the same as the economy of most of the

twentieth century. The leadership of a superintendent will be based upon how well these needed changes are accomplished. For a variety of reasons, successful efforts at changing schools have been few and far between. Vision is a common theme in both the change literature and the leadership literature.

This chapter has introduced the focus for research on the superintendent and the vision communicated. In addition, this chapter introduces the research questions, the research strategy and the significance of the study. Further chapters will examine relevant literature, elaborate on the research strategy and methodology, and discuss the findings of the research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The “form” of schooling has remained essentially the same for about 100 years. Many structures of public schools in the United States have been historically endowed a position in the schooling process despite cultural and societal factors generating an impetus for change. Knowing there is a need for schools to reform to meet the needs of a changing society, there remain significant impediments to altering those structures which inhibit schools from providing all students what a *Nation at Risk* calls “the twin goals of equity and high-quality schooling” (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983, A nation at risk section, the excellence in education subsection ¶2)

The shifting of cultural and societal values has left the schools behind, not only because they are slow to change, but because schools have always been a reflection of the society they attempt to educate. Schools need to understand their purpose and all the changes in American society have left the culture, as yet, undefined. Organizations, as reflections of the culture in which they exist, will be, as Bennis (1973) predicted over four decades ago, “adaptive, rapidly changing *temporary systems*” (p. 385).

With society and the organizations therein experiencing a state of organic flux (Morgan, 1998; Bennis, 1973), school systems find themselves in the midst of a difficult era. They are teaching students much the same content as before

with methods that have undergone no significant changes. When efforts are made to reflect the cultural shifts in society, the society has already moved on. “We live in a moment in time where the rate of change is so speeded up, we see the future only as it is disappearing” (Laing, 1983, p. 5). Schools are established as the means for a democratic society to perpetuate the “conditions of their existence” (Schlechty, 1990, p. 31).

HISTORY OF CHANGE EFFORTS

Tyack and Tobin (1994) describe some of the historical practices that have been maintained despite efforts to change them. They describe these practices as being a “grammar” of schooling where, similar to the grammar of speech, there does not need to be a conscious understanding to be understood. Examples cited in their work include customary practices like graded classrooms, self-contained classes at the elementary level and students receiving Carnegie units at the high school level.

In the late nineteenth century, “efforts to create schools in the image of the factory had become explicit and purposeful” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 20). Education in the first half of the 20th century was marked by a focus on content more than pedagogy. Marzano (2000) suggested there were principles of instruction that were examined, but were never widely implemented. Early in the century, however, political reformers of the time identified social inequalities, such as issues of class, and saw schools as a “vehicle for correcting these social

injustices” (p.68). This era also saw the debut of Dewey’s philosophy about teaching and learning and the social implications of education. Little of the social direction suggested from this time period of educational history became a part of the “grammar” of schooling (Tyack & Tobin, 1994) with the possible exception of what Gardner (1961) described as America’s twin virtues; egalitarianism and emphasis on competitive performance. The two virtues constantly conflict within our system of schooling and the culture at large.

In the second half of the century, Marzano found a beginning emphasis on research of pedagogical practices. He states this focus became known as the “teacher effectiveness” literature (p.72). This literature led to a “proliferation of what might be referred to as instructional models” (p.76). While many features of these models are still in use in the classrooms of America, they have not had a transformative effect.

Fullan asserted, “Not much progress has been made since the 1960’s, despite renewed interest in the 1980’s in large scale reform focusing on accountability. The pressure for reform has increased, but not yet the reality” (2007, p. 6). Research conducted from the late 1960’s through the mid-1980’s provided the first empirical evidence to indicate there was a relationship between educational practices and student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006), but replication of known successful practices has been slow to take root.

HOMEOSTATIC SYSTEMS

Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) call the difference between what we do and what we know how to do the “knowing-doing gap” (p.4). Baird-Wilkerson (2003) agrees, pointing out how sustainability of organizational growth, in working to "close the gap" between organizational practices as they are now and the best organizational practices, demands a great deal of time and energy and a high tolerance for risk (p. 4).

Change efforts have been studied, analyzed and written about for many years. The change process has been viewed from many different perspectives, each focusing on different dimensions and effects. Some have focused on the depth of change, examining differences between incremental and fundamental or deep change (McREL, 2001; Fullan, 2003). Hanson (2003) looks at the targeting process of change, as without targeting, the results being sought are not likely to be realized. According to Hanson, there are five “key elements of the targeting process, which include the objectives, focus, level, potency and motivation for change” (p. 303). Kotter (1996) has described an eight-stage process for creating major change. In an analysis of their Concerns-Based Adoption Model for change, Hall and Hord (2001) identify twelve principles that are foundational to all change processes. So many different perspectives and dimensions to the change process make it difficult to know where to focus change efforts to successfully close the knowing-doing gap.

In describing the attributes of educational organizations, Owens (1995) describes the structure as both loosely coupled in significant ways and tightly coupled, or highly bureaucratic, in others. The core activity of schools, teaching and learning, is viewed as being loosely coupled in that it is not controlled by administrators, though they do have bureaucratic means to control the structure of teachers' work, as in the assignment of students and the allocation of resources.

Systems can also be classified as either incompetent or competent (Zmuda et al., 2004). In an incompetent system "assumptions are based on perceived reality" (p. 46). Educators in such a system make assumptions based on this perceived reality. These assumptions engage a homeostatic reaction and inevitably support their habitual practices and the status quo. In an incompetent system current practice is generally defended regardless of evidence of ineffectiveness. Schmoker (1996) noted evidence that in incompetent systems only the "most partial superficial implementation was occurring as teachers found ways to twist the innovation right back into what they had always done" (p. 22).

Fullan (2006) states there are four obstacles to systemic change. They are the walls of the classroom, the walls of the school, the walls of the district and the walls between local and state interests. It is inferred the walls between state and local interests can be managed by compliance manipulation, but breaking down the walls within the district is the charge of the superintendent.

Reform efforts often fail because reformers, as Hall and Hord (2001) indicated, typically overlook "that most change implementors have full-time (or

more!) jobs...” (p. 105). When the district efforts to induce changes in campus or classroom activities, educators have learned “they can wait for it to pass over so they can get about doing what they ‘were hired to do’” (Schlechty, 2001, p. 39). Many excellent teachers are averse to campus or district activities not because of a lack of dedication, but because “they prioritize the tangible and immediate needs of their individual classrooms over the abstract and fleeting nature of collective work” (Zmuda et al., 2004, p. 8).

In discussing the motivation for change, Hanson (2003) lists three types. Enforced changes are required changes, likely the result of an outside agency creating pressure for the change, while expedient changes are superficial attempts to address a problem. These changes divert attention from the roots of the problem, are unlikely to generate systemic changes and lack sustainability. Essential changes are “typically voluntary and a response to the clear recognition that a problem should be solved in as genuine and creative a manner as possible” (p. 306). Such changes can be systemic and lead to other significant changes.

THE PARADOX OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

The American education system exists in a paradigm of paradox. Ferrero (2006) described “education’s ideological divide” as a struggle between traditionalism and innovation (p. 11). Characteristics of a traditional ideology include such things as standardized tests, teaching basic skills, ability grouping, essays and research papers, and subject matter disciplines. Each of these

characteristics has an innovative counterpart, which include authentic assessments, higher-order thinking, heterogeneous grouping, hands-on projects and interdisciplinary integration. Other innovative ideologies include thematic integration, depth of instruction, a cultivation of individual talents, multiculturalism, inclusive curriculum, teacher autonomy and creativity and appealing to student interests. The traditional strands countering these are chronology, history, breadth, academic mastery, Eurocentrism, canonical curriculum, a top-down curriculum and mandated content. Sorting through these apparently conflicting perspectives can be daunting.

When managed and integrated, the results still do not create systemic change, but a cyclical change where an emphasis can cause a relatively quick shift between the two perspectives, depending on the societal need. Even so, with cultural shifts occurring at today's frequency, lag time would make full synchronization of the educational system and society as a whole impossible. Only systemic change would allow the schools to reflect current societal needs (Daggett, 2006; Fullan, 2007).

The gap between state and local interests can be managed by compliance manipulation, as most state issues are ones that can be managed by meeting legal guidelines. If the goals of the district match the larger goals of the state, the two can be probably integrated successfully enough to meet requirements. Indeed, Ferrero (2006) described schools that manage to teach the "traditional" state content and still offer students an "innovative" curriculum that meets local needs

(p. 11). Other barriers mentioned by Fullan (2007) occur within the district.

Ultimately these barriers must be overcome in order to generate enough energy to move a system forward.

Another enigma facing reformers is that, on one hand, educators need to be a part of a collective effort to understand their shared core beliefs, and on the other, they possess a need to retain professional autonomy. DuFour (2004) stated that a basic need is to feel a sense of connectedness. However, most educators do the vast majority of their work in isolation. This generates another paradox.

DuFour suggests that educators have a hard time generating the commitment necessary to face the brutal facts regarding student learning based on the hoped for numerical outcomes, but may be more willing to face the facts of systemic change if there are appeals to the human needs. This paradox must be managed as must the previously discussed paradox of traditional versus innovative ideologies. District and campus leaders hoping to bridge the paradigm of paradox must appeal to human needs.

Besides a feeling of connectedness, DuFour (2004) also listed an innate desire to feel a sense of significance, and a longing to feel we are successful at what we do as critical human needs. Teachers are rarely afforded the opportunity to feel successful because it is uncertain what students could ideally have attained. Without clear standards of the capabilities of their students, teachers are left to create their own standards for success and never know if the standards they set were high enough for them to feel justified in the achievements attained. Teachers

enter the business primarily to make a difference, and though early aspirations may prove to be unrealistic, teachers continue to try. When students respond to the best attempts of teachers with indifference, it is difficult for teachers to maintain their efforts. This realm of paradox creates an atmosphere not conducive to externally imposed change efforts.

THE MOTIVATION OF EDUCATORS

One of the more significant barriers to change is a failure to recognize the need (Zimmerman, 2006). Kotter (1996) suggested the first element present in any successful change effort is the creation of a sense of urgency. Collins (2001) suggests the path to greatness begins “by confronting the brutal facts” of the current reality (p. 88). Reports, such as *A Nation at Risk*, legislation, like *No Child Left Behind*; state efforts to implement higher accountability standards, merit pay and vouchers; and warnings from reformers, about extinction of the American public education system (Schlechty, 1997; Schlechty, 2001) all offer messages of urgency. “Yet, in spite of such messages, there is little evidence to suggest that contemporary educators recognize a pressing need for change” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 54).

Previously unsuccessful change efforts (Greenberg & Baron, 2000), fear of the unknown (Fullan, 2001), and threats to expertise (Fullan, 2001; Greenberg & Baron, 2000) are among the causes of resistance to change. The calls for improvements in schooling may have resulted in developing deeper resistance and

a stronger homeostasis. Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) suggest some change efforts actually push teachers away from reforming their practice. Many of the forces creating a sense of urgency have been negative and. The reaction generated is one of survival and resultant efforts only going as far as needed to stave off pressure. DuFour and Eaker (1998) suggest that a more positive motivation has a better chance of generating long-term, deep changes in the organizational structure. A constant state of panic is a less than ideal environment for a culture of continuous improvement.

Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, and Kleiner (2000) have asserted that instead of emphasizing technical skills or strategies, a more basic challenge is to develop practices that “keep their dreams whole while cultivating an awareness of the current reality around them” (p. 59). Almost all motivation-related research focuses on one of two core questions: “(1) What turns me on? or (2) What’s in it for me?” (Hanson, 2003, p. 191). Theories developed from the first question are usually referred to as content theory, while research based on the second question has generated a field of study around the idea of a process theory. Many theories have developed around each perspective. Some theories examine extrinsic motivation, but Hanson (2003) suggests the internal perspective is the most critical for understanding organizational development. Morgan (1998) notes what he describes as the discovery of the obvious fact of life: that people work best when they are able to “achieve rewards that satisfy their personal needs” (p. 37).

Maslow (1973) first described a theory of motivation more than six decades ago. The theory is generally referred to as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. There are five basic categories described as: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. What Owens (1995) describes as the genius of Maslow's work, the sequential hierarchical pattern, Hanson (2003) suggests is a weakness. Each need must be met in order to begin an effort to fill the next higher need in the hierarchy. The ERG (existence, relatedness and growth) Theory is offered as a more flexible option. This theory collapses Maslow's five levels into three and does not demand that any one need be fully met before the others are pursued.

DuFour and Eaker (1998) frame some of these needs in the context of the education system. They suggest there is a basic need to succeed in one's work, but test scores and negativity of the public attention toward education dampens the prospects. Secondly, they suggest a basic human need is the desire "to belong, to feel a part of a collective endeavor. Schools have often failed to generate this sense of belonging because teachers have worked in isolation" (p. 281). The final basic human need mentioned is the desire to live a meaningful life and to make a difference in the world. This desire is the "most powerful factor that attracts people to the teaching profession" (p. 281).

The greatest problem in teaching, according to Fullan and Hargreaves, is "how to create, sustain and motivate good teachers throughout their careers" (1996, p. 63). Collins and Porras (1994) describe successful organizations as being driven by a collective passion around a core ideology. Growth of a school

system or a campus happens “by tapping into the wellsprings of emotions that lie within the professionals of that school” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 280).

“We need leaders who remind us of the moral purpose of our profession” (DuFour, 2004). Fullan (2003) echoes the suggestion calling for the engagement of “people’s moral purpose” (p. 12). This represents the “why” of change. If leaders are able to engage the moral purpose, they will appeal to the basic core value of most educators and offer them the opportunity to feel a sense of significance. In responding to the negative sense of urgency some feel is required for change in our educational system, DuFour and Eaker suggest “a more enduring catalyst for change is a compelling picture of what the school might become – one that projects positive images and practical alternatives that are clearly superior to the status quo” (1998, p. 56). This catalyst for setting direction includes the identification and articulation of a vision (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004).

VISION AND MORAL PURPOSE

“We need leaders who remind us of the moral purpose of our profession” (DuFour, 2004). Fullan (2001) echoes the suggestion in defining the eight key drivers for change. The first overriding driver is “engaging people’s moral purpose.” This represents the “why” of change. Among the other drivers described is an understanding of the change process and developing cultures for learning. If leaders are able to engage a moral purpose, they will appeal to the

basic core values of most educators and offer them the opportunity to feel a sense of significance.

Hord (2004) describes a shared vision as “a particular mental image of what is important to an individual and to an organization; it is a preferred image of the future that compels staff to work toward that image” (p.8). The vision of a school must reflect the core beliefs of the stakeholders. “The legitimacy of a shared vision is based on how well it represents all perspectives in the school community” (Zmuda et al., 2004, p.18).

A vision by itself does little good. Reeves suggests a vision should not stand alone, but “the first obligations of leadership are articulating a compelling vision and linking clear standards of action that will accomplish the vision.” (2006, p.34) While many educational researchers speak of the importance of vision, it is one of many necessary components of school reform. A grand vision, shared by all stakeholders, cannot lead to change, but when developed collectively, appealing to a shared vision can provide the atmosphere where change is possible. Without a clear and compelling vision, short term events of change may occur, but with little sustainability. Generating and then appealing to one’s personal vision creates the moral purpose necessary for change to occur. A personal vision is what Barth described as:

...one’s overall conception of what the educator wants the organization to stand for; what its primary mission is; what its basic, core values are; a

sense of how all the parts fit together; and above all, how the vision maker fits into the grand plan. (1990, p.148)

VISION DEFINED

Senge (1990) argued, “When there is a genuine vision, people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to” (p. 9). Nanus (1992) concurred, “There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile vision of the future, widely shared” (p. 3). Senge clarifies there is a difference between a genuine “shared vision” and “the all-too-familiar ‘vision statement’” (p. 9). Unless a vision is shared by the stakeholders responsible for implementing necessary changes, it is unlikely to motivate them to make those changes. Therefore, success of any initiative not consistent with a stakeholder’s vision is unlikely to succeed.

Vision has been a key component in many leadership theories (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Quigley, 1993). These theories suggest vision is the primary means effective leaders use to “inspire followers to perform exceptionally well” (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996, p. 37). In the literature on leadership, vision is described as a trait found in effective leaders who can “clearly state their visions for their organizations” (Larwood, Falber, Kriger & Miesing, 1995, p. 742). Vision has also been a significant feature in the research on effective organizations and organizational change (Peters &

Waterman, 1982; Senge, 1990; Collins & Porras, 1994; Kotter, 1996; Collins, 2001) and the literature on educational change (Schlechty, 1990; Louis & Miles, 1990; Barth, 1990; Fullan, 1992; Hord, 1992; Boyer, 1995; DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

The descriptions of leadership to which vision is ascribed a role range from strategic, charismatic, transformational, and moral to instructional, participative, and democratic (Leithwood et al., 2004). It is suggested that “leadership by adjective” may mask commonalities amongst the styles (p. 6). It may also be part of the reason school administrators are ambivalent and cynical about vision (Lashway, 1997).

Understanding “a vision includes several subcomponents” (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996, p. 37) may also add to the lack of acceptance of vision as an important component to change efforts. Yukl’s (2006) assertion that the variety of meanings adds to the confusion may be exemplified by an examination of some of the definitions found in the literature:

Because it operates on many levels, it is difficult to define simply. A vision is more than an idea. At once it is a picture of the future and the present, appealing simultaneously to logic and to feeling; first it makes sense, and then it inspires strong simultaneous feelings of hope and pride in its accomplishment (Snyder, Dowd & Houghton, 1994, p. 74)

Quite simply, a vision is a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization (Nanus, 1992, p. 8).

...a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organization. This image, which we call vision, may be as vague as a dream or as precise as a goal or mission statement. (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 89).

A vision is not a mission. To state that an organization has a mission is to state its purpose, not its direction (Nanus, 1992, p. 31).

Visions are not reality. They are intended realities (Schlechty, 1990, p.89).

A vision statement is an expression of hope... A vision is really a dream created in our waking hours of how we would like the organization to be (Block, 1987, p. 113).

A vision is a picture of the future you seek to create, described in the present tense, as if it were happening now (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1994, p. 302).

...it offers a road map to the future and suggests guidelines to those in a given enterprise – how they are to act and interact to attain what they regard as desirable (Quigley, 1993, p. 3).

Vision refers to a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future (Kotter, 1996, p. 68).

... a general transcendent ideal that represents shared values; it is ideological in nature and has moral overtones (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996, p. 37).

Ylimaki (2006) points out there are at least two “dominant definitions of vision in educational leadership literature” (p.621). One definition is rooted in the “leader’s ability to foresee a compelling future image of an organization” (p. 622). The other conception that emerged from Ylimaki’s research is the idea that “vision means clear and measurable goals that guide organizational members’ efforts throughout a change process” (p. 623).

Many of the definitions for vision developed in the formative years of study were developed as descriptors of leadership traits or qualities. From the trait perspective, the visionary leader is largely responsible for the development and communication of an organizational vision. The leader develops the vision and shares it with members of the organization. This can happen in at least four different ways:

1. Telling: The leader states the vision and the organization follows it;
2. Selling: The leader decides the vision, but persuade members before proceeding;
3. Testing: The leader has an idea or ideas about the vision, but wants to know member reactions before proceeding; and
4. Consulting: The leader seeks input in the form of vision suggestions or other levels of creative input. The leader retains the right to reject any recommendations (Senge et al., 1994).

More recent descriptors focus on the shared development process which Senge et al. referred to as “Co-Creating.” In this process the leader and members of the organization, through a collaborative process, build a shared vision together” (1994, p. 314). While not the most efficient method, DuFour and Eaker (1998) suggest the collaborative effort will more likely inspire changes needed in schools. Lashway advocates involving “teachers at the outset, since they are the ones who must ultimately translate abstract ideas into practical classroom applications, and they can do this better when they are actively involved in developing the vision” (1997b, p. 3).

Conley, Dunlap and Goldman advanced the idea that “writers on the topic and participants in the process respond that they seem to understand more or less intuitively what vision is when they see it” (1992, p. 1). Lashway admitted “the concept of vision has always been somewhat fuzzy around the edges” (1997a, p.

2). It is also Lashway's contention "organizations cannot survive (much less prosper) without a well-focused vision for the future" (p. 2). In describing failed transformation efforts Kotter (1996) proposes one of the main reasons is because of underestimating the power of vision. Vision is necessary to help "direct, align, and inspire actions on the part of large numbers of people" (p. 8).

Many schools don't have visions, but Louis and Miles posit "that few really excellent schools lack them" (1990, p. 219). At the district level the same can be said to be true. Kotter suggests another reason transformation efforts often fail is because the vision is under-communicated by a factor of at least ten and perhaps by factors of 100 or 1000. Even when communicated thoroughly by the superintendent, the "volume is still woefully inadequate" unless repeated by principals and if "highly visible individuals still behave in some ways that are antithetical to the vision" (1996, p. 9).

The consensus in the literature is that vision is a critical component to the success of an organization in the twenty-first century. It is important to remember that vision is one dimension of the complex process of organizational transformation. For superintendents uncertain about the concept, it is important to note that ultimately, "visions are about social justice" (Lashway, 1997a, p. 8) and moral purpose.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the methodology and research design used to implement the study and examine the research questions posed are described. The chapter includes sections on the purpose of the study, a review of the research questions, a description of the research design and criteria for selection of the participants. An explanation of the methods used to collect data and to analyze the data will be provided, as well. The chapter will conclude delineating the trustworthiness of the data, examining the study's limitations and offering a summary.

As described in Chapters One and Two, a common theme in the literature about organizations, leadership and change refers to the development and communication of a vision. The vision must be widely shared. The degree to which the vision is aligned will serve to indicate how well the district can maintain a sustained focus on the vision. The research on transforming schools indicates a clear and compelling vision, widely shared, is critical to making significant changes in the culture of a district.

The data generated through this case study will be gathered by interviews of a superintendent and campus principals and through documents pertaining to the district's vision and observations. The philosophical framework used to

analyze the data will be reflective of the literature, but also guided by the direction of the responses, creating a grounded theory as an explanation of the results.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Despite the persistence of vision as a theme in the literature, there are few studies that examine the depth of vision alignment between the district and the campus level leadership in a successful urban district. A growing trend in the literature is looking to larger scale renewal and it is suggested that pockets of success in a few schools within a district is insufficient (Reeves, 2006; Fullan, 2007). As district level accountability increases, it will be critical for superintendents, as instructional leaders, to understand which renewal strategies may make a difference.

Another purpose for conducting this study is to develop some insight as to the importance given to the development and communication of a vision, at both the district and the campus level. When both levels articulate similar components of the vision as an integral element of the renewal effort, the level of alignment would be higher. A higher level of alignment would be a prerequisite of more focused district and campus activities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In a large, successful, urban Texas school district, are the educational visions of superintendents and principals aligned? This broad query inspired the following research questions which guided the study:

1. What does the superintendent perceive the essential components of the district's vision to be?
2. What do the principals perceive the essential components of the district's vision to be?
3. Are the principal's perceptions of the vision aligned with the perceptions of the superintendent?

RESEARCH DESIGN

METHODOLOGY

The research questions that guided this study are explicitly perception questions, which seek to inform based on the meanings attached to them. The individuals within the organization who provide the data used to address these questions and the researcher who interprets the data are bound by the context of perspective. Other contextual frames contribute to the understandings gleaned from the research process as well. This process offers some objective events which can be defined, but more often suggests subjective experiences.

The way a question is asked is one of three possible reasons for choosing a qualitative method for doing research (Mertens, 2005). Because the study of

experiences are not often directly observable but rely on interpretation to bring them to light suggests a qualitative study as the appropriate methodological type depending on the research questions posed (Hatch, 2002). Qualitative methods were deemed the most appropriate methodology for addressing the research questions presented in this study.

There are several research methodologies, designs or strategies available to the qualitative researcher. “There is no recipe or formula in making methods decisions” (Patton, 2002, p. 12). The best way to make meaning from the research questions posed is from a case study design.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research has been assigned many definitions and descriptions. In education, acceptance of qualitative research is a relatively recent development and has been fluid and dynamic in its development. Having a clear definition of qualitative research may not be critical (Hatch, 2002), but listing the characteristics relevant to this study will help frame the processes involved. Hatch lists ten characteristics of qualitative research prevalent in the literature.

A study of perceptions is about understanding and understanding requires interpretation. As such, it is unsurprising that subjectivity proves to be one characteristic common to many qualitative studies. Qualitative studies can emphasize description, analysis or interpretation. Subjectivity is required in all three, but more is required as the researcher comes closer to interpretation. Jansen and Peshkin contend objectivist researchers study objects, while subjectivist

researchers “study processes, people, or events” (1992, p. 686). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) have argued qualitative researchers are concerned about the impact their subjectivity has on the data produced and work to limit the impact. Hatch (2002) adds the idea that researchers do not pretend to be objective, but understand their impact on the data.

Centrality of meaning is also a hallmark of qualitative research. Much of what is currently called qualitative research stems from the theory of symbolic interactionism. This tool for understanding human dynamics basically suggests humans act the way they do because of meanings generated by perceptions communicated through a language. These meanings affect the language which determines how individuals deal with the things they encounter. Not all qualitative research uses symbolic interactionism as its framework, but all qualitative research is about understanding meanings humans make about their world that enable them to participate in their lives (Bogdan & Biklen 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Hatch, 2002).

Another feature of qualitative research is found in the holistic and complex nature of the questions being studied. Discreet variables are not a goal because they are inseparable in their meaning from the whole. The researcher wants to understand the integrated components of whatever process, system or people are being studied (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Hatch, 2002).

Data is interpreted inductively by the qualitative researcher. The researcher organizes, compares, and “bestows patterns upon them” (Miles &

Huberman, 1994, p. 7). The inductive analysis moves the researcher's interpretations from specifics to generalizations (Hatch, 2002). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest the metaphor of putting a puzzle together. The qualitative researcher's puzzle has no box and only takes shape, with the image gaining clarity, as the researcher puts the pieces together. Theory developed this way is called grounded theory, and it develops from the bottom up. Generalizations emerge from the analysis of data as opposed to being the foundation for the research and in evidence before the data collection (Mertens, 2005). The research conducted for this study reflects the characteristics described above. It does not necessarily reflect all the potential characteristics ascribed to qualitative research, nor should it (Bogdan & Biklen 1992; Mertens, 2005; Hatch, 2002).

PARADIGM

This study has been conducted from a constructivist perspective. A research paradigm is determined by the world view of the researcher (Mertens, 2005). Answers to questions about how the world is ordered, what we may learn about it and how we can know it reveal different belief systems at play. These questions define our ontological (how the world is ordered) and epistemological (what we may learn about it) perspectives. These answers become the driving force behind the research paradigm chosen and with it the methodology for understanding how knowledge is gained (Hatch 2002). Lincoln and Guba (2000) report that over the course of the past decade paradigms have begun to interbreed. While there are features of many paradigms that overlap with this researcher's

natural world view, the most compatible paradigmatic approach to research is reflected in the constructivist perspective. Lincoln and Guba suggest qualitative methods are generally reflective of this perspective.

Mertens (2005) argued the ontological assumption of constructivism is that reality is not absolute, but that multiple realities exist and they depend upon temporal and contextual frameworks. Because knowledge is constructed from the shared meanings of the studied and the studier, the epistemology of a constructivist is not objective. Because of the method of knowledge acquisition, it is “undesirable for researchers to be distant and objective” (Hatch, 2002, p. 15). Because the study requires interaction of the researcher and the participant to construct meanings of vision in the participant’s context, this particular study fits, primarily, within the constructivist paradigm.

STRATEGY TYPE

Qualitative research is probably the most common method utilized by researchers in the social sciences. As the field has matured, numerous types of qualitative designs or research strategies have developed. Mertens (2005) indicated there are at least 26 different types of qualitative research, but had a commonality in six strategies with two other books about qualitative research, one by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and the other by Patton (2002). The six common strategies include:

1. Ethnographic research
2. Case Study

3. Phenomenological research
4. Grounded theory
5. Participatory research
6. Clinical research

Choices of methodology depend on the context and the purpose of the research being conducted. In education the most common form of qualitative research is probably an effort to “discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (Merriam, 1998, p. 11).

Knowledge produced from within the constructivist paradigm quite often takes the form of a case study. Case study is among the research strategies most commonly found in educational research (Merriam, 1998). Some describe the case study as a form of ethnographic research, as those using this design are interested in “interpretation rather than hypothesis testing” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29).

Mertens (2005) points to a debate that attempts to distinguish whether a case study is a method or a design strategy, the common thread being whether a particular case is viewed to develop an understanding within the scope of a complex context. The accounts presented in the case study include enough contextual detail and the voices of the participants are loud enough, that the reader can place themselves in the role of the participants and judge the quality of the findings (Hatch, 2002). Merriam (1998) asserted that case study can be

differentiated by the characteristics of being particularistic, descriptive and heuristic.

Being particularistic suggests a study focus on a particular phenomenon, situation, or event. The case has value for what it can reveal about said phenomenon. The specificity of case makes it a good design for questions arising from practice. Descriptive refers to the product of research as being thick and rich which means a complete, literal description of the incident or entity that is the subject of investigation. Heuristic means the case study offers insight into the phenomenon being studied. Case study can offer the reader new meaning, extend meaning or confirm what is already known (Merriam, 1998). “The case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing” (Stake, 1995, p. 2).

Another characteristic of case study develops from its intent. Merriam (1998) offers three categories of intent: descriptive, interpretive and evaluative. Descriptive case studies detail accounts of the phenomenon under study. Evaluative case studies effort to explain and judge, while interpretive studies attempt to understand and explain.

This particular study is rooted in the interpretive case study. “The level of abstraction and conceptualization in interpretive case studies may range from suggesting relationships among variables to constructing theory” (Merriam, 1998, p. 39). If there is a lack of theory or inadequate explanation of phenomenon, the researcher gathers data to analyze, interpret or theorize about the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Interpretive case study uses the thick description to generate

“conceptual categories” (p. 38) to “illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions” (p. 38). The current study is focused on interpreting the concepts and themes found in the literature on vision and the vision’s alignment in a particular setting. This type of study either illustrates and supports or challenges the ideas suggested in the literature.

SETTING AND PARTICIPANT SAMPLING

The selection of the setting and the participants can have a significant impact on the results of research findings. The purpose of the study is to answer the previously posed research questions using data developed at a location and from individuals and data at that location. The importance of the selection process and the impact on results are emphasized in the literature on qualitative research. Qualitative researchers must think purposively and conceptually about sampling (Miles and Huberman, 1998).

There are two basic types of sampling, probability and nonprobability (Merriam, 1998). Random sampling is the most familiar example of probability sampling, and allows the investigator to generalize results of the study. The goal of qualitative research is not “generalizability but understanding conditions under which a finding appears and operates: how, where, when, and why it carries on as it does” (Miles and Huberman, 1998, p. 204).

Nonprobabilistic sampling methods are most appropriate for qualitative research. The most common form of these sampling methods is called purposive

or purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998). In purposeful sampling the investigator wants to “discover, understand and gain insight selected from that which most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).

SITE SELECTION

Purposeful sampling was employed in the selection of site for this research is a purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998). Finding the best case to study suggests the researcher should first select the criteria and “then select the case that meets those criteria” (p. 65). The setting selected for the study is a large, successful, urban Texas school district. The purpose of selecting a large district is reflective of research findings, as Williams (2007) found the larger the district, the more likely the district’s student demographics would be reflective of the overall statewide demographics. The State demographics for TAKS tested students included: thirteen percent African American students, 43 percent Hispanic students 40 percent White students, and 51.5 percent Economically Disadvantaged students.

Because the review of the research suggested that vision plays a critical role in organizational success, a district meeting a standard of student achievement would make data collected more likely to add to the understanding sought through the research. “In 1993, the Texas Legislature enacted statutes that mandated the creation of the Texas public school accountability system to rate school districts and evaluate campuses” (Texas Education Agency, 2006, p. 7). Because the state already had much of the needed infrastructure in place, Texas

was able to develop a viable and effective accountability system in a relatively short amount of time. Necessary components already in place included: a pre-existing student-level data collection system, a state-mandated curriculum, and a statewide assessment tied to the curriculum. The system, initiated with the original legislative session, remained in place through the 2001-2002 school year, but the ratings issued that year were the last under the system.

Beginning the following year, 2003, a new assessment, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), was administered for the first time. The TAKS includes more subjects and grades, and boasts a higher difficulty than its predecessor. With such significant changes, the accountability system needed to be substantially altered. Results from the 2003 TAKS were analyzed and the development of the new accountability system began. The first ratings using the redesigned system were issued in the fall of 2004.

The standards developed went through a three year phase-in period. The ratings issued in 2006 marked the third year of the new system and the first time the acceptable passing rate was at the full standard recommended by a panel of educators and other stakeholders. To determine ratings under the standard accountability procedures, the accountability rating system for Texas districts used four base indicators:

- spring 2006 performance on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS),

- spring 2006 performance on the State-Developed Alternative Assessment II (SDAA II),
- the Completion Rate I for the class of 2005, and
- the 2004-05 Annual Dropout Rate for grades 7 and 8

(Texas Education Agency, 2006).

Utilizing these data sources, individual campuses and school districts are currently rated as either: 1) Academically Unacceptable, 2) Academically Acceptable, 3) Recognized, or the highest rating, 4) Exemplary. These ratings are based on cumulative campus or district passing percentages (Texas Education Agency, 2006).

Reading was tested in grades 3-9, writing in grades 4 and 7, English Language Arts (ELA) (a combination of reading and writing) in grades 10 and 11, social studies in 8, 10, and 11, mathematics in 3-11, and science in grades 5, 10 and 11. Districts were also held accountable for the results of students receiving modified testing through a qualification for special education services. For non-special education students, a single test score could be applied as many as three times per academic category. For example, an Economically Disadvantaged student's Reading score would be counted in all students tested category, in the appropriate ethnic category, and the Economically Disadvantaged category.

In 2006, for a district to be rated Recognized, the passing rate in all academic areas of Reading and English Language Arts (ELA), Writing, Social Studies, Mathematic and Science and all ethnic student subgroups, consisting of

African American, Hispanic, White and students classified as Economically Disadvantaged, had to have a group passing rate of 70 percent or better. Special Education students not assessed by TAKS, but by the State Developed Alternative Assessment, SDAA II, needed to have 70 percent or better of students meeting expectations as set by their Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee. To be rated Recognized, districts must also have had a dropout rate less than seven-tenths of one percent for students in grades 7 and 8 during the 2004-2005 school year and a completion rate of at least 85 percent for the senior class cohort of 2005 (Texas Education Agency, 2006).

Of the 1136 districts assigned ratings by the Texas education Agency in 2006, thirteen districts were classified as Exemplary and 313 were categorized as Recognized. The remaining districts were classified as either Academically Acceptable (677 districts) or Unacceptable (26 districts). This information was given to the districts as a part of their Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report. The districts then presented the information to the school board and their communities as part of an annual report.

Though thirteen districts achieved Exemplary status, it was determined those districts failed to meet the criterion of matching state demographics. With less than one-third of the state's districts achieving Recognized status in 2006 (see Table 1), it was determined that the achievement of Recognized status would provide a qualifying criteria for a "successful" district.

Table 1 – District Ratings by Category

State of Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) – District Ratings by Category (excluding Charter Operators)

ACCOUNTABILITY RATING	2006	
	Count	Percent
Exemplary	13	1.3%
Recognized	313	30.3%
Academically Acceptable	677	65.5%
Academically Unacceptable	26	2.5%
Not Rated: Other	4	0.4%
Total	1,033	100.0%

(Texas Education Agency, 2006).

An examination of the 326 districts achieving a rating of Recognized or higher by Williams (2007) indicated fifteen had student enrollments of more than 10,000. Of the fifteen, eight districts had an enrollment of greater than 25,000 students. In an effort to gain as much insight as possible, the alignment between the demographics of the state and the district was viewed as a critical component in the selection of the participant. Demographic information was analyzed for those ethnic subpopulations that represented more than ten percent of the state's student population base (see Table 2). These included: African American, Hispanic and White. Economically Disadvantaged students as a subpopulation were also included in the demographic analysis.

Table 2 - Statewide Demographic Data

State of Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) – Statewide Data

Enrollment	African American	Percent	Hispanic	Percent	White	Percent	Economically Disadvantaged	Percent
4,505,572	664,242	14.7	2,040,449	45.3	1,644,308	36.5	2,503,755	55.6

(Texas Education Agency, 2006a)

Table 3 - TEA Recognized Districts – Over 25,000

Texas School Districts with Student Enrollment over 25,000: Receiving a Rating of Recognized in 2006

District *	Enrollment	African American	Percent	Hispanic	Percent	White	Percent	Economically Disadvantaged	Percent
District A	26,153	3828	14.6	12,011	45.9	7307	27.9	13,376	51.1
District B	35,143	3279	9.3	6,137	17.5	22,174	63.1	6526	18.6
District C	47,808	4376	9.2	12,306	25.7	27,145	56.8	11,200	23.4
District D	59,566	5851	9.8	26,222	44.0	25,264	42.4	22,846	38.4
District E	78,154	6270	8.0	47,795	61.2	21,560	27.6	38,664	49.5
District F	53,007	5679	10.7	7913	14.9	30,101	56.8	10,869	20.5
District G	35,008	9569	27.3	10,154	29.0	12,414	35.5	17,440	49.8

(Texas Education Agency, 2006b)

Table 4 - TEA Recognized Districts - Between 10,000 and 24,999

*Texas School Districts with Student Enrollment between 10,000 and 24,999:
Receiving a Rating of Recognized in 2006*

District **	Enrollment	African American	Percent	Hispanic	Percent	White	Percent	Economically Disadvantaged	Percent
District H	15,885	1569	9.9	1809	11.4	11,183	70.4	1995	12.6
District I	10,229	516	5.0	967	9.5	6869	67.2	690	6.7
District J	12,276	271	2.2	4610	37.6	7102	57.9	4186	34.1
District K	19,765	2037	10.3	2670	13.5	13,158	66.6	2253	11.4
District L	19,534	2136	10.9	4208	21.5	12,577	64.4	4610	23.6
District M	15,462	2499	16.2	3528	22.8	8032	51.9	3291	21.3
District N	11,519	758	6.6	1844	16.0	8589	74.6	2009	17.4
District O	15,632	24	0.2	15,241	97.5	319	2.0	13,636	87.2

(Texas Education Agency, 2006b) (Williams, 2007, p. 58)

To gain the greatest insight from the research questions posed, participant selections consisted of three components: 1) being a Recognized district in the state of Texas for the 2005-2006 school year as measured by the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System, 2) having an enrollment over 10,000 students, and 3) having a student population that closely reflects the student population percentage of the state of Texas.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Selection of the participants for this study meets the standard of being purposeful and nonrandom. Merriam (1998) has suggested that several types of purposeful sampling exist. Miles and Huberman (1994) have also pointed out

there are many types of sampling strategies appropriate for qualitative inquiry, but the typologies used sometimes offer a strong overlap, while others may be unique. This study used a mixed or combination type strategy for determining the participants. One typology used is referred to as a criterion type. Using a criterion based selection, the researcher created a list of the essential attributes required for the case. The researcher then located a unit matching the list. In this case, the superintendent participant needed to fit the following criteria:

1. The appropriate sample must have been the superintendent or an assistant superintendent in the district under study for a minimum of three years.
2. The appropriate sample must come from a large urban district with more than 10,000 students, of which at least twenty percent are identified as economically disadvantaged.
3. The appropriate sample must come from a district that demonstrated success in improving test scores during their tenure.
4. The appropriate sample must come from a district that demonstrated success in closing the achievement gap between Economically Disadvantaged students and their non-economically disadvantaged counterparts within the district.
5. The appropriate sample must be willing to participate in the study.

Principals were determined to be the second group sampled for the study.

Most of the districts fitting the criteria have several elementary campuses feeding

their student bodies to a middle school or junior high school, just as most high schools receive their students from multiple middle or junior high school campuses. A part of the purposeful sampling for this study developed from the need to maintain a balance of perspectives in the principals chosen to participate based on the level of their campus. There were three selected from the elementary level and two from the secondary level, one each from the middle school and the high school. Besides these requirements, principal candidates needed to fit the additional criteria listed:

1. The appropriate sample must have been a campus principal in the district under study for a minimum of three years.
2. The appropriate sample must come from a campus that demonstrated success in improving test scores during their tenure.
3. The appropriate sample must come from a campus that demonstrated success in closing the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students and their non-economically disadvantaged counterparts within the district.
4. The appropriate sample must be willing to participate in the study.

Principal candidates who met the criteria suggested above were entered into a random pool for selection. This helped fit what Mertens (2005) described as purposeful random sampling. The result is not a statistically random sample, but one random enough to not be selected under different criteria other than those selected as requirements. The other category of sampling types applicable to this

study is convenience sampling as the research conducted was limited to the state of Texas for reasons of cost.

DATA COLLECTION

Heck (2006) lists seven methods for collecting data in a case study and suggests inclusion of several data sources to corroborate and triangulate. The methods of data collection offered include:

1. Interviews
2. Focus Groups
3. Documents
4. Archival Records
5. Artifacts
6. Direct Observation
7. Participant Observation

Merriam (1998) has simplified the list, suggesting data is collected for qualitative research in one of three ways. The data can be obtained through interview, observation or gleaned from documents. This condenses Heck's first two methods into interview, the second three into document mining, and the last two into the observation category.

This study will focus primarily on the interview, though pieces of information found in the settings of district buildings or observed during the course of the interview may support or challenge data collected during the

interview process. Documents discovered incidentally will also be examined to help understand and clarify the research effort.

“Interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings” (Fontana & Frey, 1998, p. 47). The interview is used to collect descriptive data from the subject’s point of view in their own words (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The most common type of interview, and the one employed in this study, is individual face-to-face verbal interchange (Fontana & Frey, 1998). There are three basic types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Merriam, 1998; Fontana & Frey, 1998; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Hatch labeled the descriptors differently: informal, formal and standardized (2002, p. 92). These are not separate and discreet categories but descriptors of points on a continuum. The highly structured or standardized interview rigidly adheres to predetermined questions that minimize the ability of the researcher to access the true perspectives of the respondents. On the other end of the continuum, informal or unstructured interviews are more like unstructured conversations, which should mean they would make for poor primary sources of data in a study (Hatch, 2002).

Bogdan and Biklen have claimed, “Good interviews are ones that produce rich data filled with words that reveal the respondent’s perspectives” (1992, p. 136). A combination that incorporates all three interview styles is recommended (Merriam, 1998). Some standardized information is obtained, some of the same

open-ended questions are asked of all participants, and some time is spent in unstructured conversation so new insights can emerge.

Many subjects may feel self-conscious at first (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992), and due to the abstract nature of vision, it was deemed important for the interviews to begin with a few standardized questions. To generate rich data, the standardized questions will transition into a series of open-ended questions. Merriam (1998) suggests it takes a skilled researcher to be able to deal with the flexibility of an unstructured interview, so deviance from the planned questions was limited to situations generated more by the subject than the researcher.

DATA ANALYSIS

“In the social sciences there is only interpretation” (Denzin, 1998, p. 313). Merriam (1998) concurs; “Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data” (p. 178). Qualitative case study amasses significant amounts of raw data, making it necessary to maintain the data in an organized and focused manner (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994, 1998; Merriam, 1998). It may be even more important to heed the advice of Merriam (1998) and to understand, “the right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it *simultaneously* (italics in original) with data collection” (Merriam, 1998, p. 162). Miles and Huberman (1994) agree, arguing the rationale that the field-worker should begin early analysis for several reasons including: shifting from researcher to analyst gives perspectives and allows for generating new and better data, and

that it prevents the analysis from becoming overwhelming and demotivating.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest data analysis falls into two categories: analysis in the field and analysis after data collection. Suggestions for analyzing the data as it is collected include:

1. Force yourself to make decisions that narrow the study.
2. Force yourself to make decisions concerning the type of study you want to accomplish.
3. Develop analytic questions.
4. Plan data collection sessions in light of what you find in previous observation.
5. Write many “observer’s comments” about ideas you generate.
6. Write memos to yourself about what you are learning.
7. Try out ideas and themes on subjects.
8. Begin exploring literature while you are in the field.
9. Play with metaphors. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp. 146-156)

After the data is collected, the second phase of analysis begins. “Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning” (Hatch, 2002, p. 148). Miles and Huberman (1994) provide a suggested sequence of activities for qualitative data analysis. The sequence is offered in the following six steps:

1. Give codes to the first set of field notes drawn from observations, interviews or document reviews.
2. Note personal reflections or other comments in the margins.

3. Sort and sift through the materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, distinct differences between subgroups, and common sequences.
4. Identify these patterns and processes, commonalities, and differences and take them out to the field in the next wave of data collection.
5. Begin elaborating a small set of generalizations that cover the consistencies discerned in the database.
6. Examine those generalizations in light of a formalized body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories.

This inductive process allows for categories to emerge from the data.

“Coding is analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). The process is about having a conversation with the data, asking questions of data or making comments to the data (Merriam, 1998; Hatch, 2002). Following this sequence, an initial interview with the superintendent will generate categories for application to subsequent interviews with principals.

Merriam (1998) suggests category construction is data analysis. Hatch (2002) offers a sequence of typological strategies to use when predetermined categories are available. Typological analysis is an appropriate strategy when the typologies are fairly obvious. To analyze alignment of vision, the categories should emerge from the initial interview with the superintendent. The steps in a typological analysis are:

1. Identify typologies to be analyzed.
2. Read the data, marking entries related to the typologies.
3. Read entries by typology, recording the main ideas in entries on a summary sheet.
4. Look for patterns, relationships, themes within the typologies.
5. Read data, coding entries according to patterns identified and keeping a record of what entries go with which elements of your patterns.
6. Decide if the patterns are supported by the data, and search the data for nonexamples of the patterns.
7. Look for relationships among the patterns identified.
8. Write the patterns as one-sentence generalizations.
9. Select data excerpts that support the generalizations (Hatch, 2002, p. 153).

At this level of data analysis, the researcher examined the data to identify any themes and patterns related to the categories that emerged following the superintendent interview. Differences of interpretation were considered and addressed to ensure a reliable and trustworthy interpretation of the findings (Merriam, 1998).

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness consists of four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These are the qualitative equivalents of internal

and external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 300).

While these parallels exist, the criteria for rigor in qualitative research differ from those in quantitative research (Thomas, 2006).

CREDIBILITY

Credibility in research is established when the subjects of the research agree the reality described by the findings resonates as accurate. Credibility is the strength of qualitative work (Cresswell, 2003). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest credibility is qualitative research.

There are many strategies to help the researcher provide the credibility demanded of qualitative research (Mertens, 2005; Cresswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman offer six, Mertens seven and Cresswell eight. The researcher relies on using as many strategies as possible because, “it is incumbent on a qualitative researcher to demonstrate through the use of multiple strategies that their research is credible” (Mertens, 2005, p. 254). Of the eight strategies available, the ones determined to be most appropriate for this study are: prolonged and substantial engagement, peer debriefing, member checks, and triangulation. The selected criteria for credibility are described below:

1. Triangulation is the method of checking information such as interviews, observations, and document reviews (Mertens, 2005; Cresswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994).
2. Prolonged and Substantial Engagement will be determined when the researcher determines themes and examples are repeating

themselves and new or relevant information to the research has stopped (Mertens, 2005; Cresswell, 2003).

3. Peer Debriefing is the practice of discussing the researcher's findings with a disinterested peer who will probe and question the researcher for clarity in the research (Mertens, 2005; Cresswell, 2003).
4. Member Checks are considered the most important criterion in establishing credibility and are accomplished by the researcher summarizing the interview and asking if the summary accurately reflects the interviewee's position. Another method of member checks is to present to the interviewee a draft of the research report and request comments for clarification (Mertens, 2005; Cresswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994).
5. Producing context-rich, thick description that is sensible, convincing and plausible (Cresswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Using these techniques and strategies will assist the researcher in providing a study less affected by bias, providing credibility to the study.

TRANSFERABILITY

Thomas (2006) has argued that only "the reader determines the transferability of a case study" (p. 414). The only way to establish transferability is to create a thick description of the "time, place, context, and culture" (Mertens,

2005, p. 256) “so that someone in a potential receiving context may assess the similarity” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 126). This study contains the “thick description” necessary for the reader to assess transferability.

DEPENDABILITY

Dependability parallels reliability in quantitative research. Because the qualitative studies make no claim to be replicable, the standard shifts to one of disclosure. Miles and Huberman (1994) have defined dependability as “whether the process of study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods” (p. 278). Dependability is achieved by tracking the record of change during the study period and making that record public (Mertens, 2005). Thomas (2006) suggested that including the potential impact of changes as a part of the triangulation process adds dependability to the study.

CONFIRMABILITY

Confirmability means that someone other than the researcher can confirm the data (Thomas, 2006). Mertens (2005) contended it means “data and their interpretation are not figments of the researcher’s imagination” (p. 257). Miles and Huberman (1994) have described confirmability as, “relative neutrality and reasonable freedom from unacknowledged researcher biases - at the minimum, explicitness about the inevitable biases that exist” (p. 278).

To establish confirmability, it is important to establish an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The available audit trail for

this study includes raw data in the form of original recordings of interviews, documents and interview notes. It also includes analysis forms and data reconstruction tools and the products generated from the forms and tools (Thomas, 2006).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study's primary limitations are typical of qualitative research and case studies. Because the scope of the study is limited, the results will not be generalizable to other leaders or other districts. The results only apply to one superintendent and one district. Additional limitations of scope include the contextual elements of time and location. The study was conducted over several months, not years, and the study was limited to one large, successful urban Texas school district. Each descriptor of the selected participant district is an additional limitation assigned to the study. A smaller district may have provided entirely different data, as would an unsuccessful district, a suburban district, or a district in another state.

Researcher bias may also be a factor in the analysis and interpretation of the data in this case. Efforts have been made to limit the bias, however, the ideas that generated the research questions were based on personal biases and beliefs which existed long before the study was conceived or designed. My experiences as a professional educator and aspiring superintendent have informed worldviews inseparable from the focus of the research. Therefore, it is incumbent, as the

researcher, to use methods of trustworthiness previously described to minimize the impact of these biases.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The methodology used in this study of vision and its alignment from the superintendent through the campus principals were described and the purpose of the study and a review of the research questions were presented. The choices made regarding the research design most appropriate to the research questions were discussed and a qualitative case study was chosen as the most appropriate mode of research. Setting and participant sampling strategies were delineated and it was determined the appropriate sample would be the superintendent of a large Texas district with a minimum of twenty percent of the students being eligible for free and reduced lunches. The district should also have achieved Recognized status as measured by the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS).

Data collection procedures were described, as was the process for analysis of the data collected. Methods were presented which would help assure the trustworthiness of the results. Finally, limitations of the study were furnished.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Over the past thirty years much of the literature on effective organizations has suggested that a shared vision plays an important role in achieving success. This study proposed to examine the vision of a district as perceived by its superintendent and to gauge the alignment of that perception at the campus level. By examining the perceptions of principals from some of the district's successful campuses, this study sought to develop a deeper understanding of the role vision might play in a district's success. Vision was explored from the perspective of its development, communication and the depth of its alignment. The ultimate aim of the research is to add to the body of knowledge about the role vision plays in a successful school district.

A large district was selected specifically because it was less likely the superintendent would have a direct impact due to the several layers of administrative bureaucracy between the superintendent and the campus principals. Per dictates of the literature, it was determined that studying a high-achieving district would best reflect the assumptions concerning vision as a vital element of success. To help ensure student demographics were not the primary contributor to student success, it was decided selected campuses would have a larger population of those students for whom it has been historically most difficult to achieve academic success. Those students of low socio-economic status and of ethnic

minority status were in evidence at greater than district averages for the targeted campuses. Overall achievement at the selected campuses was equal to or above district averages and all elementary and middle school campuses had achieved Recognized status as determined by the state.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Academic student success served as the dependent variable of this study while perceptions of vision and their alignment served as independent variables in analyzing the success. Three research questions were used to frame the focus and the form of this study. They include:

1. What does the superintendent perceive the essential components of the district's vision to be?
2. What do the principals perceive the essential components of the district's vision to be?
3. Are the principal's perceptions of the vision aligned with the perceptions of the superintendent?

The three questions were designed to be broad enough to allow themes to emerge from the data collected in the district. The literature revealed a broad spectrum of definitions and features of vision, so if the research questions were too narrow in focus they might have limited the findings. Using the questions as the framework widened the scope of data retrieved and analyzed during the course of study.

THE DISTRICT

The selection of a district that might offer the greatest insights into superintendent and principal vision alignment was determined to be a one that reflected the state's demographics. To gain the greatest insight from the research questions posed, it was determined the participant district needed three features, 1) being a Recognized district in the state of Texas for the 2005-2006 school year as measured by the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System, 2) having an enrollment over 10,000 students, and 3) having a student population that closely reflected the student demographic population percentages of the state of Texas.

Compass ISD met all three standards. The district was identified as being Recognized by the Texas Education Agency as measured on their AEIS report. With 78,154 students in 2006, Compass also had an enrollment that exceeded the sample size greater than 10,000 students. Historically underachieving subpopulations include the ethnic minorities African American, Hispanic and those students identified as Economically Disadvantaged. Reeves has suggested, "many people assume there is an inextricable relationship between poverty, ethnicity and academic achievement" (2000, p. 186). For this reason, it was determined the district's demographic data should be within ten percentage points of the state's averages. Compass met this expectation, with the only variance being the district's Hispanic population which exceeded the state's average by nearly sixteen percentage points (Table 5). The alignment of these demographics

between the district and the state argues strongly for adopting a Recognized district as one meeting the measure of success.

Table 5 – Statewide Demographic Data Compared to Compass ISD

State of Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) – Statewide Data compared to Compass ISD Data

x 1000	Enrollment	African American	Percent	Hispanic	Percent	White	Percent	Economically Disadvantaged	Percent
State	4,505	664	14.7	2,040	45.3	1,644	36.5	2,503	55.6
CISD	78	6	8.0	47	61.2	21	27.6	38	49.5

(Texas Education Agency, 2006a)

Additional data was also examined to determine how each of the major subpopulations included in the AEIS data analysis compared. An examination of the data supports the suggestion that Compass ISD could be identified as a “successful district.” Data confirms that for all subpopulations in all subject areas of TAKS data included in the AEIS report Compass ISD students outperformed their peers in state averages (Table 6) with differences in scores ranging from one percentage point to seventeen percentage points more. Statewide, 94 % of White students met standards on the TAKS, while 95% of the White students in Compass met the standard on the Reading/ELA test. Statewide, an average of 54% of African American students met the passing standard in Science. In Compass 71% of African Americans met the standard on the state’s science test.

For the 2006-2007 school year, the percent of passing students required to be identified as Recognized was raised and Compass ISD along with many others failed to maintain their status. For Compass, science scores from the Economically Disadvantaged failed to meet the new standard blocking the district from achieving the Recognized status for the 2006-2007 school year.

Table 6- Statewide Passing Rates Compared to Compass ISD

State of Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) – Statewide Data compared to Compass ISD Data

	African American	Hispanic	Economically Disadvantaged	White		African American	Hispanic	Economically Disadvantaged	White
State/ELA	82	82	81	94	State/Math	61	68	66	86
CISD/ELA	90	89	87	95	CISD/Math	74	76	74	87
State/Science	54	59	58	85	State/SS	81	80	79	94
CISD/Science	71	73	70	90	CISD/SS	89	88	85	96
State/Writing	89	89	88	95	State/All	52	58	56	81
CISD/Writing	95	93	92	96	CISD/All	67	68	65	83

(Texas Education Agency, 2006a)

THE CAMPUSES

At the time of the study, Compass ISD had 97 schools, was growing by approximately 4,000 students annually and the District opened approximately

three new schools annually. Eleven of these schools were special schools and were not considered for this study. The district had 59 elementary schools, fifteen middle schools and twelve high schools. Purposeful sampling determined three principals were to be selected from the elementary level and two from the secondary level; one each from the middle school and high school levels. Besides these requirements, principal candidates needed to fit the additional criteria listed:

1. The appropriate sample must have been a campus principal in the district under study for a minimum of three years.
2. The appropriate sample must come from a campus that demonstrated success in improving test scores during their tenure.
3. The appropriate sample must come from a campus that demonstrated success in closing the achievement gap between Economically Disadvantaged students and their non-Economically Disadvantaged counterparts within the district.
4. The appropriate sample must be willing to participate in the study.

Principal candidates who met the criteria suggested above were entered into a random pool for selection, generated by comparing campus demographic information with district level demographic data. It was decided that the combined percentages of ethnic minority students needed to exceed the district averages from the same categories. The percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students also needed to exceed the district average (Table 7).

Table 7 - Compass ISD Demographic Data Compared to Campus Data

State of Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) – District Level Demographic Data compared to Campus Data

	Enrollment	African American	Percent	Hispanic	Percent	White	Percent	Economically Disadvantaged	Percent
Compass	78,154	6,270	8.0	47,795	61.2	21,560	27.6	38,664	49.5
Ash LL	708	27	3.8	635	89.7	38	5.4	641	90.5
Logan RG	1,027	162	15.8	762	74.2	92	9.0	780	74.2
Reed BR	700	44	6.3	587	83.9	64	9.1	619	88.4
Slater EF	1,144	42	3.7	1,027	89.8	71	6.2	1,022	89.3
West GB	2,012	148	7.4	1,667	82.9	168	8.3	1,339	66.6

(Texas Education Agency, 2006a)

Each selected campus had demonstrated significant growth over the previous three years with the same principal throughout. For further confirmation of campus level success, it was decided to focus on Recognized campuses when possible. All campuses met the criteria except for the high school, as Compass ISD had no high schools meet the Recognized standard.

THE SUPERINTENDENT

James Peoples, the superintendent of Compass ISD, has been in education, in some form, his entire life. “My whole family was educators, Mom and Dad

were teachers, so I grew up around schools, and all I ever knew was schools. I mean, you know, that was our life, but when I went to college, I thought that's what everybody did, I thought they became a teacher" (JP). Raised in a neighboring state, his father later became a superintendent offering an early administrative view to the superintendent of Compass. "I am the one, that back then, with no more communication than we had, I was the one that would telephone and say, 'Yes, we are going to have school,' or 'No, we're not going to have school,' when an ice storm hit" (JP).

Peoples has also served as a state superintendent in a bordering state. He taught for one year in Texas and three more in his home state before taking a summer job at the state education agency. He ended up staying and, after four or five years, by the time he was twenty-nine years old, "the person who's the state superintendent brought me down and said, I want you to work with me, and want you to work with the state legislature, things like that" (JP). Peoples credits "a lot of my background brings that political side and political perspective to the job" (JP). When the elected superintendent left office in the middle of his term, the governor appointed Peoples as the state superintendent of public instruction to complete the term. At the end of that term, Peoples ran for the office and won.

I actually threw my name in the hat and ran for the office and was elected on a statewide vote. I was on the ticket with the governor, lieutenant governor, all that. A great experience and a lot of people said, "Why didn't you stay in politics? Why didn't you continue to do it?" And the

reason was, really two reasons: one I've always looked at myself as an educator and, you know, what I came to realize more and more in that position, and I got tired of it, was let's look at what was done right for kids, but the politics of it is in either a Democrat or Republican idea and what you had to deal with in that. And then the other reason was my kids were growing, really up in the middle school and high school at that time and I guess my older son was in junior high, I think eighth grade, it was eight to ninth grade, and I think I saw him play one ballgame. I said I'm not going to do this. And so that's when I went into the superintendency and so my background is quite a bit different than what most people have, you know that matriculate into the superintendency, but it was a good background (JP).

His first superintendency followed in the same neighboring state. He stayed in that role for six years. After both sons had graduated from high school, Peoples accepted a job as dean of education at a small state university. He'd never worked in higher education, but found the challenges offered at the university level appealing. "I helped them get ready for a successful accreditation visit from the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), and I got to establish some administrator prep programs and did some revisions for teacher education programs" (JP).

A search firm made contact and Peoples returned to the superintendency at a Texas school district of about 25,000 students. He spent six years in that district

before taking the helm at Compass. At the time of the interview, he was completing his sixth year with Compass and his twenty-first year as a superintendent. He believes the role of the superintendent has changed considerably over the years. He suggests, “When I first went into the superintendency, I think you were focused on schools, you were focused on education, you still had a lot issues sometimes to deal with parents and funding, and those kinds of issues, but it wasn't the number of global issues that a superintendent has to deal with today.” The role has also taken on a “PR perspective” where “you have to sell your bond issues. You have to sell things to the public. So to me the superintendency has become a much more visible, selling kind of position for the district, than what it was when I started” (JP).

The shift to the more global view is generated from government at both the state and federal levels. Peoples states:

Some of the transition is, has to do with the intrusion, I think, of the state and federal government more and more in the local education policy.

Because, used to, you had your school laws. Which, school laws basically dealt with contracts, purchasing, and those kind of issues, but now it's just such a multiplicity of things that a superintendent has to deal with. So, you know, it's changed dramatically (JP).

Because of the impact of governmental decisions on local districts, Peoples felt it was important for a superintendent to help monitor and influence the state legislature. In addition to his role as superintendent, Peoples was also serving as

president of the Texas School Alliance (TSA), a consortium of 30 larger Texas districts. The group looks “at how legislative issues -- [such as] testing, accountability and curriculum -- affect our large districts, and we want to have a voice in legislative issues at the state and national levels.” Peoples has stated, “We're a well-respected organization, and even though we're composed of larger schools, we look at what's good for all schools” (Quoted in Spence, 2006). He also serves on several other boards, executive committees, and legislative advisory committees.

Peoples performs these duties within the context of a somewhat balanced life. He is reported to ride his bicycle regularly and even plays golf occasionally. He teaches Sunday School each week and, with his wife of nearly forty years, enjoys visiting his sons and grandchildren in his home state.

THE PRINCIPALS

Five principals were interviewed for this study, three Hispanic and two white. Two of the principals were male and three were female with ages ranging from the late thirties to the late fifties. All but one were in their late thirties to middle forties. Experience in education ranged from seventeen to thirty-five years, with four of the five ranging from seventeen to twenty-three years. All principals interviewed had spent the vast majority of their careers in Compass.

THE PRINCIPAL OF ASH ELEMENTARY

The principal of Ash Elementary was a Hispanic female in her middle forties who has been at Ash for the past three years. She began her career in education as an elementary music teacher in Compass and subsequently spent six years as a vice-principal at two different campuses before being promoted to principal. She served as principal at a prior campus for four years before being asked to help Ash achieve at expected levels (AE). According to Dr. Peoples, the previous principal at Ash had been returned to a classroom position after failing to meet district expectations.

The principal at Ash described the principalship as a job for which there was little preparation. “I don't think anything prepares you for that job, until you're in it” (AE). As vice principal she felt she had been fortunate to work under a principal who involved her in several things normally done by the principal. “So I knew a lot about creating a school improvement plan, I knew about interviewing teachers, all those things that normally you would do. The hard part was trying to get a hold of what was really happening in the school. That was the part you had to learn” (AE).

Hardest to learn about the principal's role were the multitude of implications accompanying each of her decisions as campus leader.

I remember people coming at me with all kinds of questions, and they were coming to me for the answer, and that was hard. I kept saying, “I'll get back to you later, I'll get back to you later,” because I had to stop

and think, what, my response and what it meant, to whatever it was that I said, you know, affected either their classroom, affected the campus, so I had to kind of slow down a little bit, but nothing really prepares you. I don't believe it does. You have a lot of little experiences that help you, but until you get in there, it's different. The vice principalship into the principalship is very, very different (AE).

The recognition of this difference changed the way she viewed her position of leadership.

The types of decisions, and everything rested on you, and everything reflected you. And I think for me, an issue of pride, I wanted everything to be right, so it was important that everything I do, that it be right. That, I think was difficult, because I didn't want to make any mistakes. I just didn't want to make mistakes (AE).

Despite her fear of making mistakes, the principal admitted to making many. She learned how important even the smallest detail can be when dealing with teachers, as teacher perceptions did not always match reality. She described walking through the halls, reflecting on some element of her job and found teachers had projected anger into her because she wasn't smiling. She also believes she learned certain aspects of managing her staff from the superintendent.

Upon her arrival at Ash, success was almost immediate. Achievement gains for Economically Disadvantaged students improved a minimum of twelve percentage points in her first year as principal and the campus has been

Recognized each year since. Over 80% of each subpopulation has met standards each year in every area except science, where scores have risen between 47 and 50 percentage points per subgroup over this period of time.

THE PRINCIPAL OF LOGAN ELEMENTARY

The principal of Logan, a male Hispanic about 40 years old, was in his seventh year as a principal in Compass at the time of the interview. He had spent five years as an elementary teacher and then five years as an assistant principal. He was completing his fourth year at Logan. At the time of the interview he was beginning the transition to a new position. He was promoted to assistant superintendent in charge of elementary administration. Logan was a new campus when he arrived, but was the first new campus in the district not ready to begin the year in “35 or 40 years” and his students and staff were spread over several campuses. They also had many more students than anticipated.

We were supposed to open with about 640 kids. That never even, I mean by the time, in December, we were registering children; we were already up to 700. That went up to 750 and we still haven't even opened, the whole school is not even ready, and we have to open with 800 children, so what I ended up doing, what we ended up doing is we had 800 children at four different campuses until this one was ready. We just divided up by grade levels, the teachers we had available to teach the classrooms at the other schools until we were ready to go. I had the distinct pleasure of having to go through all that, which was really good

experience, looking back on it now, but that 850 when we entered in August, just kept going up, 900 by the end of the year, the next year a thousand plus, and then we went up to 1150 and the projection was 1300 kids if something didn't happen. We had portable buildings six months after entering this building (LE).

There were many demographic features that exacerbated the overcrowded situation. “We were at about 48% mobility, so a teacher could easily have half of her class be different from August to May when they finished” (LE). Despite this beginning, the campus showed significant improvement through its first three years, becoming a recognized campus in 2005-2006.

The Logan principal felt his conception of the role changed after arriving in the position. “But as well prepared as I thought I was, there is a significant difference when you sit behind that principal's desk” (LE).

Probably the biggest factor is that, and it really sets in, I'm sure you went through it too, is that you learn very soon, you know, the buck stops here. I'm the one. I'm making the shots. I'm calling the shots and good or bad, it's, you know, the principal is going to be perceived as the major and one and only decision-maker on the campus. Be it good, be it bad, be it a PTA issue, be it an instructional issue, it's all about you and so you really, at least I did, you take it really personal in that, that's a big difference (LE).

Attaining the position of principal gave Logan's chief a different view of things in other areas as well. He was able to reflect back on his history and many questions about what prompted certain decisions became clear. "Well, one thing you find out too, that I did, is that you find out why they decided the way they did" (LE). Before arriving in the position of principal many decisions were questioned. "Well, if I was principal, well I would probably do this, this, and this, but it's not until you get up there you realize - well now I know why he acted that way" (LE).

THE PRINCIPAL OF REED ELEMENTARY

A male Hispanic in his late 50's, the principal of Reed Elementary was in his twenty-fifth year as a principal in Compass and, at the time of the interview, completing his thirty-fifth year in education. His campus had achieved Recognized status the two previous years and he was cautiously optimistic Reed would be able to repeat the success for a third year in a row.

He began his career in education as a third grade teacher in Compass. He spent four years in that role before becoming a "visiting teacher."

A visiting teacher is like a truant officer. They would send me out if a kid wasn't coming to school, I'd go knock on the doors, and usually like a social work officer, the kids, they don't have any shoes, and so, we can probably help you with that. He doesn't have any clothes; we can probably help you with that. Of course, we did take them to court also. You know how it is, you're trying to help them out and they are still not complying, then we'd have to go through all the paperwork to get them to

court and be there in court in front of the judge telling him, yeah, this is the information we have, etc. That's an interesting job (RE).

The principal also spent two years as a vice principal before getting his first assignment as a principal. Of all the principals interviewed, the principal of Reed was the only one with a doctoral degree which he earned about fifteen years earlier.

The principal of Reed believes the expectations that came with the position have changed considerably in the 25 years he has served in the role.

One thing, it's gotten more complex, and there's no doubt about it. I saw myself as trying to rally the teachers, let's do a good job, etc. and yeah, it's still that. A lot of it has to do with motivation, and I guess with some folks you are more successful than with others, and some years you are more successful than other years, but I think that's the main thing that the principal, or one of the main things the principal does. Also, there is a matter of planning, and trying to bring about initiatives, trying to bring about change. And anytime you're going to change things, I mean it's going to get uncomfortable. That's just the way it is, and so you just have to be sure of where you are going (RES).

As principal, he feels Reed's achievement of Recognized status demonstrates his success. "Well, I think we've been successful, because we've been Recognized" (RE).

I've been here seven years and we've probably been recognized five of those years. One of them I didn't have anything to do with, because that was the year before. From when my predecessor left, that year was recognized. But we've been successful. We've had bumps. We've had our rough spots, but all along we've been successful.

The principal expressed hopes of being an Exemplary campus before he retires.

THE PRINCIPAL OF SLATER MIDDLE SCHOOL

The principal of Slater Middle School is a white female in the midst of her eighteenth year in education. The student population at Slater is 84% Economically Disadvantaged and 93% Hispanic. Her entire career has been in Compass ISD, with seven years as a physical education teacher and coach at the middle school level. Her route into administration came at the urging of a mentor, “My high school coach dragged me to get my masters and when I did my internship I decided I liked it; decided I could make a difference in kids’ lives in a completely different avenue than I ever could on the coaching side and I just worked my way through” (SMS). She began her administrative career as an assistant principal and spent three years in that role before finding a position as vice principal. At secondary campuses in Compass a vice principal is a position one step above the assistant principal. She spent four years in that role at Slater, while applying for various openings for principal or vice principal on other campuses, “but it was meant for me to stay at [Slater]. That's where I stayed” (SMS).

She believes she was fortunate to work under principals who were “very proactive people who got their junior administrators involved in things” (SMS). This was particularly the case with the principal from whom she inherited her position at Slater:

And the lady that I worked under, who is now the director of our community programs and literally working across the street from me, she and I work so well together that it was rare she made a decision that I wasn't aware of, so going into the principalship for me wasn't that different, besides the fact that now I was responsible for making those decisions. Even though my voice had been heard and I'd been part of the process, but now I had to make the decisions, and I was responsible for those decisions where before I wasn't. Staying on the same campus, I think had pros and cons to it. I mean I had to inherit people that I knew may not be the right people for their fit. I had to figure out how to move them around and do that kind of thing, but it was also nice because I felt comfortable when my faculty knew me and I didn't have to start over from scratch.

In her first year at the helm of Slater, significant changes made by the sixth grade math teachers altered the tenor of the campus for her subsequent years.

We went from last in the district, to first in sixth grade, and it was a change in teaching, for those teachers. They took, they just totally threw

out what they used to do and started over and did a lot of hands-on, and a lot of interactive, and a lot of different teaching by looking at kids and saying, “this is what we have to teach, how are kids going to get it, and that's how we have to teach it” (SMS).

The efforts were noticed at the district level, resulting in a great deal of attention being drawn to the campus. “To literally go from 14th in the district to first, was, as a Title I campus, everyone called it the Slater miracle, we didn't like that, but that's what it was called at the district level” (SMS). The campus had also garnered praise for being the only middle school campus to achieve “Recognized” status for three years in a row.

Slater’s principal recently accepted the challenge of opening the district’s newest middle school. While the percentage of students identified as Economically Disadvantaged won’t be as high as it was at Slater, the campus is not in a wealthy area of the district either. There are other challenges instead:

Like this move to Cale, it makes me nervous, because I'm like, okay, it's really me and this island right now, and now I'm building my faculty, so I feel like I have a lot more responsibility now as a principal than I did then. Even though I hired people every year, I still had my core. I'm starting from scratch (SMS).

As the principal of a new campus there are opportunities as well as challenges. When asked if opening a new campus had an upside, she responded, “It does, because I get to start traditions. It's no more of this, 'well, we've always done it

that way.' It's 'this is how we're starting it, and if it doesn't work we'll change it,' kind of thing, or we'll start those traditions that become the, 'well we've always done it this way' kind of thing" (SMS).

THE PRINCIPAL OF WEST HIGH SCHOOL

At the time of the interview the principal of West High School was preparing to open a new campus in the fall of the following year. The principal, a white female, was completing her seventh year in administration and her seventeenth year in education, had been allowed to leave of West early in order to make the needed preparations for the new campus. All her professional experience has occurred in Compass ISD. "I'm very, very happy with Compass. My husband works at Compass, and we are Compass products and proud of it. We've both had all of our career here and plan on keeping it that way, because they treat us well" (WHS). Without experience in other districts, she explains her belief in Compass based on observations. "I ironically live in another small town area district, and seeing the politics, I've decided that our politics, as a whole, in this district, are fine. But I have had lots of experience with people that have interviewed that have left the district and are begging to get back in" (WHS).

The Compass culture comes from central office support, according to West's principal.

We have people in Central office that have been in the trenches. I think it's different when you start hiring from outside, people who don't understand schools at the central office level. We have been very fortunate

that in Compass, the way that they've chosen to hire is really from within the trenches, people that know what we are going through. So, therefore, central office is really seen as a support system.

Prior to entering administration, the principal of West taught high school English and business administration courses for a decade. She received her masters in educational administration and is currently working toward her doctorate in the same area. Her administrative experience includes two years as an assistant principal and two as a vice principal. She described herself as particularly suited to being a vice principal.

I think I was best fit for the vice principal position. The way that it is designed in Compass, is that a vice principal kind of does all logistics on the campus, and makes sure that everything works well, and I am very concrete, sequential. So, I enjoy doing master schedule. I enjoy doing any kind of scheduling, or making sure that the mechanics of the school, that it's well greased and everything is running. So I think that that was probably my best fit, where it was the easiest for me to excel. Now, as principal, you sort of tend to have the target, so you're held accountable for a whole lot more items, but as vice principal, my idea of what was happening on the school was good (WHS).

Her biggest adjustment coming into the job was discovering of just how political a high school principal's position could be.

I think the one thing that I was ill-prepared for was the politics. You expect, I mean, I expect conflict, and I expect dealing with students and teacher and parent issues. I feel comfortable dealing with all of those, but that's not really a learning curve. It is different in that, you're more in a political world, and you have to make sure that you keep all the constituents happy, and that means not only people at Central office. It means community members, and it's at a different level. It's political.

Despite the political pressures the West principal maintains her focus on what she considers important. “My screen, my filtering system is, what can I live with at two o'clock in the morning? I know if I make students first, the rest of it doesn't matter” (WHS). Her beliefs act as the basis for the culture she intends to facilitate at her new campus. The first priority is to make student success the most important factor in hiring decisions. By making it the focus of the hiring process, she hopes to create a culture on campus that makes student success the core value driving all decisions and discussions.

THE ELEMENTS OF VISION

In its description of the school board's duties, Compass ISD board policy, which is developed from the Texas Education Code, states, “The Board shall adopt a vision statement and comprehensive goals for the District and the Superintendent” (AE(Legal)).

Other district policies also address vision. Policy BAA(Legal) also reflects the Texas Education Code. It states in part, "The Board and the Superintendent shall work together to: Provide educational leadership for the district, including leadership in developing the District vision statement and long-range educational plan;" and "Establish Districtwide policies and annual goals that are tied directly to the District's vision statement and long-range educational plan."

Another part of district policy, BJA(Local) (See Appendix F), addresses superintendent qualifications and duties. In describing the superintendent's duties in a section on "school or organizational improvement" the policy states, in part:

The Superintendent shall promote leadership in efforts to improve the school or organization through activities such as the following:

1. Articulate a vision of what the District can and should achieve, and gain acceptance among teachers, other staff, students, and the community by implementing the strategic planning process.

None of those interviewed expressed an awareness of a vision statement, and an examination of district documents found no evidence of a formal statement. However, all principals interviewed for this study did suggest the superintendent regularly articulated, "a vision of what the district can and should achieve."

The district does have a formal mission statement. It states:

The Compass Independent School District is committed to the belief that children come first. The mission of the district is to encourage each student to strive for personal excellence and to ensure all students learn to function, contribute, and compete as responsible individuals in an ever-changing world.

The mission was generated from a formalized set of belief statements. Those statements are:

Our Beliefs

- The well-being and education of children are vital to the future of our society.
- Everyone shares in the responsibility for the education of children.
- Every individual has a contribution to make to society and has a responsibility to do so.
- The quality of our schools directly affects the quality of our community.
- All people can learn.
- Challenge, effort, self-discipline, and opportunity to learn are necessary for students to reach their potential.
- Learning is a lifelong process.
- People are our most important resource.
- Each individual has worth and deserves respect.
- The family unit provides the foundation for all learning.
- Parents have the responsibility and the right to be meaningfully involved with their child's education.

- The diversity of our cultural heritage enriches life.
- Individuals are responsible for their actions.
- A basic role of an educational system is the intellectual growth and development of the student.
- An educated population is necessary to sustain a democratic society.
- Learning is accomplished through challenging learning experiences provided by superior educators in partnership with parents and the community in a climate of cooperation and mutual respect.

Dr. Peoples had little to do with the development of the statements, “The board had a mission statement and a belief statement when I came here, and it pretty much is in line with what I had in my framework” (JP). He added, “we tweaked it some, but very little since I've been here” (JP).

The fact that Dr. Peoples was not involved in the development of the mission and belief statements did not negate his belief in their relevance. “I think some superintendents lose sight of this fact, also, it's very often that I will read that mission statement in my meetings and sometimes I even send it to my board, and talk about it with my board, you know. And I, I think again that it keeps them focused on exactly what we're here to do” (JP).

In further discussing the importance of having a mission and statements of belief, Peoples said,

You know, it's the lighthouse up here. It, it, it's where you have to keep your focus and so forth. Whether it be a strategic planning process, or whether it be any other process that we might be going through, you

have to talk about your mission statement and, and your belief statement (JP).

Though the superintendent and all the principals agreed on the importance of the mission and belief statements as a driving force behind much of the district's directionality, there was not a great deal of familiarity with the specifics of their contents. The language used to convey the message of vision, mission and beliefs was not the same language used in the written documents. Since the documents were drafted prior to Peoples arrival in the district, there is minimal attachment to the language used.

I was actually in Compass when the whole strategic plan, mission statements and such was developed. There was another brief superintendent we had for like two years, one year - and that was his thing. He kind of set the stage for that, got it going, and high-tailed it out. I remember that mission statement being everywhere, and that kind of set the tone, after that at least (LE).

Perhaps the principals don't feel a need to be familiar with the language because Peoples doesn't quote the language from the documents.

Bottom line to it though, I simplify things. I think for me, I'm not all that smart. I just say it's all about kids. Put the kids first, you know. Schools should be learning platforms. Schools should not be teaching platforms, and that's what we've gotta keep our focus on. We have to keep our focus on the fact that we're about kids, and if it's using technology,

using the data, if it's using a special kind of program, whatever it is, that's what we're about. Over here we've got to function in a way that they can learn with that. And I think that's what that mission statement basically said, because, in essence, it says that we believe that all kids can achieve, and our goal is to help every one of those kids excel and be successful. And I don't know of anyone that preaches that the responsibility of public education is not to help kids be successful. Our job is not to help kids fail. And, you know, I preach that constantly, and, you know, convocations, Monday messages, anything that I'm doing (JP).

Principals had, what they felt, was a clear understanding of the vision, mission and beliefs, but felt the contents guided them in a non-explicit way. “They're implied. If you were to tell me what it was, I couldn't tell you other than I know that we do what's best for kids at all times and that kids are at the forefront of everything that we do” (AE). Another principal summarized it similarly, “Do what's best for kids. Do what's best for kids in terms of accountability and not forget that they are kids” (LE). A third principal acknowledged, “It's pretty pervasive, but it's not anything that we hearken to every day, or during morning announcements, but it's definitely there” (RE).

The message of “Doing what's best for kids” emerged in all interviews, despite the formal language of the mission and belief system being removed. “I know those things, but I couldn't tell you what they are verbatim” (AE). Questions about what Compass ISD valued lead to one explanation from a principal, “I

know those things, we know that, it's ingrained in us" (AE). Another suggested, "I don't think it's something you can communicate. It's like creating climate. How do you do that? It's not about what's said. It's by what's done" (WHS).

THE TOOLS OF ALIGNMENT

After coding and analysis, five themes emerged from the responses of interviewees and from an examination of related documents. The five themes provided a structure and common frame for understanding how the superintendent's vision aligned with those held by the campus principals included in this study. The emergent themes of vision alignment in this case include:

1. Communications
2. Desired Results
3. Guidelines
4. Resources
5. Accountability
6. Consequences

Each of the six was addressed by interview respondents. Communications from the superintendent were mentioned most frequently as the method used to insure that everyone in the district is on the same page. The other five methods match those suggested by Covey as tools "to create a greater overlap between what the organization cares about and what the individual within the organization cares about" (1991, p. 213). Desired results are the goals and objectives, but not the

methods, needed to create a shared focus. Individuals need to understand the parameters and policies of their work. Guidelines specify the parameters, based on policy and principle, within which results are to be achieved. The types of support available to aid in the achievement of the desired results constitute the resources. Accountability consists of performance standards and the data to be used in assessing those standards. Consequences outline what will happen as a result of achieving or failing to achieve the expected standards.

COMMUNICATIONS

This study revealed a variety of communication strategies used by Superintendent Peoples to ensure his vision was understood by the district's staff. Each year since Peoples arrival in the district, he has ushered in the new school year by addressing the entire district. One principal viewed it as:

It starts in the summer with these convocations. He sets the tone.

It's a cheerleading session where he comes out and he sets the tone that year. This year was, 'We Are Compass.' And it's a show, but it's a real one.

He's being sincere in that this is who we are (LE).

Other principals also recognize the motivational value of the convocations.

He is a real motivator. As a matter of fact he brought back what we call the convocations, and it is a good show. At the beginning of the year, because we are so big, he has to do it multiple times, but it's a show. The idea is to get everybody revved up and ready to go (RE).

And he started that the first year he came to the district, and we were all like, okay here is another hour and a half out of our staff development time that we have to give up, but it's still a lot of fun. He makes it upbeat, and it's like a pep rally, and it kind of gets wild sometimes, beach balls flying around and things like that, but it's a lot of fun (SMS).

The principal of West High School, who will be hosting the ten convocations next year, suggests another element of each event that has an effect on the culture. "It's that 'We're all in this together' type feeling" (WHS).

Dr. Peoples recognizes the importance of the opportunity presented at the beginning of the year to set a tone.

I do nine convocations. We will do 10 next year just 'cause of the size, we can't get it all in. But the important part about that, and it goes to speaking to the culture, the important part about that, is in a district this large everybody can kind of take their job, 12,000 employees, and kind of just, not feel a part of a whole. What that convocation does, it, it helps everybody understand, we're part of something a lot bigger than Slater Middle School. Well, I'll just put it, at an organizational kind of setting, and it's a way that everybody can see me. I can communicate to them exactly what my goals, my expectations are, and, you know I try to do that in a way that is entertaining and that people understand, but that is how you set that culture (JP).

As the head of a large organization, having access to all employees in a live setting provides the superintendent the opportunity to reach past the campus principals and speak directly to the teachers. The principals also recognize the use of the convocations for setting expectations for the year. The superintendent is described as saying, “These are some broad goals for you to think of this year. We then, as principals, kind of feed off of that, take it back” (LE). Another principal observed, “He stands up there and preaches the same thing he preaches to the principals two weeks earlier, so everybody hears the same message, nobody gets something different” (SMS).

Each of the years Peoples has been at Compass, the convocation ceremony was used to establish a theme for the year. The year in which the study was conducted had as its theme “We Are Compass.” Based upon the theme established, principals were expected to do the same at the campus level. “We are expected to have a theme at our campus (LE). For another principal the alignment between the superintendent’s vision, as expressed in the annual theme, and her vision was very tightly aligned. “Luckily, I’m very fortunate, for some reason, without even talking to the man, he and I are almost in sync every year when I pick my theme” (SMS).

Superintendent Peoples used written messages to communicate his vision to employees as well. A weekly email is sent to every employee with an attached Monday Message. Peoples explains the need this way:

I've got 94 campuses. If I get to each campus once a year I'm lucky. And so you have to be able to communicate, and make yourself a person that sets the expectations that you have. I really do feel like people in Compass know James Peoples, but they know me because they see me at convocations, they see me at school events, but every Monday they get something from me, and I may just talk about, oh, what I did last week. My wife and I went to a play. It's a great play we enjoyed. Or I may talk about school finances. I may talk about any of those things, but it's a way that you build that relationship with people, where, when I go out, and say something, that, "This is going to be tough", that, "We may not like doing this." People understand it.

The campus principals interviewed describe the Monday Message as an important link in the communication chain. The descriptions of the message are similar among the principals, with one saying, "The entire district gets a Monday message from him. He sends out, 'Here are some things in the district. Here are my thoughts. You guys have a good week'" (LE). Another view, describes the Monday Message communication as: "Everyone in the district gets it. He talks about the good things that are going on, he talks about, it might be a little personal note on his part, things that he might've done with his life or something, visiting his grandkids" (AE). Peoples also uses the message to discuss state and federal education issues. One principal's observation was, "And sometimes it's fun to read, because you're like, okay, he's not real happy about this. You know, you

can tell the sense of things, and you know he's in Austin, and he keeps up-to-date” (SMS). Another noted, “He is really down to earth, and you know where he stands on issues (AE).

These political perspectives offer more than a view of the legislative process. They help to build an organizational image. “I would respond that the state is getting a lot more in terms of education than it is funding, and that administrators and teachers are working hard every day for better results, achieving better results, and this should result in more funding” (JP-MM-1:28) is an example of this from a Monday Message.

The principals also recognize these communications have a more significant value than simply developing a personal relationship with the superintendent. One principal spoke of using the message to support his efforts and reinforce the communication of his vision at the campus level. “There's that connection to him, be it an e-mail, but that I feel. And I think a lot of teachers do, too, because I remind them of it. Did you read Dr. People's email today? You know, he kind of said what I was telling you about” (LE). A second principal characterized the message as, “It kind of gives us a pulse of everything that is going on with the legislators, with Compass, and adds some personal, what he's been up to, what does he think, and it gives you that feeling that, you know, we know him” (WHS). A different principal felt, “You can also read into him when he is getting his message across to the district and then to the schools. This one a couple of weeks ago, was like, whew, okay, he was talking about some specific

school there whether they get it or not, we'll see. And he did get interesting responses to that message” (SMS).

The district lost its Recognized status in the 2006-2007 school year as the state raised the standards for achieving such status. The Monday Message was used to remind the district staff that the achievement of the Economically Disadvantaged subpopulation was the reason for the loss of that desired rating. In addressing this situation the superintendent was able to focus his communications directly on his vision. Part of his message was to point to a renewed effort, “I know many of you have worked diligently this year to increase the passing percentage of our Economically Disadvantaged population” (JP-MM-2:18). The message continues to lay out the expectation:

A good, strong, quality education is possible for all our students. An effective school is one that has strong leadership, high expectations, academic rigor, discipline, and parent involvement. We must address each child’s ability and motivation for success, and this means we must constantly strive to instill in our children the correct habits, study skills, attitudes, values, and desire for relevant academic success. Schools that are successful do not have the attitude or belief that certain children can’t learn or achieve because they are disadvantaged in some way. No child should fail simply because he/she may be poorer than another child or more disadvantaged than another child. Strong schools believe they can make a difference, their staffs and teachers know and act as if they can

make a difference, and believing and acting this way creates a situation where they do make a difference. They do not let differences in children hinder the education of their students. They don't complain; they act. They find and use everything they can, every means they can, to support and strengthen the education of each child (JP-MM-2:18).

Later in the same message he suggests, "But if we focus on success and believe in the success of each child, we shall get success. For the sake of our children, let us do nothing less!" (JP-MM-2:18). This message ends, similarly to all other messages, with a tagline restating the expectation and linking it to his vision, "I believe in each of you and what you do each day in our schools to help our students. Thanks for all you do! We are Compass, and all children will succeed" (JP-MM-2:18).

Besides these methods of communication, Dr. Peoples's visibility and personal interactions were cited by respondents as being important to the alignment process. These components were described as helping the superintendent communicate what was valued within the district. In describing his visibility one principal said, "I mean the guy is everywhere, he's just, he's there. He's almost a politician, you know. I hate to use that word because it's looked at with a negative perception, but he, I guess what I can say is, he wouldn't sell you anything that he didn't believe in, truly believe in. But he's out there" (LE). Another felt almost overwhelmed by his visibility, "He is very visible, at almost every function. I don't know how he does it. He's at every function and he's at our

meetings, and community meetings. And his message is always the same. It's about student achievement and what we do to get there" (AE). Other acts of visibility serve as symbolic gestures that convey meaning to those involved. The principal at Slater Middle School cited such an example:

We're all going through this fingerprint thing right now, you know, and Dr. Peoples is the first one over there getting his fingerprints done. He's like, 'I'm gonna be the first one in line, I'm not going to ask any of you guys to do this, if I'm not the first one in line.' When we tell our faculty that, they are comfortable with it (SMS).

West's principal similarly suggested the conveyance of values wasn't through a written or oral medium, but through actions.

I don't think it's something you can communicate, it's like creating climate. How do you do that? It's not by what's said. It's by what's done. For instance, this week is TAKS training, and all central office staff who have a certification, they're assigned to campuses, and they're helping campuses get through TAKS. So it's things that they are doing, not what they're saying. They are willing to set up training. They are willing to come on your campus. They are willing to do things that make you feel as if you're completely supported. So I don't think it's just punching a checklist, or anything like that, and I don't think it's just what they say. Now, granted, the communication piece is wonderful (WHS).

Peoples believes the acceptance of his expectations and vision comes, in part, from the staff trusting him personally. The visibility and personal interactions play a role in establishing that trust. “When, you know, PTA, Founder's meetings, any big thing that we have in the district, if he's walking through, he will greet you, give you a handshake and talk a little bit, and then go on. But that's the way he is” (AE). The same principal felt as if she learned from watching the superintendent’s interactions.

I just watch and I learn, and in watching him when he would go to meetings, even a little principal's breakfast, make the rounds at all the tables, saying hello to everyone. So I kind of thought, okay the next time I have a staff breakfast or something I have got to do the same thing. So I did, and it makes a difference to go around and say hello to everybody. That's how I learned from him, watching him, and I think that's important (AE).

Part of the trust developed through these personal interactions, is a developing loyalty to the man and his values. The interactions allow principals to feel personally comfortable with the superintendent. As one principal described it:

It's neat to be able to pick up the phone and talk to him. In some school districts I think the principal would be a little intimidated to pick up the phone and say, 'Dr. Peoples, can I have 30 minutes of your time?' I don't feel that way in Compass, and I actually had to do that this year with a situation that was going on and I said, 'I just need 30 minutes of your

time,' and he thanked me for coming in and being frank and honest with him. We didn't see eye to eye on everything, but I got my voice heard and think it took some things off my shoulders that I needed to have out there. But I don't think people in every district would feel comfortable doing that (SMS).

Another compared an experience he had with Peoples to a previous superintendent who was described as greatly admired, but more reserved:

He's a master of anything you read in terms of leadership, from Carnegie in the 50s to Covey now, Maxwell, whoever, I mean, relationships have been there. And he remembers everything. He's got a memory, and he really works on those relationships, and in fact, when I went in there with him, there was the contrast right there. Mr. R did get around to, "do you have children, this that or whatever". James Peoples is all "come on in, tell me about yourself, where did you grow up, do you have kids, you married, tell me about you." That, to me, meant a lot. And we only got into the, well, got this school opening up and I understand you interviewed and so on. We got to that, but it's like boom, right away, oh, I know where that high school is, up in North Texas, and we just.... That's who he is (LE).

Data from respondents and from written communications revealed that the superintendent of Compass ISD utilized a number of communication styles and strategies to insure his vision was aligned with those of the campus principal.

Strategies included large group communications, written messages, interpersonal relations and symbolic visibility. The data suggested each of these were a part of a strategic and conscious effort on the part of Dr. Peoples to enhance a districtwide focus.

DESIRED RESULTS

Covey describes “desired results” as the identification of “what is to be done” (1991, p. 213) in terms of goals and objectives and when it should be done. In describing effective organizations, Senge (1990) discusses clarifying the vision and how it differs from the current reality. Those who are successful also generate a particular type of focus. “They *focus on the desired result itself*, not the ‘process’ or the means they assume necessary to achieve that result” (p. 164). Those involved in trying to achieve success in education tend to focus on strategies, programs or activities, and not the results (O’Neill, Conzemius, Commodore & Pulsfus, 2006). Data generated from the interviews conducted indicate the superintendent had clear expectations of the results desired and they were shared and understood at the campus level. The expectations were both long term and near term. They included the vision for the district and the intermediary goals to achieving the vision.

Dr. Peoples believes setting the expectations for certain desired results are a critical part of his role as superintendent.

What I think, in a large district like this, what a superintendent does is, establishes the expectation. He or she sets the culture. That's what

I have to do. And we are a culture of high expectations. We are a culture of expectations in student, high student achievement (JP).

With all the legislative mandates and externally imposed accountability standards facing districts, he acknowledged, it can be difficult retaining an appropriate focus.

We have to set the standards and expectations of what we want achieved out there in that classroom, so, the whole focus, period, with all the things going on, all the laws, all the requirements and all that, a superintendent just can't lose sight of the fact is that we're here for one reason and that's to teach kids. And, I think that's just so important for a person to remember (JP).

The data garnered from interviews supported the idea that campus principals were well aware of desired results. The principals' perceptions of the desired results run a gamut from specific short term goals, to the broad vision of the possibilities. One principal described the latter, "Well, he wants success for every child, regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic level, or whatever. And that is the aim. That's his vision, and that's what really drives a lot of the decisions that he makes" (RE). The same principal also had an understanding of the intermediate expectations, as well. "It's never been said, but I think Dr. Peoples does expect every school to be recognized, or exemplary. I think that is sort of a given" (RE).

Other principals frequently described the results that were both, desired in the long term and expected in the short term. When discussing the expectations and planning for them at the campus level, the principal from Ash noted,

Anything that is below 75%, you need to have an objective for.

Anything above recognized, I guess you've met your target. Or like, if it's the focus of the district, like Economically Disadvantaged science this year. Oh my goodness. Everybody heard it. Everybody heard it. But we know, "you better have that there in your plan," because we all got it. We all got it. We all know, and that's just the way he is. He lets us know. He lets us know. This is what you better be working on. So, we know (AE).

The same principal characterized the district as having the desire to be the best because, "Ultimately we expect that kids are going to be learning. So in everything that we do, we want to do it the best way that we can, because of what it means for kids" (AE).

The principal at Slater Middle School described the expectations, "And Dr. Peoples doesn't pull punches, when he says he wants to be recognized, he wants to be recognized, and he'll boil it down to the subpopulation he wants us to work on" (SMS). Another principal suggested, "There's no magical numbers we're being handed, but..." (WHS). The principal at Reed described the expectations regarding the Economically Disadvantaged subpopulation as being omnipresent.

When we as a district saw that we have a problem with Economically Disadvantaged students that is something that just kept coming up. It was not brought up on Data Day and then forgotten. It was brought up at Data Day. It was brought up at principals' meetings. It was brought up at cluster meetings. It was brought up over and over again. I do think that what you are mindful of is really what you are going to be aiming at. That's the way it has to be (RE).

Logan's principal suggested, "It's very clear in terms of, as a principal, what our bottom line goal should be and coming straight from Dr. Peoples, it should be instruction, you need to be the instructional leader, and specifically, be Recognized." He went on to say, "I think as a principal, for this campus should be very clear, and that is to be a Recognized campus, and have that as an indicator of everything that is going well at our schools" (LE). He also cited a meeting with principals where Peoples stated the expectation, "Several times he mentioned that we should be a recognized school district. 'We were, and can be, and should be'" (LE).

The respondents also used phrases such as "good for kids" or "best for kids" in describing the expectations for the decisions made. In summarizing the district's beliefs, the principal from Logan said,

Do what's best for kids. Do what's best for kids in terms of accountability and not forget that they are kids. I think you can carry that through high school too. To summarize it though, what's best for children.

There have been things, decisions that he has made to where I think that is right in line with that belief system, and is it good for kids, then let's do it. It's going to cost us a little bit more, these playground upgrades, fine, you know what, it's a brand-new school but we kind of designed it as such that we probably should have included that, and this school itself, and others, and that's just kind of one small not so significant example, but is it good, and will it benefit children, and if so, let's do it (LE).

Another principal suggested “I think it's having proactive people like Dr. Peoples to say, this is what we are going to do, this is what's right for kids, and this is how we are going to do it. And even though we are such a diverse district, that is not an excuse for our district. We're not going to let it happen” (SMS).

GUIDELINES

The guidelines for achieving desired results can vary greatly in terms of their specificity. Compass ISD does not have a significant focus on policies or stated parameters. The guidelines that do exist, provide frameworks that help align the district’s vision with campus efforts to improve student success. These frameworks are found less in policy and more in terms of the district’s five year strategic plan. Compass already had a strategic plan in place when Peoples became the district’s superintendent.

It was not the kind of document that I was used to, and I don't think it was utilized the way it should. Like a lot of plans, it was put up on the shelf and not used a lot. So it wasn't so much what was in the plan, as

it was the process of how that plan was used, and I think that's what I brought to the table as far as the strategic planning process was concerned; is the fact, that all of a sudden people understood, that hey, this is an important piece of paper, and we're going to have to focus on these priorities and these objectives (JP).

The plan establishes a broad priority in each of eight areas related to the functions of the school district. Objectives are designed to help achieve each priority. The plan's priorities and objectives are generated by:

...a committee of about 200 people, teachers, administrators, parents, community people, we take those people and we divide them up into those eight areas, and I have a staff person that's the lead person in each one of those areas who basically will chair that committee and we will spend probably the next couple of months every Thursday night facilitating the process where these people will come up with, okay, what do we need, what do we want to happen in these next five years (JP).

Once the committee identifies the objectives for the five year plan, staff members generate the activities that will help to meet those objectives.

I will take each cabinet member, which is basically my deputy superintendents and assistant superintendents, and they will work with their staff in their areas and they'll put those activities in the plan, and then at the end of that first quarter they report out what have they done in the first three months of that year (JP).

The principals are reminded of the strategic plan by central office administration regularly. When the district has an initiative being implemented districtwide, its alignment to strategic plan is clearly stated. As the principal from Ash Elementary describes it, “When we do take on an initiative, they always say in compliance with, or in alliance with our strategic plan, the five-year plan for where we need to be. And we all get the plan” (AE). The principal from Slater Middle School, in discussing communications about the district’s mission and beliefs, commented on the strategic plan as well.

You know every five years the district does the strategic plan, and they go over it pretty extensively with us, and then we kind of, don't go over the same process on our campus, but we have our school improvement plan, that we sit with our coordinators and our departments every year, and say, where are we going to go to get from point A to point B, and this is where the district wants us to be. And I do think that that trickles all the way down. And it's fluid both directions. There is district and campus leadership involved in that strategic plan, so, and I've been part of that process, which is pretty neat. I do think it's publicized and voiced.

The strategic plan acts as a guideline for campus improvement plans, according to the principal at Logan.

We have a strategic plan which is updated every five years at the district level. We have a campus plan that, every year is revised. We keep

it in sync with what the district is trying to do as a whole, but it's so broad that really, I don't have teachers study it in and out, left and right all the time, because I think that'd be more work for them. And so what I do when it comes to that time of revising our plan, I'm the one who kind of looks it through. Am I in line with the district strategic plan here? It's written in pretty broad terms, and so it works well for us. And, you know, as large as we are, you really have to kind of keep it broad (LE).

The principal from West High School suggested the principal's role is after the development, "once all of that is established, then kind of carrying the torch onward" (WHS). Another principal noted one impact of the strategic plan on the campus level. "Our school improvement plan used to be one sheet of paper. Now it goes on probably for about 40 pages or so" (RE). Another principal who compared the strategic plan to the campus improvement plan observed,

We do have similar categories. The whole instruction piece on our school improvement plan instruction piece is all the content areas: reading, writing, math, and science, and social studies. So that's the instructional piece. Then we have a piece for technology, which is also in our strategic plan. Then we have a piece for safety, and that's also in the strategic plan, a piece for communication, a piece for academic performance indicators, or something like that. So they match up. It just looks a little different, but they do match up.

Guidelines are supplied in conversations between campuses and central office administration, as well. The campus principal needs to be ready to answer certain questions when considering a campus based initiative. One principal suggested a typical conversation might begin, “How does it align with what we are trying to do? If it's something you want to do, how does it match up? If it doesn't match up, you can't do it” (AE). Another principal described the process in greater detail.

We're given a lot of freedom on the campus, so, if the data is showing that I need to do something, I better do something. I would be able to look, okay, this is what I'm going to do. I would talk it over with the Executive Director of Instruction. Say, “This is what I want. This is what I'm thinking of doing.” Just dialogue. Very informal. “What do you think about this?” Then they would probably say, “Okay.” There's a lot of freedom there. As long as it is all, first of all, legal and safe for kids, and all that stuff, but they pretty much leave us.

Guidelines can be flexible and are frequently determined through conversations. “I think it comes from the district giving us the latitude to get from point A to point B in how we see fit” (WHS). Campus initiatives are regularly filtered through central office personnel. “Okay, if we are in charge of the money, and give you the money, we need to see some results. Why are you doing this, and what is the likely impact on the children” (RE).

RESOURCES

Covey suggests resources include “the human, financial, technical or organizational support available to help accomplish the results” (1991, p. 213).

Peoples believes this is an area often overlooked.

Too many people, I mean too many superintendents, say, okay principals, teachers, we’ve gotta raise our TAKS scores, go out there and raise our TAKS scores. That's not good enough. You've got to help them. You've got to have a, something in place that is going to help them understand how they're going to raise those TAKS scores. So you've got to put in place the things that people need to get to that point of where you're going to raise scores (JP).

He also mentions support in the context of building principal capacity. “It's the explanation of the expectation, and providing them with the support to do that” (JP).

Several examples of resources available to support the campuses in pursuit of the district’s vision were cited, by both the superintendent and the campus principals. Types of resources cited came from each category; technical, financial, human and organizational. Dr. Peoples described the financial aspect of the support.

We've used state compensatory money, Title I money, and of course that's for the schools at risk, with high Economically Disadvantaged, but we put a number of resources out there to our people

to help; academic support teachers in math and science. We spend a lot of money in this district, and we are not a wealthy district. But we spend a lot of money on that extra support the campuses have to have (JP).

The knowledge that the Economically Disadvantaged subpopulation kept the district from being recognized meant, “Our priority this year was, make no mistake, and people know that, my priority this year was Economically Disadvantaged science. That's where we put our resources” (JP).

Professional development was another area of resource support identified by the superintendent.

I can tell you, principals within the first three weeks, they identify teachers who are struggling already. And we start doing things with those teachers out of our professional development department, and it's a big job, but to start having things done with those teachers to help them with what they're struggling with. So, we do a lot of professional development in this district. And I don't think there's any substitute for it. I think you've got to do that (JP).

Evidence of resources being used to support the vision also emerged from the interviews with campus principals. One principal recounted a district level meeting where Dr. Peoples addressed the campus leadership.

And through that whole meeting, though, he reminded us, “We’re a big district, with a lot of support that we can provide for you. So, it's not that I'm reprimanding you. I'm telling you, look, here it is. How can we

help you? We have the staff in this district to help you.” And so, inevitably you are going to have someone who may not take that the right way (LE).

Another principal noted how he expressed the district’s support to new teachers.

One of the things that I tell new teachers is this: one of the good things about, or one of the great things about Compass, is that if you want to be in a district where you are going to have available to you a lot of training, Compass is the place to be. We have all sorts of training, and all sorts of areas, it's just a matter of, really, the person making the commitment to it, and of course as a school, and as principal I need to also tell folks, “Hey folks, this is what is available for you as a Compass employee.” Of course it is really helpful when you have a teacher that is struggling, you really have something to refer them to, someplace where they can go and get additional training. So, that's a real plus.

The support is seen as always available. “They will send support if you need it. If you don't, then you can do it yourself” (SMS). An example of how campuses are able to access resources that align with the vision was offered by the principal of Slater Middle School:

So I think it's the culture of, this is what we want, and you make it work on your campus. But I also feel like there's a culture that it's okay to go to our superintendent, executive superintendent and say this is my concern, and have our data, and say, 'because of A, B, and C, I need extra

support here. Can I pull it from this area over to this area, or can you get me extra support I need, another teacher or whatever, and they give us that ability. Every year we get our allocations and we start building our master schedules, we can get with Dr. Peoples and deputy superintendents and say, "I don't think it's enough teachers. I need to do this." And if you have a good argument, he's got the funding; he'll give you an extra teacher here or there. And that stems from instruction, to fine arts, to athletics. I mean, we did a lot of things last year that helped our athletics and our fine arts programs, too. We got extra teachers to be able to pull things off that we hadn't been doing. So again, it's that whole child thing, it's we've got to get them to pass the test, but we also want them to be solid citizens that can do something in the world when they get out (SMS).

Another example of how the district resources were used at the campus level was offered by the principal of Ash Elementary:

The way they saw guided reading is not the way I saw guided reading, so I brought in my support from the district, "Here are the reading people," and I gave them time to have staff development, on-site staff development, and we all learned a lot that way. But they all knew now, what I expected to see, and I would hold them accountable. When I come into your classrooms, this is what I'm going to expect to be seeing (AE).

The available resources and methods of allocation need to align with the vision in order to be effective and to maintain the vision's viability. The principal of West described specificity in the alignment of resources.

It's with the support of the specialists for the area. For instance, if I know I'm going to need to work on math, then they are going to provide me math specialists, and people from central office whose forte is that area. So, there's tiers of support, you know, again based upon data. If mine is ESL, I'm going to have ESL people in there helping me collaborate so that we know really kind of their perspective to make sure that we're doing what we need to (WHS).

The principal from Ash summarized the impact.

I enjoy coming to work. Compass is a fun place to work, of course because you have that support, you have people who are going to listen to you, and I can get on the phone and call Dr. Peoples right now. He's not inaccessible to me. I could get on the phone and call anybody. My teachers can get on the phone and call anybody they wanted to. There is no one who is untouchable here, and that's a good thing. It's a fun place to work, at Compass, because there's a lot of support, and a lot of communication (AE).

Another aspect of resource alignment which emerged from the interviews related to campus sharing for the good of the district. One principal assessed the

district's message of "We Are Compass" as being reflective of the overall attitude.

I think that they develop our leadership capacity to the point, I've made decisions about my new campus that sometimes I've had to, for the greater good of the district, allow someone else to have a candidate that I really wanted for my particular campus. But I knew that what was best for Compass was for me not to touch a particular candidate, or for me to fight for a candidate. But I am okay with that. I'm okay with looking for what's best for all of Compass.

The principal of Slater echoed the same sentiment. She described the reaction of teachers about phone calls that came after they achieved significant gains in the success rates of students on math tests.

And everybody kept calling and saying, "Can we come see, can we come see, can we come see?" and our teachers were like, "Well, we're going to show them this, but were not going to show them this." I'm like, "Okay, guys, this is in the best interest of the kids, I know that you're competitive, and I love the fact that you want to stay in first place. It's just going to make you work a little bit harder, because they are going to know what they have to do to master that." And last year one of the schools that came in and worked with us, beat us, and my sixth-grade teachers didn't like that, so now they're like, "So, we aren't going to show it anymore." You can't do that, because we're still in the business of helping kids. So, if

it's the best thing to do for kids, then don't be afraid to talk about it, to tell them about it (SMS).

Evidence from interviews indicated a strong alignment between the way resources were shared in Compass ISD and the vision of the district. Resources were allocated in areas of need and were available when principals felt they were needed, so long as the campus could show the need tied to the vision. The vision's notion of success for all students reached such a significant level, that principals felt compelled to share resources for the good of all students in Compass ISD, and not only those on their campuses.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Covey suggests accountability “sets up standards of performance, time of evaluation and methods of measuring progress” (1991, p. 213). As previously cited, the district's desired result was for each campus to meet, at the least, the standard of Recognized. To meet the Recognized standard at the campus level, as well as the district level, requires a minimum of 75% of students in each measured subpopulation to achieve particular scores on the TAKS test (see Appendix E).

Standards within the district are differentiated somewhat, however. The campuses selected for this study all had higher than average numbers of Economically Disadvantaged students. Schools with very few numbers of Economically Disadvantaged students may be held to a higher standard. The superintendent hosts what is described by the principals as Data Day. Data Day is

held each summer. Principals are given notebooks of data and discussions about the information ensue. The superintendent was very passionate about the data and described sharing as a significant part of the district's focus.

When I came here, one school didn't even know what the other school was doing, but they didn't want to hurt anybody's feelings. I said well, get over it. I've got a campus down here with 92% Economically Disadvantaged students outperforming a campus up here with 16% Economically Disadvantaged students. Those people on that campus, I'm not worried about them feeling bad, they need to be doing better than this campus here. So, we really got into an analysis, we used regression analysis and all that, statistically in comparing schools with one another (JP).

The principals' observations about Data Day offered more insight into the day and the standards that were communicated to the campus principals.

Initially you get the district focus, and you pretty well crunch the numbers, and you see kind of where the district is holistically. And then there becomes a focus on your little piece of the pie, and we kind of then do breakout sessions to really kind of look at our piece of the pie, what our data is saying, and therefore based upon this data, what do we need to do (WHS)?

The Logan Elementary principal had several observations about Data Day.

Anyhow, Data Day is where that message of being Recognized came from. This year, more than any, he went as far as this, and I'm a Title I campus, this statement might have been perceived negatively by others. We had three, I believe it was, exemplary campuses. And he said, "I'm proud of what you did, but you know what? My expectation is that you are Exemplary." I mean, those three schools, they're some of the most affluent campuses in Compass. And, so, there was a little bit of tension. I know things were said, "Ah, geez, we still have to work hard. As well as we did." But you ask those principals if you want to start comparing foundations, in terms of kids at [affluent campus] or [high-level of Economically Disadvantaged campus], or even Logan at 73% free and reduced lunch. "You got a lot more to build on over there than you do over here." I agree with the statement, and I know that there were some people that didn't really think that was necessary.

The principal from Reed Elementary described the district's use of data and how standards were used fairly.

Another thing that has gotten real different is that the data we used to get, I look back on it and it's pretty simplistic, and now we have it all disaggregated, and sliced and diced every which way. And of course it's all very transparent because we didn't used to put it in front of people, data, as much as we do now. For example, any school, I mean we get together and it's shared out at one of the first meetings we have with the

superintendent. Here's how all the schools did. And one of the things that Compass also does, they've developed some regression charts that show how you did relative to the percentage of children on free and reduced meals. So, in other words, you may do really, really well, but you're at a school that's below the regression line, because you're in a very affluent area. Now you may not do quite as well, but you may still look respectable compared to the regression line, because considering the population that you work with, and you are being very effective. And so that data has gotten much more complicated (RE).

Compass ISD has aligned the standard of performance to the desired result of being a Recognized district and data is used to measure progress toward that goal. Principals are regularly informed of where they are in relation to the expectation and are provided the data necessary to measure their own progress which they are expected to use make informed decisions about their academic programs.

CONSEQUENCES

Consequences clarify those things that result from meeting or failing to meet the standards set for accountability. Reasons for the consequences should also be explicitly understood (Covey, 1991). Because of its tight focus on student achievement and the establishment of clear targets for each campus, there are a range of consequences utilized to help insure alignment with the district's desired

results. The most significant consequence imposed in Compass was described by Dr. Peoples,

It's the explanation of the expectation, and providing them with the support to do that, but then the understanding that if that's not accomplished, then you may or may not be a principal next year. In a district this large, it's been very few, but I have removed principals. I have put principals back in the classroom that just weren't getting the job done (JP).

Data from interviews revealed that the campus principals were fully aware of the potential consequences.

He actually called out school names, and said over here at whatever school it was, "You're going to need to work on this. You know your Economically Disadvantaged science here didn't get done. This one area, you're going to have to work on." We all knew, okay, "You know, I don't want to give my job up next year." But at the same time it's very clear, he's not messing around with it. He knows what each and every one of us has on our scores. He's very knowledgeable about that. He looks at each and everybody's scores. So we know that, and begin with everything that we do in every meeting that we have. It's just there.

Another principal described the feelings generated by publicly displaying the data from individual campuses in a public setting and possible reactions.

Yep, these are the numbers. And, of course, yeah, you know that all the schools are ranked by subject area, reading for example, third, fourth, fifth, and I mean it's right there. You can see where you fall, and so sometimes, ouch. How you react is based on your attitude. Because of your attitude, "Oh, we can do better than that." I know we can do better than that. Or, you think, "It's because of the kids that we get." Once you take that attitude, now it's over (RE).

The principal respondents also described a less significant range of consequences, both good and bad. One principal described how both the good and bad were used in the same context at approximately the same time. The events described by Slater's principal occurred as a part of the district's Data Day.

The fact that Dr. Peoples praises Slater for being recognized, is that he is not afraid to stand up and go, "But you're reading scores are way off the regression chart. Fix them." In the same meeting, in a 15 minute span, as he's praising us for being the only middle school that's done it (been Recognized) three years in a row. But then he's showing a map that's got me in the red, and says, "Erica, this is Slater. Fix it." In front of 70 some odd administrators. It's those kinds of things that they're going to do. Your strengths and they're going to point out your weaknesses, but do it in a good way. I didn't feel bad about it (SMS).

The principal went on to explain how she used the consequences at her campus to make needed improvements.

I was like, I needed to be called out. I know that's what my reading scores are, and honestly I wanted him to do it because then it made my reading teachers step up. When I can walk into them and say, 'I got called out at the district meeting in front of every administrator in this district that we're below the regression line,' gave me a little bit of power. Too, where I can walk in to another department, and say we're way above the regression line, we're doing fine, let's keep it up, what are we doing to stay there, let's keep doing it. So you get both aspects of it.

The superintendent explained that removal of the principal was not the first option and did not occur immediately. Support is always provided prior to such a move.

I think there has to be an understanding, an expectation, and everyone out there knows I'm a very kindhearted, compassionate person, but this is the expectation. And you give people time to try and achieve that expectation, but if they're not getting there, you move them. I can tell you, I have one school, I won't mention the name of the school, but the first three years I was here, it was horrible, I kept working it, I kept putting more resources there. I'd get more people, and just, it wasn't happening. And I just moved the principal out, and brought in another principal, the first year that other principal was in there, that I knew would get it done, the school was Recognized.

Data from the principal interviewees corroborated the superintendent's description of providing support before removing a principal. Schools that are not at the Recognized level receive greater attention and support from the central office, though the campuses selected for the study had received a Recognized rating. "If you know what the end results are going to be, and you can do it, then go get it. We'll give you the autonomy to do that. You're a professional, you know how to do it, and if you don't, we've got the help here" (LE).

Less successful campuses may not have as much autonomy and as a consequence, they are guided in their decisions by consultations from central office. Two of the principals described the support they received when they moved to new campuses, three years ago, as being similar to those who have not achieved academic success.

They come out to the campus, this is after the summer Data Day, and they come back and follow up, what'd you do with the data from Data Day? A number of people can come out from, obviously the Director of elementary Ed, maybe, sometimes the deputy. So they send out different people and they go over, okay, "What are you going to do? Let's look at your numbers from last year, from the last two years." They look to see how you do, how things are going, and what have you got going in reading. "How are you addressing it?"

I would bring in reading specialists, math specialists, those team leaders, counselors, vice principals, those facilitators. They're all in there

with me and it's kind of like congressional hearings or something. I haven't had one of those in a few years. My understanding is that they still do that, and in doing so, do your goal setting. Okay, here's what we are shooting for, come spring. They'll do that with campuses they feel they need to and, usually, with your new principals too. So, that trickles down to the teachers. They go back and explain what is expected, here's how we're supposed to do it (LE).

The second principal to have received such support described the situation from her first year at the campus similarly.

Instructionally, if my benchmark scores, like in my first year, weren't looking too good right off the bat, I'd get a little phone call from the Department of Instruction. So we'd talk and they'd come in and we'd talk about it, "Okay, let's talk about your reading. Tell us some of the things you're doing. You might want to do this, just as a support" (AE).

For the successful campuses included in this study there was always an awareness of possible consequences from benchmark scores. These consequences were generally viewed as supportive and non-punitive in nature. However, they were also perceived as an unwanted consequence. "I tell these teachers, and we've had them here, I kind of joke about it, and I say, 'We don't want central office here, people. We don't want the federales,' as I tell them, 'looking over our shoulders, seeing what we're doing. If we're doing a good job, they're going to stay away'" (LE).

The principals spoke of getting phone calls about benchmark results. The Slater Middle School principal described her method for dealing with such calls.

What I encourage my teachers to do, that if we don't get to something, and it's on that assessment, at least tell me up front, so that when that data comes in, I can say, yeah, we didn't get to this objective. If I get a phone call from central office, saying, "Why were your groups so low in this objective?" I go, "We didn't get to it yet. We're behind, we didn't get to it." But I want to know that before I get that phone call, because I will get that phone call occasionally, but not very often (SMS).

Logan's principal also related his method of dealing with a similar phone call. He began his story with his belief about support from the central administration.

"Don't look at their support as something that it's a good thing they're coming out to help us." Last year, second grade teachers, who aren't TAKS, well we just got slapped in the face because we came in like second from the bottom in our benchmark for second grade mathematics. And I get a phone call. And before the phone call I told them, I said, "I'm expecting a phone call ladies, it's that serious," and so it was a real eye-opener for us (LE).

The principal went on to describe the resultant conversation with the central office. "We had a meeting, and they were nice. They just came and, I think the central office staff knows me well, too, and trust me. 'All we need to do is go out there and monitor, and take care of this'" (LE).

A positive consequence of achieving the desired results in accountability was described by the principal of Ash. In discussing phone calls from the central administration about benchmark results, she suggested those did not come from Dr. Peoples directly.

If you get a call from Dr. Peoples, but he never directly (pause), he will directly to, often, to compliment. Always, always. When we came out, our first scores the first year I was here, I'm at a baseball game he comes over and congratulates me on my scores. Or, we got recognized, he gave me a phone call, very sweet. Stuff like that. He will, to compliment you. And thankfully I've never gotten any other kind of phone call, but I'm sure he makes those too. I'm sure he has to, but I haven't gotten one, but that's basically how it happens.

Results of this study revealed Dr. Peoples uses both negative and positive consequences to help principals stay focused on the intermediate vision of being a Recognized district. Though district support is generally viewed as a positive, when it comes as a result of failures it is perceived differently. Campus principals expressed a preference not to need such supports.

Campuses failing to meet the superintendent's expectations may face more radical sanctions, ranging from direct intervention in terms of the district level support to removal from the position of campus principal. Principals believe Dr. Peoples is willing to make such a change if he deems it necessary for the success of students.

Positive consequences result when campuses meet expectations. Forms of positive consequences can range widely. They may come in the form of public pronouncements by the superintendent on Data Day in front of the all of the district's other administrators, or they can come in a personal phone of congratulations.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed the research questions which framed the study, described the context of the district under study, provided contextual background information on the interviewees, and presented the elements of vision found in the district. The perceptions of the superintendent and principals were explored to determine the degree to which their visions were aligned. The semi-structured interviews revealed a shared vision that had been articulated and demonstrated through six related methods. These tools of alignment were utilized by the superintendent and his leadership team to align his vision to those being sought at the campus level.

In discussing methods of data analysis, Bogdan and Biklen suggest the researcher should be exploring the literature while still in the field (1992). In the course of conducting this study the researcher discovered an alignment of several emergent themes with what Covey had described as features of an empowered organization. These five features, desired results, guidelines, resources,

accountability, and consequences combined with a communications strategy to serve as categories for coding data gathered from the field.

The study revealed a superintendent and principals both focused on providing “What’s best for kids” and being the “Best” at whatever they were doing. This vision was fostered by the expectation of being a Recognized district as well as each campus achieving Recognized status. The study describes the strategies utilized for achieving this alignment.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

*One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes.
From *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*

Over the past two decades, the context of education in America has changed, as have the expectations for schools. A different type of education is needed to meet the changing needs of a changing society (Blankstein, 2004; Fullan, 2003a). Few issues in our nation's history have generated as much ferment as education has over the past two decades (Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, Harvey & Koff, 2005). A global economy, changing demographics and increasing accountability standards have all had an impact (Schlechty, 2001; Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005).

The primary responsibility of a school district's superintendent has shifted in this new era, and a heightened interest in superintendent leadership comes at a time when demands have never been greater (Pardini & Lewis, 2003). Previous conceptions of the superintendent as an "implementer of policy established by the board of education is far too simplistic" (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990, p. xii). Society's changing needs, combined with the moral imperative to increase student achievement and eliminate achievement gaps, are viewed by urban superintendents as the one challenge they were hired to overcome. They also feel "it may well be the major indicator of their effectiveness in the local judgment"

(Fuller, 2003, p. 46). Konnert and Augenstein (1990) suggest the “primary responsibilities of the superintendent are to provide leadership in establishing a vision for the educational organization and then converting this vision into a set of goals and priorities for the organization” (p. 11).

This research aimed to examine the depth of alignment between a district’s vision, as shared by the superintendent and campus principals in a large, successful urban district. A shared vision may not manifest itself in a document, but is “a common agreement about values, an agreement that forms a collective sense of identity and purpose” (Cambron-McCabe, et al., 2005, p. 50). A shared vision is a reflection of what is valued. Those values are not “simply goals or outcomes; values are a deeper sense of what is important” (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 26). They “focus attention and define success” (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 26). The study conducted by Deal and Petersen (1999) found the successful superintendents communicated their vision of excellent teaching and learning through continual communication with principals. Carter, Glass and Hord (1993) describe the importance of utilizing principals to carry the message to each individual school in the district. In order to study the relationship of a shared vision as articulated by a superintendent and the implications for implementation at the campus level the following three questions were developed and utilized to guide the research process.

1. What does the superintendent perceive the essential components of the district’s vision to be?

2. What do the principals perceive the essential components of the district's vision to be?
3. Are the principal's perceptions of the vision aligned with the perceptions of the superintendent?

STUDY DESIGN

In order to investigate the above research questions in depth and detail, the researcher used a qualitative methodology and a single case study design. Data were gathered primarily through interviews. Additional data came from an examination of district documents. The additional data helped to clarify and support the information gleaned from the interview process.

THE DISTRICT

A purposive method was used in the selection of the district studied. The selected district, Compass ISD, met the following criteria:

- 1) being a Recognized district in the state of Texas for the 2005-2006 school year as measured by the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System,
- 2) having an enrollment over 10,000 students Average Daily Attendance (ADA), and
- 3) having a student population that closely reflects the student population percentages of the state of Texas.

In addition, Compass ISD met the criteria of being a Broad Prize finalist. Each year 100 large urban districts with high minority, low-income populations are determined to be eligible for the Broad Prize. Eligibility criteria included all twenty-five districts nationwide with more than 100,000 students, all K-12 districts serving between 35,000 and 99,999 students with at least forty percent of the eligible enrollment identified as Economically Disadvantaged.

Once eligibility is determined, four years of data is collected on these districts. The type of data collected includes reading and math test scores from elementary, middle and high schools in each district. The data collected also includes SAT and ACT scores and demographic information about the district's student population. The data is then analyzed by the National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) to assess performance growth within the district. Statewide comparisons to districts with similar demographics are also included in the data collection process.

A board of fourteen reviews the data and selects five finalists. The review board has several former superintendents, university professors and foundation representatives as its members. A team of practitioners and researchers conduct site visits to each of the finalist districts to gather additional quantitative and qualitative data. From the collective data a committee of nine selects a winner from the five. The stated purpose of the annual award is to honor "large urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and

improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among poor and minority students” (Leeping & Gonzales, 2007, ¶ 1).

The Broad Foundation’s mission is to make significant improvements in K-12 urban public education by addressing better governance, management, labor relations and competition (Leeping & Gonzalez, 2007). At the time of the study, Compass ISD was one of only twenty-five school districts selected as finalists for the Broad Prize since its inception in 2002. The Broad Foundation’s inclusion of Compass ISD further demonstrates their success as a large urban district.

THE SUPERINTENDENT

The superintendent of Compass ISD was selected through a purposeful and nonrandom process. Patton (1990) suggests the participants in qualitative research should be purposefully chosen. The superintendent in this research met or exceeded all the criteria established for selection. Superintendent Peoples’ tenure as superintendent in the district being studied has been longer than three years. During his tenure the district had more than 10,000 students ADA and more than twenty percent of the students identified as Economically Disadvantaged. The achievement levels of students in the district have increased over the term of the superintendent, while closing the gap between historically underachieving minority students and those identified as Economically Disadvantaged. The superintendent was interviewed one-on-one with a semi-structured set of guiding questions.

THE PRINCIPALS

As with the superintendent, all principals interviewed for this study met or exceeded the pre-established criteria for selection. All interviewees served campuses with a higher proportion of minority and Economically Disadvantaged students than the district average and all but one was the leader of a Recognized campus. There were no high schools within the district that achieved Recognized status for the 2005-2006 school year. Questions for the campus principals were generated after interviewing the superintendent. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in a environment in their office at a time convenient to them.

ANALYSIS

The interviews conducted for this study were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were coded using an open method, allowing themes to emerge. Responses were assigned to appropriate categories and then analyzed for differences and similarities. The results of the analysis were presented in Chapter Four. Every effort was made to ensure the descriptions provided offer a robust view of each theme described.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Thomas (2000, p. 24) aligns purpose and vision, which provide “a target that could align the efforts of different people to solve problems and cooperate.” The role of a superintendent is to articulate the vision in a way that affirms the school’s guiding values, beliefs and its sense of purpose. The vision serves to

clarify important educational issues and is relevant to the context of the community. Gladwell has suggested “the power of context says that what really matters is little things” (2000, p. 150). Changing beliefs and behavior requires the creation of a “community around them” (p.173). The beliefs and values help define the purpose, which becomes the source of the vision. The purpose and vision are both championed by the superintendent, “in word and in deed” (Johnson, 1996, p. 88).

People rarely make changes by rational decision-making processes, but rather in a see-feel-change sequence (Kotter and Cohen, 2002). The role of the leader is to help people work through a process that Kotter and Cohen see as:

1. Help people see (new possibilities and situations)

As a result

2. Seeing something new hits the emotions
3. Emotionally charged ideas change behavior (p. 11).

The context, Fullan argues, “is social, not individual” (2003, p. 2).

A common purpose becomes a critical ingredient in building a community of responsibility (Sergiovanni, 2005). Such communities have as their “frame and glue” (p. 55) common understandings. The members of this community of responsibility “share enough of a common focus, they also feel obliged to embody this focus in their behavior” (p. 56). Elmore (2000) asserts “the ‘glue’ of a common task or goal” and “a common frame of values for how to approach that task (p. 15)” are essential elements of effective leadership.

Though the Board Policy (AE) of Compass ISD suggests the board and superintendent collaborate on a written Vision Statement, the researcher found no evidence of anything that could be identified as a formal Vision Statement. Despite the lack of an official document, the principals interviewed for this study suggested the superintendent had a vision, one widely shared. The lack of any formal statement may have advantages in the case being studied.

Bolman and Deal advise that, “condensing intangible values into accessible prose is difficult” (2006, p.151). Any attempt at trying to articulate a specific vision may not generate the desired results. Thomas asserts, “vision statements can’t be enacted by fiat and pushed down through the organization” (2000, p. 25). The result of such an effort might be compliance, but without passion. Instead, it is suggested, purpose inspires commitment. “Vision and culture are personal values put into action” (Block, 1993, p. 204). It is further suggested, “Ownership resides only with those who craft and create a vision” (p. 191).

For the superintendent’s vision to be aligned with those at the campus level the superintendent must generate shared values and beliefs. The culture that develops an aligned vision is generated by a sense of higher purpose and deeper values (Block, 1993 & Thomas, 2000). To be a successful school district in the twenty-first century, the superintendent must nurture commitment (Schlechty, 2005).

All principals interviewed agreed the superintendent had a vision that was widely shared, based on a sense of deep purpose and values, and to which they were committed. “We want to be the best. And do everything the best,” (AE) is how one principal characterized the vision. The superintendent embodies this vision in a variety of ways. The empowerment of principals to achieve the vision offers the greatest evidence of alignment in Compass ISD. What are essentially contracts between the superintendent and the campus principal are developed as an extension of the vision through five structures described by Covey (1991) as:

Desired results: Goals and objectives to fulfill the shared vision

Guidelines: Parameters within which results are to be accomplished

Resources: The technical, human, financial or organizational support available to help achieve the desired results

Accountability: Which data will be used and the standards to be met in measuring progress toward vision achievement

Consequences: What will happen, good or bad, as a result of meeting or failing to meet agreed upon accountability standards.

Data revealed that these aspects of superintendent leadership played a significant part in the alignment of the superintendent’s vision with the vision being pursued on successful campuses. The five components were all recurrent themes that emerged from the data. The data revealed communication as a sixth and overarching feature of leadership that focused the campuses on the superintendent’s high expectations and sense of moral purpose. These

communications served to highlight the desired results, resources available, accountability and consequences.

COMMUNICATIONS

The most significant feature of superintendent leadership was found to be the communications strategy implemented throughout the district.

Communication was found to be nearly constant and with high expectations always a part of every mode of communication. The ubiquitous expectations lead to the perception of a shared understanding by the principals. Despite a lack of an overt statement of vision, all respondents suggested there was a vision and each held the belief they knew what it was. Their descriptions came from language repeatedly used by the superintendent, but never in a formalized statement of vision, belief or values. The language used was seen as a reflection of expectations in those areas, and became commonly held perceptions.

The researcher discovered many modes of communication being utilized to build commitment and a sense of moral purpose. The district's theme or motto for the year during which this study was conducted was "We Are Compass." This statement was introduced at each of nine "back to school" convocations and included in many of the superintendent's written communications. A weekly newsletter to all employees described how the decision of a local government agency made had negative implications for the district. After questioning the decision-making process of the agency, the superintendent concluded with, "We Are [Compass], and at least we recognize that!"

The superintendent's use of the unifying theme for the year, "We Are Compass," works to create a common understanding and develop a shared cultural identity. This shared understanding exemplifies the type of school culture Sergiovanni described as communities. Communities are defined as "collections of individuals who are bonded together" by a "set of shared ideas and ideals" (1996, p. 48). These bonds develop a group of individuals into a collective "we." This community provides its members a sense of belonging, involvement and identity. The resultant relationships form the basis of community as moral enterprise. These communities form the foundations for making visions work (Sergiovanni, 2005).

Other messages from the superintendent appeal more directly to the commitment of individuals within the organization. The appeal expounds the superintendent's vision to "be the best," as defined by the principal of Ash Elementary. It also offers a commitment and assumes one in return. This part of weekly correspondence is an example of the superintendent building community while simultaneously building on the vision of being the best:

As I wrote this Monday Message and reflected on many of the successes of this past year in [Compass], I became somewhat emotional thinking about the tremendous staff we have in this district and how hard everyone works to make this school district the best. I do not get to work with each of you on a day-to-day basis, but those I do work with daily exemplify excellence and a work ethic that is second to none. I know that

they are examples of what each and everyone of you do every day. As I look to 2008 I can only resolve that I will continue to work my hardest and dedicate myself to making all programs in [Compass] more successful and make this district even better than it is. I know you will resolve the same!

(JP - MM)

Writing in this fashion makes a declaration of the superintendent's vision. "This declaration of a desired future creates the conditions for having an aligned team"

(Block, 1987).

DESIRED RESULTS

Achieving "Recognized" status as a district was perceived by principals as being a very important part of the superintendent's vision. Recognized status was a demonstration of actively pursuing the vision of being the best. As one principal put it, "...in everything that we do, we want to do it the best way that we can, because of what it means for kids (AE)." Respondents suggested the desired results could differ somewhat from campus to campus. Campuses with low numbers of Economically Disadvantaged students were expected to perform at higher levels with fewer resources than were those referred to as Title I campuses. Campuses serving affluent students were expected to meet the state's Exemplary standard.

GUIDELINES

Compass ISD utilized a strategic planning process to set priorities related to their vision, mission and beliefs. With input from district stakeholders, central office staff developed objectives under those priorities and district staff developed annual activities to address each objective. Campus improvement plans and initiatives were required to align with the district plan, as a means of establishing uniformity between the superintendent's vision and the vision of each campus principal.

Campuses were granted a great deal of flexibility in determining how to achieve their desired results. "Yes you can do this and this, but it has to keep aligned with what it is that Compass wants. There is that freedom to do that, and it's got to show that it's working. So that is a big, big thing" (AE). This was the case for the successful campuses that were selected to be a part of this study, though principal respondents indicated the flexibility they enjoyed may not be universal.

RESOURCES

The alignment of resources to the vision emerged as a common theme among respondents. Among the resources most discussed were professional development and staffing positions. Compass has a significant staff development department. The superintendent suggested the department was good upon his arrival in the district. The superintendent believes the changes under his leadership changed the focus to reflect his belief, "we're going to put our

resources where we identify the weaknesses in this district are (S 1).” He added, “It was an aligning process (S 1).”

Because of their higher than average number of Economically Disadvantaged students, campuses included in the study were identified as Title I within the district. “Being a Title I campus, we had extra resources (MS 1).” Title I campuses were able to utilize funds, as deemed appropriate, to meet the needs of significant populations of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Many used the funds to pay for additional instructional staff, while one used the funds to pay for *Success for All*, upon the retirement of two of his reading specialists.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Data was widely perceived as the most influential force driving decisions at both the campus and district levels. The district holds a “Data Day” each summer where all district and campus data was shared. As Collins (2001) suggests, successful organizations confront the brutal facts with an eye toward improvement. Each principal was given a binder with the data from their campus and all other campuses. The superintendent addresses all principals and was widely perceived to be in command of all the data being presented.

It was generally understood that most were expected to be identified as a Recognized campus. When the district lost its Recognized status, it was because of the percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students failing to meet standards in Science. All principals interviewed mentioned the fact, as it had been

pointed out by the superintendent at Data Day and on several other occasions, such as monthly meetings.

The activities and initiatives included in the district's strategic action plan were a result of the data generated from the statewide TAKS assessment. Campus Improvement Plans were designed to develop campus strategies to improve student achievement as well. Targets were set as a part of the planning process, with periodic benchmark assessments given during the course of the year as formative assessments. Campuses and grade levels were expected to be on target or showing growth from previous data.

CONSEQUENCES

Campus principals were acutely aware of the consequences, both good and bad, that would result from the disaggregation of student achievement data. Performing below expectations on the benchmark assessments would result in a phone call from an assistant superintendent, and depending on the response from the principal, could result in central office intervening. Data Day was also mentioned frequently as a motivating factor. Principals recognized the importance of doing well to earn plaudits at the district-wide meeting. They were also aware that the superintendent would mention specific campus deficits and point out certain levels of underachievement where they could no longer be tolerated.

It was known some principals had been removed from their positions and returned to the classroom. Additional resources and support were provided prior

to making such moves, but if expectations were not met, the resulting consequences would be significant.

CONCLUSIONS

The superintendent of Compass ISD has worked to create a shared vision that includes a culture of high expectations through the establishment and communication of a moral purpose. The constant is remembering “we're here for one reason and that's to teach kids (S 1).” To accomplish this objective, he communicates frequently and through many modalities. It is through these communications the superintendent has built relationships with the principals interviewed, who all felt they understood and respected the superintendent. These relationships allow the superintendent to “maintain clarity and constancy of purpose and to face the data and the fears” (Blankstein, 2004, p. 28).

There is also a mutual understanding between all interviewed concerning the desired results, the resources available to achieve those results, the data to be used to measure progress toward those results and an awareness of what will happen as a result of evaluation of the results, the consequences. These shared understandings have resulted in the superintendent and principals mutual vision for the district's success. As a result, Compass ISD has been able to become a high achieving, large, urban district.

LIMITATIONS

Some of the limitations of this study are a result of the site selected for study. A single site was selected to provide focus in the generation of data, but different themes of vision may emerge in different settings. The district selected for study focused its vision on being the “best” district, which was to be achieved through a focus on teaching and learning, and measured by student achievement. The author noted in previewing other eligible districts that many framed their vision in similar terms, while others framed their stated vision in terms of the student outcomes only, ignoring district outcomes.

Another site limitation stems from the criterion of being a relatively “successful” district. The assertion about shared visions by Louis and Miles was “that few really excellent schools lack them” (1990, p. 219). Therefore, transferring their findings to the district level would seem most appropriate in the study of a successful district. The campuses selected were also successful and a limitation for the same reason. Within the district there were examples of unsuccessful schools, but it was determined a study of successful campuses would better allow the emergence of those components of vision most critical to success.

Another of the study’s limitations could be ascribed to the fact the focus was limited to campus principals and the superintendent of the district. The inclusion of teachers at the selected campuses may have proven helpful in determining the depth of alignment. Inclusion of other personnel at the district level may have also added valuable information about their roles in the alignment

process. Finally, inclusion of other stakeholders, from board members and community members to non-instructional personnel such as secretaries and custodial staff may have generated conflicting or confirming data.

Choosing to study “vision” itself may also have been a limitation. As discussed in Chapter Two, there are many conceptions of vision. Lashway admitted “the concept of vision has always been somewhat fuzzy around the edges” (1997a, p. 2). As Ylimaki (2006) discovered, there are at least two “dominant definitions of vision in educational leadership literature” (p.621). One definition focuses on the “leader’s ability to foresee a compelling future image of an organization” (p. 622). The other dominant conception argues “vision means clear and measurable goals that guide organizational members’ efforts throughout a change process” (p. 623). In this study, the vision emerged as a combination of both. Though the compelling image was not of a distant future, focusing on believable and achievable successes may be the most likely way to inspire the necessary commitment of those who would be called upon to implement the strategies and activities required to bring the vision to fruition. Compass ISD, like most large urban districts, has struggled to significantly close the gap in student achievement. The context is an important consideration for the type of vision generated.

A final set of limitations lies in the biases of the researcher. As a resident of the district under study, I have been exposed to a great deal of background information about the district’s operations and culture and these insights may

have assisted or hindered the research. Another personal bias comes from the engrained belief that leadership, encompassed by such features as vision, purpose and commitment, may have more to do with the success of an organization than generally acknowledged. The impact of a “soft” feature of leadership, like vision, is certainly more difficult to assess and study, but as we move from an era of compliance to an era of engagement, those features become more critical to our understandings of organizational success.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The most obvious recommendation for further research would be an inquiry into the vision alignment of schools that were less successful in a similar district, to discover which components of vision-sharing were in place and which might be missing. Other extensions of the current research might examine permutations of similar studies in a variety of settings. Among the possibilities to be considered are successful schools in less than successful districts or an examination of studying teachers on successful campuses to examine the depth of a vision’s reach.

A critical responsibility of the superintendent is providing leadership to establish vision, purpose and meaning as a precondition for change (Fullan, 2001). Additional research is needed to understand the relationship between vision, purpose and meaning. An understanding of the interaction and overlap between the three will help clarify the differences and similarities between the

terms, their functionality, and varied effects on the success of the district under study.

Further research is indicated in each of the six areas which emerged as the tools of alignment. For example, Drews and Byrd (2006) reported no relationship could be found between resource allocation to classroom instruction and student achievement. A negative relationship was reported between expenditures on leadership, both campus and district, and student achievement. Alignment of resources to a focused vision was not a variable in their study. Resource alignment and its impact on student achievement would provide valuable information for policymakers and school leaders alike.

REFLECTIONS

While my understanding of the role of vision was enhanced greatly by conducting research in Compass ISD, my learning was not limited to vision. The components of alignment manifested in the district contributed to making the vision a plausible achievement and not just a plate of platitudes. Those components: defining the desired results; identification, alignment and allocation of resources; use of data as a method of accountability; and conveying the knowledge of both good and bad consequences of achievement were illustrated in a variety of ways. Most significantly, the study of the superintendent as a person who manages to communicate in way that makes him “known” and his expectations understood to so many employees, was a discovery I did not foresee.

The focus of superintendent and principals in Compass is on making the district the “best” “because of what it means for kids” (AE). While there was no apparent evidence of a formal vision statement and there was little more than a superficial awareness of the mission and belief statements, there was a clear belief that a vision was driving the efforts of those interviewed. Vision in this case was more than a compelling view of the future of the school or the district. It was a compelling view of one’s best self. I met and interviewed people who were servants to the idea and beliefs of hope.

Educators are a diverse group who are driven by a variety of personal motivations. To be a successful educator may require a vision, but at a deeper level success may require a sense of moral purpose and commitment. Working in tandem, these personal qualities serve to keep the vision in focus.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE LETTER

I am a candidate for a doctoral degree in Educational Administration at the University of Texas at Austin and a fellow in the seventeenth cycle of the Cooperative Superintendency Program. The purpose of this letter is to request the participation of the superintendent and five campus principals of your school district in a study that examines the concept of “vision” and the strength of the alignment between the two perspectives. Your district was selected because of the significant number of economically disadvantaged students served by the district combined with its status of having earned the Texas Education Agency rating as *Recognized* for the 2005-06 school year. This research is being conducted as partial fulfillment of the requirement of my doctoral treatise.

By participating in this study, the superintendent and five campus principals will contribute to research that will highlight the importance of sharing a vision and its contribution to your district’s success. If you agree to participate in this research, you are committing to the following:

I would like to schedule a one-hour interview with the superintendent and a one-hour interview with five campus principals to gain different perspectives on the elements of vision shared by the individual participants. The interviews will be scheduled through the offices of the superintendent and the individual principals. Each interview will be conducted separately. All data collected will be at a location convenient to the individual participant and will be recorded, transcribed and coded. At the conclusion of the research, the recordings will be destroyed. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

The results of this study will be disseminated in a variety of formats to enable educators and researchers to benefit from the experiences, knowledge, and expertise of the superintendent and campus principals concerning the effective sharing of vision in an academically high achieving, large Texas school district.

Please be aware that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may discontinue participation at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your future relationship with the University of Texas at Austin. If you have any questions about this study, please email Randy Ewing at randyewing@mail.utexas.edu, my faculty sponsor, Dr. Ruben Olivarez at rolivarez@austin.utexas.edu, or Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, at 512-232-2685.

Sincerely,

Randy Ewing
Doctoral Candidate, The University of Texas at Austin

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

Signature of Participant

Title

Date

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: SUPERINTENDENT

Name: _____	Position: _____	Date: _____
Ethnicity: _____	Gender: _____	Age: 25-35 35-45 45-55 55+
Highest Degree: _____	Years with District: _____	Years as Superintendent: _____
Years as Superintendent with current District: _____		
Experience/Years as a:		
Classroom Teacher: _____	Asst. Principal: _____	Principal: _____ Administrator: _____
District Enrollment: _____	Number of Campuses: _____	ES _____ MS _____ HS _____ Alt. _____
Demographics: % Afr. Am.: _____	% Hisp: _____	% White: _____ % Other _____ %
Eco. Disad.: _____	Number of Teachers: _____	
Formal district "Vision Statement" Yes _____ No _____ Supporting Documents Available:		

1. Tell me about your background in education.
2. How did you conceive your role when you first became a superintendent?
3. How has your conception of the role changed?
4. How do you see the role of "vision" in this district?
5. Who was involved in its development?
6. There can be visions that characterize the District and visions that detail hopes for the Students.
 - a. What types of descriptors would illustrate your aspirations for the students of the district?
 - b. How close do you feel the district is to fulfilling the vision for your students?

- c. How do you measure how close you are?
 - d. What kind of strategies do you utilize to help you close the gap?
 - e. How would you characterize your vision for the district? (e.g. destination district; collaboration of multiple communities; or the envy of Texas)
 - f. How close do you feel the district is to fulfilling the vision for its image?
 - g. How do you measure how close you are?
 - h. What kind of strategies do you utilize to help you close the gap?
7. There are several functions that go into the running of a successful school district, all of which exist to support teaching and learning.
- a. What image do you have about what constitutes good teaching?
 - b. What are students doing when they learn best?
 - c. What kinds of strategies does the district use to move toward the image?
 - d. How do you know if the strategies are having the desired effect?
8. What should quality staff development look like?
9. What communication strategies do you use to communicate the district's vision with campus principals?
- a. Are there meetings?
 - b. What types of written communications are used? (e.g. emails, newsletters, statements, press releases)
 - c. Is it reflected in the professional learning of principals? (e.g. principal conferences, academies, learning communities)
10. Are there any other activities/practices you utilize to keep principals focused on achieving the vision?

- a. Goal setting & monitoring
 - i. Non-negotiables re: Achievement & Instruction
 - ii. Monitoring goals re: Achievement & Instruction
- b. Resource allocation (budget)

11. How often do you estimate “the message” is communicated to principals?
12. With all the other functions of your role demanding your attention, what do you do to keep your focus on the stewardship of teaching and learning?
13. Is there anything else you’d like to share about the role of vision in the district?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: PRINCIPALS

Name: _____	Position: _____	Date: _____
Ethnicity: _____	Gender: _____	Age: 25-35 35-45 45-55 55+
Highest Degree: _____	Years with District: _____	Years as Principal: _____
Years as Principal with current District: _____		
Experience/Years as a:		
Classroom Teacher: _____	Asst. Principal: _____	Principal: _____ Administrator: _____
Campus Enrollment: _____	Type of Campus: ES ___ MS ___ HS ___ Alt. ___	
Demographics: % Afr. Am.: _____ % Hisp: _____ % White: _____ % Other _____ %		
Eco. Disad.: _____	Number of Teachers: _____	
Separate campus "Vision Statement" Yes ___ No ___ Supporting Documents Available:		

1. Tell me about your background in education.
2. How did you conceive your role when you first became a principal?
3. How has your conception of the role changed?
4. With all that comes at you, how do you maintain focus on what's really important?
5. How would you describe the culture of the district?
6. Where do you think the culture comes from?
7. Is the culture communicated to you?
8. Are the district's mission and beliefs a part of the communication process?

9. Where does that communication come from?
10. Do the district's mission and beliefs have an impact on the work you do at the campus level?
11. Did you have a role in their development? Is that an important consideration?
12. Do you use them in leading your faculty, or do you use something different to help guide your team?
13. How are expectations communicated to you?
14. What is your feeling about the superintendent?
 - a. Is your relationship personal or perceived?
15. How familiar are you with the district's strategic plan?
 - a. Does it effect what you do on a daily basis?
 - b. Do you have any input into the plan, or the initiatives it generates?
16. What elements are to be included in your campus plan which are determined or driven by the district's strategic action plan?
17. How are performance objectives, or standards, or expectations communicated or developed?
18. How does the district use data?
 - a. Is it a collaborative process?
19. How are the district's resources allocated?
 - a. Is there an alignment with the goals?
 - b. Are initiatives (i.e. staff development) aligned with the goals, beliefs and mission?
20. What communication strategies does the district use to communicate the district's vision, mission, beliefs or culture of high expectations to the campus?
 - a. Are there meetings?

- b. What types of written communications are used? (e.g. emails, newsletters, statements, press releases)
 - c. Is it reflected in the professional learning of principals? (e.g. principal conferences, academies, learning communities)
21. How often do you estimate “the message” is communicated to principals?
22. Are there any other activities/practices utilized by the district to keep you, as campus principal, focused on the district’s mission?
- a. Goal setting & monitoring
 - i. Non-negotiables re: Achievement & Instruction
 - ii. Monitoring goals re: Achievement & Instruction
 - b. Resource allocation (budget)
23. Does the district have a shared vision of what it is to become?
24. Do you have a vision for your campus?

APPENDIX D

COMPASS ISD DISTRICT PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Table 8 - District Performance Summary Report

State of Texas District 2006-2007 District Performance Summary Report

District: Compass ISD			
Accountability Rating: Acceptable			
	District	State Average	Order
Demographics (2006-07)			(Out of 1222)
Total Number of Students 2006-07	81,861	n/a	5
Preliminary Wealth per WADA 2006-07	\$194,563	\$215,817	371
Percent African American	8.00%	14.4%	456
Percent Hispanic	62.3%	46.3%	220
Percent White	26.2%	35.7%	923
Percent Asian/Pacific Islander	3.20%	3.30%	91
Percent Native American	0.30%	0.30%	515
Percent Economically Disadvantaged	46.3%	55.5%	833
Academic Performance 2006-07²			
<i>Percent Meeting 2006-07 Accountability Standards in:</i>			
Reading/Eng Lang Arts	92.0%	89.0%	420
Mathematics	81.0%	77.0%	436
Writing	94.0%	92.0%	312
Science	80.0%	71.0%	289
Social Studies	94.0%	89.0%	235
All Tests	75.0%	70.0%	381

Percent Tested in TAKS/TAKS-I/SDAA II/ 2006-07	98.1%	97.7%	781
Dropout Rate 2005-06 ³	0.20	0.40	848
Completion Rate 2005-06 ⁴	90.30	88.90	706
Attendance Rate 2005-06	95.50	95.50	801
Number of Academically Unacceptable Campuses 2006-07	0	n/a	n/a
Staffing Information 2006-07			
Student/Teacher Ratio	15.67	14.69	162
Student/Staff Ratio	7.54	7.46	285
Superintendent Salary	\$241,565	\$102,644	20
Financial Performance (Actual 2005-06)			
Percent Spent on Instruction	60.3%	57.5%	221
Per Pupil Expenditures	\$3,544	\$4,294	829
Fund Balance (%) of Total Expenditure	9.12%	17.9%	1,007
Tax Rates 2006-07			
Maintenance & Operations (M&O)	1.33	1.33	672
Interest & Sinking Funds (I&S)	0.26	0.12	120
Total Rate	1.59	1.45	161
Percent Total Tax Rate Difference 2006-07	-0.11	-0.07	958

1. For all fields (except Dropout Rate) districts are ordered from highest to lowest. For Dropout Rate, districts are ordered from lowest to highest.
2. Data with non-specific or non-numeric values have been masked to comply with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
For a detailed explanation of masking, refer to: Explanation of AEIS Masking Rules at: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/2007/masking.html>
3. Dropout rates are calculated only for the 7th and 8th grades.
4. Completion rates reflect the percentage of high school students graduating or continuing high school beyond their senior year.

(Texas Education Agency, 2008)

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/school.finance/forecasting/summaries/district_summary_0607.html

APPENDIX E

STATE OF TEXAS RATINGS

Table 9 - State of Texas Ratings Categories
State of Texas District 2005-2006 Requirements for Each Rating Category

	Academically Acceptable	Recognized	Exemplary
Base Indicators			
<p><i>TAKS (2005-06)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students and each student group meeting minimum size: • African American • Hispanic • White • Econ. Disadv. 	<p>meets each standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading/ELA... 60% • Writing..... 60% • Social Studies.. 60% • Mathematics.... 40% • Science..... 35% <p>OR meets Required Improvement</p>	<p>meets 70% standard for each subject</p> <p>OR meets 65% floor and Required Improvement</p>	<p>meets 90% standard for each subject</p>
<p><i>SDAA II (2006)</i> All students (if meets minimum size criteria)</p>	<p>meets 50% standard (<i>Met ARD Expectations</i>) OR meets Required Improvement</p>	<p>meets 70% standard (<i>Met ARD Expectations</i>) OR meets 65% floor and Required Improvement</p>	<p>meets 90% standard (<i>Met ARD Expectations</i>)</p>
<p><i>Completion Rate I (class of 2005)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students and each student group meeting minimum size: • African American • Hispanic • White • Econ. Disadv. 	<p>meets 75.0% standard OR meets Required Improvement</p>	<p>meets 85.0% standard OR meets 80.0% floor and Required Improvement</p>	<p>meets 95.0% standard</p>

	Academically Acceptable	Recognized	Exemplary
<p>Annual Dropout Rate (2004-05)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students and each student group meeting minimum size: • African American • Hispanic • White • Econ. Disadv. 	<p>meets 1.0% standard OR meets Required Improvement</p>	<p>meets 0.7% standard OR meets 0.9% floor and Required Improvement</p>	<p>meets 0.2% standard</p>
Additional Provisions			
Exceptions	<p>Applied if district/campus would be <i>Academically Unacceptable</i> due to not meeting the <i>Academically Acceptable</i> criteria on up to 3 test measures. (See detailed explanation.)</p>	<p>Exceptions cannot be used to move to a rating of <i>Recognized</i>.</p>	<p>Exceptions cannot be used to move to a rating of <i>Exemplary</i>.</p>
<p>Check for Academically Unacceptable Campuses (District only)</p>	<p>Does not apply to <i>Academically Acceptable</i> districts.</p>	<p>A district with a campus rated <i>Academically Unacceptable</i> cannot be rated <i>Recognized</i>.</p>	<p>A district with a campus rated <i>Academically Unacceptable</i> cannot be rated <i>Exemplary</i>.</p>
<p>Underreported Students (District only)</p>	<p>Does not apply to <i>Academically Acceptable</i> districts.</p>	<p>A district that underreports more than 100 students or more than 2.0% of its prior year students cannot be rated <i>Recognized</i>.</p>	<p>A district that underreports more than 100 students or more than 2.0% of its prior year students cannot be rated <i>Exemplary</i>.</p>

(Texas Education Agency, 2006)

APPENDIX F

COMPASS ISD POLICIES RELATED TO VISION

Compass ISD
123456
EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

AE
(LEGAL)

The Board shall adopt a vision statement and comprehensive goals for the District and the Superintendent. *Education Code 11.1511(b)(2)*

STATEMENT AND GOALS
DATE ISSUED: 10/5/2007
UPDATE 81
AE(LEGAL)-P

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Compass ISD
123456

SUPERINTENDENT
QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES

BJA
(LEGAL)

QUALIFICATIONS	<p>The qualifications for Superintendent must permit a candidate for certification to substitute management training or experience for educational experience. <i>Education Code 21.046</i></p>
DUTIES	<p>The Superintendent shall be the educational leader and chief executive officer of the District. <i>Education Code 11.201(a)</i></p> <p>The duties of the Superintendent include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Assuming administrative responsibility and leadership for the planning, organization, operation, supervision, and evaluation of the education programs, services, and facilities of the District and for the annual performance appraisal of the District's staff.2. Except as provided by Education Code 11.202, assuming administrative authority and responsibility for the assignment and evaluation of all personnel of the District other than the Superintendent.3. Overseeing compliance with the standards for school facilities established by the Commissioner under Education Code 46.008.4. Initiating the termination or suspension of an employee or the nonrenewal of an employee's term contract. [See DF series]5. Managing the day-to-day operations of the District as its administrative manager, including implementing and monitoring plans, procedures, programs, and systems to achieve clearly defined and desired results in major areas of District operations.6. Preparing and submitting to the Board a proposed budget and administering the budget.7. Preparing recommendations for policies to be adopted by the Board and overseeing the implementation of adopted policies.8. Developing or causing to be developed appropriate administrative regulations to implement policies established by the Board.9. Providing leadership for the attainment and, if necessary, improvement of student performance in the District based on the state's academic excellence

indicators and other indicators as may be adopted by the State Board of Education or the Board.

10. Organizing the District's central administration.

11. Consulting with the District-level committee as required under Education Code 11.252(f).

12. Ensuring:

a. Adoption of a Student Code of Conduct as required under Education Code 37.001 and enforcement of that Code of Conduct; and

b. Adoption and enforcement of other student disciplinary rules and procedures as necessary.

13. Submitting reports as required by state or federal law, rule, or regulation.

14. Providing joint leadership with the Board to ensure that the responsibilities of the Board and Superintendent team are carried out.

15. Performing any other duties assigned by action of the Board. *Education Code 11.201(d)*

16. On a day-to-day basis, ensuring the implementation of the policies created by the Board. *Education Code 11.1512(a)*

COLLABORATION WITH THE BOARD

The Board and the Superintendent shall work together to:

1. Advocate for the high achievement of all District students;
2. Create and support connections with community organizations to provide community-wide support for the high achievement of all District students;
3. Provide educational leadership for the District, including leadership in developing the District vision statement and long-range educational plan [see AE];
4. Establish Districtwide policies and annual goals that are tied directly to the District's vision statement and long-range educational plan;
5. Support the professional development of principals, teachers, and other staff; and
6. Periodically evaluate Board and Superintendent leadership, governance, and teamwork.

Education Code 11.1512(b)

Compass ISD

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SUPERINTENDENT

QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES

BJA
(LOCAL)

DUTIES

In addition to performing statutory duties [see BJA preceding], the Superintendent shall also perform the following duties.

INSTRUCTIONAL
MANAGEMENT

The Superintendent shall promote improvement of instruction through activities such as the following:

1. Be informed about all aspects of the instructional program and ensure that there is a continuous focus on improving student academic performance.
2. Promote goal-oriented performance and support for those involved in achieving District and campus performance objectives.
3. Conduct periodic evaluation of all programs and operations to determine improvements needed and to foster attainment of District and campus improvement plans.
4. Assist the Board in evaluating the effectiveness of school programs.
5. Facilitate the planning and application of emerging technologies in the classroom.

SCHOOL OR
ORGANIZATIONAL
MORALE

The Superintendent shall foster positive school or organizational morale through activities such as the following:

1. Promote an open, collegial environment among staff and develop positive staff morale.
2. Use collaborative decision making with the staff when appropriate and within given time constraints.
3. Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills in relating to the staff, the Board, and community, and skills in anticipating, managing, and resolving conflicts.
4. Demonstrate sensitivity in dealing with staff, students, and community members from diverse cultural backgrounds; communicate similar expectations of the staff throughout the District.
5. Appropriately assess school district climate in conjunction with teachers, parents, and others; use findings to maintain or improve conditions.
6. Reinforce excellence.

SCHOOL OR
ORGANIZATIONAL
IMPROVEMENT

The Superintendent shall promote leadership in efforts to improve the school or organization through activities such as the following:

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Compass ISD

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SUPERINTENDENT
QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES

BJA
(LOCAL)

1. Articulate a vision of what the District can and should achieve, and gain acceptance among teachers, other staff, students, and the community by implementing the strategic planning process.
2. Demonstrate high expectations for staff and student performance in an enabling and nonthreatening way.
3. Encourage appropriate risk taking.
4. Ensure continuous renewal of curriculum, policies, and methods.
5. Recommend to the Board sound policies regarding organization finance, instructional programs, personnel, school plant, communications, and related functions of the District, directed toward District improvement.

PROFESSIONAL
GROWTH AND
DEVELOPMENT

The Superintendent shall provide leadership in professional growth and development through activities such as the following:

1. Participate actively in professional associations.
2. Conduct himself or herself in an ethical and professional manner.
3. Disseminate ideas and information to other professionals.
4. Seek and use evaluative information for improvement of performance.

ACADEMIC
EXCELLENCE
INDICATORS AND
CAMPUS
PERFORMANCE
OBJECTIVES

The Superintendent shall provide leadership in promoting increased student performance on Academic Excellence Indicators, including student achievement as measured by TAAS, SAT, and ACT scores; student attendance; and dropout rates.

PERSONNEL
MANAGEMENT

The Superintendent shall manage personnel effectively through activities such as the following:

1. Manage through the appropriate administrators the recruitment, assignment, evaluation and remuneration of personnel, and ensure that all personnel programs achieve their intended purposes.
2. Direct the improvement of staff performance through a planned, professional development process, directed toward individual renewal and attainment of the District's mission.
3. Recognize exemplary performance of teachers and staff.
4. Delegate appropriately.

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**SUPERINTENDENT
QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES**

**BJA
(LOCAL)**

5. Ensure effective and active recruitment of the most qualified teachers, administrators, and other personnel.
6. Seek regular input from employees regarding problems and suggestions.
7. Ensure that all applicable Board policies and state and federal laws are understood and followed in implementation of programs, schools, and in all business pertaining to the District.
8. Hold teachers and administrators accountable for their actions in an unbiased and consistent manner.
9. Actively identify problems and initiate solutions.

**MANAGEMENT OF
ADMINISTRATIVE,
FISCAL, AND
FACILITIES
FUNCTIONS**

The Superintendent shall manage administrative, fiscal, and facilities functions responsibly through activities such as the following:

1. Communicate the human, material, and fiscal resources needed to accomplish the District's mission and to maintain standards.
2. Take action to ensure that resources are allocated to accomplish the District's mission and to maintain standards.
3. Report to the Board on the status of support programs, personnel, and facilities operations of the schools.
4. Take action to ensure that all facilities are kept in good repair, adequate to meet future population needs, and, in general, provide for a safe and conducive learning environment.
5. Manage the budget development and the reporting process; ensure that programs are cost effective, and that funds are managed prudently.
6. Take action to ensure that the District complies with all laws, rules and policies related to fiscal management, meeting accepted accounting standards.
7. Provide accurate and timely financial information to the Board and public.
8. Facilitate central and campus administration communication between the Board and administration to promote mutual understanding and respect.
9. Utilize central administrative staff effectively and hold them accountable for their respective responsibilities.

**STUDENT
MANAGEMENT**

The Superintendent shall promote positive student conduct through activities such as the following:

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SUPERINTENDENT
QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES

BJA
(LOCAL)

1. Ensure that all student services and student discipline are effective and equitable.
2. Promote support services for students that encourage their growth.
3. Work effectively with faculty/students/parents to ensure that campuses are safe.
4. Develop procedures whereby parents are actively involved in their child's instructional program.

SCHOOL OR
COMMUNITY
RELATIONS

- The Superintendent shall promote a positive tone for school and community relations through activities such as the following:
1. Foster collaborative educational efforts among members of the total school community.
 2. Articulate the school mission and needs to the community.
 3. Seek support for school programs.
 4. Involve himself or herself in community activities that foster rapport between the school district and the larger community.
 5. Use effective communication skills.

SCHOOL BOARD
RELATIONS

- The Superintendent shall promote and support a positive relationship with the Board through activities such as the following:
1. Meet the Board's needs for information.
 2. Interact with Board members in an ethical, sensitive, and professional manner.
 3. Demonstrate competence in written and verbal communications to the Board.
 4. Recommend policies to the Board to enhance teaching and learning.
 5. Bring issues to the Board in a timely fashion, to allow alternate solutions or programs to be implemented if necessary.
 6. Keep the Board apprised of solutions, actions, or information that the Board requests or that are necessary for consideration of programs and policies.
 7. Share all information with all Board members, resisting preferential alliances, but rather dealing with the Board as a whole.
 8. Understand the difference between governance and administrative roles.

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9. Ensure that all sides of an issue are presented to the Board in an effort to enhance the best possible decisions based on a clear understanding of all considerations involved.
10. Foster a cooperative environment that enhances Board and staff relations, as well as the administration of policies.
11. Meet the Board's expectations regarding Board meetings: (a) need for information prior to meetings; (b) preparation for meetings; (c) organization of Board meetings (e.g., logistics, conducive physical environment, agenda, arrangements with media representatives).
12. Jointly develop with the Board a systematic evaluation process for the Superintendent.

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