

**A CASE STUDY OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP IN THE PRACTICE OF  
MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN HIGH-ACHIEVING SCHOOLS  
SERVING HISPANIC STUDENTS IN SOUTH TEXAS**

A Dissertation

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the educational experiences and leadership behaviors of five South Texas high school principals, in the context of the practice of multicultural education and Hispanic student achievement. Through the recounting of the principals' personal stories, experiences, and artifacts, several themes emerged in the analyses of the data collected for this study:

- Multicultural education,
- Effective Schools, and
- Culturally Responsive Leadership.

Subthemes for the study included high expectations, collaboration, relationships, empowering school culture, equity pedagogy, communication, vision for success, Hispanic principal leadership, and Hispanic student achievement. Findings for the study further revealed that:

1. Each of the five principals articulated, supported, and fostered a culture of high expectations.
2. Collaboration, among staff, students, and the extended learning community, was a designated priority in these high-performing schools.
3. Principals in each of the five high schools understood the significant value of developing, nurturing, and maintaining productive, caring relationships.
4. Principals understood the value of creating a school culture that empowered students and staff to aspire toward quality teaching and learning.

5. Principals understood and worked vehemently to provide equity pedagogy that addressed the needs of all students.
6. Principals understood the power of varied forms of communication in shaping and supporting the mission of their schools.
7. Principals in these high-performing schools developed and steadfastly articulated a clear vision of success for their schools.
8. Hispanic principals provided unique, relevant, and effective leadership in support of their Hispanic students.
9. Neither school/community demographics nor socioeconomic status determined the potential for Hispanic student success in each of the schools led by the study's participants.

While each of the principals in this study used a variety of means to create and support learning environments conducive to all students, each assumed personal responsibility for the success of his/her students, and each worked to empower their Hispanic students through his/her own personal histories and experiences. Thus, the significance of this study lies in the potential to impact Hispanic student achievement by developing school leaders and creating school structures that support culturally diverse students.

## DEDICATION

With my deepest love, respect, and admiration, this study is dedicated to:

- My daddy, Jose Arnoldo Guerra, who after working in the searing Texas sun paving our highways every day, came home to study for his G.E.D.;
- My mom, Armandina, who with unwavering love, taught me to stand up every time I fell;
- My twin, Cynthia, who captured my dreams like fireflies to light my way;
- My little sis, Sandra, whose gentle heart beats within my own;
- My family, Ricky, Jaime, Javi, Candie, Luke, and Jace, who brighten even the darkest days;
- My courageous friend, Darlene, who always BELIEVED, and to
- The heart of my heart, Leonel, my husband and BEST friend who still holds my hand and shares the popcorn at the movies.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Population projections released by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2008 predict that the United States will become a more racially, ethnically diverse country by the year 2050. Estimates specify that people of color, who comprise approximately one-third of the U.S. population, will become the nation's majority in 2042, increasing their numbers to 54% of the nation's total population by the middle of this century (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). According to the same report, by 2023, half of all children counted in the United States will be minorities. In fact, by the year 2050, the nation's population of children of color is expected to climb to 62%, up from 44% in 2008. Of these, 39% will be Hispanic, an increase from 22% in 2008. Concurrently, non-Hispanic White children numbers will decrease from 56% in 2008 to 38% in 2050. Additionally, American schools will host a higher percentage of children living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

Following similar national population trends, the ethnic diversity of students enrolled in Texas public schools will also surge and significantly impact the face of state education. By the year 2040, Hispanics will clearly outnumber, what is now a predominantly White student population, climbing to a surprising 66.3% of all students enrolled in Texas elementary and secondary schools (Texas State Data Center [TSDC], 2002).

As defined by National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), high poverty schools serve student populations of which more than 75% are eligible for the free or

reduced-price school lunch program (NCES, 2011). In 2008-2009, 19% of public schools in America were classified as high-poverty schools. When considering which students are most likely to attend these schools, higher percentages of Hispanic, African American, and Native American/Alaskan Natives attended high poverty elementary or secondary schools in 2008-2009 than their White or Asian/Pacific Islander counterparts (NCES, 2011).

Overrepresentation of African American and Hispanic students occurred in similar patterns when comparing other ethnic distributions of students attending high-poverty schools. While African American students comprise 17% of all students attending schools, 34% of this student group attended high-poverty schools in 2008-2009. Similarly, NCES reported that for that same year, 45% of the Hispanic student population attended high-poverty schools (NCES, 2011).

Complicating matters even more, high school students attending high-poverty/high people of color public schools in 1999-2000 were more than likely taught by teachers who were not certified in the core areas of English, science, and mathematics, although they were assigned to teach those same areas. In contrast, students attending low poverty schools with few students of color were more often than not, taught by teachers, highly qualified and/or certified, to teach those subjects. Research asserts that students will learn more from teachers who are certified or are highly skilled in the subject area they have been assigned to teach (Goldhaber & Brewer, 1997, 2000).

When it comes to measuring academic student proficiency, national assessment data also paint a bleak picture. Overall, between 2007 and 2009, insignificant change was noted in the performance of Grade 4 students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) while Grade 8 students attained a one-point increase in their performance for that same time period. Grade 12 students fared slightly better, scoring two points higher between their 2005 and 2009 assessment performances (NCES, 2011).

The same national assessment data continue to indicate a mixed review for the academic performance of the culturally and linguistically diverse. While the NAEP average reading scale score of all fourth graders was higher in 2007 than in 1992, the Hispanic-White achievement gap in reading performance averaged 26% in the same year. Two years later in 2009, Grade 4 students recorded no measureable change in their reading scores on the same assessment, and thus the Hispanic-White reading performance gap remained virtually intact. Mimicking the same pattern, Grade 8 students also increased their reading scores in 2007 and 2009, but did not close an achievement gap of approximately 25%. At Grade 12 in 2009, White students scored 22 points higher than their Hispanic peers taking the NAEP reading assessment, signaling little change in the reading gap that continues to exist between these two student groups (NCES, 2011).

While the NCES illustrates student performance on a national scale, Texas has utilized its own state accountability system, the Academic Excellence Indicator System or AEIS, to measure its own student, campus, and district performance over

the last 10 years (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2012a). The report compiles information from a broad range of categories that included state assessment summaries for all student groups, attendance rates, high school completion rates, dropout rates, and most currently, college readiness rates (TEA, 2012a).

A review of Texas student performance data, as reported by the 2009 Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports reveal that the gap between White and Hispanic students passing all Texas Assessment Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests hovers at an average of 25% in Grades 9, 10, and 11 for the 2009 school year. While that gap was decreased by an average of approximately 3% during the 2008-2009 school year, test results at Grades 5 and 8 indicate a similar trend and gap in student achievement (TEA, 2009a). Over the 2010-2011 school years, Texas state assessment results indicate that the passing rate for students passing all state assessments increased. Thus, the Hispanic-White *All Tests Passed* passing rate decreased to an approximate 16% difference at Grades 9, 10, 11. For that same time period, the Grade 8 Hispanic-White *All Tests Passed* gap was decreased to 20% while Grade 5 earned a 16% difference in the passing rate of all state assessments taken in 2010 and 2011 (TEA, 2011a).

Of greater concern to many educators is the fact that while there has been a decrease in the achievement gap between White students and their non-White counterparts from 2008 through 2011, second language learner (SLL) students posted an average gap of 52% in Grades 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11 (TEA, 2011a). An analysis of the data further suggests that the promise of increased rigor and higher state assessment

standards in the form of a new Texas assessment system will continue to significantly challenge Hispanic and second language learners as well as their teachers and administrators.

Comparable data trends were similarly reflected when comparing student group graduation rates throughout the nation's secondary schools. More often than not, gaps in state graduation rates were significantly higher for people of color and SLL students when compared to their White counterparts (TEA, 2011a). To illustrate the case in point, regional data depicted similar trends when comparing student graduation rates and demographic data for each of the regional 20 Texas Education Service Center (ESC) areas (TEA, 2011a).

While state graduation rate gaps have decreased over the last several years, the data supported a pattern of consistent underachievement for the culturally and linguistically diverse, as these students failed to complete their high school graduation requirements and earn the high school credentials necessary to ensure university and/or lucrative employment opportunities. Such data confirm the need for Texas educators to identify the most effective means to assist students in meeting all state and national academic standards and graduation requirements as Texas becomes part of a more diverse educational landscape.

Addressing the needs of a clearly diverse classroom must, therefore, include an examination of those practices and leadership skills that enabled Hispanic and SLL students to meet their graduation requirements in Texas academically recognized or exemplary secondary schools.

## **Statement of the Problem**

*The Condition of Education 2009* (NCES, 2009), a congressionally mandated annual report, paints a lackluster portrait of the condition of American education. The report concludes that, although some improvements can be cited in higher math and reading scale scores for the nation's fourth and eighth grade students, little has changed in the area of high school performance. In fact, no significant, measurable changes in the performance gaps between White students and their Black or Hispanic counterparts occurred from 1992 through 2007.

As the data in this report attest, culturally and linguistically diverse student success has not been easily attained throughout schools across the country. Most specifically, Region One Education Service Center Academic Excellence Indicator System and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) student performance reports for area Hispanic students reflect similar group national trends that point to a crisis in the making, especially when considering the many children and young adults who will not be able to succeed in schools that are neither academically nor culturally competent to support student learning for all student groups (TEA, 2009b). Therefore, while student achievement inquiries should not be limited to one distinct group, Texas Hispanic secondary student academic success remains the driving force behind this study as relevant to the practice of multicultural education and the application of critical theory.

As previous data illustrate, the Hispanic student population in Texas will dramatically increase to approximately 66.3% of all students enrolled in Texas public

schools by the year 2040 (TSDC, 2002). With this demographic shift, it is also important to consider the significant number of English language learners who will soon occupy Texas schools and who will attempt to complete high school graduation requirements. Currently, Texas graduation rates depict a 16.2% gap between Hispanic and White student groups and a 40.5% gap between White and SLL student populations. While the Region One ESC area student graduation rates indicate smaller gaps when comparing these two student groups, an amazing almost 40.5% gap exists between Texas White and SLL student populations (TEA, 2010b). Such statistics certainly signal a grave concern and pose difficult questions for countless Texas educators struggling to meet accountability standards, while preparing students for post high school success.

In attempts to better understand and address the underachievement of Hispanic students in South Texas, researchers have attempted to explain the various degrees of success that Hispanic students have encountered in the public school system. Several studies include claims that school organization structures and leadership profoundly impact the success or failure of schools (August & Hakuta, 1997). Examining how successful schools are organized to develop and support high-achieving Hispanic students is critical to determining how best to address diversity within the classroom. Moreover, examining the leadership of the campus administrator, as the visionary hub of the organization, can lend an additional perspective to the achievement of Hispanic students attending their schools.



The scholarly work of Chamberlain (2005) supports the claim that cultural disparities between educators and culturally and linguistically diverse students can negatively impact the educational outcomes and success of these students. In this regard, various theoretical frameworks offer additional reasoning to explain the continuing gap in Hispanic student achievement. Among these frameworks, critical theory has been used to challenge the Eurocentric epistemology and dominant ideologies that have shaped the structure and current practices in American schools (Banks, 2004).

In this study, the implications of critical theory upon the practice of multicultural education in Texas recognized or exemplary schools undergird the examination of high school principals' perceptions regarding their school leadership, in relation to Hispanic student achievement. Understanding how principals create and sustain school cultures that enable Hispanic students to advocate for themselves as a means to attain academic success is tantamount to developing self-efficacy.

Many believe instruction, that neglects Latino culture and ethnic identity, is responsible for their poor performance in the classroom (Bartolome & Trueba, 2000). Researchers, such as Garcia (2004), often describe the failure of students of color in terms of public policies and practices that continue to ignore the values, language, and culture of the culturally diverse and perpetuate the oppression of these groups. Several other significant research studies, spanning over the last 15 years, affirm that the lackluster performance of culturally diverse students is linked to the incongruity that exists between their own cultures and the norms, values, practices, and expectations

espoused by the schools they attend (Cummins, 1986; Delpit, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2002). Such studies have led to a critical examination of traditional classroom instruction versus the implementation of multicultural education, designed to address the ever-increasing diversity within today's schools. In this respect, it is essential that educators undertake the study and implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy to assist Hispanic students in their academic efforts.

Ladson-Billings (1994) first identified and defined the term *culturally relevant pedagogy* as pedagogy that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (pp. 17-18). Gay (2000) further contended that “culturally relevant pedagogy encourages teachers to work with students’ cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles” (p. 29) to create learning connections that are culturally relevant in the acquisition of new knowledge.

In this way, culturally relevant pedagogy validates and acknowledges a student’s cultural capital, rather than rendering it invisible or something to be overcome. In other words, a student’s culture becomes a valued commodity that may be utilized to make learning meaningful and relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994). A number of researchers also agree that culturally relevant pedagogy addresses the academic, as well as social needs of culturally diverse students (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade, Kelly, & Oberg, 1997). Such an approach is an important factor in improving student performance.

Regardless of *how* researchers attempt to explain Hispanic student achievement, it is apparent that a more focused effort by policymakers and educators must be undertaken to increase the success of Hispanic students in light of the recent shift in student demographics within the American education landscape. These same sentiments echo in the work of Freire (1980), which strongly signals the need for multicultural leadership in the form of culturally responsive organizational practices, behaviors, and attitudes. A fresh and more deliberate approach toward meeting the needs of the culturally diverse students in our schools must, therefore, include an examination of Hispanic student performance in Texas recognized or exemplary schools and its relationship to the role of the school principal and the implementation of multicultural education within the context of critical theory.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the educational experiences and leadership behaviors of five high school principals in their efforts to increase Hispanic student achievement in high-achieving schools in South Texas. It is this researcher's position that to effect positive change and increase Hispanic academic success throughout secondary schools, educators must first gain a more comprehensive understanding of how their roles, as school leaders, can significantly impact their teachers and students as they work to forge a school environment that will encourage and support Hispanic student achievement.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions provided a guide for addressing the purpose of this study:

1. What are the experiences of high school principals who serve in high-achieving Hispanic schools?
2. What are the perceptions of high school principals regarding their success with Hispanic students in high-achieving schools in South Texas?

## **Significance of the Study**

In light of the rapidly changing student demographics of Texas public schools (Lindsey, Roberts, & Jones, 2005), findings from this research study may perhaps add to the existing, but limited body of knowledge regarding the relationship between school administrator leadership practices and behaviors and Hispanic student achievement. In this context, the research findings may assist school leaders in the identification of culturally responsive leadership competencies that they may wish to personally develop, encourage, and institute within their schools.

Moreover, this study may also prove essential toward validating and/or encouraging the practice of multicultural education, specifically culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive leadership, as a means to improve the academic outcomes of Hispanic students attending schools in South Texas. Additionally, educators will hopefully use the findings of this study to better inform their practice and decision-making regarding their school organizational structures, professional development, and classroom instruction.

Lastly, but most importantly, this study may assist researchers in identifying gaps in the literature in order to target future studies in the field of multicultural education and culturally responsive practice in the classroom and in leadership positions. All such work will ultimately result in clearing the educational landscape of the obstacles that hinder the academic success of culturally diverse students, who rely on the expertise and commitment of the educators to whom they entrust their academic futures.

### **Theoretical Base for the Study**

Understanding how principals create and sustain a school culture that nurtures, encourages, and enables Hispanic students to advocate for themselves as a means to attain academic success is tantamount to developing self-efficacy. In this study, critical theory, thus, undergirds the examination of school leadership in the context of multicultural education and the achievement of Hispanic students attending successful high schools in South Texas.

According to Gay (as cited in Banks, 2004), critical theory:

deals with practice and perspective, understanding and control, and the dialectical relationship between theory and practice. Its ultimate value commitment is human emancipation. Its goals are to expose contradictions in culture, explain how conventional curriculum and instruction perpetuate the socioeconomic exploitation and subjugation present in society at large, and create more egalitarianism in schools and societies. (p. 31)

Critical theorists believe that individuals and social groups are able to construct their own reality regardless of social oppression. Thus, individuals have the capacity to resist and reconstruct a relationship within the oppressive structure. From a critical theorist perspective, learners are active participants in the curriculum rather

than passive recipients (Knapp & Woolverton, 2004). Therefore, investigating the principal's role in creating a school culture that supports student emancipation as a means to nurture Hispanic student achievement is an essential premise of critical theory.

### **Definitions**

Several terms must be defined to further clarify the nature of this study. Critical theory, culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive leadership, leadership, multicultural education, and successful schools are usually explained in a variety of ways, most often in accordance with the purpose and function assigned by scholars in the field of multicultural education.

#### **Critical Theory**

For the purpose of this study, Gay (as cited in Banks, 2004) describes *critical theory* as theory that:

deals with practice and perspective, understanding and control, and the dialectical relationship between theory and practice. Its ultimate value commitment is human emancipation. Its goals are to expose contradictions in culture, explain how conventional curriculum and instruction perpetuate the socioeconomic exploitation and subjugation present in society at large, and create more egalitarianism in schools and societies. (p. 31)

#### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

*Culturally relevant pedagogy* is defined as an effective means of meeting the academic and social needs of culturally diverse students (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade et al., 1997). In her work, Gay (2000) emphasized that culturally relevant pedagogy is a means to incorporate "the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse

students” (p. 29) to assist students in their learning tasks. Culturally relevant pedagogy validates and affirms a student’s culture, while drawing on his/her strengths to make learning more relevant and effective (Gay, 2000).

### **Culturally Responsive Leadership**

In this regard, the term *culturally responsive leadership* is quite applicable to this particular study as leaders have the potential to positively or negatively influence the teaching and learning communities within their schools. For the purposes of this study, culturally responsive leadership refers to those skills, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, actions, and language demonstrated by school leaders that effectively support and respond to the needs of culturally diverse students within their school communities (Gay, 2000, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Through this lens, culturally responsive leadership also includes the interactions between school leaders, teachers, parents, and extended school communities and how these interactions support the teaching and learning of diverse student groups.

### **Leadership**

Much has been written about leadership, leading to a multitude of definitions for the term. Chemers (1997) simply concluded that *leadership* is a “process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task” (p. 1). In reading this definition, the researcher argued that perhaps the most significant part of the statement is the reference to social influence and its connection to leadership. Dimmock and Walker (2005) further concurred with the assertion that leadership is a process of influence, yet they added

that leadership is also a socially bounded and constructed process since values and behaviors interact and are influenced by culture. This is particularly true when the term leadership is applied to schools. The research of Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) corroborated the significance of leadership in the success of schools stating that an effective principal is often cited as a necessary component of an effective school. Fullan (2005) further concurred that leadership is critical to school and district success.

### **Multicultural Education**

While scholars emphasize the different facets and purposes of multicultural education, Gay (as cited in NCERL, 2009) affirms that scholars believe cultural pluralism and ethnic diversity are central components of the educational process. For the purpose of this study, therefore, Banks and Banks (2001) best describe *multicultural education* as:

an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students and students who are members of diverse racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school. (p. 1)

### **Successful High Schools**

As related to this study, *successful high schools* are defined as Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System recognized or exemplary schools which house Grade 9 through Grade 12 students. These schools achieved their recognized or exemplary status for at least three consecutive school years (2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011). The Hispanic student population for those corresponding schools also



mirrored the same passing rate as achieved for the schools' AEIS recognized or exemplary status.

### **Assumptions**

Several assumptions were made in regard to this study.

1. The researcher was impartial in collecting and analyzing the data collected for this research study.
2. All South Texas secondary schools selected were selected using the AEIS recognized and exemplary school reports for the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011 school years.
3. All principal participants were chosen from South Texas secondary schools in which Hispanic students demonstrated AEIS state recognized/exemplary academic success on state accountability assessments for at least three consecutive years.
4. The participants in the study answered all questions honestly and objectively.
5. Interview instruments assisted the researcher in identifying and analyzing leadership attributes and practices that cultivated the implementation of multicultural education to improve Hispanic student achievement.

### **Delimitations**

This study examined the perceptions of five high school principals regarding their educational experiences and leadership behaviors in their efforts to increase

Hispanic student achievement in high-achieving schools in South Texas. Thus, the scope of the study was limited to that set of criteria and to the participants in the study.

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter I of the study provided an introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, theoretical framework, definitions, assumptions, delimitations, and the organization of the study. Such an overview assisted the researcher toward a more focused review of all components of the study.

Chapter II included a review of the literature targeting national and state student performance, Hispanic student achievement, Hispanic high-performing schools, multicultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy, and critical theory. As explored through the literature of scholars in the field, Chapter II also reviewed the research regarding effective schools and leadership.

Chapter III included a description of the selection of the research design. Discussion regarding the study's sample, data collection, data analysis, credibility, transformability, dependability and confirmability was also included in Chapter III of this study.

Chapter IV provided a set of profiles for all who participated in the study. The profiles enable the reader to become better acquainted with the research population and the context in which the study was framed. They included data gathered to better define the Region One Education Service Center area, the communities in which the schools are located, the schools and the principals selected for the study, and the

researcher who conducted the study. The profiles added the depth that was needed to identify those factors and opportunities that were available to create and sustain Hispanic student success.

Chapter V presented the research findings emerging from the data collected throughout the course of the study. Interview and observation data, as well as artifacts and researcher's notes, allowed for the identification of key themes in the research study.

Chapter VI provided a summary of the research, conclusions, and recommendations identified as a result of what was learned in the study. References and appendices are also included in the organization of the research after Chapter VI.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

To respond to the research questions posed for this study, a review of the current state of Hispanic student achievement and accompanying scholarly literature allow for a context around which to frame the study. Moreover, a review of the literature, in regard to the historical roots of multicultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy, and critical theory, adds further dimensions to this work. From this perspective, a review of multicultural education studies, effective schools research, and leadership also serves to broaden the researcher's perspective regarding the connection(s) between multicultural education, school leadership, and student achievement. Thus, this chapter is organized to shed light upon:

- National Hispanic assessment trends;
- TAKS vs. STAAR assessment systems;
- Texas student performance and graduation rate trends;
- Hispanic student achievement;
- High-performing Hispanic schools;
- Historical roots of multicultural education;
- Multicultural education as defined by various scholars;
- Culturally relevant pedagogy;
- Critical theory;
- Multicultural education studies;
- Effective schools;

- School leadership, and
- Culturally responsive leadership.

### **National Hispanic Performance Trends**

When it comes to measuring academic student proficiency, national assessment data paint a bleak picture. Overall, between 2007 and 2009, insignificant change was noted in the performance of Grade 4 students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) while Grade 8 students attained a one-point increase in their performance for that same time period. Grade 12 students fared slightly better, scoring two points higher between their 2005 and 2009 assessment performances (NCES, 2011).

The same national assessment data continue to indicate a mixed review for minority student performance. While the NAEP average reading scale score of all fourth graders was higher in 2007 than in 1992, the Hispanic-White achievement gap in reading performance averaged 26% in the same year. Two years later in 2009, Grade 4 students recorded no measureable change in their reading scores on the same assessment, and thus the Hispanic-White reading performance gap remained virtually intact. Mimicking the same pattern, Grade 8 students also increased their reading scores in 2007 and 2009, but did not close an achievement gap of approximately 25%. At Grade 12 in 2009, White students scored 22 points higher than their Hispanic peers taking the NAEP reading assessment, signaling little change in the reading gap that continues to exist between these two student groups (NCES, 2011).

In mathematics, Grade 4 students improved their scores by an average of 27 points from 1990 through 2009, yet the achievement gap between Hispanic and White students still hovers at approximately 21%, marking an insignificant change over that same time period. While nationally Grade 8 students also garnered improved scores in mathematics, the results similarly reflected little change in the Hispanic-White achievement gap of 26% (NCES, 2011). In much the same pattern, Grade 12 White students outscored their Hispanic peers by 23 points on the 2009 NAEP mathematics assessment. Such figures indicated that efforts to improve student performance have had little impact upon minority student group achievement gaps (NCES, 2011).

Student performance on national assessments reflected only one piece of the academic puzzle when reviewing Hispanic student performance. While significant gains have been made in high school completion rates, there is still much work to be done when considering Hispanic student high school completion. As the PEW Research Center asserted, Hispanic attainment from October 1972 through 2011 revealed a 24.4% change in the numbers of Hispanic students completing their graduation requirements (Fry & Lopez, 2012).

In 1972, only 51.9% of all Hispanics enrolled in public schools completed their graduation programs as opposed to 2011 when 76.3% of all Hispanics met their graduation goals (Fry & Lopez, 2012). The most current numbers reflected a 9% gap between Hispanic students and their White counterparts. Of greater concern is the number of students who have dropped out of school and failed to complete their graduation requirements. While White students registered a 5.7% dropout rate,

Hispanic students sported a 16.3% dropout rate, a number that is almost three times as much as White students (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Such numbers, as indicated in Table 1, signal a need to identify ways to enable Hispanic student completion of their graduation programs.

**Table 1. Population (Ages 18-24) High School Graduation Status, Race, and Ethnicity**

Population Year, Race/Origin	Percent	
	High School Completers	High School Dropouts
<u>2011</u>		
ALL	85	8.3
Hispanic	76	16.3
White	88	5.7
African American	81	8.9
Asian	90	5.2
<u>2010</u>		
ALL	85	8.7
Hispanic	73	18.5
White	89	5.7
African American	82	10.1
Asian	92	4.9

*Source.* Fry and Lopez (2012).

### **State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)**

In the spring of 2012, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) replaced the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) as the state's new assessment. Texas students were tested in Grades 3-12, in the core subject areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. The new assessment system was designed to measure grade level proficiency as well as college and career readiness. Depending on the grade level, students took two or four exams (TEA, 2012b).

As compared to the TAKS, the STAAR was developed to be a more rigorous assessment (TEA, 2012b). The Spring administration of the assessment contained more test items and assessed on-grade level skills and content. Additionally, for the first time since Texas assessment began, the STAAR was assessed with a four-hour time limit.

The high school STAAR also reflected increased rigor in the form of 12 End-of-Course (EOC) exams measuring proficiency in the core area subjects (TEA, 2012b). The corresponding exams were designed to be administered every year beginning in Grade 9. The 12 EOC assessments include:

- English I, English II, English III
- Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II
- Biology, Chemistry, Physics
- World Geography, World History, and U.S. History

Each of the subject area exams eligible for testing in 2012 was administered to students in the year in which they were enrolled in the course. Unlike the TAKS, the STAAR will only assess content that was delivered during the year in which students were enrolled in each of the courses.

According to the Texas Education Agency's description of the STAAR, assessment questions were created to provide more depth and complexity than those on the TAKS. Critical analysis rather than literal understanding became the focus of the STAAR reading exam, while attention to rigor was also exhibited in requiring students to complete two essays, testing two different genres, rather than just one.



STAAR science and math assessments included additional open-ended questions allowing students to demonstrate their independent thinking (TEA, 2012b).

Students will be expected to meet a cumulative exam score, compiled from their eligible scores of previously taken exams, in order to graduate from high school (TEA, 2012b). Additionally, students must pass the Algebra II and English III End-of-Course exams in order to meet their Recommended High School program graduation requirements. The admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee is responsible for determining the appropriate assessments for special education students. Moreover, schools are required to provide accelerated instruction for students who fail any of the STAAR exams (TEA, 2012b).

### **Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills**

The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) was the former assessment system utilized to measure school and student performance in Grades 3-8 and Grades 9-11 (TEA, 2012b). The exams included 30-60 items and assessed multiple grades of curriculum in single tests. Reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies were assessed in various grades and in various combinations throughout the life of the assessment system. Students were asked to write one composition, in one designated genre, at Grades 4, 8, 10, and 11. Short answer or open-ended responses were also required of students assessed in reading, mathematics, and science (TEA, 2012b).

The Student Success Initiative required students to pass the TAKS at Grades 5 and 8 in order to be promoted to the next grade level (TEA, 2012b). Schools were

required to provide accelerated instruction to prepare students who had previously failed TAKS. Described as a moving target, increased performance standards were set every year, and students, as well as schools, were asked to meet those standards in order to meet their state accountability requirements. Cumulative assessment results in various demographic groups were used to determine school accountability ratings (TEA, 2012b).

Different versions of the TAKS measured student progress for second language learners as well as for students in special education. Grade 11 results determined whether students should graduate. Schools and districts were measured according to how many students passed each of the exams rather than what level of proficiency the students attained (TEA, 2012b).

As the replacement of the TAKS became a reality, the Texas Education Agency transitioned Grades 3-9 into the STAAR assessment system. Standards have yet to be set to determine state accountability. Raw scores were used to report current STAAR results as these scores were “bridged” to determine equivalency for the assigning of upcoming school ratings (TEA, 2012b).

### **The Texas Student Achievement Gap**

When comparing state and national student performance data, there has been little to cheer about when it comes to Hispanic and SLL student performance in Texas. A review of Texas data, as reported by the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports, revealed that the gap between White and Hispanic students passing all Texas Assessment Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests hovered at an average of 25%

in Grades 9, 10, and 11 for the 2009 school year (TEA, 2009a). While that gap was decreased by an average of approximately 3% during the 2008-2009 school year, test results at Grades 5 and 8 indicated a similar trend and gap in student achievement (TEA, 2009a).

In contrast to 2009, the 2010-2011 state assessment results indicated an increase in the passing rate for students passing all state assessments. However, the Hispanic-White *All Tests Passed* gap was only narrowed to approximately 16% at Grades 9, 10, 11. For that same time period, the Grade 8 Hispanic-White *All Tests Passed* gap was decreased to 20%, while Grade 5 earned a 16% difference in the passing rate of all state assessments taken in 2010 and 2011 (TEA, 2011a). As many celebrated the increase in the number of students passing the TAKS, others were also alarmed with the student performance of second language learners (SLLs).

While there has been a decrease in the achievement gap between White students and their non-White counterparts from 2008 through 2011, second language learners posted an average gap of 52% in Grades 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11 (see Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6). That double digit gap resembled a great abyss as educators contemplated the accountability implications associated with such dismal results.

In fact, schools have scrambled to identify what must be done to prepare students for a new and more rigorous Texas state accountability system, one which will undoubtedly challenge Hispanic and second language learners, as well as their teachers and administrators. It is clear that opportunities as well as possible pitfalls

await Hispanic and second language learners as they navigate their way through the traditional classroom.

Table 2. Grade 11 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Met Standard

Subject Area	Year	State	Region	African Am.	Hispanic	White	SLL*	Hispanic White Gap	*SLL White Gap
English Language Arts	2011	91%	89%	94%	88%	94%	58%	6%	36%
	2010	91%	88%	88%	87%	94%	55%	7%	39%
	2009	93%	89%	98%	88%	99%	45%	11%	54%
	2008	91%	86%	88%	85%	95%	33%	10%	62%
Math	2011	90%	87%	93%	86%	95%	65%	9%	30%
	2010	88%	85%	89%	85%	94%	63%	9%	31%
	2009	82%	78%	82%	77%	90%	47%	13%	43%
	2008	80%	75%	77%	74%	89%	43%	15%	46%
Science	2011	90%	85%	88%	85%	96%	54%	11%	42%
	2010	90%	85%	96%	84%	96%	54%	12%	42%
	2009	86%	78%	90%	77%	93%	41%	16%	52%
	2008	81%	73%	81%	73%	92%	36%	19%	56%
Social Studies	2011	98%	96%	98%	96%	97%	84%	1%	13%
	2010	97%	95%	96%	95%	98%	80%	3%	18%
	2009	97%	95%	98%	95%	99%	77%	4%	22%
	2008	95%	92%	90%	92%	98%	66%	6%	32%
All Tests	2011	84%	77%	84%	77%	93%	34%	16%	59%
	2010	81%	75%	88%	74%	91%	32%	17%	59%
	2009	76%	68%	80%	67%	87%	23%	20%	64%
	2008	72%	63%	71%	61%	86%	16%	25%	70%

\*Second Language Learners.

Source. Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2009a, 2011a).

Table 3. Grade 10 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Met Standard

Subject Area		Year	State	Region	African Am.	Hispanic	White	SLL*	Hispanic White Gap	*SLL White Gap
English Arts	Language	2011	91%	89%	94%	88%	94%	58%	6%	36%
		2010	91%	88%	88%	87%	94%	55%	7%	39%
		2009	89%	86%	90%	86%	93%	47%	7%	46%
		2008	85%	81%	86%	80%	93%	33%	13%	60%
Math		2011	75%	74%	69%	73%	82%	52%	9%	30%
		2010	75%	73%	73%	72%	88%	49%	16%	39%
		2009	66%	61%	67%	60%	82%	31%	22%	51%
		2008	65%	59%	64%	57%	78%	26%	21%	52%
Science		2011	76%	69%	73%	68%	85%	34%	17%	51%
		2010	75%	67%	76%	66%	89%	30%	23%	59%
		2009	65%	55%	77%	53%	86%	14%	33%	72%
		2008	57%	45%	55%	44%	74%	11%	30%	63%
Social Studies		2011	93%	91%	90%	90%	97%	70%	7%	27%
		2010	93%	90%	88%	90%	96%	69%	6%	27%
		2009	89%	85%	96%	84%	97%	53%	13%	34%
		2008	85%	80%	83%	80%	94%	38%	14%	56%
All Tests		2011	65%	60%	61%	59%	75%	25%	16%	50%
		2010	65%	58%	62%	57%	80%	22%	23%	58%
		2009	55%	45%	57%	44%	74%	11%	30%	63%
		2008	49%	38%	46%	37%	65%	7%	28%	58%

\*Second Language Learners.

Source. Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2009a, 2011a).

Table 4. Grade 9 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills TAKS Met Standard

Subject Area	Year	State	Region	African Am.	Hispanic	White	SLL*	Hispanic White Gap	*SLL White Gap
Reading	2011	89%	82%	84%	82%	93%	49%	11%	44%
	2010	92%	86%	95%	86%	94%	56%	8%	38%
	2009	87%	80%	88%	79%	95%	39%	16%	56%
	2008	87%	79%	89%	78%	95%	36%	17%	59%
Math	2011	72%	65%	69%	64%	80%	41%	16%	39%
	2010	72%	64%	66%	63%	78%	40%	15%	38%
	2009	64%	55%	64%	54%	78%	24%	24%	54%
	2008	61%	51%	61%	50%	77%	21%	27%	56%
All Tests	2011	69%	61%	66%	60%	79%	30%	19%	49%
	2010	70%	61%	66%	61%	78%	32%	17%	46%
	2009	63%	53%	61%	52%	78%	18%	26%	60%
	2008	60%	48%	60%	47%	76%	15%	29%	61%

\*Second Language Learners.

Source. Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2009a, 2011a).

Table 5. Grade 8 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Met Standard

Subject Area	Year	State	Region	African Am.	Hispanic	White	SLL*	Hispanic White Gap	*SLL White Gap
Reading	2011	89%	83%	91%	83%	93%	51%	10%	42%
	2010	91%	86%	89%	85%	96%	54%	11%	42%
	2009	95%	91%	99%	90%	97%	60%	7%	37%
	2008	95%	91%	96%	91%	98%	60%	7%	38%
Math	2011	81%	77%	87%	76%	91%	54%	15%	37%
	2010	80%	76%	87%	76%	86%	55%	10%	31%
	2009	82%	79%	90%	79%	92%	55%	13%	37%
	2008	79%	73%	73%	73%	89%	45%	16%	44%
Science	2011	79%	74%	91%	73%	89%	44%	16%	45%
	2010	78%	73%	84%	73%	91%	42%	18%	49%
	2009	73%	67%	82%	67%	87%	31%	20%	56%
	2008	69%	61%	68%	61%	85%	23%	24%	62%
Social Studies	2011	94%	92%	99%	92%	98%	77%	6%	21%
	2010	95%	92%	98%	92%	97%	78%	5%	19%
	2009	92%	89%	95%	89%	97%	69%	8%	28%
	2008	91%	87%	93%	87%	97%	63%	10%	34%
All Tests	2011	69%	62%	84%	61%	81%	27%	20%	54%
	2010	69%	63%	82%	62%	86%	27%	24%	59%
	2009	67%	61%	76%	60%	83%	25%	23%	58%
	2008	64%	55%	59%	54%	79%	18%	25%	61%

\*Second Language Learners.

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2009a, 2011a).

Table 6. Grade 5 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Met Standard (First Administration)

Subject Area	Year	State	Region	African Am.	Hispanic	White	SLL*	Hispanic White Gap	*SLL White Gap
Reading	2011	87%	82%	96%	82%	95%	63%	13%	32%
	2010	86%	80%	92%	80%	91%	60%	11%	31%
	2009	85%	79%	88%	78%	95%	55%	17%	40%
	2008	85%	80%	95%	79%	94%	54%	15%	40%
Math	2011	86%	84%	88%	83%	92%	70%	9%	22%
	2010	86%	83%	92%	83%	93%	71%	10%	22%
	2009	86%	85%	91%	85%	92%	73%	7%	19%
	2008	86%	84%	96%	84%	94%	69%	10%	25%
Science	2011	86%	85%	98%	85%	95%	71%	10%	24%
	2010	87%	85%	92%	86%	93%	72%	7%	21%
	2009	85%	84%	91%	83%	97%	68%	14%	29%
	2008	82%	81%	91%	81%	94%	61%	13%	33%
All Tests	2011	75%	71%	84%	70%	85%	48%	15%	37%
	2010	76%	71%	90%	70%	89%	49%	19%	40%
	2009	73%	69%	81%	68%	88%	46%	20%	42%
	2008	72%	68%	90%	67%	88%	43%	21%	45%

\*Second Language Learners.

Source. Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2009a, 2011a).

Comparable data trends were similarly reflected when comparing student group graduation rates throughout the nation's secondary schools. More often than not, gaps in state graduation rates were significantly higher for students of color and SLLs when compared to their White counterparts (see Table 7, Table 8, Table 9, and Table 10). To illustrate the case in point, Table 7, Table 8, Table 9, and Table 10 depict a comparison of student graduation rates and demographic data for each of the regional 20 Texas Education Service Center (ESC) areas. While state graduation rate



gaps have decreased over the last several years, the data supported a pattern of consistent underachievement for students of color, as these students failed to complete their high school graduation requirements and earn the high school credentials necessary to ensure university and/or lucrative employment opportunities.

Upon an initial review of state data for the Class of 2010, the graduation rate for the *All Student* group raised little concern as there was an actual increase in the number of students graduating in that year. According to the *Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools 2009-2010 Report* (TEA, 2011c), 84.3% of the Class of 2010 cohort of 314,079 students completed their graduation requirements in a timely manner. Compared to the Class of 2009, this percentage rate was 3.7% higher. Of those 2010 students not graduating on time, 7.2% were able to continue their education in the fall, with an additional 1.3% eventually receiving their GEDs.

The data also indicated that while the Class of 2010, as a whole, improved their graduation rate from 2009, a distinct gap in graduation rates existed along racial and ethnic lines. For that same class, Asian/Pacific Islanders achieved the highest graduation rate, 93.8%, while African Americans and Hispanics attained the lowest graduation rate, 78.8%, for that student cohort. It is important to note that all Class of 2010 ethnic and racial groups improved their graduation rates, with Hispanics having improved 5.3% and African Americans having improved 5.0% (TEA, 2011c).

Table 7. State and Education Service Center Regional Graduation Rates, Class of 2007

Class of 2007 Education Service Center	AEIS *Ethnic Distribution % Hispanic Population	+All Students	+African American	+Hispanic	+White	+SLL	White Hispanic Graduation Gap	White SLL Graduation Gap
Texas Average	46.3%	78.0%	70.7%	68.5%	88.2%	39.3%	19.7%	48.9%
ESC 1---Edinburg	96.8%	71.9%	68.5%	71.2%	86.5%	42.2%	15.3%	44.3%
ESC 2---Corpus Christi	70.1%	75.1%	72.1%	69.4%	87.4%	47.7%	18.0%	39.7%
ESC 3---Victoria	47.3%	82.7%	79.0%	72.7%	91.1%	59.7%	19.1%	31.4%
ESC 4---Houston	43.1%	76.6%	70.5%	64.8%	88.3%	29.0%	23.5%	59.3%
ESC 5---Beaumont	11.3%	81.5%	69.9%	72.9%	88.1%	51.7%	15.2%	36.4%
ESC 6--Huntsville	24.0%	83.6%	70.6%	73.1%	88.8%	48.3%	15.7%	40.5%
ESC 7---Kilgore	19.8%	83.9%	76.5%	71.5%	88.6%	50.4%	17.1%	38.2%
ESC 8---Mt. Pleasant	14.2%	88.3%	80.0%	78.6%	92.7%	60.0%	14.1%	32.7%
ESC 9---Wichita Falls	19.5%	86.3%	76.7%	78.2%	88.8%	50.0%	10.6%	38.8%
ESC 10---Richardson	37.7%	77.1%	68.8%	64.2%	88.1%	39.3%	23.9%	48.8%
ESC 11---Fort Worth	28.7%	81.9%	72.4%	68.6%	88.5%	45.2%	19.9%	43.3%
ESC 12---Waco	24.9%	81.4%	73.0%	73.6%	87.5%	47.1%	13.9%	40.4%
ESC 13---Austin	40.0%	79.5%	68.3%	66.6%	88.4%	36.0%	21.8%	52.4%
ESC 14---Abilene	31.0%	77.0%	62.5%	62.8%	85.5%	33.9%	22.7%	51.6%
ESC 15---San Angelo	51.6%	78.2%	57.8%	69.7%	87.7%	45.8%	18.0%	41.9%
ESC 16---Amarillo	39.8%	82.9%	66.0%	75.9%	88.4%	45.6%	12.5%	42.8%
ESC 17--Lubbock	51.6%	81.0%	69.7%	73.4%	90.7%	60.0%	17.3%	30.7%
ESC 18--Midland	58.3%	74.4%	57.5%	69.1%	82.6%	48.3%	13.5%	34.3%
ESC 19--El Paso	88.5%	72.0%	72.0%	70.8%	82.4%	38.2%	11.6%	44.2%
ESC 20--San Antonio	66.9%	74.5%	70.5%	68.8%	87.4%	43.1%	18.6%	44.3%

Source. Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2007, 2008b).

Table 8. State and Education Service Center Regional Graduation Rates, Class of 2008

Class of 2008 Education Service Center	AEIS *Ethnic Distribution % Hispanic Population	+All Students	+African American	+Hispanic	+White	+SLL	White Hispanic Graduation Gap	White SLL Graduation Gap
Texas Average	47.2%	79.1%	71.8%	70.8%	88.8%	44.2%	18.0%	44.6%
ESC 1---Edinburg	96.9%	74.8%	73.0%	74.3%	85.1%	49.4%	10.8%	35.7%
ESC 2---Corpus Christi	70.4%	75.7%	67.2%	71.5%	85.3%	52.3%	13.8%	33.0%
ESC 3---Victoria	48.2%	83.0%	79.8%	74.2%	91.2%	67.8%	17.0%	23.4%
ESC 4---Houston	44.3%	77.8%	71.1%	68.6%	88.9%	34.8%	20.3%	54.1%
ESC 5---Beaumont	12.2%	83.7%	75.0%	73.5%	89.0%	53.8%	15.5%	35.2%
ESC 6---Huntsville	16.4%	85.4%	74.1%	77.4%	89.8%	52.9%	12.4%	36.9%
ESC 7---Kilgore	20.6%	85.1%	78.1%	74.9%	89.7%	48.8%	14.8%	40.9%
ESC 8---Mt. Pleasant	14.8%	89.1%	83.8%	84.3%	91.4%	78.0%	7.1%	14.3%
ESC 9---Wichita Falls	20.4%	87.3%	77.3%	83.1%	89.2%	64.7%	6.1%	24.5%
ESC 10---Richardson	38.6%	77.8%	69.0%	67.2%	88.5%	41.8%	21.5%	46.7%
ESC 11---Fort Worth	29.7%	83.3%	74.2%	73.0%	89.1%	50.6%	16.1%	38.5%
ESC 12---Waco	25.7%	82.0%	74.8%	75.9%	87.6%	50.8%	11.7%	36.8%
ESC 13---Austin	40.8%	80.3%	70.0%	68.0%	89.3%	39.4%	21.3%	49.9%
ESC 14---Abilene	31.6%	78.3%	71.3%	63.8%	87.0%	40.4%	23.2%	46.6%
ESC 15---San Angelo	52.4%	80.1%	69.3%	73.3%	87.9%	64.8%	14.6%	23.1%
ESC 16---Amarillo	40.5%	83.7%	69.7%	75.0%	90.0%	55.8%	15.0%	34.2%
ESC 17--Lubbock	52.0%	82.2%	70.7%	74.7%	92.1%	57.7%	17.4%	34.4%
ESC 18--Midland	59.3%	73.1%	56.5%	66.5%	83.4%	45.9%	16.9%	37.5%
ESC 19--El Paso	88.8%	74.5%	76.1%	73.0%	86.7%	39.4%	13.7%	47.3%
ESC 20--San Antonio	67.6%	74.0%	68.9%	68.4%	87.6%	49.1%	19.2%	38.5%

Source. Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2008a, 2009b).

Table 9. State and Education Service Center Regional Graduation Rates, Class of 2009

Class of 2009 Education Service Center	AEIS *Ethnic Distribution % Hispanic Population	+All Students	+African American	+Hispanic	+White	+SLL	White Hispanic Graduation Gap	White SLL Graduation Gap
Texas Average	47.9%	80.6%	73.8%	73.5%	89.7%	49.2%	16.2%	40.5%
ESC 1---Edinburg	97.0%	77.2%	69.7%	76.8%	85.9%	53.4%	9.1%	32.5%
ESC 2---Corpus Christi	71.1%	78.4%	72.9%	74.6%	87.9%	39.4%	13.3%	48.5%
ESC 3---Victoria	49.2%	85.4%	83.5%	77.8%	92.4%	53.8%	14.6%	38.6%
ESC 4---Houston	45.2%	79.4%	72.9%	71.9%	89.6%	41.2%	17.7%	48.4%
ESC 5--- Beaumont	13.0%	85.4%	76.1%	78.0%	90.6%	55.6%	12.6%	35.0%
ESC 6--- Huntsville	26.6%	86.2%	70.6%	73.1%	88.8%	48.3%	15.7%	40.5%
ESC 7---Kilgore	21.6%	86.1%	80.4%	77.2%	90.0%	57.3%	12.8%	32.7%
ESC 8---Mt. Pleasant	15.4%	91.3%	86.0%	86.4%	93.9%	72.4%	7.5%	21.5%
ESC 9---Wichita Falls	21.1%	89.7%	77.8%	86.2%	92.1%	75.9%	10.6%	16.2%
ESC 10-- Richardson	39.4%	79.5%	71.5%	70.3%	89.5%	47.3%	19.2%	42.2%
ESC 11--Fort Worth	30.7%	84.2%	74.8%	74.8%	90.2%	54.2%	15.4%	36.0%
ESC 12---Waco	26.4%	83.6%	77.0%	78.1%	88.7%	56.4%	10.6%	32.3%
ESC 13---Austin	41.6%	81.8%	74.4%	70.9%	90.1%	45.7%	19.2%	44.4%
ESC 14---Abilene	32.7%	78.9%	70.5%	66.4%	87.8%	59.0%	21.4%	28.8%
ESC 15--San Angelo	53.1%	83.7%	79.6%	76.7%	91.0%	60.3%	14.3%	30.7%
ESC 16--Amarillo	41.3%	84.4%	71.8%	78.1%	89.6%	55.2%	11.5%	34.4%
ESC 17--Lubbock	52.6%	81.9%	68.1%	74.8%	92.8%	60.0%	18.0%	32.8%
ESC 18--Midland	60.4%	75.3%	62.6%	69.7%	84.2%	48.4%	14.5%	35.8%
ESC 19--El Paso	88.9%	76.3%	79.0%	75.3%	84.7%	48.8%	9.4%	35.9%
ESC 20--San Antonio	68.0%	75.4%	69.3%	70.8%	87.6%	49.7%	16.8%	87.9%

Source. Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2009a, 2010b).

Table 10. State and Education Service Center Regional Graduation Rates, Class of 2010

Class of 2010 Education Service Center	AEIS *Ethnic Distribution % Hispanic Population	+All Students	+African American	+Hispanic	+White	+SLL	White Hispanic Graduation Gap	White SLL Graduation Gap
Texas Average	50.3%	84.3%	78.8%	78.8%	91.6%	54.8%	12.8%	36.8%
ESC 1---Edinburg	97.4%	82.3%	77.1%	81.8%	93.6%	67.4%	11.8%	26.2%
ESC 2---Corpus Christi	73.8%	81.4%	76.9%	77.9%	89.5%	55.1%	11.6%	34.4%
ESC 3---Victoria	53.1%	88.4%	85.7%	82.9%	94.1%	52.4%	11.2%	41.7%
ESC 4---Houston	47.4%	83.2%	77.7%	77.2%	91.8%	45.2%	14.6%	46.6%
ESC 5---Beaumont	14.9%	88.9%	84.0%	85.9%	91.6%	67.2%	5.7%	24.4%
ESC 6---Huntsville	30.3%	88.5%	80.6%	82.6%	92.1%	62.2%	9.5%	29.9%
ESC 7---Kilgore	24.1%	89.4%	85.5%	82.6%	92.5%	64.4%	9.9%	28.1%
ESC 8---Mt. Pleasant	17.7%	93.9%	90.5%	96.4%	94.6%	93.0%	-1.8%	1.6%
ESC 9---Wichita Falls	24.6%	92.9%	89.2%	90.2%	93.9%	72.2%	3.7%	21.7%
ESC 10-- Richardson	41.3%	83.7%	77.5%	77.3%	91.2%	56.6%	13.9%	34.6%
ESC 11--Fort Worth	32.8%	86.8%	79.0%	79.3%	92.0%	58.2%	12.7%	33.8%
ESC 12---Waco	30.2%	86.6%	80.0%	82.0%	91.0%	61.4%	9.0%	29.6%
ESC 13---Austin	44.9%	85.5%	77.6%	77.0%	92.6%	53.5%	15.6%	39.1%
ESC 14---Abilene	35.9%	80.6%	70.8%	70.2%	88.8%	57.1%	18.6%	31.7%
ESC 15--San Angelo	56.0%	87.3%	77.4%	83.4%	92.4%	87.0%	9.0%	5.4%
ESC 16--Amarillo	44.0%	87.5%	79.5%	83.8%	90.9%	58.0%	7.1%	32.9%
ESC 17--Lubbock	55.7%	85.0%	73.4%	78.6%	94.7%	63.8%	16.1%	30.9%
ESC 18--Midland	64.0%	78.5%	64.8%	74.5%	85.7%	52.5%	11.2%	33.2%
ESC 19--El Paso	90.0%	80.7%	83.2%	80.0%	85.5%	54.9%	5.5%	30.6%
ESC 20--San Antonio	70.9%	80.0%	76.2%	76.2%	89.8%	51.8%	13.6%	38.0%

Source. Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2010a, 2011b).

Upon further analysis of such data, additional invaluable insights surfaced regarding the graduation rates of Hispanic and SLL students in each of the Region ESC areas of the state. In this regard, the graduation rates of Texas' southernmost Region One ESC area students raised significant concerns. As noted by Table 6, an evaluation of Region One's demographic profile, according to the 2007 Texas Academic Excellence Indicator Report (AEIS), indicates that the area serves a predominantly Hispanic student population. In 2007, Hispanic students comprised approximately 97% of the total school population. The Class of 2007 Hispanic graduation rate, 71.2%, slightly exceeded the State's average Hispanic graduation rate of 68.5%. However, the 71.2% represented a 15.3% gap between Hispanic and White student graduation rates.

For that same class, only 42.2%, less than half of all SLL students graduated from Region One public high schools in 2007. What was even more alarming was that Region One's SLL and White student group graduation rate gap of 44.3% clearly underlined the fact that 57.8% of SLL students, eligible for graduation, were not able to complete minimal high school requirements and earn a high school diploma (see Table 7).

Along the same lines, Table 8 and Table 9 data revealed that Region One Hispanic and SLL students in the Class of 2008 and the Class of 2009 inched their way closer to the graduation rate recorded for White students over those same years. However, an astounding graduation gap of 32.5% also illustrated the significant gap

that existed between Region One SLL students and their White counterparts for the Class of 2009 (see Table 7 and Table 8).

A review of the graduation rate data for the Class of 2010, as depicted in Table 9, illustrated a narrowing of the gap between Hispanic and White students graduating from Region One public high schools. However, a 26% difference in graduation rates persisted between SLL students and their White counterparts. Such data confirm the need for Texas educators to identify the most effective means to assist students in meeting all state and national academic standards and graduation requirements as Texas becomes part of a more diverse educational landscape.

Upon examination of the data, several concerns come to mind regarding the Hispanic and SLL student groups mentioned in the previous student assessment reports. The data indicate that significant numbers of Hispanic and SLL students were not able to attain academic success in their schools and complete their graduation requirements at the same rates as compared to their White counterparts. As a counterpoint, the data also raised questions regarding the success of Hispanic and SLL students who were able to meet their graduation requirements.

Who and/or what enabled these students to succeed during that same time period poses a target for investigation. Identifying the conditions, practices, or behaviors that propelled Hispanic and SLL student achievement may prove beneficial to other students and schools, seeking to find solutions to the challenges of increased rigor and new state and federal assessment mandates.

While these considerations pose a need for further reflection, future implications for students who did not meet their graduation requirements compel the researcher to ponder the opportunities available for productive careers after they leave their high schools. With these data in mind, addressing the needs of a clearly diverse classroom must, therefore, include an examination of those practices and leadership skills that enabled Hispanic and SLL students to meet their graduation requirements in Texas academically recognized or exemplary secondary schools.

### **Hispanic Student Achievement**

Many factors can be attributed to the achievement levels of Hispanic students. In an insightful report issued in November 2005, the Pew Hispanic Center defined and identified the characteristics of public high schools that most Hispanic students attend. The research asserted that there are differences in the types of schools that Hispanics attend in contrast to those schools attended by African American and White students. Hispanic students are more likely to attend large high schools, with high student-teacher ratios. These public high schools are also characterized by significant numbers of students coming from poor families (Fry, 2005).

Statistical research indicates that many larger schools are usually associated with lower student achievement and higher dropout rates. Additionally, such schools are usually plagued by strained instructional resources and are usually home to larger concentrations of low socioeconomic status students. Researchers have also endeavored to explain how low student performance can also be attributed to each of the factors previously mentioned (Fry, 2005).



While taking into consideration such factors as family income, English proficiency, level of parental education, and where Hispanic students were born, scholars are also quick to point out that these single factors do not act alone to explain the achievement gap. Thus, examining the context in which learning is supposed to occur is also an important consideration, especially when it comes to policy decision-making. The Pew Hispanic Center's report (Fry, 2005) attempted to explain the trends and characteristics noted in their assessment of the U.S. Department of Education survey collected from all public high schools for students attending those schools in the 2002-2003 school year (Fry, 2005).

As previously stated Hispanic or Latino students were more likely than African American or White students, to attend the country's largest high schools (Fry, 2005). More than 56% of Hispanics attending high school in 2002-2003 attended high schools with enrollment numbers of 1838 or more students as compared to 32% African Americans and 26% Whites. Statistics also indicated that Hispanic students are twice as likely as African Americans to attend large schools, with enrollment of 1838 or more students. Seven states are predominantly responsible for educating 80% of all Hispanic youth in the country. On average, high schools in these seven states are much larger than high schools in the rest of the country. Hispanic students, in states with large Hispanic student populations, are more likely than African Americans or Whites to attend large and disadvantaged schools (Fry, 2005).

Approximately one quarter of the nation's public high schools are home to 45% of students, classified as eligible for free and reduced lunch (Fry, 2005). A

disproportionate number of this student population is composed of Hispanic students. To add to this statistic, 300 of these high schools have populations numbering 1838 or more students. It is important to note that about 25% of all Hispanic students attend these larger high schools as compared to 8% African Americans and 1% Whites (Fry, 2005).

Additionally, in 2002-2003, approximately 44% of Hispanic students attended the most disadvantaged of these schools as compared to the 9% of Whites attending these same schools (Fry, 2005). Many of these schools were located in the central city or urban setting. When it comes to instructional resources, Hispanic students attend high schools in which the student-teacher ratio is greater than 22 to 1 as compared to the average ratio of 16 to 1. Thus, Hispanic students are classified as dually vulnerable in respect to their level of poverty and their attendance in large, under-resourced schools (Fry, 2005).

Moreover, examining and analyzing school principal leadership in the practice of multicultural education and the application of critical theory within AEIS state recognized or exemplary secondary schools is critical to creating school environments that support positive gains in the academic achievement of Hispanic students in secondary schools. Such an initiative requires a more comprehensive understanding of the roles that secondary principals play as school leaders who are able to influence and impact the daily interactions and potential academic success of students and their teachers.

To respond to the research questions posed for this study, a review of the historical roots of multicultural education allows for the exploration of scholarly research and its application within the field of education. A review of the literature in regard to culturally relevant pedagogy and critical theory will add further dimensions to this study. From this perspective, a review of multicultural education studies and effective school leadership research will also serve to broaden the researcher's perspective regarding the connection(s) between school leadership and student achievement.

### **High-Performing Hispanic Schools**

While many have argued that Hispanic student success is a challenging endeavor, others have offered current examples of high-achieving schools located within the Region One Education Service Center area (Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes Scribner, 1999). One such prominent study, conducted in 1993 and supported by the Texas Education Agency as well as The University of Texas, argued that high-performing Hispanic schools, subjects of the study, had not acquiesced to the low expectations, outdated decision-making, tracking, inadequate curriculum, poor instruction, and "ill-prepared" educators that have often plagued their low-performing counterparts (Cummins, 1984, 1986; Duran, 1989; Figueroa & Garcia, 1994; Garcia, 1994; Levin, 1986; Reyes et al., 1999; Reyes & Scribner, 1995; Valencia & Aburto, 1991).

In contrast, the study identified high-performing schools that were staffed by dedicated teachers who utilized culturally relevant resources and who challenged

students to become critically engaged in their own learning (Paredes Scribner, 1999).

As per the study, these high-performing schools serving Hispanic students in the Region One ESC area:

- Were led by principals who care about their students;
- Nurtured the ethic of caring and learning;
- Shared decision making;
- Developed communities of learners who strive to do their best for their students and schools through professional growth and learning;
- Collaborated to solve problems;
- Celebrated linguistically diverse students;
- Strove to do their best through professional growth and learning;
- Developed and shared a vision for the future of their students;
- Achieved their goals creatively, and
- Took risks to improve teaching and learning (Reyes et al., 1999).

The study further delineated what needed to be in place to develop high-performing Hispanic learning communities. The components of this conceptual framework (Reyes et al., 1999) included:

1. Governance as well as leadership defined by a culture of collaboration, a shared mission, and the belief that all students have the potential to academically succeed;

2. Collaborative community and parent relationships that emphasized Hispanic cultural values and experiences, personal contact, and structures/ environments that fostered communication;
3. Culturally responsive pedagogy to create student-centered learning environments that value and embrace cultural and linguistic diversity, address a variety of teaching and learning styles, and create opportunities for meaningful, relevant interaction with students, and
4. Assessment practices properly aligned to the second language learner's experience, knowledge and skills, and the context in which learning occurs.

In support of the conceptual framework previously mentioned, Wagstaff and Fusarelli (1999) contended that high-performing Hispanic schools evidenced a strong system of communication and collaboration among school administrators, their staffs, and the community. Site-based decision-making enabled members of the professional staff to feel included in the decisions made regarding instruction at their schools. In fact, staff believed that their administration worked diligently to include them as well as parents in addressing teaching and learning in their schools. Processes for coordinating, planning, and communication were in place to keep everyone informed about their initiatives.

In this regard, a clear and shared vision and mission was articulated by parents, teachers, and school leaders in the schools that Wagstaff and Fusarelli (1999) studied in their research. Even students were able to voice the school's vision and mission,

and thus everyone became part of a team sharing a set of collective goals to be achieved. Principals of these schools understood the importance of including everyone and working toward a shared vision (Wagstaff & Fusarelli, 1999).

According to Wagstaff and Fusarelli (1999), effective school principals viewed themselves as facilitators who were able to provide the necessary resources and bring people together to accomplish a set of shared goals. The principals involved in the 1993 study described themselves as good listeners and as support to the students and staff. In essence, they saw themselves as the “go to” people at their campuses. Additionally, principals modeled their own expectations, a positive attitude, their dedication, and their commitment to the mission of the school. In this way, principals worked diligently to develop trust and a positive climate among their staff (Wagstaff & Fusarelli, 1999).

Wagstaff and Fusarelli (1999) also indicated that principals utilized a variety of leadership styles to accomplish their school goals. They were highly visible and were able to identify the strengths of their campus staffs and students as they led their schools toward their performance objectives. Some principals saw themselves as coaches, affirming that their staffs were professionals, capable of assisting students in meeting their learning goals (Wagstaff & Fusarelli, 1999).

Consistent with the research of effective schools, Raywid (1992) asserted that (a) teachers and students assume responsibility for their roles in successful schools; (b) they collaborate with their peers; (c) they are treated as valued contributors and professionals in their schools; and (d) they move as a collective unit, using their

common values and shared goals as guideposts. Bergman's (1992) scholarly work argued that effective principals utilized communication in various forms to build trust and collaboration among students, staff, and the community.

In this respect, effective principals were good listeners and provided teachers with the autonomy that they needed to develop and initiate good instruction. Thus, governance and leadership within effective schools mirrored a framework of collaboration and leadership styles that supported shared decision-making, exemplary student achievement, staff collegiality, and collaborative problem-solving (Funkhouser, 1992; Purkey & Smith, 1983).

Site-based decision-making enabled high-performing schools to create open, collaborative climates that allowed teachers to become more involved in the planning and implementation of curriculum initiatives (Riley, 1984). Participation in such professional dialogues contributed to staff satisfaction and acknowledgement of their value in their school organization (Stevenson, 1987). Taking ownership of such decisions allowed staff to develop efficacy and support for a collaborative culture within their schools (David & Peterson, 1984).

Wayson (1988) asserted that high-performing schools are led by staff who work diligently to create positive school environments that let students know they are appreciated, valued, and able to succeed. This mindset involved the deliberate planning of instruction and application of strategies that value cultural and linguistic diversity (Stedman, 1987). Reyes et al. (1999) concurred with Stedman (1987) when

they declared that effective principals ardently articulated the benefits of cultural diversity and cultural pluralism.

In fact, effective principals expressed their belief and confidence in the ability to learn about their students. They were committed to providing the necessary tools and resources for students and staff. Lucas, Henze, and Donato (1990) agreed that school leaders who prioritized the learning of Hispanic second language learners, held these students to high standards and were knowledgeable about instructional approaches that assisted second language learners. These principals passionately denounced cultural deprivation reasoning and other deficit models of schooling (Reyes et al., 1999).

As demonstrated by the previous scholarly work cited for this study, high-performing Hispanic schools provided their students with quality instruction at the hands of knowledgeable, committed professionals who clearly believed in their students. Leaders of these schools employed a variety of leadership styles to convey a clear vision and mission for the success of their students and staff. They employed collaborative governance and leadership to engage their learning communities and support the learning of their Hispanic students. Acknowledgement and validation of cultural and linguistic diversity served as a framework for the teaching and learning at high-performing Hispanic schools (Reyes et al., 1999).

### **Historical Roots of Multicultural Education**

Historically, multicultural education found its voice during the curriculum reform movement that began in the 1960s and 1970s. The early ethnic studies



movement, as well as the intergroup education movement of the 1940s and 1950s, directly impacted the emergence of multicultural education. Acquiring a historical perspective regarding multicultural education is, therefore, central to understanding how this curriculum reform movement began, and how it has shaped the landscape of America's schools (Banks, 2004).

### **Ethnic Studies Movement**

According to Banks (2004) and other prominent scholars, the Black studies movement that began in the 1960s and 1970s was rooted in the ethnic studies research movement that began in the country's early national period as a means to develop teaching materials for use by such African American scholars as Williams (1882-1883), Woodson and Wesley (1922), and DuBois (1935, 1973). Their goal was to develop curriculum content about African Americans that could be integrated into the school and college curriculum. To this end, they created curriculum that emphasized the historical contributions of African Americans and the importance of valuing the African American culture in the school's curriculum.

In describing the early history of the schooling of African American children, Brooks (1990) described how segregation and desegregation have mirrored the age in which such practices were instituted. The colonial and early national periods were characterized by desegregation, while segregation became a mainstay in the early 1800s. The early 1950s and 1960s, however, witnessed a reversal of segregation policies toward desegregation; nonetheless, researcher Brooks (1990) believed that current practices point toward another push for school segregation.

While the first public schools in Massachusetts and Virginia were officially described as desegregated, African Americans found that they had to establish their own schools, since they were often the victims of discrimination in these very same schools (Brooks, 1990; White, 1973; Woodson, 1968). While Boston refused to fund separate schools for African Americans in 1800, the city later funded separate schools for African American children in 1818. History also points to the fact that the first public schools for African Americans in the South after the Civil War were segregated as per legal statutes established by White legislators.

Such policies led to the establishment of separate schools with disparate funding and inequality in the forms of expenditures per pupil, lower teacher and administrator salaries, poorer quality of teaching resources, and older textbooks (Anderson, 1988; Bond, 1939). Additionally, Black public schools in the South, populated by African American teachers and administrators, were subject to school boards, curricula, and textbooks controlled by the White dominant majority. Therefore, integrating content about African Americans into the existing curricula, proved to be a great challenge for scholars involved in the ethnic studies movement. Woodson (1933) asserted that African Americans were only taught about the European civilization, while the history and contributions of the great African civilizations and cultures were being neglected in schools and colleges. He indicated that such a practice had a negative impact upon African American youth, which then led to low self-esteem and a devaluing of the African American culture.

According to Roche (1996), Woodson was a true advocate for the integration of African American studies into school and college curricula. Woodson continued to play a key role in the development and implementation of historical materials for use by elementary and secondary schools, and as such, he was a central figure in the fight for the inclusion of African American content into school curricula. African American scholars, such as Williams, DuBois, Wesley, Quarles, and Logan, also significantly influenced the development and implementation of African American studies within school and college curricula.

While the early ethnic studies movement revolved around the work of African American scholars and their goal to integrate African American content into school and college curricula, the intergroup education movement involved the reduction of prejudice and discrimination through the use of content regarding religious, national, and racial groups (Banks, 1996; Cook & Cook, 1954; Trager & Yarrow, 1952). The intergroup education movement can be directly linked, however, to the contemporary multicultural education movement, because both shared many common goals and similar concerns (Banks, 2001; Taba & Wilson, 1946).

### **Intergroup Education Movement**

World War II heralded the migration of African Americans, Mexican Americans, and rural Whites in search of job opportunities to northern and western cities. Thus, social forces played a significant role in the intergroup education movement that sprang from the increase of war-related job opportunities in northern and western urban areas, since these employment opportunities were not available in

the south. Such a migration led to racial and ethnic tensions that resulted from the intense competition for jobs and housing among Whites and Mexican Americans in western cities and African Americans and Whites in northern cities. Therefore, the intergroup education movement emerged in response to these conflicts (C. A. M. Banks, 2004; DuBois & Okorodudu, 1984; Taba et al., 1952).

In attempts to resolve issues regarding prejudice, the intergroup education movement sought to create interracial understanding among students of diverse national, religious, and racial identities (Cook & Cook, 1954; Taba & Wilson, 1946). Scholars in the movement published works and sponsored projects and activities designed to address intergroup education for both the elementary and secondary school levels, as well as for the college level. Additionally, several national organizations were created to advance the goals of intergroup education; in this regard, these efforts were similar to those recommended in current multicultural education publications.

Several prominent scholars advocated theories regarding intergroup relations. Social scientists, such as Wirth (1928), Cook (1952) and Allport (1954) led the way toward the development of theories regarding the reduction of intergroup tensions during this era. Other noted researchers in the field included Alain Locke, an African American philosopher; Ruth Benedict, Franz Boas, John Dollard, E. Franklin Frazier, Melville, J. Herskovits, Otto Klineberg, Ralph Linton, and Margaret Mead.

## **Landmark Studies**

African American anthropologist Allison Davis urged that social studies teachers teach their students to adhere to democratic values and reject injustice, oppression, and exploitation (Taba & Van Til, 1945). Davis also believed that teachers should advocate social action and reach out to the underprivileged as a means to teach students how to organize and work toward the improvement of their community. The studies of social scientists, such as Davis and Locke, contribute to the fact that scholars of the 1940's believed in becoming involved in the social problems of that age. Other studies also had a profound impact upon intergroup relations and the intergroup education movement; several of these works involved the study of anti-Semitism in western nations, especially during the years prior to the onslaught of World War II. Jewish organizations became actively involved in sponsoring research that had the potential to stem racial conflicts and ethnic hate (Wyman, 1984).

Several other landmark studies, conducted during the 1950's, added to the body of research that explored how personality factors contribute to the development of prejudice in individuals. In this regard, Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford (1950) published their research regarding personality and its role in developing prejudice. Although their work does not fully explore the impact of structural factors upon the formation of prejudice in individuals, their study has had a significant impact upon intergroup relations.

Banks (2004) cited the intergroup education movement for the significant theoretical research that has evolved from the study of children's racial attitudes.

Goodman's (1952) studies supported the earlier work of several other renowned researchers and proved that preschool children are racially aware even at a very young age. Moreover, their racial attitudes reflect similar attitudes displayed by adults in their lives. Such evidence is central to the intergroup education movement as scholars and educators involved in this movement have sought to improve intergroup relations and resolve conflict.

In much the same way, Allport's (1954) study emphasized that interpersonal contact is one of the most effective means to improve relationships between mainstream and students of color groups. Under appropriate conditions, Allport asserted that conflicts resulting from stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination can be reduced through contact that is intentionally managed. In this regard, effective intergroup interactions occur when four necessary conditions or principles are established as a premise for authentic interaction (Allport, 1954). These conditions include:

1. *Equal status*: Both groups assume and undertake an equal status relationship,
2. *Common goals*: Both groups collaborate on a shared problem or goal that becomes or is designated as common or superordinate goal,
3. *Intergroup cooperation*: Interdependence is planned as a component central to achieving the common goal or accomplishing the designated task, and

4. *Support of authorities*: Groups function under identified and acknowledged authorities and social norms that both groups accept. The authority and norms support the contact between the groups and members (Allport, 1954).

Managing the contact between the groups under the previous parameters enables both groups to reconceptualize their generalizations and misinformation about each other. Thus, prejudice is reduced as misconceptions are erased, and new information is attained. Such effective interaction allows groups to learn more about each other and about a category of people (Allport, 1954). Allport's principles can be identified as the theoretical foundation for the work of such scholars as Cohen (1972), Aronson and Bridgeman (1979), and Slavin (1985), as well as other noted researchers in the field of multicultural education. In this regard, the work of intergroup educators has contributed to the development of multicultural education, since both share several common goals and expectations.

According to Banks (2004), the work of intergroup educators furthered the development and advocacy of democratic racial attitudes and values that have been advanced in today's education (Banks, 2004). Additionally, significant work has been done to study the effects of curricular interventions upon student racial attitudes. The work of Trager and Yarrow (1952), as well as Hayes and Conklin (1953), paved the way for support of the postulate that affirmed that "multicultural lessons, activities, and teaching resources, utilized within a democratic classroom atmosphere and implemented for a sufficiently long period, help students to develop democratic racial

attitudes and values” (Banks, 2004, p. 10). Banks also concurred with the studies of such intergroup scholars as Horowitz (1936), Clark and Clark (1947), and Goodman (1952), who have established that children absorb and internalize adult values, beliefs, and attitudes that are found within institutions and societal structures. Moreover, it is important to note that the intergroup education movement helped focus attention on ethnic attachment, pride, empowerment, and action to change society (Banks, 2004).

### **Ethnic Studies Movement vs. Intergroup Education Movement**

When comparing the early ethnic studies movement to the intergroup education movement, it is important to note that these movements differed in both their aims and goals. The early ethnic studies movement was centered on helping African Americans to become aware of the importance of their own history and culture. The commitment to empower and enhance the African American community was also a key element of the early ethnic studies movement (Banks, 2004). Thus, the ethnic studies movement dealt with the histories and cultures of specific groups. Such scholars as Woodson (1933) and DuBois (1973) voiced the goals of this movement through their studies and publications.

In contrast, the intergroup education movement focused on developing intergroup harmony, rather than tackling the issues of institutionalized racism, power, and structural inequality (Banks, 2004). Central to the framework of this movement was the idea that all groups needed to learn how to communicate and get along with each other; thus, interracial harmony and human relations were the key elements upon which the goals and aims of the movement were based. As leading scholars in the



intergroup movement, Sleeter and Grant (1987) concurred. They identified five categories upon which their typology was based, believing that the intergroup education movement supported these approaches in the implementation of multicultural education:

1. *Teaching the culturally different*: This approach focuses on assimilation rather than making others aware of inequities. The goal is to help culturally different, low achieving students to “catch up” and join the mainstream dominant culture (Sleeter & Grant, 1999, 2009).
2. *Human relations*: This approach attempts to address the affective aspects of the classroom. Importance is strongly delegated to the manner in which students feel about themselves and diverse groups in society. As in the previous approach, the dominant culture is not questioned or criticized (Sleeter & Grant, 1999, 2009).
3. *Single-group studies*: In this approach, the focus is on one single or specific group. Time is allotted to study one group at a time rather than acknowledging that all groups are part of the mainstream and that their history or culture is as important as that of the mainstream, dominant culture (Sleeter & Grant, 1999, 2009).
4. *Multicultural education*: This approach involves the intentional reform of the educational system to fully acknowledge and represent diversity. Curriculum, school structures, staffing and assessment are examined in order to support the development of a culturally, pluralistic society that

does not seek to merely assimilate minorities (Sleeter & Grant, 1999, 2009).

5. *Education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist*: Social justice and the empowerment of youth play central roles in this approach. Similar to the multicultural education approach, this particular approach demands explicit social critique and democratic participation of citizens (Sleeter & Grant, 1999, 2009).

Through their work, Taba and Wilson (1946) concluded that the intergroup education movement and the ethnic studies movement shared a common premise: an emphasis on the acknowledgement of the histories and cultures of ethnic groups.

While the intergroup education movement edged toward a human relations framework, the ethnic studies movement centered on the empowerment of the single group in question. However, Banks (2004) further concurred with Taba and Wilson that intergroup education incorporates “the concepts and understanding about groups and relations, sensitivity and goodwill, objective thinking, and experiences in democratic procedures” (p. 11).

While the vision of the intergroup education ideology revolved around interracial harmony and desegregation, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s advocated an ideology that embraced the empowerment and advancement of African Americans through Black studies in schools and colleges (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967). Thus, a more separatist ideology emerged during the 1970’s in which African Americans demanded more control of their community schools and distinct courses

designed to address Black studies. However, the demand for the actual inclusion of ethnic content into curriculum was not actually articulated until the 1980's and 1990's (Banks, 2004).

### **The Evolution of Multicultural Education**

As the early ethnic studies and intergroup movements took hold of American education, multicultural education evolved in several phases. The first phase centered on the individual interests of educators who specialized in the history or culture of ethnic groups. These individuals initiated institutional change through the incorporation of the concepts, information, and theories derived from ethnic studies into school and teacher-education curricula (Banks, 2004).

Multiethnic education, the second phase of multicultural education, began when educators realized that changes in the curricula were not enough to impact the education of the ethnically diverse. The second phase brought about the realization that structural and systemic change of an entire school could not occur until educational equality among all student groups was achieved. As per multiethnic educators, such reform would only be possible when students are taught to develop more democratic racial and ethnic attitudes (Banks, 2004).

Two other phases can be identified in the evolution of multicultural education in America. According to Banks (2004), the third phase developed as a result of groups who identified themselves as victims of society and educational institutions. Demanding a voice in the curricula of schools, women and people with disabilities

were among the groups that sought recognition and inclusion in schools, colleges, and universities during the third phase of multicultural education (Banks, 2004).

The current or fourth phase of multicultural education emphasizes the development of theory, research, and practice as interrelated with race, class, and gender. All four phases continue to exist in some form and give voice to the current developments in multicultural education (Banks, 2004). In this respect, it is important to consider how theory can be used to explain the implementation of multicultural education within today's schools.

### **Defining Multicultural Education**

Exploring its historical roots and theoretical framework allows researchers to more fully understand and define multicultural education. According to Banks and Banks (2001), multicultural education is described as:

an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students and students who are members of diverse racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school. (p. 1)

Scholars such as Garcia (1982), Grant (1977, 1978), and Frazier (1977) concur and claim that multicultural education is a “concept, a framework, a way of thinking, a philosophical viewpoint, a value orientation, and a set of criteria for making decisions that better serve the educational needs of culturally diverse student populations” (p. 32).

Gay (2004) further elaborated that multicultural education centers its focus on a set of beliefs and explanations that acknowledges and values the significance of

ethnic and cultural diversity in determining the lifestyles, social experiences, personal identities, and educational opportunities of the individual, group, or community in which they live. Therefore, multicultural education is both descriptive and prescriptive. As to its descriptive dimensions, Gay (2004) asserted that multicultural education identifies the ethnically and culturally diverse social structures of the United States and describes their relationship to the larger whole, including national institutions, values, beliefs, and systems of power. Baptiste (1986) moved on to say that multicultural education is also prescriptive in nature, as the discipline offers solutions to ensure that all diverse groups are treated equitably in schools.

Gay (1988, 2000) argued that pedagogical equality rests on the implementation of culturally sensitive instructional strategies which, in turn, allow for the optimal academic achievement of culturally diverse students. The work of Banks (1990) further illustrated that there is a direct link between multicultural education and citizenship education, as both are interdependent. Banks (1990) claimed that citizenship education

must help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed not only to participate in, but also to transform and reconstruct society...to become literate and reflective citizens who can participate productively in the work force...[who] care about other people in their communities and...take personal, social, and civic action to create a humane and just society. (p. 11)

As per the scholarly work of Baptiste (1979), multicultural education is viewed as a reform movement that seeks to revise the “structural, procedural, substantive, and valuative components of the educational enterprise to reflect the social, cultural, ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity of the United States” (p. 14). Baptiste called

multicultural education an institutionalizing process that endorses the philosophy of cultural pluralism within schools and the educational system. Bennett (1999) similarly affirmed the beliefs of such scholars as Baptiste when she explains that systemic change can only occur through:

- Curricula that embrace and develop an understanding of ethnic cultures, histories, and contributions;
- Processes for teaching students to acquire multicultural attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors, and
- Action strategies to combat racism and other types of oppression.

Along this same line of thought, Sleeter and Grant (1999) argued that social reconstruction is the ultimate goal of multicultural education. Therefore, teaching social and political action skills, as well as collaboration, should be the focus of the discipline as a means to equitably redistribute resources and opportunities to the oppressed. Gay (2004) summarized that social transformation and personal emancipation represent the fundamental themes of multicultural education as an emancipatory as well as social reform movement that includes pedagogy as a focus. In this manner, multicultural education can be viewed as a process that requires the intentional investment of time and resources as well as careful planning and monitoring of actions that will bring about systemic change (Banks, 2001).

As per the scholar Gay (2004), Nieto's definition of multicultural education encompasses a more inclusive and eclectic perspective than any other definition to date. Nieto (2000) framed multicultural education in a sociopolitical context that

includes substantive and procedural components, outcome expectations, and some interpretive comments. Nieto (2000) stated that multicultural education is an all-encompassing pedagogical process that is antiracist, democratic, and inclusive. It is perpetuated through the curriculum and instructional strategies implemented in schools. Multicultural education involves the interactions of students, teachers, and parents, and it is reflected through the ways in which schools believe students learn and teachers teach.

According to Nieto (2000), critical pedagogy is the philosophy that drives the discipline of multicultural education, and as such, there is a focus on knowledge, reflection, and action as a basis for social reconstruction. Burbules (1992/1995) concurred that critical pedagogy is primarily concerned with social injustice and the transformation of institutions or social relations that espouse inequity and oppression. Delving deeply into an issue and how it relates to institutional and societal power structures is central to the idea of reconstruction and transformation as advocated through the tenets of critical pedagogy.

To further clarify how multicultural education embraces critical pedagogy, Freire's (1970a) scholarly work clearly articulated the idea that critical pedagogy involves developing a critical consciousness in order to move to praxis or reflection and action. For Freire, being able to discover and act upon social injustice and oppression began with his focus upon literacy. Freire's work emphasized equating illiteracy with powerlessness and dependence. He asserted that enabling people to become literate creates a sense of confidence and competence, which ultimately can

lead to collective social action to eradicate the oppression of a social group (Freire, 1970a).

To summarize, critical pedagogy questions belief systems and actions to determine who stands to benefit from society's power structures. From this perspective, education systems are regarded as part of the power structures that influence and reinforce the belief systems of the dominant society through the rhetoric of the elite, testing, tracking, vocational training or college preparatory curricula (Apple, 1979; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Popkewitz, 1991). Taking such a position regarding the influence of schools upon the children whom they serve, critical pedagogy, thus, becomes an integral element in defining the various facets of multicultural education.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Ladson-Billings (1992a) defined culturally relevant pedagogy as “just good teaching” or pedagogy that meets the academic and social needs of culturally diverse student populations. Her scholarly work is acknowledged by leading researchers in the field of multicultural education as they laud the effectiveness of such an approach (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001). Gay (2000) firmly asserted that culturally relevant pedagogy entails the use of

the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to and effective [for students]...It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. (p. 29)



As diversity enriches American classrooms, some scholars adamantly concur that culturally relevant pedagogy is the perhaps the most significant means to increase academic achievement.

Ladson-Billings (1992b) further contended that culturally relevant teaching is a “pedagogy of opposition,” similar in nature to critical pedagogy but far-reaching as it speaks to empowerment of a group, rather than merely empowerment of only the self. Three premises undergird the foundation for culturally relevant pedagogy:

1. Students must experience success (Ladson-Billings, 1995).
2. Students must develop and nurture cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995).
3. Student must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Concurring with Freire (1970b), Ladson-Billings (1995) asserted that students need to achieve success. They must be able to learn and apply “literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills in order to be active participants in a democracy” (p. 160). Through her scholarly work with educators who teach students of color, Ladson-Billings affirmed that the ways in which students acquire these skills may vary, but teachers and students still retain the responsibility for teaching and learning what is central in a rigorous curriculum. In other words, no free passes can be issued to anyone, regardless of their cultural identities or what is termed as diversity! *Everyone* must learn the skills necessary to not only survive, but thrive in current

society. Academic competence is then the starting point for all students as they work to empower not only themselves but the collective unit.

Culturally relevant pedagogy, thus, aspires to create teacher and student awareness to, first and foremost, demand academic excellence from all in the classroom, regardless of the strategies that they use to engender the desire to learn. Ladson-Billings (1995) stated that the crux of the matter is to enable students “to choose” academic excellence rather than settle for less. Through her three-year study and observations of teachers, Ladson-Billings (1995) found that teachers who implemented culturally relevant pedagogy recognized the social power that African American students brought into the classroom and challenged them to move beyond that attribute and reveal their academic capacity by focusing on relevant, meaningful issues and ideas. In demanding students of color to perform at different and higher level of academic competence, teachers in Ladson-Billings’ (1995) study helped develop academic leadership in their students, and in turn, other students acknowledged and valued the positive traits that they observed in their peers.

Ladson-Billings (1995) contended that culturally relevant pedagogy also rests on developing cultural competence. This premise stresses the need to cultivate cultural integrity, as well as academic excellence in the classroom. In her study, Ladson-Billings (1995) found that teachers used culture as a conduit for learning by finding relevant and meaningful ways in which to infuse the interests of students into the learning of new skills and knowledge. Thus, (a) poetry was learned through the students’ love of rap music; (b) community and parent volunteers served as role

models to demonstrate skills that students could then learn and value; and (c) students were allowed to use their “home language” to express themselves in the classroom with the caveat that they were then required to “translate” their expressions into standard English. All of these examples speak to the use of culturally relevant pedagogy to assist students in the learning of new skills and knowledge.

In line with the research of Ladson-Billings, Howard (2001) contended that teachers must become aware that culturally diverse students frequently bring cultural capital into the classroom that is often radically different from conventional standards and world views. With this recognition comes the need to utilize the cultural capital that students bring into the classroom although it may differ from the mainstream culture and norms present in the school. Research by Bourdieu (1973) corroborates Howard’s position. Research by Bourdieu (1973) explained that cultural capital personifies the social norms and practices, beliefs, values, language, and behaviors defined in a particular context. Howard (2001) asserted that a disconnection may exist between the cultural capital that a student possesses with that of the mainstream, dominant culture, and structure in which that student is expected to learn and perform. Those in the mainstream, thus, possess an advantage, a privilege while the culturally or linguistically diverse do not. Mainstream language, beliefs, behaviors, and structures may pose impediments to those who are not familiar with these norms, and thus, they may have a more difficult time in meeting mainstream expectations. Pedagogy, that can provide a bridge over which to negotiate success, may assist

students who are not privy to the advantages of those who possess the cultural capital of the dominant culture of the school.

Understanding that cultural capital provides privilege is one of the most essential reasons in developing what Ladson-Billings (1995) called a “critical consciousness” in order to create student empowerment and academic success. As a predecessor in the study of critical pedagogy, Freire (1970a, 1970b) described the term *conscientizacao* or conscientization as a process that enables students to recognize systemic oppression and then move to action and become self-empowered to achieve personal and group success. Although Freire’s studies entailed working in Brazil with the poor, illiterate, disenfranchised, and oppressed, there are many ties to studies launched in the United States intended to assist similar groups in their quest for justice and equity.

In this regard, Ladson-Billings (1995) argued that culturally relevant pedagogy requires and encourages teachers to develop students who will critically engage the world and others. In other words, culturally relevant pedagogy espouses goals that move beyond learning the essential skills and knowledge to a higher plane of consciousness in order to act after carefully and critically weighing the norms in which all students are expected to function. This awareness should assist students and teachers to develop “multiple perspectives” about the world in which they live and learn (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

## **Critical Theory**

When examining the perceptions of secondary school administrators and students toward multicultural education, a review of critical theory and how this theoretical framework grounds the research questions in this study is essential. Critical theory must first be defined in the context of curriculum theory. Beauchamp (1968) summarized curriculum theory “as a set of related statements that give meaning to a school’s curriculum by pointing up the relationships among its elements and by directing its development, its use, and its evaluation” (p. 66). Other scholars have emphasized specific facets and functions to further clarify curriculum theory. Gay (as cited in Banks, 2004) agreed that while curriculum theory can be defined from various perspectives, it can be easily described according to its primary functions. From Gay’s perspective, curriculum theory seeks to “define, describe, explain, critique, and evaluate phenomena endemic to the field, and to guide curriculum practice” (Gay, as cited in Banks, 2004, p. 31).

To understand critical theory in the context of curriculum theory, Schubert (1986) asserted that critical theory is one of three categories (descriptive, prescriptive, and critical) that define three types of curriculum theory. According to Gay in Banks (2004), critical theory:

deals with practice and perspective, understanding and control, and the dialectical relationship between theory and practice. Its ultimate value commitment is human emancipation. Its goals are to expose contradictions in culture, explain how conventional curriculum and instruction perpetuate the socioeconomic exploitation and subjugation present in society at large, and create more egalitarianism in schools and societies. (p. 31)

Interweaving the ideologies of neo-Marxist conflict theorists and interpretivists, Knapp and Woolverton (2004) explained that critical theory was developed to address the phenomena of education at a macro and micro level. Similar to interpretive theory, critical theory embraces the social construction of meaning. Interpretivists focus on the interactions of teachers, students, and peers in the creation of the school experience. Therefore, interpretivists are concerned with the behavior of individuals that results from the construction of meanings and the relationships that are formed from the interaction of individuals. New meanings are constructed as individuals interact with each other (Knapp & Woolverton, 2004).

Critical theory, much like conflict theory perspectives, addresses issues of power in the social structure-at-large and how power creates social, economic, and political inequality. In this regard, critical theory similarly seeks to address injustice and social oppression in modern society. The works of Knapp and Woolverton (2004), Gramsci (1971), and Freire (1970b) affirmed that state hegemonic practices, policies, and structures support the construction of meanings that advance the subjugation and oppression of those in lower social or socioeconomic strata. According to critical theorists, the institution of formal schooling is reflective of societal forces that support the domination and oppression of lower social classes through instruction that perpetuates differential outcomes (Knapp & Woolverton, 2004).

Critical theory is, therefore, based on transformation, since individuals are regarded as active participants within a social setting and in making meaning of their own realities (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). Critical theorists believe that individuals

and social groups are able to construct their own reality regardless of social oppression. Thus, individuals have the capacity to resist and reconstruct a relationship within the oppressive structure. From a critical theorist perspective, learners are active participants in the curriculum, rather than passive recipients (Knapp & Woolverton, 2004).

The actions, reactions, and interactions of the individuals in schools are based on the socially constructed meanings that are attached to their beliefs and the structures in which they operate. These meanings, therefore, can change as they are reinterpreted by those involved in the interactions. Critical theorists, however, believe that change does not often occur, since hegemonic curricula and middle-class teachers reinforce the worldview of the elite, rendering lower class students powerless to change these same structures. Critical theory, thus, rests on the ideologies of both interpretive and conflict perspectives and is transformative in nature, as a change is sought through the reinterpretation and reconstruction of new meanings in social interaction (Knapp & Woolverton, 2004).

### **Multicultural Education Studies**

Reviewing the previous definitions of multicultural education serves to illustrate how this discipline has emerged as a reform movement within today's schools and how this movement has impacted the current educational system. The work of Garcia (2004) further contributed to defining the emergence of multicultural education as he argued that moving from "Americanization" to multicultural education has proved to be a significant challenge, since Americanization was

designed to address small ethnic and linguistically diverse urban groups into a single dominant national community and culture. However, Gonzalez (1990) and San Miguel and Valencia (1998) claimed that this process has not been effective because many Mexican American and other non-White students do not fit the profile commonly associated with European-born immigrants who predominantly populated urban industrialized areas. In contrast, immigrants from Mexico mainly occupied rural communities and came to America cognizant of a pre-established relationship between two countries, where one country was acknowledged as the more advanced and industrialized. Such a relationship established a power structure and identification of social class.

Since *Americanization* assumes that as a group, culturally and linguistically diverse children are culturally defective and that the group must be acted upon to resolve their individual flaws, Garcia (2004) stated that the values, language, and culture of the group must not be ignored. Rather, these attributes must be acknowledged and utilized to provide for the success of the culturally diverse. In this regard, multicultural education can be credited with several significant changes that have taken place in the development of curriculum content. Thus, the seemingly unbalanced perspectives of Western European values, history, literature and the perpetuation of a monolithic culture became the center of a curriculum debate in which the acknowledgement of cultural diversity became a priority. Informing majority group children about the contributions of people of color helped to reaffirm the group's significance to society. As proponents of multicultural education claimed,



curriculum design and development that embraced the cultural diversity present within America's classrooms served to enhance the educational experience for all students (Sleeter & Grant, 1987).

### **Curriculum Reform**

The move to reform curriculum was, at first, subtractive in nature. Multicultural education was seen as a temporary and highly focused effort that would lead to a successful and homogenous student population. Children, with different cultures and languages, were asked to abandon these attributes and continue the assimilation process through educational programs designed to assist students in "bridging the gap." These programs were seen as the means to help culturally diverse students to eventually acquire academic success and access into other societal domains (Sleeter & Grant, 1987). Such programs as Head Start, Title I, and now Chapter I were born out of the early multicultural education reform movement as an answer to the underachievement of students who were identified as culturally diverse and out of the mainstream academic environment. Students, working their way through these programs, were to eventually and naturally embrace mainstream American values and acquire English as their primary form of communication (Garcia, 2004).

The impact of multicultural education can also be identified in the efforts to "enhance human relations" through deliberate curriculum content design and development (Colangelo, Foxley, & Dustin, 1982; Perry, 1975). Students would be exposed to curricula that would enable them to not only learn about each other, but

also be better able to understand each other. Thus, communication between all culturally diverse groups would be improved and social accommodation of diversity would be enhanced.

Furthermore, the implementation of multicultural education programs has seen a focus on promoting respect for diversity through a more activist approach. Scholars, such as Banks (1984, 1988), Gay (1975), and Fishman (1989), have advocated curriculum change that not only espouses learning about and disseminating information regarding cultural diversity, but also develops an understanding and social acceptance of cultural diversity as a goal for which to strive. Current trends in curriculum development point at the attempt to integrate issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and social class. The aim of curriculum change, in this regard, is to bring an awareness of diversity issues through literature, social thought, scientific approaches, and historical construction. Through this approach, students are asked to become “social critics” who are able to identify social injustice, and in so doing, are then able to act as change agents.

Most significantly, bilingual education for Mexican Americans emerged as a product of multicultural education through the efforts of the bilingual education community. According to Grant and Sleeter (1988), programs, such as “double immersion,” typically exemplify efforts to utilize language and culture to create bilingual and bicultural student populations. Until Proposition 227 came into effect in California, both Texas and California were at the forefront of the initiative to implement bilingual education as part of the states’ curricula.

Multicultural education has also inspired publishing companies to deal with the bias that has permeated the presentation of information in school textbooks (Gollnick & Chinn, 1986). Although strides have been made to write history from diverse perspectives, the debate continues over whether bias has been completely erased from school textbooks. For example, Loewen (1995) asserted that the teaching of history and the instructional use of its corresponding textbooks alienates the culturally or linguistically diverse because history is usually told from the perspective of the White experience. Loewen (1995) also argued that current textbooks neglect to recite history from the perspective of the minorities who were often victims to the dominant society laying claim to their lands and forcing them into slavery.

Instead, history books laud the dominant majority for the freeing of slaves, and in many ways these same books subtly reinforce stereotypes that alienate people of color (Loewen, 1995). Loewen (1995) went on to say that modern textbooks have improved their recitation of the institution of slavery in American history, but have still neglected to open a discussion on the more important, underlying social and economic inferior status that it bestowed upon the African American community and the cultural racism that it perpetuated among the mainstream White society. In this manner, the multicultural education reform movement continues to influence the development and selection of instructional materials aligned to the tenets of multicultural education (Loewen, 1995).

Additionally, pre-service teacher training has been influenced by the multicultural education reform movement; efforts to increase teacher awareness of

cultural diversity issues have been instituted by many educational organizations. The intentional integration of the premises of multicultural education is wholly supported by researchers such as Gay (2000) and Banks (1996) who asserted that the curriculum, environment, philosophy, and pedagogy defining the current educational landscape should mirror the cultures and histories of the ethnically, social, and racially diverse students who sit in today's classrooms. In this regard, magnet and double-immersion school programs have moved closer to reflect the goals and roots of the multicultural education movement (Garcia, 2004).

### **An Examination of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity**

Besides exploring discrimination, desegregation, underachievement, low self-esteem, and non-English proficiency as a pragmatic set of problems to resolve, the multicultural education movement has sought to examine the theoretical assumptions that have driven historical and current educational endeavors. More specifically, there has been a shift toward examining the social circumstances of Mexican American or Hispanic students inside and outside of the school in an effort to better understand their academic achievement (Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999). Such a focus has directly impacted the implementation of educational initiatives and led to serious scholarly inquiry regarding educational policies and related practices in Texas and California.

Garcia (2004) claimed that multicultural education has also sparked a more pronounced effort to conduct case studies in the examination of cultural diversity. Over the last several decades, cultural diversity research has led to the identification of

racial, ethnic, and ethno-linguistic group characteristics. Although these studies were conducted to bring an awareness of group attributes as a means to better understand and serve these populations, more often than not, the studies usually served to promote and reinforce group stereotypes. The existence of heterogeneity within a cultural group as well between cultural groups was not recognized through this research. Therefore, a common set of knowledge regarding the attributes of a particular group could not necessarily be applied to all students in a group in an educational setting (Garcia, 2004).

The work of August and Hakuta (1997), though, pointed to the identification of those conditions that lead to optimal learning for the linguistically and culturally diverse. Their review of 33 studies, a majority involving Mexican American students, revealed the following attributes as contributing to the academic success of culturally diverse student populations:

A supportive school-wide climate, school leadership, a customized learning environment, articulation and coordination within and between schools, use of native language and culture in instruction, a balanced curriculum that includes both basic and higher-order skills, explicit skill instruction, opportunities for student-directed instruction, use of instructional strategies that enhance understanding, opportunities for practice, systematic student assessment, staff development, and home and parent involvement.  
(August & Hakuta, 1997, p. 171)

Garcia (2004) similarly drew attention to the goals that exemplary schools in Texas, Illinois, California, and Massachusetts implemented to ensure high-quality instruction. These included:

- Fostering English acquisition and the development of mature literacy;
- Delivering grade-level content;

- Organizing instruction in innovative ways (i.e., establishing schools within school, families, continuum classes, flexible grouping, etc.);
- Protecting and extending instructional time;
- Expanding teachers' roles and responsibilities;
- Addressing students' social and emotional needs, and
- Involving parents in their children's education.

The intentional and deliberate attention to these goals increased the academic success of the highly diverse and poor student populations enrolled in these schools.

Additional case studies, involving two elementary schools and one middle school, were conducted by Miramontes, Nadeau, and Commins (1997); their work identified exemplary school attributes as linked to effective decision-making in the academic success of linguistically and culturally diverse student populations. These characteristics were singled out as the basic premises for effective school reform according to Miramontes et al. (1997) and are important to consider in the context of Hispanic student academic success.

### **Basic Premises of Effective School Reform**

#### **Premise 1: Active Learning**

Knowledge is best acquired when learners actively participate in meaningful activities that are constructive in nature and appropriate to their level of development.

#### **Premise 2: The Primary Language Foundation**

The more comprehensive the use of the primary language, the greater the potential for linguistically diverse students to be academically successful.

**Premise 3: The Quality of Primary Language Use**

There is a difference between token use of the primary language in instruction and its full development as a foundation for thinking and learning.

**Premise 4: Strategies for Second Language Development**

Instruction must reflect specific strategies designed to meet the needs of second language learners.

**Premise 5: Contexts for Second Language Development**

Second language instruction must be organized to give students the time, experiences, and opportunities they need to fully develop language proficiency.

**Premise 6: First and Second Language Environments**

Bilingual academic proficiency requires that clear, distinct, and meaning-enriched contexts for each language be created during instructional time.

**Premise 7: Transitions and Redesignations**

As per Miramontes et al. (1997), decisions regarding transition to formal second language reading and redesignations that exit students from programs cannot be made arbitrarily. The proficiencies and skills of each individual student should be considered to advocate for the continued academic success in transition to formal second language reading redesignations or in exiting students from their current services or programs.

**Premise 8: Instructional Assessment**

An appropriate assessment plan should address language and literacy development, as well as content knowledge.

**Premise 9: Parents and Community**

Parents and community need to play a major role in the learning and schooling of their children.

**Premise 10: Planning for Cross-Cultural Interactions**

Instruction must be organized to help students understand and respect themselves and their own culture, as well as the cultures of the broader society.

**Premise 11: Sociocultural and Political Implications**

Sociocultural factors and political context must be considered in making decisions regarding every aspect of program planning.

**Premise 12: Teachers as Decision-Makers**

Teachers are equally responsible for decisions regarding the instructional program for linguistically diverse students.

As has been illustrated through the work of August and Hakuta (1997), Garcia (2004), and Miramontes et al. (1997), a set of common links, promoting the academic achievement of linguistically and culturally diverse student populations, have been identified as a result of the multicultural education reform movement. Therefore, multicultural education continues to evolve as a discipline, as it reflects the practitioners who shape its implementation and the populations it was designed to serve.

**Effective Schools**

Throughout the American quest to identify the attributes of highly successful schools, much has been studied and written about what needs to be done to replicate



these same conditions in struggling schools. With that thought in mind, no discussion about effective schools should seriously be undertaken until the Effective Schools Movement is reviewed. In 1966, “The Equal Educational Opportunity Survey” was published by Coleman et al. The report concluded that family background was the most significant factor impacting student achievement, stipulating that social factors, such as lack of education and poverty, hindered student learning, more so than the method of instruction (Coleman et al., 1966).

In due time, the report was responsible for a vehement debate regarding the importance of schools in the achievement of students of color and those living in poverty. As a result, compensatory education programs were born, specifically designed to address school improvement by changing the learning behaviors of low-income children. In essence, the report claimed that schools did not make a difference in the education of children (Lezotte, 2012).

In contrast to this assertion, Edmonds (as cited in Lezotte, 2012) argued that children of poverty were being taught in ways that did not conform to their needs. Rather, these children were expected to conform to traditional instruction that paid little attention to relevance or diversity (Lezotte, 2012). The Effective Schools Movement emerged from this dialogue, and many scholars then embarked on research to support the premise that all children can learn, and schools can control the factors that will facilitate that learning (Lezotte, 2012). The research additionally acknowledged the significance of family and social factors in facilitating student

learning; however, emphasis was placed on what schools could do to enable learning (Lezotte, 2012).

Undertaking the task of proving that schools do make a difference, Edmonds and other scholars sought to identify successful schools that had positively impacted the student performance of all students, regardless of their socioeconomic labels. Edmonds' (1979) pioneering research identified various attributes, common to these successful organizations. Edmonds argued that regardless of size and location, effective schools shared several characteristics that could be studied and replicated in less successful schools as a means to improve student performance. As per Lezotte (2012), the Effective Schools Movement was thus predicated on the beliefs that:

- Every child can learn; all come to school motivated to do so.
- Schools possess and control enough of the variables to ensure that students do learn.
- Schools should be held accountable for measured student achievement.
- Schools should analyze student performance data to ensure that all students are learning the intended curriculum.
- The internal and external learning communities of each school are qualified and capable of planning and implementing the necessary changes in their schools to ensure that every student learns (Lezotte, 2012)

Officially referred to as the Correlates of Effective Schools, the formal identification of these attributes by Edmonds in 1982 propelled the Effective Schools

Movement into the school improvement educational arena (Edmonds, 1982). Since then, the work of Edmonds and others asserted that effective schools demonstrated:

1. Instructional leadership that was focused on the quality of instruction;
2. A clear and focused mission;
3. High expectations for student achievement;
4. A positive, safe, and orderly climate;
5. Frequent monitoring and alignment of instruction;
6. Positive home-school relations, and
7. Opportunity to learn and time on task.

### **Instructional Leadership**

Effective schools were synonymous with effective principals. In an effective school, the principal served as an instructional leader, one who insisted and persistently articulated the mission of the school to all stakeholders (Lezotte, 2012). This individual clearly understood the characteristics of effective, quality instruction and was able to guide the staff in meeting that mandate (Ornstein & Levine, 2003). Such school leaders educated their learning communities in the mission of the school and ensured that all share in its purpose and in the understanding of the core beliefs that shaped the organization. The principal was not only responsible for articulating the mission, but was also obligated in leading all stakeholders toward the fulfillment of that mission (Lezotte, 2012).

### **Clear and Focused Mission**

Effective schools demonstrated a keen understanding of the mission of the school and did whatever was necessary to fulfill that mission. All stakeholders in an effective school were committed to their roles in driving the school toward the successful learning of all students. Articulating a shared mission was something that all staff understood and were able to do in an effective school (Lezotte, 2012). The shared mission included an acute understanding of the instructional priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability mandates that set the parameters for school success (Ornstein & Levine, 2003).

### **High Expectations for Student Achievement**

Staff and students, in effective schools, believed that they could achieve. They were dedicated to their respective roles as teachers and students, and all believed that they could work together to accomplish their goals. Teachers understood that they were capable and competent professionals able to guide and assist students in mastery of the intended curriculum (Lezotte, 2012). Ornstein and Levine (2003) corroborated the notion that staff were aware and accepted the belief that all students could master challenging knowledge and skills.

### **Positive, Safe and Orderly Environment**

Environments in effective schools were conducive to teaching and learning. There was a sense of purpose, order and business-like climate that enabled staff and students to strive toward learning. Adult and student behaviors focused on accomplishing the learning goals that had been articulated for the school. Students and

teachers were actively engaged in learning, and there was a sense that all had a role in securing an environment that would enable teachers to teach and students to learn (Lezotte, 2012).

### **Frequent Monitoring and Alignment of Instruction**

Principals and staff continuously monitored student progress in effective schools. There was a deliberate process to ensure that all students were moving toward their learning targets in a timely fashion. Data were used to inform and adjust instruction to the identified needs arising from frequent monitoring. Assessment was used to improve individual student behaviors and performance as well as to adjust curriculum. Thus, decisions were made and substantiated by the data that were collected by the staff (Lezotte, 2012).

### **Positive Home-School Relations**

Effective schools encouraged parents to become partners in the learning of their children. Parents understood and supported the mission of the school and acted to become part of the team. School staff enlisted and engaged parents and the community in the school's mission. The shared sense of purpose was extended into the community (Lezotte, 2012).

### **Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task**

Effective schools treasured time, and staff worked diligently to ensure that all students were given ample opportunities to experience learning in a variety of modalities. Teachers understood that students should be actively engaged to ensure that learning was taking place. Thus, as professionals, teachers had a clear

understanding of the content and skills over which they had assumed responsibility to teach. In essence, they understood the art of teaching and worked to ensure that students were given the opportunity and the time in which to learn (Lezotte, 2012).

### **Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools**

With this thought in mind, the study of effective leadership should include a review of Lezotte's (1991) *Correlates of Effective Schools: The First and Second Generation* as relevant to the practice of multicultural education and principal leadership. Lezotte (1991) affirmed that successful schools must provide a safe and orderly environment that is free of violence and oppression and that is conducive to teaching and learning.

#### **First Effective Schools Correlate**

The initial correlate moves from eradicating undesirable behaviors toward encouraging and supporting behaviors that espouse collaborative teaching and learning. An emphasis on building respect for human diversity and appreciation for democratic values should be integrated into a multicultural and democratic environment that allows all stakeholders the opportunity to work together to build relationships that support individual and collective success. Administrative leadership is essential in voicing, supporting, and perpetuating a vision that defines collaboration (Fullan, 2005). In this sense, principals must understand the process involved in developing and articulating a clear vision to enlist support from the teaching staff (Yukl, 1998).

## **Second Effective Schools Correlate**

Establishing and demanding high expectations of all is a second effective schools correlate that speaks to culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Schools that move beyond the first generation of effective schools correlates will focus on shifting the emphasis from teacher instruction to student learning, where all will be involved in demanding and finding the means to achieve student success. Such a shift will demand that educators work collaboratively to seek alternative strategies to help meet the demands of high expectations, rather than moving on to the next unit and leaving behind those students who did not learn (Lezotte, 1991). The expectations must be realized for all students, and this is certainly essential when deliberating the role of a principal, who is ultimately responsible for meeting all state and federal assessment mandates. Schools leaders must demand high expectations not only of their teachers and students, but also of themselves (Fullan, 2005). Principals will have to use their influence and provide opportunities for teachers to build skills that will enable them to move from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning and, thus, address diverse learning styles.

## **Third Effective Schools Correlate**

When deliberating the third effective schools correlate, it is important to note the profound impact that instructional leadership has upon not only teachers, but also students (Lezotte, 1991). Effectively and persistently communicating the school's mission to staff, students, and the community is not enough. The second generation correlate emphasizes the need to empower teachers to become instructional leaders, as

well. Building a community of shared values extends the concept of democratization, and the principal shifts from being identified as a “leader of followers” to a “leader of leaders,” whose responsibilities will include coaching, partnering and cheerleading. Yukl’s (1998) scholarly work corroborated the concept of building leadership capacity to implement and sustain organizational change.

Articulating the vision of success for all students will become a responsibility that all staff will share. Recognizing that all staff members are invaluable in the expertise that they possess will also be a cornerstone that will perpetuate the notion of the shared responsibility inherent in instructional leadership (Lezotte, 1991). As a principal and instructional leader, the school administrator must model the behaviors that will commit the staff to assuming the role of classroom instructional leader (Fullan, 2005). This leadership responsibility of creating leaders who will ultimately reform a school’s value and belief system, as well its practices, can ultimately facilitate the implementation of multicultural education to improve student performance and cultivate respect for human diversity.

#### **Fourth Effective Schools Correlate**

Who better to lead the charge than the principal when it comes to articulating a clear and focused mission for the school, the students, and the staff? The fourth effective schools correlate describes how a clear and focused mission propels staff to share an “understanding of and commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability” (Lezotte, 1991, p. 3). The second generation correlate emphasizes inclusion of all students in the learning process, rather



than just those who can learn easily. Working to develop and provide a curriculum that addresses the basic as well as higher level skills becomes the shared responsibility of all staff. Everyone must understand that they must begin with the end in mind in order to address all students in the accountability system (Lezotte, 1991).

The school principal is essential in articulating a clear and focused mission that provides opportunities for all students. As the school's instructional leader, the principal will have to become the partner who enables teachers to take ownership of all campus goals, priorities, and accountability requirements (Fullan, 2005). Howard (2003) further contended that teachers must develop an understanding that diverse student populations walk into their classroom with their own cultural capital. Yet, that capital is often radically different from the mainstream, and if not acknowledged and nurtured, students will have a difficult time in building the necessary instructional skills and relationships to become academically successful (Howard, 2003). Principals can bridge the divide between teachers and their culturally diverse students by ensuring that their own beliefs and attitudes provide for teacher and student support in the teaching and learning process.

### **Fifth Effective Schools Correlate**

For students to experience academic success, they must be given the opportunity to learn with a guarantee that time will be allocated appropriately. The fifth effective schools correlate, as described in the Lezotte's (1991) second generation effective school research, addresses the goal by asking teachers and staff to employ an interdisciplinary approach to cover all of the necessary skills and

knowledge that students must know to become academically proficient. Instead of acting as sole agents of learning, teachers must learn to work collaboratively to plan for instruction. School leaders must guide teachers toward making smart decisions regarding content so that all students will have the opportunity to acquire the learning tools necessary to continue their educational pursuits (Fullan, 2005).

### **Sixth Effective Schools Correlate**

The sixth effective schools correlate refers to frequent monitoring of instruction. In the first generation set of correlates, Lezotte (1991) emphasized how teachers were responsible for frequent monitoring of instruction to be able to adjust their teaching of content. The second generation correlate avows that students should become partners in the progress monitoring of their own learning. Parallel to the tenets of multicultural education practice, the sixth correlate corresponds to developing student self-empowerment through academic competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995). That competence must be carefully and intentionally developed by educators who focus on delivering instruction based on an aligned written, taught, and tested curriculum. Such alignment allows for authentic assessment through performance-based student products that allow students to demonstrate mastery of student expectations. Teaching students the value of monitoring their own learning creates “self-disciplined, socially responsible and just” students (Lezotte, 1991, p. 6). School leaders can assist students and staff to seek self-empowerment by creating a climate that allows everyone to monitor their progress as all work toward achieving school goals, state, and federal expectations (Fullan, 2005; Yukl, 1998).

## **Seventh Effective Schools Correlate**

The last effective schools correlate addresses home and school relations. Inviting and creating parent and community partnerships fosters opportunities to integrate cultural capital within the school setting, thereby, allowing students to use their diversity in the learning of new skills and knowledge. Learning becomes a shared responsibility that entails collaborative support from all involved in the school. School principals can guide teachers toward creating effective, authentic parent and community partnerships that will support and improve student performance. Principals will have to provide opportunities to build and cultivate these liaisons (Fullan, 2005).

### **School Leadership**

Bossert (1988) claimed that principals of effective schools usually exemplify four attributes: (a) goals, (b) production emphasis, (c) power and strong decision-making, and (d) effective management. While arguing that that strong principal leadership was needed to structure effective schools, Bossert (1988) also asserted there was no clear research indicating which processes should be structured or which structures should be put in place to create success. Concurring with the assertion that principals do make a difference in creating successful schools, Hallinger and Heck (1996, 1998) claimed that principal leadership had a measureable influence on student achievement.

In regard to effective schools research, Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee (1982) stated there were two generalizations that could be made regarding principal leadership: (a) administrative behaviors do impact school effectiveness and (b) no

single style of leadership appears to be appropriate for all schools. Appropriateness depends on other factors, such as the alignment of the principal's leadership style to the curriculum program and the administrative organizational hierarchy. In this respect, Lee, Bryk, and Smith (1993) asserted that principals assume three different roles in effective secondary schools:

- Administration: Effective principals are responsible for the allocation of resources, for the development and enforcement of policies and procedures, and for the supervision of professional development.
- Mediation: Effective principals communicate with internal and external stakeholders, and they act as a buffer from environmental obstacles for teachers.
- Leadership: Effective principals shape school goals and guide instructional processes within the school (Lee et al., 1993).

Thus, principals of effective schools set the direction and contribute to the success of their schools.

Echoing the same conclusions, Marzano (2003) also claimed that students enrolled in highly effective schools tend to perform at significantly higher rates than those enrolled in ineffective schools. Based on a passing rate of 50%, students in effective schools scored 44% higher than those attending ineffective schools (Marzano, 2003). Firestone and Riehl (2005) further contended that two factors can be identified as significantly impacting improved student learning: the first is the presence of a highly skilled, competent, and committed teacher, and the second can be

traced to the presence of a skilled instructional leader who targets improved teaching and learning as the school's highest priority.

As previously mentioned, much has been written about leadership, including many definitions for the term. Chemers (1997) simply concluded that leadership is a "process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task" (p. 1). In reading this definition, the researcher argued that perhaps the most significant part of the statement is the reference to social influence and its connection to leadership. This is particularly true when the term leadership is applied to schools. Fullan (2005) also cited research that asserts the importance of the principal in the school setting, stating that leadership is critical to school and district success.

Bass (1990) firmly attested that leadership can be described as the one most significant elements in the success or failure of organizations such as schools. As discussions peak regarding the practice of multicultural education to improve Hispanic student achievement, it is also essential to discuss the leadership role of the secondary school principal. Yukl (1998) stated that in terms of exerting influence, there are fundamental differences in defining the critical attributes of leaders or administrators. Leaders are not always administrators, and administrators are not always leaders. With this thought in mind, it is clear that whatever tasks are to be accomplished, school leaders possess the ability to negatively or positively influence the people with whom they work.

While the debate over the impact of a principal's leadership on student achievement remains a point of contention, reports such as that developed by the 1977 U.S. Senate Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity (U.S. Congress, 1970) clearly asserted that the principal is perhaps the single most influential person in a school:

In many ways the school principal is the most important and influential individual in any school. He or she is the person responsible for all activities that occur in and around the school building. It is the principal's leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale of the teachers, and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become. The principal is the main link between the community and the school, and the way he or she performs in this capacity largely determines the attitudes of parents and students about the school. If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to principal's leadership as the key to success. (p. 56)

Throughout history, several prominent theories have shaped how educational leadership and school policy has been defined within American schools. Among these, transactional and transformational leadership seem to have deeply impacted how schools are organized and how they operate. Rooted in the business world, transactional leadership, as defined by Burns (1978), is leadership that induces followers to act on behalf of the goals, values, and motivations that are shared by both leaders and followers. Burns (1978) further clarified the difference between transactional and transformational leadership when he stated that transactional leadership involves bartering one thing for another. While there are several forms of transactional leadership, each is dependent upon a distinct leadership style based on the intended outcomes (Burns, 1978).

Transformational leadership focuses on change or transformation (Burns, 1978). This style of leadership involves transforming the organization as well as its members. It is based on the assumption that the results will always exceed the expectations because of the fundamental changes that have been enacted and taken root to create a new and more effective organization. Burns (1978) asserted that transformational leaders develop mutual relationships that encourage, stimulate, and elevate followers into leaders and leaders into moral agents. Bass (1985) concurred with the work of Burns and further detailed the four attributes of transformational leadership behaviors as:

1. Individual consideration,
2. Intellectual stimulation,
3. Inspirational motivation, and
4. Idealized influence.

Recognizing the needs of neglected members of an organization, thinking outside of the box to solve old problems, expressing high performance expectations, and modeling personal exemplary behaviors, character and achievements enable transformational leaders to transform their organizations and team members (Bass, 1990). In line with the work of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) as well as others, Leithwood (1994) conceived the transformational model of school leadership which aligns the four skills previously mentioned to actual school practice.

In defining instructional leadership, Smith and Andrews (1989) identified four roles that instructional leaders play in their school organizations: (a) resource

provider, (b) instructional resource, (c) communicator, and (d) visible presence.

Principals act to ensure that teachers have all that they need to perform their responsibilities. As an instructional resource, the principal also models desired behaviors, provides support for instructional activities, and participates in professional development. In the role of communicator, the principal articulates clear goals for the school and for performance. The principal is a visible presence in the organization and is easily accessible to all staff.

While this model clearly defines the roles that school leaders perform in the operation of their schools, several other models have emerged from instructional leadership, of which the Reflection-Growth Model (Blase & Blase, 1999) has proven to be an interesting approach to school leadership. Blase and Blase (1999) developed their Reflection-Growth Model that espouses the following strategies that principals use to build teacher capacity within their ranks:

1. Prioritizing and facilitating the study of teaching and learning,
2. Establishing and enabling collaboration among teachers,
3. Establishing coaching relationships among teachers,
4. Making research-based decisions, and
5. Applying the principles of adult learning with teachers.

This approach mirrors characteristics common to instructional leadership, as do several other notable models derived from the same design. Additionally, transformational leadership has been linked to instructional leadership since it seeks to



increase the work of staff toward organizational goals and the development of skilled practice (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999).

Research throughout the years has rendered much discussion about those attributes that define effective leadership behaviors. School leaders often seek to define and emulate those behaviors in an effort to produce successful schools. Thus, scholars have endeavored to create lists that suggest which leadership behaviors can positively impact staff and student attitudes, behaviors, and performance. Cotton (2003) identified 25 categories in which principals can make a difference, as a result of their own leadership behaviors. These include:

1. Safe and orderly environment
2. Vision and goals focused on high levels of student learning
3. High expectations
4. Self-confidence, responsibility, and perseverance
5. Visibility and accessibility
6. Positive and supportive climate
7. Communication and interaction
8. Emotional and interpersonal support
9. Parent and community outreach and involvement
10. Rituals, ceremonies, and other symbolic actions
11. Shared leadership, decision-making, and staff empowerment
12. Collaboration
13. Instructional leadership

14. Ongoing pursuit of high levels of student learning
15. Norm of continuous improvement
16. Discussion of instructional issues
17. Classroom observation and feedback to teachers
18. Support of teachers' autonomy
19. Support of risk-taking
20. Professional development opportunities and resources
21. Protecting instructional time
22. Monitoring student progress and sharing findings
23. Use of student progress for program improvement
24. Recognition of student and staff achievement
25. Role modeling

Marzano et al. (2005) similarly identified 21 school leader responsibilities, which while not being new or unique, certainly provided new insights into the practice of effective school leadership. In particular, Marzano et al. (2005) asserted that affirmation is a responsibility that principals of effective schools demonstrated. In line with the work of Banks (2004), Gay (2000), and Ladson-Billings (1995), affirmation can be likened to acknowledging and valuing the contributions of all stakeholders in a learning community.

Marzano et al. (2005) further indicated that effective schools were led by principals who valued and acknowledged culture, using it as a means to move students and staff toward academic success. In this way, the principal acted as a change agent

who was able to advocate for students as supported by the work of Banks (2004) and Marzano et al. (2005). The ability to effectively communicate with all of their learning communities enabled school leaders to articulate their vision for success and to develop relationships that supported the learning outcomes designated for all of their students (Marzano et al., 2005). Establishing these vital relationships ensured that their teaching and learning communities were driven by an instructional focus in which these school leaders were very much involved (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Thus, effective school leaders such as those defined by Marzano et al. (2005), created opportunities for their teaching and learning communities to work together by assuming a posture of high visibility, providing resources when and wherever needed, and leading innovative endeavors within their schools. They worked to involve their staff in identifying the core values and beliefs that would drive the focus of their initiatives, and as such, they were able to monitor and adjust their progress toward their goals (Marzano et al., 2005).

The identification of these responsibilities is clearly linked to the practice of multicultural education as confirmed by the research of the practice of multicultural education and culturally responsive leadership. Similar goals are reflected and should be articulated by school leaders who wish to transform schools into places of opportunity where all students can learn and achieve their potential as productive members of a democratic society. This is particularly true of principals seeking to

positively impact the achievement of Hispanic students, the largest growing segment of our school population.

In regard to addressing student performance through the practice of multicultural education and critical theory applications, principals can either lead the charge or acquiesce to the status quo and continue to turn a blind eye to the underachievement of diverse learners. Unfortunately, many school leaders assume that their own personal belief systems, including their values and actions are understood, shared, and accepted by everyone (Gay, 1994). Assuming that their decisions regarding curriculum and instruction are free of personal or organizational bias, school leaders often operate assuming that their own beliefs are culturally neutral and are not impacted by the cultural restrictions of their surroundings.

However, Gay (1994) contended that culture significantly impacts and molds all aspects of the teaching and learning process in the classroom and in the entire school. Such research denotes the need to cultivate awareness, not only of the culture that defines the school, but also, the culture that leaders advocate through their own beliefs, values, and actions. Such is particularly true when referencing culturally responsive leadership and its impact upon the learning communities for whom principals are responsible.

### **Culturally Responsive Leadership**

In this regard, the term *culturally responsive leadership* is quite applicable to this particular study as leaders have the potential to positively or negatively influence the teaching and learning communities within and outside of their schools. As

previously stated, culturally responsive leadership referred to those skills, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, actions, and language demonstrated by school leaders that effectively support and respond to the needs of culturally diverse students within their school communities (Gay, 2000, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Through this lens, culturally responsive leadership included the interactions between school leaders, teachers, parents, and extended school communities. As various studies indicated, the ways in which these interactions supported the teaching and learning of diverse student groups may have varied across the contexts in which principals practiced culturally responsive leadership in their schools. However, a principal's influence was keenly recognized as significantly impacting many facets in a school's organization (U.S. Congress, 1970).

Plainly stated, culturally responsive leaders must possess cultural knowledge and self-awareness to identify their own personal beliefs about diversity in all of its forms within their schools in order to create opportunities for their diverse learning communities (Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbell Jones, 2005; Ponterotto, Utsey, & Pedersen, 2006). In fact, Ponterotto et al. (2006) urged school leaders to cultivate a multicultural perspective and persona in which diversity is valued, honored, and accepted. As the previously mentioned scholars defined, this individual:

possesses the ability to live and work effectively among different groups and types of people; understands the biases inherent in his or her own worldview and actively learns about alternative world views...and is a social activist, empowered to speak out against all forms of social injustice (e.g., racism, homophobia, sexism, ageism, domestic violence, religious stereotyping). (Ponterotto et al., 2006, p. 130)

In this regard, culturally responsive leaders demonstrated several attributes associated with cultural responsiveness (Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004).

1. Clearly articulated personal beliefs and attitudes regarding diversity and diverse groups;
2. Knowledge about these groups, and
3. Interpersonal skills in working and dealing with people from diverse cultures.

Culturally responsive school leaders demonstrated each of these previous characteristics and worked to develop these proficiencies and skills in their schools.

Much has been studied in regard to identifying and nurturing those personal attitudes that will foster a personal understanding of a school leader's core beliefs and attitudes. In similar fashion, gaining knowledge about the cultural diversity existing in a school community was also slated as a skill required of culturally responsive leaders. Den Berg and Crisp (2004) have argued that school leaders must become well acquainted with the demographics, cultural traditions, and history of the diverse groups within their communities. They must also understand their experiences with oppression, the impact of social policies upon these groups, and the resources available to support these individuals. Additionally, culturally responsive leaders should also become knowledgeable of the culturally sensitive models that can be utilized in the school community. Addressing cultural and language bias should also become a priority as school leaders plan their interactions with these communities (Den Berg & Crisp, 2004).

Additionally, Dimmock and Walker (2005) asserted that school leaders retained the responsibility of creating and sustaining a positive, safe, and welcoming school environment that was inclusive of all. In relation to the previous responsibility, culturally responsive leaders were also defined as those who work with students to help them understand and value themselves as members of their own cultural communities rather than as deprived minorities in a dominant culture (Lindsey, Roberts & Campbell Jones, 2005).

As various scholarly studies have attested, high expectations for all students were identified as a necessary component of schools that were responsive to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Grant & Gillette, 2006; Grothaus 2004; Madsen & Mabokela, 2005). Such a premise and practice enabled all students to access a quality curriculum and the opportunity to learn in meaningful and relevant ways.

These same assertions translated into the influence that school leaders were capable of exerting over the professional development that their staff received. Villegas and Lucas (2002, 2007) claimed that when educators became aware of their students' lives, they were able to increase their socio-cultural consciousness and acquired affirming perspectives regarding diversity. Thus, as Grothaus, Crum, and James (2010) contended,

The changing student population and demographics requires all school leaders to know how to provide meaningful and effective guidance and professional development to enable the whole school staff to utilize successful classroom instructional strategies and practices to foster a positive culturally diverse learning environment. (p. 119)

## **Summary**

Reviewing the literature regarding current Hispanic student performance, high-performing schools, and effective principal leadership laid the foundation for further examination of the research questions posed for this study. Such an undertaking was paramount in light of the challenges posed by the ever-increasing rigor of new state and national assessment mandates and by the changing demographics that have already altered Texas classrooms.

As educators seek to stay ahead of the curve, understanding the principles of multicultural education, in general, and culturally relevant pedagogy, in particular, proved vital to the Hispanic students who expect and deserve the opportunity to learn and succeed in every classroom of which they are a part. Additionally, reviewing the literature gave the researcher a context from which to frame the qualitative inquiry that defined this study.



## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

As articulated through the perceptions of five secondary school principals, this study examined and analyzed principal leadership in the practice of multicultural education and the application of critical theory within successful secondary schools that exemplified significant Hispanic student achievement. The researcher posited that to effect positive change and increase Hispanic academic success throughout secondary schools, educators must first gain a greater understanding of how their roles as school leaders can significantly impact their teachers and students as they work to forge a school environment to encourage and support Hispanic student achievement.

Specifically, this inquiry focused on analyzing participant responses to a semi-structured interview addressing the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of high school principals who serve in high-achieving Hispanic schools?
2. What are the perceptions of high school principals regarding their success with Hispanic students in high-achieving schools in South Texas?

To address these questions, Chapter III described the research design, research population and sample, data collection, data analysis procedures, and the validity, credibility, and reliability/ transferability factors of this study.

#### **Research Design**

A qualitative research design was utilized to examine and analyze the perceptions of five high school principals regarding administrative leadership in the

practice of multicultural education and the application of critical theory within their Texas recognized or exemplary high schools. Permission was granted by the Texas A&M Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this study (Appendix A). Semi-structured interviews were administered to all participants to address the research questions posed in this study. Coupled with analyses of historical document data regarding student performance for the participants' schools, the semi-structured interviews yielded qualitative information that was utilized in assessing administrative leadership practices that were intended to encourage Hispanic student achievement and the implementation of multicultural education.

The decision to utilize a qualitative research design stemmed from the nature of the research questions that were posed in this study and the sample that was queried. Gay, Mill, and Airasian (2003) defined qualitative research as the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest. The purpose of qualitative research was thus centered on promoting a deep and holistic or complex understanding of a particular phenomenon, such as an environment, a process, or even a belief.

When examining the perceptions of the participants in this inquiry, a specific environment, a rather small research sample, and a belief system provided the focus for this in-depth study. In this regard, qualitative study supported the examination of the perceptions and experiences of high school principals in relation to the academic success of their Hispanic students.

The work of Holloway (1997) further affirmed that “qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live” (p. 2). In this regard, this study explored the social realities of secondary school principals in the context of increasingly higher student performance standards posing rigorous academic challenges for students of color.

Malterud (2001) additionally identified qualitative research as naturalistic inquiry that was cultivated within the social and human sciences. As Malterud explained, qualitative research is grounded on theories relevant to hermeneutics and phenomenology. Such inquiry involved the methodical collection, organization, and analysis/interpretation of information gathered, while conversing or observing people in their natural settings (Malterud, 2001).

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) elaborated that qualitative research enables scholars to gather and interpret information in terms of the meaning that the subjects themselves have constructed. Case studies, personal experience, interviews, observations, and historical data are some of the empirical ways in which qualitative research can be gathered to address the research questions posed by a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Gay et al. (2003) corroborated previous research and stated that qualitative inquiry often involves the simultaneous collection of a variety of narrative and visual data over an extended period of time in a naturalistic setting. This type of research usually involved a small number of individuals, and in this manner, the participant(s)'

experiences became the focus of the study. Non-numerical data, such as extensive notes taken at a research site, interview data, video/audio recordings are utilized in a qualitative study (Gay et al., 2003). Such was the case in the research conducted for this study. The participants' personal experiences in South Texas successful high school settings were the driving force of the study and were aptly described by the principals who participated in the study.

Moreover, semi-structured audio-taped interviews enabled the researcher to delve deeply into the personal perceptions of the participants as members of high-performing state recognized or exemplary schools. As per Berg (2004), the semi-structured interview allowed the interviewer to utilize a number of preselected questions and special topics. The questions, developed for this study, were asked of each participant in a systematic and consistent order. This process provided the interviewer with the freedom to roam beyond the set of questions outlined for the interview and probe more deeply into the experiences and perceptions of the participants. In much the same way, participants were also given the freedom to more fully explore their own perceptions and understanding of their roles as high school principals in high-performing schools.

Furthermore, in this particular study, the features of a semi-structured interview provided the interviewer with a more comprehensive view of the perceptions of secondary school administrators regarding the achievement of Hispanic students and the implementation of multicultural education within their schools. The use of quantitative methodology cannot fully assist the researcher to develop an

analysis of participant perceptions. Therefore, the semi-structured interview, as part of a qualitative research design, proved especially beneficial in collecting perceptual data for this study.

In assessing the benefits of qualitative research, Babbie (1986) concluded that this approach provides a greater degree of flexibility, comprehensive analysis, and the opportunity for a variety of detailed observations of an individual or social situation. Face-to-face interviews allow the researcher opportunities to adjust interview schedules for additional probing questions as the participant's responses dictate. Of significant importance is the fact that the researcher can develop a more in-depth understanding of the participant's perspectives, line of thought, attitudes, or the situation being studied as the interview takes place.

A qualitative researcher is thus able to observe changes in the participant's body language, mood, voice, and other situational or environmental issues that may influence the participant's replies. Observation during the interview can also yield data that support or contradict what the participant states during the actual interview. Such was the case in this study, as the researcher was able to align the observation data collected to the interviews that were conducted and analyzed for each of the participants.

One additional benefit to qualitative research is that it allows for flexibility as some participants feel more at ease when responding to questions in a face-to-face interview rather than responding to a standardized survey or questionnaire. For example, the researcher Davis (1986) suggested that the gender should be considered

when selecting a research approach as women favor qualitative research strategies because they prefer discussing subjects in context.

Additionally, there has been a growing trend in the use of qualitative research, especially in the field of education. Researchers and educators feel that certain types of educational problems and questions cannot be solely addressed through quantitative studies, which principally rely on numerical analysis and controlled variables (Gay et al. 2003). Qualitative research, on the other hand, allows the researcher to collect data in real-world settings, and thus, the findings add relevance to real-world situations. Thus, the simultaneous study of many aspects of a phenomenon helps researchers to look at specific questions or issues in a deep and holistic manner (Gay et al., 2003).

While some have argued that qualitative research has its limits because findings are not always immediately generalizable to a large population or to all situations, a qualitative research design was very much appropriate for the in-depth and detailed study of a single situation or a very small sample, such as the one dedicated to this study. To further clarify the value of qualitative study, Gay et al. (2003) argued that over time and across similar studies, researchers can draw conclusions that are then generalizable to a larger population. It is hoped that the results of this study may, similarly, contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the implementation of multicultural education and student achievement.

Schaffir and Stebbins (1991) asserted that purposive sampling assists the researcher to select cases for study, based on the literature reviewed and knowledge of the subject area. Such case selection prerequisites enabled the researcher to focus on a

specific subject or case rather than undertaking the collection and observation of all respondents. Schaffir and Stebbins (1991) also claimed that a researcher's bias is kept in check by utilizing research teams to assist in the inquiry. Member validation was utilized to allow respondents the opportunity for feedback when given interview and/or observation copies (Schaffir & Stebbins, 1991). Therefore, the researcher employed purposive sampling to select the participants for this study.

Successful South Texas high schools, as defined by the state's AEIS and AYP accountability systems, assisted the researcher to identify the setting of this study. Entry into the setting was gained through a conversation with a central office administrator and/or the superintendent of schools to establish the purpose of the study and to seek permission to conduct the research. After securing permission from the superintendent, a discussion, with each of the participants, followed to solicit their agreement to participate in the study. All of the participants agreed to participate in the interview process delineated for this study. After the interviews took place and the study was completed, each participant received a copy of the research.

### **Research Population and Sample**

The population under investigation in this study consisted of high school principals employed in schools located in the Region One Education Service Center area school districts. Purposive sampling was used to identify the participants selected for this study. The administrative participants were all certified school principals who received their administrative mid-management or principal's certification through a university program. Additionally, each of the administrators selected was a principal

of a high school that had attained a state AEIS recognized or exemplary ranking for at least three consecutive years (see Table 11).

**Table 11. Participant Selection Criteria**

Principal	School Level	Principal Certification	AEIS Recognized/ Exemplary Rating 3 Consecutive Years
Orange	High School	Bachelor's-Secondary Education History & Political Science Master's-School Administration	Recognized
Gold	High School	Bachelor's-Health Professions Biology & Chemistry Master's-School Administration	Exemplary
Blue	High School	Bachelor's-Secondary Education U.S. History Master's-School Administration	Exemplary
Silver	High School	Bachelor's-Elementary Education Master's-School Administration	Recognized
Red	High School	Bachelor's-Elementary Education Master's-School Administration	Recognized

*Source.* Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2012b).

### **Participant Selection Process**

To begin the participant selection process, the researcher first examined the selection criteria (Table 11) used to identify possible participants and then proceeded as indicated:

1. The researcher generated an AEIS ratings list of all Region One ESC high schools attaining a recognized or exemplary rating for the school years, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012.
2. After the list was whittled down to approximately 20 schools that had attained the specified AEIS ratings for the 2011-2012 school year and the two years prior to that year, the researcher proceeded to identify corresponding school addresses and telephone numbers.



3. The researcher called each of the schools to determine if their principals met the criteria set for their selection to the study. Each principal had to have been the school's principal during the three consecutive years in which they earned the AEIS rating, and they had to still be assigned to the school in order to participate in the study. The list was then further refined as not all principals had remained at the eligible campuses; some had been recently replaced, retired, or moved to another city.
4. Following the consent protocol, permission was acquired to invite the possible principals to participate in the study
5. After that determination was made, the researcher proceeded to invite the possible remaining candidates to participate in the study using the Telephone Recruitment Script approved by the IRB. Those who answered the telephone invitation were asked if the researcher could meet with them to further discuss the research study and their role in the project.
6. Arrangements were then made with those principals who met the criteria, accepted the telephone invitations, and who were willing to meet with the researcher during mutually agreed dates.
7. At their first face-to-face meeting, the researcher further discussed the details of the research study, and after all participant questions were answered regarding the study, the researcher acquired their consent to participate.

8. An interview date and location were selected, and the research process continued as specified in the consent protocol described in the study.

In accordance with district protocols, a preliminary conversation, regarding the interview and research process, took place at a participant's meeting scheduled by the researcher several weeks before actual interviews are conducted for this study.

Participants were made aware of the nature of the study and the procedures to be used to gather data. Provisions to ensure confidentiality were shared with all administrative participants. Interviews were then scheduled and conducted with each of the participants involved in this research. Follow-up information was gathered through telephone conversations with each of the participants involved in the study.

### **Instrumentation**

The operational research variables examined in this study involved a review of the literature on the achievement of Hispanic students and high-performing Hispanic schools, the historical roots of multicultural education and the critical attributes of multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy, the implications of critical theory upon school organizations from a leadership perspective, effective schools research, and culturally responsive leadership. The scholarly work reviewed in this study assisted the researcher in the identification of the findings that emerged from the study.

A semi-structured interview was utilized to collect relevant data to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of high school principals who serve in high-achieving Hispanic schools?
2. What are the perceptions of high school principals regarding their success with Hispanic students in high-achieving schools in South Texas?

As indicated, the study's interview questions were developed and structured to allow principals to reflect upon their administrative leadership roles in the practice of multicultural education and the application of critical theory to improve Hispanic student achievement. By describing their roles, beliefs, and attitudes regarding the success of their students as well as their actual practices, the participants provided the researcher with a clearer picture of their leadership in the operation of their schools and the teaching and learning process.

The semi-structured interviews included the following questions:

1. Describe your educational experiences.
2. Describe your school.
3. Tell me why you believe your school is successful.
4. What instructional practices have you implemented to increase Hispanic student achievement in your school?
5. Describe a typical day for you as a principal of your school.
6. What role do you believe you played in the success of your school and Hispanic students?
7. How would you describe your leadership style?

8. In your opinion, how does your leadership style impact the achievement of your Hispanic students?
9. How do you communicate with your Hispanic students and parents?
10. What have you done to build a team of educators focused on increasing the achievement of your Hispanic students?
11. In your opinion, what characteristics must an effective principal of Hispanic students possess? Why?
12. If you could change anything about your school to increase Hispanic student achievement, what would it be? Why?
13. If you could change anything about yourself to improve Hispanic student achievement, what would it be? Why?

The transcribed text was analyzed; notes were written from the taped recordings of the interview as well as during the actual interview. Additionally, observation data, historical artifacts, and student performance data were reviewed and analyzed to gain a wider perspective regarding the success of Hispanic students in the schools selected for the study.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

After permission for the study was granted by school authorities, consent forms were hand-delivered to all possible participants. The purpose and procedures to be used in the study were explained to each of the participants, and they were advised how the information collected through the interview process was to be used during the course of the study.

Notes were written by the researcher during the interview process and subsequently analyzed to find a recurrence of any themes that may be common to all participants' responses. Student performance data were gathered from the public domain and did not reflect individual student performance of the student participants. Data from the interviews were collected during the 2011-2012 school year.

### **Data Analysis**

Results of this study were reported after a content analysis of the participants' interview responses was conducted. Open-ended and axial coding was utilized to determine the categories of information identified across all participant responses.

Historical data, such as the most current NCEs student performance results, 2007-2011 campus and district AEIS reports, and the 2007-2011 AYP reports were reviewed to analyze Hispanic student achievement for the schools involved in the study. These same data proved to be useful in comparing student performance and grade level achievement in the schools involved in the study to their state and district peers. The SLL or limited English population's results were also studied to determine their level of progress, prior to and after the administration of the TAKS. Participant perceptions of multicultural education, its implementation in their schools, and its impact upon Hispanic student achievement were also considered when reviewing the data that were gathered from student performance results. Additionally, data collected from historical artifacts, principal and school observations, and the researcher's attendance to several school events enhanced the connections made between the literature review and the findings identified for this study.

## **Credibility, Transformability, Dependability and Confirmability**

Validity or credibility in qualitative research can be summarized as the extent to which data are reasonably believable and trustworthy so as to be successfully defended if challenged (Maxwell, 1992). Maxwell (1992) pinpointed three classifications of validity when applied to qualitative research:

1. *Descriptive validity* – Denotes the researcher's accuracy in reporting events, objects, behaviors, settings, etc.
2. *Interpretive validity* – Refers to the accuracy of the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the participants' responses, perspectives, experiences, emotions, ideas, etc.
3. *Theoretical validity* – Relates to the degree to which the data gathered agrees with the theoretical explanation offered by the researcher. (pp. 2001-2003)

In much the same way, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) model of trustworthiness ensured authenticity, in terms of creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described creditability as to whether the research conclusions depicted a creditable conceptual interpretation of the data collected from the participants.

Furthermore, transferability was defined as the extent to which those conclusions could be applied beyond the parameters of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The same scholars asserted that dependability measured the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, analysis, and theory generation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moreover, Lincoln and Guba (1985) described confirmability as related to the extent to which the findings of the study were authenticated by the data collected in the study.

In particular, the following strategies addressed creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985):

- *Prolonged engagement*: The researcher was able to fully familiarize herself with the research setting and the participants involved in this study through the scheduled semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and follow-up discussions that ensued after the interviews and observations had taken place.
- *Triangulation*: The literature review as well as data collected from the interviews, observations, school artifacts, student performance reports, and field notes verified the findings that emerged from this study.
- *Raw data*: The researcher audio-taped and transcribed the interviews and kept field notes as part of the data collection and analysis process.
- *Member checking*: The researcher utilized this strategy to verify the accuracy of the data collected and reported in the study. Inter-reliability was also substantiated through colleagues to ensure accuracy of the data collected for the study.
- *Interview protocol*: The semi-structured interview allowed the participants to become fully engaged in their responses and discussions with the researcher. Participants were able to provide insightful information regarding their experiences and perceptions of their leadership in the context of the success of their Hispanic students.

- *Reflexivity*: The researcher kept a field journal with notes taken at the interviews and observations, as well as in the researcher's own reflections regarding interactions with the participants and the research setting.

To further clarify how the research in this study was found to be trustworthy, interviews were audio-taped to allow the researcher the opportunity to comprehensively review all participant responses. In this respect, the researcher triangulated the semi-structured interview data with various school and historical artifacts as well as with the principal and school observations conducted by the researcher. Thus, the data was triangulated by examining and utilizing:

- AEIS state, district and campus student performance reports;
- AYP state, district and campus student performance reports;
- NCES student performance reports;
- Campus planning schedules and agendas;
- School schedules;
- Parent announcements and invitations to College Nights;
- Parental Involvement Dinner agenda;
- Book study invitation and handouts;
- Principal observation data;
- School site and classroom observation data;
- Scholastic Book Fair invitation and observation of event;
- Collaborative planning observation;
- A Cure for Cancer Walk Invitation and observation of event;



- Morning cafeteria duty and student welcome observation;
- Member checking.

### **Summary**

Gay et al. (2003) defined qualitative research as the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest. The purpose of qualitative research was thus, centered on promoting a deep and holistic or complex understanding of a particular phenomenon, such as an environment, a process, or even a belief. As has been previously stated, the decision to utilize a qualitative research design stemmed from the nature of the research questions that were posed in this study and the sample that was queried.

In this regard, a qualitative research design fully supported the examination of the perceptions and experiences of high school principals in relation to the academic success of their Hispanic students. Thus, it was critically important to collect such data especially when considering the significant impact that such a discussion can have upon Hispanic student performance and academic success. Moreover, analysis of the data collected for the study enabled the researcher to make connections to the findings that emerged from the study and validated the review of the literature regarding multicultural education, effective schools and principal leadership in regard to the achievement of Hispanic students.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **PARTICIPANT PROFILES**

#### **Introduction**

As the scholarly work of Bass (1990) attested, leadership is a significant and critical factor in the success or failure of schools. In light of current national and state Hispanic academic achievement trends and the projected increase in the Hispanic student population within Texas schools, the researcher believed that it was paramount for educators to redefine their priorities in order to meet the needs of these students. Such reflection required scholarly consideration of the responses to the research questions guiding this study:

1. What are the experiences of high school principals who serve in high-achieving Hispanic schools?
2. What are the perceptions of high school principals regarding their success with Hispanic students in high-achieving schools in South Texas?

#### **Organization of the Chapter**

Beginning with a brief overview of the methodology and sample selected for the study, this chapter included a comprehensive analysis of school, participant, and researcher profiles, lending greater depth of understanding of the lives, perceptions, and reality of the participants selected for the study. The profiles were written to describe an overview of the Region One Education Service Center area, the communities in which the schools were located, the high schools and the principals selected for the study, as well as the researcher's profile. More importantly, Chapter

IV sets the foundational framework for the exploration of the study's findings in the next chapter.

### **Overview of the Methodology and Sample**

A review of the literature revealed the historical evolution of multicultural education and its impact upon student achievement. In light of the challenges posed by increasingly rigorous state and federal accountability standards, understanding the research regarding effective schools and the impact of leadership upon student achievement is critically important. Those leadership practices that encourage and sustain Hispanic student achievement must be examined through the perspectives of principals leading successful high schools serving Hispanic students.

Understanding that the perspectives and experiences of the participants selected for this study gave voice to their perceived reality, the researcher selected qualitative study as the best means to explore the research questions cited for this inquiry. As has been previously stated, the decision to utilize a qualitative research design stemmed from the nature of the research questions that were posed in this study and the sample that was queried. Gay et al. (2003) defined qualitative research as the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest. A qualitative research design thus allowed the researcher to gain a holistic and complex understanding of the practices, beliefs, and attitudes of five high school principals leading successful schools serving Hispanic students.

Utilizing purposive sampling, five principals from five Texas Education Agency high schools, achieving a recognized or exemplary rating for three consecutive years, were selected as participants for this qualitative study. To select the participants, a list of all TEA recognized and exemplary high schools located in the Region One ESC area was first generated using the Academic Excellence Indicator System reports for the 2008-2011 school years. Eligible principals, who had been assigned to those high schools for the three consecutive school years in which the schools had earned their performance status, were confirmed through telephone inquiries and additional school documents. Further examination of the AEIS list of schools included a review of the school's demographics to meet the study's criteria for the sampling.

Adhering to the Consent Protocol (Appendix A) approved by the IRB, the researcher proceeded to invite and explain participation in the study to each of the principals. IRB-approved documents (Appendix B), such as a Recruitment Letter, Telephone Script, Information Sheet, Consent Form, and Interview Questions, were used to introduce the study to each of the participants and to obtain their consent to participate in the study. From the list of eligible participants, five principals, leading a mix of traditional, non-traditional, small and large schools, ultimately agreed to participate in the study.

Each of the participants selected were principals of AEIS recognized or exemplary South Texas high schools serving Hispanic students during the aforementioned school years cited for the study. The five principals agreed to

participate in a semi-structured interview, an onsite observation of their daily interactions, and a follow-up discussion of the data gathered during their participation. To ensure accuracy of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and observations of the participants, member checking was also utilized in the course of the study.

The sample represented in this study included four male principals and one female principal, with varying years of educational experience in different school settings. Each began their educational careers for a variety of reasons, and all demonstrated an acute awareness of their school populations and their leadership roles within the context of state and federal accountability mandates. Their unique school settings allowed the researcher to examine their perspectives toward their own leadership practices in the context of their sustained, successful student performance.

A constant comparative analysis of the data collected was implemented to render the categories and subcategories relevant to this qualitative study. In regard to such an analysis, Glaser and Strauss (1967), authors of this inductive approach, described two sub-processes, unitizing and categorizing information, to code and further refine the data collected. To further clarify the process, Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained the organization of collected data, as involving three types of information coding: (a) open coding to identify descriptive categories, (b) axial coding to identify relationships between the categories and subcategories, and (c) selective coding to identify a central category as it relates to a theoretical model.

Using open and axial coding, several categories and subcategories emerged from the semi-structured interviews and participant observations that were conducted for this study. Multicultural education, effective schools, and culturally responsive leadership were revealed as the primary categories identified for this study, while the subcategories surfacing from the data also included high expectations, collaboration, relationships, empowering school culture, equity pedagogy, communication, and a vision for success. It is important to note that while each of these themes can be independently defined, all of them worked seamlessly together to create significant academic success for the Hispanic students enrolled in each of the schools in which the five principals practiced their administrative craft.

To gain a much clearer understanding of these elements in the context of this study, it was necessary to first explore the area in which these high schools were located, the high schools that these students attended, the principals who accepted the responsibility and challenges of leadership, and the researcher's own experience as incorporated into the body of this study. Data for the profiles were compiled from several sources, including the Region One Education Service Center website, the U.S. Census Bureau, the Texas Education Agency, the participants' interviews, and the researcher's observations.

The analysis of data and the findings presented in the following chapter begins with a review of the profiles for the Region One Education Service Center, the five communities in which the high schools reside, the five high schools selected for the study, and the profiles for each of the five principals identified for the study. Each of

these profiles then contributed toward the analyses of data collected in the study and in identifying the themes that eventually led to the findings and conclusions of this qualitative inquiry.

## **Research Study Profiles**

### **Region One Education Service Center**

Created by the 59<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, the Region One Education Service Center is one of 20 education service centers in the State of Texas. Although the centers were originally designed to serve school districts as media centers, their current role has evolved to address three objectives described in the Texas Education Code §8.002:

1. Assist school districts in improving student performance in each region of the system,
2. Enable school districts to operate more efficiently and economically, and
3. Implement initiatives assigned by the legislature or commissioner.

The Region One Education Service Center (2012) area is located in deep South Texas on the United States and Mexico border. The area encompasses approximately 9,771 square miles and is home to Cameron County, Hidalgo County, Jim Hogg County, Starr County, Webb County, Willacy County, and Zapata County (see Table 12). Thirty-seven school districts and nine charter school systems serve a total population of 1,533,713 residents, of which 412,862 are students enrolled in Region One district schools (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Of the 597 campuses located in the Region One ESC area, 346 were classified as elementary campuses, 104 were middle schools, and 147 were high schools. In 2011, approximately 97.4% of the student population in the Region One ESC area was identified as Hispanic, while 1.8% were identified as White and all other populations were less than 1%. Thirty-six percent of Region One’s students were labeled as second language learners (SLL), while 85.11% were classified as economically disadvantaged (Region One ESC, 2012). The Region One Education Service Center area has demonstrated that exemplary Hispanic student performance can be attained. How that feat was accomplished by the schools participating in the study is a topic that should be explored.

**Table 12. Region One Education Service Center Profile Summary**

Counties	Square Miles	Number of School Districts	Population	Number of Schools	% Eco Dis	% Hispanic Students	% SLL*	% 4 yr. Completion Rate	% Dropout Rate
7 Counties	9771	37 Districts	1,533,713 Residents	597 Campuses	85.1%	97.4%	36.0%	82.3%	2.5%
		9 Charter School Districts	412,862 Students	147 High Schools					

\*Second Language Learners.

Source. U.S. Census Bureau (2010, 2011b).

### **Community Profiles**

Each of the schools selected for this study reflected the unique community in which the school resided. Becoming aware of their extended learning communities allowed the researcher to further explore the data collected for this study. Data reflecting population demographics, household income, and percent poverty



designations were explored in Table 13 to provide additional insight regarding the extended learning communities of these schools. A more comprehensive profile of each school was offered to readers in a narrative describing each of the communities in which the schools reside.

For the purpose of this study, the communities in which the high schools reside have been assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity. Their uniqueness, as defined by their demographics and other factors, was considered in framing the findings that emerged from the analyses of the data collected in this study. The communities, similarly named as their high school counterparts, include:

- Orange Community;
- Gold Community;
- Blue Community;
- Silver Community, and
- Red Community.

**Table 13. Community Profile Summary**

Community	Type of Community	Population	% Hispanic	Median Household Income	Average Per Capita Income	% Below Poverty Level
Orange	Urban	241,935	95.6%	\$37,245	\$14,447	29.2%
Gold	Urban	16,175	91.9%	\$23,093	\$10,430	43.6%
Blue	Urban	241,935	95.6%	\$37,245	\$14,447	29.2%
Silver	Urban	79,147	88.2%	\$37,176	\$15,542	28.0%
Red	Rural	573	93.9%	\$26,379	\$8,122	31.3%

*Source.* U.S. Census Bureau (2010, 2011b).

As Table 14 illustrates, there was a wide range in the number of residents inhabiting the cities that were home to each of the high schools selected for the study. The largest city was inhabited by 241,935 residents, while the smallest community boasted a population of only 573 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2011b). Each of the cities was comprised of a predominantly Hispanic community earning as little as \$8,122 per capita and at most, \$15,542.

While the size of the cities widely varied, the percent of residents living below the poverty level was very similar for all of the communities, except for one of the cities listed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2011b). Approximately 43.6% of Gold Community residents lived below the poverty level when the U.S. Census was taken in 2010 as opposed to Silver City, of which 28.0% of its population lived in poverty in that same year according to the U.S. Census Bureau, (2010, 2011b).

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the high schools and principals selected for the study, the following narrative profiles described each of the communities in greater depth. The collection of data from these sources served to contextualize and frame the study.

### **Orange Community**

The city in which Orange High School (OHS) resides was a rapidly growing border area community that had been given a new lease on life because of the increased international trade that has resulted from NAFTA. As such, the 241,935 Orange City residents have shared their history, culture, commodities, and industries with a neighboring Mexican sister city for over one hundred years (U.S. Census

Bureau, 2010, 2011b). In fact, many Mexican students attended the community's public and private schools as well as its university and community college.

As a border area community, 95.6% of the city in which OHS resides was predominantly comprised of persons of Hispanic or Latino origin. When averaged, the median household income, between the years 2006-2010, was \$37,245. Moreover, 29.2% of the city's population lived below the poverty level during the aforementioned years, while the per capita income in the last 12 months of that same time period ranged at \$14,447 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).

The city in which OHS was located also included two large public school districts, various charter schools, and several private parochial schools serving local and international citizens. Additionally, a state university and community college afforded the city's students post-secondary opportunities. Several other technical colleges have also thrown their hats into the ring to compete with traditional schooling (TEA, 2011a).

While Orange Community provides students with a variety of educational opportunities, it was interesting to note that 63.8% of residents, 25 and younger, completed their high school graduation requirements. The same report cited that 92.4% of the city's population spoke a language other than English in their homes, and approximately 17.3% of the community's population completed a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).

### **Gold Community**

As a South Texas community, 91.9% of the city in which GHS is located was predominantly comprised of persons of Hispanic or Latino origin. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 43.6% of the city's population lived below the poverty level between 2006 and 2010. In the same years, the average median household income of its 16,175 citizens was \$23,093, and the per capita income in the past 12 months of that time period ranged at about \$10,430 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).

Hosting a school of choice, Gold High School community provided many unique opportunities to students living in the tri-county area. While GHS provided professional career opportunities, 56.5% of its residents, 25 and younger, were identified as high school graduates. The same report cited that 84.2% of the city's population spoke a language other than English in their homes, and approximately 10.1% of the community's population completed a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b). The community, in which GHS resides, however, was located reasonably close to several universities and colleges.

### **Blue Community**

Blue High School (BHS) was also located in the same county and city as Orange High School. As a border area community, 91.9% of the city in which BHS is located was predominantly comprised of persons of Hispanic or Latino origin. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 29.2% of the city's population lived below the poverty line between 2006 and 2010. When averaged, the median household income

was \$37,245 during that same time span, while the per capita income in the past 12 months of that time period was \$14,447 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).

The city in which BHS resides has been identified as a diverse community of which 29.2% of its population are foreign born and 92.4% speak a language other than English in the home. While Blue High School, an early college high school, afforded many students the opportunity to complete their high school requirements and concurrently attend the local state university, only 63.8% of the city's residents were identified as high school graduates. Approximately 17.3% of the city's population earned a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).

The city also included two large public school districts, various charter schools, and several private parochial schools serving local and international citizens. A state university and community college resided within the city as well, creating post-secondary opportunities for its students. Several other technical colleges additionally competed with traditional schooling (TEA, 2011a).

### **Silver Community**

As a South Texas community of 79,147 citizens, 88.2% of the city in which SHS is located was predominantly comprised of persons of Hispanic or Latino descent. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011b), 28.0% of the city's population lived below the poverty level between 2006 and 2010. In the same years, the average median household income was \$37,176, and the per capita income in the past 12 months of that time period ranged at about \$15,542 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).

While SHS provided unique educational opportunities for students in the tri-county area and was located within easy access to several universities, colleges, and trade schools, it was interesting to note that 72.2% of residents, 25 and younger, completed a high school education. The same report asserted that 76.8% of the city's population spoke a language other than English in their homes, and approximately 20.5% of the community's population completed a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).

### **Red Community**

The district, of which RHS is a part, was located in a South Texas community of approximately 573 citizens. The historical community itself was established in 1790 through a land grant issued by the King of Spain. The eventual arrival of the railroad contributed in developing the rich farmland community, later recognized throughout the Rio Grande Valley for its staple, vegetable and citrus crops. A post office was opened in 1929, and several businesses flourished at that time. Although the number of businesses has drastically decreased over time, the community is quite involved in its schools. (Texas Escapes, n.d.).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Red Community was comprised of 93.9% persons of Hispanic or Latino descent. Approximately 43.4% of the city's population lived below the poverty level between 2006 and 2010. In the same time span, the average median household income was \$22,881, and the per capita income in the past 12 months of that time period ranged at about \$10,800 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).

While RHS provided unique educational opportunities for students in its own rural community and was located within easy access to several universities, colleges, and trade schools, it is interesting to note that the nearest larger city recorded a 57.4% graduation rate for residents, 25 and younger. The same report cited that 48.6% of that city's population spoke a language other than English in their homes, and approximately 8.6% of the community's population completed a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).

### **High School Profiles**

While many challenges exist for all students attending Region One ESC area schools, much was learned from the great strides that have occurred over the last several years in many of these same schools. Such progress was evidenced in the consistent and successful academic performance of the five high schools included in this study (see Table 14). To be more specific, each of the schools selected earned an exemplary or recognized status for at least three consecutive years, as per the Texas Education Agency Academic Excellence Indicator System AEIS (TEA, 2010a, 2011b). For the purpose of this study, the five high schools selected for this study have been given a pseudonym as indicated by the following:

- Orange High School—AEIS Recognized Rating;
- Gold High School—AEIS Exemplary Rating;
- Blue High School—AEIS Exemplary Rating;
- Silver High School—AEIS Exemplary Rating,
- Red High School—AEIS Recognized Rating

**Table 14. High School Profile Summary**

High School	Principal + Asst. Principals	Number of Teachers	Average Teacher Salary	Number of Students	% Eco Dis	% Hispanic Students	% SLL*	% 4 yr. Completion Rate	% Dropout Rate
Orange	11	210	\$50,502	3700	58.5%	97.7%	9.0%	94.1%	0.8%
Gold	3	54	\$54,478	675	46.5%	73.5%	0.9%	97.7%	0.0%
Blue	1	16	\$51,154	390	92.6%	97.9%	2.1%	100%	0.0%
Silver	3	43	\$52,032	616	69.3%	88.0%	0.6%	97.0%	1.0%
Red	1	10	\$46,627	80	73.8%	78.8%	3.8%	93.8%	1.1%

\*Second Language Learners.

Source. Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2010a, 2011b).

As Table 14 (TEA, 2010a, 2011b) illustrates, the high schools involved in the study ranged in size from as few as 80 students to as many as 3700 students. The same could be said about the range in the number of staff that served each of the schools. As few as 10 teachers to as many as 210 were employed at each of the high schools selected for the study. Two of the high schools were led by a single administrator, the principal, while the largest high school employed an administrative staff of 11. The average teacher salary ranged between approximately \$55,000 to less than \$46,000 (TEA, 2010a, 2011b).

As indicated by the topic of the study, all of the schools were comprised of a majority of Hispanic students, while the number of second language learners was 9.0% or less. Economically disadvantaged students ranged from a low of 46.5% of the population in one school to an astounding 92.6% at another school (TEA, 2010a, 2011b). The four-year completion rate was incredibly high for the students attending each of the high schools included in the study.



In fact, the four-year completion rate was exceptionally high for all of the high schools included in the study. The completion rate, thus, ranged between a high of 100% to a low of 93.8% (TEA, 2010a, 2011b). What was incredibly astounding was the fact that the largest high school, 3700 students, registered a four-year completion rate of 94.1%. In much the same light, two of the high schools had a dropout rate of approximately 1.0%, while the other three recorded a rate of less than 1.0% (TEA, 2010a, 2011b).

As such, the study of the practices that their school principals implemented to increase Hispanic student performance certainly merited serious consideration and study. In this regard, much was learned about each of the schools from the review of the campus AEIS reports detailing student performance data and demographics. The following school profiles allowed for a more in-depth description of the high schools that are home to the principals selected for this study.

### **Orange High School**

As the largest high school eligible for participation in this study, Orange High School (OHS) was a traditional urban high school campus located along the most northwestern edge of the Rio Grande Valley Region One Education Service Center area. As one of eight public high schools in a community of over 241,935, OHS was also the largest high school campus in the county and within its own school district. At the time of the study, OHS was a rapidly growing high school, currently home to over 3700 students.

Achieving an AEIS recognized rating in 2011, OHS additionally earned various AEIS Gold Performance acknowledgements for its 2009-2010

- Attendance Rate (2009-2010),
- Class of 2010 College-Readiness Graduates Rate,
- Class of 2010 Recommended High School Program Rate, and the
- Commended on Social Studies

According to its 2011 AEIS report, 58.5% of Orange High's students were classified as economically disadvantaged, and 52% of the student population made the at-risk list for that same school year. Predominantly serving culturally and linguistically diverse populations, 97.7% of Orange High's student body was classified as Hispanic, 1.8% White, and 0.1% African American. Additionally, 9.0% of the student population was labeled as second language learners, while 14.1% were considered for the mobility rate (TEA, 2011a).

Making great strides from the previous couple of years, the 2011 AEIS report listed a four-year completion rate of 94.1% for the OHS Class of 2010. The dropout rate for that same year fell below 1% to 0.8%. The same AEIS report cited a five-year completion rate of 96% for the Class of 2009 and a 0.8% dropout rate for that same class (TEA, 2011a).

Employing a relatively young teaching force of approximately 210 teachers, 53% of the OHS teaching staff had 10 or less years of experience in the classroom. One-fourth of the remaining teaching staff had between 11 and 20 years of teaching experience, while about one-fifth of the staff brought more than 20 years of

experience into the classroom. Of the teachers assigned to OHS, 87.7% were listed as Hispanic, 9.5% were White, and 0.5% were African American. Twenty-two professional support staff and 11 campus administrators complemented the 210 teaching staff assigned to OHS in 2011 (TEA, 2011a).

According to the 2011 AEIS report for OHS, all salaries for campus leadership, teachers and professional support staff exceeded the state average. The average teacher salary was listed at \$50,502, almost \$2000 more than the average state teacher salary. Campus leadership salaries averaged at about \$78,311, almost \$8000 more than the average state school leadership salary, while professional support salaries were listed at approximately \$62,822, more than \$5000 higher than the average state professional support salary (TEA, 2011a). Staff salaries reflected the incentives that were made available to possible teacher candidates in an effort to attract and keep great teachers.

Of the total operating expenditures listed by function for OHS, almost 72% was spent on instruction and instructional-related services. Therefore, approximately \$4,600 was spent per student on their instruction. This amount was almost \$1000 less when compared to the expenditures of similar campus groups (TEA, 2011a).

OHS was relocated and newly built as a state of art facility several years ago to house the significant increase in student enrollment as the community grew in population and the export/import industry prospered. Nestled among new home construction, OHS was designed with a focus on energy conservation. The partial two-story facility mimicked the spokes of wheel with an immense student gathering area in

the center and front of the school. Computer labs, athletic gyms, a large cafeteria, wide hallways, and plenty of classrooms were brightly illuminated with natural light and green spaces that welcomed and encouraged student-teacher interaction.

The design of the facility also provided easy access to the monitoring of student traffic throughout the day. Community pride in the facility and the school's traditions were evidenced in the cleanliness of the facility and the display of college pennants and school expectations throughout the school.

### **Gold High School**

Having earned an AEIS exemplary rating for three consecutive years, Gold High School (GHS) met the study's selection criteria. GHS was listed as one of five schools comprising the only all magnet public school district in the State of Texas. Spreading over 3600 miles, the district encompassed three counties in the southern most edge of the Rio Grande Valley Region One Education Service Center area and served middle as well as high school students interested in attending specific professional career-dedicated schools. While each of the district's five schools was located in one of three cities in the tri-county area, the district was unique as it functioned amid 28 other public school districts in the Rio Grande Valley. The district prided itself in providing an alternative school experience characterized by hands-on applications of professional career skills, with a strong emphasis on scholastic achievement.

As previously mentioned, the four high school magnets in the district were specifically dedicated to science education, business education and technology, or the

medical and health professions. Middle school students were also eligible to enroll in a preparatory program from which, upon completion, they could then continue to one of the district's four high schools. As a public school district, students were free to attend on a no-cost basis and were provided with free bus transportation to and from its magnet schools. The open enrollment policy allowed students living in the tri-county area to consider enrolling at any of the five schools, as long as they committed themselves to learning and working diligently toward completing their educational program. Currently, over 95% of the district's graduates enrolled in major universities or technical colleges to continue their professional career programs.

While the district came into existence in 1964, GHS did not open its doors until 1989. Students who wish to attend GHS were eligible to enroll in Grade 9 or no later than the first semester of Grade 10. GHS provided students with the opportunity to enroll in a nationally recognized academic program that emphasized math and science career profession preparation, in fields such as engineering, architecture, and computer science. Real world applications and the opportunity to receive college credit beginning at Grade 9 enticed students to enroll in the high school. GHS has fostered partnerships with Project Lead the Way, Rice University, the Rochester Institute of Technology, the University of Texas-Pan American, and South Texas College.

GHS also offered special needs students the unique opportunity to enroll and attend a half-day technical program to hone their skills in either welding, building, or automotive trades. In this program, students were eligible to take the majority of their

academic classes at their home schools and complete a technical program at Gold High School. The initiative enabled students to obtain the necessary workplace technical or social skills to attain success in the job market or in pursuit of higher education in those aforementioned career pathways.

Achieving an AEIS exemplary rating in 2011, GHS additionally earned several Gold Performance acknowledgements for its exemplary performance regarding the:

- Attendance Rate (2009-2010)
- Advanced Academic Courses (2009-2010)
- AP/IB Results (2009-2010)
- College Admissions (Class of 2010)
- College-Ready Graduates (Class of 2010)
- Recommended High School Program (Class of 2010)
- Texas Success Initiative (TSI-ELA)
- Texas Success Initiative (TSI-Mathematics)
- Commended on Reading/ELA
- Commended on Mathematics
- Commended on Science
- Commended on Social Studies

According to its 2011 AEIS report, 46.5% of Gold High's 675 students were classified as economically disadvantaged and 8.3% of the student population made the at-risk list for that same school year. Predominantly serving culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, 73.5% of Gold High's student body was

classified as Hispanic, 11.7% White, 1.0% African American, and 12.6% Asian. Additionally, 0.9% of the student population was labeled SLL or second language learners, while 7.9% were considered for the mobility rate (TEA, 2011a).

The school's 2011 AEIS report also listed an impressive four-year completion rate of 97.0% for the GHS Class of 2010. No students were listed as dropouts for the Class of 2010. The same AEIS report cited a five-year completion rate of 97.8% for the Class of 2009 and a 0.0% dropout rate for that same class. In fact 80.8% of GHS students were enrolled and completed advanced coursework and/or dual enrollment (TEA, 2011a).

Employing a relatively experienced teaching force of approximately 54 teachers, it is interesting to note that about 30.6% of the GHS teaching staff had 10 or less years of experience in the classroom. Approximately 29.8% of the teaching staff had between 11 and 20 years of teaching experience, while about 39.6% of the staff brought more than 20 years of experience into the classroom. Of the teachers assigned to GHS, 53.7% were listed as Hispanic, 39.6% were White, and approximately 1.8% were African American. About six professional support staff and three campus administrators complemented the 54 teaching staff assigned to GHS in 2011 (TEA, 2011a).

According to the 2011 AEIS report for GHS, all salaries for campus leadership, teachers and professional support staff exceeded the state average. The average teacher salary was listed at \$54,478, a little more than \$6000 over the average state teacher salary. Campus leadership salaries averaged at about \$78,441, more than

\$8000 higher than the average state school leadership salary, while professional support salaries were listed at approximately \$62,822, more than \$9000 higher than the average state professional support salary (TEA, 2011a).

Of the total operating expenditures listed by function for GHS, almost 72% was spent on instruction and instructional-related services. Therefore, approximately \$6,698 was spent per student on their instruction. This amount was almost \$1000 more when compared to the expenditures of similar campus groups (TEA, 2011a).

Gold High School was located in a quiet area neighborhood which was pleasantly landscaped with local flowering shrubs and trees. The outdoor areas of the campus provided students plenty of green space with park benches and tables around which to gather throughout the day. A majority of students were transported from GHS in school buses. School hallways were large, and many of the students sit on the floor or perform experiments from their daily assignments in the hallways. While the office is open and welcoming, definite procedures were in place to attend to the needs of students, parents or staff requiring information or attending to their daily schedules.

The facility itself was not new construction as it was built in 1989. However, it is really clean and “lived in” as student work and teacher instructional resources abound throughout the building. Walking through the facility, visitors were definitely able to see and hear the hands-on instruction and applications of technology that both students and staff aptly utilize. The researcher’s visit to the school also revealed a serene yet engaging atmosphere, interrupted by the animated conversations and student-teacher interactions in the classrooms.



While students do not compete in traditional high school sports, GHS offered opportunities to participate in several University Interscholastic League (UIL) events and to delve further into their own career interests. To this end, state-of-the-art computer labs, a school gym and outdoor recreational area, an outdoor welding shop, a friendly cafeteria, expansive hallways, and large career specific classrooms all seem to encourage academic and social interactions. Moreover, the design of the facility provided easy access to the monitoring of student traffic throughout the day, while displays of student work and school expectations throughout the school evidenced staff and school pride.

### **Blue High School**

Blue High School (BHS) was a unique campus as it is part of a border area school district, while residing within the grounds of a state university. More specifically, BHS is an early college high school, designed to provide students with the opportunity to attain approximately 60 hours of college credit while concurrently pursuing their high school diplomas. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as several other partners and sponsors, have long supported the development of the Early College High Schools Initiative (Early College High School Initiative, n.d.).

Such schools have been credited with the improvement of graduation rates while preparing students for highly skilled careers through student engagement, a comprehensive college preparatory curriculum, and early enrollment at the university with which the campus is affiliated. As per the Early College High School Initiative, these schools enable low-income students, first-generation college attendees, second

language learners, and underrepresented populations to complete their high school education while attaining up to two years of college credit at no cost (Early College High School Initiative, n.d.).

Achieving an AEIS exemplary rating in 2011, BHS additionally earned several Gold Performance acknowledgements for its exemplary performance regarding the:

- Attendance Rate (2009-2010)
- Advanced Academic Courses (2009-2010)
- College-Ready Graduates (Class of 2010)
- Recommended High School Program (Class of 2010)
- Texas Success Initiative (TSI-ELA)
- Texas Success Initiative (TSI-Mathematics)
- Commended on Reading/ELA
- Commended on Mathematics
- Commended on Science
- Commended on Social Studies

According to its 2011 AEIS report, 92.6% of Blue High's 390 students were classified as economically disadvantaged, and 28.5% of the student population made the at-risk list for that same school year. Predominantly serving culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, 97.9% of Blue High's student body was classified as Hispanic, 1.0% White, 0.0% African American, and 1.0% Asian. Additionally, 2.1% of the student population was labeled SLL or second language

learners, while 2.3% were considered for the mobility rate. Additionally, the 2011 dropout rate for Blue High was 0.0% (TEA, 2011a).

Of the 16 teachers employed at BHS, 43.7% had five or less years of experience in the classroom. Approximately 18.8% of the staff had less than 10 years' experience, while 12.5% had less than 20 years. One quarter of the staff, 25%, brought more than 20 years' teaching experience into the classroom. Of the teachers assigned to BHS, 93.7% were listed as Hispanic, while the remaining teachers were Asian. One school leader and 2.5 professional support staff supplemented the 16 teaching staff assigned to BHS in 2011 (TEA, 2011a).

According to the 2011 AEIS report for BHS, salaries for campus leadership and teachers exceeded the state average. The average teacher salary was listed at \$51,154, almost \$2500 more than the average state teacher salary. Campus leadership salaries averaged at about \$86,519, almost \$16,000 more than the average state school leadership salary, while professional support salaries were listed at approximately \$50,737, about \$7000 less than the average state professional support salary (TEA, 2011a).

Of the total operating expenditures listed by function for OHS, almost 81% was spent on instruction and instructional-related services. Therefore, approximately \$4,271 was spent per student on their instruction. This amount was about \$1000 less when compared to the expenditures of similar campus groups (TEA, 2011a).

Blue High School began as an early college program school in 2006. The partnering university allowed the first 100 freshmen to begin instruction in one of its

own academic buildings. As the school population increased in size with the yearly addition of new freshman classes, the school eventually outgrew the university hall and was relocated to a set of portable buildings on the grounds of the city's state university. Students and staff adjusted to the portable buildings as they provided immediate access to such university facilities as its university library, gymnasium, and various other academic buildings throughout the day. Students gradually transition into college level coursework as they concurrently earn their high school and college credits.

The BHS portable buildings provided limited areas for student gatherings; however, plenty of classroom space and the hallways were utilized for students to congregate, study, and converse. Picnic tables and benches were placed at various locations throughout the site to allow students the opportunity to eat their breakfast and lunch that was transported daily by the school district to the high school.

Recognizing the need for a building of their own, the district approved and began construction of a new facility for the students and staff of Blue High School. Thus, many of the former site's limitations were recently addressed as a new permanent facility has been built, on the university's grounds, to specifically house Blue High School's student body and staff. The facility is now officially designated as home to all BHS students, providing students with newly designed classrooms, a study-cafeteria area, and the technology to meet the state's assessment and curriculum demands as well as all early college high school mandates.

Beginning at the middle school level, the district counselors and administrators notified all students and parents of the opportunity to apply for admission into the district's early college high school, BHS. Students applied, and if they met the entrance criteria, they were selected and began their educational program as freshmen at BHS. Students who enrolled at BHS were given an orientation, prior to their attendance at the school. Both parents and students signed contracts, detailing their roles, responsibilities, and the expectations that must be met in order to fulfill all requirements for the awarding of high school graduation and college credit during their four years at the high school.

Student academic progress was closely monitored and interventions were immediately put into place if a student was seen to be faltering at any time during their enrollment at BHS. They were counseled, and parents were notified if there is any lapse in their behavior and/or expected academic program in which the student is placed. All students were expected to complete their high school and college level academic requirements.

### **Silver High School**

Silver High School (SHS), as its counterpart Gold High School, was also one of the five schools comprising the only all magnet public school districts in the State of Texas. Spreading over 3600 miles, the district encompassed three counties in the southern most edge of the Rio Grande Valley Region One Education Service Center area and served middle and high school students interested in attending specific professional career dedicated schools. While each of the district's five schools was

located in one of three cities in the tri-county area, the district was unique as it functioned amid 28 other public school districts in the Rio Grande Valley. The district took pride in providing an alternative school experience characterized by hands-on applications of professional career skills, with a strong emphasis on scholastic achievement.

As previously mentioned, the four high school magnets in the district were specifically dedicated to science education, business education and technology, or the medical and health professions. Middle school students were also declared as eligible to enroll in a preparatory program from which, upon completion, they can then continue to one of the district's four high schools. As a public school district, students were free to attend on a no-cost basis and were provided with free bus transportation to and from its magnet schools. The open enrollment policy allowed students living in the tri-county area to consider enrolling at any of the five schools, as long as they committed themselves to learning and working diligently toward completing their educational program. Currently, over 95% of the district's graduates enrolled in major universities or technical colleges to continue their professional career programs.

While the district came into existence in 1964, Silver High School was not opened under its present mission and purpose until 2003. Once slated as a teacher academy in 1993, Silver High School was redirected and reopened as a high school that addressed the career pathways of students interested in business, education, and/or media technology. Students who wish to attend SHS were eligible to enroll in Grade 9 or no later than the first semester of Grade 10. SHS provided students with

the opportunity to enroll in a rigorous academic program that emphasized hands-on instruction in the previously mentioned career pathways.

Silver High School was also unique in that it offered several half-day career and technology programs to meet the needs of students with special needs. Once enrolled in the program, such students took the majority of their academic classes at their home high schools while enrolling at Silver High School in a technology career pathway. Enrollment in the half-day program allowed students the opportunity to gain marketable technical and social skills as they pursued a post-high school career or education. More specifically, Silver High School offered a half-day program to enhance computer skills and the use of office software, providing students with the proficiencies necessary to succeed in a business setting.

Achieving an AEIS recognized rating in 2011, SHS additionally earned several Gold Performance acknowledgements for its exemplary performance regarding the:

- Attendance Rate (2009-2010)
- Advanced Academic Courses (2009-2010)
- College-Ready Graduates (Class of 2010)
- Recommended High School Program (Class of 2010)
- Texas Success Initiative (TSI-ELA)
- Texas Success Initiative (TSI-Mathematics)
- Commended on Reading/ELA
- Commended on Social Studies

According to the 2011 AEIS report, 69.3% of Silver High's 616 students were classified as economically disadvantaged, and 31.2% of the student population made the at-risk list for that same school year. Predominantly serving culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, 88.0% of Silver High's student body was classified as Hispanic, 6.8% White, 1.1% African American, and 3.7% Asian. Additionally, 0.6% of the student population was labeled SLL or second language learners, while 16.4% were considered for the mobility rate (TEA, 2011a).

The school's 2011 AEIS report also listed a laudable four-year completion rate of 91.9% for the SHS Class of 2010. No students were listed as dropouts for the Class of 2010. The same AEIS report cited a five-year completion rate of 97.0% for the Class of 2009 and a 1.0% dropout rate for that same class. SHS also posted 54.4% of its students as having participated and completed advanced course or dual enrollment (TEA, 2011a).

Employing a relatively experienced teaching force of approximately 43 teachers, it is interesting to note that about 39% of the SHS teaching staff had 10 or less years of experience in the classroom. Approximately 30.8% of the teaching staff had between 11 and 20 years' teaching experience, while about 30.2% of the staff brought more than 20 years of experience into the classroom. Of the teachers assigned to SHS, 61.7% were listed as Hispanic, 34.8% were White, and approximately 3.5% were Asian. About six professional support staff and three campus administrators complemented the 43 teaching staff assigned to SHS in 2011 (TEA, 2011a).



According to the 2011 AEIS report for SHS, all salaries for campus leadership, teachers and professional support staff exceeded the state average. The average teacher salary was listed at \$52,032 or \$3,394 over the average state teacher salary. Campus leadership salaries averaged at about \$72,845 or \$2026 over the average state school leadership salary, while professional support salaries were listed at approximately \$63,954 or more than \$6909 higher than the average state professional support salary (TEA, 2011a).

Of the total operating expenditures listed by function for SHS, almost 61.6% was spent on instruction and instructional-related services. Therefore, approximately \$6,726 was spent per student on their instruction. This amount was approximately \$1300 more when compared to the expenditures of similar campus groups (TEA, 2011a).

Silver High School sat squarely in a major thoroughfare of the city. As one of the oldest schools of the district built in the 1960's, Silver High School retained an attractive, clean, and pleasant environment for its students, staff, and visitors. The outdoor areas of the campus provided students with green space, park benches, and tables around which to gather throughout the day. A majority of students arrived to and departed from SHS in school buses. School hallways nicely accommodated the traffic flow, and the students easily moved from class-to-class. While the office was warm, open, and welcoming, definite procedures were in place to immediately attend to the needs of students, parents, or staff requiring information or moving through their daily schedules.

It is important to note that while the facility is not new construction, it was exceptionally clean and radiated with the personal work of students and staff. Visitors, walking through the facility, were definitely able to see and hear the engaging hands-on instruction and personal academic interactions that took place in the school. The researcher's visit to the school revealed a sense of pride in the school and in the ownership of learning from the staff and from the student body.

### **Red High School**

Located in a very lush agricultural and rural community in the southeastern Region One Education Service Center area, Red High School (RHS) sat squarely in the midst of rural farm acreage and a wind farm. There were no easily distinguishable business entities or structures that point to booming business or enterprise in the small community. While the historical district was home to approximately 300 students, school pride in academics and athletic programs was evidenced throughout each of the three district campuses.

The UIL 1A school district, of which Red High School is a part, provided instruction to students in the immediate area as well as to students who are bused from an adjacent coastal community. Several larger communities were easily accessible from RHS and provide amenities common in larger cities.

Red High School students attended to their coursework in an original school building constructed in 1932. New construction replaced a portion of the original building in 2004; the building was also shared for several classes by middle school students. A new gymnasium, agricultural facilities, and classroom wings have been

recently constructed or renovated to allow students and staff to participate in additional school activities in newer surroundings and an environment conducive to collaborative and community learning.

A clean and serene natural outdoors environment enriched the school facilities. An elementary school play yard, amid high school and middle school facilities, added to the friendly and open atmosphere of the school district. The outdoor areas of the campus provided students with green space, several park benches and tables around which to gather throughout the day. A majority of students arrived to and departed from RHS in school buses.

One office assistant wore multiple hats and performed the duties of principal's secretary, PEIMS clerk, and receptionist. Visitors encountered a warm welcome when arriving at the school, and their concerns or inquiries were handled in a professional, friendly manner. In much the same way, staff greeted students and others routinely in the hallways and dining hall.

It is important to note that while the facility has weathered many years and many life stories, it was exceptionally clean and reflected the personal work of students and staff. Visitors, walking through the facility, were definitely able to acknowledge the pride in the identity that students and staff have defined and nurtured over time. The researcher's visit to the school revealed the desire to learn and to achieve success in all that students and staff have designated as school and personal goals.

Achieving an AEIS recognized rating in 2011, RHS additionally earned several Gold Performance acknowledgements for its student performance regarding the:

- Texas Success Initiative (TSI-Mathematics)
- Commended on Mathematics
- Commended on Social Studies

According to its 2011 AEIS report, 73.8% of Red High's 80 students were classified as economically disadvantaged, and 41.3% of the student population made the at-risk list for that same school year. Predominantly serving culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, 78.8% of Red High's student body was classified as Hispanic and 21.3% as White. Additionally, 3.8% of the student population was labeled SLL or second language learners, while 16.5% were considered for the mobility rate (TEA, 2011a).

The school's 2011 AEIS report also listed a commendable four-year completion rate of 93.8% for the RHS Class of 2010. For the same class, 1.1% were listed as dropouts. The same AEIS report cited a five-year completion rate of 94.1% for the Class of 2009 and no dropouts for that same class (TEA, 2011a).

Employing a relatively young staff of 10 teachers, 1 principal, and 1 professional support professional, it is interesting to note that about 59.3% of the RHS teaching staff had 10 or less years of experience in the classroom. Approximately 11.2% of the teaching staff had between 11 and 20 years' teaching experience, while about 29.5% of the staff brought more than 20 years of experience into the classroom.

Of the teachers assigned to SHS, 72.1% were listed as Hispanic and 26.5% were White (TEA, 2011a).

According to the 2011 AEIS report for RHS, all salaries for campus leadership, teachers, and professional support staff were less than the state average. In this regard, the average teacher salary for RHS was listed at \$46,627, a few dollars less than the average state teacher salary. Campus leadership salary was listed at about \$68,101 or about \$2718 less than the average state school leadership salary. Additionally, the professional support salaries were listed at approximately \$49,898 or \$7,147 less than the average state professional support salary (TEA, 2011a).

Of the total operating expenditures listed by function for SHS, almost 77.1% was spent on instruction and instructional-related services. Therefore, approximately \$8,718 was spent per student on their instruction. This amount was approximately \$2,973 more when compared to the expenditures of similar campus groups (TEA, 2011a).

### **Principal Profiles**

As Leithword, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) have asserted, “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p. 7). In accordance with this assertion, effective leadership that develops staff, sets direction, and redesigns the school organization has been targeted as a key essential component in executing successful reform and improving student performance (Fullan, 2001; Villa & Thousand, 2000). Moreover, educators have identified a significant need for visionary,

collaborative leadership to successfully confront the increasingly rigorous accountability standards, decreased resources, and fiscal burdens facing today's schools (Hallinger, 1992; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992).

While the importance of school leadership has been much debated over time, the research of notable scholars has affirmed that powerful relationships exist between effective leadership and:

- The clarity of a school's mission and goals (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Duke, 1982);
- The school's climate (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979);
- Teacher attitudes (Oakes, 1989; Purkey & Smith, 1983);
- Classroom teacher practices (Miller & Sayre, 1986);
- The organization of curriculum and instruction (Cohen & Miller, 1980; Oakes, 1989), and
- Students' opportunity to learn (Duke & Canady, 1991; Murphy & Hallinger, 1989).

In this regard, the principals selected for this study exemplify many of the attributes that have been brought to light by leadership and effective schools research. As indicated by their student performance data, as well as by the data collected from their interviews, observations, and artifacts, their leadership has resulted in the success of their schools and in particular, the success of their Hispanic students. Table 15 rendered a brief overview of the participants in the study, while additional detailed

principal profiles provided a more comprehensive portrait of the individuals who have led their schools to AEIS recognized or exemplary status for the last three years.

Table 15 revealed that of the five participants selected for the study, four were males and one was a female. All the participants were Hispanic and had been principals at their schools or school districts from as little as 4 years to as much as 15 years. Two of the principals had attained a bachelor’s degree in elementary education, while the other three were secondary education majors or had a science career major in biology and chemistry. All participants in the study had earned a master’s degree in school administration.

**Table 15. Principal Profile Summary**

Principal	Gender	Ethnicity	Years Educator Experience	Years Administrator Experience in Current School District	Degree Credentials
Orange	Male	Hispanic	37	15	Bachelor’s-Secondary Education History & Political Science Master’s-School Administration
Gold	Male	Hispanic	21	5	Bachelor’s-Health Professions Biology & Chemistry Master’s-School Administration
Blue	Male	Hispanic	20	10	Bachelor’s-Secondary Education U.S. History Master’s-School Administration
Silver	Female	Hispanic	20	6	Bachelor’s-Elementary Education Master’s-School Administration
Red	Male	Hispanic	30	4	Bachelor’s-Elementary Education Master’s-School Administration

*Source.* Interview Data.

### **Orange High School Principal**

As a 37-year veteran of education, Mr. Orange exuded a semblance of relaxed confidence and competence when he first greeted the researcher at the door of his

office. Genuinely articulate, friendly, and proud of his school, Mr. Orange was eager to share his many experiences as the high school principal of a large, rapidly increasing student population. After discussing the interview process and research study with the researcher, Mr. Orange quickly began to speak about what motivated his unlikely entry into the field of education.

Mr. Orange recounted how, while graduating third in his high school class and having earned a football scholarship, he had been told to pursue a military career because of no financial aid. He stated,

When I graduated high school, I graduated third in my class with a scholarship, I was asked to play football in college and I – I had it in my mind I was going to go into the military. In fact, for most Hispanics in the Odem area, that's the way it used to be. The counselor would say, "Oh, you're good army, military – *Garcia, Martinez*, – whoever, Hispanic, and so I figured I'd go to the military and then later on go to college.

Thus, Mr. Orange had originally decided not to enroll at what was then known as Texas A&I University in Kingsville, Texas. However, late in that 1970 summer, he had a very impactful conversation with his father, one that forever changed his life's course.

According to Mr. Orange, his father had only been able to attain an eighth grade education, but he was a very civic-minded man who knew right from wrong. Steadfast in his beliefs, the gentleman had been a WWII veteran and a life-long member of the American G.I. Forum and Veterans of Foreign Wars. As such, he was an avid admirer of Dr. Hector Perez Garcia, a renowned physician and Civil Rights Coastal Bend leader who had worked diligently throughout his lifetime to create



community awareness in the disparate treatment of Hispanics in the community, workplace, education, and health settings.

Mr. Orange's father particularly admired the fact that Dr. Garcia had served as a WWII battle field surgeon and that he had been instrumental in assisting a Hispanic widow who had been denied hometown funeral arrangements for her husband because of his Mexican-American heritage. Dr. Garcia's intervention, along with then Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, resulted in the soldier's burial at Arlington National Cemetery, thus allowing the first Hispanic soldier to be buried with full military honors at a national cemetery.

Through Mr. Orange's words, his admiration of his own father was evident,

Some of the things that were happening shouldn't be happening, and my dad was always of that nature. He was civic-minded, and he had an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education, and back then that was quite a bit for some people. And he knew what was right from wrong, and the things that Dr. Garcia was doing in the 1950s, he supported in march after march in the area throughout South Texas in raising awareness of how Hispanics are treated.

When asked if he was going to go to college, Mr. Orange told his father that he would have to wait until he returned from the military. Mr. Orange's father would not take no for an answer and insisted that they visit with Dr. Hector Perez Garcia in Corpus Christi, Texas. During their visit, Dr. Garcia asked Mr. Orange for his high school transcript and his ACT scores. Dr. Garcia agreed with Mr. Orange's father, and stated, "You know.... You need to go to college." He picked up the phone and made arrangements for Mr. Orange to see the appropriate college officials to get him enrolled that day.

When all was said and done, Mr. Orange, accompanied by his father, enrolled at the Texas A&I University in Kingsville and accepted a National Defense Grant and loan that was forgiven after graduation because of the policy that allowed recipients such credit if they committed to working in a high poverty area for five years. Thus, Mr. Orange began his teaching career in Odem, Texas, after graduating with a double major in history and political science.

He continued his education at Corpus Christi State University where he earned his administrative mid-management certification and was then hired in Robstown, Texas, as an assistant principal. His educational career then brought him to the border area community in which he has lived and worked for over 15 years as an assistant principal and currently as a high school principal.

One extremely poignant and memorable aspect of Mr. Orange's profile is his description of a second meeting with Dr. Hector Perez Garcia, 19 years ago. As Mr. Orange recalled, he was then an assistant principal in the Coastal Bend and was responsible for working with government officials during the hosting of a presidential year political rally at the school where he worked. One of the attendees was Dr. Hector Perez Garcia, the man responsible for making arrangements for him to enroll at Texas A&I.

After the rally, Mr. Orange approached Dr. Garcia to greet him and thank him for what he had done to start his career in education. When Mr. Orange thanked Dr. Garcia for what he had done, he stated that Dr. Garcia had replied, "No, no. No me des gracias, don't thank me. I want you to help an Hispano. Make him aware of what

you went through, what college can do for you.” Mr. Orange reiterated that those words have had the most profound impact upon his mission as an educator and upon how he can impact student achievement.

### **Gold High School Principal**

An articulate and composed young man, Mr. Gold greeted the researcher warmly and in a relaxed manner prior to his scheduled interview. He was professionally dressed in a suit and tie, and his presence exuded a quiet confidence and air of competence. Mr. Gold’s office reflected the professional demeanor and organization that was apparent in the entire school. Everything seemed to be in its place, but student work pleasantly adorned the entry and office areas. Prior to the interview, an explanation of the research study and interview process was shared. When asked about his credentials and educator background, Mr. Gold recited his educational journey.

Mr. Gold, Principal of Gold High School, received a Bachelor’s degree from Texas A&M in 1990, with a major in biology and a minor in chemistry.

I had ambitions of going into the health professions, but...due to some circumstances that occurred when I was younger, right out of college, I fell into education. I was asked to take over a science class for high school...and ever since then, I’ve, for the next 21 years, I’ve been an educator.

Thus, continuing his education in the Rio Grande Valley, Mr. Gold earned his teaching certificates from the University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) and pursued a master’s degree at that same university. Eventually, he earned his administrator’s certificate at UTPA, and after teaching for 10 years, he became an assistant principal. He has been Gold High School’s principal for the last five years.

In speaking about his profession, Mr. Gold displayed a quiet, thoughtful confidence and demeanor. He humbly spoke about his role as a principal at the school; he was very thorough, honest, and knowledgeable about his school, students, and staff. Very aware of his school's student performance data, Mr. Gold was able to speak fluently about his experiences and his perceptions about his school. During his shadowing, the researcher observed how easily he moved from classroom-to-classroom, speaking to students and staff about their ongoing work. Students grinned and teachers shared their latest projects with him as he walked through the building. It was easy to see that his monitoring was not something new or foreign; it was simply another time to share and dialogue about the day's instruction and events.

What really permeated through his words was his belief in the great responsibility that he had assumed in his position as principal of the school. Although he understood his role as the instructional leader of his school, he was also aware of how his decisions and actions impacted the entire organization. Mr. Gold believed that listening was a very important skill, no matter what situation he encountered. Confronting even the most difficult of situations, he truly believed that honesty needed to be at the top of the list, always understanding that every decision renders a set of consequences, which may then trigger other unforeseen actions and outcomes.

Thus, analyzing encountered situations was very crucial to Mr. Gold. In fact, he was very much concerned about the consequences of his decisions and his interactions with students and staff. Obviously empathetic, he did not want to be remembered as a person who used hurtful language or who demeaned others. In this

regard, Mr. Gold stated that words can sometimes be very hurtful: “They will last forever,” he chimed, and “I don’t want to be remembered by that.” Laying aside emotions and relying on patience and rationality, he described his approach toward resolving issues as always beginning with the question, “How can we fix it?” Mr. Gold saw himself as a facilitator, a guide, and a role model for others.

### **Blue High School Principal**

Clearly proud of his school, Mr. Blue politely welcomed the researcher into his office located adjacent to the visitor’s entrance in the portable buildings that were once home to this early college high school. Dressed in khakis, a dress shirt, and patterned tie, Mr. Blue offered refreshments and was clearly eager to participate in the interview process after the research study was explained to him. He was profoundly humbled that he and his school had been selected to participate in the study, as he described himself as a native of the community who had always aspired to make a difference in students who very much reflected his own culture, life experiences, and socioeconomic roots.

Serving as the school’s first and only principal for the past four years, Mr. Blue described himself as a 42-year-old, former migrant student who had “had the privilege” of attending five different elementary schools throughout the family’s work-related travels. His words declared his belief that being a migrant student had not been a deterrent to his education. In fact, he identified his early learning experiences as a privilege. Because he was the child of an American father and a Mexican mother, Mr. Blue also lived in Mexico with his parents for a short period of

time. He was able to complete his elementary, middle, and high school education, though, in the South Texas district at which he is now serving as a principal.

Stating that he “actually didn’t like school,” Mr. Blue took as many high school credits as possible during the evenings, Saturdays, and summers and was able to graduate in three years with four additional credits. He then enrolled at the local community college and continued the pursuit of a degree in education at the local state university where he graduated. Becoming a teacher in the same school district in which he is now a principal, Mr. Blue first became an assistant principal at the other larger school district located in his hometown. Later, he was offered a position at the high school from which he graduated, followed by a director’s position at one of the same district’s magnet schools.

When the opportunity arose for a principalship at the local early college high school, Mr. Blue applied and has for the past four years witnessed the evolution of the school, beginning with only 100 students at the freshman level. With every year’s addition of another freshman class, the school has increased its student as well as staff numbers to a maximum of 400 students. Last year marked the culmination of much hard work, effort, and organization, as the first freshman cohort for the early college high school was able to walk the graduation line and receive their diplomas.

What was pleasantly revealed about Mr. Blue during the course of his interviews and observation was his very focused determination in setting and achieving goals on behalf of the mostly disadvantaged students who attend his school. He likened them to himself and clearly believed that educators must work diligently to

facilitate and instill a passionate desire to complete their college education. He saw that accomplishment as a means to providing opportunities that allow students to pursue productive careers, which enable them to care for themselves and their families. Vehemently articulating this vision throughout the day, Mr. Blue understood that both students and staff must take ownership for their own success. However, as educators, he believed that it was incumbent upon himself and each of his staff to guide and ensure that all students entrusted to their care, made it to the graduation line, where their names would be called.

### **Silver High School Principal**

Walking into Silver High School, the researcher was greeted by a friendly and helpful office attendant who directed me into Ms. Silver's office. Several minutes later, a smiling and professionally attired Ms. Silver came into the room, shook my hand, and introduced herself. She stated that she had been walking through her building and observing her teachers, but that she was excited and pleased to be part of the study. Moving to her conference table, Ms. Silver offered refreshments; her demeanor reflected a quiet, yet certain confidence and pride in her work as well as in her students and staff.

Ms. Silver detailed her professional background by stating that she began her educational journey in deep South Texas, at Brownsville ISD, where she was first employed as a fifth grade teacher and where she later moved to a sixth grade class. Stating that she truly enjoyed working with her students, Ms. Silver also asserted how, after several years of teaching, she became disillusioned with the educational system.

Many students were coming into her sixth grade class not knowing how to read. In fact, it was at this time that she actually contemplated going back to the university and pursuing an alternative career.

Embarking on her administrative journey occurred on the spur of a friend's whim. As described by Ms. Silver, her decision to pursue administrative certification came when she accompanied her best friend to an administrative school law class as a visitor. She was enthralled by the professor and the issues the class was exploring. The realization came to her, "I thought if I'm going to make a difference in education, I need to become an administrator!"

Ms. Silver enrolled at the University of Texas-Brownsville and completed her master's degree and certification within a year. Soon after receiving her administrative certificate, she was able to apply for positions within the district's curriculum department; these included a position as an elementary science specialist and as an assistant principal at a local elementary and high school. Shortly thereafter, Ms. Silver was assigned as a high school principal where she worked for six years.

Moving from that community to her current position proved challenging but also invigorating. As part of the only magnet public school district in the state, Ms. Silver has had to explore the various mindsets and belief systems inherent in that school system and in that school. She has become a part of her school over the last six years, but she has not lost sight of her own beliefs stating, "Administrators are key to making those decisions that run a campus that can change lives for kids."



Listening to Ms. Silver, the researcher was struck with the fact that Ms. Silver took her leadership responsibilities quite seriously. She stated that she was awestricken with the realization that in her hands, she held the future of her students. Her decisions could either help or hinder her students. She vividly described the moment, when walking across the field during the graduation of her first senior class, she understood the great responsibility and power that had been entrusted to her as well as to her teachers. At that moment, she felt she had to thank God for allowing these students to accomplish their goals.

### **Red High School Principal**

When arriving at Red High School, the researcher met the principal, Mr. Red, who was kindly waiting after school hours to participate in the scheduled interview. Dressed casually in jeans and a school emblem polo shirt, Mr. Red, principal of Red High School, warmly greeted the researcher at the front steps of the school and proceeded into the building to begin the interview process. After discussing the interview and research process, Mr. Red comfortably addressed each of the questions asked by the researcher. He was very outgoing, open, and descriptive about his educational journey and experiences.

Mr. Red graduated from a Rio Grande Valley high school in 1981 and decided to declare elementary education as his career pathway soon after his graduation. He attended Texas Southmost College in the summer of that year, and by the fall semester, he had successfully completed 31 college hours. After feeling “burnt out,” Mr. Red decided to leave the university and pursue a business career in Corpus

Christi, Texas, where he worked for Pizza Hut and Dairy Queen in management. His career in business management continued for 10 years, but after marrying and becoming a father, Mr. Red decided to return to the Rio Grande Valley to pursue a degree in education.

He received a bachelor's degree in 1992 from Texas Southmost College/the University of Texas at Brownsville. Soon after, he obtained his first teaching position in San Benito, Texas, and taught a self-contained third grade class for seven years. Mr. Red commented on the fact that the San Benito school district offered teachers the opportunity to continue their education and work toward completion of a master's degree. The district offered to pay for their degrees, provided that teachers committed two more years to the district upon completion of their degrees.

After speaking with the district's superintendent at the time, Mr. Red was given permission to apply for an administrative position should an opportunity arise prior to completing the two-year commitment to the district. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Red was offered an assistant principal's position at a neighboring school district. He accepted the offer and worked for that school district for six years. Stating that it was an "awesome, awesome school district...I loved it there," Mr. Red sadly commented that he had had to take a leave of absence because of his deteriorating health.

He eventually moved on to two other school districts as a campus administrator for approximately four years. Mr. Red stated that he was exceptionally pleased to have worked in Raymondville as an assistant principal for three years, as he believed that he had learned a lot from his principal, calling her "an excellent role

model.” He then applied for his current position, believing that the position would offer him experience in a smaller, rural community.

When he was selected for his current position, he was surprised to find out that he would be the acting principal for all three campuses – high school, middle school, and the elementary, and that he would be the sole campus administrator. With no assistant principal assigned to any of the campuses, Mr. Red commented that he has also assumed the responsibilities of the special education, curriculum, and special populations directors.

When asked about support in his administrative duties, Mr. Red stated that he has a very capable and competent counselor with whom he works really well and upon whom he depends greatly. He was also very appreciative of the fact that his current superintendent steps in to serve as an assistant, even taking on teaching responsibilities when there is a need at the school. Acknowledging his superintendent’s support, Mr. Red stated, “When I get in a bind...and he knows when I’m needing some help. He changes his hat and comes in. He serves as my assistant.” Mr. Red has been at his current position for four years and grinning broadly, categorized his experience in the district as, “very rewarding!”

### **Researcher Profile**

#### **Sylvia Guerra Rios**

Born in 1954 as the eldest of a pair of twin girls, Sylvia is Hispanic and the first of her family to graduate from high school and then from Texas A&I University in Kingsville. Coming from a traditional home in which her father was the sole wage

earner, Sylvia's mother, Armandina, was indeed her first teacher. The small, two-bedroom home in which she lived with her parents did not offer too many luxuries, but it had a large backyard and a huge cedar tree in which her father fashioned a rickety tree house. This was a place to dream, to imagine strange new worlds and adventures in which Sylvia and her sister were the lead characters.

Throughout her school age years, the family struggled to make ends meet. Her father, Arnoldo, who worked at the Texas Highway Department all of his life, took great pride in his work, Always on time and rarely staying home to tend to his health, her father, was well-known and affectionately recognized for his dedication, work ethic, and for the extreme care that he took in paving our Texas highways.

With the same resolve, her father one day decided that he would earn the diploma he had never attained when he was in high school. Sylvia recalled her grandmother tearfully explaining that her father had had to leave high school as a freshman in order to help support the family during a harsh economic crisis. She stated that he loved school and did not want to leave, but his father had urged him to help. So Sylvia's father could not refuse his father, but he had never lost sight of his own dream.

So he bought a set of G.E.D. study guides, and every day after working in the hot Texas sun, he would come home to shower, have supper, and then begin studying for his G.E.D. What really left an indelible impression upon Sylvia was that her "Daddy" never gave up, even when a particular section was too difficult or unfamiliar to him. Late into the night, with a single lamp to light what he was reading, he would

pour over his books, making sure that he understood and was able to answer every question that was written in the study guides. When he finally took every test and passed each of them, he waited for that diploma to arrive in the mail, and when it did, it was framed and displayed in the living room. His pride and the family's pride in that achievement had never been forgotten, truly underlining an event that clearly defined her life's path. That day and many others like it revolved around the concept of education and its benefits.

By all means, Sylvia learned the value of education through the eyes of her parents and grandparents who constantly reminded her that "education was something no one could ever take from you." So she knew that it was something for which she would always strive and value. Her parents and grandparents had great expectations for each of the girls, and Sylvia felt that she could not, would not disappoint them. Learning to read from some old fairy tale books her grandfather brought home after they had been discarded by his employer, Sylvia was fascinated by the stories that were recited in those magical books. Grandma's house was a couple of blocks away, and that was the place where Sylvia and her sister used an old piece of siding and chalk to "teach" their younger cousins.

Assuming a teacher's role was easy for Sylvia because she found school to be a fascinating place in which something new was always shared by teachers who cared about her. So she enrolled in every English, math, science, and social studies class that she could take in high school. She felt that her best teachers were strict, but while the

expectations were great, they recognized the potential that lay within her and gave her the tools with which to learn.

She fondly remembered her first grade teacher who assigned her to listen to other students learning to read and who comforted her when she accidentally let the tadpoles slip down the drain in the classroom sink. She remembered the teacher who gave her a precious black marker of her own, so that she could complete a science project in the fourth grade and the teacher who helped her to become a UIL persuasive speaker even though she had never before been schooled in public speaking.

Similarly, she recalled her writing teacher, who she respected immensely and had sent her poetry to be printed in a magazine. The same admiration was held for her science and math teachers who made sure she understood trigonometry, physics and chemistry, in case she wanted to pursue a career in engineering or medicine. To this day, Sylvia has not forgotten her band director, who gave all Hebbronville High School band members the opportunity to travel to Corpus Christi and experience the ocean or to Houston to visit NASA and enjoy a baseball game in the Astrodome, to San Antonio to visit the World's Fair when it was first opened, and who taught everyone to understand and feel the beauty of music through every note played for an audience.

Thus, when Sylvia graduated in 1973 as Hebbronville High School's valedictorian, alongside her twin sister, Cynthia, the salutatorian, Sylvia chose to become a teacher. With a double major in secondary English and mathematics, she accepted her first teaching position in Harlingen and eventually moved back to the

Hebbronville area where she assumed a high school English and mathematics position. In addition to her teaching assignments, Sylvia sponsored a variety of school clubs and became the UIL speech and one-act play director for over 16 years.

Ultimately, she recognized that if she truly wanted to make a difference and give other students those memorable learning experiences that had shaped her own life, she would have to go back to school and earn her administrative certificates. She did just that in 1986 when she received a master's degree in administration, earning certification in mid-management and the superintendency. Throughout her 35 years of educator experience, Sylvia accepted positions as a curriculum and assessment director, a high school principal, and interim superintendent. Currently, she is the Director of the satellite Region One Education Service Center in Laredo, hoping to soon complete one more of her goals, a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction.

**CHAPTER V**  
**FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY**

**Introduction**

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) claimed that qualitative research enables scholars to gather and interpret information in terms of the meaning that the subjects themselves have constructed. Case studies, personal experience, interviews, observations, and historical data are some of the empirical ways in which qualitative research has been utilized to address the research questions posed by a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In this particular instance, a qualitative case study that explored principal leadership in high-achieving schools serving Hispanic students in South Texas was selected to investigate the research questions posed in the study:

1. What are the experiences of high school principals who serve in high-achieving Hispanic schools?
2. What are the perceptions of high school principals regarding their success with Hispanic students in high-achieving schools in South Texas?

Personal interviews, participant and school observations, as well as artifacts, state and national student performance reports, and the review of the literature assisted the researcher in making meaning of the information that was gathered from each of the participants in the study. Their perceptions and experiences, coupled with supporting data gathered from the various sources previously mentioned determined the identification of categories that emerged in the study. In short, the chapter's organization included:



- A summary of the categories that were identified from the data;
- The findings that were ascertained from the study, and
- A summary of the potential impact of the findings.

### **Selected Categories**

The analysis of the data collected from the five participants' interviews and observations as well as relevant artifacts and the researcher's notes revealed that multicultural education, effective schools, and culturally responsive leadership emerged as the primary categories or themes of this study. Subcategories surfacing from the data included:

- High Expectations,
- Collaboration,
- Relationships,
- Empowering School Culture,
- Equity Pedagogy,
- Communication,
- A Vision for Success,
- Hispanic Principal Leadership, and
- Hispanic Student Achievement.

Each of these categories was validated in the scholarly work of those who advocate for the integration of multicultural education, effective schools research, and culturally responsive leadership into the daily routines of all schools.

As declared by Banks (2004), the actual realization of multicultural education within all schools requires systemic and institutional change including revisions in the curriculum, appropriate teaching materials, and attention to teaching and learning styles. Moreover, the school community must be open to an honest assessment of the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of teachers as well as administrators (Banks, 2004). The goals, norms, and culture of the school must also be aligned to the principles of multicultural education in order to ensure its effective implementation (Banks, 2004).

When considering that multicultural education has been defined as a process rather than simply a product, a way of thinking, decision-making, and behaving in educational settings, an examination of leadership practices and behaviors was critical to its effective implementation in schools (Banks & Banks, 2001). Such a study was even more important when considering how principal leadership in Texas schools can influence the academic success of Hispanic students who are fast becoming the majority in today's schools. Thus, the findings from this study have the potential to significantly impact the ways in which educators interact with the function of their school organizations and in the relationships that are fostered within their school environments.

### **Findings From the Study**

The findings for this study revealed the relationships that exist among multicultural education, principal leadership, and effective schools in supporting the achievement of Hispanic students in successful South Texas high schools. In order to

graphically represent and visually make meaning out of the data collected from this study, the researcher utilized a free form of concept mapping (Figure 1), sometimes referred to as mind mapping (Buzan, 1974; Buzan & Buzan, 2000).



Figure 1. Hispanic Student Achievement in the Context of Multicultural Education, Effective Schools, and Leadership

Defined as a technique that assists in visualizing relationships among different concepts, concept mapping has traditionally been utilized in quantitative research (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009). However, given the nature of this study, this type of concept-free form mapping assisted in visually clarifying the important

nonhierarchical relationships of concepts identified in this study. Figure 1 describes the interrelationships among multicultural education, culturally responsive leadership, and effective schools that were demonstrated by the principals participating in this study.

As depicted in Figure 1, the visual representation of the themes that emerged from this study indicated that Hispanic student achievement was supported by the leadership of their school principals in the implementation of the principles of multicultural education in an effective school environment. The study's high-performing Hispanic schools were clearly defined by a culture of high expectations, learning community collaboration, positive relationships, an empowering school culture, and pedagogy that addressed the needs of all students. Most importantly, these schools were led by principals who understood their roles as school leaders and who effectively communicated their vision for school success as well as Hispanic student achievement.

To summarize, the following findings emerged from the analyses of the data collected from the participant interviews and observations:

1. *High expectations*: Each of the five principals fiercely articulated, supported, and fostered a culture of high expectations within their organizations and in their interactions with their teaching and learning communities.
2. *Collaboration*: Collaboration, among staff, students, and the extended learning community, was a designated priority and a means to accomplish

all goals identified by each principal and staff of the high schools in the study.

3. *Relationships*: Principals in each of the five high schools understood the significant value of developing, nurturing, and maintaining productive, caring relationships with their teaching and learning communities.
4. *Empowering school culture*: Principals understood the value of creating a school culture that empowered students and staff to aspire toward quality teaching and learning, self-motivation, determination, responsibility, and advocacy for the opportunity to learn.
5. *Equity pedagogy*: Principals understood and worked vehemently to provide equity pedagogy that addressed the needs of all students, particularly the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse.
6. *Communication*: Principals understood the power of varied forms of communication in shaping and supporting the mission of their schools among their teaching and learning communities.
7. *Vision for success*: Principals in these high-performing schools developed and steadfastly articulated a clear vision of success for their schools through their words and interactions with their teaching and learning communities.
8. *Hispanic principal leadership*: Hispanic principals provided unique, relevant, and effective leadership in support of their Hispanic students.

9. *Hispanic student achievement*: Neither school/community demographics nor socioeconomic status determined the potential for Hispanic student success in each of the schools led by the study's participants.

### **Support for the Findings**

#### **Finding 1: High Expectations**

Each of the five principals fiercely articulated, supported, and fostered a culture of high expectations within their organizations and in their interactions with their teaching and learning communities.

Meeting the first criteria for school success, evidence of sustained exemplary achievement of Hispanic students was, of course, documented in the three or more consecutive years of the participants' respective schools earning a Texas Education Agency recognized or exemplary status (TEA, 2010a, 2011b). Determining how Hispanic students and schools were able to accomplish this feat, regardless of their socioeconomic status or student group designations, led to the finding that high expectations and rigor were not only a mindset, but a routine, a process that was demonstrated in a variety of ways by the school principals and their stakeholders. Such a finding substantiates much of what has been written about high expectations and a rigorous curriculum in the literature of multicultural education, effective schools, and leadership.

Concurring with Freire (1970b), Ladson-Billings (1995) asserted that students need to achieve success. The scholar affirmed that the ways in which students acquire these skills may vary, but teachers and students still retain the responsibility for

teaching and learning what is central in a rigorous curriculum. In other words, no free passes should be issued to anyone, regardless of their cultural identities or what is termed as diversity! *Everyone* is charged with the personal and collective responsibility to learn the skills necessary to not only survive, but thrive in current society. As Freire (1970b) and Ladson-Billings (1995) contended, academic competence is then the starting point for all students as they work to empower not only themselves but the collective unit.

Mirroring that scholarly work, one of the most apparent references to the practice of multicultural education in the participants' schools was the culture of high expectations and attention to rigor that was evident in the way the principals advocated, supported, and implemented their school's curriculum standards and in their focused determination to achieve student academic success for all their students.

Clearly all of the principals believed that high expectations were necessary to create an environment in which all students and staff had a part to play. Mr. Orange emphasized that as patients who did not want a doctor or dentist who could only perform at less than at the 100% standard, his job was to ensure that all performed at their optimum potential. He believed that his teachers should know what he stood for and what he expected from each of them.

My goal is to make this the best high school in your community. I would love for it to be exemplary. It's going to take maybe a little while longer, but maybe I'll leave you with this: The newspaper called, and the reporter wanted to talk to me about what I thought about the EOC and the STAAR assessments. And I said, sure. What do you want to know? Well, how do you feel? Good. Great, I told my staff when I was teaching, I taught government, economics and history. Whatever I was teaching, I would tell

kids, you're walking into the best classroom in the entire community! You're going to learn so much from here. EOC is a piece of cake.

And those kids are going to get everything they need to know, and they're going to be ready for the test because that's what I was trained for! I told my staff we're going to be ready for it. It's going to be easier. Now, I'm not a fool, but if I talk like that, you know what, they're going to meet the challenge. They're going to rise up and say, hey, you know what, hey, it's going to be good. We got the best teachers here. We're the best staff.

What the paper put out was that the principals here, oh, we're afraid. We're scared. No, no, no. We don't know what to expect and whatever. If the leader of a school is scared about what's coming up, how is the staff going to be? And I told my staff that. I said, You know what, hey, we're going to do great. We're going to do well on it. Ordinary people doing extraordinary things! Well, I relish in the fact that, you know that I've gotten so many of them to believe that, Hey, this can be done. In a border town, the expectations that we have for kids, and kids will tell you, hey, we're going to do well. And the expectation is there, and they're treated like they should be treated.

These words similarly echoed the research of Edmonds (1979), Lezotte (1991), Freire (1970b) and Ladson-Billings (1995) as they reinforced the belief that high-performing schools and students must experience success through high expectations and those practices that enabled students to achieve.

**A college-going culture.** Regardless of their size or geographic location, examples of high expectations and a college-going culture abounded throughout the physical school sites of all five high schools, in the principals' formal and informal discussions, and in the principals' interactions with students, staff, and the community. Evidence of a college-going culture was manifested in the parent and student announcements that were placed in the counselors' offices, in the front office, in the school's hallways, and in the morning announcements. As documented in the researcher's field notes, Orange High School as well as Blue High School, Gold High



School and Silver High School had a display of university financial aid fair brochures and invitations for parents to access upon arrival at the schools. Parent newsletters as well as parent meeting agendas reflected the principals' and staff's messaging regarding these announcements at Orange High School, Blue High School, Red High School, Silver High School and Gold High School

The principal interviews further revealed that all of the principals vehemently spoke to the idea of “when” students were going to a university rather than “if” a student was to enroll. Support for this expectation was extended into the weekly routines of several of the schools in the form of college or higher learning days. This practice was particularly demonstrated at Red High School where all staff and students were expected to wear attire from their alma maters or from a university they planned to attend.

Students were asked to research the colleges of their choice and to begin thinking about what each would have to do to be able to enroll and complete a degree at that institution. Staff was encouraged to share their own academic experience at their alma maters. When asked why his superintendent was wearing a Texas A&I University-Kingsville Javelina shirt, Mr. Red explained,

On Thursdays, we promote higher learning. The students wear uniforms. They have their khaki pants, red or white shirt. But on Thursdays and Fridays, we allow them some flexibility. At that time, they're able to wear their blue jeans with tennis shoes and a university shirt of their choice.

I started this (practice) here because I want my kids to go to college. I think it's very important for them to begin an awareness at a very young age, as to what's out there. It's not, you know – I hear very often, Oh, I can hardly wait to get out of high school. I'm like, that's not where it stops. That's the beginning. That's the beginning, you know. You need to go out

there; you're going to become an adult. You're going to become parents. Guys, you need to support families. I said you're going to get married one day.

I don't want to take ownership of the event or the activity because I brought the idea from a former school district. But I found it odd that they didn't do it here, you know. So I spoke to the teachers; the teachers were all for it because, hey, I get to wear jeans, you know, but, I said, that's not the important thing. The important thing is we need to start promoting college. I mean, it's not just up to high school; I want to know what happens to these kids. I mean, are they being successful? I said, let's just start promoting.

Similarly, the other four high schools demonstrated their commitment to a college-going culture through the events that they had scheduled for parents and students. College fairs and tours, designed to inform students and parents of the various opportunities awaiting students who could choose a career pathway early in their high school program, were held at Gold High School and Silver High School. As magnet schools designed to specifically address career specific fields, these schools promoted awareness of professional career choices open to students in those schools by partnering with community and university career professionals who, during scheduled events, would speak to students about the preparation needed to enter into those specific fields. Their school websites and counseling announcements delivered student and parent notices regarding these university or technical school opportunities.

As an early college high school housed on their university's grounds, Blue High School entertained university professors on a weekly basis. Students attending this high school, of course, were also enrolled in the university's academic program. Thus, students were exposed to a university setting every day. Such a configuration allowed students to interact with other university students, and Mr. Blue believed that

this structure was a great opportunity for his Hispanic students, one that should not be taken for granted. Sharing a copy of the Blue High School parent contract with the researcher, Mr. Blue passionately expressed his pride in the culture that he believed described the unique opportunities that were available to his students when he stated,

I also think that we all work to create and sustain a college-going culture. High expectations can be found everywhere. Also, our students know that they will be expected to complete their college hours as they begin their early college high school program. Students and their parents sign contracts as they begin their educational program here. So they know that they have great opportunities to complete as many as 60 hours of college level without having to pay for it out of their own pockets, but they also know that they have to work to stay in this school. So they may be given a jump start, but it's up to them and us to be successful. We continuously monitor their level of progress and we communicate with all students as well as with their parents and college professors in order to ensure their success.

Thus, the idea that attending a university after high school became a very possible reality for students and for the teachers who taught these students.

**Opportunity for quality, advanced coursework.** Understanding that the desire to attend a university was not enough, principals of all five schools encouraged and created opportunities for larger numbers of students to enroll in advanced placement courses. In similar fashion, the participants in the study moved their staffs toward reviewing and revising their curriculum for increased rigor. Orange High School, Gold High School, Blue High School, and Silver High School were particularly successful in restructuring their advanced placement classes to include additional ranking status points and in providing professional development designed to build content expertise in all staff, regardless of the grade levels to which they were

assigned to teach. In this manner, all students had access to quality, rigorous instruction beyond state assessment preparation.

As a school of choice in which all students can be accepted on a first come-first served basis, Mr. Gold and staff took several steps to ensure that students and parents were informed of the rigorous expectations that students must fulfill to graduate from Gold High School. His science, math, and engineering magnet school was clearly focused on delivering a curriculum that prepared students for careers in the aforementioned subject areas. Many students were enrolled in advanced placement classes, yet, they were not actually taking the AP exams upon course completion.

What we did is we put some things in place that increased the participation of all of our students in these exams, so they can see a challenge, to see what a college exam is. And a lot of them have surprised themselves. They gain college credit. And that was one thing, and that's one of the biggest initiatives that we had to help promote AP participation and help promote AP performance in all of our students. And we basically are forcing our students to take this challenge, and our district leadership understands that it's not about the results; it's about the students that are taking this challenge, you know, and trying to meet this challenge. It's giving them that opportunity. So, now we're going to put it in our board policy that a student who takes an AP class must take the AP exam in order to get the GPA weight, the higher GPA weight. So, basically we have about 320 students challenging about over 1300 AP exams this year.

So that has jumped up, typically, from 300 AP exams given to now 1300 AP exams, where the whole school is testing those first two weeks. And now what that has done to our teachers is now they're saying, okay, my curriculum has to fit all, and it has to work with all; we're going to have to do a better job of getting this material and getting these foundations across to these students.

What does it tell my underclassmen teachers...the same thing. I need to help my AP teachers because these kids are going to be taking these exams. And it's not a selected few anymore. Now it's everybody who will be taking it. And it's just basically been an incentive for our teachers to

work even harder to get these kids ready for AP exams. Now it's, hey, I got to look at my class. Everybody is going to take it. Everybody is going to do well, and so it has enhanced the curriculum, enhanced lesson activities, enhanced teaching, and so forth.

As Mr. Gold remarked, all students were required to begin their advanced coursework as freshmen in order to prepare for a very rigorous college level curriculum. To illustrate the point as evidenced by the school schedules provided by Mr. Gold, freshmen were required to take two science courses in their first year at Gold High School.

From the outset, Gold High School teachers were advised of the expectations that lay before them. As per Mr. Gold, all teachers were required to use their student performance data to align their instruction to the expected outcomes required in the students' career pathway. Staff was held responsible for providing interventions to assist all students identified as strugglers. More importantly, subject area instruction has taken on an interdisciplinary approach so that students can make connections and understand the importance of all of their core area subjects, communication, and collaborative skills.

In essence, the researcher observed the students and staff making connections to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills and the responsibilities that educators must fulfill to prepare students for careers that may yet not have been created. Observations also revealed the independence and self-motivation that students develop at the school. Students were allowed to take their work to the hallways, where they performed their own physics experiments, and the same was true when they created their own technology applications for the content learned. Thinking out-of-the-box was

something that was demonstrated at Gold High School. Teachers and students were very much engaged in pursuing inquiry that was not regulated by a textbook. As the researcher observed throughout the previous interactions, Mr. Gold was an engaged facilitator and kept a watchful eye to ensure that students and staff had all of the necessary resources to be successful in their instruction.

**Data, accountability, and high expectations.** Evidence collected from each of the high schools and from the participants most definitely pointed to the use of data to inform instruction and to keep each school focused on their student performance goals. Accountability was seen as a necessary means to ensure that all students and staff performed at their potential and beyond their own expectations. The teaching and learning communities at each of the schools were educated about their respective roles in attaining the accountability standards that had been set at their schools. All staff were schooled in state and federal assessment mandates, but they were all held to a higher standard that included performance beyond minimal state and federal assessment accountability. Each principal found unique ways in which to school and communicate their teaching and learning communities in the use of data to address the needs of all stakeholders. All were expected to perform with quality as a teaching and learning outcome. As Mr. Orange declared,

As educators, we have to commit ourselves to get out of the bell curve. You're not going to have 20% that are going to fail. And that's not going to be something (we find) in the water. It's going to be something in the classroom, in the teachers that are going to be able to instill and expect that students are going to be at that grade level in testing, in assessment.

In speaking to my teachers, I said, would you go to a surgeon that had 80% success in surgery? No. Would you go to a dentist that had 60% pain-free extractions? No. As educators, if in 2014, the federal government is saying we're going to have to be 100 percent in everything we do...if they have to learn 10<sup>th</sup> grade math or 9<sup>th</sup> grade math or 11<sup>th</sup> grade math and your job is to get them to know that stuff, we're going to get there with them because you're not going to fail.

The 20% that you think are not there, we're going to tutor them. We're going to get their parents in, and we're going to hound them for the work, and we're going to expect them to do the work, and we want them to be measured at that grade level because you're professionals, and this is what we do. And if we can't get to a student, we will ask our neighbors; we're going to ask the ELA teacher or the math teacher or the auto mechanics teacher.

How do you get through to this kiddo? What makes them tick? Bring the parent in, or let me work with them. Use me. And you're not going to be saying, hey, you know, I'm a failure. I can't work with this student. You know, I can't get through to them. Sometimes it takes a lot of people to work with the student. So your efforts are going to begin with everybody else through synergy. We're going to get to where we need to be.

As Ms. Silver described, her students and staff utilized a motto that defined the expectation of quality in all that they did and chose for themselves and their school. She stated that she, her students, and staff firmly believed that quality was never an accident; it was the result of "high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, and skillful self-examination." As such, quality represented wise and deliberate decision-making. Thus, quality was not an act, but rather a habit that all could learn. According to Ms. Silver, this core belief became the standard by what all initiatives and actions were measured in her school. It was even recited at every graduation in a chorus of teachers, students, and the principal.

Those words mirrored the mindsets that had to be developed at Silver High School to increase academic rigor within the curriculum. Removing barriers that

excluded many students from enrolling in advanced placement classes and incorporating International Baccalaureate classes, which generally require preparation of papers, oral presentations, and written exams, many of which are either internally or externally assessed, were two initiatives that Ms. Silver explicitly implemented within her school. Additionally, requiring that teachers themselves use technology within their instruction became a sore point of contention early in her administration. However, she insisted and convinced teachers that students needed to have access to all tools for which that school was known. That meant, in many cases, that teachers, themselves, were expected to keep up and learn new skills. They were told that each and every adult was going to be held accountable for student learning. Ms. Silver recounted an experience she had in using data to inspire and motivate teachers to perform at a higher level. She stated,

Some four years ago, our Algebra I teacher and I wrote a proposal to this district so we could do an alignment. Well the following year, our scores shot up; we broke that syndrome. Well at that time our EOC Algebra I scores were the highest in the district, and when you look at the data by population, our Hispanic kids beat the other Hispanic schools in other districts with Hispanic populations.

I had to break it down to show our kids – look at what you did because at our other schools, they have higher population of non-Hispanic, and those kids are big and high achievers. So I took the data and showed the teachers – look at what you did – we have broken ranks. You have no idea how outstanding you are, that you broke through.

So I've always shared with my staff, and I've always posted the goals of the office and the strategic plans that give us a really great framework as well. So that's what we did then. So they worked together.

Holding students and staff accountable was something that Mr. Blue discussed with pride. All parents and students attending Blue High School are counseled and



asked to sign a contract that defines the roles and responsibilities to which each party must commit. The benefits of attending this early college high school were explained, and students were told that they would be supported during their academic journey, but they were also told that they, too, would be held responsible for their own learning. Thus, the culture of high expectations was something that was articulated orally and in written form.

Teacher meetings were also held to discuss their roles in the learning partnership at Blue High School. It was made known that they must monitor the progress of their students and intervene when students are struggling in any of their classes. This responsibility also extended to the monitoring of students as they took college level classes that were taught by college professors. As Mr. Blue explained, he and his teachers advocate, support, and guide their students throughout their early college high school experience, always emphasizing their mutual responsibilities in the learning partnership that they established as students enroll in the school.

In much the same fashion, Mr. Red revealed that his staff understood that assessment is secondary to the larger, more significant scheme of things. Student learning took the top rung of the school's top priority list, not test taking. However, teachers were expected to use their data to make informed decisions about the skills that students need to be successful at any point in their educational careers. Therefore, working with the district's administration and community school board, Mr. Red has made sure that the latest technology that the district can afford is made available to students. Although the campus serves very few students, there has been an effort to

bring the outside world into the school through their grant funded 21<sup>st</sup> Center for Education that works to enhance student skills after school.

Mr. Gold's school also reflected the high expectations that are necessary to move students to the next level of higher learning. His science, math, and engineering magnet school was clearly focused on delivering a curriculum that prepared students for subject specific careers and provided the relevance that students needed, to apply what they had learned to real world problems. As a school of choice in which all students can be accepted on a first come-first served basis, Mr. Gold and staff have taken several steps to ensure that students and parents are informed of the rigorous expectations that students must fulfill to graduate from Gold High School. This mindset was evidenced in what and how rigorous coursework was scheduled,

I think that another thing that makes our school successful is our engineering classes. Every kid has to go through an engineering class. And those students understand why they need to know geometry, why they need to know algebra, because they're using it in a curriculum that shows them that, hey, to solve a problem outside of school and outside in the world of an engineer or in a college, this is how you have to do it and this is why you need to know your calculus; this is why you need to know your algebra, your physics, your chemistry, your biology.

This is why you have to write well, because you have to maintain a Notebook, and you have to write directions. So if I get this notebook – if your partner gets this notebook, he needs to be able – you need to be able to communicate in writing how to do these steps. And so they're starting to understand that this is not – these courses are not taught in isolation, but they're taught to help them be successful in any area.

As Mr. Gold remarked, all students are required to begin their advanced coursework as freshmen in order to prepare for a very rigorous college level curriculum. To illustrate the point, freshmen are required to take two science courses

in their first year at Blue High School. From the outset, teachers are advised of the expectations that lay before them. As per Mr. Gold, all teachers are required to use their student performance data to align their instruction to the expected outcomes required in the students' career pathway.

Since students who enroll at Gold High School remain there until their graduation or if they choose to leave on their own, Mr. Gold and his staff understand the great responsibility with which they have been entrusted. Those students who are lagging behind are immediately identified and interventions are introduced to ensure that students are able to succeed within their school programs. More importantly, subject area instruction has taken on an interdisciplinary approach so that students can make connections and understand the importance of all of their core area subjects, communication, and collaborative skills.

In essence, the researcher observed the students and staff making connections to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills and the responsibilities that educators must fulfill to prepare students for careers that may yet not have been created. Observations also revealed the independence and self-motivation that students develop at the school. Students were allowed to take their work to the hallways, where they performed their own physics experiments, and the same was true when they created their own technology applications for the content learned. Thinking out-of-the-box was something that was demonstrated at Blue High School. Teachers and students were very much engaged in pursuing inquiry that was not regulated by a textbook. Throughout the previous interactions, Mr. Gold was an engaged facilitator and kept a

watchful eye to ensure that students and staff had all of the necessary resources to be successful in their instruction.

Evidence of high expectations was everywhere to be found at Orange High School, but most importantly, it was in the manner in which Mr. Orange articulated his vision of high expectations that was most impressive. When he first took the reins of leadership at Orange High School, Mr. Orange called a meeting to discuss his vision for student success with all of his staff. When he stated that the school and the staff were going to be the best in EVERYTHING that they did, he was met with quite a few doubters and naysayers, especially since only one other high school in the city had occupied that sole pedestal.

Demographically, Orange High School should have been the most successful school, serving affluent students and very few English language learners. Yet, other schools in the community had always managed to outperform the sprawling namesake of the district. As Mr. Orange recalled, he let the staff know that in reality there were no barriers holding students or the school at bay. He asserted that if a “professional” was sent into the classroom, then there should be no obstacles that that educator could not overcome. His intention was to assure the staff that they were capable of preparing all students to succeed because they were competent professionals who could find ways to plan for effective instruction.

Mr. Orange related that data were going to become a priority in their school, and that in one year, they were going to overtake every other high school in student performance. He told the staff that they were not going to be part of the bell curve;

they were going to make sure that every student experienced success. He compared accepting an 80% passing rate as foolishly choosing a surgeon who could only tell you that 20% of the time, he had failed to cure his patients. That was not an acceptable rate for the sick, and neither was that an acceptable rate for students who were not able to pass.

We're going to be the best. And I said, this is how we're going to get there. We're going to look at data, improve what we do. If we're weak in an area, we're going to get staff development. As a campus, we're going to build, and we're going to be successful. The same thing with my assistants.

When I first got here, I asked, who's in charge of math? Somebody raised their hand. Okay. How many problems are there on the TAKS test? Well, that's the testing coordinator. She knows that. Well, no, no, no. If – if you're in charge of math, you should know. In ELA, in writing – how many 4s did we get last year? Who's in charge of ELA?

I said, every single one of you is going to have to know the same thing. You need to know how many problems are in the exam. In two weeks, I'm going to come back. We're going to meet, and all of you are going to know how many problems are in math. If you're in charge of math or ELA, science or social studies, you will know how we did the last couple of years, if we have been improving or not, what the weaknesses are.

And I showed them, This is what you do, and this is how you look at it. Look at the report that you're given. How are the boys doing? How are the girls doing? You're a GT? If you have a 110 GT kids, then all of them passed ELA. How many scored 4s? All of them should be doing extremely well, if they're in the GT program. Then look at your left, look at your at-risk and compare percentages passing. Showed them how to do that, how to get all the reports on the school, and that's the vitals of a school. That's how you know what your pulse is from last year... if its dying or are we improving. So they became very good at looking at the data.

Mr. Orange began the journey to bring Orange High School into his new vision by informing parents and the community of their respective roles in the academic success of Orange High School students. They studied the data, shared it

with parents and students, and created a plan of action of which the stakeholders could take ownership. The plan of action was posted and articulated at every turn, every activity, every day. The curriculum was reviewed by his “professionals” and they began to ask not only more from the students, but also from themselves.

Mr. Orange made sure that every one of his staff, including assistant principals, understood the data and how to use it to plan for instruction that was a step ahead of what was required. More than just rhetoric, Mr. Orange asked teachers to increase the advanced placement enrollment and to encourage all students to learn with the premise in mind that all students could be advanced placement material. Pedagogy was also reviewed in order to ensure that all students would have access to the appropriate rigor that was necessary to create a wave of high achievers.

What is most amazing is that Mr. Orange asked teachers to hold students accountable for their own learning, making them an essential component of the teaching and learning partnership that creates a culture of high expectations. Students and parents were informed that they, too, were to do their part in creating the success that he envisioned for all of his students. In fact, at his beginning-of-the-year Principal-Parent Breakfast, Mr. Orange handed every parent two six-penny nails with the expectation that one was to be used to hang their child’s high school diploma upon high school graduation, and the other was intended for their college diploma. The quarterly breakfast meetings kept the expectation very much alive in the parents’ minds.

## **Finding 2: Collaboration**

Collaboration, among staff, students, and the extended learning community, was a designated priority and a means to accomplish all goals identified by each principal and staff of the high schools in the study.

As much has been written regarding the attributes of highly successful schools and the role of the principals in the shaping of those schools, the research of Shannon and Bylsma (2002) clearly asserted that increased collaboration was one of five essential components they identified in highly successful schools. This same attribute was also found in highly successful schools serving large percentages of low socioeconomic students. August and Hakuta (1997) revealed similar findings in their review of 33 studies, indicating a need for the coordination and articulation of instruction to ensure success for the linguistically and culturally diverse students attending today's schools.

In respect to the principal's role in shaping successful schools, Blase and Blase (1999) similarly concurred with this finding. Their scholarly work distinctly pointed toward strategies implemented by principals to build teacher capacity within their ranks. These included: (a) establishing and enabling collaboration among teachers, (b) developing coaching relationships, and (c) applying the principles of adult learning with teachers. Lezotte's (1991) work incorporated a multicultural dimension by affirming that successful schools must provide a safe and orderly environment, free of violence and oppression, and that is conducive to teaching and learning. The initial correlate moved from eradicating undesirable behaviors toward encouraging and

supporting behaviors that espouse collaborative teaching and learning. Mr. Gold expressed how he had fostered collaboration among his professional staff when he stated,

Well, I like to think by working with teachers and working with support staff and working with faculty, bringing them in – in things that they never were used to bringing in and being a part of, just gives them a sense that their – their experiences and their talents are valued. And when an individual feels that way, they'll – they'll work and they'll do whatever they need to do to make and encourage these kids to be successful. And that's the nature of our school. And you're right. There are some campuses that need a different leader. They need a leader that needs to be – a highly structured campus. They want to be told what to do. They want to know what to do. They don't want to know the why.

This campus has a different style of teachers. I have teachers that want to know why are we doing this. Once they understand why we're doing this, let's make it better. You propose an idea. Let's make that idea better. What can we do? How can we do it better, and how can we do it better together? And that's the style of our campus and that's what our campus is.

Some campuses need that top-down leadership. Some campuses need that PLC, professional learning community leadership where you bring in the people, your campus leaderships that are going to move your campus in the direction that it needs to be moved, and you're going to do it together. Because my ideas may not fit in the classroom, or my ideas or my proposals or my innovations may not fit, but we can do something that will fit our kids, fit our students, fit our resources, and fit our campus.

Mr. Red corroborated Mr. Blue's description of his own particular learning community. Mr. Red saw his learning community as an extension of the family relationships that existed in his rural community. When the researcher drove up to the school to conduct the first interview with Mr. Red, she asked directions to get to the office from what seemed a parent volunteer. Later that afternoon and on another subsequent visit, she again observed the volunteer at the school's library. The woman was a District Board Member who understood the need for help to the only librarian



serving the entire school. That relationship reinforced the Mr. Red's description of his own teaching and learning community when he stated,

Their family works here. They've got their nieces, nephews, grandchildren here. People – our transfer students – our teachers that are coming from Raymondville, from Lyford, they bring their kids over here and we accept them as transfer students. That's one of the privileges they get for working here. But, yeah, I mean, you know, the older kids that are now parents that are former students, I mean, it's just – it's unreal. But it's a very close-knit, tight, family-type environment.

I think the teachers develop this unity. We're here to work as one. Our high school has been very successful, but our other campuses, our elementary and our middle school, they work together. They work as a team. And it's – I think that's one of the reasons that our schools have been so successful. And one of the reasons I attributed to their success was that they were given the autonomy to choose their curriculum; they know what works. They've seen what works.

And so coming in, I didn't want to come in and make changes and tell them, We're not – you know, that's the way you've done it in the past. This is the way we're going to do it now. I saw that they had been successful, so I said, let me – let me, you know, learn more about your way and see what you guys are doing and – and I allow them (that autonomy).

In this respect, findings from this study corroborated the previous research on the effective implementation of collaborative learning communities to plan for effective instruction. School cultures, conducive to rigorous student learning expectations as well as a strengths-based approach toward collaborative learning among professionals, was also evidenced in the schools that were led by the principals selected for this study. In fact, the five participants in this study visibly demonstrated an ability to bring people together in meaningful and relevant ways to facilitate instruction and the academic success for all of their Hispanic students. They interpreted their roles as principals as securing the necessary resources, including time

and professional development, to ensure quality rigorous instruction to prepare all students for the high expectations of success espoused by their leadership.

Findings from the study additionally indicated that each of the principals understood the value of creating and supporting professional learning communities. They believed that learning communities were a key component to establishing an ongoing professional dialogue regarding the planning of instruction, student progress monitoring, and building teacher capacity in those areas where a need had been identified. Thus, the principals found creative ways in which to incorporate collaborative planning time into their school schedules.

Flexible scheduling and early release days were often used to create opportunities for teachers to collaborate and dialogue about their instruction and content area expertise. In several instances, substitutes were hired to allow teachers to meet and discuss their curriculum. All five principals stated that they allowed for teacher input regarding the development of schedules that allotted teacher time to share ideas about best practices. They wholeheartedly affirmed that listening, to what teachers believed was important in planning for effective instruction, was a best practice that allowed teachers to place trust in the leadership of the school.

Ms. Silver, in particular, scheduled departmental collaboration throughout the week, “We do collaboration, Monday through Friday by department, by subject area. So I’ll go by and visit with them. We talk about ideas. We talk about plans. We talk about formative assessment.” The school schedule allowed teachers to plan for

instruction and engage in professional dialogue by department from 8:00 a.m. to 8:50 a.m. on their designated department collaborative days.

Although the school bell rang at 8:30 a.m. to begin the regular school day, students belonging to that specific professional collaborative group of teachers would remain in the cafeteria until their teachers were ready to begin instruction at 8:50 a.m. While their teachers were meeting, these same students participated in their own student collaborative groups or participated in other school and student activities. By creating this schedule, students were given the opportunity to assume responsibility for their behavior and participation in this teacher initiative, while teachers were given the time that they needed within the school day to discuss instruction. Teachers felt appreciated and valued by Ms. Silver.

Furthermore, findings in this study supported the fact that principals fostered and encouraged professional learning communities among staff to not only plan for instruction, but also, to engage themselves in professional learning. Such books as Steven Covey's, *Seven Habits of Effective People*, were studied, discussed by the staff, and then shared with students at Ms. Silver's school. Believing that staff should model lifelong skills, Ms. Silver also stated that her staff utilized professional learning communities to learn new skills that could then be applied within their own classrooms and school.

Moreover, principals in this study were able to create networking support systems for their students as professional learning communities were given the task to monitor and discuss student progress among all stakeholders, including the students

and their parents. These collaborative groups became an extension of the school student performance monitoring initiatives while building teacher capacity in content or pedagogical expertise. Principals utilized these communities to extend ownership of their vision for their schools. They designated team leaders or department chairs and provided guidance and professional development to enhance teacher leadership within their schools.

Mr. Gold explained that professional learning communities in his school supported the small learning communities of students that had been created to monitor and support student groups throughout their four years at that high school. Teachers and staff were told that planning and working together was a non-negotiable. Principals asked teachers to use data to make informed decisions about instruction and that their professional learning communities were their sounding boards, a collection of experts and professionals who had been trained to help students succeed.

From his perspective, professional learning communities that included interdisciplinary meetings were an essential structure to follow students from grade level to grade level. The same group of educators followed their small student learning communities from their freshman year through their graduation, and thus, they were able to learn more about their students and immediately intercede if and when problems arose. By the same token, students felt supported by their teachers and their principal, believing that they were part of a family partnership. Mr. Gold asserted that his teaching and learning community was quite aware of their roles and

What really helps is just, you know, being such a small learning Community. They can't afford not to work together. And that just

lends – I mean, that – that was something that I inherited, you know. And so one of the things about having such a small learning community is because teachers understand that they need to help each other; they need to work with each other; they need to set their differences aside to serve our students. Sometimes, you know, as an administrator – that’s when an administrator steps in and says, Ladies and gentlemen, we do have some differences, but these differences are interfering with students and student learning and student needs. We need to set these differences aside, and how are we going to come to a compromise to make it work?

Similarly Mr. Blue, Mr. Orange, and Mr. Red were very much aware of the potential benefits, for students and staff alike, that could be reaped from implementing a professional learning community framework within their schools. Mr. Blue’s professional learning community was utilized for many reasons, including building teacher capacity. Additionally, his learning community was also given the responsibility to counsel students about their progress and graduation requirements. He stated that staff kept constant vigilance over the progress of each student assigned to their campus. Counseling was not something that was assigned only to the counselor. As his words asserted,

Well we continuously work on implementing the professional staff development that our district provides, but my staff is creative, and we are always looking for those rigorous types of activities which will help our students be successful in their college level work. There is a lot of sharing and collaborating among my staff; so we always feel confident that together we can plan good lessons. Of course we use critical thinking level questions and as many hands-on activities as possible. What is great about this school is that our teacher-student ratios are not large; so a lot of individual attention can be paid to students who are struggling. We encourage establishing relationships with our students so that they can feel supported in completing their goals.

We also monitor ourselves and what we are doing to improve student achievement. I always schedule weekly meetings to make sure that we are right on track, and if there is anything that I can’t pick up, I am always sure

that one of us or more will be able to find the necessary solutions to any problems that we identify.

I also believe that keeping everyone on track through our meetings and through monitoring of instruction and student progress also has helped us to stay on track as far as our goals. This may mean that sometimes I have to bend and be flexible with schedules or resources so that we can all work together. And that is fine with me. I try to encourage all my staff and students that learning something new in different ways can be fun.

Observation data revealed that teachers were very much involved in tracking the progress of their students at Blue High School. When asked how teachers monitored student progress, Mr. Blue remarked that teachers confer with students who are assigned to them. They begin with a data review, to be able to share this data with students, and then develop a plan to address the deficiency. For those students who are progressing well, teachers confer to encourage them to accept new learning challenges.

Mr. Blue remarked that he does the same when speaking with parents. He believes in listening first to what parents have to say, but he also knows that data can speak volumes in enlisting their collaboration with the school and with the staff. Often, he asks parents to visit with the teachers and with their students in order for them to build the collaboration that is necessary to create success when taking college level courses. Mr. Blue stated that, ultimately, these students are not adults or 18-year-old graduates ready for university life. Therefore, he and his teachers are there to support and guide them as they acclimate to their new environment, and this mindset requires charting a course for action.

Mr. Gold concurred with Mr. Blue in his belief that their students are doubly challenged in having to complete a high school diploma while earning college credit. Such an organizational requisite demanded that teachers collaborate exceptionally well, and Mr. Gold provided that opportunity through the much treasured resource of school time. He scheduled departmental collaboration on Fridays when teachers could meet for one hour to discuss their planning of instruction. The school schedule reflected a modified bell schedule to account for collaboration. In this respect, the researcher was able to observe teachers in the mathematics department planning together. In his own words, Mr. Gold stated

Well, the curriculum, we call it – Learning Outcomes – Essential Learning Outcomes. And the teachers decide what is essential that the kids need to know before they leave their class or a certain time period. And that is something that the teachers work on yearly. And they work on it, you know, almost on a weekly basis, because we do allow our teachers to collaborate for one hour every Friday, as a department. We allow that one hour on a Friday. Like today, we have a modified bell schedule where we allow the teachers to work together in their departments to discuss curriculum issues, to discuss assignment issues, to discuss the lesson planning, discuss activities, discuss things that will help enhance student learning.

Collaborative planning and professional dialogue regarding instruction was a necessary mainstay at Red High School. As per Mr. Red, the rural school requires that he and his staff wear multiple hats in addressing the needs of his students. Mr. Red serves as the principal for all three campus levels – elementary, middle, and high school. His responsibilities encompass district and campus testing director, special education director, special programs assistant, and principal. If there is a need to substitute, Mr. Red has, on many occasions, also volunteered for that duty.

Mr. Red expressed the belief that his teachers are professionals on whom he can depend. He related that he must trust them as professionals who are truly interested in their students and who will make wise decisions that will prepare them for life. He stated that he is there to guide, facilitate, provide resources, motivate, and to set the direction for his school, but he knows that he must listen to his teachers as they are in the trenches on a daily basis.

The collaborative nature of Red High School was also apparent in the way the staff interacted with Mr. Red and with their Superintendent. In fact, the Superintendent was also part of the teaching staff as he taught a physics class. In a small school district, there is no money to pay for an extra science teacher and shared responsibility was something that all staff understood and have assumed; thus, the Superintendent and Mr. Red fill in the gaps when they are needed. Mr. Red earnestly spoke about the assistance that his superintendent was able to give when he stated,

I speak very highly of my superintendent because we have a very good rapport. And because of budget crunches and things like that, I know that, I don't foresee getting any assistance in the near future; however, when I get in a bind, and he knows. I mean, you know, he knows when I'm needing some help. He changes his hat and comes in.

Challenging his staff and students to engage themselves in higher levels of new academic readiness was realized in the collaborative framework utilized at Orange High School. As has been previously discussed, the principal believed in training all assistants in disaggregating data and state accountability so that they could make sense of all state and federal mandates and be able to speak knowledgeably with their assigned departments. They, in turn, then trained their lead teachers and



departments so as to ensure a common understanding of where “we need to go,” stated Mr. Orange. He stated that that his weekly meetings with his assistant principals were utilized to set the direction for the week, to take stock of their progress, and to reinforce their mission.

Mr. Orange also met with his department heads on a weekly basis to keep everyone in the loop. He remarked that at these meetings, he purposefully recited their goals for the year and asked teachers to summarize their progress in relation to their goals. During assigned afternoon planning, his professional learning communities were expected to plan research-based instruction that was aligned to college level readiness, yet be applicable to the student populations in their classrooms. All departments were also expected to become familiar with student progress across all content areas since they shared their students. In speaking with Mr. Orange, there was a sense that his staff was acutely aware of his intense focus on effective planning of instruction to improve student achievement. It was also noted that the staff felt comfortable with the collaborative demands that he made of all stakeholders. Observation data revealed that teachers were motivated and willing to work diligently for Mr. Orange. They enjoyed being successful!

### **Finding 3: Relationships**

Principals in each of the five high schools understood the significant value of developing, nurturing, and maintaining productive, caring relationships with their teaching and learning communities.

In 1977, the U.S. Senate Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity (U.S. Congress, 1970) emphatically asserted that the principal is the “single most influential person in a school” (p. 56).

In many ways the school principal is the most important and influential individual in any school. He or she is the person responsible for all activities that occur in and around the school building. It is the principal’s leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale of the teachers, and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become. The principal is the main link between the community and the school, and the way he or she performs in this capacity largely determines the attitudes of parents and students about the school. If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to principal’s leadership as the key to success. (U.S. Congress, 1970, p. 56)

Such a statement reflected the significance of effective leadership, particularly in establishing relationships that will foster effective school communities that enhance student achievement. Cotton (2003) identified 25 categories defining principal behaviors that could significantly impact staff and student attitudes, behaviors, and performance. Building, supporting, and maintaining relationships were thus emphasized through a variety of leadership behaviors.

In much the same way, Lezotte (1991) made the case for the construction of a safe and orderly environment that was free of violence and oppression. An emphasis on building respect for human diversity and appreciation for democratic values should be integrated into a multicultural and democratic environment that allows all stakeholders the opportunity to work together to build relationships that support individual and collective success. Shannon and Bylsma (2002) argued for the same

principles when they identified supportive learning environments as contributing to the success of highly effective schools.

Evidence collected for this study indicated that all schools led by the selected participants exhibited significant numbers of positive relationships. These relationships manifested themselves into effective planning of instruction, awareness of individual student needs, and the fostering of supportive community relationships to enrich student learning. The value of positive relationships also proved beneficial to students who, ultimately, gained support for their learning, and such was expressed very well by Mr. Gold, principal of Gold High School, when he stated,

I think the one thing about our school is, because it's a small learning community, the teachers and students get to know each other very well. You'll have a student who may have a teacher their freshman year but may have them again their junior year. And the teachers are able to see the maturity and growth in that, because we're such a small school. Our teachers have anywhere from two to three teaching assignments, because we're small. And because of those teaching assignments, they may be in different grade levels and they get to see the kids quite often. And they get to know the kids, you know. You know, they form these strong professional bonds with these kids. And I think that's the essence of our school.

Second, a lot of these kids are very open to differences in their peers. They're open to different ideas. They can be themselves without anybody criticizing them or looking down on them. They feel comfortable here. And they all feel that, you know, this is a place where they can feel relaxed and they can learn, and they can be engaged in this learning.... We try to encourage it, and we try to embrace it and have the kids keep on being welcoming and engaging and sharing their differences and respecting their differences and also getting to know their teachers and being, you know, not only a teacher, but also those teachers can be counselors and mentors for these students. And that's because of a small community. It's a small learning community – 700 kids, you know, it really is small, when you look at a high school with 2,000, maybe 3,000 kids. So that's one of the things I think that makes the Gold High different. And another thing that makes us different, we're a school of choice. We're a magnet school.

Mr. Orange built his relationships by adhering to the belief that in all things, “Do the right thing, and everything will take care of itself.” He believed that individuals can look at a problem and decide to wallow in it or just decide to move on and fix it. Mr. Orange, particularly, worked at developing relationships with the community in order to foster their support. For example, while serving as a middle school principal, Mr. Orange encouraged parents and the community to become engaged in Habitat for Humanity. Twenty-two people participated in building a home, and the subtle advantage was that students became aware that their principal as well as the school staff were genuinely there to help them and their families.

That same philosophy was echoed in the practice that Mr. Orange initiated at his school to recognize staff for their achievements and to build relationships that could translated into positive outcomes for his students. Walking through the school during an observation, the researcher noted that superman capes were displayed in several of the classrooms. When asked what that meant, Mr. Orange explained his initiative,

But in everything we do, we’ll try to motivate them, and, you know, I’ll try every which way to motivate staff. A couple of years ago there was a documentary that came out, *Waiting for Superman*. And so I looked into it, read it and I put a twist on it. I said – I told the staff about it, and it was in December. And so I had an idea.

You know, at Orange High School, we know that there are no super heroes out there coming to save the day, that in each and every classroom we have ordinary people doing extraordinary things with our kiddoes. And so at the end of the year, we started giving away Superman capes to the staff that were doing outstanding. And I tell my staff, I used to coach. The number of hours that you put in and what you want your kids to do on Friday nights, that’s, you know, the epitome of what, you know, as classroom teachers we should aspire to do.

Work our tails off. Get them ready. You know what, they're going to produce for you. Develop the third R in what we do. That relationship, the kid's going to work for you because you helped them out. Because they saw in you that you sparked them, that you never let up, that you wanted them to do better, that's what they need to see in each and every one of you. So the Superman cape flew off, and we're having more made for this year, but they like it. They hang it in their rooms and on their bulletin boards. And I think by now we've given maybe 70, 80 of them away.

As per the parental involvement agendas and school website announcements shared with the researcher, Mr. Orange employed unique ways in which to engage the community and his staff. Parent and Principal Breakfasts, held three to four times a year, also enabled Mr. Orange to develop authentic relationships, built on the basis of credibility, trust, and shared responsibility with parents. Such events also forged a support system and community network that was easily accessible to all staff and stakeholders. In a similar manner, taking the time to meet with incoming freshmen in small numbers provided opportunities for Mr. Orange to develop a positive relationship with these students and set the foundation for all future interactions.

Ms. Silver had based her relationships on the premise that staff had the responsibility to work together on behalf of their students. Citing this responsibility, Ms. Silver believed that credibility, honesty, and flexibility were all necessary components in establishing a sincere dialogue where performance expectations could be openly discussed. Her statements and the researcher observations of her interactions with staff during their planning time corroborated her perspective regarding the fostering of her relationships with staff. In her words,

And I believe that it happens because I'm out there with the teachers. I'm out there. I try to be very credible, very honest with them. There's never any hidden agendas. You know, I have to mean what I say, but yet I'm very

flexible. So when they come in, it's like, No, no, no, no, no. I say, Okay, well let's talk about it. Where are we going? Oh, okay. You know, so there's give and take. It's a collaborative atmosphere.

Developing a school schedule that allotted time for collaborative planning was one way in which Ms. Silver fostered an authentic relationship with her teachers. Valuing their input and seriously considering their suggestions also added another dimension to the relationships established in Ms. Silver's school.

Mr. Blue utilized his collaborative planning meetings to reinforce relationships at his high school. His articulation of pride in his school and students also assisted him in sustaining relationships with his students and staff. Mr. Gold's philosophy regarding relationships began with the premise that he and staff were there to help students succeed and move on to the next level of challenge. As has been previously discussed, Mr. Gold believed that professional bonds are based on understanding the need to work together, regardless of any personal differences. Understanding the non-negotiables was also one of the principles that Mr. Gold espoused in creating relationships with staff, students, and the community. Being able to listen to others, placing honesty as a priority, and believing that all can be accomplished are necessary components in forging successful and productive working relationship.

To Mr. Red, establishing positive relationships with the community and his staff was the way to create and sustain successful outcomes for his students. At the time of his participation in the study, Mr. Red was busy planning a Parent Involvement Dinner. While his rural school was home to approximately 300 students for the entire district, he was extremely pleased and excited that the response to his

invitation had already resulted in 300 acceptance notices from the parents who had decided to attend. The dinner had been based on previous successful Thanksgiving family luncheons in which the entire school participated, but now, this dinner was to involve several topics for parental discussion, including Title One, assessment, and parental support for their school initiatives.

While reviewing the agenda with the researcher, Mr. Red eagerly recounted how he had used social media to invite the community not only to attend but to become involved in the actual meeting. He described prior holiday events, but was extremely excited about this particular invitation since it was not focused on a holiday. His words echoed the eager anticipation of the event,

You know, one of the biggest things we have here is our Thanksgiving family luncheon. And we get up to 500 people in our gym... The Thanksgiving luncheon has been a tradition; I know it's been very successful. That's during the day. It's actually – we have an early release for Thanksgiving, and it's the day of the early release. The kids have lunch early – 11:00, 12:00 – and by 12:30 they're gone. And the whole community – parents, aunts, uncles, madrinass, padrinos – everybody comes and they all are fed a turkey dinner.

But I'm really excited about this parent conference. I really am. There's two different things that I'm doing. I have several teachers who are parents themselves, and I talked to them separately, and I said, you guys, you are – you're parents, and I want you to be involved with your kids and I want you to have the opportunity to listen to what these speakers have to say, to listen to what our federal programs have to say, because they're things that you should know.

Things about our migrant eligibility or things about our, how we spend our Title 1 monies, that's things that you should know. It's something that not only as a parent, as a teacher you should know. So I want them to partake in the conference. The younger bunch that don't have kids, they're going to help me with providing activities for the little ones so that they're not disruptive while their parents are trying to listen to the presenters.

In this regard, the principals selected for this study voiced that they understood the value of creating, nurturing, and sustaining relationships that supported their school communities. They looked for unique ways in which to engage their stakeholders and themselves in fulfilling the vision that they had set for the success of their students.

#### **Finding 4: Empowering School Culture**

Principals understood the value of creating a school culture that empowered students and staff to aspire toward quality teaching and learning, self-motivation, determination, responsibility, and advocacy for the opportunity to learn.

Gay (1994) contended that culture significantly impacts and molds all aspects of the teaching and learning process in the classroom and in the entire school. Such research illustrated the need to cultivate awareness, not only of the culture that defines the school, but also, the culture that leaders advocated through their own beliefs, values, and actions. Hernandez (2001) further argued that when teachers use different learning strategies, students were empowered; students became active participants in the teaching and learning process and were more successful in their academics.

Lezotte's (1991) *Second Generation Effective Schools Correlates* emphasized the need to empower teachers to become instructional leaders, as well. Thus, building a community of shared values extended the concept of democratization, where the principal shifts from being identified as a "leader of followers" to a "leader of leaders," whose responsibilities include coaching, partnering and cheerleading. Yukl's



(1998) scholarly work also corroborated the concept of building leadership capacity to implement and sustain organizational change.

In the first generation set of effective schools correlates, Lezotte (1991) emphasized how teachers were responsible for frequent monitoring of instruction to be able to adjust their teaching of content. The revised correlate required students to become partners in the progress monitoring of their own learning. Such a revision placed the onus of shared responsibility for learning upon students as well as teachers.

Parallel to the tenets of multicultural education practice, Lezotte' revised sixth correlate corresponded to developing student self-empowerment through academic competence as described by Ladson-Billings (1995). Teaching students the value of monitoring their own learning creates "self-disciplined, socially responsible and just" students (Lezotte, 1991). In this respect, school leaders assisted students and staff to seek self-empowerment by creating a climate that allowed everyone to monitor his or her progress as well as work toward achieving school goals, state and federal expectations (Fullan, 2005; Yukl, 1998).

A culture of self-empowerment was evidenced in the actions, structures, activities, and words that the subjects of this study shared with the researcher. School and collaborative planning schedules as well as copies of meeting agendas shared with the researcher lent additional insight regarding the ways in which principals empowered their learning communities to achieve their vision for student success.

As such, each of the principals in the study allowed teachers to become teacher leaders, as they participated in their professional learning communities, made

decisions about instructional initiatives, monitored the progress of their students and themselves, further developed their content and pedagogical expertise, and interacted with their students and the learning community. Principals described how, over time, they had become facilitators in this process. Moreover, principals used their own cultures to make relevant connections to advocate for the success of their Hispanic students. Mr. Blue, in particular, described his perspective in regard to developing communities that would enable students and staff to support each other. He stated,

Whatever mistakes they made in the fall, then we need to work harder...we need to focus...we are the Phoenix, we think about the geese who fly in a formation. Sometimes someone else has to be the point and the leader for the day or that hour as long as they can maintain the speed; so that's what I try to inculcate into my students.

As Hispanics, we need to work together. There are different sayings in Spanish. For example...as Mexicans, some have the crab or the lobster mentality that if someone is going up, they pull them down, and eventually nobody gets up as opposed to other communities.

I am going to use the cultures...there are a lot of Jewish people that help each other. If somebody comes down on their luck, the whole community... they come to the rescue – whether it would be financial support or moral support, and they are there for one another, because there's one thing they want for everybody to rise up to the top...unfortunately for Hispanics, that has not been the perspective, and we do not want anybody to shine.

Then we need to work with the same mentality...that Hispanics should help each other to rise too, so that whenever you see a Lopez, Hernandez, Cerda, or Rios, whoever it is, they should say, "Look, they are coming to the top!"

And I let them know that there will be instances where we are not going to be as successful as we want, but if that stops us, then we are falling short of the gold that we have inside... That we should be helping each other and in fact I have some of my better seniors tutoring some of my Juniors who are struggling, and again we help each other; we have our own Jewish/Hispanic community at work here, and everybody is putting money on it.

Ms. Silver, in particular, described a situation in which when she first arrived at the school, the staff had strictly enforced quotas for only students who they deemed eligible to attend advanced placement classes. She listened to a committee of teachers and later to students who did not want to upset what they believed were classes that only the elite should attend. Ms. Silver believed that the non-elite, in this case, were students who were identified as the unpopular or those in a lower socioeconomic class. She believed that these classes were gatekeepers that excluded potential successful students and was genuinely taken aback when one little Hispanic girl exasperatingly volunteered to give up her place in the advanced placement class, just to keep that structure in place. In her own words, Ms. Silver recalled how she felt and reacted to the situation,

I said, because we're so human, we get this class that says "regular," and we do this. We get this class that says "pre-AP." Oh, now we do this. I said, I'm getting rid of that. We're all going to do pre-AP. We're all going to do AP. Because our regular – our kids deserve the best strategies. So we changed everything.

The saddest thing about that, the senior class that year wanted to meet with me. So we met. I had all the seniors in the library. One of my Hispanic little girls – not to single her out. I had a little Anglo girl who said, you know, we don't agree with everything going pre-AP and AP. There's some kids who just can't do it. I said, Okay. And I just listened. I had this Hispanic little girl raise her hand. She said, I would be willing to go to regular classes.

That gave me chills. That convinced me even more to say, you don't know what you're talking about. I didn't say it. You know, I wasn't going to belittle kids...I said, Thank you for your opinions, you know. But I thought, little girl, you don't even know the potential you have.

I thought, wait a minute here...I have to advocate for kids, even when kids don't realize that I have to advocate for them...they don't know what good teaching is. They don't know that I have to be the one to do that. You know, we have to do that as educators. But, you know, that was the saddest thing.

When I heard her say that, I thought, Oh, little girl, if you only knew how much I was fighting for you. You know, to make – and I thought whenever kids walk through this door, I don't care who they are, they have to believe they can do it. And we have to – we have to – if you're going to be pre-AP, you're going to be pre-AP with everybody.

Ms. Silver also realized that the student was not really at fault in her way of thinking, as she was a product of the school's culture. However, the principal acknowledged that there was a need to delve into staff and student core beliefs if her high school was to become a more inclusive and student-centered institution. After standing firm in her decision to open these classes to all students, Ms. Silver also issued a mandate that staff had to align their instruction to these higher standards. She was resolute in her stance that these classes were not to be watered down to accommodate greater numbers of students; rather that teachers were to teach to a higher standard and expect that students meet that higher standard.

Ms. Silver proudly stated that she envisioned her role as one of advocacy for students, and as such, she must protect their rights to a quality education. She believed that she must model inclusiveness and that “can do” attitude that is necessary to achieve goals, but she had not lost sight that attitude was not enough to succeed. “Whoever walks through this door has to believe they can do it,” was the mantra that Ms. Silver explained outlined her expectations of an empowering culture.

Mirroring similar sentiments, Mr. Orange's youthful experiences and choices in education enabled him to realize the value of empowering students and staff. By creating opportunities to engage in academic discussions regarding their own instruction, Mr. Orange actually empowered teachers to take ownership of their

student outcomes. Through his leadership, teachers were motivated to create instruction that provided students with the necessary skills to earn college credit through their advanced placement classes. In 2005 only 50 students took an AP exam. In 2011, over 350 students scored a 3 or 4, earning them college credit for those high school classes. Such an increase was a testament to the decisions that Mr. Orange made to encourage and include more students in his school's advanced placement classes, and all of this translated to a sense of empowerment for the students as well as for the teachers.

Similarly Mr. Gold, Mr. Red, and Mr. Blue had set processes in place that enabled students and teachers to feel a sense of empowerment upon accomplishing school or personal goals. This was particularly true of students attending Mr. Blue's school. Mostly lower socioeconomic students attended Mr. Blue's school, yet, as per the AEIS 2010-2011 performance report, almost 100% of his students were able to complete the early college high school curriculum and graduate with a high school diploma, as well as a maximum of 60 college hours. This feat was celebrated with the graduation of the first high school cohort, who began its journey as a class of 100 students.

Mr. Blue recounted how he and his staff continuously advocated for their students, understanding that completion of their high school and early college programs would eventually empower them as individuals and as a collective unit of Hispanic students who otherwise may not have become as successful as they had envisioned. This was quite evident when during one of the researcher's observations,

the counselor brought a progress report to the attention of Mr. Blue. He directed her to call the students, one-by-one to determine what could be done about their progress in their college-level courses. He explained that the list included students who would probably have to retake the coursework with the university, but he was more distressed that a student had been labeled as a potential failure, although he had not yet failed the course. Mr. Blue's words resonated with the passion that he had for the success of his students when he elaborated upon their efforts to advocate for their students,

A minute ago, one of my teachers came by with some of the preliminary results of some university class, 1302, for about 6 kids. In that (list), 2 of them had a 66 and 69 respectively; another a 75. He should not have been on that list, as for a potential failure at the University. So we have 3 mid-50s; so they might have to take the course again, but again we go back and communicate with the professors, if this is already set in stone. We ask, "What are some of the things we can do or that the kids did not do or how are you making an assumption that the kid already failed when you have not graded some certain assignments or paperwork?" So I learned and picked up the best strategies along the way, and we implement them here. For the most part, I think that has been successful.... There are areas that we have to go back and re-tweak. I can implement things with fidelity, and not let them be a one shot thing. I think that the day we are consistent and will give them time to develop and think, those things work.

Being a school of choice, Mr. Gold's school similarly empowered students and staff by providing rigorous instruction in science, mathematics, and engineering. The rigor of the program was supported by staff who tutored and designed instruction to address the needs of all students in the program. School schedules indicated that Mr. Gold and his leadership team had scheduled rigorous coursework for all grade levels and had provided opportunities for students to master skills with which they were

having difficulty during assigned tutorials. Additionally, Mr. Gold has worked diligently to create awareness of the need to allow students to empower themselves through knowledge gained in the program. Ultimately, students who attend Gold High School have had the opportunity to work with various university partners to extend their college level experiences.

While Mr. Red's school serves a very small community, Mr. Red and the District's administration have worked to provide all students with ample opportunities to access a rigorous curriculum. In this regard, the campus has served the needs of all of its student populations and has supported students through one-to-one tutoring and after-school programs, such as his 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Lab that the researcher visited during a school observation. Working as a cohesive unit of educators, Red High School focused on the needs of the individual student as they move through the school system.

#### **Finding 5: Equity Pedagogy**

Principals understood and worked vehemently to provide equity pedagogy that addressed the needs of all students, particularly the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse.

Gay (1988, 2000) argued that pedagogical equality rests on the implementation of culturally sensitive instructional strategies which, in turn, allow for the optimal academic achievement of culturally diverse students. The renowned scholar firmly asserted that culturally relevant pedagogy entailed the use of

the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more

relevant to and effective [for students]...It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. (Gay, 2000, p. 29)

Concurring with Freire (1970b), Ladson-Billings (1995) affirmed that students need to achieve success. They must be able to learn and apply “literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills in order to be active participants in a democracy” (p. 160). Through her scholarly work with educators who teach students of color, Ladson-Billings concluded that the ways in which students acquire these skills may vary, but teachers and students must assume the responsibility for teaching and learning what is central in a rigorous curriculum. In other words, achieving academic competence empowers the individual as well as the collective unit.

Moreover, the work of August and Hakuta (1997), Garcia (2004), and Miramontes et al. (1997) specifically shed light upon those conditions that led to optimal learning for the linguistically and culturally diverse. The research drew attention to:

- Fostering English acquisition and the development of mature literacy;
- Delivering grade-level content;
- Organizing instruction in innovative ways (i.e., establishing schools within school, families, continuum classes, flexible grouping, etc.);
- Protecting and extending instructional time;
- Expanding teachers’ roles and responsibilities;
- Addressing students’ social and emotional needs, and
- Involving parents in their children’s education.



Data collected from the semi-structured interviews and observations of the five principals in this study revealed several parallels drawn to the principles of multicultural education. Each of the principals spoke about the various practices and strategies that were implemented in their schools to address the linguistically and culturally diverse students they served.

All principals selected to participate in this study were cognizant of the need to provide curricula and pedagogy that were appropriate for the instruction of linguistically and culturally diverse students. They organized their schools in ways that provided access to quality instruction from teachers who valued the diversity of the students in their classrooms. School schedules reflected opportunities for students to access additional assistance or who wanted to pursue their own investigations.

Therefore, diversity in abilities, interests, and cultures were honored and celebrated in each of the schools. In particular, students at Gold High School were encouraged to be themselves and to recognize the talents, skills, and abilities in others. Teachers were cognizant of the different types of learners sat in their classrooms. As Mr. Gold's words attest, even gender equity was identified as an issue in a school that mostly targeted engineering, science, and mathematics instruction.

Currently my demographics are 60% male, 40% female. We're hoping to balance that out in the future where we have an equal number of females and males in our school. I don't know if that lends itself to the curriculum, which is a math and science curriculum, but that's the way our demographic makeup is at this point in time.

Providing access to more female students was a target that Mr. Gold articulated for his school.

As previously mentioned, Mr. Gold remarked that his school welcomed all students into the learning environment, especially because of the demographic composition of the school. The researcher's observations revealed that students felt at ease, accepted each other, and actually celebrated their diversity. School choice and participation in their own learning enabled students as well as staff to form a collaborative relationship in which individual differences in culture and in learning were valued by all stakeholders. Busing students allowed opportunities for more students to take advantage of attending this school of choice.

In Ms. Silver's school, teachers planned for the differentiation of instruction for all students, as evidenced by their lesson planning documents and agendas. In fact, her school offered half-day classes for special education students, interested in completing a career pathway. These students were served for half a day at their home campus, and then they would complete another half day in a business program, acquiring skills that would facilitate their employment upon graduation. School schedules and conversations with Ms. Silver depicted these half-day career opportunities for many of her students. Advocating for all students in her school, Ms. Silver reviewed the strategies that were most effective for the students who had been entrusted to her supervision.

In much the same way, Mr. Blue stated that counseling students was the first step in addressing possible student failure. Parental contact and teacher conferences were also used to identify interventions that would enable students to get back on track if they were falling behind or did not understand particular instruction. Mr. Blue

also developed school schedules, which he shared with the researcher, that allowed for after-school and Saturday tutorials. Moreover, as was indicated by their planning agendas, professional learning communities were asked to select strategies that reinforced inclusion of all students in the learning process.

In much the same way, Mr. Red also provided guidance to his staff as they identified students in need of additional academic assistance. Paying attention to their social concerns was not overlooked in determining how best to support students at Red High School. Mr. Red best expressed his thoughts regarding his students when he stated,

I like to know everything I can about my kiddoes. Making contact with the parents and being, I think, just being aware of my students' needs and seeing their daily routines and how they come to school and you can tell when a child is unclean. You can tell when a child has not eaten. You can tell when a child is not feeling well. And being tuned into those characteristics of the kids, I think that plays a major factor (in their academic focus).

Well, I need to make sure that all those characteristics that I mentioned – all those things that I feel that I would need, to be an effective leader and to be attuned to my kids' needs, I think that that needs to be something that's common knowledge with all my teachers, with all my staff members. I don't run the school on my own, and they need to be tuned into the students' needs, as well. They need to be educated, as far as research-based strategies that have proven to be successful with these students, with our English language learners.

You know, I lament to say I think that that's one of the areas where we need to really, really strengthen, because of – at the high school itself, my social studies teacher, my math teacher, my English/language arts teacher, they're all Anglos. They're all – they're – you know, they don't speak the language. They understand – some of them understand a little, you know.

So, you know, you would think, well, how can our – how can an English language learner be successful with somebody who doesn't understand the language, who doesn't understand – you know, I feel that as a leader, that

I need to provide them with the knowledge of what's out there to help them help their kids be successful. And I think that's the major obstacle.

Right now I've got some kiddoes that are recent immigrants that, aside from teacher strategies, instructional strategies, maps, graphs, you know, graphic organizers, graphic aids and that little translator, you know, lamentfully [sic], I mean, that's all they – that's all they have. And what I have seen from these kiddoes, they come in with the drive already in them. They come in wanting to be successful. They want to learn.

As was demonstrated by all five principals, attention was paid to who their students were and what needs they brought into the classrooms of their schools. They understood how their leadership impacted their students and their potential to achieve.

#### **Finding 6: Communication**

Principals understood the power of varied forms of communication in shaping and supporting the mission of their schools among their teaching and learning communities.

As has been previously mentioned, Shannon and Bylsma (2002) asserted that highly effective schools exhibited several attributes, regardless of their demographics or socioeconomic status. Communication was one of these attributes as it was essential in articulating the vision of the school and in setting direction for all stakeholders in the learning process. That attribute was also identified in highly effective principals. As Chemers (1997) concluded, leadership is a “process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task” (p. 1).

The U.S. Senate Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity released a report in 1970 exclaiming that the principal is the link between the community and the

school, setting the tone and climate for teaching and learning (U.S. Congress, 1970). Bass (1990) and Smith and Andrews (1989) concurred that principals are responsible for articulating the school's performance expectations with clarity and confidence. The scholarly work of Cotton (2003) as well as that of Marzano et al. (2005) affirmed the importance of communication skills in performing those responsibilities critical to effective school leadership. Lending further support of the concept of effective communication, Lezotte (1991) and Fullan (2005) emphasized the significant impact that principals exert in voicing their vision and setting direction for their staff, students, and learning communities.

Communication with all stakeholders was recognized as an essential facet of school success. Some schools used traditional methods of communication: (a) scheduled parent meetings and conferences, (b) informal parent conferences, and (c) parent letters sent through the mail or hand-carried by students. Incorporating such social media as FaceBook, blogs, and school websites into their communication networks offered an array of opportunities to enhance communication with students, parents, staff, and the community.

At Red High School, the researcher observed Mr. Red take a telephone call from several of his senior agriculture students. He explained that his students, staff, and community had his cell phone number and were able to call him directly. School activities, such as basketball, school club meetings, and other school events, provided additional opportunities to meet with parents and articulate as well as reinforce the

schools' core beliefs in school achievement, academic partnerships, and support for individual and group goals.

As was previously described, Mr. Red was quite proud and pleased that a majority of the school's parents attended the first annual Parental Involvement Dinner. He believed that such gatherings are not only important to forge support for school initiatives, but were also necessary to maintain open communication channels. As per Mr. Red, parents felt respected and valued at events such as these. He and his wife, as well as several members of his school staff, had collaborated on planning the event, and they hoped to make it an annual event, where parents could receive information regarding important academic initiatives and programs. In describing his communication with his teaching and learning stakeholders, Mr. Red remarked that he like to communicate one-on-one.

When we send out anything from the school, any type of flyers, brochures, we send them in Spanish and English. We also have a school messenger system to where we send out messages via phone calls. And those are also in English and Spanish. But I'll give you an example. One of the areas where I understand or I feel that our school board feels we need to improve on is parental involvement.

They, especially the parents of Hispanic students, especially our recent immigrants, tend to stay away, because they do come to a couple of meetings. If it's a PTL meeting and the meeting is done primarily in English and their needs aren't being met, they're sitting there not knowing what's being discussed and so they start fizzling out. And so a good example is we've got our first annual Red High District-Wide Parental Conference that we have scheduled for this Tuesday.

And believe it or not, I went home last, I think it was Friday. I think it was Friday when I started. I've got a lot of my parent contacts on my phone, okay. And because I've developed that rapport with them, and they know me, they call me. You know, they have my cell phone number. You know, they know

they can call me at any time, and so I started texting. I sent out a general text to all the parents that I had on here, and then on Facebook.

And as a matter of fact I'm going to be attending a board conference pretty soon, in May, where that's one of the sessions I want to attend, how you can increase parental involvement through the use cell phones and texting and Facebook.

As evidenced by several telephone logs from his teachers, Mr. Orange described how he and his staff communicated with the parents of 3700 students at Orange High School. All teachers were required to make at least 10 positive telephone calls per six weeks to parents in order to chat about student progress. This number was in addition to those calls that were necessary to inquire about student absences or other disciplinary matters. More importantly Mr. Orange remarked how he targeted parents of second language learners who might want to stay away from the school because of language barriers or any other situation that might keep them from coming to school. He recounted,

And my Spanish speakers, I mean, I went – we have our log of our – our student emergency data that we have in a hard copy binder. So I went through that, and I looked specifically for my Spanish-speaking parents that I know that either won't get the flyer or whatever; I made the calls. We had a parent activity last Tuesday. This past Tuesday, it was family fun night. And those that I wasn't able to reach, I would leave a message....Those that didn't come...later, I said, hey, I made a call. I missed you.

Mr. Orange also explained how he used parent meetings, such as his Parent and Principal Breakfast meetings and other motivational events or initiatives to engage parents as well as students and staff. In particular, he described,

And to motivate them, I'll use every kind of trick I can get. I remember one year I passed out two nails to all the parents that came in. I had my custodian paint the nails orange. And I told the parents at the end of the meeting, here, I'm going to give all of you that have students here, these, and it was a pair of

six penny nails. . . . You take them, and let your kids know –tap them on the wall or maybe put them on a – wherever you want, but let your students know that one of them is for the Orange High School diploma.

You're going to hang it right there. And the other is for the college or technical school or vocational school. Whatever postsecondary school they're going to get, their second degree is going to be right there. So I have a senior – bless his heart. He's a special ed. student, and he's doing well. He was going to take the TAKS and he's even passed it. He'll be okay. He says, Mr. Orange, I never told you but three years ago, my mom and dad came to your meeting, and they took the nails, and they're waiting for that diploma. And he's so proud of that. And I'm going to hang it there for my mom, sir. Are you going to go to college? Yes sir; I'm going to go. I'm going to see what I can do. That's great, Mi'jito. You do it.

When asked by the researcher what skills should an effective principal possess, Mr. Orange further declared,

Communication skills. . . . you have to be able to motivate and inspire. Not only students and staff, but the parents need to hear you and see that your message is one that they also believe in. They're sending their kids in here to our campus to get them better, ready for college, ready for technical school, ready for whatever comes – military, workforce. We're going to get them ready. They're going to graduate.

As evidenced by their school websites, school brochures, and announcements, two of the magnet schools and the early college high school involved in this study, proudly touted their university partnerships in their communications with students, parents, and the community. In particular, their principals utilized their school web pages and traditional communication media to school, their students, and parents about these partnerships.

More specifically, Mr. Gold, Ms. Silver, and Mr. Blue used their web pages to describe their collaborative relationships with their university partners, citing the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Texas-Pan Am, the University of



Texas at Brownsville, Texas A&M International University, Rice University, Rochester Institute of Technology, South Texas College, and other community educational institutions, including museums. Several of these schools also used traditional and non-traditional media to announce and describe the national and state academic achievements they had earned to illustrate their commitment and valuing of their academic programs.

Ms. Silver related that she would always pick a theme and a book study to communicate her vision, ideas, and initiatives with her teaching and learning communities. She showed the researcher the subject of her latest book study that encouraged teachers to “Bug Them.” She remarked, “Every year we have a theme: “Bug Them.”

And you train your teachers on that. Well it’s because we’re not going to let the kids fail. You’re going to call home; you are going to contact the parents by bugging them. We are going to bug kids...we’re going to bug kids; we’re going to bug parents, but not just for the bad reasons but good reasons, that kids are doing great too. February was Share our Hearts with the Communities month; they were asked to call home to talk about positive things that kids had done.

As was evidenced by the researcher, notices for college entrance exam preparation, student counseling sessions, and designation of college days were posted where students, parents, and staff could peruse. School websites for Orange High School, Gold High School, Blue High School and Silver High School offered students and parents the opportunity to review academic vocabulary and to plan for school events that sponsored college information and access to college recruiters. In addition, school clubs and organizations were also used as vehicles to communicate with parents and

students. In particular, student council was one of the organizations that Mr. Gold used to communicate with students.

### **Finding 7: Vision of Success**

Principals in these high-performing schools developed and steadfastly articulated a clear vision of success for their schools through their words and interactions with their teaching and learning communities.

As previously stated, a principal's vision for success must be clearly articulated to set a clear direction and focus for students and staff. The research of Cotton (2003), Marzano et al. (2005), Fullan (2005), Yukl (1998), Ladson-Billings (1995), and Lezotte (1991) and other notable scholars, underscores the importance of articulating high expectations and setting clear goals for student and staff performance. The five principals included in this study definitively demonstrated a variety of ways in which they set the pace and reinforced a clear vision for their schools. As Ms. Silver emphatically pronounced, "I have a vision for my kids. I share that vision with my staff, and then I let them be creative and take risks, all with one goal in mind, that our kids will, can do it."

Sharing their stories about their own journeys into education, as former students, teachers, and principals of their own schools, served to reinforce the vision for success each principal referenced in their schools. This was particularly true when each principal personally spoke about his/her own school experiences. Thus, the recognition of the value of education in their own lives served as a springboard to communicate the importance of schooling for the Hispanic community.

One principal's story about his father's efforts to make sure that he enrolled at a university rather than enlist in the military, involved the help of a Hispanic Civil Rights activist, Dr. Hector Perez Garcia. Dr. Garcia was a WWII army veteran and surgeon, who during the 1960s fought for Hispanic rights to voting, health care, and education. The principal's recitation of the experience clearly underlined the principal's mission to help other Hispanics in their quest for an education. As Principal Orange asserted, mentoring and sharing that story outlined his purpose as an educator. In fact, Mr. Orange stated that he too, had become involved in similar political action groups and educational organizations in order to bring his voice to the table. As Mr. Orange stated, he took every opportunity available to reiterate his vision for his school,

Every chance I get I'll – if it's at a student's meeting, at a gathering, when I talk to the kids at the beginning of the year. I have to crowd the gym now because it's a thousand kids. But we fit them in there, and they listen to me. You have the best high school in Orange Community. You're at one of the greatest high schools in Region One.

My vision –a campus of graduating a thousand freshman that came in, a thousand seniors four years later. That's my job. If half of them are graduating, hang it up and go do something else because I'm not doing my job. But my job is to hold high expectations and have the staff – and the staff to know that if I'm going to say something, it's going to be walked out there.

Understanding the practical demands of making a living and supporting a wife and children set the stage for one principal's view of the importance of an education. Living in a very small and rural community, Mr. Red has worked to ensure that his students are prepared to take on the challenges of becoming productive citizens who can earn a decent living wage and at the same time be able to continue pursuing an

education if they so choose. According to his own remarks, Mr. Red made it a point to speak to his students about their futures and their choices regarding continuing their education, and he has used his own life experiences to highlight the value of an education when he stated,

I think you have to be able to empathize with some of these Hispanic students and their home environments and what they're growing up with or lack thereof. Coming in from – I mean, being Hispanic myself, I wasn't born rich. I was raised by – from two months old – by my 63-year old grandmother, and I had her until – I was with her till she turned 102.

I learned that I needed to further my education. I didn't want to work in the fields. I worked – and, you know, I guess being there, growing up poor, growing up knowing that that's – I didn't want to stay poor. I'm not – by far, I'm not rich, but I can empathize with some of these kids and talk to them and find out what, you know – I like to know everything I can about my kiddoes.

In similar fashion, Mr. Gold spoke about his own inadvertent journey into education. Although he had not intended to become a teacher, his life's path led him to a career that he now very much enjoys. A very passionate Ms. Silver recounted her own experiences into educational administration; she stated that she envisioned her role as a principal, as one who significantly shaped and impacted the lives of her students. That is why she took her job very seriously and endeavored to make decisions that would serve the best interests of her students. Finally, Mr. Blue's remarks about his experiences as a migrant student and local high school graduate served to form a foundation for inspiring students and staff to make a difference in the lives of students they taught. His dedication to his students was evident in the practices and policies that he put in place at his school.

### **Finding 8: Hispanic Principal Leadership**

Hispanic principals provided unique, relevant, and effective leadership in support of their Hispanic students.

As per Scribner and Scribner (2001), high-performing schools that served Hispanic students exhibited similar effective schools characteristics as described by Edmonds (1979). In this regard, a clear vision for all students was articulated by their principals, setting the high expectations that motivate students and staff to achieve academic success (Scribner & Scribner, 2001). The Hispanic principals who were selected for this study demonstrated unique ways in which to engage their learning communities. This was particularly true in the ways they prioritized community and parental involvement.

Hispanic principals involved in this study created a variety of ways in which to structure their schools and schedules to provide instruction that would meet the needs of their students. As has been previously discussed and evidenced by their school schedules, Ms. Silver and Mr. Blue inserted additional classes or class time for students to acquire or practice identified skills for mastery of grade level content and state assessments. Mr. Orange, Mr. Red, and Mr. Gold provided opportunities for after school or Saturday tutorials as was indicated by their student announcements, parent flyers, and website postings. Each of the principals worked with their teaching staff to plan for these events and were very deliberate in the assigning of teachers to the groups that were identified for the assistance.

To demonstrate how thinking out of the box enabled the success of his students and staff, Mr. Orange utilized gender grouping of students during tutorials for state assessment preparation to allow students to experience success. Mr. Orange described how he, at times, had had to persuade and urge teachers to join his initiatives,

For the SLL kids, we had three workshops on Tuesdays. We had the boys in the morning and the girls in the afternoon. And one of our teachers here taught them. All the boys, 50 something boys were in the class. You could hear a pin drop. They weren't playing off each other...last year we had a really social SLL class, and so I said, You know what, we're going to have to get these guys ready, so I separated boys and girls.

Well, I was told hey, Orange, are you psychic or what? How do you know that? No. I try things. If it doesn't work, you back up and do something else. So for three weeks...I think it was pretty successful. They came in on Super Saturdays. We had 150 of them come in. and a lot of them were SSL kids. And when you pay attention to them, you know who they are and, hey, we said do your best here; we did something for them that was unique; they're going to come back, and they're going to put out their best for you. It's a relationship as well.

His tutorial schedules were placed in a binder that he, as well as his Campus Assessment Coordinator, kept for review and shared with the researcher

One of the most important attributes that effective Hispanic principals demonstrated was their ethic of caring, tough love. and high expectations for their students. Mr. Gold discussed how he was always careful in how he interacted with students and staff while standing firm in his convictions. In validation of the work of Ladson-Billings (1994), Mr. Gold stated,

To help with Hispanic students, you need to be able to listen to them. No matter how bad the situation is and how bad, or what they did, or whatever the situation is, you need to listen to them. Second, you need to be honest with the students and let them know that whatever has happened, you

know, there's consequences, whether they're disciplinary consequences or whether they're academic consequences, or whether they're social consequences. There's always consequences in every decision we make.

And the third thing is don't – don't, for whatever reason, don't ever tell them they can't do it. Don't ever tell them that they're not or will ever achieve that. Don't ever say that they're not capable of doing that, regardless of what your – because that's a personal opinion. You know, our job is to keep their chins up, encourage them, and motivate them. And there is a way of doing that.

And sometimes words are very hurtful. And in regard to students, those words will last forever. And I'm sure you can remember when a teacher said something that was very negative to you when you were in childhood, you know, when you were in elementary or junior high. I can. And those are some – I don't want somebody to remember me by that. I've made mistakes, and I'm sure somebody does remember me saying something that I shouldn't have said, but you never have – you got to leave your emotions out. You've got to always be rational and patient with kids. And, you know, your emotions definitely have to be out of the picture. No matter how difficult the situation is, you need to be able to not have any emotion tied to these conversations when you're speaking to Hispanic students.

I mean when anger sets in, then you say things irrational – irrational thoughts and irrational words that could last forever. They impact students, young, young, young minds. And what I mean by that is, you know, you need to be more of a counselor and more of a motivator, an encourager. You know, you want to – you just don't want to let your emotions take over, because, yes, it's frustrating when a kid doesn't turn in his work; yes, it's frustrating when a kid lies to his parents and blames it on the school; yes, it's frustrating when a kid does an offense that you just don't understand why he did it; yes, it's unfortunate, a kid that has problems with their boyfriend or girlfriend interfering with their work, and you're at a maturity level like, what is going on?

But you got to understand, at that moment, this is the most important thing in their life. And they need somebody to guide them and let them understand. Hey, this is what – we can't change the past. This is the decision you made. You need to own up to your decision. These are the consequences, and these are the consequences that could happen, and just be honest with the kids. And this is how you can fix it.

In much the same way, Mr. Blue spoke about his own beliefs and the expectations that he had regarding the parameters of interaction of his teaching and learning communities. He fervently argued that culture and diversity must be valued when he stated,

There is no room for name calling in this school; being that we get some students that are second language learners, and they are coming in within those first 2 years. Again we are talking about TELPAS courses and how we expect of them to do better.

We have students that have been in the United States for only 2 years because of the culture – again referring to the Hispanic, any Mexican American, anybody who is new to the community we refer to them as wetbacks, mojudos.

Again there is no room for any name calling within our own community. We should be helping each other. For my second language learners – one of the things I encourage them to do is practice the English Language. On many occasions, they feel comfortable going back to speaking in Spanish, and my thing is if you really want to help your peers, talk to him in English expecting him to talk to you back in English. Because if not, they will not ever acquire the language and skills to be successful.

There is a saying “El que tiene mas saliva traga mas pinole.” Those people who practice the language, those people that persevere are the people that continue doing more, day after day, without looking back when people made fun of them because of the accent they have.

In fact I have teachers that have Hispanic backgrounds, and they have the little accent, and I usually use my teachers as examples as, “El que quiere, puede.” If you really want it, you can achieve it. Look at this guy.

I have a teacher who teaches Algebra I, second year teaching an architecture course. He has a degree from Kingsville; he is working on his masters, but he is teaching w/us and every single lesson he teaches has to do with engineering, architecture.

Additionally, the five principals found ways in which to build collaborative governance in their schools as they encouraged input and feedback from their teachers



in the planning of instruction and in the undertaking of school initiatives (Scribner & Scribner, 2001). In this regard, Mr. Gold had more to say about listening to his teachers, and this was apparent in how he interacted with his staff during the researcher's observation. Mr. Gold stated,

I would want to say that I listen and I – and I seek a lot of teacher input, which is a little different from most administrators. I seek a lot of input from my department leaders and my SBDM – my committee leaders. I try to be transparent with things and initiatives and things that are coming up. And I try to ask them, this is what we need to do. How can we do it together, you know. I don't try to solve things all by myself.

I ask my teachers to help in solving these things, because it's all a matter of buy-in. And you don't want teachers to dig their heels in on something that you may have created, and then all it's going to do is just hurt student performance and student learning. So I think one of the things I think I do well is I do listen, and I do seek teacher input on the things that are pertaining to curriculum, organization, initiatives, innovations, and stuff like that. And I try to listen to them, and I try to implement what they tell us. And I think that's a big factor. And then letting them know that they're empowered in this school. They're not the only ones here.

This study corroborated the work of various researchers who asserted that principals utilize their own style of leadership to manage their schools; however, they also implemented some form of collaboration to seek staff buy-in when setting and working to accomplish their goals. This was demonstrated by the principals who articulated their own brand of leadership as was observed by the researcher. In particular, Mr. Orange reiterated his position regarding site-based decision-making when he stated,

I guess I'm a Type A, but I've mellowed through the years. But there is only one – one vision here. And you don't run this school by committee. I have SBDM meetings, and we go over the parameters of the area. That committee deals with it. Didn't used to be like that... the very first one I had, Why don't – do you have to sign in? You can talk to me about that

later on. Right now we're going to talk about staffing. Well, I don't like that cafeteria. Talk to me about that after the meeting.

They got used to going, Okay, we're going to address the things that affect the school that are going to make it run better. Not the little personal gripes and grievances that, and that's another one. They've had two grievances here in seven years. And they were people that were going to be terminated, and that's usually the ones that are going to fight you. And I – you have to do that sometimes. Sometimes they hurt kids, and if you hurt kids you're not going to be here.

Moreover, the principals involved in the study recounted their personal life stories to draw relevant connections to the culture and diversity of Hispanic students. In particular, Mr. Blue and Mr. Red related their own stories regarding their educational journeys. In Mr. Red's case, he described why he made his decision to pursue a college education,

I think you have to be able to empathize with some of these Hispanic students and their home environments and what they're growing up with or lack thereof. I mean, being Hispanic myself, I wasn't born rich. I was raised by – from two months old – by my 63-year old grandmother, and I had her until she turned 102. I learned that I needed to further my education. I didn't want to work in the fields. I worked, and, you know, I guess being there, growing up poor, growing up knowing that, I didn't want to stay poor. I'm not, by far, I'm not rich, but I can empathize with some of these kids and talk to them. I like to know everything I can about my kiddoes.

In Mr. Blue's case, he found unique ways in which to engage his students by telling his own story as a youngster and as a student in the university. He modeled his expectations for success, telling students that they were not always going to succeed at every first attempt. He recounted,

I am going to tell you something I did academically with my kids. I sat down with them – all my Juniors and Seniors – and I pulled out some of their transcripts through the University, and I displayed them without their names. I put them on the overhead projector...the Elmo and they saw....Oh that belongs

to so and so and that belongs to so and so, and I said well, these are grades, in general, and then I put my college transcript on the Elmo, and they saw it.

I told them that there will be times when you'll be making mistakes, and there will be times when you will not commit 100%, and you know I had a D here an F there, but you know, the latter part of my senior year at the University... nothing but As and Bs. When I did my masters, nothing but As. There is no room for Bs.

It's like those kids in the nursing program. You get a B or C, it doesn't count. You have to get an A because they don't want someone treating you or giving you a shot, putting in only 70%. So as I talk to them academically, I tell them it's okay to make a mistake here and there or to slack off for a certain thing, but it should not happen every single time. Again, for the Spring... whatever mistakes they made in the fall, then we need to work harder...we need to focus.

Well, I believe that my staff and students have set the pace for what we need to do to complete their early college programs. I also believe that my own experiences as a student in our district and how I feel about the opportunities that we have here also help students to understand how important it is to take advantage of what is being offered to them. I believe that many of my staff have also have had similar experiences. So we can all sympathize and model what we expect of our students because this is what we expect of ourselves.

Lastly, the Hispanic principals in this study held teachers accountable for the instructional strategies that were used in the classroom to support the learning of all students and specifically, their Hispanic students (Scribner & Scribner, 2001). Mr. Blue described how he held his teachers accountable, beginning with personal interviews to discuss the teachers' perspectives regarding their role in student achievement when he stated,

We're committed. I think that the best thing that I have done was when I sat down with each teacher, asking them what expectations they had and out of those responses and that meeting that we had, I have seen the teachers' commitment and that they are willing to go above and beyond. On many occasions and in a lot of schools – I've been in a bigger schools – people are waiting for 4 o'clock or 4:30 or 5:00 o'clock so that they can leave.

Here, at any point in time, any given day, you have people here at 7:00. On occasions, we have funds to pay for extra duty pay, for tutorials – things of that nature, but about 8 out of 10 times, they are here waiting for the kids. They are doing something, whether they are studying for themselves or preparing for the following day, and kids are staying behind.

So in looking at those teachers that are committed, and again it is not about the pay but it's about making a difference for the kids. That's how I tap in on those teachers and say, this is what I need help with. They take on the challenge; they take on the responsibility; they take on the task knowing that it's to assist me. But at the end of the day, it's not a grade, but it's a kid they do that for, and that's how I select my teachers.

Similarly, Ms. Silver further demonstrated her own commitment to enabling Hispanic student success. She held a meeting with her teachers to discuss PDAS and their role in meeting their school and state accountability standards. Ms. Silver remarked,

This year for PDAS training, I took that instrument and asked, how many want to be at this end? Nobody raised their hands; we did some breakout sessions. Who wants to be professional? Who wants to be an exceeds? What's it going to be like to be an exceeds? So we had those discussions. We had an understanding. You know if I'll do 20 walk-throughs, at least 18 will need to be very interactive.

So we had to put a number to this and that. And that became the expectation this year, and that's another thing you do to increase the Hispanic student engagement... I said you know I've never given you a directive about how to handle this; we always collaborate; we're always sharing ideas. But I am giving you a directive. You need to start every week reading math. It's always about ideas and best practices, but sometimes you have to give little directives or big directives.

As per the work of such notable scholars as Edmonds (1979), Lezotte (1991), Scribner and Scribner (2001) and Banks (2004), Hispanic principals utilized their own leadership style and appealed to their own culture to engage Hispanic students in their own learning. They vocalized their high expectations for their students, staff, and for

themselves and supported collaborative structures to advance their vision. These principals applied the tenets of multicultural education and effective schools in order to set goals and drive their vision for Hispanic student success within their schools.

### **Finding 9: Hispanic Student Achievement**

Neither school/community demographics nor socioeconomic status determined the potential for Hispanic student success in each of the schools led by the study's participants.

As the scholarly work of Scribner and Scribner (2001) attested, Hispanic students in high-performing schools were able to achieve academic success regardless of the socioeconomic status or the demographics of their schools and communities. The U.S. Census Bureau (2010, 2011a, 2011b) drew a stark portrait of the communities in which each of the schools resided. An average of 32% of the predominantly Hispanic populations in these cities lived below the poverty level. Regardless of these statistics, each of the schools in these communities was able to attain a Texas Education Agency exemplary or recognized accountability status (TEA, 2010a, 2011a).

As evidenced by their AEIS student performance reports, the success of the high schools selected for this study was consistent over three years under the leadership of their current principals. This fact indicated that the leadership and practices of these individuals positively impacted the performance of their students and staff. Mr. Red attested that teachers in his school asked for the autonomy to determine the curriculum to be taught. Mr. Red understood their need to be valued as

professionals. So he trusted his teachers and believed that his particular leadership style allowed teachers to feel empowered, able to help all students succeed. Mr. Red declared,

I think it impacts the students because the teachers feel comfortable in their teaching styles, their individuality, and they feel comfortable with what they're doing. It goes down to the students. You know, the teachers don't feel that, Well, this is the curriculum I have to follow. This is the timeline I need to follow. The teachers know that if they need to adjust, if they need to go long, if they need to extend a lesson or whatever, they've got that option. They've got the flexibility.

You know, their lesson plans that they turn in to me, you know, on a weekly basis, it's not, it's not anything written in stone. They – I mean, so I think that it's all a trickle effect. You know, I make the teachers feel comfortable. I feel the teachers know that I've got faith in them and I know that they're going to do what they need to do to have our students be successful, and they have a great time teaching.

You know, I see my teachers – I may be elaborating a little bit more, but, you know, in other – in other districts where I worked, I saw them teaching the tests. All we did were test-taking strategies and how to bubble, and here, especially at my high school, I've got great teachers teaching subject matter, teaching what the kids need to know. Testing is secondary. You know, there – we do have a couple of weeks where we start – we start reviewing for the test and, you know, test-taking strategies, but that doesn't consume their time. They teach what the kids need to know. And those are all things that I feel have attributed to the success of our school.

While Blue High School is an early college high school, the demographics of that school were similar to those of surrounding schools (AEIS, 2011a). Yet, that particular school had been able to excel while others had not. Economically disadvantaged students with few resources were able to complete their high school requirements and earned their college credits. With great pride, Mr. Blue expressed his perceptions of his own staff and students when he stated,

It's different because the kids make it different; they have a certain expectation and I don't see that in some of the other students. In the other high schools, students may have the same expectations; they feel that they are entitled to be there. I feel that they say, "Well this is it; I have to be here." The kids here have a choice; they make a choice. That's why it's different. The choice to be here. They choose to apply; they are willing to sacrifice and live behind that choice that other students wouldn't have made. Those students that were in band were willing to leave band, orchestra, or sports to succeed in academics.

The same was true for students who attended each of the other four high schools involved in the study. They were also able to overcome the barriers that had plagued other area schools. Much was learned from these schools and their leaders that could possibly impact the success of Hispanic students in other schools.

### **Summary**

As per the findings detailed in this study, every principal demonstrated those tenets that define the implementation of multicultural education, effective schools research, and leadership. Although each principal chose a variety of means to vault their schools toward success, their insightful focus on the achievement of their students remained the primary focus of their efforts. Their words and actions served as evidence to corroborate a culture of high expectations, collaboration, relationships, empowering school culture, equity pedagogy, communication, and a vision for success (Banks, 2004; Cummins, 1984; Edmonds, 1979; Freire, 1970b; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Reyes et al., 1999).

The relationship between the identified themes in the study and the performance of Hispanic students in these schools was clearly articulated by the words, experiences, and perceptions of the principals who really believed that their

attitudes and practices supported the achievement of their students. They vehemently espoused the importance of reciting their own stories as examples of how individuals can succeed even if the odds do not seem to be in their favor. Committing themselves to assisting all students in their schools, particularly their Hispanic students, these principals felt a responsibility and an obligation to advocate for the success of their students through the roles that they played as principals of their schools. They realized the impact that their leadership had upon the performance of their teaching and learning communities. Thus, they set a vision for their own performance as principals of their schools, understanding that the culture and diversity of their students had to be acknowledged and valued. In the words of Mr. Blue, to be successful as principals of Hispanic students, they had to

Have an understanding of the culture. You need to know where your kids are coming from. You have to have an open door policy for those parents who have concerns, cause again, ask those students who travel 14 miles on a daily basis not knowing what is going to happen.

Again, we look at some of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation, the parents haven't experienced this type of expectation with this type of rigor, this type of course; they know that they go to a regular high school, and that at the end of the day, they go back. Being that we are entrusted with their futures, there is very little room for failure here. I think that you need to know your parents; you need to communicate that you're committed to the excellence of their kid's welfare, academically and socially, by them sending to this school which is new.

It's a new concept because we are only five years old now. A lot of parents haven't adapted to the concept that they are doing high school and college work at the same time; so you need to know your community and your parents. You need to communicate constantly with your parents, assure them and reassure them that they are making the right decision by allowing them to apply to your school, and that once they are selected, that it's an investment for them to be here.



When I interview a parent and kids, I haven't had one say that they don't... want the best for their kids, to be prepared to go to college...many, many, many parents regardless of their background, there is no doubt that one is going to go to college....You know because of the proximity we have with Mexico, knowing the Mexican culture, being of Mexican descent, you know that there are certain things that actually are catalysts for things that happen in your school.

There will be a day when a lot of students will be absent, and you'll ask why. Since its Dec. 12, El Dia de la Virgin, and they go to give thanks to God because they have good...certain things happening for them. Since the kids are going to be out, you need to understand on certain days they are TEA approved absences, but you need to understand that on certain days it's our Hispanic, our Mexican culture, to do certain things and you need to know that.

You need to be able to relate to parents, and again grandparents are very appreciative everywhere, but in the Mexican culture and the Hispanic community, the grandparents are revered, sometimes even more than the parents, because they are the ones that traditions have been handed down to from year to year, from generation to generation, and you need to be aware; you need to know when there's a death in the family, it impacts the whole family including your students in your high school.

You need to know if they are economically disadvantaged. On occasion, they are going to be wearing the same pair of jeans, the same shirts are not going to be washed, that sometimes the dress code might not be 100% there. And then you need to ask, "Why not be able to have that open communication and trust between student and the parent and/or yourself or the counselor or the parent liaison," enough to say or the nurse to say, "Mijo I saw you with the same shirt" and for the kid to be able to say, "Well, we do not have money to pay the light bill, and we don't have soap."

"My mom's at home"; "My mom has been deported." I've had things like that happen with my kids here, having a 16 or 17 year old to be head of the house because they are legally here, except the parents and the parents have been deported, and for the parents to be able to call...and say, "What do I do Mr. Blue?" Do I keep him in your school, or do I ask him to come back and live over here?...and having to call social services, to call Sacred Heart Orphanage to say you know that these kids are in my school – they are the best thing, but they need help.

Knowing your community and your parents, I think and having a passion for what you do and really wanting to make your community, your Hispanic community a better place, I think that these are some of the skills and things you need to have in order to be successful...and for them to see that passion. I tell my teachers I have never ever written a speech for anything I do. I speak from my heart, and I think I have a passion for what I do. I love what I do.

The words spoken by Mr. Blue most certainly reflected the passion and the vision that he held for his students. It was as if this man was like the very students whom he served. His dreams were those of his students; his own experiences and life story served to define his advocacy and the desire to empower his students. As like the other four principals selected for this study, Mr. Blue mirrored the belief that his Hispanic students could succeed if they were just given the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the educational experiences and leadership behaviors of five high school principals in their efforts to increase Hispanic student achievement in high-achieving high schools in South Texas. The study was designed to consider the perceptions and experiences of each of the participants in the context of the practice of multicultural education and school leadership. The researcher conjectured that to effect positive change and increase Hispanic academic success throughout secondary schools, educators had to first gain an understanding of how their roles, as school leaders, could significantly impact the performance of their teachers and Hispanic students.

In light of current national and state Hispanic academic achievement trends and the projected increase in the Hispanic student population within Texas schools, the study sought to redefine educator priorities in order to meet the needs of such students and multiply the potential for academic success in similar schools. Such reflection required the scholarly consideration of the responses to the research questions guiding this study:

1. What are the experiences of high school principals who serve in high-achieving Hispanic schools?
2. What are the perceptions of high school principals regarding their success with Hispanic students in high-achieving schools in South Texas?

## **Chapter Summaries**

The challenges posed by increasingly rigorous state and federal accountability standards demanded a comprehensive understanding of the research regarding effective schools and the impact of leadership upon student achievement. Thus, the study of leadership practices that encourage and sustain Hispanic student achievement, as evidenced by the perspectives of principals leading successful high schools, gave direction and focus to the study.

Chapter I of the study provided an introduction, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the theoretical framework, the definitions, the assumptions, the delimitations, and the organization of the study. Such an overview assisted the researcher toward a more focused review of all components of the study in the context of the identified statement of the problem.

Chapter II included a current description of student performance in the State and in the Region One ESC area. A review of the literature targeted the research citing Hispanic student achievement, the history of multicultural education, and culturally relevant pedagogy grounded within a critical theory perspective. Studies, defining the critical attributes of multicultural education as well as its impact upon student achievement, school climate, and school teaching/learning communities, were also explored through the literature of scholars in the field. Additionally, Chapter II also reviewed the research regarding effective schools and leadership.

Chapter III included a description of the selection of the research design. Discussion regarding the study's sample, data collection, data analysis, validity, credibility and reliability/transferability was also included in Chapter III of this study. The justification for utilizing a qualitative research design for this study was included in this chapter. Understanding how this research method was applicable to the study gave the researcher the opportunity to consider the methodology that was necessary to create meaningful connections for the collection and analysis of data.

Chapter IV presented a set of profiles for all who participated in the study. The profiles enabled the reader to become better acquainted with the research population and the context in which the study was framed. The profiles included data gathered to better define the Region One Education Service Center area, the communities in which the schools were located, the schools and the principals who were selected for the study, and the researcher who conducted the study. The profiles added the depth that was needed to identify those factors and opportunities that were available to create and sustain Hispanic student success.

Chapter V presented the research findings that emerged from the data that were collected throughout the course of the study. Utilizing the interview and observation data, as well as the artifacts and researcher's notes that were collected, several themes were identified and emerged in the analysis of the data collected. Multicultural education, effective schools, and leadership were revealed as the primary categories of this study.

Subcategories surfacing from the data included high expectations, collaboration, relationships, an empowering school culture, equity pedagogy, communication, a vision for success, effective Hispanic principal leadership, and Hispanic student achievement. Each of these themes was validated in the scholarly work of those who advocated for the integration of multicultural education, effective schools research, and culturally responsive leadership into the daily routines of all schools.

Chapter VI provided a summary of the research, conclusions, and recommendations that were identified as a result of what was learned in the study. References and appendices are also included in the organization of the research after Chapter VI.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings in the study corroborated the work of many scholars who have studied effective schools and leadership. What was important in the study was the potential connections that were noted between the findings and the implementation of multicultural education within the context of Hispanic student achievement. In particular, the findings included evidence to support that:

1. *High expectations*: Each of the five principals fiercely articulated, supported, and fostered a culture of high expectations within their organizations and in their interactions with their teaching and learning communities (Banks, 2004; Edmonds, 1979; Fullan, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lezotte, 1991; Scribner & Scribner, 2001).

2. *Collaboration*: Collaboration, among staff, students, and the extended learning community, was a designated priority and a means to accomplish all goals identified by each principal and staff of the high schools in the study (Banks, 2004; Edmonds, 1979; Fullan, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lezotte, 1991; Scribner & Scribner, 2001).
3. *Relationships*: Principals in each of the five high schools understood the significant value of developing, nurturing, and maintaining productive, caring relationships with their teaching and learning communities (Banks, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Scribner & Scribner, 2001).
4. *Empowering school culture*: Principals understood the value of creating a school culture that empowered students and staff to aspire toward quality teaching and learning, self-motivation, determination, responsibility, and advocacy for the opportunity to learn (Banks, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lezotte, 1991; Scribner & Scribner, 2001).
5. *Equity pedagogy*: Principals understood and worked vehemently to provide equity pedagogy that addressed the needs of all students, particularly the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse (Banks, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lezotte, 1991; Scribner & Scribner, 2001).
6. *Communication*: Principals understood the power of varied forms of communication in shaping and supporting the mission of their schools among their teaching and learning communities (Banks, 2004; Fullan, 2005; Lezotte, 1991).

7. *Vision for success*: Principals in these high-performing schools developed and steadfastly articulated a clear vision of success for their schools through their words and interactions with their teaching and learning communities (Edmonds, 1979; Fullan, 2005; Lezotte, 1991).
8. *Hispanic principal leadership*: Hispanic principals provided unique, relevant, and effective leadership in support of their Hispanic students (Edmonds, 1979; Fullan, 2005; Lezotte, 1991; Reyes & Scribner, 1995; Scribner & Scribner, 2001).
9. *Hispanic student achievement*: Neither school/community demographics nor socioeconomic status determined the potential for Hispanic student success in each of the schools led by the study's participants (Edmonds, 1979; Fullan, 2005; Lezotte, 1991; Reyes & Scribner, 1995; Scribner & Scribner, 2001).

Regardless of their socioeconomic status or student group designations, the findings revealed that all of the identified high schools and their principals fostered a culture of high expectations and rigor. The presence of these subcategories depicted a mindset, a routine, and a process that was demonstrated in a variety of ways by the school principals and their stakeholders. Such a finding amply substantiated what has been written about high expectations and a rigorous curriculum in the literature of multicultural education, effective schools, and leadership.



Findings from this study also corroborated effective schools research and the implementation of collaborative learning communities to plan for effective instruction. The five participants in this study visibly demonstrated an ability to create school cultures conducive to teaching and learning. They were able to bring people together in meaningful and relevant ways to facilitate academic success of their Hispanic students. The principals in this study interpreted their roles as facilitators who could secure the necessary resources, including time and professional development, to ensure the development and delivery of quality rigorous instruction to prepare all students for the high expectations of success espoused by their leadership.

The participants in this study demonstrated an acute understanding of the value of professional learning communities. They believed that learning communities enabled an ongoing professional dialogue regarding the planning of instruction, student progress monitoring, and building teacher capacity in those areas where a need had been identified. Thus, the principals found creative ways in which to incorporate collaborative planning time into their school schedules.

Evidence collected from this study indicated that all schools led by the selected participants exhibited significant numbers of positive and productive relationships. These relationships manifested themselves into effective planning of instruction, awareness of individual student needs, and the fostering of supportive community relationships to enrich student learning. The value of positive relationships also proved beneficial to students who, ultimately, gained support for their learning.

A culture of self-empowerment was evidenced in the actions, structures, activities, and words that the subjects of this study shared with the researcher. Each of the principals in the study allowed teachers to grow and become teacher leaders, as they participated in their professional learning communities, made decisions about instructional initiatives, monitored the progress of their students. Findings also indicated that principals selected for this study encouraged staff to monitor their own progress as they developed their content and pedagogical expertise and interacted with their students and the learning community.

All principals selected to participate in this study were cognizant of the need to provide curricula and pedagogy that was appropriate for the instruction of linguistically and culturally diverse students. They organized their schools in ways that provided access to quality instruction from teachers who valued the diversity of the students in their classrooms. School schedules reflected opportunities for students to access additional assistance or who wanted to pursue their own investigations. Therefore, diversity in abilities, interests, and cultures were honored and celebrated in each of the schools.

Findings for this study also indicated that principals recognized that communication with all stakeholders was as an essential facet of school success. Some schools used traditional methods of communication, while other schools utilized social media to inform and draw the community into their learning partnerships. Principals established a variety of ways to communicate their vision and goals for

their schools, students, and staff. Media was also used to foster community and parental involvement at all of the schools, regardless of their size or demographics.

The five principals included in this study definitively demonstrated a variety of ways in which they could set the pace and reinforce a clear vision for their schools. They all made learning a personal experience. Sharing stories about their own journeys into education, as former students, teachers, and principals of their own schools, served to reinforce the vision for success each principal referenced in their schools. Thus, the recognition of the value of education in their own lives served as a springboard to communicate the importance of schooling for the Hispanic community. The five principals strongly felt that their mission was to open doors for Hispanic students who were often marginalized. Working on behalf of these students came with a price; each student in turn was to “pay it forward” and move the next generation through the doorway toward opportunity.

### **Conclusions**

The key findings from this study support the following conclusions, spanning across the three identified categories: (a) multicultural education practices, (b) effective schools research, and (c) leadership. Principals of high-achieving high schools serving Hispanic students:

1. Integrated and applied the principles of multicultural education, effective schools research, and culturally responsive leadership to create a culture of high expectations and self-empowerment;

2. Utilized a variety of school structures and strategies to create collaborative learning communities to plan for effective instruction and to learn together to improve their content and pedagogical expertise;
3. Developed and nurtured relationships with all teaching and learning communities to inspire trust, teamwork, and shared goals;
4. Vehemently and persistently articulated their vision for success and high expectations in multiple ways for various audiences;
5. Routinely monitored student and teacher performance;
6. Shared their own educational experiences and personal stories to create relationships, relevance, and emphasis in valuing an education;
7. Modeled their respect and valuing of diversity through culturally responsive practices within their schools and out in the community;
8. Created opportunities for student success requires work, planning, and steadfastness;
9. Accepted that the responsibility for student learning comes with assuming a leadership role in their schools.

### **Recommendations**

The significance of this study lies in the potential to impact Hispanic student achievement by developing school leaders and creating school structures that support culturally and linguistically diverse students. Sharing and cultivating these identified leadership practices with other educators can help support Hispanic students during

their academic journeys. The following recommendations are offered for consideration in developing culturally responsive practices and leaders:

1. Researchers and practicing high school leaders need to continue identifying those culturally responsive leadership proficiencies and behaviors that address the culturally and linguistically diverse students who occupy Texas classrooms in ever-increasing numbers.
2. School leaders need to provide opportunities to learn in schools that welcome and honor diversity.
3. Region One ESC schools should embrace culturally responsive leadership and offer professional development in this area to all practicing and potential school leaders and classroom educators.
4. Professional collaborative communities should initiate conversations that include culturally responsive pedagogy in their planning of instruction to prepare all students for academic success and to create classroom environments that welcome and celebrate diversity.

Throughout this study, the researcher observed the participants and learned about their own personal stories that inspired their own cultural responsiveness. Although the participants demonstrated a basic understanding of cultural responsive leadership, there is a need for additional research on the topic in order to school all educators. The following topics may help to extend the findings from this study and provide additional opportunities for application in more schools:

- A study describing teacher culturally responsive beliefs and attitudes in high-achieving schools serving Hispanic high school students;
- A study describing the culturally responsive leadership practices, beliefs, and attitudes of the Superintendent of Schools, and
- A study exploring the culturally responsive beliefs, values, and attitudes of Hispanic students in high-achieving schools.

Students spend the majority of their days and weeks in schools all over Texas.

The school experience for some is memorialized in yearbooks, filled with smiling faces and bright futures at some distant university. However, for many students, the school experience is one of despair and distress, with little hope for a better tomorrow and no credentials to empower them in the future workplace.

As adults and as educators, we are responsible for each of these students and what is to become of them as they make their way out of our classrooms. Thus, it is important to fully grasp the impact that today's decisions have upon these students, even after they leave their schools. Finding solutions to such challenges is not always easy, but as graduation requirements become more rigorous, there is a need to consider what we should be prepared to sacrifice to enable and empower all students, and in particular, the largest growing segment of the Texas student body, our Hispanic students. Who will be there to open the door that will lead to a more hopeful tomorrow? Culturally responsive leadership is the first step in clearing the way for the success of every student who steps into our classrooms, but it must be learned and it must be practiced to make a difference for all.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**IRB APPROVAL**

## CONSENT FORM

### Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying high school principal leadership and the practice of multicultural education in high-achieving schools serving Hispanic students. The purpose of this study is to explore the educational experiences and leadership behaviors of five high school principals in their efforts to increase Hispanic student achievement in high-achieving high schools in South Texas. You were selected to be a possible participant because, for the past three consecutive years, you have been the principal of an AEIS exemplary or recognized secondary campus in which Hispanic students have demonstrated similarly ranked academic success.

### What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Answer a semi-structured set of questions during two scheduled interviews and,
2. Allow the Principal Investigator to shadow and observe your interactions with staff, students and the educational community during a typical day at your school.

### Schedule:

Day One	Initial Interview
Day Two	Shadow and observe Principal on campus
Day Three	Second Interview

- The two interviews will take place on your campus, at sites deemed appropriate by the Principal Investigator and you, the participant.
- The first interview will take approximately two hours of your time. The second interview, preceded by the observation, will take approximately one hour.
- The Principal Investigator will shadow and observe your interactions with staff, students and the educational community during a typical day at your school.

Your interviews will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy of your responses.

### What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

### What are the possible benefits of this study?

The possible benefits of participation include the possible identification of replicable practices and leadership behaviors in the practice of multicultural education as a means to improve Hispanic student achievement.

Texas A&M University IRB Approval	From: 03/09/12
IRB Protocol # 2011-0104	To: 02/28/13
	Authorized by: KR

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, other secondary instructional leaders may benefit from the identification of successful practices and leadership behaviors that may be implemented within their own schools as a means to increase the academic achievement of Hispanic students.

**Do I have to participate?**

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

**Who will know about my participation in this research study?**

This study is confidential; information gathered will be protected. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity and that of your school and school district. The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored and secured in a locked file, of which only the Principal Investigator, Sylvia Rios, will have access.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the Principal Investigator, Sylvia Rios, will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for only the time needed to fully complete the study and then erased.

**Whom do I contact with questions about the research?** If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact

Sylvia G. Rios  
(xxx)xxx-xxxx or (xxx)xxx-xxxx  
xxxxxxxxxxxx@yahoo.com

**Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?**

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tam.u.edu

**Signature**

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

**Signature of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Texas A&M University IRB Approval	From: 03/09/12
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**APPENDIX B**  
**IRB APPROVED FORMS**

## RECRUITMENT LETTER

Sylvia G. Rios  
P. O. Box xxxxxx  
xxxxx, Texas 7xxxx

(xxx) xxx-xxxx Cell  
(xxx) xxx-xxxx Home

Greetings Professional Colleague:

My name is Sylvia G. Rios, and I am a Texas A&M University doctoral candidate researching the leadership of successful high school principals whose schools have achieved a Texas Education Agency Exemplary or Recognized rating for three consecutive years. You have been identified as one of these outstanding instructional leaders! Therefore, I want to congratulate you and your staff for earning such a distinction for the past three years!

My research also involves exploring those practices and leadership behaviors that secondary school leaders believe have supported the achievement of diverse student populations. Once again, your school has demonstrated outstanding performance outcomes, especially for your Hispanic students. Congratulations are certainly well-deserved!

Because you and your school have done so well, I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that will take a little of your time, but which may significantly impact the success of many other students throughout the state. The study, entitled ***A Case Study of High School Principal Leadership in the Practice of Multicultural Education in High-Achieving Schools Serving Hispanic Students in South Texas***, involves your participation in two scheduled interviews and an observation of your interactions with your educational community, in the performance of your duties during a typical day at your school.

The first interview will take no longer than two hours, at a date, time and on-campus site of your choosing. Shortly after the first interview, I will shadow and observe your interactions with your educational community. The second interview will be scheduled following the observation and will take no longer than one hour of your time.

### RECRUITMENT LETTER (continued)

I have attached a consent form for your review and consideration. Your participation in this study involves minimal risk and is strictly voluntary and confidential; you may elect to withdraw at any time, for any or no reason. Additional information regarding this study may be obtained from me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or (xxx)xxx-xxxx. You may also email me at xxxxxxxx@yahoo.com with any information requests that you may have regarding this study.

I hope to visit with you soon as I sincerely believe your participation in this study will certainly add to the body of knowledge that is so necessary to ensure the success of all students in our Texas classrooms! I look forward to meeting you and sharing the wonderful and exciting success story of which you have been a part!

My congratulations and best wishes for another successful school year are extended to you, your staff, and students!

Sincere Regards,

Sylvia G. Rios

## TELEPHONE SCRIPT

**Principal Investigator:** Good Morning/Afternoon. My name is Sylvia G. Rios, and I am a Texas A&M University doctoral candidate researching the leadership of successful high school principals whose schools have achieved a Texas Education Agency Exemplary or Recognized rating for three consecutive years. You have been identified as one of these outstanding instructional leaders! Therefore, I want to congratulate you and your staff for earning such a distinction for the past three years!

My research also involves exploring those practices and leadership behaviors that high school leaders believe have supported the achievement of diverse student populations. Once again, your school has demonstrated outstanding performance outcomes, especially for your Hispanic students. Congratulations are certainly well-deserved!

Because you and your school have done so well, I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that will take a little of your time, but which may significantly impact the success of many other students throughout the state. The study entitled, ***A Case Study of High School Principal Leadership in the Practice of Multicultural Education in High-Achieving Schools Serving Hispanic Students in South Texas***, involves your participation in two scheduled interviews and an observation of your interactions with your educational community, in the performance of your duties during a typical day at your school.

We can review the consent form together today, or you may decide to review it at a later time on your own. Your participation in this study involves minimal risk and is strictly voluntary and confidential; you may elect to withdraw at any time and for any reason. Please feel free to call me at (xxx)xxx-xxxx or (xxx) xxx-xxxx for any information that you may need to make an informed decision regarding your participation in this study. You may also email me at xxxxxxxxxx@yahoo.com if this is more convenient for you.

I hope to visit with you soon to discuss the specifics of the interviews and observation. I sincerely believe your participation in this study will certainly add to the body of knowledge that is so necessary to ensure the success of all students in our Texas classrooms! I look forward to meeting you and sharing the wonderful and exciting success story of which you have been a part!

## INFORMATION SHEET

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this form is to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying the practice of multicultural education in successful secondary schools. The purpose of this study is to explore the educational experiences and leadership behaviors of five high school principals in their efforts to increase Hispanic student achievement in high-achieving high schools in South Texas. You were selected to be a possible participant because, for the past three consecutive years, you have been the principal of an AEIS exemplary or recognized high school campus in which Hispanic students have demonstrated similarly ranked academic success.

### **What will I be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer a semi-structured set of questions during two scheduled interviews, to take place on campus, at sites to be determined by you and the Principal Investigator.

You will also be asked to allow the Principal Investigator to shadow and observe you, performing your duties as a high school principal, during a regular school day at your campus.

The first interview, on Day 1, will take approximately two hours of your time. The Principal Investigator will then shadow and observe you performing your duties during one regular school day. A second interview will follow the observation and will take approximately sixty minutes.

Your interview responses will be audio recorded.

### **What are the risks involved in this study?**

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

### **What are the possible benefits of this study?**

The potential benefits include the possible identification of replicable practices and leadership behaviors in the practice of multicultural education as a means to improve Hispanic student achievement.

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, other secondary instructional leaders may benefit from the identification of practices that may be implemented within their own schools as a means to increase the academic achievement of Hispanic students.

## INFORMATION SHEET (continued)

### **Do I have to participate?**

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

### **Who will know about my participation in this research study?**

This study is confidential; information gathered will be protected. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity and that of your school district. The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored and secured in a locked file, of which only the Principal Investigator, Sylvia Rios, will have access.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the Principal Investigator, Sylvia Rios, will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for only the time needed to fully complete the study, and then they will be erased.

### **Who do I contact with questions about the research?**

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact

Sylvia G. Rios  
(xxx) xxx-xxxx or (xxx) xxx-xxxx  
xxxxxxxxxxx@yahoo.com

### **Who do I contact about my rights as a research participant?**

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu).

### **Participation**

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. If you would like to be in the study, please read, review, and sign the consent form provided to you by the Principal Investigator. If you have any additional questions regarding the study or your participation in the study, please make sure that you pose these questions before you sign the consent form.

## CONSENT PROTOCOL

A Consent Protocol outlining the consent process includes the following:

1. **Verbiage used by principal investigator is conversational, friendly, and straight forward in obtaining consent.**

The language in the recruitment letter and telephone script are similar in nature and lay the foundation for subsequent conversations regarding the research project.

Good Morning/Afternoon. My name is Sylvia G. Rios, and I am a Texas A & M - College Station doctoral student investigating the leadership of successful secondary school principals whose schools have achieved a Texas Education Agency Exemplary or Recognized rating for three consecutive years. You have been identified as one of these outstanding secondary school instructional leaders! Therefore, I want to congratulate you and your staff for earning such a distinction for the past three years!

My research also involves investigating those practices that secondary school leaders believe have supported the achievement of diverse student populations. Once again, your school has demonstrated outstanding performance outcomes for your Hispanic students. Congratulations are certainly well-deserved!

Because you and your school have done so well, I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that will take a little of your time, but which may significantly impact the success of many other students throughout the state. The study involves your participation in a scheduled interview, which will take no longer than two hours, at a date, time and site of your choosing.

You may select a campus or off-campus setting in which to conduct the interview, and we can work together to schedule an appropriate time to accommodate your calendar and campus responsibilities. No other interview will be scheduled for this project; however, I would like to ask that you extend me the opportunity to clarify any responses that you may give, should clarification become necessary.

We can review the consent form together today, or you may decide to review it at a later time on your own. Your participation in this study is voluntary and confidential, and you may elect to withdraw at any time. Please feel free to call me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or (xxx) xxx-xxxx for any information that you may need to make an informed decision regarding your participation in this study. You may also email me at xxxxxxxxxxxx@yahoo.com if this is more convenient for you.

I hope to visit with you soon to discuss the specifics of the interview. Please know that I am wholeheartedly convinced that your participation will certainly add to the body of knowledge that is so necessary to ensure the success of all students in our Texas classrooms! I look forward to visiting with you and sharing the wonderful and exciting success story of which you have been a part!

## CONSENT PROTOCOL (continued)

In addition, the principal investigator will have a telephone script for potential participants contacted by telephone and an information sheet for potential participants contacted by on a direct person-to-person basis. Both the telephone script and information sheet will have a brief description of the research, activities in which participants will participate, the time commitment, and Principal Investigator's contact information. If potential participants agree to participate in the study, then an interview date, place, and time, convenient to both the Principal Investigator and Participant will be set.

2. **At what point in the process the consent form or information sheet will be distributed and the verbiage used in leading up to its presentation.**

The recruitment letter, information sheet, and consent form will be distributed in the initial mailing and direct person-to-person contact. The consent form will be reviewed and discussed with potential participants in the initial telephone and/or direct person-to-person contact.

All potential participants will demonstrate their initial consent to participate in the study by voluntarily agreeing to an interview and by scheduling a meeting with the Principal Investigator. A Participant's presence at the interview will also demonstrate consent.

The Principal Investigator will inform Participants that they cannot participate in the study until they signed the written consent form. All consent forms will be secured in an envelope and kept under lock and key to maintain the confidentiality of all Participants.

3. **Amount of time allocated for the subject to review the consent documentation.**

Participants will have at least two different opportunities (initial contact and day of interview) to review the consent documentation. Before the interview process begins, participants will be asked to review and sign the consent form. However, the Principal Investigator will reassure participants that participation in the study is completely voluntary, and if they choose to leave at any point, they may without any consequences.

4. **The identification of other points within the protocol where consent will be reaffirmed and how this may be achieved. Depending on the length and nature of the study, the IRB may require consent to be formally reaffirmed. Lengthy studies involving children or the cognitively impaired are of particular concern.**

Verbal and written consent will be reaffirmed immediately prior to the face-to-face interview. In addition, the primary investigator will reassure participants that participation in this study is completely voluntary and if they choose to leave at any point, they may without any consequences.



## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Describe your educational experiences.
- Describe your school.
- Tell me why you believe your school is successful.
- What instructional practices have you implemented to increase Hispanic student achievement in your school?
- Describe a typical day for you as a principal of your school.
- What role do you believe you played in the success of your school and Hispanic students?
- How would you describe your leadership style?
- In your opinion, how does your leadership style impact the achievement of your Hispanic students?
- How do you communicate with your Hispanic students and parents?
- What have you done to build a team of educators focused on increasing the achievement of your Hispanic students?
- In your opinion, what characteristics must an effective principal of Hispanic students possess? Why?
- If you could change anything about your school to increase Hispanic student achievement, what would it be? Why?
- If you could change anything about yourself to improve Hispanic student achievement, what would it be? Why?