

SUBURBAN SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS PERSPECTIVES OF  
CHANGING STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE IMPACT ON  
DISTRICT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

A Record of Study

by

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study is designed to further understanding of how suburban school superintendents impact a district with changing demographics. The purpose of this study will be to assess how superintendents interpret changing demographics in their school districts and the impact of changing student demographics based on inclusive policies and practices. Interviews with superintendents and other district and campus leaders from two similar Texas suburban school districts are used for this study.

Interview responses highlighted three themes from the interview responses; (a) the ability of the leaders to recognize diversity within the school district, (b) the influence that stakeholders have with district leadership in decision making, and (c) recognizing the impact of demographic diversity and the impact on district programs, practices and policies. Findings show that superintendents and district leadership recognize the growing diversity within their students and communities and employ various strategies to meet the needs of a diverse population, but there is still a struggle in designing an all-inclusive educational system.

## DEDICATION

This body of work is dedicated to the wonderful mentors who have influenced my walk with leadership and the family that has supported me along this path. I would like to thank God for providing me the love, opportunity and circumstances that allowed me to pursue this challenge. This is dedicated to my wife, Alison Smith who encouraged me to keep working and provided me with peace of mind that the sacrifice of time now will be rewarded in the future. She is the person and the leader that I aspire to be and I hope that one day I can inspire and impact the lives of others the way she has impacted and inspired me. This is dedicated to my children Nathaniel, Camille, Emerson and Cooper who have been patient and understanding while I completed this work.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

**Background of the Study**

Suburban neighborhoods are in a state of consistent growth and change with regard to the diversity of entering residents, based on trends that show more families leaving inner city communities to settle in traditionally White, middle-class suburban areas (Holme, Diem & Welton, 2014; Frey, 2011). Diarrassouba and Johnson (2014) discuss the cause of this growth in suburban diversity as a combination of social and policy factors, educational opportunities for kids, an aging population of residents and comfortable living conditions. As a result of these shifts, suburban neighborhoods retaining more than half of all racial groups, district superintendents must now understand the need to respond to such demographic shifts (Holme, et al., 2014; Frey, 2011). According to Texas Education Agency's (TEA) 2020 Comprehensive Biennial Report on Texas Public Schools (2020), there were 5,416,400 students enrolled in Texas public schools during the 2018-2019 school year. According to the Texas Public Schools report, there was an increase of 591,622 students in the last 10 years which is an average increase of 59,162 new students each year.

As much as the number of students has grown in Texas in recent years, the diversity of student demographics has grown at an equally rapid pace.

Table 1

*TEA Comprehensive Report on Student Demographic Breakdown*

	TEA Report 2010	TEA Report 2019
African American	14%	12.6%
Hispanic	48.6%	52.6%
Asian	3.7%	4.7%
White	33.3%	27.4%
2 or More	N/A	2.4%

As Table 1 shows, the demographic trends for students in Texas are growing in diversity. While there are only minimal changes to several of these demographic reporting categories, a larger shift is seen in the reduced percentage of White students in Texas public schools and an increase in Hispanic students. Another noticeable change in reporting categories is the addition of the category that recognizes students who represent two or more races. Equally noticeable is the decline of African American students and the slow incline of Asian students in Texas public schools. These trends show that while diversity is increasing in Texas classrooms, the biggest shifts are with the increase of Hispanic students and decrease of White students.

Further analysis shows that students from immigrant families comprise nearly one-quarter of students under 18 years of age across the U.S. (Passel, 2011; Turner,

2015). Research also shows that students living in poverty continue to increase with one-third of the U.S. student population falling below the poverty line (Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Frey, 2011; Turner, 2015). Further examination of the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and the Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) confirm that amidst these fluctuations in student numbers and demographics are disparaging gaps in student achievement between ethnicities. According to Texas Education Agency's (TEA) 2020 Comprehensive Biennial Report on Texas Public Schools (2020), white students scored on average, 22 percentage points higher than African American students and 18 percentage points higher than Hispanic students on the 2019 STAAR Accountability Assessments. These reported gaps in academic performance between student racial and ethnic groups demonstrates that public schools are struggling to provide equal educational opportunities (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Brayboy, Castagno & Maughan, 2007; Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Lee, 2009; Nieto, 2005).

Even amidst the fluctuating demographics of schools there is inadequate research and understanding for how superintendents can address the gaps in opportunities that exist for various student groups (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Theoharis, 2017). These changes in student demographics highlight a need for inclusive opportunities for students and staff in suburban schools and how they perceive their own value within the school organization with their unique contributions and sense of belonging (Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Ehrhart & Singh, 2011).

School leadership plays a pivotal role in either fostering the inclusion of diverse stakeholders or in establishing trends of diversity exclusion (Meehan, 2020).

Inclusionary research looks at individuals in a workplace and the degree at which they feel accepted and valued within the organization (Roberson, 2006). School leadership are expected to have the skills to be malleable amongst diversity to encourage inclusivity in their school culture (Madsen & Mabokela, 2005; Madsen & Young, 2010; Young, 2008). This same sentiment can be attributable to the superintendent role as the foremost leader of a school district.

The school superintendent is in an integral position to make an impact in a role that is considered by many to be one of the most difficult executive positions in America (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999). The district leader has to acquire and maintain a capacity for working through today's political, social and economic challenges (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999). In a multi-cultural society that is constantly evolving, inclusive school superintendents have to continuously re-evaluate their own influences on district practices that benefit all students and staff equally (Meehan, 2020). Among the many challenges that school superintendents face as leaders is in creating a district culture that recognizes and encourages diversity and variety in teaching and learning based on the needs of the constituents (Combs, 2002). It is this challenge of recognizing and encouraging diversity that can be difficult to overcome.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) report on racial and ethnic student enrollment in public schools, there is a demographic shift that

shows a gradual reduction in White students and increase in students of color (2017). Research indicates that superintendents' response to shifting enrollment trends in their schools determine whether or not students are receiving equitable learning opportunities in a school environment that is inclusive of all racial and ethnic groups (Dentler & Hafner, 1997; Turner, 2015; Wortham, Murillo, & Hamann, 2002). Superintendents in charge of demographically diverse districts are critical in influencing the success of policies and practices intended to counteract the perceived negative impacts of diversity (Thomas, 2008).

With a focus on addressing diversity, superintendents may implore strategies such as recruiting initiatives, intentional professional development, diversified career development and mentoring programs designed to keep diverse racial and ethnic groups within their employees (Cox, 1994; Morrison, 1992; Roberson, 2006). A focus of inclusion has leaders relying on initiatives such as employee contributions, communication development, and community relations as a way of encouraging employees to use their skills and talents within the school district (Roberson, 2006; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2000). The opportunity for an inclusive approach to growth in a diverse school district allows for ways to include a diverse group of employees in the policy-making process (Shore et al., 2011; Thomas & Ely, 1996).

There is existing literature on the importance of leadership over an organization. Ferdman's research (2014) explains how leadership development is designed to bring about the awareness and contributions of individuals to create shared ownership in reaching organizational goals. Literature is also available on campus level leadership and

their impact on a school. According to Lindsey, Graham, Westphal and Jew (2008), campus leaders have to be aware of the implications of diversity on their campus and the challenges that come from demographic diversity in students and staff.

There is insufficient research in how a superintendent impacts the inclusive culture of a suburban district experiencing demographic growth. This study is necessary in gaining knowledge on how suburban superintendents not only develop awareness of the needs of their diverse student population, but also how they develop inclusive practices with their district. This qualitative study will gauge the perceptions of how district leaders in 2 Texas suburban school districts interpret changing demographics in their districts and the impact that changing demographics has had on the district's policies and practices. This study is based on the responses of the research participants and the interpretive nature of each district leader's reality. According to Ishimaru and Galloway (2014), public school systems need to develop a better understanding of organizational leadership to provide more equitable educational opportunities for diverse student populations.

As is the case in all district initiatives, there must be a purposeful intent from district leadership to create goals that address the needs of schools with changing demographics. School systems have an obligation to create an atmosphere where all cultures are taken into account within curriculum and policy development (Brooks & Fraise, 2015). According to Thomas (2008), the link between a district's successful performance of educating diverse students is grounded on the recruitment and retention of top diverse teacher talents. So, in essence, hiring practices must also be a reflective

priority of superintendents trying to address the need for diversified staff. If superintendents fail to recognize and embrace the diversity of their constituency and address their needs, staff turnover will increase and the overall collaborative team atmosphere will diminish (Thomas, 2008).

Many times, diversity training for teachers and campus level administrators focuses on awareness and identification of student diversity and demographic changes, however it does not help school leadership develop specific tools for addressing the diverse needs of the student population (Madsen, Young & Young, 2010; Thomas, 2008). It is then up to superintendents to take the next steps after diversity training of staff to develop a plan of action in improving student performance in a demographically changing district (Combs, 2002).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine how superintendents in suburban school districts interpret changing demographics in their schools and the impact that these changing demographics have on their district policies and practices. Using the frameworks of diversity and inclusivity as research guides, the investigation into the role of superintendents took a twofold approach: (a) the perceived ability of suburban superintendents in recognizing and leading demographically diverse schools, and (b) the perceived implications that inclusion has had on staffing, policy and practice.

### **Significance of the Study**

The goal of this study was to contribute to the literature regarding suburban superintendents' perceptions and impact on policies and practices aimed at impacting

changing student demographics. Research such as that of Evans (2007) is available to demonstrate principal influence and response to changing demographics at the campus level but there is little discussion of superintendent perceptions and influence at the district level. Superintendents are tasked by school boards and communities with transforming school districts into organizations where all members of the district can contribute to the district's growth, and where there can be recognition of the changing diversity of the student population and how to support students successfully (Cox & Blake, 1991). According to Combs (2002), the challenge that organizational leaders face in regard to diversity is in developing an atmosphere that encourages an appreciation for the various characteristics and approaches to teaching and learning that are needed. With organizational effectiveness measured in this study by the degree at which policies and practices were adapted to meet the needs of changing student demographics, it is important for district leaders to devote resources and attention to enhancing organizational effectiveness by building capacity for successful reforms within a diverse student population (Malen, Rice, Matlach, Bowsher, Hoyer & Hyde, 2015).

As campus demographics continue to change in suburban school districts and become more diverse, teachers and campus administrators are continuously searching for guidance and strategies to meet the needs of their evolving student population. Schools that experience a shift in student demographics are challenged to set and achieve new goals that meet the needs of diverse learners. The phrase collective efficacy refers to the perception of a group's capability of affecting a specific situation (Evans, 2007; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk, 2000). It is essential that district superintendents lead



districts toward positively affecting changing demographic needs. In other words, superintendents must foster the collective efficacy of the school district towards successful student achievement amongst demographic uncertainty. According to the multi-year study conducted by Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) as a part of the Wallace Foundation, schools with higher achieving student performance have leaders who provide stakeholders with extensive influence on decisions. Leithwood, et. al.'s research showed that school leaders who invest in the collective knowledge of the teaching staff are more successful.

While teachers and campus level administrators are working at ground level to develop specific strategies for meeting these needs, all of the constituents of a school district and its community are looking at the superintendent as the foremost expert who will lead the district purposefully during times of change (Glass, 1992). Superintendents should be able to address resistance to diversity and any conflicts that accompany the changing demographics of students, teachers and campus level administrators, should resistance arise (Madsen, Young & Young, 2010).

In school districts with changing demographics, the norms and values of the professional staff are often inconsistent with the norms and values of the students' cultural traditions (Madsen & Mabokela, 2013). It is then prudent of the professional staff to educate themselves on the traditional cultural intricacies of their students and teachers so that diversity training can begin where it is most needed. To ensure that superintendents are leading by example through this process, they should first identify the cultural norms and values they hold most important and the effects these norms and

values have on various demographic groups (Combs, 2002). Superintendents can then lead diversity training and professional development that is appropriate for their knowledge base and professional growth.

Superintendents must transform the school district into a multicultural organization, where all members of the district can contribute to the district's growth and where diversity can be realized and valued (Cox, 1991). Once initiatives have been put into place through practice and performance, superintendents must find a way to assess the effectiveness of these practices in reaching district goals for meeting the needs of a demographically varied student population. By fostering an environment where diversity self-efficacy is encouraged, administrators enable teachers to become leaders in their own changing work environments (Combs, 2002).

### **Definitions of Terms**

The terms used within this study are as follows:

#### **PEIMS**

The Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) is the electronic system in which all requested data by TEA is submitted. Districts must submit data to TEA such as student demographics, financial information, personnel information and academic student performance data.

#### **TAPR**

The Texas Academic Performance Report is the report card system that is used by TEA to provide feedback to campuses and districts. The TAPR provides information such as district and campus academic performance, demographic information, staff

information, program information and financial reports. The TAPR replaced the AEIS report previously provided to districts.

### **AEIS**

The Academic Excellence Indicator System is the former report card system from TEA to provide feedback to campuses and districts on academic performance, demographic information, staff information, program information and financial reports.

### **Other Central City Suburban**

There are eight categories that TEA uses to classify Texas public school districts. There are several factors that determine a district's type, including enrollment, economic status, growth in enrollment, and the proximity to urban areas. Other Central City Suburban is the district type we will be focusing on in this study. Other district types include Major Urban, Major Suburban, Other Central City, Independent Town, Non-Metropolitan: Fast Growing, Non-Metropolitan: Stable, and Rural. There is also a ninth district type labeled as Charter School Districts.

### **University Interscholastic League**

The University Interscholastic League (UIL) works alongside TEA to provide students with academic and athletic experiences through competition. UIL is also a governing group that upholds sportsmanship and collaboration between schools.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by the theory of inclusion as it relates to leaders over diverse organizations. This study focused on school districts with growing student diversity and the response of the superintendent as the district leader. The theory of

inclusive leadership is used in this study to measure and assess the impact of suburban superintendents' leadership efforts in communities growing in diversity. According to Johnson and Lambert (2020), leaders cannot utilize the benefits of diversity without being committed to inclusionary practices. Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Ehrhart, & Singh (2011) define inclusion as the degree in which someone perceives their unique selves as a valued member of a group that satisfies their need for belonging and their personal contribution to the group. These key ideas of belonging and uniqueness can be determined through the inclusive behaviors of organizational leadership.

Another theory guiding this study was of leadership over diverse organizations. The GLOBE study, that analyzed leadership from sixty-two countries, attempted to design an ideal model of leadership (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta, 2004). While this study provided examples of leadership styles in various cultures, little information was provided to guide the needs of leadership in highly diverse settings (Ensari & Riggio, 2020). According to Ensari and Riggio (2020), developing a universal leadership model is difficult because of the different values and norms that varied cultures hold significant. To truly be an inclusive, leaders have to identify and accept their own cultural identities and biases before they can be authentic in leading diverse organizations (Ensari and Riggio, 2020). As suburban school districts are continuing to grow in diversity, inclusionary leadership practices continue to be an area of needed evolution.

For the purposes of this study, I focused on superintendents' perceptions of how changing student demographics have impacted the inclusionary practices of district

policies and procedures. Authentic inclusive leadership should be seen in the behaviors and actions of the leader (Enari & Riggio, 2020). As suburban school districts continue to show trends for demographic change, the intentional work of the superintendent toward inclusive practices that respond to the educational and cultural needs of the students is vital for the success of educating all students (Holme, Diem, & Welton, 2013). District superintendents have little-to-no direct influence over the rate at which community demographics and cultures change, but public school superintendents do have direct influence over the district response to demographic change.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What is the perceived ability of suburban district superintendents in recognizing and leading demographically diverse schools?
2. What are the perceived implications that inclusion has had on staffing, policy and practice?

### **Methods**

The data collection process for this study included purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, and data analysis. Two suburban districts in Central Texas were chosen as participants of this study based on pre-determined criteria of changing student demographics that paralleled the rate of student demographic change across the state. District and campus leadership from each district were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews regarding the changing student demographics they have experienced and the district responses to sed changes.

## **Limitations**

Identifying limitations was essential prior to visiting participating districts to avoid challenges that may disrupt this study (Hays and Singh, 2012). One limitation that may be encountered during the data collection process is the differences in available personnel that are accessible from district to district. In one district may be given access to interview the superintendent as intended, but in another district, the superintendent may assign the interview of a designee. While multiple district administrative positions are influential in the design of district policies, the roles do carry different responsibilities and influence. A second potential limitation may be that there are some superintendents who may not want to highlight any areas in policy and practice that could be seen as insufficient for student success. If superintendents know they are behind in addressing deficiencies in response to student demographic changes and needs, they may not want to discuss these areas openly with an outsider. Hopefully, superintendents at participating districts will look at this as an opportunity to take an in-depth look at their practices relevant to meeting the needs of their schools with changing demographics and work to strengthen those practices and procedures.

A third limitation of this study could potentially be district funding variations. Each district may have various priorities that dictate where funding is allocated, which could play a role in how districts address educational reforms. A fourth limitation is the sample size chosen for this study. With such a small sample of district leaders participating in this study, the results will not be able to be generalized for larger populations of school district leaders.

A final limitation of this study is the various goals that each district may have for their campuses. There are no solutions that fit every district's needs, so the goals set forth with each district in addressing changing demographics may vary, and in turn create different strategies for campus staff to follow.

### **Delimitations**

One delimitation of this study is the number of school districts that included as participants. Changing demographics in public schools is a large-scale issue, but only a small number of Texas school districts in suburban communities were asked to participate in this study. With the focus of this study so narrowed, findings and conclusions cannot be broadened to encompass a general understanding of changing demographics in schools and district superintendents' perceptions.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions of this study include: (a) the respondents to the survey will be honest in their responses to the survey questions; (b) district participating in the study will have district diversity plans to address changing demographics in schools; and (c) schools staff within districts experiencing changing demographics will put forth good faith efforts into adhering to district strategies for addressing diversity.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter discusses the purpose of the study, the problem being researched, the significance of the study, the research questions used to guide the study and the key terms that will be used. Investigating current literature on schools with changing demographics and leadership amongst

diversity is the focus of Chapter II. Chapter III explores the methodology used in deciding on participants, data collection, the analysis of the data collected, and the reliability of the data collected. The findings of this study are discussed in Chapter IV. Chapter V is the final chapter of the study that provides conclusions from the study and possible future research that can be extended from this study.



## CHAPTER II

### CRITIQUE OF LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

This study utilized the theory of inclusive leadership as the foundational framework for research. The focus was on school districts with growing student diversity and the response of the superintendent as the district leader. Inclusive leadership is used in this study to measure the impact of suburban superintendents' leadership efforts on the growing diversity of their student demographic populations. Shore et al. (2011) defines inclusion as the experience one has of belonging while being valued as a unique individual. This study applies an additional definition by including Nishii and Leroy's (2020) work in exploring the benefits of diverse employees in the workplace feeling that they are valued for their contributions to the decisions and practices of the organization. According to Randel, Galvin, Shore, Ehrhart, Chung, Dean and Kedharnath (2018), the value added to an organization from inclusive leadership is in the contribution of new perspectives. With increased diversity comes the increased responsibility of the leader to include varied points of view from all stakeholders.

To find and organize relevant literature for this study, the following databases and research guides were used: Texas A&M JSTOR, Texas A&M REFWORKS, Google Scholar and ProQuest. Other relevant information used to guide the review of the literature process was collected from district data made available from the TEA website or on specific and individual district websites.

According to Ensari & Riggio (2020), the perception of a model leader is most influenced by the culture of those being led. Fullan (1993), commented that a school superintendent working in conjunction with the school board and community is the most influential person in transforming a school district to meet its goals. The purpose of this study is to determine the perception of suburban district superintendents in recognizing diversity in the student population and the implications it will have on purposeful inclusionary policies and practices. Inclusive leadership can be defined by leadership actions that creates opportunities to bind diverse individual contributions into influencing structural change (Shyamsunder, 2020).

Suburban school districts are in a constant state of change and stakeholders are looking to the superintendent for inclusive leadership. District administrators have an obligation to intentionally and openly search for and support diversity (Johnson & Lambert, 2020). District administrators must stay knowledgeable about changes in racial and ethnic demographics in their schools if they are going to provide equitable opportunities for all their students (Gooden & Dantley, 2012). Inclusive leaders are most valuable when they create opportunities for individuals to obtain a sense of safety, support, trust and value while they are at work (Creary, 2020; Ferdman, 2014). The culture and the productivity of the staff diminish without these opportunities.

In trying to establish a workplace culture of inclusion, leaders can focus on individuals and/or the organization as a whole. Creary (2020) discusses that an inclusive leader working to create a workplace that recognizes and honors individual diversity requires leadership development in human capital. This work will specifically focus on

the knowledge, skills, and relationships between leaders and co-workers (Creary, 2020). Working on inclusive leadership with the organization as a whole, leaders will focus on building the individual skills of its employees to foster intentional inclusive practices (Creary, 2020). With a focus on the organization as a whole, inclusive leadership effectiveness can be determined by the retention rates and overall sense of well-being for a wide and diverse group of employees (Creary, 2020).

In relation to school district leaders, a focus on inclusive practices that enhance diverse individual contribution and the systems and structures that guide district processes is necessary to achieve lasting and meaningful impact. Similar to the research done by Creary (2020), Shyamsunder (2020) discusses the “bottom-up” approach to inclusive leadership compared to the “top-down” approach to inclusive leadership (p. 236). Each approach alone yields positive inclusive change within an organization, but an intent on reaching sustainable systemic change that addresses the needs of the individuals as well as the large-scaled needs of the organization requires inclusive leadership practices with both approaches (Shyamsunder, 2020).

Leadership is the critical factor in determining whether the practices of an organization will enhance equity and inclusion amidst diversity or perpetuate the exclusion of organizational members (Meehan, 2020). In investigating the impact that a superintendent’s perception has on a school district, previous studies that focused on the role of the superintendent were reviewed. Thomas Glass’ Study of the American Superintendent (2000) is an in-depth look at the challenges that superintendents face regularly. This study analyzes many aspects of the superintendent, but most notably the

relationship that the superintendent has with the school board and community at-large and the level of communication provided to both groups. A longitudinal study that began in 1982, this study found that most superintendents are inclusive of the school board and community in decision making processes but that not all community members are willing to participate for various reasons. One of the results of this study shows that attempts of the superintendent to be inclusive of community members does not always yield positive results.

A study by George Peterson (2002) focuses on the many roles and responsibilities of the superintendent as the instructional leader of the district. This study highlights the perceptions of school board members and campus leaders on the instructional leadership of the superintendent. Results from this study found that the inclusive involvement of the teachers and community in developing district goals and procedures helps to determine the success of the district. This is never truer than it is when a district is experiencing changing demographics that account for changing cultural norms within the community.

The challenge of the superintendent, when leading demographically changing schools, is to recognize when the cultural norms of the community are shifting and to navigate the districts policies and practices to be reflective of these changes. The demographic differences of a school district can influence the interactions that occur between its stakeholders even though diversity in demographics is not inherently work related (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). As suburban student demographics change, the challenges continue to evolve. According to Holme, Diem & Welton (2014), minority

students in suburban schools had increased more than 80% at the same time that low-income students in suburban schools had more than doubled. Demographic changes of this magnitude impact many aspects of a suburban school district, including cultural norms, instructional design and staff preparation. District approaches to counter these changes vary.

According to Howard (2007), the gaps in student achievement, language barriers and economic diversity means that education leaders must re-examine all policies and practices for students. As shown by the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), trends of narrowing achievement gaps between white students and students of color can be seen in elementary grades for reading and mathematics. The trends for middle school grades, however, show little to no gap reduction in achievement between white students and students of color. High school trends also show a gap for graduation completion rates between white students and students of color, even though all racial groups are showing increases in this area. As demographic diversity continues to grow in suburban schools, it is the burden of the school leaders to reflect on trends and practices and make necessary adjustments for the benefit of all students.

Some studies have shown that school districts that do attempt to counter changing demographics in their schools by updating educational services will often neglect to recognize the cultural and political changes and challenges that may follow (Holme, et. al, 2014; Turner, 2015). A study by Cooper (2009) looks at two elementary schools with changing demographics and how the campus leaders focused on surface level strategies to recognize diversity while neglecting to address deeply rooted

perceptions of the teachers (Holme, Diem, & Welton, 2014). The results of this study showed that the leaders' neglect of these deep-rooted perceptions of teachers failed to narrow the division between families and teachers.

Another study by Evans (2007), investigated three high schools experiencing changing demographics, specifically with increased African American students, and how the school leadership responded to these changing student demographics (Holme, Diem, & Welton, 2014). The results of this study found that the teachers in each of these campuses assumed a colorblind instructional doctrine that devalued the cultural differences of diverse students and created a professional atmosphere where challengers to this instructional approach were not accepted by their teaching peers. This form of deficit thinking does not allow for the implementation of inclusive practices within a school unless district policies requiring inclusive practices are adopted.

Power and politics are extremely influential over district policies and practices in times of stability, but they are even more influential in times of transition and change. When school districts are experiencing changing student demographics educational reform is quick to follow. According to Weiss and McGuinn, education reform can only succeed when state policies affect change for district practices, and when district practices affect change for the teachers (2016). The concern with this approach to education reform is that there are non-education professionals creating state policies at the state level who may lack an understanding of the day-to-day operations of school functioning and needs. According to Thomas, school leaders over demographically diverse schools are important in influencing the dynamics occurring in times of diversity

(2008). However, district leaders are often at the mercy of political authority from the federal government down to the local school board.

Even local school board elections and the role of the school board as a political entity can be difficult to navigate but their role is extremely important in the design of policy. According to McCurdy, school board demographics have changed drastically over the years resulting in a change in philosophical shifts in thinking of the boards' role (1992). McCurdy suggests that today's board members are more concerned with personal agendas than were board members of the past and are intent on creating quick fixes to large-scale problems (1992). This is a unique perspective of school board authority and it creates the assumption that if elected school board members are focused on individual agendas instead of the ideals of the voting constituency, there is no-one left to focus on the needs of the diverse student population. Instead, school district leadership must carry that responsibility.

School superintendents have an obligation to create an atmosphere where all cultures are taken into account within curriculum and policy development (Brooks & Fraise, 2015). If district leaders fail to recognize and embrace the diversity of their students, teachers and community, the staff will turn over and the collaborative team atmosphere will diminish (Thomas, 2008). When rapid change occurs, the priorities of the district should change as well to meet the needs of the district constituency. Building district capacity to adjust policies and practices to meet the needs of changing student demographics is important. According to McDonnell, the benefits of capacity-building is immediately recognized by an organization's current individuals, but the long-term

beneficiaries are members of the organization who have not yet arrived (1987). In a district with rapidly changing demographics, the determining factor of success is whether or not the district has established capacity to withstand change and diversity. With a solid foundation in place this is possible.

One of the recent political movements that has caused fear and frustration in public schools is the topic of charter schools. When public schools are undergoing changing student demographics, the fear of public-school leaders is that there will be a movement of students to charter schools to escape issues of overcrowding and changing student populations. This fear is driven by the potential of funding being taken from school districts and given to charter schools. According to Kirst (2007), local opponents to charter schools such as school boards, PTA's and district administrators, are against the development of charter schools because the higher enrollment of students in charter schools means that fewer students will enroll in their school district campuses. Fewer students enrolling in school districts translates into less state funding per pupil, and a reduction in state aid can have a larger negative impact on school district budgets.

When a school district is experiencing rapid change in student demographics, there is potential that some sub-populations may not have adequate representation needed within the democratic process of policy design. Theories about the democratic process give perspective to the meaning of being part of a democracy and how people with varied degrees of power are offered different degrees of influence in society (Ingram & Smith, 1993; Young, 2000; Williams, 2005). According to Williams, there is a lack of low-income parents of colors' interaction with district policies based on politics



(2005). Lower income families simply do not maintain the capacity to interact with lawmakers and policymakers (Williams, 2005). With a lack of low-income parents' involvement, the design and implementation of policies and practices is left to those with different values and perspectives. For policies to benefit varied cultures and students with varied economic backgrounds, all parents need to be invited to take part in the policy-making process as respected members of the design team (Williams, 2005). Currently, the lower income families are not active participants in the policy-making groups and therefore lose power over the design of policies and practices at the federal, state and local levels (Williams, 2005).

To further the conversation about democracy in education, one question asked is why lower-income families are not consistently able to improve their economic standing in society through education. Paolo Freire answered this question when speaking of poor families in Brazil when he alluded to an intentionally faulty education of poor students (Williams, 2005). According to Freire, poor students become accustomed to struggling and therefore need a curriculum designed to give them the tools they need to move their status in life (Williams, 2005). Because we live in a representative democracy, each diverse group needs proper representation in policy-making levels to help provide each diverse group of students with the tools they need to be successful. According to Rowan (1993), the health of a school organization is most effective when it represents the norms and values of the surrounding society. For a school district to truly represent its surrounding society though, the district leadership must first have a clear understanding of the community it wishes to represent (Lowery & Harris, 2002).

A school district is a community organization and as the organization becomes more diverse, the needs of the organization change. While superintendents lead the charge towards inclusive practices, they can't do it alone. As inclusive leaders, superintendents must work to magnify diverse perspectives and invest in others to be change agents with them (Shyamsunder, 2020). Building an inclusive organization requires the leader to access the diverse backgrounds and mindsets of its constituents to work together towards reaching the collective objectives of the organization (Pless & Maak, 2004). Meehan (2020) discusses the need to align organizational structures around collective commitments to equity and inclusion, but this work begins with understanding our own experiences and making connections with others in the organization. Inclusive leadership has never been more important in school districts as it is now.

As society continues to change and become more diverse, our school districts continue to reflect the cultural needs of the residing communities. As a result, school superintendents and district leadership must continually re-examine inclusive leadership practices that provide equal opportunity for all students and stakeholders (Meehan, 2020). The idea of individuals maintaining a sense of belonging and uniqueness with their contributions to the organization is vital for the success of the inclusionary practices of the organization (Nishii & Leroy, 2020). The school superintendent, as the inclusive leader, is the agent who is responsible for fostering inclusive practices at both the systemic level as well as the individual stakeholder level (Ferdman, 2014 &

Shyamsunder, 2020). Inclusive leadership then, is a needed practice of school district superintendents and should be an intentionally crafted practice.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

This study investigated the perceptions of district superintendents on their awareness of changing demographics in their schools and the impact it has had on district policies and practices. The recruiting of research participants for this study focused on suburban school districts experiencing a shift in student demographics. Districts targeted for this study were traditionally majority white districts who show a steady reduction in white students over a period of at least 10 years. According to the student demographic percentages shown in Table 1, the percentage of white students enrolled in public schools in Texas dropped by roughly 6% from 2010-2019, and that trend of student demographic change was used when selecting school districts to participate in this study. The focus on tracking student trends with timeline of 10 years is important to this study because of the intention to focus on districts that show a gradual shift in student demographics rather than rapid demographic change.

#### **Data Collection**

This study was a qualitative case study (Merriam, 1998) where district superintendents, district leaders and campus leaders were interviewed to identify their perceptions of changing demographics in their school districts and the impact on policies and practices. The role of the superintendent in Texas schools is the most influential in the design and implementation of district initiatives and policies and will be able to provide the richest perspective relevant to the topic of this study. Using the state Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) reporting data to determine

districts that fit the demographic parameters of this study, a list of school districts was created as potential participants.

10 district and campus leaders from 2 suburban school districts with changing student demographics were interviewed through semi-structured, open-ended questions. These two districts were selected based on the gradual rate of demographic change within their student demographic population in comparison to state demographic trends. Both school districts showed 10-year trends of reduced white student populations and increased Hispanic student populations between 2010 and 2019.

Purposive sampling superintendents over Texas suburban school districts provides data relevant to this study (Schwandt, 2001). The purposive sampling process used to select participants was homogenous so that participants were selected based on the similarities between each other as suburban school districts experiencing changing demographics (Hays & Singh, 2012). The homogenous purposive sampling implemented in this study narrowed the participants to be suburban school districts across Texas, and more specifically from districts labeled as Other Central City Suburban school districts. There are 164 school districts in Texas that are classified as Other Central City Suburban. According to TEA (2016), the criteria for meeting this district type includes: “it is located in a county with a population of between 100,000 and 869,999;” and “its enrollment is at least 15 percent of the largest district enrollment in the county” (para. 7). The University Interscholastic League’s (UIL) classification of school districts in Conference 6A, with student populations above 2,100 students was also used to further narrow the list of participating school districts.

Of the 164 districts in Texas classified as Other Central City Suburban, the list of possible participant districts was narrowed based on the geographic proximity of the researcher to the school districts where accessibility would be more likely.

Superintendents from three school districts were emailed with a request to participate in the study. All three school districts fit the desired size and demographic student trends for the study and were all within driving distance for the researcher, making them highly accessible. Two superintendents responded with agreement to participate in the study and were selected to contribute based on their similarities in demographic change to each other and to the state trends. Once agreement to participate was finalized, communication continued with scheduling interviews with district and campus level administrators for both school districts. Deciding on which district and campus level administrators to interview was aided by the suggestions of the superintendents.

This study followed a case study protocol. The case study focus of this study specifically examines the phenomena in the world of the researcher and the participants as described from the perspective of the researcher and the participants (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). This study investigated everyday experiences from the perspective of the participating superintendents and other administrators interviewed (Schwandt, 2001). District and campus level administrators were asked to participate in interviews along with district superintendents to provide a variance of perspectives for each district and to triangulate each superintendent's responses. Aside from the superintendent, other district administrators and campus administrators provide rich context on how policies and practices are impacted by student demographic changes at different levels of leadership.

For the purposes of this study, two members of the district leadership cabinet, an elementary principal, a secondary principal, and the superintendent were requested for interview from each district.

The focal instrument in this study was semi-structured interviews. The goal of the interviews was to gain insight into the perceptions of superintendents regarding changing demographics using guiding questions from Thomas Glass' Study of the American Superintendency (1992) and George Peterson's Singing the Same Tune (2002) study over the perception of the superintendent as the instructional leader. With open-ended questions, participants were encouraged to discuss their perceptions about changing demographics and their response to district needs with opportunities for elaboration (Yin, 2013). Changing demographics in schools is a challenging problem faced by many district leaders and the results of this study could help school districts determine where to start in creating policy and practice that will affect positive results. As a fellow practitioner in public education, the researcher conducted the interviews as both a researcher and an administrative colleague who has experienced changing student demographics in schools.

### **Data Sources**

Interview data was collected in the Spring of 2020. Overall, 10 people were interviewed from 2 school districts (all data presented with pseudonyms). District and campus administrators were interviewed from each district. The two school districts selected for this study were suburban school districts in neighboring counties in Texas, within the same region, and with similar student populations and demographics. Both

school districts are two of the top three fastest growing school districts within their region..

### **Johnson ISD**

Johnson ISD is a school district with just over 12,200 students in a fast growth county between two major metroplex cities. Johnson ISD is a suburban district that is growing in number, by 3-4% each year, and in student demographic diversity. The administrators who participated in interviews included the Deputy Superintendent, two district level administrators, a high school principal and an elementary school principal. At the time interviews were conducted, the school board was in the final stages of hiring a new superintendent, therefore the Deputy Superintendent was interviewed in place thereof. Johnson ISD was chosen as a participating district for this study because the rate of changing demographics was very similar to the trending rate of demographic change in Texas. Johnson ISD has traditionally been a high performing suburban district and the intentional adjustments to meet the changing student populations will impact future performance. As seen in Table 2, each of the administrators interviewed from Johnson ISD brought varied experiences and expertise to their leadership roles.

### **McCoy ISD**

McCoy ISD is a school district with just over 8,300 students in a fast-growing city. McCoy ISD is a suburban district that is also growing in student number and diversity. The student population is averaging yearly growth at 2%. The administrators who participated in the interviews included the Superintendent, two district level administrators, an intermediate school principal, and an elementary principal. McCoy



ISD was chosen for this study because of the similarities to Johnson ISD. The rate of demographic change for McCoy ISD is similar to the trending rate of change for state student demographics and the response of the district to these changes will determine future student performance as McCoy has traditionally performed at a high level. The experiences and demographics of the administrators from McCoy ISD are varied as you can see in Table 2.

Table 2

*Administrators Interviewed*

Johnson ISD	Ethnicity	Gender	Yrs. Exp.	Admin. Level
Mr. Anderson	White	Male	3	Dep. Supt.
Mrs. Carter	White	Female	6	Asst. Supt.
Mrs. Jones	AA	Female	3	District Admin
Mrs. Williams	White	Female	5	Principal
Mrs. Davis	White	Female	1	Principal
McCoy ISD	Ethnicity	Gender	Yrs. Exp.	Admin. Level
Mr. Miller	White	Male	9	Supt.
Ms. Brown	White	Female	11	Asst. Supt.
Mr. Hill	Hispanic	Male	1	Asst. Supt.
Mr. Taylor	White	Male	1	Principal
Mrs. Thompson	Hispanic	Female	4	Principal

The years of experience of the administrators interviewed is of note. Most of the participants to this study have not been in their current leadership roles for extensive amounts of time. The average years of experience for the administrators in Johnson ISD is just over four years while the average years of experience for McCoy ISD administrators is just over five years. This suggests that these administrators entered their current roles of leadership amidst demographic change and diversity. They have experienced the changing demographics of their students and the impacts of diversity on their schools from previous roles and are now experiencing the phenomenon from their current roles in leadership.

Identifying potential pitfalls associated with participating districts is essential to avoid challenges that may disrupt this study (Hays and Singh, 2012). One potential pitfall that could be encountered during the data collection process is the possible differences in personnel that may occur at the district level from district to district. Another potential pitfall may be that there are some district level administrators who may not want to highlight any areas in policy and practice that could be seen as insufficient for student success. Hopefully, district level personnel at participating districts will want to take an in-depth look at their practices relevant to meeting the needs of their schools with changing demographics and work to strengthen those practices and procedures.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative thematic coding was used to organize the interview data and create meaningful and relevant conclusions about the administrators experiences with relation

to inclusive leadership practices. The semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes in length per participant. Questions within the interview focused on participants' awareness of changing racial and ethnic demographics within their school districts, how this awareness has impacted district decision-making and ultimately how decision-making has led to change in district policies and practices. Interviews were tape-recorded to ensure that communication from participants was recorded accurately. The tape-recorded interview responses were transcribed into written text for further analysis. Using thematic coding, transcribed interview responses were reviewed and organized into relevant categories based on how each participant conceptualized and responded to the demographic changes in their district (Ayscue, 2016). Using these patterns and trends, reviews of the responses were conducted to form conclusions about the response data.

The respondents were asked to answer questions intended to garner a clear understanding of the inclusionary practices of superintendents and district leadership in the decision-making practices used on a consistent basis. When analyzing the responses from the interviews, the themes that surfaced were; (a) the ability of the leaders to recognize diversity within the school district, (b) the influence that stakeholders have with district leadership in decision making, and (c) recognizing the impact of demographic diversity and the impact on district programs, practices and policies. The three constructs of leadership, organizational justice, and organizational outcomes, presented by Torres, Madsen, Luo, Ji and Luevanos (2018) as a tool that school districts could utilize to assess the level of inclusiveness of the organization, was used as the

model to measure and determine the leaders adjustment to changing demographics. It was evident from the responses that there are efforts made from both school districts to be more inclusive of all demographically diverse stakeholders, but there are clear areas of need pointed out by the respondents.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Introduction**

This study investigated the ability of suburban superintendents to recognize and lead demographically diverse school districts and analyzed the implications that inclusive practices have on policy and practice of demographically diverse schools. The purpose of this study was achieved by interviewing key district and campus level administrators with each district. This chapter presents the results of the interviews while highlighting common and uncommon responses of the participants. Table 3 shows the themes that were determined based on the responses of the participants.

Table 3

*Themes Derived from Data Analysis of Leader Interviews*

Theme 1	Recognition of Diversity
Theme 2	Stakeholder Influence of Inclusive Leadership
Theme 3	Diversity Impact on the Inclusion of Programs, Practices and Policies

## **Recognition of Diversity**

The ability to recognize the various needs of diverse demographic student groups and staff is important for ensuring inclusive practices of district leaders. Leadership is one of three constructs used in the inclusionary scale model presented by Torres, et al. (2018), and it helps ground the perspectives of the leaders interviewed in this study. The leadership construct measures the impact that a leader has on the organizational image and the level of responsiveness that a leader has with regard to changing demographics. For the purposes of this qualitative study, the construct of leadership is being used to measure the ability of district and campus leaders in recognizing the growing diversity of their students and the ensuing challenges, while reflecting on the image displayed by the district with regard to staffing diversity.

Respondents were asked a series of questions to illustrate whether the decision-making bodies of each district were a demographic reflection of the students and community. According to Ferdman (2014), the goal of leadership development should be to draw all members of the organization towards common goals and objectives. This practice enhances the probability of leadership that is inclusive. In analyzing the responses of the participants for each of the following questions, the demographics of the administration and staff do not mirror the demographic population of the students and community. Responses will show that there is a recognition from district and campus leadership of this diversity gap between staff and students, and a need to close the gap, but progress towards this goal of a demographically diverse staff that is reflective of student demographics has been allusive.

*How does your current student enrollment compare with enrollment 10 years ago?*

All respondents agreed that the student enrollment numbers have shown growth in number and diversity. While answers to this question were given based on memory and not fact, Table 4 shows the official demographic comparison for Johnson ISD and McCoy ISD from ten years ago to today. As can be seen from Table 4, the biggest shifts are in student population size, increase in Hispanic students and decrease of white students. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in McCoy ISD also showed a noticeable increase. Both school districts are growing rapidly in size and diversity. Both school districts show a noticeable decline in white students while their Hispanic students are on a steady incline, along with the overall student populations.

Table 4

*Student Demographic Comparison Between 2009 and 2019*

	Johnson ISD 2009	Johnson ISD 2019	McCoy ISD 2009	McCoy ISD 2019
African American	8%	7%	10%	12%
Hispanic	28%	34%	16%	24%
Asian	2%	2%	4%	4%
White	61%	53%	69%	56%
2 or More	N/A	4%	N/A	3%
Economically Disadvantaged	45%	46%	24%	35%

Table 4 Continued

EL Learners	7%	6%	3%	3%
Special Education	11%	13%	9%	9%
	Total = 8,514 Students	Total = 11,861 Students	Total = 6,505 Students	Total = 8,282 Students

The overall perspective of the respondents was that the student populations of both school districts have become increasingly more diverse as the population size has grown. Lowenhaupt and Reeves (2015) discuss in their study the student growth in public schools and immigration patterns and how the growing capacity of public schools has a definite impact on the level of instruction and the policies and practices that are adjusted to meet the demand for more students. The challenges of increased numbers and increased diversity has created a need for systemic changes in how districts respond to the needs of the students and staff. According to Mrs. Brown, there has been a “significant shift” in ethnic diversity that has paralleled increases in special education students, low socio-economic students and students with behavior challenges. Continuing, Mrs. Brown expressed that a result of these changes has been a shift in how the district responds, such as specific teacher training on behavior management.

Most responses to this question focused on the challenges that come with growth in population, rather than the challenges of demographic change. According to Mrs. Carter, the growth of Johnson ISD by 400 students a year has caused district leadership to revise district policies and practices due to the number of new students, staff and



campuses added at a fast-growth pace. An interesting perspective regarding student demographic changes came from Mr. Hill when he commented that;

“an interesting thing here at this district that we’re noticing now is...it’s leveled out quite a bit. And we’ve really noticed that there’s been a slowdown in the change.”

The “change” referenced by Mr. Hill is in regard to students from low income homes. Mr. Hill goes on to explain that his perception of this slowdown in demographic change is due in large part to a surge in the affluent housing market in the district. Even though there is an increase in affordable housing options, there is also an increase in affluent housing developments as well that has created “an interesting phenomenon,” where both, the affluent and the economically disadvantaged, are continuing an upward trend. While Table 4 shows continued trends of increased diversity, Mr. Hill’s observation of recently slowed changes will be worth monitoring.

*How has the demographics of your central office staff changed within the last 10 years?*

In response to the question regarding the changing demographics of central office staff over the last ten years, there was little variance in participant responses. Table 5 gives a comparative look at the staffing demographic breakdowns for both districts for 2009 and 2019 as a reference. While this is a holistic look at the staffing for each district, it is comparable to the demographics of each district leadership team. This comparative view shows that both districts are making slow progress towards diversifying their staffs to match the student demographics of their students, even though they are both well behind the state average of 28% Hispanic teachers, 11% African American teachers and

58% white teachers. The staff demographics do not reflect the demographics of the student body.

Table 5

*Staff Demographic Comparison between 2009 and 2019*

	Johnson ISD 2009	Johnson ISD 2019	McCoy ISD 2009	McCoy ISD 2019
African American	2%	3%	2%	2%
Hispanic	6%	11%	3%	6%
Asian	Less than 1%	0%	0%	1%
White	92%	84%	94%	91%
2 or More	N/A	2%	N/A	Less than 1%
	Total = 1,258 Staff Members	Total = 1,589 Staff Members	Total = 1,045 Staff Members	Total = 1,061 Staff Members

When asked about the diversity of the central office staff, Mr. Hill commented;

“It hasn’t changed much. It doesn’t match the...population of the district. It’s no fault of the district...it is something that we wish we could do something about...it’s just easier said than done.”

Mrs. Davis shared the same perspective when she commented;

“the demographics really have not changed very much as far as diversity. We still need to work on that.”

One explanation as to why district leadership diversity may be lagging behind the rapid changes of student diversity is the lack of district leadership positions that have been vacant over this same time period. According to Mr. Miller;

“We haven’t had a lot of turnover... in the district in terms of central office, nor have we had a lot of growth.”

With a lack of growth in central office staffing and with a lack of vacancies, it is difficult to transition the staff demographics to be more representative of the student population.

Madsen and Mabokela (2016) discuss the need to increase the diversity within an organization to truly develop cultural awareness that is reflected in leadership and policy.

That’s not to say that there haven't been some changes in the diversity of central office staffing. As seen in Table 2, two of the respondents interviewed, one Hispanic male (Mr. Hill) and one African American female (Mrs. Jones), are in position to offer their expertise and diverse perspectives in district leadership decisions as newer members of each district’s executive leadership teams. With the executive leadership teams for each district being small in number, each of these respondents represents about one fifth of these teams and allows the district leadership teams to be more intentionally inclusive of diverse cultures and perspectives in executive decision making.

*How has the demographics of the school board changed within the last 10 years?*

The demographics of the school board carries a different perspective since members of the school board are elected and represent the voting members of the community. The perception of the respondents from both school districts is that the

demographics of the school board members have not changed much, if at all over the past ten years with the exception of closing the gap between male and female officials. Johnson ISD is more demographically representative of the community in which they serve than McCoy ISD based on current board members. Among the seven school board members at Johnson ISD are three women, four men, four white representatives, one African American representative and two Hispanic representatives.

McCoy ISD's school board's demographic makeup includes two women and five men, and with all seven members being white. According to Diem, Frankenberg and Cleary (2015), school board members tend to be mostly white men and not a representation of the racial demographics of their constituent population, which can be attributed to elections moving to an at-large format and reducing the chances of neighborhood representation. With district demographics that show 44% of its students are non-white it is not a true representation of the community it serves. According to the recollection of Mr. Hill, there has never been a "non-white" board member elected to the school board at McCoy ISD. A possible reason as to why there is little change in school board demographics, explained by Mrs. Brown, is that there is very little turnover, with the average years of service for each board member approaching fifteen years. With the extended longevity of each board member's time on the board, and a majority of board members running for re-election unopposed, there is very little opportunity for increased diversity.

*What do you see as the most difficult problem you face with regard to changing student demographics?*

A majority of the respondents focused their answers to this question on demographic changes to their student populations. According to Mr. Miller, he sees the biggest problem is making sure that teachers have the appropriate training for working with different demographics, such as overcoming their own cultural biases and learning how to transcend the academic gaps that exist with economically disadvantaged students. According to Nelson and Guerra (2014), educators often lack the cultural knowledge needed to understand the varying nuances that a diverse student body brings and therefore do not build classroom environments that are reflective of contributing cultures. Mr. Anderson shared the same concern with his perception that “poverty is the greatest challenge to educators.” He goes on to explain that areas not impoverished generally have students that thrive academically “irrespective of their demographics.”

Mr. Hill discussed a similar concern of the economic hardship of the students being the challenge that the district must overcome. According to Mr. Hill;

“Generally speaking, students who come from poverty or close to poverty tend to struggle academically more than others.”

He goes on to say that in an effort to teach these students effectively a district must work to recruit teachers with the “best pedagogical practices” for working with students from poverty. A concern comes for a district with changing student demographics, that there are many teachers who have not been asked to meet the challenges that students from poverty might bring, and therefore are not prepared pedagogically to meet the challenge.

While teacher pedagogical knowledge and practices can be improved to meet the needs of changing student needs, there is also a view of hiring practices that impacts this

area of concern. Robertson (2006) contends that multicultural organizations enforce policies and practices that encourage the diversity of employees and the contributions that can be made to help the organization. According to Mrs. Thomas, one of the biggest problems the district faces is that the overall demographic of the teaching staff does not mirror the demographic of the student population which can make it difficult to relate to students' experiences.

Evidenced by the responses of the leaders, there is a strong recognition that the growing diversity of district staff and leaders does not mirror the rate of growing diversity of the student body. There is evidence of a responsive approach, focused on training and equipping staff to teach and lead in a more culturally responsive way, that addresses differences in ethnicity as well as family income differences. This approach is similar to the inclusion model presented by Pitts (2006), as a focus on educating the existing workforce on diversity management and diverse cultures. Both school districts have found success with student performance with strategies geared towards culturally responsive instruction, but one can only wonder how increasing the diversity of leaders and instructional staff might speed the closing of academic achievement gaps between student subgroups.

### **Stakeholder Influence of Inclusive Leadership**

District and campus leaders have a direct influence over the inclusive practices of school districts. Leaders must also strive to allow the influence of diverse students, staff and community members in leadership decisions. Organizational justice is another construct used in the inclusionary scale model presented by Torres, et al. (2018), to help

interpret the inclusionary practices of leaders. The organizational justice construct measures the fairness and equity that school leaders demonstrate in their efforts to include all stakeholders as active participants in school business. For the purposes of this study, interview responses are examined to determine the degree to which leaders include stakeholder representatives from all demographic groups in collaborating with district leadership on decision making opportunities.

In an attempt to learn more about how districts include stakeholders in decision making processes, questions were asked to learn more about district leadership's efforts to build trusting relationships with staff and community. Based on the majority of participant responses, there are district efforts to be inclusive of all stakeholders in the educational process. There were, however, perspectives of some respondents that divulge a concern in each district's ability to effectively include members of the economically disadvantaged community. According to this perspective there are efforts in asking the parents and community for volunteers, but there is work needed moving beyond just making opportunities for involvement available, and in practicing intentional solicitation of involvement from representatives of every demographic group.

*Who takes the lead in developing policy?*

Madsen and Mabokela (2013) conclude that the responsibility of understanding the differences between diverse stakeholders of an organization rests with the leader. As the leader of the school district, the responsibility of developing policy to represent a diverse constituency rests with the superintendent. Respondents consistently pointed to the superintendent as the main developer of district policy while responses that explored

a greater depth of policy development showed a more collaborative process involving members of the district leadership team. Mr. Miller responded;

“I would say it is the superintendent’s office... I have to, for the most part, instigate, begin the process. But having assistant superintendents in specific areas, then it’s delegated to them... if I’m talking about taking a lead in developing policy pertaining to HR, then I’m going to the assistance of HR.”

This response demonstrates a collaborative effort with each district department in the policy creative process.

Another perspective brought from multiple respondents was regarding the need to follow regulations and laws set forth by TASB and statute. Mr. Anderson commented that in Texas;

“we’re kind of heavy legislatively so we’ve got a lot of legislative requirements that, whether they’re regulations through the agency (TEA) or state laws or whatever it is, that pretty much put parameters on the policy within this state. So, I would say on an aggregate level it’s really kind of driven by the legislature here in Texas.”

Mrs. Brown confirmed this sentiment in her response;

“we work with TASB... and look through the policy, what their recommendations are and whether we need to tweak it to our district.”

While there is a certain level of interpretive subjectivity within many policies and regulations, both of these districts appear to have processes in place to meet the spirit of state laws regarding school policies.



*How willing are the parents and the community to participate in decision making?*

Respondents from both districts stated their community members are willing and vested in participating in district decision making and on district committees, but that there is difficulty in solidifying participation from across all demographics. Mrs. Williams said that they have many parents willing to serve in decision making capacities but not consistently. Sometimes the length of the voluntary commitment is the problem. There are efforts from each district leadership team to reach out in various forms to all demographic groups for participation. Examples include venues such as advisory committees, attendance rezoning committees and bond steering committees, community members and parents are often encouraged to participate.

According to Mrs. Williams;

“I think they do a great job at that. I think our communications department is very strong and they see that as their role in pulling the community in. They’re not afraid to listen to the community and hear from the community.”

Mr. Taylor confirmed this viewpoint as well with his comments;

“I know with our recent bond election, that was a very collaborative process and I think that it went so smoothly, by and large, because of the input from the community. It passed with overwhelming margins and I think that it speaks to the quality of leadership and administration in gathering community input, rejecting or anticipating resistant areas, amending the package to suit, and being responsive to the desires of the community.”

Examples such as this demonstrate that collaborative efforts can bridge the gap that varying perspectives may bring.

When discussing the willingness of parents and the community to participate in decision making, there is a concern as to the level of success the district has in acquiring meaningful participation from all demographic groups. Mrs. Thomas commented;

“I don’t think they are (willing). I think they probably have a handful of parents that would want to and those are the parents that are already involved, like in PTA.”

She goes on to say;

“I feel like they are trying...but again...if they’re not reaching out to my parents or if they’re just saying we’re going to put this survey out to see who’s going to respond, it’s never going to be my parents. I don’t know if it would be a true representation of our district as a whole.”

Explaining a little further on this perception of community participation, Mr. Anderson explains;

“If it’s something that impacts their child, then I think they all have a kind of vested interest in having their voice heard. And I think at the same time, again, it gets this economic divide. Those who are economically challenged tend to feel a little disenfranchised. So, normal communications or normal venues to receive input might not work with them. And I think that language barriers can play into that.”

Mr. Anderson's response to this question goes to the topic of trust that the parents and community are looking for with their district leadership. If it is the community's perception that the school district only accepts the contributions of an elite few, trust is lost.

The response from Mrs. Jones complimented this sentiment with her comments; "parents can be afraid or intimidated to reach out and try to be a part of that decision-making process. And I think that's because they are afraid. They don't necessarily know how their input will be valued."

These responses lend to a perspective that community and parent participation in district decision making opportunities is limited across all demographic groups based on economic factors and therefore there is not a true representation of economically disadvantaged family's participation in decision making.

*How do you solicit input from school board members, community, and staff when formulating district goals?*

According to Mr. Anderson, venues such as parent conferences and social media platforms are vital tools used consistently to keep the lines of communication open between schools and the community and to give the school the opportunity to "tell their story." He went on further to say that the social media platforms "allow for input to be received by the district upon a host of topics whether you want to get that input or not." Social media is now a constant form of two-way communication that is advantageous for parents and school staff.

Representatives from both districts were able to give examples of programs designed for community outreach. Mrs. Brown was able to discuss “VIP Nights” that McCoy ISD hosts several times a year as a way to connect families and community members with district and community resources available to them. Mrs. Carter shared the example of communication from the new superintendent on his first day on the job where he sent out an “thought exchange” to all staff and parents where he asked for their feedback on what areas of the district are going well and what areas of the district are in need of change. At the time of the interview the superintendent had received over 800 responses from staff and parents, demonstrating the responsive opportunities of current communication platforms.

*How is decision making collaborative with district administrators and personnel?*

Administrative responses from both participating districts were that there are numerous opportunities for district and campus staff members to work cooperatively with district leadership on district initiatives. Participants from both districts offer examples of committees and venues for collective collaboration, such as strategic planning committees, bond steering committees, superintendent advisory council meetings, and regular principal and assistant principal meetings. While examples of district leadership efforts to include district staff and campus administrators were available, the practice of listening surfaced more than once in the responses. According to Mrs. Carter;

“What I am starting to see more and more is that the level of collaboration to me is directly correlated to the willingness of the district administrators to listen.”

Mrs. Jones' perspective is that there is;

“always a perceived communication gap. People talk about district, or you know, admin, and in every district I’ve been in, and it’s been there. And if I had the key to get around it or get over it, I’d be a trillionaire. But unfortunately, I don’t have the key, other than just listening.”

Perceptions such as these illustrate the importance of genuine inclusive practices in a culturally competent and responsive superintendent and leadership team. These perceptions also suggest that the ability of the district administration to, not only invite staff to participate, but to actively listen to staff ideas is the key to genuine collaboration. Inclusive practices such as these help to encourage the support of all stakeholders in the district organization (Madsen & Mabokela, 2016).

*What are some areas where you involve community in planning/advisory capacity?*

Responses to this question were similar, and sometimes an extension, to earlier responses to the question on soliciting input from the community, with a little more in-depth analysis of community involvement. Mr. Anderson elaborated;

“one area that you really see it is in terms of facilities because you’re asking the community to vote and to actually tax themselves at a higher rate.”

Mr. Miller complimented the perspective of involving community advisory with facility upgrades in regard to supporting bond elections, but he also suggested the need for community involvement in the strategic planning process, and on site-based decision teams at the district and campus levels.

Evidence from the responses above show that leaders are trying to be inclusive of all stakeholders in participating in decision making processes. Invitations to collaborative discussions, open outreach venues to share ideas, both virtual and face-to-face, and encouragement to join committees are a common occurrence with both school districts. As pointed out by some leaders, however, opportunities for participation from some demographic subgroups are not seen as viable opportunities for various reasons such as cultural differences and fear of rejection. Williams (2005) points this out as she discusses the lack of economically disadvantaged families in district decision making and politics. Until these fears can be put to rest, there is still work to be done in ensuring inclusive participation of all stakeholder families.

### **Diversity Impact on the Inclusion of Programs, Practices and Policies**

The direct inclusive impact of a diverse constituent population on a school district can be measured by the programs, practices and policies that impact the school program. Organizational outcomes are the final construct used in the inclusionary model used by Torres, et al. (2018) to measure the inclusivity of organizations. The construct of organizational outcomes measures the resulting impacts of an organization based on inclusionary practices. In this study, organizational outcomes help ground the analysis of the perception of superintendents and district leadership on topics that impact student performance.

Questions centered on student academic achievement, school programs and the difficulties that schools face as a result of changing student demographics are asked to assess the outcomes of inclusionary practices amongst demographic diversity. According

to Roberson (2006), managing diversity is considered the first priority in developing an inclusive environment. A question of program evaluation was also asked of the respondents to assess the level of administrative responsiveness to changing demographics. Overwhelmingly, responses from the participants show a recognition from leadership that a demographically diverse student population brings challenges to each district. Respondents agreed that challenges can be overcome with intentional focus on a student-centered pedagogy, recruiting and retaining a diverse instructional staff, and consistent and restorative discipline management practices.

*What existing school programs and practices are a direct result of changing student demographics?*

While staffing is a vital variable in navigating the challenges of changing student demographics, there are more variables that can aid the process. When asked to discuss school programs and practices that are a direct result of changing student demographics, both districts had clear examples to share. Mr. Taylor talked at length about the district's work with behavioral transitions for students, such as the addition of transition plans for students in an alternative education setting and the addition of a district mentor and behavior coaches on certain Title I campuses. Another strategy that McCoy ISD used to assist teachers in getting to know the challenges that students face at home and how to help is the staffing of district social workers. According to Mrs. Brown;

“they really have to delve deeper into that relationship piece and know where their kids are coming from, what type of background, and building that relationship with the entire family.”

The strategy of implementing district social workers is a strategy designed to help bridge the gap of understanding between teachers and families.

Other respondents also spoke of student behavior as being a challenge that is perceived to have increased with demographic changes. Milner and Tenore (2010) claim that there is a disconnect between the expectations of predominantly white teachers and the perception of expected rules for students who are increasingly non-white. According to Mrs. Davis,

“our student behavior is tough, and we’re having a hard time figuring out what to do in a more restorative role.”

With the addition of staffing allocations added to address student behavior, character programs were also implemented across both districts to address the behavioral, social and emotional needs of students. One strategy that Mr. Miller spoke of was

“vetting and deciding on a common curricular (character education program) ... a common language that all of our kids would hear at all schools.”

For this district it was important for the communicated message to be the same, with older students receiving a more in-depth version of the program. Other examples of programs that were perceived to be a result of changing demographics included a weekend and summer feeding program, an after school childcare program, community mentoring partnerships, and the implementation of the Advanced Via Individual Determination (AVID) program that is directed at potential first generation college students.

*How is your vision of instruction impacted by changing student demographics?*



With the initial goal of schools being driven by the core value of student learning, participants were asked to answer how their vision of instruction has been impacted by student demographics. Bainbridge and Lasley (2002) claim that the greatest challenge to educators is the performance gap between white students and students of color. Mr. Miller stated;

“our vision of instruction just means... that you have to teach the whole child... and it’s also our vision of instruction that one size doesn’t fit all.”

Another perspective that was shared by a couple respondents revolved around the idea of maintaining strong foundational pillars and reflective teachers. Mr. Hill spoke at length about the reflective practices of the teaching staff;

“The vision is constant, having teachers who are reflective, always looking at their own instructional practices, and looking for new ways to improve. Always looking at the data and really reading into and studying the data to determine what changes in instruction needs to happen.”

Mr. Taylor complimented this sentiment with his statements about the dangers of stagnant instruction amidst changing student demographics. In his comments he talked about the struggle teachers face when their traditionally affluent students, who have always been successful with little innovative and responsive teaching, are replaced with a diverse group of students with more challenges. This can create quite a challenge for these teachers.

Mr. Anderson’s response to the question of instruction led to the idea of building a strong foundation that will withstand the changing climate of education;

“My vision of instruction... it’s strong curriculum, strong professional development, strong teachers... I think if you have that, irrespective of the demographics of the students, that leads to success.”

He commented that this is a broad vision, and that there are many variables that go into carrying these foundational beliefs out with fidelity, but his point communicated the importance of core values and beliefs that are sturdy enough to handle any changes in the educational climate.

Table 6

*Student Accountability Comparison Between 2009 and 2019*

	Johnson ISD 2009	Johnson ISD 2019	McCoy ISD 2009	McCoy ISD 2019
African American	80%	68%	84%	77%
Hispanic	82%	74%	88%	85%
Asian	91%	97%	95%	95%
White	78%	85%	95%	92%
2 or More	N/A	80%	N/A	89%
Economically Disadvantaged	81%	70%	86%	80%
EL Learners	61%	64%	85%	88%
Special Education	66%	51%	64%	48%

The one constant that can be taken from the respondents is the need of the professional staff to adjust to the needs of the students through reflective practices and a revised instructional model designed to meet the challenges of a demographically diverse student body. Table 6 shows the state accountability results for each district for the 2009 and 2019 school years. Students in Texas take STAAR accountability exams, beginning in third grade through graduation. Students are assessed in reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. The percentages shown in Table 6 are an average of all tests taken, at each grade level, and for every content area for each district. In a comparison with like school districts across the state of Texas, each of these districts is considered successful in educating their students. Johnson ISD received a 2019 accountability rating of a “B” and McCoy ISD received an accountability rating of an “A.” Both school districts are considered high performing school districts as their students’ performance in accountability assessments are consistently above the state average most grade levels and content areas.

However, reviewing the data from Table 6 with a lens of demographic diversity outcomes, one can notice that the student performances for the African American, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and EL students from both campuses decreased (White students from McCoy ISD also showed a decrease). As demographic diversity has risen, student performance for certain demographic subgroups has fallen. This data narrative is aligned to the respondents’ perspective that there is work needed in re-designing the instructional pedagogy to meet the needs of a more diverse group of students.

*How do you evaluate program effectiveness with regards to continuous improvement of student learning and development?*

The last question of the interview asked of the respondents was to comment on how they evaluate program effectiveness as it relates to the improvement of student learning and development. The responses from the participants varied in perspective, but a consistent theme is that there is not currently a formal system for program evaluation for either district that is conducted on a large scale consistently.

In her response, Mrs. Jones discussed the lack of in-depth program evaluation; “People may think that they are really evaluating program effectiveness because...reading scores went up. But we really haven’t looked at everything. Maybe it (reading scores) wasn’t even a result of that program. Maybe it was some other variable that came into place. But until you do a true program evaluation and factor in all of the... variables and try to isolate that one variable, I don’t think we ever really do a true evaluation.”

Mr. Anderson brought up another concern with program evaluations that are completed internally in that the evaluations are sometimes completed by the staff members who oversee the programs themselves. When this occurs, there are concerns that innate biases within the evaluators cause the evaluation to be skewed in favor of the program's effectiveness instead of providing an objective view. According to Mr. Anderson, the question is not whether we are gathering evaluative data, but rather what we are doing with the data collected, and to answer the question of, “How do we use these results to build capacity within our classrooms or to build capacity within the

schools?” According to Mr. Anderson, work still needs to be done on how to use data appropriately and effectively.

There are, however, current practices of evaluation that are geared towards targeted student outcomes. For example, Mrs. Carter commented that student academic performance data and administrative walkthrough data are two forms of evaluative data they use consistently to assess teacher instructional practices and student learning effectiveness. Other forms of program evaluation that can be assessed quickly, according to Mr. Miller and Mrs. Carter, includes student enrollment and participation in specific programs such as Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses and accelerated instructional programs. The examples are important because they are variables that can be easily measured to determine student success. Mr. Hill’s response, “I think if you look at it simplistically, is a program helping to increase student achievement,” keeps student learning at the forefront of decisions regarding the success or failure of a district program.

The desired foundational outcome of all school entities is the improved academic performance of all students. While demographic diversity does create challenges, according to Howard (2007), district leadership needs to begin looking at demographic diversity as an opportunity instead of a problem. Responses above show evidence that overall student academic performance is at a high level in both districts, but there are still achievement gaps represented between demographic subgroups. Educating the whole child today requires more than just an inclusive instructional plan. Students' physical, social, emotional and basic human needs must be met before learning can take

place. While the responses of leaders from both districts demonstrate efforts in meeting the needs of all students, the idea of a formal and reflective program evaluation process is an area of continued need.

The results of this study show that there is continued work needed in preparing leaders for working in demographically diverse communities. Creating school programs that meet the basic human needs of all students while creating culturally responsive instruction that challenges academic growth in all students is a challenge, and it is a challenge that requires consistent reflection and adjustment as the needs of students change. Implications from this study show a need to include more intentional work in school districts with growing diversity, and the leader preparation programs that implement strategies used to yield equitable student performance and inclusive workplace practices. Often times, school leaders in demographically changing communities do not have the life experience in diversity or the training required to stimulate equitable growth and participation. Therefore, leadership training programs must be designed to fill in the needed gaps in leadership knowledge and practice.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

Increasing demographic diversity in suburban school districts is an ongoing challenge to superintendents and district leadership. It is a growing concern and according to Thomas (2008), superintendents are the critical component in influencing the success of policies and practices aimed at meeting the needs of a diverse population of students. A superintendent's role as the instructional leader of the district is vital, and the level of importance that a superintendent puts on being responsive to the needs of a demographically changing student population is what sets the foundation for suburban schools of diversity. Responses from the participants show that the leaders in both suburban school districts are cognoscente of the demographic changes their schools are experiencing, but that meeting the demands of diversity with inclusive practices is sometimes challenging. Data from interviews shows that there are efforts in creating inclusive practices in district leadership but there are still some areas such as staffing and authentic community engagement that are areas of needed growth.

This study set out to analyze (a) the perceived ability of suburban district superintendents in recognizing and leading demographically diverse schools, and (b) the perceived implications that inclusion has had on staffing, policy and practice. Superintendents and other district and campus administrators are confident in recognizing that their school districts growth in diversity is paralleled to their growth in size. Concerns arise, not in the ability to recognize the challenges that diverse student

populations bring, but rather in meeting the needs of all stakeholders during a diversity population shift.

While leadership from both districts agree that an ideal staff is one that mirrors the demographics of its students and community, both districts retain staff with little diversity. Though each district is slowly closing this staffing gap, there are many factors that can be attributed to the lopsided staffing percentages. A community and school district's history, norms and values influence the approach to diversity change (Evans, 2007 & Welton, Diem & Holme, 2015). Both of the participating suburban districts are traditionally affluent districts, with majority white student populations, but as the population demographics have shifted many of the organizational traditions have remained. While many of the long-lasting traditions, such as high professional standards for staff and high achievement standards for students, transcend all races and cultural groups, there is still a barrier for some demographic student groups with instructional strategies that do not consistently take cultural differences into account.

As the student population has gradually changed over the years, efforts of responsiveness from the district have focused on pedagogical adjustments to meet the needs of a diverse staff. Professional development provided and resources purchased have been focused on helping predominantly white teachers find ways to relate to their demographically diverse students. With these efforts, both school districts have weathered the challenges of changing demographics at the surface level as they are still considered school districts of choice for their geographic areas and amongst comparative districts. Another look at Table 3 and Table 4, however, shows that there may be more to



student achievement than diverse pedagogical practices as the academic performances of Hispanic, African American and economically disadvantaged students from both districts show a decline. Perhaps, a heightened focus in building staff diversity is a missing piece of the puzzle. Diverse staff members who can relate to diverse students on a cultural level might be able to help close the achievement gaps that both districts are experiencing.

Leadership for both suburban school districts have implemented initiatives to train and prepare their instructional staff to work successfully with diverse students. Efforts to build relationships with students, get to know their interests, and learn their cultural differences have been deployed and have allowed student performance results to remain successful overall. An instructional staff, regardless of race and demographic background, that is responsive to the needs of diverse students is a sign of a successful school district. But, adding culturally relatable staff creates a level of comfort and approachability for students and the community that might not otherwise exist. This sentiment can be seen with parent and community involvement as well.

It was recognized by several respondents in this study that a true representation of the district's demographic population is not always included in decision making/advisory processes, based on a volunteer model of involvement. Superintendents and district administrators have explored various outreach opportunities to solicit participation and involvement from the community, such as virtual participation and community outreach nights. Genuine inclusive involvement though, has not been achieved according to district administrators. The predominant perspective is that

parents and community members who are economically disadvantaged and/or not on the normal volunteer circuit are not quick to give of their time and ideas out of a sense of fear that their presence on committees and perspective on initiatives would not be welcomed or valued.

Another perspective offered by district administrators is that the work schedule of the low-socioeconomic families and the working-class families makes it more difficult for them to volunteer their time. Speculation can be made that there are few processes in place to actively reach out to families of economic disadvantage, to not only invite, but to request their participation in district decision making opportunities while making it convenient for them to participate. Contacting specific families and community members of diversity, with the intention of gaining their trust that their perspectives will be valued and implemented, is the next step in being inclusive of all demographic representatives of the school districts.

Public school superintendents have a difficult job each year in ensuring that the systems, structures and staff are ready to be inclusive of all students that enter the schoolhouse doors each day. A key result of this study is that the superintendents and leadership teams of each district have the ability to recognize the needs of their student populations that are growing in diversity. Student needs are met with policies that are in-line with state and federal expectations, however, practices are not always inclusive of every demographic group represented in each district. Feelings of uniqueness and belonging (Shore, et. al., 2011) are not felt by all stakeholders. Soliciting the involvement of diverse families that are reluctant, and the recruitment and retention of a

diverse staff more reflective of the student demographic population, are needed areas of more inclusive practices. Recognizing these areas of need is the beginning. Discovering and implementing practices that address these needs is where the work matters most.

There are possible future studies that can be conducted to gather further data on diversity in suburban schools and the inclusive leadership needed to meet the needs of diverse students and staff. Looking at the action steps that superintendents and district leaders take to solicit participation from all stakeholders is an area of possible focus. In this study it was gathered noted that districts will often make opportunities for stakeholders' participation available but attracting participation from unrepresented demographic groups is challenging. How to encourage and enlist authentic engagement in governing a school district would be an interesting study that would require sampling the strategies of a wide variety of school district.

Another possible study related to this research would be an investigation into student leadership groups in schools and how they advocate for the changes needed in demographically changing communities. As students are taught to self-advocate while they prepare to enter the world beyond public education, a deeper look into student groups and how they impact the inclusive policies and practices of their schools and districts would be helpful in furthering inclusive leadership practices. Afterall, today's students are tomorrow's leaders.

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APPENDIX A  
IINTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Leadership

- Who takes the lead in developing policy?
- How does your current student enrollment compare with enrollment 10 years ago?
- How has the demographics of your central office staff changed within the last 10 years?
- How has the demographics of the school board changed within the last 10 years?
- What do you see as the most difficult problem you face with regard to changing student demographics?

Collaboration

- How willing are the parents and the community to participate in decision making?
- How do you solicit input from school board members, community and staff when formulating district goals?
- How is decision making collaborative with district administrators and personnel?
- What are some areas where you involve community in planning/advisory capacity?

Programs and Procedures

- What existing school programs and practices are a direct result of changing student demographics?

- How is your vision of instruction impacted by changing student demographics?
- How do you evaluate program effectiveness with regards to continuous improvement of student learning and development?