

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY TEXAS EDUCATION SERVICE
CENTERS TO PROMOTE IMPROVEMENT IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
--A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY**

A Record of Study

by

JERRY PAUL AUSBURN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

August 2010

Major Subject: Educational Administration

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY TEXAS EDUCATION SERVICE
CENTERS TO PROMOTE IMPROVEMENT IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
--A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY**

A Record of Study

by

JERRY PAUL AUSBURN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	John Hoyle Mario Torres
Committee Members,	Virginia Collier Ben Welch
Head of Department,	Fredrick Nafukho

August 2010

Major Subject: Educational Administration

ABSTRACT

Professional Services Provided by Texas Education Service Centers to Promote Improvement in Texas Public Schools--A Descriptive Study. (August 2010)

Jerry Paul Ausburn, B.S.; M.Ed., Stephen F. Austin State University

Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. John Hoyle
Dr. Mario Torres

This descriptive study of the twenty regional Education Service Centers in Texas is an exploratory analysis of programs and services that promote school improvement. Data collected from each service center website enabled the researcher to determine which programs and services are available to school districts and also allowed the researcher to analyze the similarities and differences of the programs and services among the twenty ESCs. The study also compared the numbers of programs provided by each service center along with the number of school districts, schools, and students served by Education Service Centers. The data revealed that Education Service Centers serve different numbers of students and districts and they assist schools through a variety of special program support, state and federal funding issues, educator certification programs, and professional development training that are designed to support the teaching and learning process in school districts. Although the number of programs and services vary among the twenty Education Service Centers, they do provide similar programs and services that are effective and provide sustainable systemic support for school improvement throughout their region particularly when it comes to statewide initiatives and areas of federal and state compliance issues and the improvement of

student achievement. Throughout the state, Education Service Centers prove to be a valuable resource to school districts seeking solutions from knowledgeable and experienced educational professionals.

In conclusion, Education Service centers provide a variety of professional services that can assist superintendents, principals, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other district staff in assisting students throughout their district in achieving the highest possible levels of success in every aspect of the school day. However, it is highly critical that both school leaders and Education Service Centers communicate effectively with each other about the needs of the districts and the services that are available to promote school improvement.

DEDICATION

For Laura, Abby, and Emily. I hope this experience sets a positive example about the rewards of persistence and effort for you in whichever educational and career paths you choose. Thanks for all of your patience, support, and love!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members and professors for their support and guidance throughout my studies at Texas A&M University. My greatest appreciation goes to Dr. John Hoyle, Dr. Mario Torres, Dr. Virginia Collier, and Dr. Ben Welch.

I would also like express appreciation for my academic advisors, Joyce Nelson and Avery Pavliska, for their assistance in surviving the process.

Another special thanks goes out to my friend, classmate, and advisor, Dr. Ludovic Sourdot for your guidance and support throughout some of the most critical times of the record of study process. A special thanks also goes to Dr. Toby York of Goose Creek CISD.

A special thanks goes out to all of my Superintendents, Bob Wells, Tom Bowman, Dr. Carol Ann Bonds, and Dr. Guy Sconzo. Additionally, I would like to thank Principal Kenneth Royal of Clear Lake Elementary, Sam McDonald of Corrigan-Camden High School, Larry Cooper of Kingwood Park High School, and Al Richard of GCCISD.

Additionally, I would like to thank the twenty Education Service Centers in Texas who were included this study, especially Mr. Thomas Poe and the staff at Region VI in Huntsville, Texas for years of support. My greatest appreciation also goes out to Dr. Mel Finkenberg, Dr. Daryl Morris, and Dr. Sandra Harris for being great professors and mentors, and to Dr. Jerry Maze for helping me locate some excellent resources on Education Service Centers.

Finally, I would also like to thank Dr. Mike McKinney for leading me to Texas A&M University, and for years of tremendous support. I truly wish all of you the very best!

NOMENCLATURE

AEIS	Academic Excellence Indicator System
AESA	Association of Educational Service Agencies
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
RESCs	Regional Education Service Centers
NCLB	“No Child Left Behind”
SBOE	State Board of Education
TAKS	Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TEC	Texas Education Code
TEKS	Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
NOMENCLATURE	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
LIST OF TABLES	xi
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Problem.....	2
Overview of ESCs.....	3
Overview of the Roles of ESCs.....	5
Theoretical Foundation	8
Statement of the Problem.....	11
Purpose of the Study	13
Research Questions	14
Operational Definitions.....	14
Assumptions	16
Limitations of the Study.....	16
Significance of the Study	17
Summary	17
II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	20
Overview of Chapter II	20
Influence of NCLB.....	21
Nationwide Network of Support	21
Accountability Issues and ESCs.....	26
Prioritization and Delivery of ESC Services.....	30
First-Hand Accounts of Texas School Leaders.....	32
Leadership Capacity and Data-driven Decisions	37

CHAPTER	Page
ESCs, School-Community Relationships, and Student Performance ..	53
Summary of the Review of Literature.....	68
III METHODOLOGY.....	71
Research Design.....	71
Population.....	72
Instrumentation.....	73
Procedures	73
Data Analysis	74
Summary	75
IV ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	76
Validity and Reliability	77
Research Findings	77
Administrative Services	79
Adult and Safety Education.....	79
Business Services	80
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	80
Computer Services	81
Internal Operations.....	82
Leadership Development and Professional Services	82
Special Programs.....	83
Compliance and Monitoring.....	83
Technology Services	84
External Support Options.....	85
Summary of Findings.....	95
V CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	99
Implications.....	108
Recommendations for Future Research	109
REFERENCES	113
APPENDIX.....	121
VITA	161

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		Page
1	Geographical Map of Regional ESCs	4
2	Comparison of the Number of Districts Served	88
3	Percentage of Districts Served	88
4	Total Number of Students Served	89
5	Percentage of Students Served	89
6	Approximate Number of Services Provided	90
7	Percentage of Programs Provided	90

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	Overview of Texas ESCs	5
2	Comparison of Number of Districts and Students Served	86
3	Comparison of Number of Departments and Services Provided	87
4	ESCs Serving Urban and Rural Schools	91
5	Common Areas of Similar Support Provided by ESC	92
6	Differences in Categorization of Curriculum Support by ESC	93
7	Comparison of ESC Services for Large Urban Schools	94
8	Comparison of ESC Services for Smaller Rural Schools	94

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Before the age of accountability in schools and the issues of inadequate school funding that are present today, Education Service Centers in Texas were established in 1965 after the 59th Texas Legislature authorized the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) to establish media centers throughout the state. During these initial stages, one of the main functions of the centers was to serve as regional media centers for public schools in Texas (www.esc13.net). Over the next 2 years, the SBOE divided the state into 20 individual regions in order for each media center to more effectively serve schools throughout their region. Soon after, the state received much-needed federal support that came with Title III of the U.S. Elementary and Secondary Education Act which assisted them with the initial start-up costs in order to establish supplementary educational centers (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2002).

During 1966-1967, each regional center received \$67,524 from the Title III planning grant. Additional funds were to be obtained from school districts through a cooperative agreement in each region. During the 60th Texas Legislature Session, a call for the expansion of Regional Service Centers was initiated and the roles of each service centers were designated in order to coordinate educational planning for the region. Seventeen years later in 1984, House Bill 72 mandated that Regional Service Centers work closer with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and local school districts in order to improve the quality of educational services throughout district programs, establishing consistency

This record of study follows the model of the *Journal of Educational Research*.

and uniformity. In January 1992, the SBOE revised the rules of operation for the Education Service Centers by allowing the commissioner of education to participate in the selection and approval process of the appointment of executive directors over each individual region center. The duty of the commissioner was to annually evaluate each director's performance and approve each service center's annual budget (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

The 75th Legislature reauthorized the continuation of Regional Service Centers by passing Senate Bill 1158 in 1997. Now in 2010, Regional Education Service Centers serve over 4 million students, and over 550,000 district administrative and campus personnel. More importantly, each Education Service Center plays an important role in assisting school districts in achieving higher levels of student performance and meeting both state and federal accountability requirements (www.ed.gov).

Background of the Problem

Today's schools are faced with many demands that were not obviously present in past decades. Problems of maintaining safe, secure, positive learning environments, increasing the level of parental involvement, improving student discipline, meeting the needs of students, and ultimately improving student performance among all student groups have increased the challenge for school administrators. Schools are laboring to establish and maintain a positive school climate that supports quality decision-making processes and maximizes all available resources in order to focus more on what is best for the students they are serving. Additionally, they seek to utilize comprehensive staff development programs based on the needs of the staff and students,

ultimately fostering a more proactive and mutually supportive partnership between the school, home, and the community in order to truly improve student achievement.

Education Service Centers seek to provide external support to public school districts and charter schools that will effectively meet the needs of each individual district and campus within their respective region. This includes services such as on-site staff development trainings that promote the professional growth of individual educators and administrators, administration and leadership skills, assisting districts with certification issues, cost-saving shared service arrangements, special education compliance issues, technology upgrades and applications, information management services, and with instructional support and curriculum.

Overview of ESCs

As a basic overview for those who are utilizing this study in order to gain a better understanding of the value of Education Service Centers, it is important to understand the geographical location and the number of districts and the number of students they serve as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.



Figure 1. Geographical Map of Regional ESCs. <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/ESC>

Table 1. Overview of Texas ESCs

ESC's	Location	# Districts	# Students
1	Edinburg, TX	37	383,360
2	Corpus Christi, TX	48	105,512
3	Victoria, TX	41	52,491
4	Houston, TX	54	1,031,462
5	Beaumont, TX	35	80,712
6	Huntsville, TX	57	161,061
7	Kilgore, TX	106	164,246
8	Mount Pleasant, TX	47	56,778
9	Wichita Falls, TX	38	38,889
10	Richardson, TX	80	710,590
11	Fort Worth, TX	77	510,207
12	Waco, TX	77	148,516
13	Austin, TX	60	345,154
14	Abilene, TX	42	47,206
15	San Angelo, TX	43	45,387
16	Amarillo, TX	63	80,040
17	Lubbock, TX	57	78,636
18	Midland, TX	33	75,202
19	El Paso, TX	12	173,275
20	San Antonio, TX	50	379,879

Overview of the Roles of ESCs

During tough economic times and inadequate school funding, the need for cost-effective support and resources for districts is critical for school improvement. However, due to limited resources, administrators, and school superintendents must seek external support from consultants, university professors, and state education agencies to provide valuable assistance. Schools in need often turn to Intermediate Units or Regional Education Service Centers which function as a system of educational support that provides training, on-site technical support, and administrative support to school districts within their region. Additionally, they provide a variety of additional services outlined by the state legislature, the Commissioner of Education who presides over the Texas

Education Agency, the needs of traditional school districts and the needs of more recently established charter schools.

Section 8.002 of the Texas Education Code (TEC) mandates that each Regional Education Service Center assists local school districts within their region improve student performance, enabling school districts to operate more efficiently and economically, and implement initiatives assigned by the Texas Legislature and the Commissioner of Education. According to Kowalski (1999), Intermediate Units were established to “facilitate communication and decision-making between local school systems and state government” (p. 3). Additionally, he states that intermediate units are able to provide a variety of professional services that are likely to promote school improvement and that the services can be provided in a cost-effective manner due to the high volume nature of acquiring and providing services to many different schools throughout each region. He also points out that the establishment of local school districts is unique to the United States (Kowalski, 1999).

Although it seems as if local school districts have a great deal of freedom to choose which professional services from external support agencies would be most beneficial in improving schools within their community, this situation could possibly contribute to more of an autonomous climate and culture within local school districts which often leads to some of the negative effects of institutionalization that sometimes hinders school reform. Due to the influence and decision-making power of the local education agency, districts still need to rely on external support from Education Service Centers in order to maximize all available resources that support school improvement. Kowalski

(1999) supports this by saying that local school districts have a considerable amount of influence and control over the programs and services that intermediate units provide to school districts. He claims that “intermediate units are best described as confederations of local districts established to facilitate communication and decision-making between local school systems and state government” (p.3).

As seen in Figure 1 on page 6, Education Service Centers are located throughout rural and urban areas in Texas. Glass & Franceschini (2007) point out that the majority of the nation’s school districts are in smaller towns in rural and suburban areas, which means very few districts are actually located in urban areas. Although ESCs frequently serve small to medium-sized school districts that may lack the same material and personnel resources that larger metropolitan districts may have, they still provide a variety of educational services that are suited to meet the needs of larger districts as well. It is highly critical that ESC and school district staff communicate effectively about the needs of their particular district and their perception of the quality of existing services currently being provided. In order to effectively determine district needs, evaluate the quality of services provided to local school districts, and ensure equitable delivery of those services to all of the school districts in their region, the Commissioner of Education utilizes a third-party satisfaction survey that determines if school superintendents, principals, and teachers in larger urban school districts perceive the service that the Regional Education Service Center provides to be equitable and consistent to that of the smaller school districts throughout the state. Upon completion and submission of the survey, the commissioner determines the overall effectiveness of the service center that is based on

the analysis of customer satisfaction and more importantly, student performance within each school district (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

Due to the increases of accountability pressure on local school districts, Regional Service Centers are striving to improve the quality of staff development and professional training for teachers particularly those considered to be in the core content areas such as reading, math, science, and social studies in order to meet state requirements on student performance as measured by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Test (TAKS), and federal student performance standards as measured by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). As the level of accountability has increased, Service Centers are being stretched more than ever in order to assist school districts in comprehending and maintaining all compliance issues, while collaboratively developing and implementing strategies that will allow for the successful implementation of the accountability measures.

Another important role that Education Service Centers play in promoting school improvement, is providing assistance to the Texas Education Agency by working with local districts to ensure that they are maintaining strong financial foundations during shaky and complicated financial times to ensure that the needs of students and staff are met. Additionally, they also play an important and active role in assisting school districts in meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2001).

Theoretical Foundation

For the purposes of this study, school improvement is defined as the overall

improvement of student performance, school climate, and the school-community relationship. School improvement can be a challenging task for even the most experienced educators. School leaders often struggle when trying to determine which resources, strategies, and services to acquire and employ in order to promote school improvement throughout their district. Tomlinson (2004) states that the primary purpose of schools is to maximize the academic potential of each student. However, America's schools are under tremendous state and federal accountability pressure to increase student test scores and eliminate school drop outs. Therefore, it is highly critical that school leaders are able to accurately identify factors that are having a negative impact on student achievement in their district so that they can acquire and utilize all available resources in order to initiate and sustain school improvement in their districts.

Peterson (1997) found that there are many factors present on school campuses that can contribute or detract from the overall quality of the school environment which can ultimately have a negative impact on student learning and their desire to attend school. These factors range from the physical appearance of the campus, to the attitudes and feelings of the teachers and students about their campus. Peterson (1997) concluded that staff and student morale was higher, social and academic growth, were continuous in schools where staff and students cared for, respected, and trusted each other. His conclusions were based on results of a survey of teachers to determine their perceptions of what defines a positive school climate. Peterson (1997) also added that when administrators can foster an environment that teaches students and provides opportunities for students to learn how to care, respect, and trust others, then they are

more likely to be successful in that environment.

Kaplan (1997) provides additional support for school reform and the improvement of climate and culture on campus by stating that school reform encompasses more than just altering curriculum and school principals who are seeking to increase student achievement need to look at the entire school environment including the climate and culture in order to assess the expectations for student success. The improvement of student performance can prove to be an extreme challenge for school leaders. With these challenges, it is highly critical that school leaders are able to utilize all available resources in order to initiate reform within their district and ultimately improve the learning environment on campus.

While seeking strategies to improve school climate, school leaders are also dealing with varying achievement levels among student groups and the accompanying federal and state accountability pressure. This leads to yet another challenge for school administrators who are looking to acquire new resources that will improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. With this being said, school leaders are searching for external support in order to promote school improvement in their districts. Once school leaders gain a better understanding of which services are currently available, the similarities and differences among the twenty ESCs in Texas, the geographical boundaries for each ESC, and the number of districts and students served, they can more effectively utilize the programs and services that most effectively meets the needs of their district and promotes school improvement.

The resulting theoretical foundation is based upon Tomlinson (2004) which

designates the school's primary responsibility to maximize the academic potential of all students through school improvement. When considering the acquisition and utilization of external support and resources that promote school improvement, schools must consider the programs and professional services that are provided by Education Service Centers. In order to do so effectively, school leaders must gain a better understanding of Education Service Centers in Texas and how they are logistically designed to meet the needs of school districts in that particular region.

Statement of the Problem

Education Service Centers are constantly trying to fill the needs experienced by local school districts, but communication about the kind of help that is needed by the districts may not always be clear. Therefore, service centers must accurately understand the specific needs of the school districts to really fulfill their missions by providing programs and services that are designed to promote school improvement within Texas.

With the Texas Education Agency requirement that all high school students pass the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills Test in order to graduate, Education Service Centers are feeling the pressure along with the local school districts to improve student performance to meet the requirements. According to 2010 AEIS Report, data from the Texas Education Agency shows that during 2008 only 91% of students passed the English Language Arts portion of the test, while only 80% passed the math portion of the test, and only 74% passed the science test, while 91% passed the social studies portion of the test. Although the percentage of students across Texas passing has increased overall from the 2007 data, a rather significant achievement gap still exists

primarily due to White students scoring higher on average and Hispanics, African-American, and other students from low socio-economic backgrounds performing considerably lower. For example, 2010 AEIS reports (Academic Excellence Information Systems) show that only 87% of Hispanic students passed the ELA portion in 2008, up from 84% in 2007, while 75% passed the Math portion, up from 71% in 2007, 66% passed the Science portion up from 55% in 2007. The achievement gaps continue with regard to the performance of African-American Students where only 87% passed the ELA portion, up from 83% in 2007, 69% passed the Math portion, up from 64% in 2007, and only 61% passed the Science portion, up from 49% in 2007 (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

Despite these minor increases in student performance with both African-American and Hispanic groups, their scores are still significantly lower than that of White students. Additionally, only 86% of low socio-economic students passed the ELA assessments in 2008, up from 83% in 2007, while 74% passed Math, up from 71% in 2007, and 63% passed the Science portion in 2008, up from 53% in 2007 (Texas Education Agency, 2010). Once again, despite significant increases in the overall level of student performance with the so-called “sub-groups”, there is still much room for improvement in order to close the obvious gaps in student performance among student groups. In order to assist school districts improve student achievement in Texas public schools, regional service centers must effectively communicate with school leaders throughout the state in a clear and effective manner that fosters a sustainable system of support for the improvement of instruction and student learning on campuses throughout their region.

Purpose of the Study

Research about the connection between Texas Education Service Centers and school improvement is very limited. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the programs and professional services currently being offered by Regional Education Service Centers to promote improvement in Texas Public Schools. Additionally, the study can serve as a source of valuable information for school leaders who need to utilize a network and system of external support that can be found throughout the state at each Regional Education Service Center.

Areas of school improvement programs and services provided by service centers may include, but are not limited to raising levels of student achievement and eliminating achievement gaps among student groups, improving school climate and culture, and the improvement school-community relationships. The study will attempt to identify which services are being provided by Education Service Centers, as well as the similarities and differences of programs and services provided among the twenty ESCs in Texas.

The findings of this study could also benefit Executive Directors leading Education Service Centers in a collaborative effort with Deputy Directors, Component Directors, Education Specialist, and other staff members working at Educational Service Centers as they design and implement new strategies to improve the quality and delivery of service to school districts throughout Texas in an efficient, cost-effective, and productive manner that allows schools to build on their current strengths as well as assisting them in eliminating or strengthening any areas of weaknesses that could detract from the overall quality of the teaching and learning environment in their district.

Research Questions

The study will address the following research questions:

- 1) Which programs and services are provided by Education Service Centers in Texas in order to promote school improvement?
- 2) What are the similarities and differences among the programs and services provided?

Operational Definitions

The following definitions will be pertinent to this study:

Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS): A system of accountability that analyzes student performance of all student groups in every school district throughout the state of Texas. The system includes district and campus performance ratings, comparing them to students across the state. The data is broken down into ethnicity, sex, grade level, special programs, and socio-economic status (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Education Service Centers (ESCs): Twenty state service centers were established by the Texas Legislature in 1967 to provide school districts with professional development, technical support, and resources (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Education Service Center Programs: The core foundation of research-based activities that have been developed as a network of support for school improvement.

Education Service Center Services: The individual components of school support that are reflective of the programmatic foundation of the ESC.

Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS): A statewide reporting system that school districts utilize to provide information on disciplinary action, finance, staff, and students to the Texas Education Agency (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

School Improvement: Schools meeting the required federal and state accountability standards, ensuring that all student groups are making consistent and appropriate gains in academic performance.

Similar Services: The relative comparison of the services that are being provided by Education Service Centers across the state in support of school improvement.

State Board of Education (SBOE): An elected 15 member board selected to oversee the public education system in Texas in accordance with the Texas Education Code (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Socioeconomic Status (SES): Students are categorized into student population groups in order to effectively monitor and assess student performance, drop-out rates, and attendance (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Student Achievement: Based on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills Test (TAKS) during 2007-2008. Data is disaggregated by percentages of students passing the English, Math, Science, and Social Studies tests and highlighted in AEIS Reports (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAKS): Criterion-referenced test required by the state of Texas since 2003. Secondary students are assessed in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies and must pass all portions of the test in order to graduate (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Texas Education Code (TEC): Set of state statutes governing public school education in Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS): State-mandated curriculum that provides educators with basic guidelines broken up by specific curricular objectives in each subject area (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study the following assumptions were made by the researcher:

1. School leaders and Education Service Center staff will communicate effectively and collaboratively work together to promote school improvement.
2. Information provided to researcher through Education Service websites or staff members is accurate and currently reflects what is available to support school improvement.
3. The researcher will collect and analyze the data in an impartial and confidential manner that will promote and enhance the relationship between Texas school districts and their Regional Education Service Centers.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations were identified by the researcher:

1. Findings from this study may not be generalized beyond Education Service Centers and public schools in Texas.
2. The number of departments, programs, and services provided do not necessarily promote school improvement or reflect the level of success for school districts.

Significance of the Study

Since the passage of the state initiated Student Success Initiative (Texas Education Agency, 2010), and the federal version of educational accountability with the "No Child Left Behind Act" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), school administrators have continuously been pressured to improve student performance. Schools across the state are seeing an increase in the number of student enrollment, many of those students being classified as "At-Risk". Schools must focus on meeting the academic needs of all student groups and improve student performance. Due to current levels of inequity and inadequacy of school funding, districts must be able to maximize all available resources in order to effectively educate students. This study will provide Education Service Centers with critical data that could shape the design, development, and implementation of educational services provided to school districts throughout their region. Additionally, it will help educators across the state of Texas be able to gain more efficient access to the types of services and programs available that were designed to promote school improvement. Finally, the study will inform educators about the similarities and differences among the various programs throughout the state of Texas.

Summary

Chapter I included historical information about the birth of Education Service Centers in Texas, background information concerning the problem, and the theoretical foundation that the study is based upon. The problem pertaining to ESCs striving to understand and adjust to meeting the needs of districts by providing programs and services that promote school improvement was explained, as well as, the purpose of the

study which states the intention of improving the level of communication between ESCs and schools in order for school leaders to become better aware of the services and programs that are being offered, and to also assist ESC staff in gaining a better understanding of the specific needs of the district. The significance of the study was explained as being beneficial to both school leaders and ESC staff as they collaboratively strive to promote school improvement throughout their region. Additionally, assumptions, limitations, and definitions that were relevant to this study were included in this chapter.

Chapter II includes a literature review that explores the background of educational service agencies from a nationwide perspective, as they strive to promote the improvement of schools throughout their regions and states. Additionally, the review of literature includes two first-hand accounts from current school leaders in regard to their experience with ESCs in their respective regions. One account comes from a small, rural school leader in ESC Region VI, and the other from a much larger, urban school district in ESC Region IV. Overall, the review addresses the increasing pressures of accountability on schools to promote improvement and the need to locate and utilize cost-effective strategies and resources in order to support their efforts.

Chapter III discusses details in regard to the methodology used to identify which services are currently being provided by Texas ESCs, and to determine the similarities and differences among ESCs throughout the state. Chapter IV presents the findings from the study of the twenty ESCs in Texas. Chapter V highlights the conclusions and

implications for ESCs and school leaders in Texas to promote improvement of schools through collaboration of services and programs.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this research was to identify which services and programs are currently available to promote school improvement, and to also determine the similarities and differences of services and programs among ESCs throughout the state. The results of this study can serve as a valuable resource to ESC staff and school leaders when evaluating the programs and services that promote school improvement in Texas.

Determining which services and programs are available to promote school improvement, as well as the similarities and differences among Texas ESCs as they strive to target the specific needs of schools within their region could prove to be extremely beneficial in improving the overall quality of programs and services available that will promote higher levels of school improvement throughout. Ultimately, this understanding could lead to better improvements in the level of communication among ESCs and school districts throughout the state, especially in assisting new school leaders, or administrators new to a different ESC region in acquiring and utilizing cost-effective resources during tough economic times for schools.

Overview of Chapter II

Research on Education Service Centers in Texas is extremely limited. However, the review of literature will focus on answering the research questions of which programs and services from education service agencies across the nation are currently available and designed to promote improvement of public schools. Additionally, the literature review seeks to provide support in the identification of the similarities and differences in

Education Service Center programs. Due to the constraints of limited research on ESC's in Texas, it was necessary to include a combination of applicable literature that focuses on the nationwide influences of educational service agencies, as well as the first-hand accounts from current school leaders that have experience in utilizing professional services provided by Texas ESCs. Additionally, the first-hand accounts will be a combination of school leaders represented by larger urban ESCs, and school leaders served by smaller, rural ESCs in Texas.

Influence of NCLB

NCLB (U.S. Dept. of Education, NCLB, 2002) defines educational service agencies in comparison to the definition of a local education agency. Basically, "local educational agency" signifies a public board of education that is authorized to maintain administrative control of public schools within their designated district. It is also stated that LEAs include ESAs and a variety of similar external agencies that provide direct support to the LEA (pp. 1961-1962). According to NCLB, the term "education service agency" designates a regional educational support agency that is authorized by the state in order to provide professional services to their LEAs (U.S. Dept. of Education, NCLB, 2002, p. 1958).

Nationwide Network of Support

According to Peters & Svedkauskaite (2008), there is a nationwide network of support from educational service agencies that strive to assist LEAs with school improvement. They highlight Georgia, Illinois, New York, and Texas as four states with two layers of regional support. Additionally, the literature states that the newest layer in

New York was brought online before the implementation of NCLB, while the remaining three states implemented the new layer reacting to the mandates of NCLB.

Special mention of Georgia's system is made and described as having 16 RESAs and a newer layer that is made up of five regional support teams (RSTs). It is also stated that both of Georgia's "layers" are designed to promote school improvement.

Peters & Svedkauskaite (2008) also describe Illinois' system of 45 Regional Offices of Education (ROEs). They describe the system as being divided up by counties across the state. Additionally, it is mentioned that ten Regional Service Providers (RESPRO) were created by the Illinois State Board of Education and brought online during 2002-2003 in order to assist a large number of schools that were designated to be in "need of improvement under NCLB".

Peters & Svedkauskaite (2008) describe the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in New York. They detail the evolution of the educational service agency system in New York as the origination of the 38 BOCES in 1940 and the seven Regional School Support Centers (RSSCs) in 2000. Additionally, it is mentioned that these centers work in collaboration with three existing statewide networks which include Special Education and Resource Centers (SETRCs), Bilingual ESL Technical Assistance Centers (BETACs), and the Statewide Student Support Network (SSSNs). In summary, all four systems function to promote school improvement throughout the state of New York (Peters & Svedkauskaite, 2008).

In direct relation to this study, Educational Service Centers in Texas are also described by Peters & Svedkauskaite (2008) as being systems of support that "provide

general and special education support to the schools and districts in their service areas” (p. 15). Additionally, Peters & Svedkauskaite (2008) state that two ESCs in Texas (Region 13 & Region 16) “host statewide initiatives focusing on school improvement and operate independently from the hosting ESCs” (p. 15). It is also stated that Region 13 in Austin, Texas hosts the “School Improvement Resource Center” (SIRC) which focuses on assisting schools throughout the state that have been declared “Needs Improvement” (Peters & Svedkauskaite, 2008). Another example of a statewide initiative that assist schools who have missed “AYP”, or “Adequate Yearly Progress” (Peters & Svedkauskaite, 2008).

Peters & Svedkauskaite (2008) also make note of Ohio’s statewide system of educational support that came online in 2007, and that the state changed the name from “Regional School Improvement Teams (RSITs) and “Centers of Special Education” to a unified system of 16 State Support Teams (SSTs) that were designed to improve collaboration and communication between what was perceived as “previously disconnected, but related school and district improvement efforts” (p. 15).

Another example of the nationwide network of support from educational service agencies can be found in the Great Lakes East & Great Lakes West multi-state consortium which includes Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, and Wisconsin. This collaborative effort by experienced school administrative experts sought to examine the capacity of the educational service agencies in the above mentioned states. Peters & Svedkauskaite (2008) claims that the number of states across America with educational service agencies has doubled from 23 to 45 over the last 20 years. They state that “there

are 553 service agencies in the United States that are staffed with over 100,000 employees in 45 states” (p.12). They also add that educational service agencies are “emerging as a critical factor within the larger fabric of statewide systems of support to positively impact school improvement and educational change” (p.12). Additionally, the claim verifies Stephens and Keane’s (2005) assertion that state ESA networks are “well positioned to provide needed support” (p. 86).

According to Peters & Svedkauskaite (2008), there is a variety in the number and titles of ESAs in the Great Lakes Region. The names vary from state to state and are categorized as follows: Illinois has regional offices of education (ROEs), Indiana has educational service centers (ESCs), Michigan utilizes intermediate school districts (ISDs), Ohio utilizes educational service centers (ESCs), and Wisconsin uses cooperative educational service agencies (CESAs). Ultimately, Peters & Svedkauskaite (2008) clarifies that the overall stability of educational service agencies remains solid if the following conditions are maintained by what they describe as the “Five Pillars: a clear mission statement and role responsibilities, a complete statewide network inclusive of all LEAs, a relatively definite source of funding aligned with the mission and the role, a close relationship with LEAs, non-public schools, and the SEA; a systemic state network.” (p. 100). Peters & Svedkauskaite (2008) summarize their evaluation of the Great Lakes ESAs by claiming that “supports the potential of ESAs to make a difference in the statewide network of support, ESAs can continue building a network of support through exemplary programs and services, there is a lack of formalized agreements between SEAs , LEAs, and legislature regarding the roles and responsibilities of the

ESAs, resources available to ESAs in their educational improvement work are not adequate, and ESAs' standardized evaluation and accountability processes are emerging but remain sporadic" (p. 6). Concluding remarks that support the fore-mentioned assertions state that ESAs are the "least expensive and readily available infrastructure available" (p.6). Lastly, it was concluded that "district and school improvement may continue to grow very slowly unless ESAs can become better utilized and mobilized" (Peters & Svedkauskaite (2008). In summary, the questions that the study asked in order to determine the overall structure and capacities of ESAs relate to the research questions of this study.

Another example of educational service agencies at work to assist schools across the nation through multi-state collaborative and initiatives can be found in AESA. Due to their efforts to assist education service agencies across the nation through a variety of research and practical applications in order to promote school improvement, one of the most reliable and helpful resources in the nationwide system of educational support agencies can be found in the Association of Education Service Agencies (AESA). AESA is a professional organization that serves educational service agencies across the country, representing 45 states, 553 agencies, and hundreds of thousands of service agency staff members. According to AESA (2010), their organization serves over 80% of the public school districts in America as well as over 83% of private schools. It is estimated that educational service agencies across the nation operate with an annual budget of \$14.7 billion. Additionally, AESA serves over 80% of the students in public and private schools across the nation (AESA, 2010). According to AESA (2010), "Educational

Service Agencies are the vital link in state national efforts to take all students, public and private, to the highest levels of academic achievement and personal development” (p. 2). This philosophy is extremely attractive to school leaders seeking external support during tough economic times and still having to deal with state and federal accountability mandates.

Accountability Issues and ESCs

The need for improvements in accountability does not only affect public school systems, but could also have a positive impact on educational service agencies as well. Recent research on the implementation of a nationwide system of accountability for ESAs identifies the positive benefits of accreditation and performance measurement on school systems and education service agencies alike (Stephens and Keane, 2005). One example of AESA’s efforts to assist our nation’s schools includes a multi-state study that focuses on the importance of the identification and utilization of educational services from external agencies. The five state case study which included Iowa, Michigan, Texas, Georgia, and New York, revealed that the influence of accreditation led to more improvement in the identification of problem areas, improved communication and feedback about the performance of ESA programs and policies, more effective and efficient allocation of funding and personnel, and improved community involvement with establishing priorities. Additionally, the study revealed that accreditation contributes to the answering of the questions of who the clients are, what their needs are, identification of the current services they are receiving and to what degree and capacity. Furthermore, the study emphasized the ability to determine the overall level of the

quality of service based on results, as well as the cost effectiveness (Stephens and Keane, 2005). The above mentioned questions relate directly to the research questions of this study which include which professional services are currently being provided by education service centers in order to promote school improvement, and what are the similarities and differences among the twenty service centers in Texas. In conclusion, the study suggested that a “well-designed accountability and accreditation system can be valuable in focusing organizational attention on important goals, improving organizational performance and consistency, and building public support and understanding”. (Stephens and Keane, 2005. p. 11).

Stephens and Keane (2005) recognize the limitation of resources for local education agencies and the challenges of downsizing of state education agencies claiming this situation has “brought to the forefront limitations in the infrastructure of the state system of elementary-secondary education” (p. 86). The most critical point of the study is that the educational service agencies valued constructive feedback from their clients in order to serve them more effectively. Overall, the results of the AESA case study revealed that the five states included in the study were extremely positive about the educational service agencies in their state in regard to the professional services being provided in order to promote improvement of schools while dealing with state and federal accountability pressure.

Peters & Svedkauskaite (2008) state that in the “current educational climate of radically increasing expectations for states to assist districts and schools in meeting accountability requirements, some states are building relationships with other entities in

the broader statewide systems of support, such as with institutions of higher education, educational service agencies, and private organizations. Building such relationships is necessary in order for SEAs to more effectively transition from their traditional role of oversight to that of capacity building” (p.1).

As the review literature demonstrates, accountability pressure is not only being felt in Texas’ schools, it is a nationwide issue. Due to the continuing increase in accountability pressure and the need for school improvement, school leaders must gain a better understanding of the requirements of the accountability systems in place. The first place they must begin is with the “No Child Left Behind Act” of 2002 which has changed the way schools approach the issues of dealing with struggling students particularly poor-performing and of lower socio-economic status. Redding (2007) emphasizes that from the statewide system support viewpoint that “American education is far more complex than a trichotomy of federal, state, and district organization may suggests” (p. 71). He continues by saying that schools need a network of support from external agencies in order to function in a healthy manner. He claims that “an effective interplay among these units is critical as relationships evolve in response to new stresses and opportunities that arise” (p. 71).

In a separate study that examined state strategies for districts identified for improvement under NCLB, the support structures for districts varied among schools and were dependent upon capacity, need, and models of support (American Institutes for Research, 2006). During a 2007-2008 study of voluntary accreditation of educational service agencies in Michigan, respondents revealed that it was extremely beneficial to

collect and analyze data about what educational service agencies do and how they do it in order to better assist school leaders with the development of a vision and purpose of the organization, the implementation of effective governance and leadership, documentation and utilization of performance results, identification of available resources and supports, the improvement of communication among stakeholders, and ultimately a commitment to continuous improvement (MAISA, 2006).

When seeking school improvement by utilizing educational service agencies, performance indicators, developmental design of programs and services, and consequences should directly reflect back to the goals as pointed out by (Petrie, 2007). Additionally, he adds that the following issues must be considered when attempting to define accountability goals that could impact the decision making process of ESAs. These issues include the identification of the purposes of the accountability system, identification of the need for implementation, identification of the primary goals of the system, identification of the accountability decisions and the consequences, identification of the legal and policy constraints, and identification of the degree of accountability of both schools and students (Petrie, 2007).

Another example of ESAs valuing feedback from clients in order to improve programs and services can be seen in a research study that evaluated professional development sessions within the Northwest Indiana Education Service Center (NWIESC). The survey evaluated three areas that set out to “determine the perceived value of the workshop, determine potential trends about the intrinsic interest of each workshop topic irrespective to the presenters, and to identify the best method of

recruitment and incentives necessary to increase workshop participation” (Cate-Clements, et al, 2007, p. 21). Throughout this study, 1,074 ESC workshop participants were included as subjects, and there was a 63% return rate on the surveys. The results of the study showed that participants believed that their participation was worthwhile, and that the support from the NWIESC was highly valuable and productive (Cate-Clements, et al, 2007). The effort by the NWIESC to utilize the survey data in order to improve the overall quality of services and programs is highly evident with their claim that they were willing to further the study to determine if teachers have actually changed their method of teaching as a result of the training, and if improvements in student learning have occurred. Ultimately, the study emphasized the importance of examining ESA services and programs in order to assist school leaders in obtaining cost-effective resources from external agencies, especially in justifying the expense of substitute teachers due to school budget issues and teachers being off-campus. The NWIESC concludes by stating their commitment to assisting teachers in their region to improve their overall level of knowledge and skills by providing them with the support and mentoring that is needed in order to promote higher levels of student learning (Cate-Clements, et al, 2007).

Prioritization and Delivery of ESC Services

Throughout the review of literature, the common thread of prioritization and a sense of urgency as it pertains to school improvement is ever-present. Gabriel (2007) discusses the importance of prioritization of ESA programs and services in connection to the above mentioned urgency by stating that the “new emphasis on student learning has

created an unprecedented need for quality teachers and quality staff development, and the services of ESAs are in more demand than ever (p. 37). Additionally, Gabriel (2007) emphasizes the importance of using proven, research-based interventions that specifically target areas of need in regard to student performance, as well as, the overall improvement of the school system.

According to Burford (2007), a recent legislative amendment in Ohio sought to reorganize the regional education service agencies approach to delivery throughout the state. This process included 140 service providers, including 59 ESCs, 23 information technology centers (ITCs), 16 Special Education Regional Resource Centers (SERRCs), 23 Area Media Centers (AMCs), 8 Education Technology Corporations (Ed Techs), and 12 Regional School Improvement Teams (RSIT). The reasoning behind the reorganization was to eliminate obvious redundancy and duplication of services among agencies throughout the state. As cited in Burford (2007), the new law under chapter 3314 designates intent by stating that “the intent of the General Assembly that the educational regional service system reduce the unnecessary duplication of programs and services and provide for a more streamlined and efficient delivery of educational services without reducing the availability of the services needed by school districts and schools” (p. 44). With the passage of this amendment, a much-needed clearer focus was applied for educational service agencies that helped to better meet the needs of clients with more options and better accountability throughout the statewide initiatives. Additionally, it set out to provide a more cost-effective delivery of services and increased the overall capacity of ESAs and school districts that they served.

First-Hand Accounts of Texas School Leaders

For the purposes of this study, it is highly important to include in the review of literature first-hand accounts from current school leaders who rely on educational service centers in Texas. One of the greatest sources of pressure on school leaders today is meeting both state and federal accountability standards. This includes gaining a thorough understanding of the student population within their district and identifying their academic strengths and weaknesses in order to eliminate achievement gaps among student groups and ultimately improving student performance. This requires school leaders to fully understand the demographics of their student population, then making a diagnosis of any academic ailments that are negatively impacting student learning. Once a diagnosis is made, then educators can collaboratively design a prescriptive treatment that will build on the existing strengths of the students while eroding away at any deficiencies.

Eliminating achievement gaps can be a costly process for school districts, therefore many districts are seeking external support that will enable them to reduce spending in their districts, but still enable them to promote school improvement. It takes a serious financial commitment to invest in additional salaries and other educational resources that are often needed to assist struggling students. Although state and federal mandates have increased the pressure on school leaders to perform, adequate and equitable funding to support the programs and resources are simply not there. Without the appropriate financial resources, school leaders will have a difficult time obtaining the resources that are necessary to promote school improvement.

One of the biggest problems for school districts during tough financial times for the nation is acquiring and providing adequate material and personnel resources that effectively meet the needs of students. Education Service Centers in Texas certainly have a vested interest in supporting their districts in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible, and school leaders are appreciative as a result. As mentioned in the introductory paragraph of this literature review, for the purposes of this study, it is highly critical to include first-hand accounts from school district personnel in both small, rural districts, and large urban districts as well.

One example of a district that relies on ESC support can be found in Shepherd ISD which is served by Region VI, ESC. The small rural district in East Texas utilizes the Education Service Center to assist them with conducting personnel audits and seeking new avenues to reduce personnel salary costs. According to Steve Pierce (2010), Business Manager of Shepherd ISD in Region VI, states that “87% of current district expenses are going to personnel salaries and over \$10,870,000 out of \$12,000,000 dollars allotted were used to pay salaries. Basically our district has too many employees with 300 employees overseeing 1,895 students. With this being the case, we were forced to pull an additional \$400,000 out of the district’s fund balance to cover the personnel salary expense”. While seeking less expensive, yet effective strategies for school improvement, Pierce (2010) adds “the financial burden has forced the district to reduce the number of personnel through attrition, retirement, resignations, and the combining of job duties. The district is now seeking consultation with Region VI Education Service Center in order to assist us with conducting a staffing audit that will provide us with the

necessary and accurate data that will enable the district to make sound data-driven decisions about personnel reductions and staffing” (Pierce, 2010).

As seen in this small, rural school example, the most critical of all resources are financial ones that enable districts to implement programs and strategies designed to improve academic achievement among all students. However, due to a failing system of school finance, appropriately meeting the needs of all students is a difficult, if not impossible task for superintendents across Texas. Additionally, it is the biggest reason why educators are forced to administer the same prescriptions and treatments for struggling students regardless of their academic health needs. This one size fits all approach leaves some students falling deeper into existing achievement gaps struggling to survive much like a critically wounded patient in need of serious medical attention. Ultimately, the gross inequity of school funding provided by the state is placing tremendous stress and seemingly irreparable damage on school systems already facing increased accountability pressure and increasing student enrollment.

Inadequate school funding not only plagues the smaller, rural districts in Texas, but it also challenging to larger, urban districts as well. Superintendents of these larger, urban districts are fighting an uphill battle with fewer dollars, but are still battling a variety of challenges that include overcrowded classrooms, student improvement issues, and teacher shortages. Although current legislation efforts claim to provide equitable sources of funding to school districts, the brutal reality is that the funding provided is simply not adequate or equitable enough to educate its students.

Texas recently dropped to 44th in the nation in spending per student. Despite the fact

that the state has fallen among the lowest in the nation with school funding, larger issues of funding inequity exists between neighboring districts. In other words, districts similar in many ways are not necessarily funded with similar amounts (Sconzo, 2009).

Although the eye of the funding storm seemingly stalls out over Austin, the devastating effects can be felt for hundreds of miles throughout the state. Humble ISD, a district of 35,000 students in Region IV is still dealing with the aftermath of the inadequate funding landfall. According to Superintendent Dr. Guy Sconzo (2009), “the passage of HB 3646 by Rep. Scott Hochberg is a \$1.9 Billion school finance reform package that claims to provide equitable funding for districts while providing an additional \$800 across the board salary increase for teachers. Although these amounts may at first seem generous, realization that funding has actually been reduced by \$27 million since 2002 may quickly change perceptions” (Sconzo, 2009). He continues in saying that “although HB 3646 will provide the district with \$4 to \$5 million dollars annually, the districts total operating revenue level has actually been frozen at the same level attained in 2005-2006. Additionally, the \$5 million per year that is being offered by the state is nowhere close to where it was during 2006” (Sconzo, 2009). This situation leaves districts feeling like they are on the losing end of a ruthless and unforgiving version "the shell game" with no end to the shuffling in sight. When it comes to providing students with equal educational opportunities, a lack of funding is no game and legislators must gain a better understanding of the school finance process and how it is selling Texas' students short (Sconzo, 2009).

Sconzo (2009) adds that while the state is still claiming equity, HB 3646

will only provide an additional \$100 per Weighted Average Daily Attendance (WADA) to Humble, while nearby Katy ISD already receiving \$300 more per WADA than Humble will be receiving an additional \$272 per WADA. Larger gaps can be seen in comparison with a much smaller neighboring district in Sheldon ISD. Sheldon currently receives \$1,100 more per WADA than Humble ISD and will now be receiving the same \$100 per WADA increase as Humble receives (Sconzo, 2009).

Can Education Service Centers in Texas effectively provide the necessary resources, programs, and services that are necessary in order to assist both larger urban districts and small rural districts in overcoming the obstacles that inadequate school funding presents? Despite the troubling school finance situation, Sconzo (2010) from a recent interview in February, 2010 believes that “Education Service Centers play an important role in assisting school districts with obtaining cost-effective resources that promote school improvement in Humble ISD by stating “at a time when a grossly inadequate and inequitable system of funding public schools is further exacerbated by national recession and a projected \$15 billion shortfall in state revenue for the next biennium, ESCs are even more critical than they were before. ESCs are in a position to offer quality professional development and other needed services like cooperative purchasing, independent management audits, brokering shared services among school districts, and the like, which in turn saves districts significant dollars from not having to pay private sector or university level prices. Our ESC in particular, has also done a fabulous job in coordinating grant opportunities for collaborative efforts among school districts, as well as initiating large, wide-scale business partners that directly and very positively impact

campuses and school children. I might also mention that our ESC, Region 4, receives the lowest per student level of state funding in the state. Hence, their public dollars support is in the low single-digit range”. Sconzo (2010) also states that “virtually all of their operating revenue comes from grants and user fees (that is workshop registrations, selling products, etc.). I am huge fan of our ESC for their quality, effectiveness, efficiency and value to our district, monetarily and professionally”. Sconzo (2010) concludes by saying that “when the state legislature returns to session in January 2011, it is being estimated that they will be facing an estimated \$16 billion budget shortfall. When you couple that with the fact that the entire \$1.8 billion increase provided to public schools this biennium came from federal stimulus dollars Texas received and that will go away in 2011, I will tell you that we are in for one horrendous legislative session. The legislature will have to confront a long broke and grossly inadequate funding system for public education, an overall estimated \$16 billion shortfall, and having to find \$1.8 billion in state money to make up for the lost federal stimulus money just to keep public schools where we are today” (Sconzo, 2010).

Leadership Capacity and Data-driven Decisions

According to both Pierce (2010), & Sconzo (2010), their districts although different in size, strive to build leadership capacity throughout their districts and both recognize the value of their regional ESC as a network of support that promotes the development of leadership capacity that promotes school improvement within their respective districts. This concept is also supported by (Senge, 2001), who states that in order for districts to exemplify a learning organization, school leaders are urged to build leadership capacity

within their organization (Senge, 2001). In order to build leadership capacity, school leaders must possess a set of leadership traits that exemplify success in building capacity. Further support is evidenced by Hoy and Miskel (2004), who support the concept of leadership traits, leader behavior, organizational, and personal effectiveness as being critical in establishing a positive school climate that promotes higher levels of student achievement in schools.

In order to effectively serve its school districts and assist them in building leadership capacity, Educational Service Centers rely on data-driven feedback provided by school leaders usually through the form of district surveys. The data collected and analyzed from the surveys enable the Education Service Center to plan professional development and services that are specially designed to assist the particular needs of its school districts throughout the region. This identification of client needs from is critical in any organization that desires to provide continuous support through continuous improvement, especially public school systems.

The role of school climate can have a powerful impact on the development of leadership capacity. Docker, Fraser, and Fisher (1989) emphasize the importance of identifying which elements of school climate are critical to improving schools. School Administrators are often in need of external support services in order to effectively and efficiently deal with student discipline, school safety, academic standards, perceptions of teachers and administrators, openness of schools, quality and level of parental involvement, amount of community support, and inclusion of parents and community members in the decision-making process, all which allow administrators the opportunity

to better analyze the effectiveness of their campuses and district which has a tremendous impact on the overall quality of school climate and culture. Docker, et al. (1989) also support using surveys to analyze the overall school climate within school districts. They suggest that the surveys should ask a variety of questions about student discipline, school safety, academic standards, perceptions of teachers and administrators, openness of schools, quality and level of parental involvement, amount of community support, and inclusion of parents and community members in the decision-making process.

In response to data received through surveys and an attempt to promote improvement in regional schools, ESCs are able to conduct internal audits of school districts to determine both areas of strengths that the district can build on, as well as, identify and correct weaknesses that could otherwise hinder school improvement. This thorough collection of data allows administrators the opportunity to analyze the effectiveness of their campuses and district and make the necessary adjustments that are needed in order to drive school improvement. When it comes to school improvement, accountability not only comes from state and federal levels, it must start within the local school district and community before schools can see any signs of improvement and achieve higher levels of performance.

Hoyle (2002) points out that “what gets measured gets done” and that evaluating the performance of organizations and individuals within the organization is an inexact science, however, evaluators should look for positive behaviors and accomplishments while attempting to identify areas of low performance or behaviors that detract from accomplishing personal and organizational goals. Education Service Centers are in

operation to assist their districts in meeting the challenges and dealing with the accountability pressures that are bearing down from both state and federal levels, additionally, they can also provide support to districts wanting to initiate positive and lasting change from within their own system. Keane (2005) believes that as these accountability pressures increase, so have opportunities for Education Service centers to support school leaders in leading student achievement reforms.

This concept is also supported by Arsen, Bell, & Plank (2004) who state that schools often seek external support in order to meet federal and state accountability standards. Education Service Centers are able to meet the challenging demands of raising levels of student achievement through effective leadership development. Additionally, as school leaders strive to effectively understand the organizational processes that are essential in the effective management of a school system, it is highly critical that they possess certain qualities and skills in order to be a more effective school leader. Hoyle (2002) provides additional support by emphasizing six critical concepts that all leaders should utilize in order to overcome challenges that hinder leadership: Vision, communication, teamwork, empowerment, mentoring, and evaluation are all emphasized as being critical components of effective leadership that can enable and empower educational leaders to become more successful in building a solid foundation that will promote school improvement. Furthermore, this foundation will inevitably provide much needed support for the entire school community as administrators, teachers, parents, and community members face new challenges as they work together to improve their schools. This concept is also supported by Marzano & Waters (2006), who state that the

level of skill that school leaders possess can have tremendous impact on school improvement and raising levels of student achievement.

Effective leadership and its role in school improvement is not a new concept, but can be enriched and enhanced through better relationships and utilization of Regional Education Service Centers. This concept is especially important when considering the relevance of the relationship between superintendents and school boards. As pointed out by Goodman and Zimmerman (2000), they must develop and sustain a quality working relationship and describes the relationship as a “key cornerstone of the foundation for high student achievement” (p. 1). Enhancement of this relationship can be a highly valuable asset in helping shape school leaders into becoming more insightful as to how to improve the overall quality of the school environment.

ESC support can provide effective school board training that promotes the enhancement of the relationship between superintendents and their board through the development of skills in providing practical applications in the decision-making process. While theory provides a foundation for knowledge itself, theory when combined with practice forms a frame of reference, it also provides a general model of analysis, and ultimately guides decision-making (Hoy and Miskel, 2004). When school leaders are willing to seek new knowledge and learn how to more effectively analyze their school system, they are more likely to make sound decisions that are truly in the best interests of the students.

As pointed out in Hoyle (2002), leadership is a critical component in determining the success or failure of a school. Due to the difficulties in fully comprehending all of the

dynamics and motivations of individuals and groups within an organization or a school system, it is important for leaders to seek external support when it comes to gaining a better understanding their own staff, support that can be found at Education Service Centers in Texas.

The collaborative efforts of education service centers, superintendents, and school boards can ultimately lead to higher levels of school improvement. This can be enhanced further through quality staff development. However, little is known about how much school districts have actually invested in professional development and what this investment actually buys (Fermanich, 2002). When considering which staff development opportunities to provide for their district, superintendents must rely heavily on student performance data in order to guide and justify their decision-making. Education Service Centers can assist school leaders in interpreting district student performance data and more importantly make sense of what the data says about their schools. More importantly, it enables them to make quality, data-driven decisions that can have a positive impact on student achievement.

As pointed out in Maze, et al. (2009), a study which focused on leadership development through ESCs, and Marzano (2006), one of the areas of leadership behavior studied was the monitoring of goals for achievement and instruction. This should motivate school leaders to look beyond their perceived level of leadership potential as it only goes so far when it comes to determining which type of staff development is needed in school district in order to foster school improvement. Leadership potential alone will not promote school improvement, and it is highly likely that quality staff development

may be necessary in order to assist the school leader in improving their skill set. This concept is also supported by Bandura (1997) who points out that ability and capability are only as effective as the level of execution that is carried out by school leaders.

Additionally, he adds that administration cannot do it alone without external support. He states that school leaders must be able to foster a collegial spirit of collaboration throughout their school community in order to migrate towards higher levels of school improvement (Bandura, 1997).

Research also supports the concept of improving the level of staff development and professional growth opportunities for instructional staff in order to raise levels of student achievement. According to Darling-Hamond (2003), beginning teachers who receive quality mentoring are more likely to remain in the profession and also increase their level of teaching competency as well. Education Service Centers are primed and ready to assist local school districts with appropriate staff development that can enhance the mentoring process of new teachers and paraprofessionals alike.

One way that leaders can improve the overall quality of the learning environment in their district is to establish and maintain a professional learning community. According to Dufour, Dufour, and Eaker (2008), “if shared purpose, vision, collective commitments, and goals constitute the foundation of a professional learning community, the collaborative team is the fundamental building block of the organization” (p. 15).

Regional education service centers have the resources to assist school leaders in effectively developing the necessary skills that are required in order to initiate more collaboration, teamwork, and empowerment throughout the process of school

improvement. Levine & Lezotte (1990) claim that successful school leaders have high levels of energy and are highly effective at acquiring and utilizing necessary resources. With so many issues affecting student performance, continuous support is absolutely critical in order to offset the demands and challenges that school leaders will face throughout their tenure in a public school system.

Administrators must become a model of professional development for their staff in order to achieve higher levels of performance and improve schools. This process must start at the top with the superintendent and flow down through central office staff and down to campus principals and teachers. With the ultimate goal of school districts being school improvement which includes raising student achievement levels and meeting both state and federal accountability standards, school leaders must seek strategies, programs, and services that are most likely suited to best meet the needs of its students, staff, and community.

Due to school funding issues, inadequate and inequitable resources provided by the state, school leaders seeking school improvement must find avenues that are cost-effective and efficient when it comes to professional development for their staff. As district leaders are receiving professional development from Education Service Centers that can help them become more effective with their duties, they must also see to it that their instructional staff of teachers also have quality opportunities to receive professional development that can help them to become more effective in their respective roles enabling them to improve the overall level and quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms. Due to the challenges of school improvement, school leaders cannot meet

the demands alone. Therefore, they must have an abundance of external support from educational agencies and service centers. Additionally, the support goes far beyond financial support from the state or federal level and even further beyond what one individual leader can inspire others to do, it must include a support system that can provide sound research-based and proven strategies that can foster and sustain school improvement. This concept is supported by Reeves (2008) who states that “the demands of leadership almost invariably exceed the capacity of a single person to meet the needs at hand. Even the most successful and iconic leaders of the past century-Churchill, Roosevelt, Mandela, Thatcher, Gandhi, and King were not complete leaders” (p. 32).

ESC Support and training can inevitably develop and shape leadership style. Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore (1995) add that a successful school leader utilizes a participatory style of management, is firm, purposeful, and is viewed as the leading professional within the campus. Education Service Centers can provide the personnel and expertise that can build on the strengths of school leaders and help them improve on any areas of weakness. School leaders must utilize their Regional Education Service Centers as an external support system that can enable them to rise to the challenge of rethinking the way that things have always been done and implement a new course of action with strategies and programs that are proven and sustainable in their district. Research plays an important role in assisting campus administrators to develop a leadership style that is productive and effective when it comes to school improvement.

It is highly critical to question how this research, along with service center support, can assist school leaders in improving school climate. One effective way to examine this

question is to take into consideration the role that school staff plays in developing and enhancing a productive culture within their school district. When considering the role that school culture and climate plays in contributing to student success, school leaders must realize that they have the responsibility for initiating whatever changes are necessary in order to promote safe, secure, and positive learning environments that are designed to meet the needs of all students on campus.

Education Service Centers can assist school leaders in improving the culture and climate throughout their districts through the development of “professional learning communities”. The development of school culture and climate includes creating and maintaining an environment that respects and incorporates cultural diversity into its mission, values, and instruction. Dufour, et al. (2008) discuss the importance of cultural change in organizations and define the culture of an organization as being built on the foundation of the “assumptions, beliefs, expectations, and habits that constitute the norm for that organization” (p. 90). Furthermore, they define a professional learning community as “educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators” (p. 14).

Barth (2001) adds support for positive change in school culture by stating that “the schools culture dictates, in no uncertain terms, the way we do things around here. Ultimately, a school’s culture has far more influence on life and learning in the

schoolhouse that the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal can ever have. Culture is the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act” (pp. 7-8).

Regional education service centers have the resources and the personnel available and necessary to assist and train school leaders with strategies that will enable them to improve the culture within their systems that can sustain positive and lasting change within their organization. Inevitably, utilization of these strategies will lead to positive change that promotes school improvement. Although change can be difficult for school leaders to implement and especially for school staff to accept, they must strive to blend the positives if any, from the existing culture with those of the newly desired culture.

Blanchard (2007) as cited in Dufour, et al. (2008), states that “if change is introduced that is not aligned with the current culture you must alter the existing culture to support the new initiative or accept that the change may not be sustainable in the long term” (p. 246). Before this can successfully be accomplished, school leaders must realize the importance of setting the tone in developing a culture that promotes cultural diversity and equality among all students, staff, and community members. However, some school leaders due to their past experiences or lack thereof may be prone to making critical mistakes in trying to change the culture and climate within their schools.

Regional ESCs can serve as the solid foundation on which to build from because of their regional proximity to their schools and previous experiences in working with a particular school community. Schlechty (2005) claims “bringing about cultural change in

any organization is a complex and challenging task” (p. 3). Additionally, he refers to the “challenge of re-culturing as disruptive change because it calls upon the system and those who work in it to do things they have never done” (p. 3). Marzano, et al, (2006) describe change as being a real challenge for members of an organization to accept due to the fact that it is often unexpected and foreign to those within the organization. Additionally, they point out that change brings about a true paradigm shift for the members, which may force them to acquire and utilize new skills in order to be successful. They conclude by saying that the struggle between implementation and acceptance of change often leads to conflict (Marzano, et al. 2006).

In addition to managing this struggle, school leaders are often overwhelmed by trends and patterns that affect schools and are negatively emphasized by the abundance of media outlets across the nation. School safety and security is one area that comes to the minds of educators, parents, and students alike. Education Service Centers can provide support in the area of school safety to their districts. The establishment of a positive school culture and climate that promotes safe and secure learning environments is highly critical to the success of school leaders and should be recognized as a top priority and as a place where school leaders begin before seeking improvement of student performance and accountability ratings.

Noguera (1995) discussed how concerns about violence have had a negative impact on the focus of academic achievement in schools, and has become a top priority for school leaders by stating that “concerns about violence have even surpassed academic achievement-traditionally the most persistent them on the nation’s agenda-as the highest

priority for reform and intervention” (p. 189). Regardless of trends and societal pressure, school leaders have the responsibility of promoting, establishing, and maintaining a safe environment.

Relationships with educational service centers that are enhanced in the school system have the potential to permeate through the rest of the community providing support and resources that were previously unavailable. Education Service Centers can provide expert training for school leaders that will enable them to establish and maintain safe, secure, and positive learning environments through a collaborative effort with their staff. Once a safe, secure, and positive learning environment has been established, Educational Service Centers can also assist school leaders and instructional staff with the development and implementation of proven, research-based strategies that can enhance student interests in learning, ultimately developing positive principal intervention behaviors.

Kaplan (1997) supports this by stating that administrators can create a more positive teaching and learning environment by providing appropriate staff development for teachers so that they can continue to grow professionally and not stagnate to the point where students in their classes become uninterested and bored. Kaplan (1997) adds that when students become disenfranchised with learning or school in general, they are more likely to develop behaviors that are disruptive to the educational flow of a campus. Additionally, he encourages educators to establish themselves by creating a climate that is conducive to learning by setting up consistent and fair rules while providing structured

routines for the students. In doing so, teachers can be effective in solidifying themselves in the classroom and will retain the respect of the students (Kaplan, 1997).

The concept of intervention behaviors is supported by Trohoski (1984) and Entekin (1991) who conducted studies that confirm principal intervention behaviors being able to be grouped within three distinct styles known as “initiator, manager, and responder”, meaning that campus leaders must be able to initiate strategies and programs associated with positive change, manage the proceeding course of action, and also be able to respond appropriately by making any necessary adjustments or modifications along the way. School leaders should pay closer attention to what the research shows before taking on an initiative that may or may not be a good fit for their school. This is where ESC staff can be most effective in assisting their districts, by providing solid, research-based training and strategies that target the specific needs of their region and schools. This is especially important during tough financial times for school districts which require school leaders to use cost-effective strategies and avoid unnecessary spending on programs that offer little or no chance of school improvement in their district.

With an emphasis on the diagnosis of ineffectiveness or problems in schools, then a prescriptive and remedial approach to solving them in a way that is sustainable, Hall & Hord (2006) emphasize the importance of simply talking to the experts, participating in training sessions, and keeping the guiding principles in mind as a guide to viewing stages of concern as a diagnostic approach to implementing new interventions within schools. The programs and services provided by Regional ESCs can support this

approach of diagnostic remediation, participatory training, initiating and sustaining new strategies.

School administrators are not only leading staff, they are leading students and they must gain a better understanding of student needs with the support of Education Service Centers. Additionally, the centers can provide cost-effective resources and expertise to assist school leaders in breaking away from ineffective strategies and outdated programs while pursuing the development of school systems that are open and willing to take input from staff, students, parents, and community members alike. School leaders must know where to begin before building and maintaining positive and effective relationships with staff. Educational Service Centers can provide the appropriate training and resources that school administrators can rely on when striving to provide support for school staff and ultimately improve their relationship with their staff. School administrators have the power to initiate positive change in school climate by establishing and understanding relationship between staff and administration. Once this relationship has been established, the principal should strive to continue building the relationship, leading by example, and motivating their staff to follow the example. Ultimately, if school administrators are empathetic and truly seek to understand the staff, then the administrator is more likely to be understood and respected by the staff. This mutual respect can ultimately lead to higher levels of improvement within school districts (Covey, 1991).

Quality school leadership is more than just a visionary mission statement. It is a major responsibility of superintendents and campus principals to ensure that their

schools are not only meeting state and federal accountability standards, but also building and sustaining positive learning environments that support the learning and growth of school staff and the school community. In order for school leaders to do effectively do both, they must be able to understand the connection between perception and reality within their school organization.

According to Collins (2001), organizational theorists advise that a key to improving any organization is honestly assessing the current reality. The effectiveness of this assessment depends on the level of communication throughout the school community. Unfortunately in public schools, sometimes the level of effective communication is not as it should be which leads to mistrust and confusion throughout the school community. This situation can present major difficulties for school leaders seeking school improvement. Communication can build consensus, but requires great effort on the part of school leaders. Effectively communicating with the school community requires school leaders to be able speak and write using language that can be understood by those outside the school setting.

As pointed out in Hoyle, English, and Steffy (1998), effective communication is a combination of both verbal and written language that is easy for the school community to understand, support, build consensus around, and prevent conflict. In order to be a successful school leader, one must formulate and adhere to a plan of both internal and external communications that build capacity for gaining both financial and programmatic support. School leaders who seem to consistently master the effective communication process are also more likely to enjoy a longer stays with their school

district and community. Those who fail to effectively communicate are going to find themselves dealing with miscommunications and political controversies all too frequently which can lead to conflict within the school community.

ESCs, School-Community Relationships, and Student Performance

With all of the daily pressures and deadlines that school administrators face, they are often left isolated and in need of external support in order to make accurate assessments about the relationship between the school and community. Often, new administrators do not know where to begin when it comes to building bridges with the school-community. When it comes to making accurate assessments of the school-community relationship, Education Service Centers can provide assistance from to school leaders with the development of surveys or audits that will collect and analyze data that can realistically frame community perceptions into a workable solution for school leaders to work from.

With the help of field agents or education specialists, school leaders and districts can best utilize their service center by attending trainings held at the service center location or they can have specialists provide on-site training within the school districts in order to provide members of the school community with the opportunity to attend and benefit from the trainings. This on-site training is especially important for districts wanting to improve the overall school-community relationship where parents and community members may not have adequate transportation or they are not able to afford making the journey out to the service center location, but they are willing and able to make the much shorter trip to the schoolhouse down the road. This partnership between the school, parents and community, and the service center is a symbiotic one in which all parties are

able to learn and grow from the interaction with each other. Inevitably, they will form strong bonds that will surely have a positive impact in regard to school improvement. This will also help teachers become more aware of what their students are dealing with at home and how this impacts their performance at school. By participating and utilizing services, they will be more likely to develop appropriate strategies to assist the students at school.

The importance of the school-community relationship and the role that the service center plays while assisting school districts improve this relationship must not be taken for granted. It is highly critical for school leaders to understand the true meaning of “community” before they are able to successfully serve as a school leader within that community. Sergiovanni (2005) says “communities spring from common understandings that provide members with a sense of identity, belonging, and involvement that results in a web of meaningful relationships with moral overtones” (p. 55). Effectively communicating with parents and community members may not always be an easy task for administrators and teachers. It is a skill that has to be developed and nurtured over time in order to establish and sustain a positive relationship. Ultimately, Education Service Centers can assist school staff in developing positive strategies that can foster a strong and successful partnership between school and home. This includes assisting school staff in learning how to better communicate with parents. By receiving ESC assistance and support with newsletters, and participating in research-based staff development from regional ESCs, school staff can acquire and utilize effective strategies that lead to improved and more consistent communication with the school-community.

The need for a true partnership between schools and communities is apparent. Clinton (2007) adds support by stating that “successful communities provide members with broadly shared opportunities to participate, promote collective responsibility, and foster a strong sense of belonging” (Middlebury College Graduation Address). The concept of a partnership between the school, family, and community is one that must be nurtured continuously throughout the course of each school year.

Without establishing and maintaining positive lines of communication and mutual support, schools may suffer and fail to see desirable gains. Sergiovanni (1992) discusses the concept of the virtuous school that strives to create a partnership with parents, teachers, community, and the school. Through this partnership, a relationship that prospers from mutual trust, goodwill and mutual benefits will flourish. Although there is still room for improvement, ESCs have the potential to take school improvement to the highest levels of academic achievement and developing a positive association between the school and home regardless of socioeconomic situations by shaping and molding school leaders and leadership style.

In addition to leadership development and the improvement of the school climate, improving student performance is one of the major goals of ESCs. When it comes to assessing student achievement levels, then implementing an effective course of remedial action, school leaders must be able to effectively deal with the challenges that student and family poverty bring to campus. With this being said, educators across the state are struggling to find new strategies to offset the effects that poverty and cultural diversity play in student performance and ultimately impacts scores from state-mandated

assessments.

In order for educators to break the cycle of poor student performance, school leaders must lead the charge in developing a staff that believes they can make a difference and not view the situation as being the way it is, and that things will always be this way. Staff development and training is one way that school leaders can effectively involve their staff in becoming more sensitive to the needs of a culturally diverse school community. Through ESC staff development, educators can receive training in order to learn new skills and strategies that can effectively link the school-communities effort to make solid connections between school climate, parental involvement, strong curriculum alignment, and improvements in student performance.

Rothstein (2004) emphasizes how social class actually shapes student learning and affects student performance. Higher standards and inspired teachers alone will not reduce the level of inequity between black and white students. Rothstein warns us against relying solely on effective teachers, eliminating classroom distractions, and the emphasis of getting a good education as the solution to narrowing the gap. While these strategies may enhance the learning experience for some students, they are limited in their ability to improve the performance of lower socio-economic children. He also insists that our leaders are consistently failing in their attempts to narrow academic achievement gaps, because they refuse to recognize that social class has a powerful impact on student learning.

Although a student's social class or skin color should not influence learning, the combination of the characteristics that define social class inevitably influence their

academic achievement. Some of the major differences between the social classes that Rothstein identifies include different styles of parenting, and different ways of communicating. In addition, he points out that there are differences in expectations and even different ways parents read to their children. He concludes by stating that although economists, sociologists, and educators have long been aware of the student achievement gap and have tried to develop strategies to remove it, they have actually failed to address the problem correctly due partly because of the narrow focus in which they have viewed the problem. By placing all of our trust in educational reform, we are most likely to foster a misleading and dangerous perspective that it is the school's problem to solve alone and that the school-community relationship has little or no value.

When it comes to dealing with achievement gaps and improving student achievement, in our nation's schools, one of the first demands that federal statutes place on school leaders begins in the area of parental involvement. According to the Texas Education Agency (2010), the "No Child Left Behind Act" (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2002), was designed and implemented to strengthen schools and improve student achievement by focusing on accountability standards, improved teacher quality, statewide education goals, more options for parents and students, establishing safe and drug free schools, implement greater financial stability, and to ensure appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities.

The Texas Education Agency adds that parental involvement has always been the centerpiece of Title I, but now with NCLB it has a specific statutory definition that describes it as being the "participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful

communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, ensuring that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning". Additionally, TEA adds that "parents are to be considered as full partners in their child's education and are to be included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child and all other activities that will build the capacity of all parents" (Texas Education Agency, 2006).

Support for strengthening the school-community relationship and parental involvement is additionally supported by others who believe that school leaders must constantly seek new strategies in order to adhere to the given parameters and improve student performance and eliminate achievement gaps in student performance regardless of student background. Interestingly enough, this support and philosophy is a powerful predictor in terms of student performance, basically, the higher the level of status, the higher the level of academic achievement. With this being said, has anything really changed since this analysis in the early 1970's? Have schools done enough to eliminate this disparity between economics and education?

Education Service Centers have played an important role doing so over the last few decades in raising the level of student achievement among all student groups, yet the need for external support in order to overcome the challenges of socio-economics in education through effective school leadership still exists. Payne (1997) provides additional support by emphasizing the importance of the responsibility of the principal in creating and maintaining a positive learning environment where all students regardless of cultural diversity, can prosper and grow in learning. Regional Education Service

Centers can assist schools in recognizing any existing or potential achievement gaps among student groups as well as assist the school by implementing quality decision-making processes that focus more on the specific needs of the students. ESCs can assist schools with the implementation of comprehensive staff development programs based on student needs and sustain a mutually-supportive partnership between the school, home, and the community. Education Service Centers can assist schools in improving cross-cultural environments in education through leadership and promotion of diversity which is can be a considerable challenge for today's school leaders.

Peters (2006) emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness in the process of school improvement. He advocates for the utilization of a three-step process to “capture, inspire, and teach”. He claims that in order to “capture”, one must develop, establish, and sustain positive relationships with students. Secondly, he adds that teachers must find new ways to “inspire” students in order to improve learning. Thirdly, he claims that the ability to “teach” will come naturally after the motivational and inspirational aspects take hold. He concludes by stating that this three-step process “allows teachers, classrooms, and schools to change the emphasis from No Child Left Behind to No Child Left Out” (p. 58).

Additional support for teacher led inspiration of students can be found in Margolis and McCabe (2004), who claim that classroom teachers have the ability to assist students in building self-efficacy by encouraging them to take on new challenges, promoting a greater interest in academics, reinforcing effort and persistence, and helping students to identify and create personal goals. Marzano (2003) states that “schools can improve the

level of student achievement to a more productive and effective state if teachers are able to offset negative environmental situations through understanding motivational theories that are proven to provide positive results” (p. 271). He emphasizes that by examining school, teacher, and student level factors, educators can successfully determine which instructional and motivational strategies work with students and more appropriately set higher academic goals that do not underestimate student potential.

Schlechty (1997) points out students are likely to exert more energy and pay closer attention to their tasks and assignments if they are authentically engaged in schoolwork. This concept should make perfect sense to every teacher who feels like they are not able to reach some of their most challenging students. Could it be that a teacher’s inability to provide meaningful and appealing work opportunities for students contributes to the teacher’s inaccurate perception of their students “not caring”. School leaders must strive to recruit and retain the best and brightest teachers available. These teachers will need to be totally committed to gaining a better understanding of the effects that society has on learning, and what their role is in offsetting those effects by contributing and producing interesting lessons that promote higher levels of achievement. In order to assist with these challenges, Education Service Centers provide a variety of certification and personnel services that support their districts in locating and hiring highly qualified and effective teachers who can improve student learning. The ability to recognize every student as an individual, with individual needs is highly critical in establishing and maintaining an environment that is productive. Doing so requires visionary leadership, a concept supported by Hoyle (2002) who states that “visionary leadership is knowing

how to inspire hearts, ignite minds, and move hands to create tomorrow” (p.29).

With state and federal accountability systems migrating towards, but not quite reaching a common ground, educators are struggling to find a balance between state-mandated accountability ratings, and meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP). Failure to make the required improvements in one or both areas can present administrators and their school districts with a variety of implications including reduced funding or possibly even taking a more punitive approach with administrators who are unable to effectively lead the charge in improving student performance among all student groups. Since the implementation of “No Child Left Behind”, schools have had to revamp their thinking and the strategies that they use in making sure that all students and staff are meeting the mandated requirements.

In order for school leaders to successfully meet the challenges of today’s accountability standards, they must become aware of the importance of cross-cultural issues and gain an understanding of the role cultural diversity plays in creating safe, secure, and positive learning environments that promote higher levels of achievement among all students. This may be particularly difficult for some educators who may have never been exposed to urban educational settings where achievement gaps may be a prevalent problem. Achievement gaps between culturally diverse students in both urban and rural settings have existed for some time now, and educators are still searching for solutions. However, recognizing the problem and effectively dealing with it may be easier said than done if educators fail to maximize all available resources. Jencks (1972) in a study that provided an analysis of the original “Coleman

Report” showed that schools do little to lessen the gap between rich and poor students, between more and less able students, student achievement is primarily a function of one factor, which is student background. The study also showed that little evidence exists that education reform can improve a school’s influence on student achievement.

As Texas schools continue to deal with the State-mandated Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, obvious achievement gaps have existed in the test scores of low socio-economic, African-American, and Hispanic students across the state. While many across the state designate this situation as “achievement gaps”, McKenzie and Sheurich (2004) describe this situation as an "equity trap" during a qualitative research study where it was determined that teachers and administrators are often affected by both conscious and unconscious thoughts that prevents them from establishing and maintaining effective schools that embrace cultural diversity and promote equity. Although many strategies such as early intervention, tutorials, benchmark assessments, and technology have been successfully utilized to decrease the size of the gaps in many schools, educators have been unable to completely close those gaps. Despite many attempts to bridge the gap between culturally diverse students through these academic strategies, student performance among these at-risk students remains to be a problem. One question that must be answered before we can seek out new strategies to fill in the achievement gaps is how educators can offset the negative impact that society, economic status, and cultural backgrounds often have on student performance (McKenzie and Sheurich, 2004).

With student performance being the ultimate goal of both ESCs and local school

districts, many educators feel that an increase in parental involvement could lead to better results, while others feel that it is more of a curriculum alignment issue. ESCs can assist administrators in successfully determining which aspects of school climate are present and effective, the level of parental and community involvement in their district, and the level of curriculum alignment within the district, as these are all critical components in achieving higher levels of student performance for all student groups. If these components can be proven to be effective then perhaps districts can work to sustain them in order to continue experiencing high levels of success. However, if proven ineffective, then schools will need to break away from the constraints of complacency and content that are supporting their failing system of “the way we’ve always done it”. Scheurich and Skrla (2001) point out that prior to accountability, schools were content to maintain the status quo, as long as the perception of a “good school” existed. The paradigm of interpretivism supports the belief that there are multiple truths to be discovered and knowledge is gained by observing and analyzing. If elements of ineffectiveness are permeating a district, school leaders must be able to make accurate observations about the state of their school and then be prepared to deal with the often unpleasant challenge of initiating change within the system. That means getting people to do things that they may really not want to do and these people sometimes include school boards. Glass and Fanceschini (2007) describe superintendents and school boards as “traditional harbingers of normalcy, valuing gradual rather than radical change” (p. 4). Professional Development provided by Education Service Centers can assist school leaders with strategies and programs that are

proven to be effective in the areas of school improvement and raising achievement levels.

This concept is supported by Marzano (2003) who suggests that all schools can reach higher levels of effectiveness if they are willing to utilize strategies based on what is known about effective schooling. He adds that “If we follow guidance offered from 35 years of research, we can enter an era of unprecedented effectiveness for the public practice of education.” Marzano (2003) also recommends specific strategies geared toward successful implementation based on years of research. He emphasizes that schools can change the level of student achievement to a more effective and productive state. Marzano (2003) consistently examines factors such as teachers offsetting the effects of a negative home environment, does teacher understanding of motivation theories contribute to positive results, what instructional strategies work with students, and ultimately, how can schools set academic goals that do not underestimate student potential. Marzano (2003) successfully encompasses these concepts by examining school-level, teacher-level, and student-level factors in addition to looking at implementation procedures.

How can school leaders get beyond only looking at school-level factors in order to promote awareness about the importance of teacher-level and student-level factors? Education Service Centers can assist school leaders in taking a look at the overall big picture of what is taking place on campus and more importantly help them avoid getting anchored down to the same old way of doing things based on environmental factors on-campus or in the community which can be a dangerous pitfall for school leaders if they

fail to make real-world connections to research-proven strategies that require change.

Good and Brophy (1994) warn educators about the dangers of focusing only on school-level factors by claiming that studies have shown large samples of schools produce important profiles of more and less successful schools, but state that these are only group averages that may not accurately determine the effectiveness of individual teacher behavior within a certain campus. They claim that people who utilize research to guide practice often expect all teacher behavior to reflect the group average. If school leaders can tap into and fully utilize the resources and services that Regional ESCs provide, they could possibly provide the foundation for building the bridge that can eliminate the gaps between cultures and student performance.

In Texas, curriculum is being driven by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), which give provides guidelines and specific objectives that must be taught in each grade level, yet it allows teachers to remain flexible and creative in regard to the way things are taught in the classroom. During tough economic times and school funding issues, districts should avoid chasing expensive remedies and implementation of unproven initiatives that create may require additional personnel, yet fail to improve student performance. This can be extremely costly for districts trapped by the promise of a quick fix to poor student performance although the programs cannot be sustained long enough to ensure any significant achievement gains. As pointed out in Reidel (2008), saving district dollars goes far beyond energy conservation efforts of turning off lights and shutting down computers, it's about rethinking the way everything is done throughout the district. This includes maximizing all available resources and the first

place one should look is at their Regional Education Service Center who can assist school leaders in strengthening their curriculum in a cost-effective manner that produces quality results in regard to school improvement by providing staff development and training that utilizes best practices and research-based strategies.

Basically by splitting up the cost among school districts, Education Service Centers often are able to bring in some of the top experts in education to train educators on best practices in curriculum management, something that many school districts could not afford to do due to financial constraints and school funding issues. Managing the curriculum requires that certain topics be covered in certain grade levels, it does allow for teachers to be creative in how they present the information based on the individual needs of their students.

Education Service Centers can assist educators in fostering higher levels of creativity through quality staff development that assist educators in improving curriculum alignment and instruction on campus. Maze, et al. (2009) points out that the greatest occurrence of “effective” and “mostly effective” ratings from a survey of superintendents on effectiveness of service centers took place in regard to staff development in the areas of curriculum alignment and delivery in a manner that truly meets the needs of all students. The results also emphasized that service centers were able to ensure that “the curriculum meets the needs of all students, followed closely by establishing efficient delivery of the district curriculum, establishing clear priorities for instructional goals and objectives” (p.29). According to the study, Education Service Centers can assist school leaders with improving the success of all students on their

campus through the development and alignment of an appropriate curriculum that meets the specific needs of students based on state standards and the data collected through the service center. In doing so, school leaders are able to guide their staff into developing the educational objectives, methods, and processes to effectively implement the objectives in order to meet the individual needs of the students.

Ramsey (1999) emphasizes the importance of school leaders moving beyond performing regular routine management tasks in order to function as a true leader instead of solely functioning as a facilitator. Administrators leading the charge into the future of education must effectively serve as a leader and collaborate with the school community by skillfully utilizing the dynamics of group processes so that they can ensure the success for all students. Ultimately, collaboration will assist us in the way teachers teach, and the way students learn.

School leaders must also work to develop and utilize curriculum that is capable of meeting the needs of culturally diverse students. Statistics show that test scores of low socio-economic, African-American, Hispanic, and other at-risk students are significantly lower than other students. In Texas, the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) show that student achievement from at-risk students is consistently less than students not labeled at-risk (Texas Education Agency, 2010). For far too long now, school systems have provided the same cookie cutter approach for all its students and hoping for the best. Shlechty (1997) concludes by presenting an interesting concept of school leaders striving to erode the old traditional view of students from an authoritative position to one that focuses on the students as being customers, and that we should create curriculum

and strategies to attract them. He also adds that it is unlikely that student performance will ever meet the expectations of the school community or parents unless they can develop and provide a product that the students find engaging, compelling, and satisfying.

Summary of the Review of Literature

In conclusion, although the literature on Education Service Centers in Texas is relatively limited compared to the scope and range of the agencies across the state, the review of literature on ESAs from a national perspective is more thorough and reveals the importance of effective leadership, school climate, and the school-community relationship. Additionally, it demonstrates the importance of understanding the influence of NCLB, establishes awareness of the network of nationwide support from ESCs, discusses the issues of accountability, and discusses the influence on legislation in adjusting delivery of ESC services in order to prioritize and eliminate redundancy and duplication of services through the complex systems of ESAs. The review continues by highlighting the first-hand accounts of Texas school leaders, discussing the role of ESCs in developing leadership capacity through data-driven decisions, discussing the importance of improving student performance, and understanding the needs of both school staff and students as being highly critical in implementing and sustaining positive change throughout schools in order to promote and support school improvement. The perspective of ESAs through a national lens ultimately reflects the importance of providing a variety of programs and services that specifically target the needs of schools within their region.

Throughout this study, it is highly evident that Education Service Centers in Texas are loaded with a variety of material, personnel, and programmatic resources that are combined with a wealth of experience and knowledge from ESC staff that can assist school leaders with all of the challenges that are referenced in this study and target the specific needs of their region. Ultimately, there is a strong connection between the research questions of this study which asks what services are available through Texas ESCs, and what are the similarities and differences of programs and services among the twenty ESCs, and the review of literature that is reflective of a national perspective on ESAs. The literature reveals that by identifying which services are available at each of the ESAs, as well as identifying the similarities and differences of services across the Great Lakes Region, experienced district leaders and those new to school leadership positions, are highly likely to build relationships with their regional ESA that fosters school improvement.

The connection to Texas ESCs can be observed by the Maze (2009) study, and in the first-hand accounts that were included in the review of literature. As local school districts have had to make adjustments in dealing with all of the state and federal mandates, accountability pressures, and more importantly serving students, Texas ESCs have stood side-by-side with their regional school districts in order to assist them with the much needed support.

The importance of collaboration and staff development as it relates to the improvement of schools is highly evident in the review of literature as being a critical component of service centers in assisting school districts develop and sustain a solid

foundation that will support the development of a strong, positive climate and culture within Texas public schools. Once this foundation has been established, then school leaders can seek a variety external programs and services through Education Service Centers that will enable them to improve the level of communication and collaboration throughout the school community. Furthermore, through this improvement in culture, communication, and collaboration school leaders will inevitably be able to effectively confront and manage both state and federal accountability demands as well as close existing achievement gaps among student groups. As observed by the first-hand accounts of Pierce (2010), schools are dealing with issues of inadequacy in school funding which forces school leaders to reduce personnel costs in order to balance the district budget. The need to seek and utilize more cost-effective programs and services to improve schools can also be observed in the first-hand accounts of Sconzo (2010). These cost-effective strategies can be easily found at regional service centers throughout Texas and really make a difference in improving staff development and ultimately student performance.

Chapter III will discuss the methodology for the study, and Chapter IV will discuss the findings, while Chapter V will discuss the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Following a review of the literature that included a perspective from a national lens, as well as first-hand accounts from Texas school leaders, it was determined that there is extremely limited research that has been conducted on Education Service Centers in Texas. This study explores the programs and professional services that are currently being offered by Regional Education Service Centers in Texas that promote school improvement. Secondly, the study explored the similarities and differences among programs and services throughout the twenty centers in Texas. Ultimately, this study serves as a source of valuable information for both Education Service Center staff making decisions about which services to provide to schools throughout their region that target the specific needs of their region, as well as assisting public school leaders who need to establish and maintain a network of external support that promotes school improvement throughout the state.

Research Design

ESCs across the state of Texas were examined in order to examine the variety of programs and services throughout the state. Two main research questions were designed by the researcher as outlined in Chapter I: (1) Which programs and services are being provided in order to promote school improvement? (2) What are the similarities and differences in programs and services among ESCs across the state? The rationale for using a descriptive approach was to explore and analyze the programs and services that are currently being offered by each center just as a school leader in need of external

support and all available resources in order to promote improvement of schools within their district. Unfortunately, little research is available that explores and defines which professional services and programs from Education Service Centers are available to school districts across the State of Texas that allows for them to maximization and utilization of external support and resources in order to promote school improvement within their districts.

The researcher utilized a descriptive, exploratory analysis in order to thoroughly examine all twenty ESCs across Texas by accessing the website of each ESC as a school leader in need of external support would in order to determine which programs and services were available in order to assist them with school improvement in their district.

Population

For this study, data from the twenty Educational Service Center websites were collected and analyzed to explore which programs and professional services are being provided to promote improvement of public schools throughout over 1,100 school districts in Texas and 4.6 million students. Additionally, the study also compares the similarities and differences of services provided among the twenty regional education service centers across the state in order to effectively serve those districts and students. The websites are a reflection of the leadership of the Executive Director and staff at each ESC as it pertains to the development and provision of services that target the specific needs of the schools within that particular region. As the data was collected and analyzed, it became highly evident that Education Service Centers in Texas were doing a superior job of targeting the specific needs of their districts through a variety of

statewide initiatives in conjunction with high-quality staff development and professional growth opportunities for their clients. Additionally, the experience factor is highly significant due to the fact that many of the ESC staff have served as school leaders themselves, either in that particular region or elsewhere in the state which contributes to familiarity and expertise when it comes to dealing with the challenges that schools face.

Due to the size and location of the population, technology and ESC websites were used in order to collect data that details the number and types of programs and services currently being offered by Education Service Centers that are designed to improve schools.

Instrumentation

For the purposes of this study, the websites from all twenty Education Service Centers in Texas were located, accessed, explored, and analyzed in order to collect data to determine which services to promote school improvement were currently available, and to compare the similarities and differences among programs and services throughout the state.

Procedures

The study examined the history of Education Service Centers in Texas from its inception and evolution from media centers in the late 1960's to present day full-service educational support systems that provide a multitude of programs and services that are designed to promote school improvement to schools within their region. The study examined each website from all twenty regional education service centers in Texas as a school leader seeking external support would do in order to try to gain a better

understanding of the services and programs that were being offered to public schools in Texas that would promote school improvement within their district. Throughout the process, the researcher located the website of each ESC in Texas. From there, each department was explored in order to identify which programs and services were available to Texas' public schools in order to assist school leaders in improving schools in their districts. Further exploration of the departments of the twenty ESCs allowed the researcher to compare the similarities and differences of ESC programs and services throughout the state that were most likely to assist school leaders in meeting the demands of both state and federal accountability standards and other issues of compliance, monitoring, along with the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning on campus in order to eliminate academic achievement gaps among student groups. Additionally, the researcher looked for the connection between Education Service Centers, effective leadership, the improvement of school culture and climate, staff development, and the improvement of the school-community relationship as being factors that could possibly contribute to school improvement throughout each region in a cost-effective manner that could benefit schools during tough economic times in regard to school funding issues across the state. In order to fully understand which services were available at each ESC, the researcher outlined those services by ESC and can be found in the appendices of this study.

Data Analysis

The programs and services that were currently being provided in order to promote school improvement were outlined and explained for each ESC. The location of each

ESC was identified, and contact information for all twenty ESCs were also provided in order to serve as a quick reference for future researchers or school leaders in need of obtaining external support that promotes school improvement, identifying which programs and services were available at each ESC, and comparing the similarities and differences among services provided throughout the state.

Summary

Chapter III discussed the methodology that was utilized for the purposes of this study as well as the research questions that were being asked. The research design was also discussed along with the explanation of the population of Texas ESCs sampled, the instrumentation utilized during the study, the data collection methods utilized during the study, and an explanation of the data collection process in determining which programs and services promote school improvement from the study of all twenty ESCs in Texas. Chapter IV provides a thorough description of the research findings from the twenty ESCs in Texas, while Chapter V highlights the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research of ESCs in Texas.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The primary purpose of this descriptive study was to explore the programs and professional services that Regional Education Service Centers provide to school districts in order to promote school improvement of public schools in Texas. Secondly, the study determined the similarity and differences of programs and services that promote school improvement in public schools throughout Texas. The results of this study will produce needed information about which programs and services are being provided across the state in order to promote improvement throughout Texas public schools. Additionally, the information gained from this study will be available to school leaders across the state of Texas and the nation who are interested in identifying and utilizing external support agencies to promote improvement in their schools. This information can also be used by university staff teaching courses in educational leadership to those individuals desiring to become principals and superintendents. Finally, the results from this study could be useful to anyone in the field of education seeking external support from outside agencies that are far removed from the local politics that are often found in local school districts and communities. Ultimately, this study can inspire educational leaders to seek external support from Education Service Centers in order to provide cost-effective opportunities for professional growth, assistance with compliance of state and federal regulations, certification opportunities, and many other aspects of education that are associated with school improvement. The data gathered was examined by using a descriptive and exploratory analysis by accessing each website in order to determine which services

were currently available and being provided to promote school improvement in Texas public schools. In addition to determining which programs and services were available in support of school improvement, the data from each of the twenty Education Service Centers in Texas enabled the researcher to distinguish the similarities and differences among the ESCs. This is important for school leaders to understand because their need for products, material resources, support and services may expand beyond their own regional ESC boundaries in some cases.

Validity and Reliability

The results of this study are valid and reliable due to the data that comes directly through each regional service center as it is presented in the “catalog of services” at each ESC. The information that is outlined on each service center website has been placed there in order to advertise and communicate to all of the school districts within each region. It is assumed that each Education Service Center maintains and updates the website information in order to accurately reflect the current programs and services that are being offered in order to target the needs of their region and ultimately facilitate school improvement throughout their region.

Research Findings

This study answers the research questions of which programs and services are being provided by Educational Service Centers and what are the similarities and differences of programs and services provided among the Education Service Center in Texas in order to promote school improvement. According to the data, it is highly evident that Education Service Centers in Texas have made a shift from the media centers of the late

1960's and 1970's to more of a non-regulatory external support agency that has evolved to assist school leaders in not only improving student performance, but also adhering to a variety of state and federal mandates based on accountability. Due to both federal and state-mandated educational initiatives, regional education service centers are required to provide specific programs designed to assist the local school districts meet these mandates.

The major findings from this study show that although professional services provided by Education Service Centers may vary by region due to the efforts of executive directors and service center staff striving to meet the specific needs of their districts, there were some commonalities of basic systems of support for public schools in Texas that could be found consistently throughout the majority of service centers. The definite commonalities of support that could be found throughout Education Service Centers in Texas can best be outlined by the following categories: Administration, Adult & Safety Education, Business Services, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Computer Services, Internal Operations, Leadership and Professional Development Services, Special Education, Special Programs, Compliance and Monitoring, and Technology Services. Within these twelve main categories, the number of programs and services grow exponentially and become more specific, detailed, and focused according to the needs of their districts in regard to professional services for teachers and administrators and student performance issues within their region and are outlined as follows in what can be described as a basic overview of statewide services:

Administrative Services

Within the Administration or Administrative Services category, service centers are able to simply establish and maintain an administrative unit that functions to oversee the daily operations of the departments within their facility. Although this may not appear to provide any immediate benefit to the improvement of Texas schools, without this unit, districts would not see the levels of organization or the availability of programs and services that are outlined in the remaining departments.

Adult and Safety Education

Within the Adult & Safety Education category, school districts can receive support and professional services in the following areas: GED, ESL, and TANF Training, Adult Basic Education, Driver Awareness for Under Educated Adults, Driver Education, Driver Education Alternative Certification, Drug and Alcohol Driving Awareness, Drug and Alcohol Testing Consortium, GED Testing, Instruction for Institutionalized Adults, School Bus Driver and Bus Safety Training. Due to concerns of student safety on campus and in the community, Education Service Centers are stepping up to the plate to provide high-quality service in the areas of school safety. The Adult Education services are simply another way that the service centers are providing support to school communities and assist their districts with the enhancement and strengthening of the school-community relationship as this has a powerful impact on school improvement throughout the state.

Business Services

Within the Business Services category, school districts can receive support and professional services in the following areas: Cooperative Purchasing, Business Offices Services Assessments, and Business Office Support. Although this division at first may not seem to provide much in the way of school improvement or a likely place for school leaders to begin their quest for school improvement, without strong business services support, school districts would likely struggle particularly due to issues of inadequate funding by the state which leads to limited resources and inevitably has a negative impact on school improvement.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Perhaps the most detailed division providing the highest number of programs and services to school districts in order to promote and sustain school improvement. Education Service Centers provide not only complete support in the core-curriculum areas of reading, math, science, and social studies, but also contributes to the strengthening of many other areas as well. Within the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment category, school districts can receive support and professional services in the following areas: Assessment and Accountability, CSCAPE, Curriculum Assistance, Early Education Professional Development, Educational Technology, ELA & Reading, Fine Arts Initiative, Health and Physical Education Services, Health, Texas Comprehensive School Health Network, Instructional Materials (Textbooks), Instructional Resources Preview Center, Interactive Video Technology Resources (IVT), Languages Other Than English, Library Contracted Services, Literary Assistance,

Master Reading Teacher Preparation and Certification, Math and Science Fee Service, Mathematics Assistance Program, Media Duplication Services, Podcasting, Prekindergarten Expansion Grant, Preschool Links, Reading First, Response To Intervention, School Readiness Integration, Science Assistance, Social Studies, Social Studies Assistance, Social Studies Website Resources, Streaming Video Services, Student Assessment Assistance, Technology Conference, Technology Integration Assistance, Technology Planning, Technology Training Online: Training and Professional Development Management System Contract, Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA), Texas Early Education Model, Texas History Conference, Texas Math and Science Diagnostic System (TMSDS), Texas Regional Collaborative for Excellence in Mathematics Teaching (TRC-M), Texas School Readiness Certification System, Textbook Services, Title IID Shared Services Agreement (Formula Funding), TPRI Reporting, Web-Based Comprehensive Curriculum Assessment Tool (WebCCAT).

Computer Services

Effective use of technology in schools is highly critical in order to not only successfully manage student achievement data, but also to provide a network of both remedial and enrichment opportunities that support curriculum and instruction. Within the Computer Services category, school districts can receive support and professional services in the following areas: PEIMS-Professional Educator Information Management System, Pentamation-Business/Student, RSCCC-Business/Student, Web-Based Job Applications.

Internal Operations

Internal Operations is an important area of service center support that provides media services to schools which may not otherwise have the resources available to produce materials that support the curriculum goals of the districts. Within the Internal Operations category, school districts can receive support and professional services in the following areas: Audio/Visual Services, Blue Streak Delivery System (Regional Delivery System to Districts), and Printing Services.

Leadership Development and Professional Services

Perhaps one of the more popular and growing services provided by Education Service Centers throughout Texas falls under the category of Leadership and Professional Development Services. School leaders seeking a cost-effective and easily accessible way to improve their leadership skills through professional development may utilize Education Service Centers in order to do so. Within the Leadership and Professional Development Services category, school districts can receive support and professional services in the following areas: Accountability, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), Administrator “E-Newsletter”, Administrator Professional Organization Support, Administrator Training, Administrator’s Corner, Campus/District Planning Assistance, CE Credits Online, Certification, Comprehensive Needs Assessment Survey Assistance, Data Management for Assessment and Curriculum (DMAC), Dropout Prevention Assistance, Governance Technical Assistance, Highly Qualified Teacher Assistance, Instructional Scans, Management Studies, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), PEIMS Attendance Audit, Personnel Placement Cooperative, Principal Appraisal, Principal

Assessment, Principal Preparation and Certification Program (PPCP), Professional Development, School Board Training, School Effectiveness Audits, Site-Based Decision Making and Planning, Superintendent Appraisal, Superintendent Preparation and Certification Program (SPCP), Teacher Appraisal Training, Teacher Preparation and Certification Program (TCP), and Technical Assistance for Principals.

Special Programs

In order to effectively comply with both state and federal requirements in regard to providing quality educational services to students with special needs, school leaders have the opportunity to collaboratively work with Education Service Center Staff in order to ensure equitable and appropriate educational opportunities for all students. Within the Special Education Programs and Services category, school districts can receive support and professional services in the following areas: Assessment and Evaluation, Assistive Technology, Behavior Management, Child Find, Comprehensive System for Personnel Development (CSPD) Leadership Council, Curriculum and Instruction, Inclusion, Legal Issues/Funding, Low Incidence Disabilities and Autism, Parent Information, Parental Involvement, Preschool Program for Parents of Children with Disabilities, Special Education Needs Assessment Surveys, Speech Language-Pathology, Transition, and Visually Impaired Services.

Compliance and Monitoring

An extension of Special Programs, yet a more focused network of support for school districts in need of complying to stringent federal and state guidelines with regard to the way schools educate students, the Division of Compliance and Monitoring found in

Education Service Centers can assist schools in receiving support and professional services in the following areas: Advanced Academic Services (Contracted), Advanced Academic Services (State Services), Bilingual/ESL Contracted Services, Career and Technical Education Consortium (Shared Services Agreement/SSA), Career and Technical Education Program Campus Effectiveness Audit, Career and Technical Assistance Service, Child Nutrition/Nutrition Education Program, CTE, DAEP Assistance (Disciplinary Alternative Education Program), NCLB Technical Assistance and Professional Development Services, Paraprofessional/Support Staff Assistance, Performance-Based Monitoring and Intervention Assistance, Safe and Secure Schools Assistance, State Compensatory Education Contracted Fee Service, Title I, Part A Contracted Services, Title I, Part C Migrant Shared Services Arrangement, Title I, Part C Migrant State Services, Title III, Part A English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement- Shared Services Arrangement, Title III Part A English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement-State Services, Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities State Services, Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFS) Statewide Initiative, Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities-Shared Services Arrangement.

Technology Services

Technology plays an important role in assisting school leaders to effectively collect and analyze student achievement data as well as implement remedial and enrichment opportunities for students. Within the Technology Services category, school districts can receive support and professional services in the following areas: SISCO Networking

Academy Services, CommNet Regional Services, Distance Learning, Distance Learning and Video Conference Technology Services, Email Services, Lightspeed Services, Network Services, and Technology Services.

External Support Options

Many school leaders may not realize that they are not required to utilize only their designated Regional Education Service Center. It is highly possible that service centers outside their specified region may provide programs and services that may not be offered locally. Therefore, school leaders may need to explore neighboring regions or beyond in order to maximize the resources that are necessary in order to promote school improvement within their district.

Once school leaders understand this overview of professional services that can be provided by Education Service Centers throughout Texas, it may be incredibly valuable for them to gain a closer perspective of what is currently being provided by their own regional service center. In order to assist school leaders across the state to better understanding of the services that are offered, they can examine the following categorization of “departments, components, or divisions” by all twenty regional service centers in order from one to twenty. School leaders may find the following information incredibly valuable as it contains location and contact information for each of the twenty service centers throughout the state. Additionally, they will be able to effectively compare the number of districts and schools served by each service center as seen below in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of Number of Districts and Students Served

ESC	Location	# of Districts	# of Students
1	Edinburg, TX	37	383,360
2	Corpus Christi, TX	48	105,512
3	Victoria, TX	41	52,491
4	Houston, TX	54	1,031,462
5	Beaumont, TX	35	80,712
6	Huntsville, TX	57	161,061
7	Kilgore, TX	106	164,246
8	Mount Pleasant, TX	47	56,778
9	Wichita Falls, TX	38	38,889
10	Richardson, TX	80	710,590
11	Fort Worth, TX	77	510,207
12	Waco, TX	77	148,516
13	Austin, TX	60	345,154
14	Abilene, TX	42	47,206
15	San Angelo, TX	43	45,387
16	Amarillo, TX	63	80,040
17	Lubbock, TX	57	78,636
18	Midland, TX	33	75,202
19	El Paso, TX	12	173,275
20	San Antonio, TX	50	379,879

With each Education Service Center in Texas providing a variety of programs and services that promote school improvement, it is interesting to compare the diversity in the number of departments and services across the state which can be seen below in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of Number of Departments and Services Provided

ESC	Location	# of Departments	# of Services
1	Edinburg, TX	12	80
2	Corpus Christi, TX	3	71
3	Victoria, TX	7	47
4	Houston, TX	25	128
5	Beaumont, TX	4	19
6	Huntsville, TX	9	171
7	Kilgore, TX	7	63
8	Mount Pleasant, TX	7	32
9	Wichita Falls, TX	4	67
10	Richardson, TX	9	53
11	Fort Worth, TX	4	54
12	Waco, TX	7	106
13	Austin, TX	12	44
14	Abilene, TX	9	42
15	San Angelo, TX	6	91
16	Amarillo, TX	6	24
17	Lubbock, TX	5	99
18	Midland, TX	6	26
19	El Paso, TX	6	*
20	San Antonio, TX	5	191

In summary of the geographical regions that are served by the twenty ESCs in Texas, over 1,100 school districts and over 4.6 million students are currently being served with a multitude of programs and services.

It is also interesting to compare the number and percentage of districts and students served by each from all twenty ESCs as seen in Figures 2,3,4 and 5.

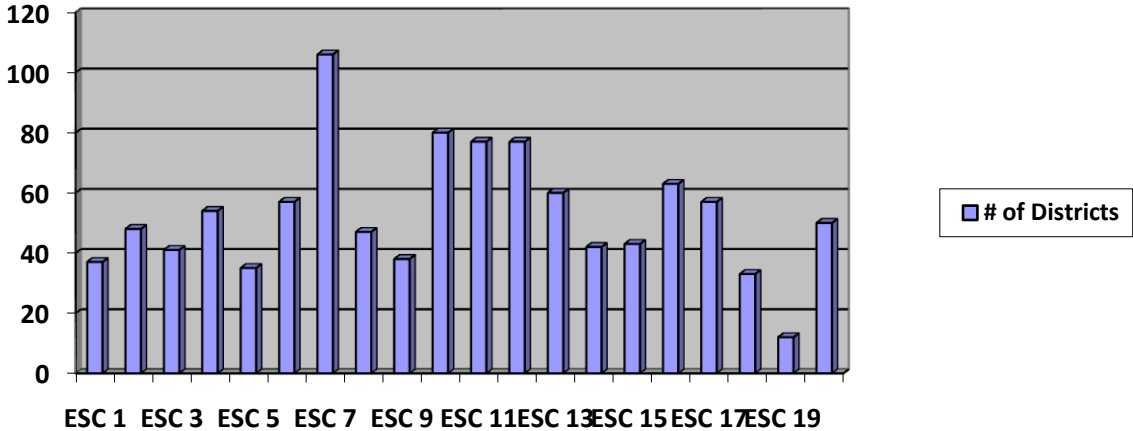


Figure 2. Comparison of the Number of Districts Served

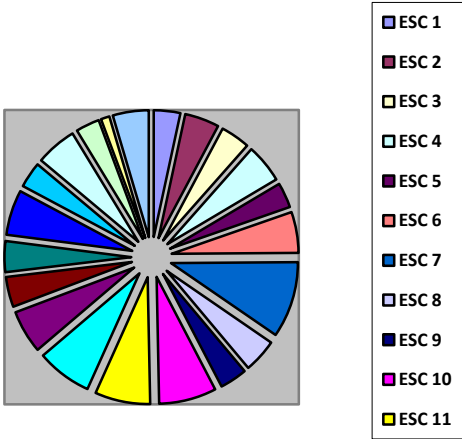


Figure 3. Percentage of Districts Served

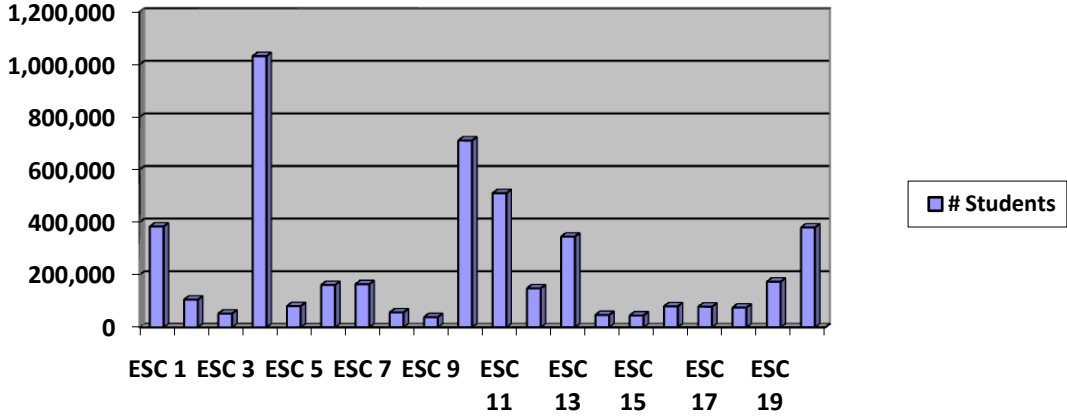


Figure 4. Total Number of Students Served

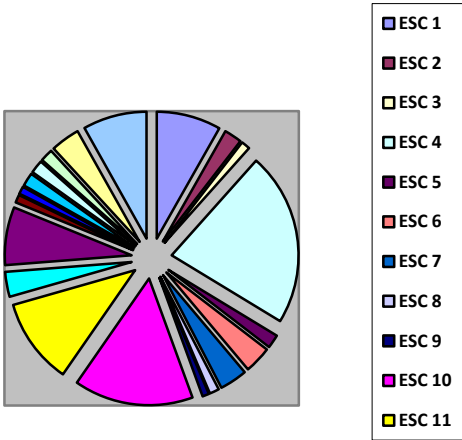


Figure 5. Percentage of Students Served

For the purposes of the study, it is also critical to gain a better understanding of the approximate number and percentage of services provided by ESCs as seen in Figures 6 and 7.

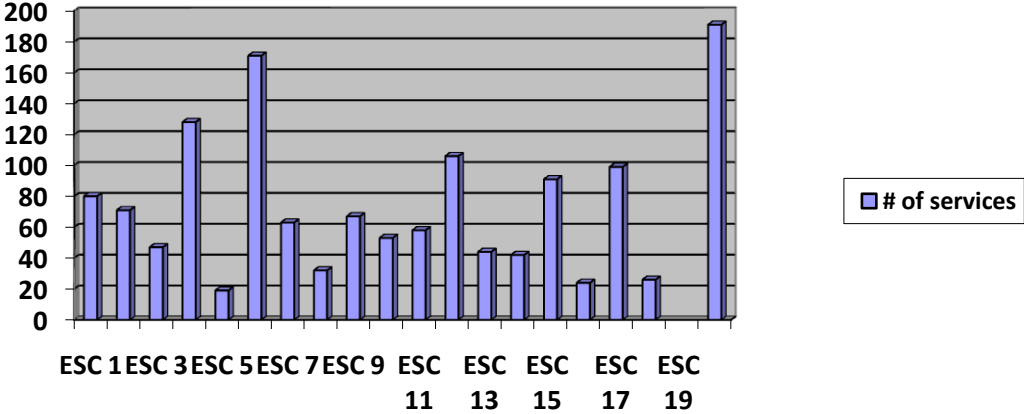


Figure 6. Approximate Number of Services Provided

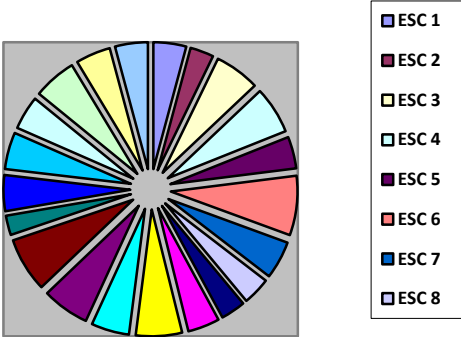


Figure 7. Percentage of Programs Provided

Additionally, it is helpful to understand which ESCs serve urban and rural schools as Seen in Table 4.

Table 4. ESCs Serving Urban and Rural Schools

ESC	Location	Urban	Rural
1	Edinburg, TX		*
2	Corpus Christi, TX		*
3	Victoria, TX		*
4	Houston, TX	*	*
5	Beaumont, TX	*	*
6	Huntsville, TX	*	*
7	Kilgore, TX		*
8	Mount Pleasant, TX		*
9	Wichita Falls, TX		*
10	Richardson, TX		*
11	Fort Worth, TX	*	*
12	Waco, TX		*
13	Austin, TX	*	
14	Abilene, TX		*
15	San Angelo, TX		*
16	Amarillo, TX		*
17	Lubbock, TX		*
18	Midland, TX		*
19	El Paso, TX		*
20	San Antonio, TX	*	

In addition to the comparison of ESC services provided to urban and rural schools, it may be beneficial to examine the similarities of services provided throughout the state. According to the data, there are three major areas of ESC support that are directly related to school improvement, and that are consistent throughout each ESC in Texas. These three areas include Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Support, Leadership and Professional Development Training and Support, and Special Programs Support which can be observed in Table 5. All twenty ESCs in Texas are displayed and participation is designated with an asterisk.

Table 5. Common Areas of Similar Support Provided by ESC

ESC	Location	Curriculum	Leadership	Special Programs
1	Edinburg, TX	*	*	*
2	Corpus Christi, TX	*	*	*
3	Victoria, TX	*	*	*
4	Houston, TX	*	*	*
5	Beaumont, TX	*	*	*
6	Huntsville, TX	*	*	*
7	Kilgore, TX	*	*	*
8	Mount Pleasant, TX	*	*	*
9	Wichita Falls, TX	*	*	*
10	Richardson, TX	*	*	*
11	Fort Worth, TX	*	*	*
12	Waco, TX	*	*	*
13	Austin, TX	*	*	*
14	Abilene, TX	*	*	*
15	San Angelo, TX	*	*	*
16	Amarillo, TX	*	*	*
17	Lubbock, TX	*	*	*
18	Midland, TX	*	*	*
19	El Paso, TX	*	*	*
20	San Antonio, TX	*	*	*

When it comes to school improvement, curriculum and instruction is one of the first areas that school leaders should begin. For the purposes of this study, it is important to examine the categorization of curriculum support provided by the twenty ESCs in Texas which can be seen in Table 6. Additionally, it is beneficial to compare services provided by ESCs serving large, urban schools and ESCs serving smaller, rural schools. These comparisons can be observed in Tables 7, and 8.

Table 6. Differences in Categorization of Curriculum Support by ESC

ESC		Categorization of Curriculum Support
1	Edinburg, TX	School Improvement and Compliance
2	Corpus Christi, TX	Regional Improvement
3	Victoria, TX	Student Support
4	Houston, TX	Reading and Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Special Education Services
5	Beaumont, TX	Support for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
6	Huntsville, TX	Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
7	Kilgore, TX	Curriculum Services
8	Mount Pleasant, TX	Curriculum, Instructional, and Technical Services
9	Wichita Falls, TX	Instructional Services and Strategic Planning
10	Richardson, TX	Instructional Services
11	Fort Worth, TX	Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
12	Waco, TX	Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
13	Austin, TX	Academic Services and Texas Initiatives
14	Abilene, TX	Curriculum Integration and Support, and Instructional Improvement
15	San Angelo, TX	Curriculum
16	Amarillo, TX	Instructional Services
17	Lubbock, TX	Curriculum and Accountability
18	Midland, TX	Comprehensive School Support
19	El Paso, TX	Teacher Quality and Student Success
20	San Antonio, TX	Curriculum and Instruction

Table 7. Comparison of ESC Services for Large Urban Schools

ESCs	ESC Services
ESC 4	Homeless Education, Advanced Academic Services, Braille Services, Languages other than English, Building Teacher & Campus Capacity, and Principals as Leaders of Instruction
ESC 10	Success Through Home Partnerships, Counselor Initiative and Student Support Services, and Teacher Job Network.
ESC 13	Troops to Teachers, Visionaries in Technology and Learning, Advanced Academics and Special Projects, and Teacher Quality and Student Success.
ESC 20	Curriculum Communique, Enhancing Education Through Technology, Tech Fiesta, Career Investigations and Career Connections.

Table 8. Comparison of ESC Services for Smaller Rural Schools

ESCs	ESC Services
ESC 1	Academic Leadership, Gear Up: Bridges to the Future, Multicultural and Culturally Diverse Learners, Vision 20/20 Online Learning.
ESC 6	Technology Integration Assistance, Early Education Professional Development, Student Assessment Assistance, Personnel Placement Cooperative, Technical Assistance for Principals.
ESC 7	CSCOPE, Dyslexia, English Language Arts/Social Studies Cooperative, Fine Arts, Gifted and Talented Services, Grants, Library Services, Math/Science Cooperative, Response to Intervention (RTI), Textbooks, and Texas Math and Science Diagnostics System (TMSDS).
ESC 8	Career and Technology Education, CSCOPE, Core Curriculum, Gifted and Talented, School Readiness Integration, TAKS, and Technology.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore which Education Service Center professional services were available to school districts in order to promote school improvement. Research question #1 stated:

Which programs and services are being provided by Education Service Centers to promote school improvement in Texas?

According to the data collected and analyzed, Education Service Centers provide a variety of professional services that are designed to promote school improvement in districts not only in their region, but throughout the state of Texas. The majority of services and programs currently being offered revolve around both state and federal accountability mandates, and are in place to assist districts with adherence to the regulations. Two of the largest challenges in this area include NCLB and AYP.

However, schools still have to effectively meet the challenges of dealing with a variety of special education requirements as well. District failure to comply with the mandates can lead to unwanted punitive consequences, ruthless media scrutiny, and relentless pressure from the school community ultimately costing administrators their job.

According to the data, service center personnel are highly qualified and capable of assisting school staff in not only meeting the state and federal accountability standards, but also in improving the overall quality of the school-community through a proactive approach of staff development opportunities for both experienced and inexperienced personnel. Additionally, one of the more important implications for participating in service center activities is the opportunity to network with other school professionals

within their region who may be experiencing similar challenges and pressures. Furthermore, they also have the opportunity to network with educators, university professors, and other nationally recognized speakers and trainers from outside their region which contributes to an infusion of new thinking and collaboration that could assist school leaders erode some of the institutionalized boundaries that are impeding the learning process in their respective districts. Participation in the wide-array of services and programs that regional service centers provide proves to be a web of support that can be found no other place. More importantly, the support is provided at a very cost-effective price. The opportunity to learn and grow as an educational professional becoming highly skilled in maneuvering through all of the challenges is a great investment but one that pays huge dividends in the way of school improvement.

Research question #2 stated:

What are the similarities and differences in programs and services among ESCs in Texas?

According to the data collected and analyzed, Education Service Centers do provide similar programs and services designed to promote school improvement in Texas. Although all twenty service centers provide similar services when it comes to assisting districts with compliance to state and federal mandates, some districts do offer some unique services to their districts. For example, some school districts throughout the state are designated as a “Title I School” because there is a significant population of students that are considered to be of low socio-economic status. This situation can have a negative impact on student performance if schools fail to establish a healthy relationship

between the school and the home. ESCs consistently offer support in this area for schools to increase and improve the number and quality of “Parent Nights”, or other school programs that are designed to help parents become an invested partner in their child’s education. Under NCLB, there is an entire component of parental involvement which provides schools with guidelines as how to build bridges between the school and home while increasing the overall level of parental involvement in their district.

According to the data, one the fastest-growing and challenging areas of support that is evident throughout ESCs in Texas is with the assistance of school funding issues. As districts are dealing with the challenges of inadequate school funding from the state level, education service center staff who are experienced in this area along with their relationships with school finance experts from across the state are able to assist their local districts in maximizing all available resources and ensuring that they get the most for the dollars they spend on education. Additionally, ESCs provide a variety of training options for both new and experienced school leaders with a multitude of “budget workshops”.

In conclusion of the findings, Texas ESCs are primed and ready to deliver high quality professional services and programs that can be tailor made to fit the needs of their particular districts. The differences that are outlined throughout this chapter do not necessarily reflect that one ESC is providing better levels of services than the next, but it is more of a reflection as to the specific needs of the districts served by that region. As a doctor strives to meet the individual needs of their patients in order to expedite the healing process, Texas ESCs also strive to meet the individual needs of their schools

through a variety of professional services and programs that promote school improvement. Although the needs may vary between the larger urban schools and smaller rural schools, ESCs are staffed with experienced personnel who can assist school leaders with the attainment and implementation of research-based strategies and programs that will lead to higher levels of school improvement. It is hopeful that this study will increase the level of understanding about Texas ESCs and how they promote school improvement throughout the state. Chapter V contains the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to conduct a descriptive and exploratory analysis of which programs and services are provided by Education Service Center to promote school improvement. The second research question asks what are the similarities and differences among the programs and services provided by Texas ESCs.

The information gained from this study will be useful to professionals in the field of public school administration and enable them to collaboratively promote school improvement of public schools in Texas. This information could also be useful to university staff involved with school leadership development and certification training programs with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of which services from Education Service Centers are in place and available to promote school improvement in the areas of school leadership, school climate and culture, accountability, achievement gaps, school finance, the school-community relationship, and curriculum alignment. Finally, the results of this study could be beneficial to anyone in the field of education who is concerned with the promotion of school improvement.

According to the data, Education Service Centers provide a multitude of professional programs and services that are designed to promote school improvement in Texas by first identifying and understanding the needs of their clients, then collaboratively working with their clients in order to develop a network of systemic support that will facilitate higher levels of school improvement. Although there is some difference in the categorization of the departments, divisions, or components within each service center,

school leaders have a variety of proven and cost-effective services to choose from that can be tailor made to meet the specific needs of students in their district. When school improvement is taken into account, Education Service Centers do play an important role in assisting school leaders with the development and implementation of a variety of services that can assist them with the school improvement process. Merriam (2001), states that the development of knowledge is based on the various assumptions we draw in from the world around us. Therefore, what does this mean in terms of what we know about Education Service Centers and how does it relate to our expectations? The answer lies in the way that Education Service Centers communicate with school districts, as well as how school districts utilize the professional services that are provided by Education Service Centers.

In order to effectively utilize Education Service Centers and maximize all the resources they hold, it is highly important to consider the current challenges that school leaders face as they may assume that there is not an effective network of external support available much less capable of assisting them with promoting school improvement throughout their district. As supported by Arson, Bell, & Plank, (2004), Education Service Centers may be the best system of external support for assisting school leaders in meeting the ever-growing list of challenges and demands that originate at both the state and federal levels. When it comes to expert knowledge, experience, and the ability to provide quality service and support to multiple districts, there is simply no better source than Education Service Centers in Texas. Perhaps the most important aspect that can contribute to establishing and maintaining a system of continuous support and

guidance for schools is that Education Service Centers are more of a “service-oriented” than a “product-oriented” system of external support. This means that they are more likely to be available for quicker responses to the needs of school leaders than perhaps other corporate entities that may be located in a completely different state with no return in sight after the sale of products or services has been made.

With time-management being perhaps one of the greatest challenges for school leaders, the ability of Education Service Centers to respond in a timely fashion with real solutions for real problems. The ability of Education Service Centers to provide high-quality levels of professional development and training for school leaders is second to none. Primarily due to the fact that it is required that Executive Directors of Education Service Centers in Texas have served public schools as a school superintendent, the leadership that is provided is grounded by not only experience in public school administration, but more importantly grounded in a true, heart-felt understanding and passion for education. As pointed out in Maze, Harris, Hopson, Nicks, and Burns (2009), Education Service Centers “are often staffed by fellow educators who have followed similar career paths while holding firmly to the ideas of improving the world through education” (p. 31). Therefore, the wealth of knowledge and experience that can be found at Education Service Centers in Texas is unlimited and available for school leaders to easily access and utilize to assist the process of school improvement.

Additionally, effective leadership development will prove to be critical in the level of success that school leaders experience. As pointed out by Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, and Glass (2005), school superintendents must possess a variety of skills that will enable

them to improve instructional methods, analyze student performance data, and additionally be able to explain what the data says about their district's achievement level as compared to both state and national levels. Hoy and Miskel (2004), support the concept of leadership traits, leader behavior, organizational, and personal effectiveness as being critical in promoting higher levels of student achievement. Effective improvement of schools cannot be a solo project for school leaders. It requires the right leadership skills in order to foster a network of collegial support from district staff and the school-community. These skills can be developed and enhanced through participation in training provided by Education Service Centers. Although superintendents and principals may have the required credentials and certifications, they may not possess all of the skills necessary to be an effective school leader. As a result, they simply cannot meet all of the demands without a proven system of external support that assists them with the promotion of school improvement in their districts. This does not mean that they are ineffective school leaders and cannot acquire or enhance the desired leadership traits, however, they must be willing to participate in professional growth opportunities that will help develop and enhance leadership traits, skills, and organizational effectiveness that are necessary in order to promote school improvement in an ever-changing challenging world of public school education.

Effective school leadership skill development by superintendents, through support from Education Service Centers seems to be a symbiotic relationship where both parties benefit from a collaborative and collegial focus on school improvement. More importantly, through this continued partnership, students throughout Texas' schools will

benefit tremendously regardless of economic background or any other challenges they may face. Rohland (2002) states that superintendents are leaders who must guide challenging and dynamic school systems while managing both social and political pressures. Upon consideration of these pressures, Education Service Centers certainly play an important role in assisting school districts and school leaders promote higher levels of school improvement throughout their school district, it simply becomes a question of which services are available and most effective for school leaders to access and implement within their own districts.

Although the twenty regional service centers throughout the state of Texas were originally designed as media centers to support schools with some basic educational resources, they have evolved into something much more dynamic and greater in terms of systemic support of public schools during tough economic times while being under intense accountability pressure to produce higher levels of student achievement that match or exceed state or national averages. Keane (2005) as cited in Maze, Harris, Hopson, Nicks, and Burns (2009), claims that as the challenges for school leaders increase, “so do the opportunities for Education Service Centers to support superintendents in leading student achievement reforms” (p. 28). With so many aspects of school improvement to consider, perhaps “opportunity” is one of the more encouraging words for school leaders to latch on to, as “opportunity” is ever-present at Education Service Centers in Texas, it is simply up to district personnel to make the most of the opportunities that they present. Hopefully, this study will contribute to the

process of how do schools become aware of and best utilize the services that are available.

This study ultimately solidified the fact that Education Service Centers in Texas provide a variety of professional services designed to promote school improvement for not only districts within their region, but throughout the state. In addition to providing districts with meeting the requirements of NCLB and AYP, education service centers provide much needed personnel support to Texas schools by providing a host of both teacher and administrator certification programs. With teacher shortages and high administrative turnover rates, this could perhaps be one of the most profitable services for districts to invest in. Additionally, service centers provide a heavy dose of curriculum and instruction support to administrators, teachers, and instructional support staff employed within their regions and sometimes across the state as educators are not prevented from seeking or participating in training outside their designated regional education service center. Curriculum and instruction support can be found in the all of the four core subject areas of reading, math, science, and social studies. These services also address the issues of state assessments and both state and federal accountability that are troubling districts across the state.

Evidence of Education Service Centers seeking a unified and collaborative state-wide approach to provide high levels of curriculum support for Texas schools is shown by the development of CSCAPE which can be best described as “a systemic model in the four core content areas that focus on a common language, structure and process for curriculum delivery” according to www.CSCOPE.com. The site also proclaims that the

goal of the Texas Education Service Center Collaborative's (TESCC) to provide a quality curriculum support system to Texas K-12 schools. The Texas Education Service Center Collaborative defines CSCOPE as "a comprehensive, customized, user-friendly curriculum support system that encompasses resources for the implementation, and monitoring of the curriculum while establishing an accountability process to ensure a quality implementation throughout Texas schools". Upon further review, it also relies heavily on the integration of innovative technology that supports the curriculum that is written, tested, and vertically aligned to the state required Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills curriculum or (TEKS). One of the most impressive features discovered is that it provides customized instructional plans that allow district resources to be integrated in both English and Spanish.

It is highly evident that Texas Education Service Centers have the ability and the resources in order to not only assist school districts in eliminating academic achievement gaps that trouble school administrators and frustrate classroom teachers as a result of highly publicized accountability ratings based on measurements of student performance on state assessments such as TAKS, but also to support enrichment that improves the overall quality of teaching and learning in order to benefit all students. The collaborative effort from TESCC with project CSCOPE exemplifies the spirit of promoting improvement in Texas public schools.

Another example of effective service center support to schools is evident with the opportunities they give teachers and administrators throughout Texas is shown by providing educators with the ability to preview instructional materials and resources at

instructional resources preview centers that are often set up at regional Education Service Centers throughout the state. This effective strategy provides educators with a personal, hands-on experience with previewing potential educational resources such as textbooks and other resources that allow for not only compliance to state-required curriculum, but to also enhance the overall level of teaching and learning in the classroom for all students.

Education Service Centers may provide a variety of services to school districts, however, the categorization of the departments, divisions, or components often vary throughout the state. It would be extremely beneficial to improve the system of categorization for the naming of the departments within each service center so that school leaders seeking external support could benefit from the improved consistency throughout the system in Texas. This could possibly allow for school leaders to more easily locate and employ the professional services that are available in order to maximize the unlimited potential and the role that each center plays in improving Texas schools. Additionally, the uniform terminology throughout the state could provide much needed external support to school administrators who may pursue leadership roles in districts in different regions across the state. With the administrative turnover rate across the state continuing to increase, perhaps more uniformity in the terminology that is used could enable school leaders to make a smoother and more effective transition not only into a new school and community.

Improved communication and consistency between the Texas Education Agency, Regional Education Service Centers, and school districts across Texas could ultimately

promote the improvement of Texas public schools not only in a more consistent and effective manner, but also to much greater levels of achievement than previously experienced.

Some Education Service Centers advertise and promote the services that are available in different ways. Education Service Centers provide what is known as a “catalog of services” that outlines the professional services available to school districts throughout each region. Some service centers add a more personalized touch to the catalog by sending staff known as education specialists and component directors out to not only visit district level administration, but actually visit individual campuses throughout their districts in order to build positive working relationships with campus principals. This strategy is more evident in rural service centers than in larger, metropolitan areas. One reason for this perhaps is due to the large size of many metropolitan school districts who have a greater number of material and personnel resources often provide much of the training themselves in district.

Another important consideration involves the concept of “relationships” when improving student performance (Edmonson, Grandon, and McIlquham, 2008). Upon consideration that “no significant learning takes place without a significant relationship” (Comer, as cited in Edmonson, et. al, 2008), it would seem that the same concept would apply to adults who are working in the field of public school education in support of students. Enhanced relationships and communication between service center staff and school district personnel across Texas could be one of the most important links in promoting the overall level of school improvement across the state.

Implications

Due to the importance of the relationship between Education Service Centers and school leaders, studies of services provided and services needed are areas for future research. Additionally, studies of how to improve the level of communication between school districts and Education Service Centers should be explored further. Also, research over the impact of Education Service Centers on student performance would be extremely beneficial to both service center staff and school leaders. Additionally, the connection between school finance and Education Service Center support should be explored further in order to provide schools with additional support through quality services while working within the constraints of an inadequate school funding system in Texas. As seen through this exploratory analysis and descriptive study, Educational Service Centers can provide a variety of professional services to school districts and be especially helpful to Superintendents, Central Office Staff, Campus Administration, Teachers, and Paraprofessionals who take advantage of their service center as a viable resource. Additionally, this study can prove to be extremely beneficial to service center staff striving to establish and maintain a true professional learning community not only within the service center itself, but throughout school districts in their designated region and perhaps beyond.

Throughout the study it is highly evident that there is a common thread that is woven throughout this fabric of external support from Education Service Centers, that common thread being school improvement. School districts that utilize and value Education Service Centers and the expertise and guidance that they offer are more likely to foster

learning environments that thrive on a multi-layered approach of internal support from parents, staff, students, the school-community, and external support from Education Service Centers. In addition to providing technical assistance to districts that enable them to successfully comply with both state and federal mandates and accountability standards, service centers can also assist schools with funding and budgetary issues, the acquisition of personnel, educator certification, and ultimately the improvement of student performance.

Recommendations for Future Research

Throughout the study, it was evident the number of staff employed and available to school districts varied throughout the state, however, it appears that each service center provides a multitude of support services that promote school improvement. It was also highly obvious that although each center may utilize a different categorization for their programs and services, the service centers are maintaining a focus to assist schools with the adherence to both state and federal standards and requirements. However, the inconsistency in the naming of departments, divisions, or components as they vary throughout service centers could possibly lead to communication issues about which services were available and being provided to promote school improvement.

The first recommendation for improvement would be that there should be more consistency between the Texas Education Agency and Education Service Centers in regard to the categorization of their programs and services that are available to schools through each service center. This would be especially helpful to the current problem of administrative turnover throughout the state and providing some comfort and stability to

school leaders who may eventually work in a different region. It is highly likely that school leaders who are not able to access solid external support to assist them with the school improvement process will struggle to make any significant gains while serving their district and this situation could lead to a much earlier departure from the district than originally anticipated or expected which ultimately leads to further problems with school improvement in that district. Although the autonomy of each service center is important to promote the improvement of schools within their region, perhaps a common language spoken and used by the centers especially when it comes to the categorization and names of the departments, programs, and services would make it easier on educators who end up working in a different region. It would seem that the state could provide some assistance and guidance with this process without taking away the creative autonomy of the service centers.

A second recommendation comes in the form of establishing consistency in the design and layout of Education Service Center websites. Similar to the catalog of services, yet perhaps more easily accessible to school leaders in need of external support, all twenty service centers have a website that has various contact information for the departments, divisions, or components within the service center. From there, one can search each department, division, or component heading in order to pull up a list of programs and services that are available in order to support school improvement. However, some service center websites provide more detail as to the specificity of the programs and services that are available and designed to promote school improvement, while others may not have much information about which services are available at all

which leaves school leaders in a state of uncertainty about which services are indeed available.

A third recommendation comes in the form of consistency of web addresses. Locating the website for all twenty service centers can be challenging at times due to the fact that not all service centers across Texas utilize the same web address format. It would seem that school administrators in transition to a different region could have any easier time locating the new service center if all twenty service centers utilized the same format of `www.esc#.net` instead of the occasional `www.reg#.net`, or some other variation. Although basic internet searches will eventually lead those seeking information to a variety of service center links, a more consistent web address could prove to be more efficient and effective for district personnel needing quick and reliable information. While utilizing a different web address format may seem creative and unique to some, it simply does not help with educators who are in desperate need of quick, efficient, and effective information or communication from their regional education service center. Although this may not seem like a critical component of service provided by each center and that it may not have a direct impact on school improvement, this is definitely one area that should be addressed and improved as education service centers strive to assist their districts with external support that promotes school improvement by providing easy access to information that is accurate and helpful.

Further research on the connection between Education Service Centers and Universities could serve as an extension of this particular exploratory analysis and

descriptive study by fostering higher levels of communication and collaboration, while also maximizing the resources that are available. Ultimately, this would allow for an even greater understanding and awareness of the professional services that are available from Education Service Centers as University programs educate future school leaders who will become more knowledgeable about the variety of external resources that are designed to promote school improvement, and more importantly be able to effectively utilize the professional services that are available. This relationship could assist both service center staff and school leaders in the collaborative engagement of the process of ensuring that the improvement of schools and student achievement is not only established, but enriched, enhanced, and sustained.

REFERENCES

- American Institute of Research. (2006). *Summary of state strategies for districts in need of improvement under NCLB*. Sacramento, CA. California Comprehensive Center at WestEd. Retrieved April 23, 2010, from http://www.cacompcenter.org/pdf/cacc_strategies.pdf
- Association of Educational Service Agencies. (2010). *Improving American education through educational service agencies*. Retrieved at www.AESA.us.
- Arsen, D., Bell, C., & Plank, D. (2004). Who will turn around failing schools? A framework for institutional choice. *Perspectives: A Journal of Research and Opinion about Educational Service Agencies*, 10, 1-19.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company.
- Barth, R. (2001). *Learning by heart*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Blanchard, K. (2007). *Leading at a higher level: Blanchard on leadership and creating high performing organizations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Burford, C. (2007). Educational Service Agency Association. Report to Ohio Leadership Advisory Council.
- Cate-Clements, C., Costa, C., and Vendretti, K., J. (Fall, 2007) Meeting the needs of our membership: An evaluation of professional development offerings. *Perspectives: A Journal of Research and Opinion about Educational Service Agencies*. 13, 21-27.
- Clinton, W. (2007). Middlebury College graduation address, May 7, 2007. Accessed at http://www.middlebury.edu/about/newsevents/archive/2007/newsevents_6331578134

202567.htm on January 29, 2010.

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great*. New York: Harper Business.

Covey, S. R. (1991). *Principal-centered leadership*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). Keeping good teachers: Why it matters, what leaders can do. *Educational leadership*, 60 (8), 6-13.

Docker, J. G., Fraser, B. J., & Fisher, D. L. (1989). Differences in the psychosocial work environment of different types of schools. *Journal of Research In Childhood Education*, 4 (1), 5-15.

Dufour, R., Dufour, R., & Eaker, R. (2008). *Revisiting professional learning communities at work: New insight for improving schools*. Bloomington, Indiana: Solution Tree.

Edmonson, L., Grandon, J., & McIlquham, L. (2008). Redefining success through Relationships: A philosophy focused on the needs on the needs of the whole child has benefited a unique school-university partnership. *Leadership Compass. NAESP*, 6, 2.

Entrekin, K.M. (1991). Principal change facilitator styles and the implementation of Consultation-based pre-referral child study teams. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 52,(07), 2516.

Fermanich, M. L. (2002). School spending for professional development: A cross-case analysis of seven schools in one urban district. *The Elementary School Journal*. 103, (7), 27-50. University of Chicago Press.

- Gabriel, G. J. (2007). Who should we help? Prioritizing limited RESA resources for school improvement. *Perspectives: A Journal of Research and Opinion about Educational Service Agencies*. 13, 29-34.
- Glass, T. & Franceschini, L. (2007). *The state of the American school superintendency: a mid-decade study*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Education and American Association of School Administrators (AASA).
- Good, T.L. and Brophy, J.E. (1994) *Looking in classrooms* (6th ed.) New York: Harper Collins.
- Goodman, R. H., & Zimmerman, W. G., Jr. (2000). Thinking differently: Recommendations for 21st century school board/superintendent leadership, governance, and teamwork for high student achievement. Washington, D.C.: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved April 25, 2010 from www.nesdec.org
- Hall, G. E., and Hord, S. M. (2006) *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Hoy, W. K., Miskel, C. G. (2004). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice*. McGraw-Hill, Boston, MA.
- Hoyle, J. (2002). *Leadership and the force of love: Six keys to motivating with love*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Hoyle, J., Bjork, L, Collier, V. & Glass, T. (2005). *The superintendent as CEO*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.

- Hoyle, J., English, F., & Steffy, B. (1998). *Skills for successful 21st century school leaders: Standards for peak performers*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Jencks, C. (1972). *Inequality: A reassessment of the effects of family and schooling in America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kaplan, L. (1997). Changing the school environment. *NASSP Bulletin*. 1 (9), 1-9.
- Keane, W. (2005). Introduction. Developing leaders: What is the role of ESAs? *Perspectives: A Journal of Research and Opinion about Educational Service Agencies*, 11, iii-5.
- Kowalski, T. J. (1999). *The school superintendent: theory, practice, and cases*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.
- Levine, D.U., & Lezotte, L.W. (1990). *Unusually effective schools: A review and analysis of research and practice*. Madison, WI: National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development.
- MAISA. (2006). *MDE & ISD/RESA Partnership Matrix*. Retrieved April 23, 2010 from <http://michiganedsource.org/Intermediate/MAISA/Matrix2006.doc>
- Margolis, H., & McCabe, P.P. (2004). Self-Efficacy: A key to improving the motivation of struggling learners. *The Clearing House*, 77, 241.
- Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Association for supervision and curriculum development. Alexandria, VA.
- Marzano, R. & Waters, T. (2006). *School district leadership that works: The effect of Superintendent leadership on student achievement, a working paper*. Retrieved

February 6, 2010, from the Mid-continent Research for Education and Leadership (McREL) Web site, <http://www.mcrel.org/topics/Leadership/products/244>.

Maze, J., Harris, S., Hopson, M., and Nicks, R. (2009). Superintendents and Education Service Centers. *Insight: Texas Association of School Administrators Professional Journal*. Winter, 27-31.

McKenzie, Kathryn, B. and Scheurich, James, J. (2004). Equity traps: A useful construct for preparing principals to lead schools that are successful with racially diverse students. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40, (5), (Dec. 2004).

Merriam, S.B. (1998). Collecting qualitative data. In “*Qualitative research and case study application in education.*” pp. 66-133. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Noguera, P.A. (1995). Preventing and producing violence: A critical analysis of responses to school violence. *Harvard Educational Review*, 65,(2), 189-212.

Payne, R. K. (1997). *Learning structures*, New York: RFT Publishing.

Peters, R. E. & Svedkauskaite, A. (2008). A network for change: ESAs from a systems perspective in the great lakes region. *Perspective*, 14, (Fall).

Peters, S. G. (2006). *Do you know enough about me to teach me?-a student's perspective*. Orangeburg, SC: The Peters Group Foundation.

Peterson, A. M. (1997). Aspects of the school climate. *ERS Spectrum*, 8 (3), 36.

Petrie, M., Park, J., & Klau, K. (2007). *Key elements for educational accountability models*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

Retrieved on April 23, 2010, from <http://www.ccsso.org/content/PDGs/Key%20Elements%20final2.pdf>

- Pierce, S. (2009). Business Manager, Shepherd ISD. Shepherd, Texas. Emailed explanation of school finance situation and district strategies.
- Ramsey, M., (1999) *How to be a more effective leader in today's schools*. (2). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Redding, S. (2007). An evolution in American education. In S. Redding, & H. Walberg, (Eds.), *Handbook on statewide systems of support (57-74) Lincoln, Il: Center on Innovation & Improvement*. Retrieved April 25, 2010, from <http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/Handbook%2010%2018%2007.pdf>
- Reeves, D. B. (2008). *The learning leader: How to focus school improvement for better results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Reidel, C. (2008). Green Schools: The color of money. *T.H.E. Journal*, June, 35, 28-34.
- Rohland, M. (2002). Understanding the evolving concept of leadership in education: Roles, expectations, and dilemmas. *Laboratory for Student Success Review*. (September). Retrieved April 25th, 2010 from <http://search.epnet.com.zeus.tarleton.edu:81/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&an=ED474262>
- SPSS (2004). *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences: Version 12.0* SPSS Chicago, IL.
- Rothstein, R. (2004). *Class and schools-using social, economic, and educational reform to close the black-white achievement gap*. Washington, D.C. Economic Policy Institute.

- Sammons, P., Hillman, J., & Mortimore, P. (1995). *Key characteristics of effective schools: A review of school effectiveness research*. London: Office of Standards in Education and Institute of Education.
- Schlechty, Phillip, C. (1997). *Inventing better schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Schlechty, Phillip, C. (2005). *Creating the capacity to support innovations: Occasional paper #2*. Louisville, KY: Schlechty Center for Leadership in School Reform.
Retrieved on January 29, 2010, from <http://www.schlechtycenter.org/pdfs/support-inn>.
- Sconzo, Guy (2009). Superintendent, Humble ISD. Humble, Texas. *Districtwide email to staff*. Retrieved on May 18, 2009.
- Sconzo, Guy (2010). Superintendent, Humble ISD. Humble, Texas. Retrieved from an email on April 20th, 2010.
- Senge, P. (2001). *Schools that learn*. New York: Doubleday.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (1992). *The virtuous school. Moral leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Sergiovanni, T.J. (2005). *Strengthening the heartbeat: Leading and learning together in schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Scheurich, J. & Skrla, L. (2001). Displacing Deficit Thinking in School District Leadership. *Education and Urban Society*, 33,(3). pp. 235-259.
- Stephens, E.R., & Keane, W.G. (2005). *The educational service agency: American education's invisible partner*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Texas Education Agency, (2006). www.tea.state.tx.us

Texas Education Agency, (2009). www.tea.state.tx.us

Texas Education Agency, (2010). www.tea.state.tx.us

Tomlinson, C. (2004). Quality curriculum and instruction for highly able students.

Theory into Practice, 44,(2), 160-166.

Trohoski, C. G. (1984). *Principals' interventions in the implementation of a school*

health program. Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Pennsylvania: Philadelphia,

PA.

U.S. Department of Education. (2002). No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Washington, DC: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (Online).

Available: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>

APPENDIX

EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS AND OVERVIEW OF THE TWENTY

EDUCATION SERVICE CENTERS IN TEXAS

Region I
1900 W. Schunior
Edinburg, TX 78541-2234
(956) 984-6000
www.esc1.net

According to the Region I Education Service Center Website, they serve 37 school districts and 383,360 students in their region and their departments are divided into the following twelve departments: Executive Services, Business Operations and Finance, Facilities and Operations, Finance and Internal Support, Information Technology, Instructional Support, School Improvement and Compliance, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Secondary School Initiatives, Office of Early Learning, Administrative School Support, and Human Resources Support. Additionally, the following programs and services are currently being advertised on the service center website: Academic Leadership Alliance, ACP for Principals, Administrative Leadership Institutes, Adult Education, AEIS IT, Alternative Certification, Assessment and Evaluation, Assistive Technology, Autism, Behavior (Special Education), Bilingual Education, Career and Technical Education, Child Find, Child Nutrition Program, Creating Connections to College, CSCOPE, Curriculum Advisory Council, Disproportionality, Distance Learning, DMAC Solutions, Dyslexia, Early Childhood Intervention, Energy Consortium, ESCONETT, FAKS Online, Finance, GED, Gear Up: Bridges to the Future, Gifted and Talented, High School Redesign Project, Inclusion, Information

Systems, Language Arts, Library Services, Mathematics, Microsoft IT Academy, Migrant Education, Multicultural and Culturally Diverse Learners, Online Professional Development, Operations, P-16 Initiatives, PADC, Parental Involvement, Parents of Students with Disabilities, PDAS and ILD, PEIMS, Personnel Services Cooperative, PPCD, Printshop, Project Learning and Living History, Project PaCE, Project PASST, Public Information Office, Purchasing Cooperative, Response to Intervention (RTI), Safe and Drug Free Schools, School Board Support, School Health, School Improvement, School Readiness Integration, School Safety Project, Science, Significant Disabilities, Social Studies, South Texas Cooperative, Special Education, Special Education-Transition, Special Education Evaluation, Superintendent Support, Technology Conference, Technology Integration, Title I, Transportation Support, T-STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), Virtual Preview Center, Vision 20/20 Online Learning, Visual Impairment, and WebCAAT.

Region II
209 N. Water St.
Corpus Christi, TX 78401-2599
(361) 561-8400
www.esc2.net

According to the Region II ESC website, they serve 48 school districts and 105,512 students while they advertise three main areas that are listed as Regional Improvement, Instructional Services, and Operational Services.

Instructional Services

Educator Prep and Certification, Bilingual/ESL, Career and Technology Education (CATE), Child Nutrition, Family (Parent) and Community Involvement, Instructional

Support Services, Library Cooperative, NCLB Support, REMS (Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools, Section 504 Assistance, Site-Based Decision Making, TCEA Area 2 Conference, Title I, Title III LEP SSA, Migrant Education, Behavior Management and Discipline, Counselor Professional Development, CSCOPE, Curriculum, District/Campus Planning, Leadership Development, Math Services, Multicultural and Diverse Learners, Partners for Educational Leadership: Principal Certification Program, Reading and Language Arts, Science Services, Social Studies, Teaching of American History-An Integrated Approach, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Program, and Safe and Drug Free Schools Cooperative, Accountability, Advanced Academic Services, Assessment Special Education, Assistive Technology, Autism, Child Find, Dyslexia, Early Childhood Education, Inclusion, Learning Disabilities Services, PPCD, Quality Childcare Provider Services, Services for Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Services to Students with Severe Disabilities/Deaf & Blindness, Special Education Support, Speech Language Pathology, State and Federal Monitoring and Intervention-Special Education, Transition-Services from School to World, Visually Impaired/Orientation and Mobility Services, Technology Applications Preparation and Certification Program, Technology Cooperative, Technology Integration, and Technology Planning.

Operational Services

Business Account Services (iTCCS/RSCCC), Public Education Information Systems (PEIMS), Educational Media, Distance Learning, Management Information Systems (MIS), Texas Education Telecommunications Network (TETN), Business

Services, Comprehensive School Health, Education Station, Multi-Regional Purchasing Service, Print Shop Services, School Readiness Integration (SRI), and Texas Early Education Model (TEEM) can be found.

Region III
1905 Leary Lane
Victoria, TX 77901-2899
(361) 573-0731
www.esc3.net

According to Region III, they serve 41 school districts and 52,491 students as they are divided into seven main departments which include Administration, Business Administration, Curriculum and Instruction, Early Childhood Intervention, Programs and Services, Student Support, and Technology.

Administration

Appraisal Software, ESC Balanced Score Card, ISO Certification, Communications, and Highly Qualified Teacher Support can be found.

Business Administration

Bookkeeping Services, Child Nutrition Services, ESC Business Office, Printing Services, Regional Purchasing Services, Texas Resource Center, and Financial Services can be found. Within Curriculum and Instruction, Bilingual/ESL, Career and Technology, Curriculum, Distance Learning, Educational Technology, Gifted and Talented Services, Fine Arts, Language Arts, Physical Education, Reading, Safe and Drug Free Schools, Science, Social Studies, Teacher Resource Exchange, and iNOVA can be found. Under Early Childhood Intervention, one can find screening, assessment, and Coordination of Social, Educational, and Health Services.

Programs and Services

Accountability, Assessment, Certification, and Leadership Services may be found.

Student Support

NCLB, School Health, Special Education, and 3LID Leadership can be found. Technology Finance Accounting Services, Library/Instructional Services, NET3 Data Services, NET3 Video Conferencing, PEIMS, RSCCC, TAKS Benchmarking, and WinSchool can be located.

Region IV
7145 W. Tidwell
Houston, TX 77092-2096
(713) 462-7708
www.esc4.net

According to the ESC IV website, they serve 54 school districts and 1,031,462 students which is the largest number of students served by a single Education Service Center in Texas. They are divided up into approximately 25 divisions which include Accountability and Compliance, Advanced Academic Services, Bilingual and ESL, Braille Services, Dyslexia, Educational Technology, Educator Certification Services, Facility Services, Financial and Administrative Services, Internal Human Resources Services, Instructional Media Services, Leadership Solutions, Mathematics Services, PEIMS Services, Personnel Solutions, Print Services, Transportation Services, Purchasing Services, Reading and Language Arts, Science Services, Social Studies Services, Special Education Services, Superintendent and Board Services, and Cooperative Purchasing Network.

Accountability and Compliance

Includes Accountability, Adult Education, Bilingual/ESL, Title III, Career and Technology Education, Child Nutrition, Diversity, Dropout Prevention, Fine Arts, Health and Physical Education, Homeless Education Program, Performance-Based Monitoring and Interventions/Program Compliance, School Health and Nurses, Support for State and Federal Program Management, Title I, Part A and Parental Involvement, Title I, Part C-Migrant Education, Title III, Shared Services Arrangement, and Tobacco Prevention Project.

Advanced Academic Services

Includes Gifted and Talented Certification Services, Advanced Placement, Advanced Academic Advisory Committee, Professional Associations, Professional Development, State Initiatives, Summer Camps, and Contacts.

Bilingual/ESL

Includes Sheltered Instruction, English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS), ESL Strategies, Spanish Reading Comprehension, Fluency, and Word Study, Spanish TAKS Reading and Writing, Tejas LEE. Dual Language, Literacy Centers in Spanish, Reading Interventions, Spanish Language Arts and Reading (SLAR) TEKS, Instructional Coaching and Mentoring for Bilingual/ESL Teachers.

Braille Services

Includes a variety of services to assist educators in providing quality service for visually impaired students in the areas of employment, public services, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications.

Dyslexia

Includes Dyslexia Intervention, Dyslexia Assessment, Dyslexia in the bilingual and ESL student, Esperanza: A Structured Multisensory Spanish Language Program, Language Program Training, and LETRS Training.

Educational Technology Services

Includes Master Technology Teacher Certification Program, Texas Mathematics Diagnostic System, Technology Team Training, Certified Internet Webmaster, Texas Virtual Schools, Videoconference Network, Presentations, Instructional Media, and TxVSN Provider.

Educator Certification Services

Includes a variety of educator certification services for teachers, principals, and superintendents.

Facility Services

Includes Facilities M&O Staff and Facility Compliance Training, Design and Construction Administration Coaching, and Plant Operations Coaching.

Financial and Administrative Services

Includes a variety of financial and administrative services by providing solutions to the areas of general accounting, payroll/accounts payable, financial PEIMS preparation, Federal grant monitoring/reporting, and budgeting/forecasting.

Internal Human Resources Services

Includes a variety of Human Resource Support for school districts.

Instructional Media Services

Includes a variety of digital media services such as Discovery Education Streaming.

Languages Other Than English (LOTE)

Includes information, services, products, and professional development to promote school improvement.

Leadership Solutions

Includes Building Teacher and Campus Capacity, Campus/District Planning, Campus/District Improvement Plans, Continuous Improvement, Customized Training, Principals as Leaders of Instruction, Legal Issues for Campus and District Administrators, Principal Assessment Centers, Principal Induction Cohorts, NCLB, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities, Site-Based Decision-Making, and State Initiatives.

Mathematics Services

Includes Mathematics Products and Support, Professional Development Materials, Graphing Calculator Tutorial-Casio, Mathematics Benchmark Performance Assessments, Master Mathematics Teacher.

PEIMS Services

Includes a variety of support services for the Public Education Information Management System.

Personnel Solutions

Includes a variety of Certification preparation programs, job searches, Building Individual Teaching Techniques and Skills (BITTS), Human Resources Services

Assistance, and Teacher Visa Assistance.

Print Services

Includes a variety of printing, binding, posters/banners, and additional services.

Transportation Solutions

Includes TransAudit, Total Assessment, Route Advantage, Adult Crossing Guard Training, Special Needs, Driver Certification Information, Laws, Bus Safety Speech Contest, Job Descriptions, Outside Resources, and Contact Information.

Purchasing Services

Includes Internal Purchasing Services, Formal Bidding Procedures, Contract Compliance, Vendor Relations, Purchase Order Processing, Internal Cooperative Procurements, Surplus Property Disposition, and Insurance.

Reading & Language Arts Services

Includes Preschool and Pre-K, Kindergarten-Grade 2 Support, Grades 3-12 Support, Bilingual/ESL, Dyslexia, English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), Library, Languages Other Than English (LOTE), Response to Intervention (RTI), School Readiness Integration (SRI), and TALA/TMSFA.

Science Services

Includes Science Products, Professional Development, Science Conference, Science Advisory Committee Core Services Collaborative, Science Benchmark Performance Assessments, Professional Organizations, TEA Updates, Master Science Teacher, and TI Graphing Calculator Tutorial.

Social Studies Services

Includes Product Snapshots, Benchmark Assessments, Downloads, Professional Development, Social Studies Products, Professional Organizations, Online Resources, TEA Updates, TETN Schedule, Social Studies Programs, and Museums.

Special Education Services

Includes a variety of Special Education Services, Child Find, and Texas Continuous Improvement Planning Public Meeting.

Superintendent/Board Development Services

Includes Superintendent Development Services, School Board Development Services, Superintendents' Academy, and School Executive Solutions.

Cooperative Purchasing Network

Includes a variety of purchasing options for school districts to participate in a cost-effective cooperative network.

Region V
2295 Delaware St.
Beaumont, TX 77703-4299
(409) 838-5555
www.esc5.net

According to ESC V, they serve 35 school districts and 80,712 students and are divided up into the following four areas which include Instructional Services, Field Services, Technology Services, and Operations.

Instructional Services

Support for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. Special Programs, Special Education, and Teacher Certification may be found.

Field Services

JJAEP, Child Nutrition Services, School Health, Physical Education Services, Safe and Drug Free Schools, Emergency Management, Adult Education, and Transportation Safety can be located.

Technology

Network Operations, Instructional Technology, School Management Software, and SETTEN can be found.

Operations

Network Support, Business Office Support, and Public Relations Support can be found.

Region VI
3332 Montgomery Rd.
Huntsville, TX 77340-6499
(936) 435-8400
www.esc6.net

According to ESC VI, they serve 57 school districts and 161,061 students as they are divided up into the following departments and components which include Administration Services, Adult and Safety Education, Business Services, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Computer Services, Internal Operations, Leadership and Professional Development, Special Education, Special Programs Compliance, and Monitoring.

Administration Services

Check Registers, Electronic Forms (Public), Grant Services, Publications, Region VI Website, Stimulus Funds Information, TETN, The “Other” Yellow Pages, Catalog of

Services, The Lettergram, The Source, and The View can be found. Under Adult and Safety Education, Adult Basic Education, GED, ESL, TANF Instruction, and Instruction for Institutionalized Adults support can be found. Within Business Services, Cooperative Purchasing, School District Business Office Services and Texas School Business Office Calendar Assistance may be found.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

CSCOPE, Curriculum Assistance, Early Education Professional Development, Educational Technology, ELA/Reading, Fine Arts Initiative, Health/P.E., Instructional Materials (Textbooks), Instructional Resources Preview Center can be found, Interactive Video Technology Resources, Languages Other Than English, Library Services, Literary Assistance, Master Reading Teacher Certification Program, Math/Science Fee Service, Mathematics Assistance, Media Duplication Services, Podcasting, Prekindergarten Expansion Grant, Prekindergarten Requirements and Guidelines, Preschool Links, Reading First, Response to Intervention, School Readiness Integration, Science Assistance, Social Studies, Social Studies Assistance, Social Studies Website Resources, Streaming Video Services, Student Assessment Assistance, Technology Conference, Technology Integration Assistance, Technology Planning, Technology Training Online, Texas Adolescents Literacy Academics (TALA), Texas Early Education Model, Texas History Conference, Texas Math and Science Diagnostics System (TMSDS), Texas Regional Collaborative for Excellence in Mathematics Teaching (TRC-M), Texas School Readiness Certification System, Textbook Services, Title II D (Shared Services) Formula Grant Funds, TPRI Reporting, and Web-Accessed Comprehensive Curriculum

Assessment Tool (WebCCATT) may be located. Within Computer Services, PEIMS, Pentamation, TREx, and Web-Based Applications may be found.

Internal Operations

Audio/Visual Services, Blue Streak Delivery System, and Printing can be found.

Leadership and Development

Accountability, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Assistance, Administrator E-Newsletter, Administrator Professional Organization Support, Administrator Training, Administrator's Corner, Campus/District Planning Assistance, CE Credits Online, Certification, Comprehensive Needs Assessment Survey Assistance, Data Management for Assessment and Curriculum (DMAC), Dropout Prevention Assistance, Governance Technical Assistance, Highly Qualified Teacher Certification, Instructional Scans, Management Studies, NCLB, PEIMS Attendance Audit, Personnel Placement Cooperative, Principal Appraisal, Principal Assessment, Principal Preparation and Certification Program, Professional Development, School Board Trainings, School Effectiveness Audits, Site-Based Decision Making and Planning, Superintendent Appraisal, Superintendent Preparation and Certification Program, Teacher Appraisal Training, Teacher Certification Awareness Training, Teacher Certification (FAQ), Teacher Certification Program Components, Teacher Preparation and Certification Program, and Technical Assistance for Principals can be found.

Safety Education and Training

Driver Awareness for Under-Educated Adults, Driver Training, Driver Education Certification Training, Drug and Alcohol Driving Awareness Program, Drug and

Alcohol Testing Consortium, Project Great East/West Region, School Bus Driver Training, School Bus Evacuation Training, School Bus Safety Training 101, and School Bus Training can be found.

Special Education Programs and Services

Assessment and Evaluation Assistance, Assistive Technology, Behavior Management, Child Find, Comprehensive System for Personnel Development Leadership Council, Curriculum and Instruction, Inclusion, Legal Issues/Funding, Low-Incidence Disabilities and Autism, Parent Information, Parental Involvement, Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities, Special Education Needs Assessment Surveys, Speech-Language Pathology, Transition, and Visually Impaired Assistance can be found.

Special Programs, Monitoring and Compliance Programs and Services

Advanced Academic Services: Contracted Services, Advanced Academic Services: State Services, Bilingual/English as a Second Language Contracted Services, Career and Technology Education Consortium Shared Services Arrangement, Career and Technology Education Program Campus Effectiveness Audit, Career and Technology Education Technical Assistance Service, Child Nutrition Links, Child Nutrition/Nutrition Education Program, CTE, DAEP Program Assistance, NCLB Assistance, Paraprofessional Support Staff Assistance Fee Service, Performance-Based Monitoring and Intervention Assistance, Safe and Secure Schools Fee Service, State Compensatory Education Contracted Fee Services, Title I, Part A Contracted Fee Services, Title I, Part C, Migrant Shared Services Arrangement, Title I, Part C, Migrant State Services, Title

III, Part A, English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement Shared Services Arrangement, Title III, Part A, English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement-State Services, Title IV, Part A, Safe and Drug Free Schools & Communities-State Services, Title IV, Part A, Safe and Drug Free Schools & Communities-Statewide Initiative (SDFSC), Title IV, Part A, Safe and Drug Free Schools & Communities-Shared Services Arrangement can be found.

Technology Programs and Services

CISCO Networking Academy Services, CommNet Regional Services, Distance Learning, Distance Learning and Video Conference Technology Services, Email and Various Help, Erate, Lightspeed Services, Network Services, and Technology Leaders can be found.

Region VII
1909 Longview St.
Kilgore, TX 75662-6827
(903) 988-6700
www.esc7.net

According to Region ESC 7, they serve 106 school districts and 164,246 students which is the highest number of districts served in the state and they are divided up into the following seven main departments which include Accountability, Administration, Curriculum Services, Head Start, Leadership and Development Educator Certification, Special Programs, School Operations, and Technology Services.

Accountability

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), Dropout Prevention, Performance-Based Monitoring (PBM), State Performance Plan (SPP), State Accountability (AEIS), Texas

Projection Measure, and Texas State Assessment can be located.

Administration

Includes DMAC, eAgreements, Superintendent of the Year, and Teacher of the Year.

Curriculum Services

CSCOPE, Dyslexia, English Language Arts/Social Studies Cooperative, Fine Arts, Gifted and Talented Services, Grants, Library Services, Math/Science Cooperative, Response to Intervention (RTI), Textbooks, and Texas Math and Science Diagnostics System (TMSDS) are located here.

Head Start

Includes Head Start Website and Early Childhood Cooperative.

Leadership and Development Educator Certification

Includes Educator Certification, Leadership, Personnel Services, Teacher Preparation and Certification Program.

Special Programs

Includes AVID, Bilingual/ESL, Career and Technical Education, Guidance and Counseling Services, Migrant Education, Parent Information, Safe and Drug Free Title IV, School Health, Special Education, and Title I, Part A.

School Operations

Includes Bus Driver Training, Business, Finance, and Operations Cooperative, Child Nutrition, Employee Benefits Cooperative, Field Service Agents, Legal Services, Marketing Services, Printing Services, Purchasing Services, School Board Training, Special Education Legal Cooperative, and Superintendent Academy.

Technology Services

Includes Education Technology, Distance Learning, ESC7 Net, Helpdesk, PEIMS, RSCCC Student, and RSCCC Business.

Region VIII
PO Box 1894
Mount Pleasant, TX 75456-1894
(903) 572-8551
www.reg8.net

According to Region 8, they serve 47 school districts and 56,778 students as they are divided up into the following seven departments which include Administration, Curriculum, Instruction, and Technical Services, Financial Services, Leadership Support, School Operations, Special Services, and State and Federal Programs.

Administration

Includes Leadership Calendar, Northeast Texas School Board Association, Region 8 Board Policies, and Region 8 Principal's Network.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Technical Services

Includes Career and Technology Education, CSCOPE, Core Curriculum, Gifted and Talented, School Readiness Integration, TAKS, and Technology.

Financial Services

Only contact information available on this link.

Leadership Support

Includes Leadership Support and Child Nutrition.

School Operations

Includes School Bus Driver Certification, Information Services, Information Services

Calendar, Informational Services Support Site, ESC Technical Support, Distance Learning, and Technology Directors Support.

Special Services

Includes Early Childhood Intervention and Special Education.

State and Federal Programs

Includes State and Federal Programs, ESL/Bilingual, Homeless Education, Migrant Education, NCLB Support, Safe and Drug Free Schools, and School Health.

Region IX
301 Loop 11
Wichita Falls, TX 75803-1300
(940) 322-6929
www.esc9.net

According to ESC 9, they serve 38 school districts and 38,889 students as they are divided up into the following three divisions which include Division of Administrative Services, Division of Instructional Services and Strategic Planning, and Executive Services. Within these divisions, programs are broken down further into departments and include Adult Education Services, Internal Fiscal Operations, Personnel and Certification Services, Instructional Technology Services, School Finance and PEIMS, Instructional Services and Strategic Planning, Accelerated Learning Services, and Accountability and Compliance.

Administrative Services

Includes Legal Assistance and Print Shop Services.

Adult Education Services

Includes GED and ESL Support.

Internal Fiscal Operations

Includes Internet Safety, Multi-Regional Purchasing Cooperative, Net 9 Cooperative, and Virtual Field Trips.

Personnel and Certification Services

Includes support for the acquisition of school personnel with the exception of the school superintendent.

Instructional Technology Services

Includes Technology Support and Distance Learning.

School Finance and PEIMS

Includes School Finance and PEIMS/Computer Information Services.

Instructional Services and Strategic Planning

Includes Math, Science, English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Assessment and Instructional Services that include Authentic and Formative Benchmark Assessment, Credit by Examination, Curriculum Alignment, Differentiated Instruction, Gifted and Talented Services, Research-Based Instructional Strategies, Response to Intervention, Thinking Maps, and WebCCAT.

Accelerated Learning Services

Accelerated Learning, Access to the General Curriculum, Assistive Technology, Autism, Behavior and Discipline Support, Child Find/Serve, Dyslexia, Even Start, Evaluation/Decentralized Function, Funding and Compliance, Head Start, Head Start Resources, Low-Incidence Disabilities, Parent Coordination Leadership, Parent Coordination Network Members, Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities,

Related Special Education Resources, School Readiness Integration, Special Education Directory, Special Olympics Texas, Summer Camps, Surrogate Parent Brochure (English and Spanish), TBSI Online Training, and Transition/Secondary Services.

Accountability and Compliance

Includes Accreditation, AYP, Performance-Based Monitoring, and Data Validation Monitoring, Career and Technical Assistance, NCLB Support, and Title I, Part C, Migrant Services.

Region X
PO Box 831300
Richardson, TX 75083-1300
(972) 348-1700
www.ednet10.net

According to ESC 10, they serve 80 school districts and 710,590 students as they are divided into the following four divisions which include Center Administration, Administrative Services, Information Services, and Instructional Services.

Center Administration

Includes Executive Director, Board of Directors, Leadership Council, and Coordination Council.

Administrative Services

This division becomes subdivided further into Accountability, Information, Planning, Support Services and Business Operations and Finance Support.

Accountability and Compliance Services

Includes Accreditation and Accountability, Performance-Based Monitoring, and Site-Based Decision Making.

Administrator Training and Assessment Services

Includes Administrative Leadership Training, Charter Administrators' Roundtable, Instructional Leadership Development (ILD), Principal Appraisal Training, Principal Assessment, Principal Leadership Academy/Assistant Principal Leadership Academy, Principals' Roundtable, Professional Development and Appraisal Training (PDAS), School Board Training, and Superintendents Academy.

General Administrative Services

Includes Dallas County JJAEP, Divisional District Contract Service, Group Facilitation Service, and Section 504 Cooperative Service.

Human Resources Services

Includes Criminal History Records Checks, Personnel Services Cooperative, and Teacher Job Network.

Retirement Asset Management Services

Includes 403(b) Third Party Administration Services, 457 Cooperative, FICA Alternative, Teacher/Employee Recruitment and Retention Program (TERRP), and the 125 Solution-Third Party Administration for Employee Benefits.

Business Information Systems

Includes Annual Tax Rate Survey, Enrollment Projections, and Sample Calendar.

Business Training Systems

Includes Budget Bootcamp, Investment Officer Training, Facts and First Training, Notary Training, and Web-Based FSP Training.

School Finance Advisory Services

Includes Annual School Finance Conference, Consultation on School Finance, Finance Specialist Service, and Campus Security Audit Service.

Purchasing Cooperative Services

Includes Purchasing Consortium.

Region XI
3001 N. Freeway
Fort Worth, TX 76106-6596
(817) 740-3600
www.escl1.net

According to ESC 11, they serve 77 school districts and 510,207 students as they are divided into the following nine departments which include Administrative Development and Support, Building Support, Business Center, Certification Services, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Educational Technology, Human Resources and Public Information, Instructional Support and Accountability, and Management Information Systems.

Administrator Development and Support

Includes Administrator Assessment and Mentoring Services, Administrator Induction (First Year Administrators' Academy), Administrator/Teacher Appraisals, Data Analysis/Planning Decision-Making (AEIS-IT), Child Nutrition, Continuous Improvement Consortium, Leadership Development, School Board Services, and Transportation Services.

Building Support

This department maintains service center grounds.

Business Center

This department provides cost-effective business services and solution support to regional schools and service center personnel.

Certification Services

Includes Teacher, Principal, Superintendent, Bus Driver, Texas Teacher Competencies, and Master Technology Teacher Certifications. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Educational Technology

Provides a variety of technology support to service center and regional school districts.

Human Resources and Public Information

Assists school districts with personnel resources and public information strategies.

Instructional Support and Accountability

Includes Assistive Technology, Auditory Impairment, Autism, Behavior Management, Career and Technology Education, Child Find, Consortium for Preparation of Assessment Personnel (CPAP), Diagnosticians/LSSPs/Psychologists, Dyslexia, Family Involvement, Low Incidence Disabilities, Multicultural and Diverse Learners, Non-Educational Community-based Support Services, Nurses, Physical Education, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities, School Health, Section 504, Special Education Assessment, Speech Language Pathology, State Compensatory Education, Texas Effectiveness Study, Title I Migrant, Title I, Part A School Support,

Special Education Transition-Regional and State, and Visual Impairments-Regional and State.

Management Information Systems

Includes RSCCC Business and Student Support Services, Special Education Software Systems, Administrator Network Server Support, Rent-A-Tech Service, Schoolwires Website Hosting Services/Assist Work Order/Synergy Digital File Sharing, and Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Tracking System.

Region XII
PO Box 23409
Waco, TX 76702-3409
(254) 297-1212
www.esc12.net

According to ESC 12, they serve 77 school districts and 148,516 students as they are divided up into the following nine departments which include Administrative Leadership, Alternative Certification, Cooperatives/Shared Services, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Information Services, Business and Finance, Special Education, School Support, Technology, and Additional Programs and Services.

Administrative Leadership

Includes Accountability, Administrator's Institute for School Improvement, Administrator Meetings/Forums/Roundtables, Administrator Training, Assessment of Principals/Assistant Principals, Business Manager's Roundtable, Campus Leadership Services, Charter School Services, Curriculum Council, Field Service Agents, Grant Assistance Services, Highly Qualified Paraprofessionals, Highly Qualified Teachers, High School Collaboratives, ILD, New Campus Leadership Institute, PDAS, School

Effectiveness Audit, and Superintendent Leadership Academy.

Alternative Certification

Includes ESL Certification Preparation, Master Math Teacher, Master Reading Teacher, Master Science Teacher, Paraprofessional Certification, Principal Preparation and Certification Program (PPCP), Speech/Language Pathology (SLP) Master's Degree, Substitute Teacher Training/Certification, and Teacher Preparation and Certification (TPCP).

Cooperatives/Shared-Services

Includes Career and Technical Education (CTE) Carl Perkins Shared Services Arrangement (SSA), Career and Technical Education (CTE) Council Co-Operative, Child Nutrition Directors & Managers Academy Co-operative, Coordinated School Health Co-operative, Counselors' Co-operative, Enhanced Core Curriculum Co-operative, Personnel Plus Co-operative, Safe Schools Project Background Check, Title I, Part C-Migrant Shared Services Arrangement (SSA), Title II, Part D-Technology Shared Services Arrangement (SSA), Title III, Bilingual/ESL & LEP Shared Services Arrangement (SSA), and Title IV-Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Shared Services Arrangement (SSA).

Special Education

Access to General Curriculum (AGC), Announcements and Updates, Assistive Technology, Autism, Braille Transcribing Services, Child Find, Evaluation, Funding, Low Incidence Disabilities, Non-educational Community-based Support Services, Orientation and Mobility, Special Education Directors' Meeting, Speech Language

Pathology (SLP), Transition, and Visual Impairment.

School Support

Includes Application for Federal Funds Preparation, Bilingual/ESL, Career and Technical Education (CTE), Child Nutrition Services, Classroom Management, Counselors, Dyslexia, Instructional Media Center, Library Services, Migrant, Nurses, Parental Involvement, Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities, Response to Intervention (RTI), School Safety, School Bus Driver Certification, Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS), Title I, and Title II, Part A-Teacher and Principal Training & Recruiting Funding Source.

Technology

Includes AEIS-IT, AEIS-IT Online, Contracted Technology Services, Curriculum Leadership that Counts, DMAC Solutions, Distance Learning, E-Rate Consulting, Facts On File, Handheld Technology, Instructional Technology Training, iTRAIN, Online Databases, Personal Graduation Planner, Technology Coordinators and Contacts, Technology Planning, and WebCCAT.

Additional Programs and Services

Central Texas Supplemental Benefits Co-operative, Drug Testing for Students and Bus Drivers/Physical Examinations for Bus Drivers, FlashAlert Newswire-Media Newswire and Parent Notification, New Teacher Academy, Printing Services, Survey Services, and Teleparent-Parent Notification and Parent Engagement.

Region XIII
5701 Springdale Rd.
Austin, TX 78723-3675
(512) 919-5313
www.esc13.net

According to Region 13, they serve 60 school districts and 345,154 students as they are divided into the following four departments which include Academic Services, Administrative Services, Executive Services, and Texas Initiatives.

Academic Services

Includes Certification, Teacher Quality and Student Success, Leadership Development, Curriculum Access and Resources for Inclusion, Teaching and Learning, Differentiation and Program Support, IDEA Coordination, Special Projects: CSCOPE, and Special Projects: TSTEM.

Administrative Services

Accountability Support Services, Bus Driver Training, Business Management Cooperative, Business Office Operations, Charter School Support, Child Nutrition Programs, Data Services, Distance Learning, Information Services, iTCCS, PEIMS, Performance-Based Monitoring, Purchasing Cooperative, RSCCC, School Board Training, State Compensatory Education, Statewide School Finance, Texas Education Network (TXED), Troops to Teachers, and Visionaries in Technology and Learning (ViTaL)

Executive Services

Includes TETN, Human Resources, Facilities, Executive Services, and Science Materials & Media Services.

Texas Initiatives

Includes Texas High School Redesign, Texas High School Project, Texas High Schools that Work, Texas Turnaround Center, Advanced Academics and Special Projects, School Improvement, and Leadership Initiatives.

Region XIV
1850 Highway 351
Abilene, TX 79601-4750
(325) 675-8600
www.esc14.net

According to ESC 14, they serve 42 school districts and 47,206 students as they are divided up into the following six “Centers” which include Curriculum Integration and Support, Instructional Improvement, School Operations, Teaching and Learning, Technology Services, and Young Learners.

Curriculum Integration and Support

Includes AEIS-IT, American History, Bilingual/ESL (Title III), CATE, Improving Teacher and Principal Quality (Title IIA), Instructional Services, Migrant, NCLB, Paraprofessional Academy, Reading Recovery, Social Studies, TAKS, Texas Reading Initiative, Title I, and Technology Integration (Title IID).

Instructional Improvement

Includes options for Professional Development.

School Operations

Administrator Training, Alcohol and Drug Testing, Bus Driver Training, Career and Technology, Child Nutrition, Educator Certification, Field Services, School Board Training, School Finance Services, School Health Services, School Meal Initiative, and

Section 504.

Teaching and Learning

Includes Advanced Academics, AP and IB Project, Drug Free Schools, and Special Education.

Technology Services

Includes Data Processing, Distance Learning, Media Services, WTTC, Technology Support, Technology Funding, and Troubleshooting.

Center for Young Learners

Includes Head Start, PPCD and Pre-K Program Support.

Region XV
PO Box 5199
San Angelo, TX 76902-5199
(325) 658-6571
www.netxv.net

According to ESC 15, they serve 43 school districts and 45,387 students as they are divided into the following seven departments which include Administrative Services, Curriculum, Data Processing, Professional Development, Special Populations, Technology Services, and Alternative Teacher Certification.

Administrative Services

Includes Administrator Appraisal/Assessment, Administrator Training, Bus Driver Training, Certification, Child Nutrition, COOP Purchasing, Emergency Operations Planning, Field Services, Guidance and Counseling Services, Online Teacher Certification Program, Parent Involvement, PDAS/ILD, Region XV District Information, Safe and Drug-Free Schools & Communities, School Board Training,

School Finance, School Health, and Site-Based Decision Making.

Curriculum

Includes Assessment, CSCOPE, Dyslexia, Fine Arts, Foreign Language, HOT TOPICS, Library Services, Mathematics, Media Literacy, Media Resources, Reading, Region 4 Store, Response to Intervention, School Readiness Integration, Science, Social Studies, TAKS, TALA, TxBESS, and Writing.

Data Processing

Includes Distance Learning for DP, Hot Topics-DP, MIS, PEIMS, RSCCC, Texas Records Exchange (TREx), and Workshops for DP.

Professional Development

Includes Professional Development Registration Opportunities.

Special Populations

Includes Access to the General Curriculum, Assistive Technology, Autism, Behavior Support, Child Find, ECI, Evaluation, Gifted and Talented, Low-Incidence Disabilities, Multicultural and Diverse Learners, Non-Ed Funds, Parent Coordination, Preschool, Regional Day School Program for the Deaf, Section 504, Special Education Administration, Special Education TExES, Special Education Transition Services, Speech Pathology, and Visually Impaired.

Technology Services

Includes ACTIVBoard, AEIS-IT, Business and Technology Applications, Classroom Performance System, CTE, CTE Certification Program, E-Rate: Technology Plan Addendum, ESC XV Educational Resources, Interactive Models, iSAFE Internet Safety,

Middle School Business and Technology, News Broadcast, NovaNET Resources, Region XV Robotics-Arena & Inventions, Starbak, Technology Integration, Technology Planning Resources, Think.com, TIP Grant, TRACK-TAKS Readiness Tool, United Streaming, Using Filamentality, and WebCCAT Resources.

Alternative Teacher Certification

Includes Alternative Teacher Certification Support.

Region XVI
5800 Bell St.
Amarillo, TX 79109-6230
(806) 677-5000
www.esc16.net

According to ESC 16, they serve 63 school districts and 80,040 students as they are divided up into the following twelve departments listed under “Programs and Services” which include Administrative Services, Administration, Alternative Certification, Business Services, Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), ESL Classes, GED Classes, Head Start/Early Head Start, Human Resources, Instructional Services, Technology Services, and Title I Statewide Initiative.

Administrative Services

Includes Child Nutrition, Field Service, IMS, School Business Service, Title VSCE, and Special Programs.

Alternative Certification Services

Includes Alternative Certification Support.

Business Services

Includes a variety of Business Services Support.

Early Childhood Initiative

Includes a variety of Early Childhood Interventions and Programs.

Head Start

Includes program to promote intellectual and cognitive development of young children in order to promote physical and mental health by teaching healthy nutritional practices in support of enhancing student achievement, parental involvement, and self-sufficiency.

Human Resources

Includes personnel support for school districts throughout region.

Instructional Services

Includes Curriculum and Instruction, Migrant/Bilingual/ESL, and Special Education.

Technology Services

Includes Internet Service Provider Support, Videoconferencing, Internet Filtering, Local Area Network Maintenance, Contracts, Web Hosting, Disaster Recovery/Data Backup, and Grants.

Region XVII
1111 West Loop 289
Lubbock, TX 79416-5029
(806) 792-4000
www.esc17.net

According to ESC 17, they serve 57 school districts and 78,636 students as they are divided up into the following nine departments which include Administrative Services, Administrator Training, Adult Education, Curriculum and Accountability, Federal and State Programs, Food Services, IMS/PEIMS, Student Support Services, and Technology.

Administrative Services

Includes Bus Driver Training, Creative Corner, Educator Placement Service, Field Services, General Supplies Purchasing Coop, Grant Writing Services, Legal Services, School Business Services, School Health, Teacher Certification, and Text Book Previews.

Administrator Training

Includes Administrator Appraisal, Instructional Leadership Development, PDAS Training, Principal Assessment, School Administrator Resources, and Testing Coordinators.

Adult Education

Includes Adult Education Classes, GED Testing, and Staff/Teacher Resources.

Curriculum and Accountability

Includes Curriculum, AEIS-IT, Career and Technical Education (CTE), Creative Corner, Dyslexia Services, Emergency Operations Planning (EOP), First Year Teachers, Gifted and Talented/Advanced Academic Services, Language Arts, Math, NCLB, Performance Based Monitoring, Reading, Response to Intervention, Safe Schools/Title IV, Science, Social Studies, Title I Contract Services, Title I School Support, and WebCCAT.

Federal and State Programs

Includes Bilingual/ESL, Emergency Operations Planning (EOP), Migrant Education Program, Paraprofessional Training, Performance Based Monitoring, Positive Behavior Support, Safe Schools/Title IV, School Health, Title I Contract Services, Title I School

Support, and Title III LEP Services.

Food Services

Includes Food Services, Child Nutrition, School Health, School Meal Initiative, and West Texas Food Service Cooperative.

IMS/PEIMS

Includes Information Management Systems, Public Education Information Systems, RSCCC Business Software Services, RSCCC Student Software Services, and IMS Calendar.

Student Support Services

Includes Special Education, Access to General Curriculum, Assistive Technology, Administrative Services, Assessment Services, Autism, Child Find, Community Resources, Deaf Education Certification, Dyslexia, Low Incidence Disabilities, Migrant Education Program, Multicultural and Diverse Learners, NonEd, Paraprofessional Training, Parent Coordination, Positive Behavior Support, Preschool Services, Psychological Services, Response to Intervention, School Readiness Integration, Taped Text and Literature Project, Transition Services, and Visual Impairment & Blindness.

Technology

Includes Administrative/Technology Contracts, Blackboard, Cisco Academy, Client WebMail, Distance Learning, eRate Support, Internet Access, Internet Filtering, Interactive TV Network (ITV), Technology Planning, Technology Training, Track-It, Web Hosting, AEIS-IT, and WebCCAT.

Region XVIII
PO Box 60580
2811 LaForce Blvd.
Midland, TX 79711-0580
(432) 563-2380
www.esc18.net

According to ESC 18, they serve 33 school districts and 75,202 students as they are divided up into the following six components which include Administrative Services, Business Office, Comprehensive School Support, State/Federal Initiatives and Technology, Information Systems, and Special Populations.

Administrative Services

Includes Resources, Teacher Certification Program, and Workshop Registrar.

Business Office

Assists districts with purchasing, payroll, accounts payable, accounts receivable, general ledger processing, and to provide fiscal management support.

Comprehensive School Support

Includes a variety of support systems that promote school improvement.

State/Federal Initiatives and Technology

Includes Bilingual/ESL, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Federal Programs, Math TAKS Tests, School Safety, and Technology.

Information Systems

Includes Information Systems Software, PEIMS, RSCCC Student System, RSCCC Business System, and Printers List.

Special Populations

Provides a variety of support systems for special population students.

Region XIX
PO Box 971127
El Paso, TX 79997-1127
(915) 780-1919
www.esc19.net

According to ESC 19, they serve 12 school districts and 173,275 students as they are divided up into the following six departments which include Migrant and Homeless Education, Other Services, Purchasing, Special Education, Teacher Quality and Student Success, and Technical and Instructional Media Services.

Migrant and Homeless Education

Includes support for schools dealing with Migrant and Homeless students.

Other Services

Includes a variety of school support services and resources that are not easily categorized elsewhere.

Purchasing

Facilitates the acquisition of resources for districts seeking school improvement.

Special Education

Includes a variety of services, activities, and technical assistance related to special education students.

Teacher Quality and Student Success

This link/page was under construction during time of study.

Technical and Instructional Media Services

Includes a network of technical support for technology and instructional media.

Region XX
1314 Hines Ave.
San Antonio, TX 78208-1899
(210) 370-5200
www.esc20.net

According to ESC 20, they serve 50 school districts and 379,879 students as they are divided into the following five departments which include Administrative Services, Business Services, Curriculum/Instruction, Teacher Resources, and Technology.

Administrative Services

Includes 360 Walkthrough, Accountability and Accreditation, AEIS-IT, Alternative Teacher Certification (TOPP), Certified Coach, Behavior and Discipline, Braille Services, Coaching into your Organization, Campus Planning, Career and Technical Education, Career Investigation/Career Connection, Center for Leadership Excellence, Charter Schools, Coaching for Educational Professionals, Cohort of Leadership Associates (CoLA), Consulting Services-Information Technology, Covey Leadership Training, Customer Service Training, Educational Resources, e-Grants, Field Services, Hire a Professional Personal Coach, Home School, ICTP, Library Resource Roundup, Parent Coordination, Principal Forum, Professional Certified Coach, School Board Training, School Safety Audits, School Transportation Mandated Programs, Sexual Harrassment Training, Site-Based Decision Making, Special Education, Special Education Statewide Leadership, SPP 11 & 12, SPP 13 & 14, Strategic Planning, and Student Assessment Administration, TCC, Teacher Appraiser Certification, Teacher of the Year, Title I Non-Public School Co-op, Useful Resources for Principals, and Work-Based Learning.

Business Services

Includes 2013 Purchasing Cooperative, Benefits Cooperative, Braille Services, Business Financial Services Cooperative, Child Nutrition Programs, Consulting Services-Information Technology, Copy Services, e-Grants, Emergency Operations Planning, FARG, Inter-Region Student Drug & Drug Alcohol Testing Cooperative, iTCCS, Living Science, Meeting Rooms, RSCCC, School Transportation Services, School Transportation Services Drug & Alcohol Supervisor Training, Site-Based Decision Making, Van Delivery, and Video.

Curriculum/Instruction

Includes 504, Accelerated Schools, Access to General Curriculum, Adult Education, AEIS-IT, Alternative Teacher Certification (TOPP), Apple Authorized Training Center, Certified Coach, Behavior and Discipline, Bilingual/ESL, Braille Services, Bringing Coaching Into Your Organization, Campus Planning, Career and Technical Education, Career Investigation/Career Connection, Center for Leadership Excellence, Charter Schools, Coaching, Coaching for Educational Professionals, Cohort of Leadership Associates (CoLA), Covey Leadership Training, CSCOPE, Curriculum Communique, Digital Knowledge Central, Distance Learning, Early Childhood/SRI, Educational Resources, English Language Arts & Reading, Enhancing Education Through Technology, Fine Arts, Gifted and Talented, Guidance & Counseling, Hire a Professional Personal Coach, Homeless, ICTP, Instructional Technology, Join LAC!, Library Resource Roundup, LPAC Framework, Math, Migrant Services, NCLB, Online Tutoring, Parent Coordination, PATH, Personnel Services Cooperative, Planning &

Renewing Curriculum, PowerMedia Plus, Professional Certified Coach, Project GREAT, Project SMART, Response to Intervention (RTI), SAAABE Conference, Safe & Drug Free Schools, School Transportation Mandated Programs, Science, Social Studies, Social Worker Services, Special Education, Special Education Statewide Leadership, SPP 11 & 12, SPP 13 & 14, State Board for Educator Certification Support, State Funded K-12 Databases, Student Assessment Administration, Student Resources, TAKS Released Assessments, Teacher Appraiser Certification, Technical Assistance Centers, TAKS, TEKS, Texas High School Project, Texas Reading First, Textbook Preview, Transformation 2013 STEM Center, Video, and Work-Based Learning (WBL).

Teacher Resources

Includes Alternative Certification, Assistive Technology, Braille Services, Digital Knowledge Central (DKC), Distance Learning, Educational Resources, Instructional Technology, K-12 Databases, Library Services, Living Science, Media Services, Online Media Catalog, PowerMediaPlus, Special Education, State Board for Educator Certification, Teacher Resource Room, Textbook Preview Services, and Van Delivery Service.

Technology

Includes 2013 Purchasing Cooperative, Apple Authorized Training Center, Assistive Technology, Career and Technical Education, Career Investigation/Career Connection, Consulting Services-Information Technology, Digital Knowledge Central, Distance Learning, Educational Resources, e-Grants, Enhancing Education Through Technology, ICTP, Instructional Design, Instructional Technology, Internet Services, Library

Resource Roundup, netVision20, Online Resources, Online Tutoring, PowerMedia Plus, Project SMART, State Funded K-12 Databases, Tech Fiesta Highlights, Tech Fiesta Home, Technical Support, Technical Training, Technology Director Information, Technology Planning Support, Training, Video Duplication, Video Production, Video Services, and Work-Based Learning (WBL).

VITA

Jerry Paul Ausburn
email: jerryausburn@yahoo.com

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

2010, Ed. D. in Educational Administration, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX.

2000, M.Ed. in Educational Leadership, Stephen F. Austin State University, TX.

1991, B.S. in Kinesiology, Stephen F. Austin State University, TX.

CERTIFICATIONS

Superintendent, Principal, Biology, Health, Physical Education

PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

(2008-Present) Instructional Specialist, Kingwood Park High School, Humble ISD, TX. assisted with campus supervision, conducted campus needs assessment, and developed campus improvement plan.

(2007-2008) Education Specialist, Region VI Education Service Center, Huntsville, TX. Assisted Region VI school districts with NCLB/Title I issues, school improvement, and staff development training.

(2007) Adjunct Professor, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, TX. Mentored graduate cohort seeking M. Ed. and Principal Certification.

(2004-2007) High School/Elementary Principal, Livingston ISD, TX. Completed Superintendent internship, improved school security and safety, improved student performance. Led Elementary campus to "Recognized" rating during first year as principal. Campus became "Exemplary" in 2007.

(1998-2004) Elementary Principal, Corrigan-Camden ISD, TX. Produced highest levels of student performance in school history.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE-Courses Taught

AED 549 (Secondary Curriculum), Stephen F. Austin State University, TX. (Summer 2007).

Instructed cohort of Master's level students seeking Principal certification and M. Ed.

PUBLICATIONS

"Professional Services Provided By Education Service Centers In Order To Promote School Improvement in Texas". Record of Study Defense, Texas A&M University, May 11th, 2010.