IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS IN TEXAS:

A CASE STUDY OF HOW STAKEHOLDERS MAKE SENSE OF HOUSE BILL 5

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Educational Leadership

by

Donna Lynn Clark

April 2019

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Approved by Doctoral Thesis Committee

_____
Dr. Virginia Rangel, Chairperson

_____
Dr. Bradley Carpenter, Committee Member

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Dr. Keith Butcher, Committee Member

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Dr. Bill Wood, Committee Member

_____
Dr. Robert McPherson, Dean
College of Education

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their staff members to me. Thank you to the counselors and teachers who trusted me with their stories, observations, and wishes for the future. You all have made this research possible.

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IMPLEMENTATIONOF COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS IN TEXAS:

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An Abstract
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Abstract

Background: Texas House Bill 5 (2013) changed graduation requirements across the state by requiring that students select a career path or endorsement as they enter high school. Over the past five years, central office leaders across the state have been working to implement this legislation. According to a recent evaluation commissioned by the state, however, historically marginalized students are not predicted to meet the new graduation expectations of completing an endorsement. Meeting the needs of all learners is required by state and federal legislation. We need to learn what was necessary to meet the needs of all students. **Purpose:** The goals of the study are to use sensemaking to understand how district and campus administrators, teachers, and staff in one high achieving suburban school district have interpreted and implemented House Bill 5, and to understand stakeholder perceptions about implementation. **Methods:** A comparative case study of two high schools within a single district was used. District leaders, counselors, building administrators, and teachers directly involved with students declaring or fulfilling their endorsement pathways were interviewed. Data were coded using the seven Saldaña first cycle coding types, then flexible subcoding to examine emerging themes across campuses while searching for means to improve the system based on stakeholder perceptions. **Results:** Analyzing stakeholder sensemaking of HB5 demonstrated that teachers, counselors, and administrators at both high schools agreed to varying degrees that HB5 was successfully implemented. Counselors, however, were deeply concerned about the changes in their duties. Their new focus was on students meeting HB5 requirements, which detracted from supporting the social-emotional well-being of their

students. Counselor caseloads of 500 or more students meant that they had to focus their time supporting graduation requirements alone. In addition, all stakeholders were taxed to meet the needs of the community, and communication patterns exhibited evidence of implicit racial bias. **Recommendations:** Districts need to adjust their awareness of actual community diversity reducing reliance on the limited ethnic tracking required by the state with a focus on effective, culturally and linguistically appropriate dissemination of information. The home language survey provides a means for understanding linguistic needs but does not offer information about country of origin. It is time districts gather family information necessary to establish and maintain a means of communicating with every family and not make excuses for communication failures.

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Chapter I

Study Introduction

One core component of the next generation of implementation studies is
research designs that enable investigation of a few key dimensions linked
to current policy initiatives as a way to extend the knowledge base and
inform the practice of policymaking and implementation in actionable
ways. (Coburn, Hill, & Spillane, 2016, p. 248)

Preparing students to contribute to society is essential for every high school in the
nation. College and career readiness (CCR) refers to the process of obtaining the skills
and knowledge essential for success in life after high school, whether in a job or in
postsecondary study (Brand, Valent, & Browning, 2013; English, Rasmussen, Cushing,
& Therriault, 2016). CCR standards include expectations for scholastic performance in
conjunction with development of workforce-specific skills necessary for postsecondary
preparedness.

Across the U.S., CCR standards are established by state legislation. In Texas,
House Bill 5 (HB5, 2013) created state CCR standards. One of the primary goals of the
legislation is to support skills necessary to attend college/university or procure
employment (Aycock & Davis, 2014). As part of this law, the state compels districts to
"…encourage to the greatest extent possible that students participate in Career and
Technical Education (CTE) programs or enroll in dual credit courses that lead to a
degree, license, or certification" (Aycock & Davis, 2014). The increased rigor of
endorsements, required specialized coursework preparing students for life after high
school, students select prior to entering high school in conjunction with the advanced

learning opportunities available through dual credit and advanced placement coursework

support college/career readiness in Texas schools (Required coursework, §19 TAC

chapter 74, subchapter G.; Graduation requirements, §19 TAC chapter 74, subchapter B.)

This law requires students to select an endorsement category to add to their Foundations

High School Program (FHSP) the legal name of the basic graduation plan.

The law also requires districts to create specific graduation paths as well as career

endorsements. These graduation paths include the FHSP (22 credits, no endorsement), the

Foundations High School Program with endorsement (26 credits), and the Distinguished

Achievement Program (26 credits, advanced placement coursework required) (Aycock &

Davis, 2014). The endorsement categories comprise Business and Industry, Public

Services, Arts and Humanities, Foundations, and Multidisciplinary studies (Graduation

requirements, §19 TAC chapter 74, subchapter B.). Each district was required by the

spring of 2015 to create sequential coursework for students to acquire endorsements

appropriate to their community (Aycock & Davis, 2014). In addition, districts were given

latitude to create coursework relevant to their community context while meeting the

demands established by the state.

An early evaluation of HB5 (2013) and its implementation points to several

successes and challenges (Mellor, Stoker, & Reese, 2015). Among other findings, the

authors report that students who completed the Foundation High School Program plus an

endorsement, or who satisfied the rigorous the Distinguished Achievement Program

along with an endorsement had achieved college/career readiness. Conversely, students

who only completed the basic diploma lacked college and career readiness. The

evaluation report goes on to show that there has been unequal performance across student

subpopulations. Specifically, only those Asian and Caucasian students who declared their endorsement pathways in junior high school prior to the 2014 school year showed early indications for college/career readiness as measured by the percent of students graduating with completed endorsements or certifications preparing them for employment with all other student subgroups performing below 60% college/career readiness (Mellor et al, 2015). These early outcomes point to the possibility that, in practice, HB5 (2013) has created a system of tracking students, which research suggests has the potential to limit their opportunities to take certain courses, obtain endorsements, and graduate as career/college ready (Lleras & Rangel, 2009).

The purpose of this research, then, is to examine the implementation of HB5 (2013) in one Texas school district in order to uncover how teachers and administrators are making sense of the policy and to gain insight into why it might be that outcomes vary across student groups.

Background of the Problem

Student achievement and college/career readiness in Texas before HB5 (2013) was not specifically delineated by the state to develop postsecondary readiness in high school students. HB5 requirements specifically stated graduation requirements and expected program development by the district. Early implementation of HB5 was focused on meeting state expectations and understanding what the districts already had in place to fulfill policy expectations. Tracking is a complication of endorsement declaration required by HB5. State monitoring and expectations create a means of understanding endorsement completion and postsecondary readiness which is the long-term focus of HB5.

Student Achievement and College/Career Readiness Before HB5. The educational and legislative communities in Texas are aware that public schools are not preparing all students equally to be college/career ready by graduation. Indeed, referring to inadequate preparation of students for college and career readiness the Texas Higher Education Strategic Plan (2015) stated that, "Without bold action, Texas faces a future of diminished incomes, opportunities, and resources (p. v)." This document went on to establish engagement goals for all high school graduates to have opportunities for further learning and potential career advancement options. The Texas Education Agency is monitoring HB5 (2013) policy implementation progress for high school completion and college readiness (Texas Education Agency, 2017). The goals for high school graduates include that 60% of high school graduates age 25-34 will earn a degree or secondary certification, acquiring marketable skills without accruing excessive student loan debt.

Before the passage of HB5 (2013), there were simple options for graduation: Minimum High School Program, Recommended High School Program, and Distinguished Achievement Program (Graduation requirements, §19 TAC chapter 74, subchapter B.). The Minimum High School Program was a 22-credit graduation program that had expectations for math, science, history and English. The Recommended High School Program and Distinguished Achievement Program were each 26-credits with the difference being level of participation in advanced coursework. The Distinguished Achievement Program required advanced placement courses intended to prepare participants for university/college coursework. College/career readiness preparation was limited to the type of diploma earned and measured by the two national college entrance exams, the Scholastic Aptitude Test and the American College Test, neither of which

takes into consideration the contextual knowledge of career fields necessary to be successful in the workforce (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014).

HB5 (2013) Requirements. HB5 sought to create a framework for achieving college and career readiness for Texas public schools. Texas HB5 (2013) requires school districts require ninth graders to enroll in a tracked endorsement via the endorsement declaration process prior to enrollment in high school. There are five endorsements: Business and Industry, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, Public Service, Arts and Humanities, and Multidisciplinary Studies. Each of these endorsements has multiple sequences of courses to prepare students for college/career readiness which was written into Texas Legal code legally mandating graduation requirements (Graduation Requirements, § 19 TAC Chapter 74, subchapter B). Texas law also requires that all courses students select be aligned to their graduation and endorsement pathways from the first day of high school (Graduation requirements, §19 TAC chapter 74, subchapter B.).

The new endorsement structures required by HB5 (2013) mandated changes in the registration process for eighth graders. Research suggests that the creation of tracked cohorts will lead to changes in the master schedule and to its increased complexity (Dauber, 1996). Students were initially required to complete all courses sequentially by grade level as required by state assessment requirements and by endorsement.

Early Implementation of HB5. Early implementation was interpreted individually by districts and regions. The Texas Legislature commissioned an ongoing evaluation of the law's implementation and outcomes. The House Bill 5 Evaluation Report (Mellor, Stoker, & Reese, 2015) indicated a need to understand how policy implementation affect college/career readiness of students across all subpopulations. The

report showed that students who graduated within the Minimum High School Program prior to HB5 (2013) were not adequately prepared for college and career (Mellor et al., 2015). The evidence used in this report included quarterly earnings of graduates and college/university completion rates. Students who received the Recommended or Distinguished diplomas earned between two and three times as much as those receiving the basic diploma (Mellor et al., 2015) Evidence pointed to students classified as Economically Disadvantaged, Hispanic, and African-American being particularly underprepared as they did not complete university/college, underperformed on standardized assessments, and earned less than those who received college and career readiness instruction via the RHSP or DAP (Mellor et al., 2015).

Stakeholders. Teachers, counselors, building administrators and visionary leaders/administrators from the district office each have important roles to play concerning HB5 (2013) policy implementation. Teachers and counselors are the frontline mentors and guides through course selection and completion. These pivotal members of the instructional team work directly with students affected HB5 and can elucidate the nuances of implementation. Building administrators are tasked with staffing along with student behavior redirection when instruction is complicated. The perceptions of these leaders are required to clarify complications when hiring and motivating those involved. The visionary leaders are the central office team members who were tasked with interpreting state policy for the district. District leaders and administrators will contribute about the interpretation process and how they established procedures for the high schools successfully implement this CCR policy. Each employee has a unique role to play within

the enactment process which is essential to understand perceptions regarding important factors of implementation.

 Tracking. Tracking occurs when students proceed through their education as a cohort. This is a result of early endorsement declaration, also known as ability grouping, which affects learning opportunities for students. Tracking in the context of remediation causes greater stratification (Lleras & Rangel, 2009; Parker, Jerrim, Schoon, & Marsh, 2016). Students who require remediation enroll in courses prioritizing skill development necessary for prerequisites. Tracking inadvertently ability groups students together, those who need remediation and those who do not. These social trajectories create unequal access to learning opportunities which affects college/career readiness in their secondary education (Dauber & Others, 1996). Tracking can complicated the master schedule and affect student opportunities (Domina, Hanselman, Hwang, & McEachin, 2016; Fletcher & Zirkle, 2009; Jones & Others, 1995). Tracking across multiple grade levels in the context of remediation limits student choice for course selection within the master schedule making it increasingly difficult to complete endorsements with each successive year in remediation (Fletcher & Zirkle, 2009). Limited opportunities for advancement in the areas of their interest affects their perceptions regarding likelihood of success.

 State of Texas Performance Monitoring Expectations. Districts must prepare for the monitoring process. The State of Texas is monitoring HB5 (2013) implementation based on the Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS), which assesses district successful implementation of HB5 (2013) instruction across student subpopulations (Texas Education Agency, 2017). The PBMAS is data collection tool utilized by the State to understand how students are performing as a means of rating and

comparing district performance. Districts are experiencing pressure to produce students prepared for college/career readiness. Since HB5 (2013) is the gateway for entry into postsecondary studies, its evaluation is essential for districts to understand whether their implementation of HB5 supports college and career readiness established by the Higher Education Strategic Plan. Districts must understand where adjustments to implementation must be made as early as possible to meet the complex goals established by state and federal legislation. This is essential for all students to be provided opportunities for college/career readiness and success in life after high school.

Long-Term Vision. The Texas Higher Education and College Board established a long-term goal supporting implementation of HB5. This is the requirement for high schools to prepare 60% of their students to meet career readiness standards (Hahn et al., 2015). According to the American Institutes for Research Evaluation report on HB5 (2015), only two subpopulations in the first graduating group of students in Texas under HB5 (2013) have a chance of meeting college/career readiness standards, Asian and Caucasian (see Table 1). The rest of the subpopulations are performing substantially below the standard of 60% passing state assessments, with the subpopulations of greatest concern being students participating in Special Education, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged students, and African-American students.

Table 1.1

Statewide Student Performance Data on Students Reaching Level II

Graduating Class of 2017-2018 Scores on State Assessments in 8th Grade

Subpopulation	Reading	Math	Algebra I in 8th Grade	Algebra I in 9th Grade
African-American	35.3	32.9	67.8	13.4
American Indian	45	33.7	76.9	15.2
Asian	75.6	68.3	94.2	47.9

Hispanic	37.4	27.9	71.5	16.1
Multiracial	59.1	39.7	85.8	26.2
Pacific Islander	42.7	31.9	86.4	19.4
Caucasian	64	45.8	87.1	28.1
Economically Disadvantaged	34	25.2	68.8	13.8
English Language Learners	5.6	11.8	39.0	4.0
Special Education	10.6	10.6	50.2	1.8

Note: American Institute for Research House Bill 5 Evaluation Report (2015, p. 40)

In addition to Texas Higher Education and College Board expectations, there are additional expectations from the Texas Education Agency regarding levels of diplomas received within each cultural, socio-economic, and intervention demographic (Texas Education Agency, 2017). Each subpopulation is expected to have 60% enrolling in college/university, completing professional certification, or engaging in military service. This will meet the 60% by 2030 goal for being postsecondary ready upon completion of high school (Hahn et al., 2015).

Statement of the Problem

HB5 (2013) is a college/career readiness policy that is interpreted by district leaders and implemented based on the context and understandings of stakeholders in each district and high school across the state of Texas. Each building within a district will have unique aspects of implementation based on context and resource availability. The early evaluation of HB5 demonstrates that only two subpopulations are likely to meet graduation expectations (Mellor et al., 2015) (see Table 1). Unequal performance of students across subpopulations is not acceptable to the Texas Education Agency.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors of HB5 (2013) policy implementation based perceptions of key stakeholders: teachers, counselors, and administrators. The goal of this work is identify what stakeholders perceive to be important to implementation to improve future processes.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the investigation:

1. How do the key stakeholders (i.e., instructional leaders, counselors, and administrators) make sense of HB5 (2013)?
2. What factors shape the sense making process for stakeholders in each of the high schools through implementation of HB5?

Theoretical Perspective

This study will be guided by Sensemaking theory. Sensemaking has its origins in organizational literature and has been applied to policy implementation (Coburn, 2001; Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Weik, 1995). It describes the process by which we draw on our collective and individual experiences to develop an understanding of external messages (Coburn, 2001; Weick, 1993). Individual sensemaking revolves context of implementation, schema and resources perceived available by the individual as they strive to implement. Meredith Honig (2006) says that, "…no one policy gets implemented or is successful everywhere all the time."(Honig, 2006). This suggests that those involved, along with the location, and time constraints around policy implementation have an effect on execution. Each individual brings with

them their unique backgrounds as they attempt to collectively solve policy enactment concerns. This collective sensemaking acknowledges that the process occurs not in isolation but as a complex series of interactions among relevant actors.

Sensemaking is a means for understanding policy implementation within an educational institution, helping stakeholders understand how they have achieved their current state of implementation (Coburn, 2001). It takes into consideration the multifaceted nature of policy interpretation and application by looking at context and individualities provided by stakeholder backgrounds or schema (Honig, 2006). In this study, sensemaking will be applied to the implementation of HB5 in one Texas school district as a way to explain how the policy may be leading to the tracking of students who are completing their graduation endorsements. Specifically, it will shed light on the ways in which key stakeholders, including district and campus administrators, counselors, and teachers have come to understand the policy and then act on those understandings.

Research Design and Method

This study will use a comparative case study design to compare how two campuses in one district have implemented HB5 (2013). The purpose of comparative case studies is to … The cases will be two schools, one that is [description] and one that is [description], within the same large suburban school district in Texas. The cases will be compared with the purpose of identifying similarities and differences across the cases found in a high performing district.

Participants. The two high school cases will be chosen instrumentally to develop a detailed understanding of how they have implemented HB5 (2013) and provide useful information while giving voice to those central to implementation (Yin, 2016).

Specifically, the cases will be chosen based on their percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students, which must be higher than 50%. Though each of these schools are similar, their programs are quite different. One has a partnership with the local recruiters and a reserve program for physical training while the other relies more heavily on the certifications available at the career and technical education center. Within each school, I will recruit school counselors, teachers, and administrators to gather details necessary to describe the implementation (Creswell, Hanson, Clark-Plano, & Morales, 2007).

There will be four groups of participants in focus groups: central office leaders, campus administrators, counselors, and teachers. Each campus member will be invited to participate during their advisory period at school to minimally disrupt their schedules. Focus groups interviews will be limited to 60 minutes based on the length of class periods with respect for the value of their time (Creswell et al., 2007). Questions will be provided in advance with room for each to respond prior to our meeting so each participant can think through their responses.

In addition, I will interview district leaders who engaged in sensemaking for the purpose of interpretation, creation, and implementation of the college/career readiness bill. This will be completed during pre-arranged meetings of less than one hour to minimize interruption of management schedules. The meetings will be over the course of two weeks. The individuals involved will be identified by the district leadership team as instrumental visionaries who guided interpretation and implementation. The team members will first be the those tasked with interpretation of HB5 (2013) and then also

include district administrators from the Counseling and Career and Technical Education departments.

Data Collection. Data will be collected in several sources, teachers, counselors, building administrators, and central office leaders. Each of these are considered unique data sets providing perception data regarding implementation, though I hope to hear anecdotal student experiences. Additionally, artifacts and other resources will be requested from each group enriching the data. Triangulation of these four sets of data will help the researcher systematically develop an understanding of essential elements of HB5 (2013) implementation at each location (Creswell et al., 2007; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2015; Yin, 2016).

Data Analysis. Primary data analysis will involve coding. Coding is used in qualitative research to organize data (Yin, 2016). This is a system of discerning what responses to interviews mean and represent. Coding assists sensemaking in highlighting examples of themes decoded from individuals involved in the data collection process (Creswell et al., 2007). A code is often a synthesized statement of meaning based on data provided the researcher (Saldana, 2009). Categorization of codes will be used to enhance sensemaking of codes (Saldana, 2009). Codes will be used to identify themes in data which will lead to understanding the complexities of policy implementation.

Comparison will be the focus of analysis. The researcher is looking for similarities and differences between the two cases per context, experiences, subpopulations, and endorsements. Implementation stories will be detailed and compared along with artifacts and codes. Comparison of building information to the data recorded in the American Institute for Research House Bill 5 Evaluation (2015) will be completed

regarding endorsement completion of students in subpopulations across each of the graduation pathways to identify areas of strength and weakness in policy implementation.

Significance of the Study

This policy has only been studied at the onset of implementation; therefore, it is essential to understand how key stakeholders perceive the processes required in order to understand implementation. Study of implementation of this complex policy in a single district across two high school cases will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding educational policy implementation. It will also inform district practice while informing other districts about how implementation worked in this particular case. This is a timely study which extends what we already know about HB5 (2013) implementation along with CCR based on the American Institutes for Research Evaluation Report (2015) regarding meeting the needs of student in all subpopulations while looking at subpopulations of students recognized by the state to require additional supports to be college/career readiness.

Decoding how stakeholders make sense of HB5 (2013) policy implementation will distribute knowledge to improve the system of preparing our students for life after high school as HB5 originally intended (Aycock & Davis, 2014). Sensemaking of this policy implementation process will be instrumental in understanding how future policies need to be implemented successfully and it will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding educational policy implementation. This contribution is essential as researchers attempt to make sense of policy implications for various stakeholders involved in education.

The proposed research will have implications for research, policy, and practice. This research will inform the state and district about what worked in the initial implementation of HB5 (2013) while also identifying needs in this high performing district expressed by key stakeholders. Assessment of how graduation/endorsement pathways evolved over time is essential to understanding effectiveness of current procedures (Domina et al., 2016). Continued implementation implications will be gathered during focus groups and identified through data analysis. Interview themes will help leaders understand endorsement functionality and whether there are opportunity gaps within current practice as anticipated by current research (Darling-Hammond et al., 2014; Duncan & Murnane, 2014). Focus group data will also inform practice in combination with data provided by the district.

Sharing the learnings about this process of improvement will benefit districts around the state and country by describing implementation of college/career readiness implementation in a high performing district. This research about the multiple pathways for graduation must not only take into consideration the various backgrounds of students and who has been best served by implementation (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015; Texas Education Agency, 2017) but also the complexities of providing diverse opportunities relevant to secondary students and their preparation for life after high school (Allen, 2016; Coburn, Hill, & Spillane, 2016; Honig & Hatch, 2004; McLaughlin, 1987; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). As each graduation pathway is increasingly skill specific, it is important to understand whether there are secondary concerns for course availability. Endorsements, no matter the number of participants, will have specific

courses available within the master schedule to meet their needs which will also limit when they can access core classes such as math, science, English and history.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to consider regarding this study. Individuals involved may not articulate their perceptions clearly resulting in miscommunication of observations. Notably, the limited amount of time spent on each campus to develop relationships and trust creates multiple layers of limitations. Staff members are the only participants thus student insights are not included. Another limitation is that state policy was interpreted based on beliefs and backgrounds unique to the context in which leaders interpret and implement policy; therefore, each high school will have a unique interpretation of HB5 framed by district leaders. This means that everything learned is not generalizable in other contexts. It is impossible to account for all the exceptional aspects of declaring a graduation pathway.

Summary

Evaluation of HB5 (2013) policy implementation across the two most Economically Disadvantaged high school campuses in the district is essential to improve student successful completion of graduation endorsements. This comparative case study is cognizant of stakeholder individualities and the complexities of policy implementation. Leadership needs to know how the process of fulfilling early endorsement selection affects stakeholders to address challenges and improve processes.

Chapter II

Literature Review

This research examines the original intent of HB5 (2013) for both college and career readiness then how districts have aligned HB5 directives to district and policy creation. As part of this legislation, high schools in Texas are now required to provide endorsements for college and career readiness to students in all subpopulations (Graduation requirements, §19 TAC chapter 74, subchapter B.).

The goal of HB5 (2013) is to cultivate students who are prepared to be engaged, contributing Texas citizens upon graduation from high school (Preparing for house bill 5 and understanding the changes coming to campus.2014). Understanding the results of policy implementation for the students involved along with direct and indirect implications are essential to manage continued improvement of HB5 implementation in this district and across Texas.

Sensemaking, the theory of how individuals or groups make meaning out of external impetus, is the framework necessary to understand the complexities of policy implementation across the district (Weick, 1993; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Implementing HB5 involves an interaction of social along with cognitive process which affect district policy creation.

College and Career Readiness

College and career readiness (CCR) standards were supported by the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) which established expectations with funding for the social and educational well-being of all students (United States. & United States, 1966). This legislative initiation of CCR involved an emphasis on technical

preparation and hands-on learning for students no matter their subpopulation. The more recent Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (2006) details expectations for college and career readiness instruction of high school students (*Carl D perkins career and technical education act: Recommendations for reauthorization,* 2015). Federal funds are to be used in conjunction state funds to improve workforce and university/college readiness of high school graduates. Complex, rigorous knowledge and skill acquisition is required for students to be prepared to participate in postsecondary education and the workforce (Brand, Valent, & Browning, 2013). CCR involves highly engaging, coherent high-quality career and technical education that appeals to students and matches the context of the profession students choose to pursue (English, Rasmussen, Cushing, & Therriault, 2016).

There are 16 career clusters recommended based on forecasted workforce requirements established by the Perkins Act (Brand et al., 2013). Each career cluster represents potential

Table 2.1

Career Clusters

Agriculture, Food, Natural Resources	Education & Training	Hospitality & Tourism	Manufacturing
Architecture & Construction	Finance	Human Services	Marketing
Arts, Audio/Visual Technology, & Communication	Government & Public Administration	Informational Technologies	Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math
Business Management & Administration	Health Science	Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	Transportation & Distribution

economic requirements in the future workforce. The Perkins Act (2006) requires that secondary learning institutions around the country align their programs through collaborative planning with community business leaders to establish accountability outcomes through innovation and systematic reform. Alignment of federal, state, and local systems is designed to prepare secondary learning institutions to cultivate a workforce that professional institutions want to employ while also appealing to students emotional-social and academic needs.

CCR involves a combination and balance of secondary learning opportunities to prepare students for life after high school (English et al., 2016). Acquiring academic knowledge is not enough, students must also have social-emotional learning opportunities to acquire skills appropriate to the employment opportunities of the community. Students must have well-rounded educational opportunities which go beyond math, science, language arts, and social studies to included social-emotional skill based learning (Hahn et al., 2015). Historically underrepresented populations especially including African American and Hispanic/Latino require this workforce alignment to close the achievement gap and attain CCR (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015; Kao & Thompson, 2003). Effective CCR education helps students build skills that are appealing to students of all backgrounds and assists their transition into adult life after secondary education (Brand et al., 2013).

House Bill 5

HB5 (2013) changed the requirements for high school graduation in a time where performance on summative assessments was emphasized over acquisition of knowledge necessary to be successful in life after high school (Aycock & Davis, 2014). The social and political contexts of high school graduation expectations inspired leaders around the

state to work together to reform graduation expectations as federal No Child Left Behind legislation failed to be reauthorized and new legislation was anticipated to replace it (Hess & Eden, 2017). The hard work of educational leaders and politicians who embraced community expectations for improvement to our education system paid off when legislation was signed into law on June 10, 2013 (Mellon, 2013). Understanding the requirements of HB5 and implications of theory are necessary to understand this research.

Context of Graduation Expectations Prior to HB5. Before creation of HB5 (2013), students were expected to pass all 15 state assessments for required math, science, social studies, and English courses to graduate along with any summative tests for advanced academic coursework (State graduation requirements.2017). Implementation of high stakes tests was immediately contested by stakeholders who focused on the relevance of high stake testing for high school students (Cooney, 2012; Rapaport, 2013). These requirements set the stage for HB5 to resonate with stakeholders around the state and were the groundwork for change mandates that eventually flexed their way through legislative processes.

There were three diplomas possible prior to HB5 (2013): Minimum High School Program (MHSP), Recommended High School Program (RHSP), and Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP). Each pathway resulted in high school graduation; however, they were also distinct. Just looking at credit requirements, the MHSP required 22, the RHSP 26, and DAP 26. Rigor was significantly increased with the DAP and it is the one designed to prepare students for college/university studies (Mellor, Stoker, & Reese, 2015). According the House Bill 5 Evaluation report created by the American

Institutes for Research (2015) completion of both the RHSP and DAP pathways were indicators for college and career readiness (page 40); though, achievement of the DAP is the strongest indicator for completion of studies at a four-year university.

The context of graduation expectations prior to creation of HB5 from the student perspective must also be understood to appreciate the political discord between stakeholders that inspired policy changes in 2013. Bobbie Cooney, an academically motivated student, spoke out about her experiences in high school advanced placement courses; she was academically penalized for her lofty goals (Cooney, 2012). Cooney planned to take two calculus courses prior to high school graduation and was initially on the DAP graduation pathway. She was interviewed by a local newspaper about her experiences in advanced placement as saying that her drive to complete advanced mathematics coursework penalized her and her peers when only 25% of them passed the summative exam. Not passing the final exam eliminated her opportunity to receive the advanced academic diploma even though she passed the course (Side-by-side comparison: Graduation program options, 2017). Prohibitive legislation angered stakeholders in and outside districts, especially amongst those who witnessed academic injustice (Baird, 2013; Rapaport, 2013).

Prior to 2013 there were 15 required high school courses with state mandated assessments. These courses were worth 15 of the required total 22 credits to graduate with a high school diploma. Seven additional credits were included in the MHSP diploma from the categories of physical education, fine and performing arts, and other available electives. One additional course in each category - English, math, science, and social studies course is required for the advanced diploma. All 15 summative state assessments

of required coursework plus any additional advanced placement courses had to be passed to graduate (Texas education agency: Assessment graduation requirements as amended by senate bill 149, 2015). The RHSP and DAP both had 26 credits but the rigor of advanced placement inclusion for DAP set it apart from RHSP (Side-by-side comparison: Graduation program options, 2017).

Many parents, students, teachers, and local educational leaders supported the academic rigor but did not support the state assessment policies prior to HB5 (Baird, 2013). Relevance of testing requirements in the context of successful completion of high school requirements was the source of stakeholder complaints. Stakeholder resonance around required changes needed for high school students to be successful inspired educational leaders to make legislative change to education policy (Benford & Snow, 2000; Cress & Snow, 2000; Rapaport, 2013).

Political Context of HB5. Assessment requirements were considered excessive by politicians and district members (Baird, 2013). Unrealistic assessment practices inspired stakeholders to resonate with educational reform of high school graduation requirements. Superintendents and local education agencies partnered with teachers to petition politicians regarding educational reform (Rapaport, 2013).

Politics was not a casual variable in the decisions surrounding creation of HB5. Thirty-eight "Future Ready Superintendents" participated in a leadership institute that inspired creation of a report designed to guide transformation of high school graduation expectations in Texas (Holacka, 2014). Alief Superintendent, H.D. Chambers, became a spokesperson for the future ready initiative. Chambers became a policy framer of HB5 by participating on the education committee (Isensee, 2014). This committee suggested

elimination of ten summative assessments and the creation of college and career readiness expectations. HB5 resonated with stakeholders and passed with a bipartisan vote of 50-23 (Texas house bill 5: Texas legislature page for house bill 5, 2013).

HB5 Requirements. Student success after high school was at the heart of this legislation (Preparing for house bill 5 and understanding the changes coming to campus.2014). A new concept of graduation and endorsement pathways were the result of HB5 (2013) for all senior classes beginning in the 2014-2015 school year (Graduation requirements, §19 TAC chapter 74, subchapter B.). These changes significantly affected districts as they had to create endorsement pathways and align processes to the new legislation.

The basic graduation requirements are now called the Foundations High School Program (FHSP) (Side-by-side comparison: Graduation program options.2017; Mellor et al., 2015). It is possible to graduate with the FHSP alone or with endorsements. In addition, there is a Distinguished High School Program where students successfully complete college or career readiness coursework which includes advanced placement classes along with an endorsement (Side-by-side comparison: Graduation program options.2017).

Graduation requirements outline exactly what coursework requirements must be satisfied in each core subject area to receive a high school diploma (Graduation requirements, §19 TAC chapter 74, subchapter B.; Required coursework, §19 TAC chapter 74, subchapter G.). One credit is equivalent to one year of coursework. The core high school subject areas addressed are English, mathematics, science, and social studies. English requirements include four credits: English I, English II, English III plus an

additional advanced English course selected by the student. Mathematics instruction must include: Algebra I, Geometry, and another advanced math course. Required science courses are: Biology, Integrated Physics or Chemistry, and another advanced science course. Social Studies required course work includes: U.S. History, U.S. Government, Economics, and World History/World Geography. The complication to passing the core requirements is passing five state assessments: English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, and US History (Aycock & Davis, 2014).

In addition to the core coursework, there are 9 additional credits required to graduate. These credits must be earned in the areas of language acquisition, physical education, fine and performing arts, along with elective credits within their area of endorsement. The two credits in languages other than English may include computer science or another substitution. One credit each in physical education and fine/performing arts. Finally, five credits in electives with speech embedded into course content (Graduation requirements, §19 TAC chapter 74, subchapter B.; Required coursework, §19 TAC chapter 74, subchapter G.).

Distinguished Level of Achievement was also modified by HB5 (2013). Achievement of the advanced diploma includes an additional math credit (now totaling 4) with coursework that must include both Algebra I and II, a total of 4 credits in science, and completion of curriculum requirements for at least one endorsement (Side-by-side comparison: Graduation program options, 2017). Performance acknowledgements are also possible for students with outstanding performance in dual credit courses, students becoming multilingual, those who pass advanced placement or international

baccalaureate exams, and those who have exceptional performance on national or international standardized assessments or certifications.

      Endorsements. Endorsements can include certification/licensure plus completion of coursework and additional tests (Aycock & Davis, 2014). There are five categories of endorsement: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), Business and Industry, Public Services, Arts and Humanities, and Multidisciplinary Studies. STEM endorsements require courses including: computer science, mathematics, science, or career technical education courses. Business and Industry endorsements include but are not limited to the study of agriculture, food and natural resources, architecture, construction, technology, audio/visual communications, finance, hospitality, manufacturing, transportation and distribution with an emphasis in public speaking and communication skills. The public services endorsement is diverse and requires completion of a sequence of courses in one of the following: education, government/public administration, health/human services, law/public safety/corrections/security, or junior reserve officer's training corps. Arts and Humanities endorsements include a series of courses in: social studies, languages other than English, American Sign Language, or fine/performing arts. Finally, Multidisciplinary studies is the most common endorsement as it prepares students for university/college study. This endorsement includes a total of four advanced placement courses, four credits in each of math, science, English, and social studies (must include English IV and Chemistry/Physics), and elective courses (Graduation requirements, §19 TAC chapter 74, subchapter B.).

HB5 In Practice. By the winter of 2014, districts were required to have areas of endorsement prepared for counselors to offer students and their families. Framing of the process had to be adequately planned in advance of implementation (Cohen & Loewenberg-Ball, 1990; Cohen, Moffitt, & Goldin, 2007). The first cohort of eighth graders chose endorsements in the Spring of 2014.

During the 2013-2014 school year, district leadership had the complicated responsibility to interpret HB5 (2013). The initial district leader interpreted the bill and was charged with establishment of district vision along with alignment to legislation (Hampshire, 2016; Hodge, 2015). The result was multi-tiered policy and process implementation based on the schema of appointed leaders. Leadership skill and practice varies across each district and community; therefore, the tone of implementation along with mobilization of resources according to the intent of the policy will vary from district to district (Benford & Snow, 2000; Gawlik, 2015).

Early implementation of HB5 (2013) focused on compliance with legislation based on the availability of pre-existing endorsements within the high school system prior to the 2013-2014 school year. The complications of policy implementation could not be fully appreciated until the first students and district representatives engaged in the new system of graduation pathways and endorsements. Ascribing meaning to realities of implementation provided clarity of expectations of outcomes for the new processes (Gawlik, 2015). Leaders enacted procedures that were consistent with former understandings; thus, translation into practice would underscore areas of weakness or need. Even the most visionary leaders could only interpret within their scope of experience and social interaction exclusive to their professional community (Coburn,

2001). Direct and indirect effects of implementation of the new policy could not be fathomed in 2014 when the first eighth grade class had to choose an endorsement pathway prior to entering high school (Cress & Snow, 2000).

The exception to this requirement is also written into state legislation. Individual Graduation Committees were extended from the 84th Legislative Session which means that students who pass all classes and at least three of their state assessments can develop a senior portfolio demonstrating qualification for graduation (*85th regular and special legislative sessions final bill report,* 2017). This is in the best interest of language learning students as well as students who require remediation to pass the mandatory standardized assessments.

HB5 Evaluation by AIR. The American Institutes for Research has evaluated the initial design of HB5 (2013) according to its initial school year of implementation in the context of previous years of graduation data (Mellor et al., 2015). The report evaluated curriculum and testing for high school graduates, the effects of teachers and curriculum on graduation rates, college and career readiness, college admissions and workforce credentials in conjunction with employability rates and earnings amongst the graduates in 2014-2015.

What is known right now is that there is a performance gap between those attaining the Foundations High School Program (FHSP) and the FHSP with endorsements and also between those who receive the Distinguished High School Program (DHSP) with endorsements (page 40). The research examined who received each of the diplomas across each subpopulation and learned that receipt of the FHSP without endorsements is an indicator of poor career and college readiness.

It is also important to know more about the subpopulations focused on in the study. The subpopulations examined are African-American, American Indian, Hispanic/Latino, Multiracial, Pacific Islander, Caucasian, Economically Disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and students in Special Education. It examined the success rates of all Texas students receiving Level II achievement on the 8th grade math, Algebra I, and 8th grade reading assessments as indicators for college and career readiness (Mellor et al., 2015, 102-103). 8th grade math subpopulations that did not perform as well as the state average according to the Level II performance indicators are: African American, Hispanic/Latino, Pacific Islander, Economically Disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and students receiving Special Education services. Algebra I subpopulations that did not perform as well as the state average of Level II performance Indicators are: African-American, American Indian, Hispanic/Latino, Economically Disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and students receiving Special Education services. 8th grade reading subpopulations that did not perform as well as the state average according to the Level II performance indicators include: African American, American Indian, Hispanic/Latino, Pacific Islander, Economically Disadvantaged, and students receiving Special Education services (see Appendix A). Thus, the State of Texas subpopulations that are historically underperforming/marginalized in all three areas of the study are African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Economically Disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and students receiving Special Education services.

The House Bill 5 Evaluation Study also took into consideration how students were prepared to declare their endorsements by the district (Mellor et al., 2015). Districts communicated to the researchers that they encouraged students to understand

endorsement selection with the 8th graders enrolling in the 2014-2015 freshman year using: brochures, webinars, webpages, parent meetings, student meetings, student handbooks, the TEA Graduation Toolkit, videos, counselors, and teachers. Understanding how each district uses their resources to encourage enrollment in endorsements and maintain enrollment in endorsements is essential to understanding how well our students are college and career ready upon completion of high school. According to the study, the measure of student subpopulations successfully completing the Foundations High School Program with endorsements and the Distinguished Achievement Program are positive indicators of college and career readiness. Understanding the complexities of how the historically marginalized subpopulations have performed in the first complete cohort graduating under HB5 (2013) will add depth to the sensemaking opportunity along with areas of high performance and need within the implementation process.

HB5 Summary. The first cohort tested district processes and leadership teams adjusted practice after the first round of implementation. Examining structural factors of endorsement declaration while analyzing potential needs for programing is essential to improve implementation (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005). This ebb and flow of policy implementation requires the framework of sensemaking to recognize areas of strength, weakness and incongruity with the original legislation to improve education (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007).

Educational Policy

Policy alone does not resolve problems (Elmore, 1979). There are windows of opportunity when there is resonation around policies in which the public is prepared to support political agendas (Kingdon, 1985). Political leaders listen to their constituents to

design educational laws and structures required for educational success (Coburn, 2006).

Politicians design bills to clarify both simple and complex elements of policy to assist

practitioners as they interpret the intended outcomes (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002).

It is at these times when politicians vote on bills designed to solve problems, where they

create a vision intended to be implemented by educational leaders empowered to

facilitate school improvement.

Policies are created when communities and political entities resonate around an

idea or concept that requires change (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005). "New policies increase

variability of practice" (Cohen & Loewenberg-Ball, 1990). As policies are implemented

there is a learning curve that shapes institutional change which takes place between

legislation and implementation. This learning curve must be studied to understand the

complexities of implementation for the purpose of future program improvement.

There are three basic phases of policy enactment: policy making, policy

interpretation and policy implementation (Kennedy, 2016). Policy making takes place in

the Senate and House of Representatives. Politicians and their constituents navigate the

expectations of voters to enact change. Policy interpretation takes place at local education

agencies and in administrative offices of school districts. Leaders use the framework of

people, place, and policy to examine who the policy affects and where it is implemented

in order to influence all aspects of direct implementation (Brodkin, 2012; Elmore, 1979;

Kennedy, 2016; Maupin, 1993).

Policy Implementation

Policy implementation in the educational system is a complex system of external

policy interpretation with district/building level policy and process creation (Coburn,

Hill, & Spillane, 2016; Cohen & Loewenberg-Ball, 1990; Honig & Hatch, 2004). District leaders receive directives from the state and federal governments which must be interpreted then implemented at each campus to stay in compliance. How well districts prepare campuses with procedures to meet the state and federal requirements while enforcing building level implementation varies from district to district (Cox, 2013; Gamoran, 1992; Honig, 2003). As a result, policy implementation in the educational system is best understood using sensemaking methods as it takes into consideration the complexities local framers address while examining the relationships between those framing and implementation policies (Coburn, 2001; Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Honig, 2009).

Cohen (1990) says that practice influences policy implementation based on beliefs, knowledge of those interpreting, creating, and applying policy. Educational leaders bring with them to the policy interpretation arena their experience and ideals based on what has worked in the past. There are relationships between new policies and historic practice (Cohen & Loewenberg-Ball, 1990). Policy innovations result in new frameworks based on the policies lawmakers created. New policies are created to alter educational achievement under the assumption that each individual district will have unique interpretations of the new policies resulting in variability of implementation. District level legislation interpreters understand the complex interactions between individuals, policies, and location and still negotiate interpretation of laws with discernment and ingenuity (Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Coburn et al., 2016). These district level "policy entrepreneurs" expertly navigate legislative mandates and swiftly decode concepts to plan for the future (Kennedy, 2016).

Once a policy is being interpreted by a district, there are six elements evaluated (Kennedy, 2016). First, district visionaries specifically identify the goal of the policy. Initial focus on outcomes creates backward mapping and aims the policy interpreters towards the outcomes politicians intended (Elmore, 1979). Next, the district looks at the ecology where policy will be implemented. This is a multifaceted approach to addressing complexities of personal relationships within each building and the district office (Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Coburn et al., 2016). Third, the cultural context of each campus is assessed. Understanding that there are nuances of expectations embedded within the culture of stakeholders found in and around each school is essential to successful policy implementation (Benford & Snow, 2000; Dingle-Swanson & Lord, ; Honig & Hatch, 2004). Policy actors are the next aspect evaluated when planning policy implementation. Policy achievement requires that individuals engage in required training and acquire specialized implementation resources while gaining access to measure effectiveness of implementation (Coburn & Talbert, 2006). Next, building level actors have the responsibility of interpreting the processes and policies created by district leaders in order to finally implement legislation with students (Kennedy, 2016). This process prevents swift change that cannot last and empowers district members to act in the best interest of the visionaries leading implementation (Cohen, 1990).

Policy Implementation Frameworks

Policy researchers have offered several ways to analyze how policies are implemented, with an eye toward explaining unexpected and unintended outcomes. Cognitive frames could be used (Weiss, 1989) as this takes into consideration differences in implementation based on individualities of actors. Cognitive frames have been used to

examine failure in policy implementation. Distributed cognition is another means of evaluating policy (Spillane et al, 2002). This has been used as a method for policy reform understanding the layers of policy understanding for future improvement. However, this is looking at reform of failing policies not focusing on sensemaking of initial policy implementation factors specifically affecting success for all students during current policy implementation. The critical Approach is another means of understanding policy implementation which involves examination of policy implementation in two different district settings (Dumas & Anyon, 2006). The limitation of having two high schools in a single district limit the policy setting and reduce the usefulness of this framework. Co-Construction is another framework that could have been used to understand the pathway to concrete ending points (McLaughlin, 1987). The ultimate design of HB5 is not to have uniform outcomes. The lack of focus on technical-rational processes which are unidirectional eliminated co-construction as a viable framework. Sensemaking, on-the-other-hand, allows for study of the nuances of implementing this complex educational policy.

Sensemaking of Educational Policy

The process of understanding how policy actors make sense of messages in their environment is sensemaking of policy implementation (Hatch & Honig, 2004; Honig, 2003; Honig, 2009; Weick, 1995). Understandings vary based on location, professional networks, communication patterns, and instructional/educational background (Spillane, 1998). Complex systems and multiple layers of leadership work together to implement educational policy in a school district (Russell, Meredith, Childs, Stein, & Prine, 2015; Weaver-Hightower, 2008). Sensemaking of policy implementation is the key to

understanding the microprocesses of policy framing and the role leaders play as motivation and action takes place (Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Hampshire, 2016; Spillane et al., 2002). In fact, Spillane (2002) says that sensemaking takes place where "policy indicators, local frameworks, and individual standards meet."

Policy implementation is a dynamic process requiring skilled mobilization of resources and stakeholders (Benford & Snow, 2000; Coburn, 2001). Sensemaking of the process of implementation is the key to understanding and interpreting how policy is shaped within the unique cultures and structures of a district (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005). Coburn (2006) says that researchers should use sensemaking to understand the microprocesses of problem or policy framing. Sensemaking focuses on authority roles, adult stakeholder roles, creation of processes, consequences of processes, and shifts in sensemaking as the process unfolds. District leadership must instigate policy interpretation as they have the authority to access resources (Hodge, 2015; Honig, 2012). Sensemaking, understanding how policies are implemented and the roles of implementers through the process, helps stakeholders reflect on the crucial aspects and multidimensionality of policy implementation (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

There are seven areas of sensemaking: grounded in identity construction, retrospective, enactive of sensible environments, social, ongoing, focused on and by extracted cues, and driven by plausibility (Weick, 1995). These seven areas of sensemaking analysis assist the researcher in understanding the complexities of policy implementation across The District.

Grounded in identity construction refers to the concept that making sense begins with the person making sense (Weick, 1995). Dispositions of leaders, their concerns and

schema result in wide-ranging interpretation of policies and processes (Hampshire, 2016).

People and their backgrounds along with perceptions of empowerment shape how policy

is enacted (Drake, 2016) "The manner in which the employee envisions themselves

within the work setting affects how they receive cues for change and rationalize change"

(Weick et al., 2005). The environmental context as well as the stakeholder team in which

sensemaking takes place affects the perceptions of the sensemaker.

Retrospective refers to the reflection on conscious and unconscious actions and

their significance. This helps the sensemaker understand their experiences (Weick, 1995).

This can take place immediately following actions or can be well after an event or

decision took place. When the sensemaker reflects on the story of a situation, this is when

retrospective reflection occurs (Weick et al., 2005). Stakeholders make decisions after

retrospective moments occur.

Enactive of sensible environments occurs when individuals take inventory and

categorize the essential aspects of policy implementation. This involves the process of

collaboratively constructing reality and the responses within that construct (Weick,

1977). Policy created at the administrative level of a system gets reinterpreted when

implementing on campus (McLaughlin, 1987). Even though district directives and

processes are often uniformly communicated, individuals bring their perceptions to the

implementation process to shape realities based on culture and beliefs found within the

social structure of a campus. This is especially important when examining the effects of

new policy on historically marginalized populations (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015; Drake,

2016). Students requiring extra attention and intervention to access success will be

treated differently during policy implementation regarding graduation expectations

(Coburn & Talbert, 2006). Constraints regarding the realities of implementation of policy within the structure of an organization along with autonomy of meaning creation provides for deviation from district designed processes and policies (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005). Sensible elements must be carefully addressed during enactment.

Social elements of sensemaking refer to the complex interpersonal communications required for policy enactment. People interact within the sensemaking process (Weick, 1995). Conversations, electronic communication, hallway conversations and any other form of discourse require social interaction. Shared sensemaking occurs when visionary leaders reach out to coordinate the efforts of multiple teams within a system (Gawlik, 2015). Coburn (2001) recognizes that the patterns of interaction and structural engagement or character of conversations affect sensemaking, so the more people involved in shared sensemaking increases the complexity of visionary alignment when implementing. The social interactions related to sharing information is also referred to as sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). This reciprocal relationship empowers greater understanding and resonance with the policy being implemented. Even where sensegiving and sensemaking are common practice, individuals are often inclined to stay within the comfort of what they already understand to adopt policies that strengthen established understandings which affects the effectiveness of policy application (Gawlik, 2015). Veteran leaders are often reluctant to change yet are paradoxically the best to lead policy implementation based on greater frameworks of knowledge and experience. The right person to lead is essential when establishing expectations for resonance which motivates policy implementation.

Ongoing elements of sensemaking give credit to the recursive, cyclical nuances of policy implementation for the sensemakers. Stakeholders in this study will always be in the middle of some level of policy implementation (Weick, 1995). Stakeholders adjust their daily routines based on complex interactions within their environment. Each of these micro-decisions are rooted in ongoing sensemaking processes.

Extracted cues come from retrospective analysis of ongoing interplay between the sensemakers and their context. Meaning is constructed as individuals reflect on their interpersonal interactions based on previous experiences (Weick, 1995). There are sensemaking implications to each new understanding There is a level of ambiguity regarding what is plausible with this process (Weick et al., 2005).

Sensemaking is also driven by plausibility. Given evidence and cues from stakeholders and the environment, individuals use their perceptions of the situation to make decisions (Weick, 1995). This does not mean that decisions are based on accurate information. Actions are based on perceptions which are balances with beliefs which evolve over time (Weick et al., 2005). Plausibility involves foreseeable contingencies based on the experiences and actions of stakeholders.

Sensemaking of policy frames from the district compared to building level articulation of the same frames exposes the complicated capacities for implementation along with quality of access for students (Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Cohen et al., 2007). A policy frame is the result of social discourse necessary to practically implement policy. Sensemaking and policy framing are both social constructs used for understanding external political mandates (Benford & Snow, 2000). Sensemaking which investigates frame creation and resonance of framing discourse needs to be highlighted in the policy

implementation process (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005). The frame is the outline for how a policy is implemented (Coburn & Talbert, 2006). In fact, Coburn (2006) said that framing shapes how solutions to policy implementation are coordinated and guides the authority relationships motivating individual sensemaking.

It is essential to evaluate all supports for policy implementation to understand if services have been offered equitably (Hampshire, 2016). Alignment to policy and strength of district level accountability will either foster or impede school change (Coburn et al., 2016). The dimensions of policy design that are most important are: alignment, accountability, system-level capacity, organizational capacity, individual capacity, organizational networks, organizational environments, specificity of policy, and ambitiousness of instructional ideas (Coburn et al., 2016).

A qualitative case study approach to sensemaking is comprehensive (Coburn, 2001). The first step is to document organizational processes involved in interpreting policy and preparing processes for implementation. The focus on interviews with stakeholders should be in-depth and involve multiple layers in the implementation process. There should be formal and informal meetings across grade levels to gain understanding of how processes vary. Interviews with district personnel will enhance sensemaking of policy throughout the processes of implementation.

Sensemaking has been used to understand marginalized populations and graduation policies affect their dropout rates (Drake, 2016). These students are often tracked and have little access to interventions that do not interrupt the sequence of their endorsement pathways so the master schedule must accommodate their unique requirements to keep them in school (Drake, 2016). Considering the policy messages and

complex practical details of the endorsement structures it is important to include sensemaking for subpopulations to understand implications that influence processes and practice (Coburn, 2001).

Social Justice

The social justice movement advocates for historically marginalized students of color in American education. Historical marginalization affects student and family perspectives about access to school related opportunities (Solorzano, 1997). Understanding that there is a history of unequal treatment requires that educational leaders intentionally plan to meet the needs of affected populations (Banks, 2018; Theoharis, 2007). Advocacy for students of color is essential for HB5 to be successful. Educational stakeholders are required to provide equitable opportunities to students, their parents, and the stakeholders responsible for their education.

One ineffective means of dealing with diversity in schools is to discount color or ethnic backgrounds, to treat students equally. This concept is coined colorblind in social justice literature (Hinojosa & Moras, 2009; King, 2015). King called this "dysconscious racism" which is a limited or distorted understanding of cultural identity and was taught in higher education (2004). This has resulted in Caucasian teachers who are inclined by their university preparation to have stereotypes about people of color that include deficiency models to justify performance (Davis, 1996). It is the role of administrators to lead their staff members away from these preconceived notions and provide students opportunity to receive equitable access to education expectations under HB5.

Understanding that there is a need for social justice in education is one of the first steps to eliminate colorblindness and promote equitable access to learning opportunities.

Leadership must intentionally plan to meet the needs of the rapidly changing, multi-ethnic demographics of the American education system (Wells, 2014). HB5 was designed to prepare all students for life after high school through college and career readiness instruction.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine the how educational leaders, teachers, and counselors help high school students select a graduation endorsement within the constructs of Texas House Bill 5 (2013) within two of the economically disadvantaged high schools in a single suburban school district. This study will employ sensemaking to analyze the beliefs, experiences, and practices of instructional leaders, counselors, and teachers as they implement college and career readiness policies in their schools. This chapter will describe the research design and then provide the details of the data collection process. In addition, context for the research is provided whereupon participants and methods for collecting and analyzing data will be presented. Finally, the issues of reflexivity and trustworthiness will also be addressed.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1) How do the key high school stakeholders (instructional leaders, counselors, and teachers) make sense of HB5 (2013)?

2) What factors shape the sensemaking process for stakeholders in each of the high schools through implementation of HB5?

Research Design

Qualitative research is a branch of the social sciences that adds to our knowledge about a topic by acquiring and analyzing data through interviews with key informants and observation of specific phenomena (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2015; Yin, 2016). The purpose of

qualitative research is to gain a deeper understanding of an occurrence within a defined context. This investigation will use a comparative case study design to understand implementation of one statewide college and career readiness policy across two high schools in a fast-growing suburban Texas public school district (Yin, 2016). A case study is a research study which investigates phenomenon within its context (Yin, 2016). A case study could examine a single student, a class of students or any other person or program (Stake, 1995). A comparative case study employs a distinctive form of empirical inquiry to fairly report about the complexities of two or more cases (Stake, 1995). Both involve a clear and detailed explanation of the context, the processes observed, a discussion of the important elements along with insights acquired through analysis of both cases. The purpose of a comparative case study is to gain additional insights into the systems involved in the case, how programs developed in two separate and similar contexts (Stake, 1995). In this study, two high schools in a single high performing district will be compared to understand the ways in which HB5 (2013) is being implemented with the purpose of identifying similarities and differences across both cases.

Setting

The District (a pseudonym) is in a suburb of a metropolitan South Texas city. It was selected because it is a highly successful district recognized as a district which provides a quality education which prepares students for life after high school (*8th annual AP district honor roll.*January 3, 2018). The district serves a well-educated community and is actively supported by parent and business partnerships that engage in shaping the district's vision and mission, which is to prepare each student for a fulfilling life that shapes the future of the community and world. This district is highly ranked by

the College Board for increasing participation in Advanced Placement courses, including historically at-risk subpopulations (*8th annual AP district honor roll,* January 3, 2018). Understanding the make-up of the district is important. 15% of the district is Africa-American. Asian is 10% and Hispanic/Latino is another 35%. Nearly 30% of the student population in the district is Economically Disadvantaged and another 20% are English Language Learners (data has been rounded to protect the identity of the district).

The district has fewer than 15 high schools. Examination of historically at-risk student subpopulations in comparison to the Caucasian (C) demographic provides insight into the differences in student populations across The District. Five of the high schools are found on Table 3.1. Two of the schools with the lowest Economically Disadvantaged (ED) rates, one in the middle and the two of interest with the highest ED percentage of students to protect the identity of the district. Each is unique in the demographic makeup of its students. For example, High schools #1 and #2 are similar in the percentage of African-American, Hispanic and Asian students they educate; however, High School #2 has fewer economically disadvantaged students and fewer English language learners. High School #3 has smaller populations of African-American students (less than 10%), but both Hispanic/Latino and Asian subpopulations have reached 25%. Only 8 percent of students are Economically Disadvantaged and less than five percent are classified as English Language Learners at High school #3. High Schools #4 and #5 a similar percentage of Economically Disadvantaged subpopulations, Latino Students, African-American students and English Language Learners (see Table 3.1).

As you can see, there are two campuses listed that are significantly different from the others. In a district known for its impressive performance through the implementation

of HB5 (2013), it is important to make sense of how The District and campus

stakeholders met the academic needs of their struggling populations of graduating seniors

in this first cohort graduating under the first full cohort of graduates who felt the full

cycle of the new endorsement policies originating from HB5 (2013). It is important to

note that the first three schools have more Caucasian students than the district average

while the last two campuses have half the number of Caucasian students as other three

schools. This difference is important later when examining student performance on the

five state assessments required for graduation in the State of Texas.

Table 3.1

Percent of Subpopulations from five High School Campuses in The District

Location	Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic Latino	Asian	Economically Disadvantaged	English Language Learners
District Averages	35	10	35	10	10	5
High School #1	40	10	25	20	15	5
High School #2	45	10	25	20	10	5
High School #3	50	10	25	25	10	5
High School #4	20	15	60	5	60	10
High School #5	15	20	55	5	60	10

Data was rounded to protect the identities of the schools and the district.
Source: TEA School Snapshots for 2017.

Participant Selection

It is essential to understand how at-risk students perform within the new

graduation endorsement expectations in a district that meets high achievement goals.

Each school is working to bridge the gap indicated by 60x30 College Board legislation

(2015) along with areas of concern indicated in the HB5 Evaluation Report (2015). Even though campus and district average End-of-Course Exam scores are all higher than the those posted by the state, careful examination of subpopulations shows underperforming student populations are yet present (see Table 3.2). There is still a need in this high performing district to meet the educational needs of ELL and ED students even though they have exceeded the rigorous standards established by the state.

Each of the high schools has unique student performance data for each of the demographics listed above and has performed well in most categories. Examination of the Language Learner data shows areas in need of improvement in each high school. High School #1 outperforms the state in every area except English II and US History for English Language Learners. High School 2 has a single underperforming demographic with the Language Learners in English II classes. In High School 3 Language Learners struggle in both English I and English II. In High Schools 4 and 5, Language Learners struggle on all assessments and African-American students also perform below the state in English I and Biology. Considering the accolades received by the College Board for college and career readiness, it is important to understand how success has been framed while making sense of why these two schools still struggle to meet the needs of some of the population.

Table 3.*2*

2017 At-Risk Standardized Test Performance – Five High Schools

Campus	State	Distr	Campus	Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic Latino	Asian	Economically Disadvantaged	English Language Learner
School 1									
English I	64	80	95	95	90	95	95	90	70
English II	66	80	95	95	90	90	95	90	55
Algebra I	83	85	95	90	95	95	95	90	95
Biology	86	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
US History	91	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	75
School 2									
English I	64	80	90	95	75	90	95	75	75
English II	66	80	90	95	80	90	95	75	55
Algebra I	83	85	95	95	85	95	95	90	95
Biology	86	95	95	95	95	95	95	90	90
US History	91	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	90
School 3									
English I	64	80	90	95	85	85	95	85	55
English II	66	80	90	90	80	90	90	80	65
Algebra I	83	85	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
Biology	86	95	95	95	95	95	95	90	85
US History	91	95	95	95	95	95	100	95	95
School 4									
English I	64	80	75	70	70	70	85	70	45
English II	66	80	75	75	75	70	75	70	30
Algebra I	83	85	90	85	80	90	95	90	80
Biology	86	95	95	90	90	95	100	95	85
US History	91	95	95	95	90	95	95	95	90
School 5									
English I	64	80	65	85	65	65	80	60	35
English II	66	80	70	85	70	70	75	70	35
Algebra I	83	85	85	90	85	85	90	85	70
Biology	86	95	90	95	90	90	95	85	65
US History	91	95	95	95	90	95	95	95	80

Data was rounded to protect the identities of the schools and district.
Source: TEA School Snapshots 2016-2017. State Numbers are precise.

Procedures

The comparative case study process for sensemaking of this HB5 (2013) policy implementation research will be followed:

1. Recruit stakeholders who initially interpreted policy for implementation.

2. Recruit stakeholders who helped to interpret and delegate implementation.

3. Recruit stakeholders who received delegated implementation from interpreters.

4. Recruit stakeholders who are the point of contact for implementation with students (see Appendix B).

5. Recruit leaders responsible for maintenance of processes.

6. Follow protocols for focus groups.

7. Follow data collection processes.

8. Follow data analysis plan.

9. Follow triangulation plan to maintain the highest integrity possible for data collected.

Data and participant anonymity will be guarded by the researcher. Data will be kept in both hard copy and electronic formats for three years at a UH facility upon which time it will be destroyed. Security of data will be maintained through use of a locking file cabinet along with password protected computer. Confidentiality of The District and all participants will be maintained by using pseudonyms for people and building names and locations involved (see Appendix C).

Stakeholder Selection

Stakeholder participants will be selected using a stratified purposeful homogenous sampling strategy (Creswell et al., 2007). Stratified purposeful homogenous sampling is when levels of sample population, subgroups, are grouped together intentionally by the researcher to facilitate data collection (p. 119). Stratification denotes that each role within the sample population invited to participate in the focus group has different leadership roles within campus. This strategy was chosen because it should assist focus group participants work together to answer implementation questions while reducing concerns about the leadership roles of participants affecting their responses. Stratified purposeful homogenous sampling will be used in the two schools and the district office based on the role vis-à-vis the HB5's (2013) implementation. These groups are essential in data acquisition regarding alignment of interpretation for implementation purposes across the district. At the campus level, these groups include counselors, teachers, and administrators. Seven counselors, 10 teachers, and seven administrators (assistant, associate and principals) will be selected and recruited to participate in one of three focus groups per campus for a total of 24 possible participants at each school and 48 participants across both schools. Within each group, participants will be selected based on their availability during planning periods with other professionals in the same group. Potential school-level participants must meet the following criteria:

1) Be involved with instructing or guiding students along endorsement pathways

2) Work in one of the two target high schools

3) Work directly with students or staff supporting selection, enrollment, or
   fulfillment of endorsements necessary to graduate.

Within the central office, 12 participants will be selected to participate using a purposeful
sampling strategy. Specifically, I will seek to recruit district-level participants who meet
the following criteria:

1) Leaders who were selected to interpret HB5 (2013) and design district level
   policy for implementation.
2) Leaders in the counseling department who design, implement, or train high school
   staff members regarding compliance with HB5.
3) Leaders within the Career and Technical Education leadership team who have
   planned endorsement structures that meet the requirements of HB5 (see Figure
   3.3).

Table 3.3 above lists the categories of participants to be recruited to participate in
this study. There will be three focus groups in each of the three locations. This will
require a total of nine focus groups over three locations. The protocols detail the
particulars of each focus group including the questions asked and environment for the
meeting and means of invitation (see Appendix B, C, D, & E). Member checks are
supported by the protocols and provides an avenue for the researcher to verify data
collected. This involves follow-up emails, telephone calls, or meetings may be requested
to ask clarifying questions of participants. The rationale for this is to improve the quality
of data throughout the collection process.

Table 3.3

Stakeholders and Campuses Involved

Central Office	High School #1	High School #2
Interpreting Administrators	Counseling Team	Counseling Team
Counseling Team Leaders	Teachers	Teachers
CTE Leaders/Administrators	Administrators	Administrators

Data Collection Methods

Focus group interviews will be the primary form of data collection. Focus groups are group interviews that provide opportunity for the participants to build on the experiences of one another to enhance the data collection process (Creswell et al., 2007). Focus groups were selected as the most appropriate interview format because participants can augment and reinforce the retelling of each other's experiences during the interview as they did during the implementation process itself. The focus groups will use semi-structured interview protocols that will include open-ended questions that seek to understand both the process of sensemaking and the factors that affect stakeholder sensemaking around implementing HB5 (2013). A total of nine focus groups will take place at each school, with an additional # focus groups taking place at the district central office.

Focus group interviews will last 45-60 minutes each and will take place at each of the two campuses and in the central office, depending on where the participants work. Interview questions will probe the process of sensemaking as well as the factors that shape that process as they relate to implementing HB5 (see Appendix D, E, & F). An IRB

approved study protocol will be followed (see Appendix C). Each focus group will be

audio recorded and transcribed, to ensure correct understanding of individual

contributions to the discussion when analyzing data. Prior to each group session, audio

recording equipment will be tested to ensure functionality of equipment and participants

will be asked for their consent to record (see Appendix G). Artifacts and endorsement

data. Artifacts will include any relevant state or district documents provided to high

school and district leadership teams to help students stay on track as they worked towards

their endorsements and they will be collected as they are presented by central office staff.

Data Analysis

Data analysis begins with coding data collected and transcribed during focus

group interviews and ends with evaluation of themes or other symbols recognized in the

coding process. Coding is a procedure of sorting interview transcription and artifact data

into categories based on the research questions (Saldana, 2009). First cycle coding will

focus on seven of the Saldaña first cycle coding types (see Table 3.4). Attribute codes

label which specifically focuses on setting or location of data collection for this research;

whereas, magnitude codes evaluate the time order related to member responses to factors

involved in how stakeholders make sense of their role in policy implementation.

Structural codes are predetermined codes including role of the focus group member,

while descriptive codes will include simple nouns that focus on the topic or factor of

implementation for this research. In Vivo codes use the specific words of the focus group

member as a label for the data collected. Process labels are action codes or gerunds.

Emotional labels of data are inferred codes based on the comments made in focus groups;

similarly, subcoding types of data labels in this study are potentially symbolic labels

based on the factors of implementation or sense making on the part of focus group

participants. Subcoding is one of the last phases of coding as it will, in this case, look for

overarching themes or symbolism which addresses the answers to either of the research

questions. Each of these seven coding types will assist the researcher in making sense of

HB5 (2013) policy implementation in The District.

Table 3.4

Seven Saldaña First Cycle Coding Types

Coding Type	Definition
Attribute	Setting: Campus 1 or 2, or central office (3)
Magnitude	Time factor of response: year or other indication of time related to policy implementation
Structural	Predetermined codes: teacher, administrator, counselor, central office administrator, central office counselor, central office endorsement specialist
Descriptive	Describes a factor of implementation related to the research questions
In Vivo	Words taken from the data provided
Process	Verb or Gerund describing data
Subcoding	Symbolism or Theme related to initial data collected

(Saldaña, 2009)

The coding process will be facilitated using an Excel document. Sentences from

interviews will be entered into the sixth column of the document one line at a time then

coded (see Table 3.5). Saldaña (2009) says that coding is a flexible process that has to be

organized while involving every piece of data collected. Once this initial coding is

complete the sorting process will begin. Comments will be sorted alphabetically by each category. Evaluation of data will look at themes not initially included in the literature review or interview questions which helps the researcher understand how participants experienced the policy implementation process (Merriam, 1998). This deeper level of coding sorts and categorizes themes found in the coding process and reveals themes otherwise missed when reviewing data. Learning from the overarching themes across all focus groups enhances the depth of understanding from the research process and provides an additional opportunity for reflection about the implementation process.

Table 3.5

Sample Data Collection Table

Subcode	Emotion	Process	Descriptive	En Vivo	Magnitude	Attribute	Structural	Data – Comment
Student Access	Frustrated	Hiring	Staff Member	Teacher hired	Early 2013 or 2014	Teacher	1	Teachers were not hired fast enough to meet the needs of all endorsement areas

Based on qualitative coding suggestions from Saldaña (2009)

Reflexivity and Positionality

Two areas that need to be addressed are the researcher's connection to the district being studied, reflexivity, and personal experiences which shape their perspective about the study, positionality (Creswell et al., 2007). I am a middle school teacher who works with language learners preparing them for success in high school and do not work in one of the high schools in this study. I have indirect professional association as a feeder

school to one of the high schools in this study. Additionally, I am a Caucasian woman researching a phenomenon and am culturally outside the affected communities. Direct contact with district and high school stakeholders does not take place outside of this study. Positionality, on the other hand, is more complex. As a child of poverty and mother of multi-cultural children, I have a vested interest in the success of students considered in this study. I have been an employee of the district for four years. Experience in historically low-performing schools has inspired greater research into what inspires the high performance in this school district particularly when examining students who historically underperform across the state and nation (Mellor, Stoker, & Reese, 2015; Parker, Jerrim, Schoon, & Marsh, 2016).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is not measured by the accuracy of the math or measurement tools. Instead, trustworthiness is measured by the credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of the study (Creswell et al., 2007; Merriam, 1998). Credibility in qualitative research includes methods that increase the reliability of the research (Connelly, 2016; Merriam, 1998). Prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing/member checking, and material storage are all aspects of the research that build credibility for a study. The researcher has taken trustworthiness into consideration when designing the study. The research has been built the methods over the course of a year and a half. This prolonged engagement with members of the university through doctoral studies and planning during an administrative internship in the district adds to the credibility of the research. Triangulation according to Meriam (1998) is the use of multiple research methods to verify data. This research includes focus

group interviews, and District data submitted directly to the researcher. Clarification of data collected from the district regarding endorsement data collected will assist the researcher in understanding stakeholder perceptions of building level factors affecting endorsement completion. Triangulation will occur through follow-up questions following focus groups, and verification of data collected from the above listed sources through the research and accountability department of the district. Use of data from these multiple sources in combination with peer debriefing and member checking adds to the credibility of the data. Finally, security of data and materials in a password protected computer and locked file cabinet protects those involved in the research.

Transferability is the generalizability of the study to other contexts (Creswell et al., 2007; Merriam, 1998). In this case, the process is transferable and the data itself contributes to the body of knowledge regarding high achieving schools and how they are addressing the complex demands of HB5 (2013) policy implementation especially for at-risk students. The steps of interviewing central office leadership and gathering data about policy interpretation and design followed by the on-site focus group structures is transferable. This process can be utilized in any district, in any part of the country or world, in public or private institutions, to understand the factors of implementation.

Dependability and conformability of the research addresses whether the research can be duplicated and substantiated by others (Connelly, 2016). The process of data collection and analysis is dependable through the use of routines during focus groups, triangulation, and by securing the data. In addition, the support of the university committee throughout the research and writing process along with member checking

within the district to verify accuracy of data increases the conformability of data collected (Merriam, 1998).

Limitations

As with any research study, this one has several limitations. Limitations involve generalizability, staff longevity within the district, participant inclusion within the context of time constraints, and potential biases of stakeholders included in the study.

Generalizability is limited due to the unique context of this suburban Southeast Texas school district and the demands of the college and career readiness policy being studied. ESSA (2015) requires college and career readiness and each state has interpreted the requirements to guide their schools in the implementation process; however, generalizability of the data is complicated by the unique context, culture and stakeholders in this district. It is important to recognize the process is generalizable and a valuable means for gathering data about policy implementation in any context.

Participants within The District are limited by their length of time within the district, their perspective within the policy implementation process, and the lack of students and feeder school inclusion. The students included in the first complete cohort to declare their endorsements and graduate from the program will have already started their lives after high school when this research begins. This valuable data will be represented through anecdotal stories presented by adult participants at each campus but this is still a limitation. Role within the policy implementation process also limits participant perspectives. Administrators, counselors and educators will be included to include a variety of points-of-view. The feeder schools have a vital role in declaration of endorsements but due to time constraints involved in the research process will not be

included in this research as it would increase the number of sites from three to eight. Inclusion of the feeder schools would be incredibly beneficial and significantly add to the data involved in HB5 policy implementation.

Finally, there may be personal biases brought into the data collection process by stakeholders. This may be in the form of perception whether or not a student has the ability to learn material or regarding whether or not The District has the resources available to meet the needs of a student. It is impossible to account for the biases individuals bring into the data collection process. The researcher already brings their unique perspective into the research process which can be anticipated during the construction of the study (Creswell et al., 2007); however, it is impossible to account for the biases others bring with them into study before they begin contributing. Though there will be biases inherent to the collection of data in this study, understanding that biases are a part of the process will help the researcher carefully question and collect data to verify and offset the bias throughout the study (Merriam, 1998).

Regardless of the limitations, the study will contribute to the body of knowledge concerning HB5 (2013) policy implementation. This research is studying the factors involved in college and career readiness policy implementation and how two economically disadvantaged high schools in a successful suburban Southeastern Texas school district has interpreted, developed, and implemented policy to facilitate student successful completion of endorsements on the way to graduation.

Summary

This chapter goes over the methods that will be used by the researcher to collect data about participant experiences during implementation of HB5 (2013). Use of

purposeful stratified sampling is how the researcher will conduct 9 building level focus group interviews, and 3 central office focus group interviews. Semi-structured interview protocol, collection of TEA and district data, along with audio recordings and artifacts will encompass the data collected and provide means for triangulation prior to member checking which adds credibility to the research. Data will be analyzed to discover themes about the factors affecting HB5 (2013) implementation. Security of data and participant identities was specifically described. Finally, trustworthiness and limitations were addressed.

Chapter IV

District Level Visionary Leadership

Context, people, and policy are the cornerstones of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Understanding the complexities of where a policy is interpreted gives insights into the resources available as well as community connection. The resources include the courses, certifications, and curriculum available for potential endorsement pathways at each high school. Community connections are business partnerships that fund and support through mentorship and potential job opportunities in the surrounding area. People are another pillar of sensemaking, and it involves the multifaceted relationships associated with enactment of sensible environments. And finally, HB5 the new graduation policy must be studied so there is common familiarity with nuances of what is being studied.

Contextual examination of where policy is interpreted enlightens research into their sensemaking process (Coburn, 2005; Weick, 1995). This specifically takes into consideration the individualities of the location and various schemas of the people involved in doing the work to understand policy. Context description will include description of the district's reputation, performance, and diversity of the district. Understanding the context of the previous graduation policy will provide additional context required for making sense of HB5 requires understanding of the previous graduation policy along with the realities of the new expectations.

Studying the specific requirements of the new graduation policy will provide valuable insights into what is involved in implementing HB5. This will include the core requirements as well as endorsement expectations. Understanding the previous graduation expectations helps to make sense of the new HB5 demands.

In The District, a single visionary leader was selected by the superintendent to lead policy interpretation of HB5 for future implementation across the district. She is a recognized district leader in The District whose longitudinal, quantitative doctoral research involved understanding the patterns of standardized test results for students at-risk of dropping out. This leader was expected to assemble a team of experts to balance interpretation perspectives and guide implementation. Over time, two team members were added to the team of instrumental interpreters, Dr. Celeste, Dr. Camarin, and Dr. Colette. Dr. Celeste was the initial visionary, Dr. Camarin the Counseling Director at the time, and Dr. Colette was the CTE Director. The three leaders pulled together all resources available in The District and coordinated the implementation of HB5.

Sensemaking framework will be used to understand the context and leaders involved in the interpretation process. This framework includes identity construction, retrospective, enactive of sensible elements, social, ongoing, focus on extracted cues, and driven by plausibility (Weik, 1995). The framework provides structure which helps focus analysis of the data involved in implementing HB5 across The District.

Context

Provision of The District context is relevant for sensemaking. Context is the framework in which the new graduation policy is implemented. All policies are not implemented successfully everywhere all of the time (Honig, 2006). The context matters. Understanding the realities of where a policy is being implemented provides insight into the interconnected, multidimensional setting.

Maintaining the reputation for educational excellence in The District is of greatest importance to both leaders and other stakeholders around the community. The district is

known for its academic preparation as well as athletic and club engagement by students and the community. Academics are highly valued in the community but almost overshadowed by stakeholder appreciation of athletics and clubs, such as Future Farmers of America. Social and economic diversity has evolved in the past 30 years. This predominantly Caucasian community has become increasingly multicultural. This aspect of context is described in detail.

Visionary leaders worked fast to interpret, obtain approval, and plan for implementation in accordance with the requirements of the House Bill. Differentiation between the expectations of the prior graduation requirements and those set forth by new policy was a high priority. Understanding the differences in focus between the two sets of graduation expectations was an early priority required to prepare for the change.

The District consistently out performs state averages when examining student data for End of Course (EOC) exams. The District has over 80,000 students and over 80% taking the English I or II EOC met standard or better. In addition, more than 90% of the students taking Algebra I, Biology or US History met standard or better. The state average for passing end-of-course exams is around 60%. Stakeholders in the district expect this level of performance to be maintained. The average SAT scores for the district are around 1150. The state average is 1032 and the national average is 1067. Academic expectations for this public-school district are rigorous.

Athletic performance standards of excellence are expected by the stakeholders and community around The District. It is a 6A district that participates in the University Interscholastic League. This means that the enrollment in the high school is greater than 2100 students. There are over 250 schools in the State of Texas in this classification

which shows there is generalizability of this research to other schools in the state based on size. The District has a history of winning UIL championships. The department of athletics first received state championship recognition for football. Other sports subsequently recognized with state championship titles are girls' soccer, team and individual tennis, boys' swimming, track, wrestling, and cross country. Multiple professional athletes were educated in The District – specifics must be limited as they would give away the identity of the school system. The community expects excellence from The District as they prepare students for success in life after high school.

Club participation and performance is a high priority in The District. One specific group that has high expectations is Future Farmers of America (FFA). This group works within the FFA community and reaches across to other career and technical education groups including but not limited to: art, welding, floral arranging, video, marketing, and multiple community interest groups. The resulting parade, livestock show, and rodeo are central to the culture and community around The District. Scholarships are won by students auctioning their creations and the accomplishments within the rodeo and livestock communities win scholarships as well. It is a high honor to become a rodeo princess at one of the high schools and they get to have priority arrangements within the parade and other celebrations. Community members join the celebrations through parade participation, sponsorship, and mentorship. It is a high honor to participate in the rodeo and livestock show traditions.

The District, as with many other fast-growing suburban metropolitan districts, have incredibly diverse populations. The District published diversity data which says students are approximately 10% African-American, 15% Asian, 35% Hispanic, 1%

Native American, 1% Pacific Islander, 3% Multi-racial, and 35% Caucasian. 30% of the

students enrolled in the district are economically disadvantaged(see Appendix H). The

south side of the district has been developed over the past four decades. The only land

left for development is north of the thoroughfare dividing the district.

The north side of the district currently has the most impoverished of the

communities. Three of the four high schools have 40% or more students classified as

economically disadvantaged. The newest high school is less than 15% economically

disadvantaged as it is surrounded by new neighborhoods. Development will create new

schools and zoning. The north side of the district has the most Spanish speaking

residents, most of whom live within the feeder patterns for the two schools included in

this study, though some do live on the south side of the district.

Policy

Previous graduation policy from the State of Texas was focused on university

preparation and was dubbed the 4x4 diploma by members in the district (Side by side

comparison, 2017). Excessive testing is what finally inspired the graduation policy

changes by the state. Stakeholders at every level of education recognized the number of

high stakes tests had to change for districts to provide college and career readiness for

everyone (Aycock & Davis, 2014). Prior to HB5, there were certification programs in this

district for the Microsoft office suite, food service, and automotive repair.

Initially, the concept of graduation pathways and endorsements was misconstrued

by stakeholders as being a high school major which will have some investment value

when transferring to the university. Visionary leaders referenced how community

members inaccurately used their schema to understand the new policy. The only frame of

reference that aligned with the new high school endorsement requirement was university protocols for declaring a major. In order to maintain the reputation of the district, clear communication with stakeholders regarding the exact purpose of the endorsement pathways was necessary but equitable communication would only be possible if the cultural needs are taken into consideration prior to offering information sessions.

Each district has the expectation to provide career readiness training in addition to the college preparedness courses already offered. Courses already in place had to be aligned with the new expectations for cross curricular integration of math and science. Modification of scopes and sequences for instruction were addressed in addition to the addition of required certification opportunities for students in career preparedness sequences. The costs of these assessments and additional instructional were considered as well.

Staff had to be trained on the nuances of implementation which was pivotal to successful implementation. Principals were in the learning loop from the beginning as resources were gathered and pathways established based on the current offerings at each campus. Counselors were sensitively instructed regarding the nuances of the legislation, so they could align their guidance to students, staff, parents and community members with the new graduation requirements. Teachers were informed of their role in implementation and the expectation to follow the new scope and sequences provided them by the district. This helped them meet the more rigorous demands of graduation requirements from HB5.

In summary, HB5 is a complex policy that affected every stakeholder in the district. The changes in graduation requirements to not only prepared students for college

but also for careers. This required a change in focus from the 4x4 graduation pathway to a broader opportunity for students to explore what they want to do as a career with opportunities to specialize and gain certifications prior to exiting high school. Central office had a huge responsibility to understand the resources readily available in the district and orchestrate implementation. This means there was meticulous planning for training principals, counselors, teachers and especially students along with their parents. Meeting the new college and career requirements under HB5 took the entire community supporting programs that were newly put into place.

People

People form the complex social interconnections that supply the skills and schema required to implement policy (Weick, 1995). Three central office visionaries interpreted policy messages from the state to implement HB5 in The District. They were the central office sensemakers who prepared for implementation of the new graduation expectations. The first was the Associate Superintendent of Leadership, Dr. Celeste. She was given the task of interpreting HB5 for the district and was given latitude to create a team of experts to support interpretation and implementation. Her first addition to the team was Dr. Camarin, a former lead high school counselor with hands-on knowledge of what it means to guide students towards high school graduation. Dr. Camarin was recently promoted to Director of Counseling. Dr. Colette was the last member of the team added and she brought with her knowledge from former positions outside the district and around the country of how career and technical education is designed. The three experts worked together to synthesize their understandings of HB5 to coordinate implementation across the secondary campuses in The District.

Dr Celeste. She was first visionary appointed by the district to interpret and then lead implementation. She is a seasoned Caucasian woman towards the end of her long educational career who always offers a warm smile and hugs as greetings. Her office is tidy and has pictures of family along with art work. Her many shelves are filled with educational and inspirational texts along with binders of documentation.

Role. Celeste has been in education for 32 years. She has taught or lead at all levels of K-12 education. Celeste has worked with more than one community, not serving The District alone which included students of varying backgrounds. She told stories of working with students from especially low socio-economic status where teachers had to ensure basic survival needs were taken care of prior to instruction. Celeste has extensive background teaching English language learners from that previous district as well as students with special needs. She worked up from an elementary teaching position into principal and uses her diverse experiences from teaching and administrating over the years within her current role for The District as she coordinates leadership teams.

Celeste created a professional network around herself in the past 15 years as a leader in The District. This network reaches out to the region and nation through continued connection with her former district and membership to the National Association of Elementary School Principals. She constantly networks professionally and said that her goal is to empower highly qualified leaders to do what they were hired to do with training, support and delegation of the authority to make the best decisions for their educational community.

Beliefs. The sum of all her roles leading up to participation on the visionary leadership team shaped her beliefs about providing equitable education for all students.

She believes that all students deserve opportunities to learn and that educational leaders must be prepared to meet the needs of the students as they arrive. Celeste said, "Children are children. They come from different places and all have a different set of baggage when they show up, but you still have to be there for them." She also understands that the leaders in the school know better than she will ever know what the students in their care require. Speaking to this she said, "What has changed the most over the past five years is bringing people on and letting them be their own leaders." The belief in hiring the best possible person for each leadership job and then empowering them to do what they were hired to do is a pervasive social theme for Celeste.

Visionary Leadership. This leads to Celeste's role as a visionary leader and creator of a team of leaders who interpreted HB5. Choosing highly qualified individuals to lead this team was essential; though, assembly of the team was only one part of her responsibilities. Coordination of resource allocation was also necessary in order to get implementation passed by the Board of Trustees. This involved reaching out to the high school administrators, counselors, and teachers of specialized courses to understand and map out resources available at each high school.

Communications went out to building administrators from Celeste requesting data about programs in place at each high school. She asked the administrators to suggest four course sequences that could be made into endorsements that they already have or that could be in place with a little maneuvering of current staffing. This social relational data gathering tactic was enactive of sensible elements and focused on the plausibility of implementation. Each high school had unique programs, and some housed more of the certification opportunities than others. West HS, for example, housed many of the

certification programs that later moved to the central CTE facility that opened after HB5

was initially implemented in The District which affected initial and later offerings at that

facility. They had more certifications that other facilities around the community.

In addition, Celeste was instrumental in gathering data from the community. A

survey was sent out to extract cues from families and community members about their

perceptions of HB5 and district responsibilities. This data guided the decisions required

of the visionary team. Celeste said that the community expected endorsements to be

aligned with college majors and prepare students for college as much as for career. This

was essential information as the leadership team prepared to train the staff about the

specific demands of HB5 for future community information sessions. Accepting these

extracted cues from the survey was essential in focusing the team on the task of

interpreting HB5 and informing stakeholders about the changes that were coming.

Celeste was specifically focused on obtaining board approval to move forward

with implementation. At the beginning of the 2014 calendar year, the leadership team had

to receive board approval in order to move forward with implementation. The 8th graders

entering high school in the 2014-2015 school year had to declare their endorsement

pathway when enrolling before spring break of 2014. Celeste recognized that each high

school counseling team had to have the resources and training in place to implement the

new HB5 graduation requirements by the end of January in 2014.

Celeste provided insights and guidance throughout the interpretation process. She

garnered the social authority and retrospective awareness of the sensible elements

necessary to coordinate the complex layers of resources, people, and knowledge required

to interpret this multifaceted graduation policy. Interesting to note, she said that her role

stopped with interpretation and that the power of her role as interpreter was to delegate authority to those central to implementation. Once the initial training sessions took place across the district, Celeste stepped back and let the empowered leaders around the district do the jobs they were hired to do.

Reflection. When asked about the success of HB5, Celeste said unequivocally that interpretation and implementation was successful. She demonstrated evidence of the success with the course catalogue offered to high school students in the first cohort's graduating class. She said that the course catalogue for them at the start of their program was less than 30 pages and now is over 100. Celeste purported that cues received from the administrators, instructors, students, and request for resources indicate that the needs of students have been met. She always goes back to empowerment as well saying that if an administrator sees a need in their program, they need only ask for what they need and have a plan for implementation. Celeste said that if there is a way to reasonably offer a program and the need is there the team will try to make it happen.

When looking to the future of implementation, Celeste specifically talked about HB5 alignment with state accountability measures.

> You're looking at a lot of things that this original House Bill did not, and
> never intended, to measure. Now we have different measures that have
> been in place. I don't know that you could change the House Bill but how
> we look at it and how we set it up probably needs to be looked at because
> the importance that CTE now holds - it didn't hold when this original bill
> was started. The magnitude of what these kids do and how it affects that
> accountability system, I don't think anybody ever saw that.

This connection to the greater picture of how HB5 would affect the district through the accountability represents a deep concern for Celeste. Success when measured by kids in the district meeting academic expectations for graduation is one thing. Celeste wants to see the same success reflected by the district as the leadership team enacts the requirements of state policy. She wants all levels of the district to feel successful not just the students.

The ultimate responsibility for interpretation and implementation lays on the leader of the team and was taken seriously by Celeste. She said repeatedly that she surrounds herself with experts who are entrusted with the power to make decisions for the team. She takes this responsibility seriously and responds to the pressure with a smile and grace that is well respected by her peers.

Dr. Camarin. Camarin, Director of Counseling, is a vibrant Caucasian woman in her middle years. Her office is full of artifacts from a career of working directly with kids. She has been in education for the past 24 years and has primarily worked in high school where her "passion lies." She worked 16 years as a high school counselor. Celeste's high school responsibilities involved working with junior high students to prepare them for registration for high school courses. She is openly "loves the idea of being able to lead a group that she feels so passionately about." This love of helping people emanates when she speaks.

Role. Camarin did not always work for The District. She never mentioned specifically where the former district was located and focused instead on tremendous pride she has for her current role. Camarin was selected to interpret HB5 legislation from the lead counselors across The District. Her passion for kids and work with stakeholders

across multiple buildings made her the best person to help interpret HB5 on the visionary leadership team. On this team, she became an advocate for endorsement opportunities. Camarin's role and responsibilities are incredibly complex and have evolved over time.

Beliefs. Camarin believes that she has made a difference by working on the visionary leadership team. As a sensemaker in the process of interpreting HB5, she has facilitated change that she is proud of retrospectively. It was her first job at central office, "dissecting [HB5] and trying to make sense of it." Camarin said, "We want our students to be successful and we want our students to have productive, meaningful lives after high school." When focusing on the cues she presents, Camarin believes that the visionary leadership team helped stakeholders in The District have what is necessary to implement the new graduation plan.

Visionary Leadership. As a visionary interpreter of HB5, Camarin worked with Dr. Celeste tirelessly gathering data and organizing the processes. The social nature or the position helped them extract cues from their environment to facilitate organization of the new processes and procedures. Camarin and Celeste were the core of the initial visionary leadership team. As the two of them gathered data from around the district, they created a wall sized flow chart of courses available at each high school. Camarin organized the courses into sequences and cross-checked available courses at each high school. As cues from across The District poured in, it became clear that the wall-sized organization chart was not the best means of communicating options to the teams around the district. Camarin refined the communication processes by creating PowerPoints communicating the vision of the team and preparing reference documents for communication with stakeholders.

Camarin's insight into ways to streamline communication was instrumental in preparing for implementation of HB5. Because of her actionable experience as a lead counselor, she was able to design immediately useful resources. Camarin designed what is now called the counseling "bible" by high school counselors. It is a synthesized reference book that contains every possible endorsement offered in The District. This guiding document was created to ease implementation and guide counselors as they register students.

In addition, Camarin designed the presentations for the Board of Trustees and other various stakeholders. She designed PowerPoints and reference documents for the Board Meetings and coordinated what would be required for counselor training sessions. Camarin created communication plans for The District as well as required paperwork processes. Once board approval was received, Camarin was the point person to start disseminating information to stakeholders.

Camarin's first training sessions were planned for counselors. In this session, the counselors received the counseling "bible" with all the potential endorsement pathways presented to them in a concise binder. They went through the binder one page at a time so counselors could ask questions that pertained specifically for the needs of the students on their campus. Administrators were encouraged to participate in this training. She repeated this training session for every high school campus in the district doing multiple training sessions each day until everyone had the resources necessary to do their job. The decision to do this was based on the plausibility of implementation and personalization of the social interaction. Every element was intentionally personalized, so individuals could extract the cues they needed to implement HB5.

Camarin's next step was to plan for incoming freshmen for the first cohort of students who would declare their endorsement prior to entry into high school and graduate under HB5. This involved working with junior high school counseling staff members to train junior high school students and counselors on the new graduation expectations. Camarin prepared generic graphic organizers and course catalogues to guide stakeholders through the process of enrolling freshmen. The processes had to be so clear that parents would understand their role and be able to sign to approve student selections as a part of enrollment.

The visionary leaders responded to the request for training sessions to be held for parents at each of the junior high school facilities as well as the high schools. All these steps had to be approved by the board prior to implementation and the presentation was coordinated by both Celeste and Camarin. The information sessions provided families with resources about the new endorsement pathways to help students plan their high school classes. They clarified the difference between endorsements and university majors – that they are not the same thing. Camarin was instrumental in designing and implementing these training sessions. Anticipation of the needs of parents were based on the cues the visionary leadership team received in the early phases of data collection.

Reflection. When asked about the success of HB5, Camarin said it has been successful from the start. Her evidence was rooted in prior opportunities for students. She talked about the imprecise nature of course selection prior to HB5. Students took a "hodge-podge of courses" that were not related as electives. She called it "sampling." This method of selecting courses prevented a "deeper dive" into career opportunities. The course opportunities available under HB5 have completely reversed this story and that is

why the new graduation policy is successful. Camarin asserted that students are better prepared for life after high school whether they attend college or university.

When looking to the future of implementation, Camarin reflected on requirements. She discussed specific areas for potential certification partnerships with agencies in the community. Camarin became especially excited about one opportunity for the future in the field of air conditioning. "This is something students can be fully certified within 24 months and they can go forth. The idea of something like that with a zero percent unemployment rate. That's huge!" She said that it will take a partnership with a technical school in the area and that they are trying to negotiate the possibility for future partnerships now. Camarin said there are more professions that can begin certification processes in high school where the skilled labor forces are aging out of their field leaving no replacements behind. There have been ongoing discussions around The District regarding electricians and plumbers to no avail. She thinks the partnership with the technical school will be the key to opening these certifications to students. Ongoing retrospective analysis of programs and partnerships inspires Camarin to continue her work and provides her hope for the future of district programs.

This visionary team member rose from the ranks of professionals and far surpassed the expectations of her team. Camarin was rewarded two years ago with a promotion to directorship. She did the technical design work behind the scenes, the training sessions, the handbook, the meetings with parents. That is her identity in the district, a technical design orchestrator. She acts on cues and does whatever is required to meet the needs of her team. Empowerment from Celeste went far with this team member and she has seen the success of her hard work in the graduation of multiple classes under

HB5 and through a well-earned promotion. This hard-working team member faces challenges with energy and a passion to help students and staff be successful. Her enthusiasm has taken her far and she is sought out for advice as you will see in the next chapter. Her visionary leadership enhanced implementation of HB5.

Dr. Colette. Colette is a tall, Caucasian woman with a welcoming smile and a strong sense of business. She has clear expectations for her team and emanates confidence and a relaxed sense of purpose. Colette has been in education for nearly 30 years though you would never know looking at her. She has worked directly with high school aged students as a teacher and spent 20 years on the East Coast where she transitioned from educator into administrative roles. Colette worked for the Department of Education before joining The District.

Role. Colette has been in her current role for the past six years. She is the Director of the Career and Technical Education Department and was hired at the end of HB5 interpretation by Celeste in 2013. Colette quickly took lead of her department and began directing her team towards implementing the new graduation policy to prepare students for life after high school through career readiness.

Beliefs. Colette believes that she arrived at the district at an opportune time to make a difference in the CTE community in The District and in Texas. She discussed the quilt of opportunities that are being connected to prepare students to go deeper into relevant curriculum that they are interested in learning. The transition from plugging electives into student schedules to responding to social cues from students to build roadmaps for their future is a source of pride. "These kids are working to be hirable the minute they graduate. They are walking with a certification, they are walking out, some

of them, with a job in hand." Colette believes she is making a difference in the lives of kids in The District.

   Visionary Leadership. When Colette was added to the interpretation team, she was not familiar with the stakeholders she learned on job and created a social network while preparing her CTE team for implementation. Initial data collection was well underway when Colette joined the team, so she was not responsible for social networking and gathering initial cues about the resources available. She said of the process, "When I was hired, there was a guide, a framework, already put together." Colette was instrumental in responding to extracted cues from the state which required that courses already in place be aligned to the expectation for continued math and science education. She said of this process,

> We had what I call a plethora of wonderful courses but no aligned
>
> programs. This gave me the impetus to actually take our quilt, so-to-speak,
>
> of great things and put them into a pathway so students could see the
>
> relevance and they can build upon their skillsets and go deeper into
>
> curriculum.

This quilt represented in the course offerings available after Celeste and Camarin completed their initial deep dive into district resources to create the endorsement reference book. Not all course sequences were initially available at each high school nor would they be. They are established as the building principal deems appropriate. Colette set-up support systems for teachers through instructional facilitators. She guided her team to create a scope and sequence for each course to align them with state requirements. Because HB5 did not specifically identify funding for certification tests which range from

$25 to $325 per exam, Colette worked with the visionary interpreters who proposed paying out of the general operating fund. The team realized that not every district in the state would be able to do this, but it was a priority to protect students and their families from the expense if possible.

Additionally, Colette began reaching out into the community to create and support corporate partnerships. She participated with the local Chamber of Commerce and works with a district-led committee of business leaders who are area partners in education. These partnerships have grown into sponsorships, mentorships and supported expansion of the central CTE facility to include hands-on learning opportunities.

Reflection. When asked about success, she specifically talked about the two high schools in this study. She said that West High School is especially successful. She described growing programs which have diversified even after relocating some of the programs at that campus to the central training facility. They have recovered from that transition and growth is ongoing. East High School has not seen the same growth. They have unique challenges that "need more work which should be driven by the campus administration." Each campus is unique, and the administration has control over programs offered and staffed on their campus. When discussing the CTE programs around the district, she said a resounding yes to the success of HB5. The growth of opportunities in the district from before implementation to what is offered now far exceeded her expectations. She is most proud of the partnerships that have resulted in improvement to the central training facility.

Dr. Colette would like to participate in a state level committee as a voice of career and technical education leadership through revision or the current bill. She wants this

committee to look at funding for tests by the state, alignment of courses and sequences offered by districts, and forecasting future needs regionally as potential areas of certification along with funding of partnerships through local technical schools. She said there is not a funding source for colleges who partner with high schools or districts and this needs to be amended to encourage future endeavors.

Colette also voiced needs for enhanced community partnerships to continue expansion of certification opportunities around The District. She is honest that all high school endorsement opportunities are not equal, she discussed the successes of the programs mentioning that there are growth opportunities all over the district which has seen more successes than failure.

Sensemaking

There are seven core elements of sensemaking as discussed in the literature review. The seven areas are identity construction, retrospective, enactive of sensible elements, social, ongoing, focus on extracted cues, and driven by plausibility. These seven elements are the analysis tools used in this research. By first examining how central office members interacted within each of these sensemaking areas then examining ways in which stakeholders in each of the high schools interacted a deeper understanding of policy enactment will be possible. The complex nature of sensemaking requires multiple lenses to examine the data and piece together how the graduation policy was implemented. Drs. Celeste, Camarin, and Colette consciously and unconsciously wove together the seven elements of sensemaking to understand the nature of HB5 and plan for implementation across The District.

Identity Construction. Identity construction is the sum of stakeholder perceptions and actions over time, or the total knowledge, experience, and responsibilities that make them who they are today (Weber & Glynn, 2006). In the performance of tasks related to HB5 interpretation, they framed not only the responsibilities of others but also who they are within the expectations of policy implementation. Each step of interpreting HB5 involved social interactions and collection of cues from stakeholders that added to their professional experiences and shaped their professional identity.

Central office visionary interpreters each received new roles at the beginning of this interpretation process. Their educational schema and life experiences shaped interpretation. Dr. Celeste was newly promoted to a role not formerly present in the district which was created for her as she interpreted HB5 and created the new frame of expectations for the high schools around the district. Dr. Camarin was recently promoted to a counseling coordinator in central office. Her experience was so fresh she was instrumental throughout the interpretation process. Dr. Colette was a new hire to the district and did not immediately have the professional connections within the district; however, as she had national connections that far exceeded the expectations of the team to help align state policy with the greater national goals. Each member of the team brought unique backgrounds to the interpretation process.

The roles of each team member were reframed as they added responsibilities to their current positions through the interpretation process. Dr. Camarin was most affected by the changing roles and as a result was further promoted to Director of Counseling. As she understood the role of interpreting the graduation legislation, she added responsibilities to her position. She created guiding documents, presentations, course

catalogues with the team and did the detail work of compiling data and ideas to represent what the team envisioned. As the project came together, so did her new position. When the department she worked in divided and became two separate departments it was a natural progression for her to take the next step into the directorship. The other two members had different situations. The new role was created for Dr. Celeste as she entered the interpretation process for HB5. Her role in The District was new already so she framed the responsibilities entailed in the position through the interpretation process. This was also the case for Dr. Colette who was new to the district. The team around her watched through HB5 interpretation and implementation for the background knowledge she brought with her to the position. She reframed her position based on this prior knowledge and expanded expectations for her team and herself.

When it came time for implementation, roles refocused again. Reframing graduation expectations in the district was the primary job for Dr. Celeste, who remained a support person for the other two members of the team but moved on to other responsibilities. Dr. Camarin's new focus on implementation continued to shape her professional interactions and the perceptions of those around her. Leading training sessions further adjusted peers to see her transition from lead counselor to central office expert. Additionally, she was the individual at central office that was assigned to call the state education agency if there were requests to add programs and align PEIMS codes. Her actions were driven by facilitating implementation and the microchanges that were required for teams to be successful. Dr. Colette's role is constantly being reframed as she grows the CTE programs he heads. Every year, new layers are implemented with

continued growth on the horizon. She adds responsibilities to her position and to those around her.

Through professional social interactions involved in the interpretation process and changing perceptions, identity construction has taken place amongst the central office visionary leadership team. Their roles have evolved and grown over the past 6 years as interpretation evolved into implementation. One member of the team stepped back into her leadership position knowing that the team was empowered to do what must be done for students to graduate with endorsements. The other two team members kept growing within the new constructs of their positions and pursuing greater depths of implementation to meet the needs of stakeholders.

Retrospective. This aspect of sensemaking involves looking back at the context of the decision-making process to further understanding of the events that took place (Weick, 1995). Once outside of the event that is being considered, there is greater clarity due to disentanglement with the sensemaking elements. Retrospective exploration of interpretation of HB5 provides opportunity to learn from the cues embedded in the situation and make adjustments to implementation.

Data collection was important. Multiple team members referenced the wall chart that tracked potential course offerings at each high school. They all knew that the wall charts were useful to them alone and that they would have to be interpreted into some sort of guiding document that the masses could use as a reference document but were not sure in the beginning of data collection what those would look like. The goal at that point was understanding courses that were available, so they could start to see what the district had to offer under each of the pathways.

Once this data was collected, they dug deep to identify possible pathways that could be offered at multiple campuses with minimal change to staffing or funding. This was a complicated aspect of supply because it was nearly impossible to anticipate what the demand would be until preregistration began. They knew at this point that the process had to be designed to be user friendly which would require some work.

Hindsight showed the importance of creating reference documents for staff members to use when guiding staff and students regarding graduation options. Each member of the interpretation team mentioned the importance of these guiding documents and Dr. Colette mentioned that the framework was essential to her implementation processes which was nearly complete when she joined the team.

Once they were created, a tremendous burden was placed on them as they worked to get processes and implementation plans approved. Each member of the team talked about getting board approval as if it was a major hurtle in the interpretation process they were deeply concerned with at the time.

Their reflection on perceptions and actions in the interpretation process noted the essential elements of preparation to be: gathering data, organizing data, preparing for dissemination of data, and gaining approval.

Enactive of Sensible Elements. Enactive of sensible elements refers to the process visionary leaders underwent when identifying the elements essential to implementation of HB5 (Weick, 1995). This was seen in the data collection process guided by the central office team. They collected data from each of the high schools regarding the specific resources available at each high school in The District.

Every secondary certified staff member in the district was involved in this data collection process at some level. Principals were asked about their resource availability and follow-up questions were asked. Teacher skills and certifications were investigated. Course offerings, past course offerings, potential course offerings were considered. And every possible avenue for career instruction evaluated at the building and central office level of inquiry. Then sensible elements were specifically labeled as potential offerings.

Visionaries had to prepare for foreseeable circumstances. They looked for curriculum, teacher, and space availability along with feasibility of budgetary allowances. This does not mean that they saw all factors of implementation. They looked at alternate certifications available at each of the high schools as well as previous careers held by currently certified teachers. Before implementation, there was a comprehensive list of skills available based on the current teaching staff, the certification exams allowed across the district, and space availability/requirements in each high school for the following year.

Social. Interactions between people are the social component of this study. The process of implementing the new graduation requirements across this fast-growing suburban school district was reliant on relationships established over time. Because Dr. Celeste believes in empowerment of highly effective leaders, many of the interactive layers of social interaction were delegated and responsive to her leadership and guidance through that empowerment

Tracking the interactions is incredibly complex and was rooted in the data requested from central office. Data requested included: teacher certifications, history of courses taught in and outside of the district, history of teachers prior to educational

careers, current electives offered, and current certifications offered. This request for data took place during the beginning of the 2013 calendar year. To gather this information, administrators had to have conversations with their staff members. Associate and Assistant Principals helped gather the data from teachers themselves and counseling team members. To obtain the career history outside of the field of education, many administrators fished for the information via email other had conversations with key employees they already knew had other careers before serving The District and may be interested in teaching elective courses.

Figure 4.1 – Social Interactions for Data Collection
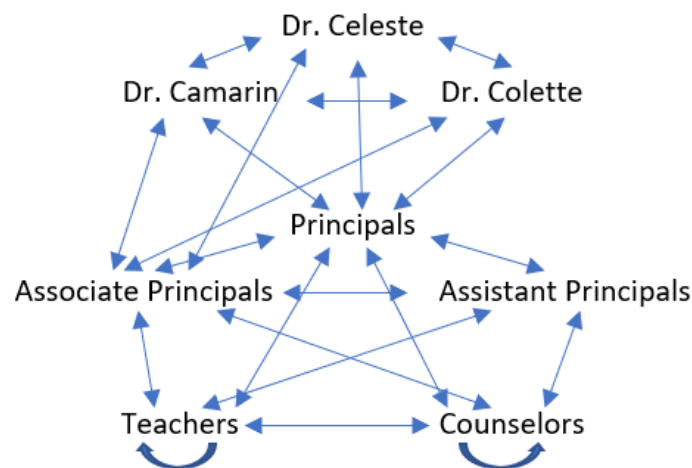
This resulted in various interactions. Central office to high school administrators, Principals to Associate and Assistant Principals, administrators to teachers, administrators to counselors, teachers to counselors, counselors to counselors, teachers to teachers and every variation in between. The social aspect of interpreting was essential to

understanding where the district stood as far as resources for implementation. The data on the figure represents the complex web of conversations that provided the data necessary for the central office visionaries to plan for implementation by investigating what was already here in the district as an asset (see Figure 4.1).

Data gathering conversations were based on relationships established within and between the central office visionary leaders, school administrative teams, and departments within the schools. The visionary team relied on the relationships established in these schools to transparently deliver the data requested entrusting the central office to decode their resource messages to plan for their facility to implement HB5 based on the resources available. This relationship is rooted in trust for the planners at central office and the diligent research that took place in the high schools. The reciprocal trusting relationships produced the data required for the visionary leaders to establish endorsement pathways that are offered by The District.

This process also provided valuable insights into the individualities found at each of the high school campuses. These differences in academic culture were important to plan around when it came to implementation. Visionary leaders had to provide flexibility to the system so that the principals could individualize their course offerings based on the needs of the student population at their campus. Principals used the opportunity to advocate for the students and staff members on their campuses which provided valuable insight into what would be required for successful implementation.

Ongoing. Interpretation HB5 is ongoing. Individuals who are interpreting and implement HB5 go through a cyclical process of analysis. When planning for implementation, the visionary leaders allowed for the implementation plan to be adjusted

as administrators adjust the master schedule based on the needs of the students in the school. This is a cycle of interpretation and implementation which is done intrinsically is a means of improving processes and programs thus helping more students graduate with endorsements. The ongoing reflection process is increasingly clear as implementation is addressed in the next chapter; however, when it came to training parents in the high schools a need presented itself in the area of parent and community engagement. Attendance was not consistent from school to school and in each of the schools in this study, parents were reluctant to attend information sessions. This cultural miscue was mentioned by central office visionaries as well as the high school leadership teams. It too will be addressed in the next chapter. This convergence of ideas is important to recognize. All administrators asked themselves, "What do we do to improve communication with families in the community?" There was a concern from central office that all parents do not have equitable access to informational resources. The training of staff was equal. Preparation was intended to be equitable. At the end of the information sessions at both West and East High Schools leaders were left wanting more from the community so they could help them understand the new system and graduation expectations. The cyclical/recursive nature of reflection regarding ongoing improvement to processes and implementation is essential to meeting the needs of all stakeholders.

Focus on and Extracted Cues. How exactly did the visionary leaders extract cues from the community in The District? They provided surveys to parents, had conversations across buildings and teams, made observations about course offerings, examined master schedules, listened to the resources provided about teacher backgrounds and their career history prior to instruction, and verified certifications of current

instructors. This focus on cues from the district along with discernment of essential elements set-up the visionary leadership team to investigate plausibility.

Driven by Plausibility. The search for accurate data drove the visionary leadership team. They dug deep for accurate data through the network of professionals available. Trust that the data was reliable, that the empowered leaders took the data request seriously, was at the core of the request for information.

Once data was collected and the realization of the cultural individualities of each campus studied, plausibility was supported through the interpretive steps visionary leaders undertook to plan for flexible implementation. The intended result was a cyclical nature of planning yearly for the next class of students.

This established another layer of plausibility, refinement. Through reexamination of processes to improve successful completion of endorsements, the visionary leadership team provided a means of empowering the high school leaders to make adjustments. This flexibility to enhance endorsements available when planning for each group of students entering their building improves plausibility that students will graduate with an endorsement that will prepare them for college or career and fulfill expectations of HB5.

Research Questions

Question number one asked how the key stakeholders made sense of HB5 (2013). The three central office visionaries made sense of HB5 by assessing the culture, resources, and individuals already available in each of the high schools in the district. They used their professional network to specifically itemize all required elements for implementation then created a plan.

Question two asked what factors shaped the sensemaking process for stakeholders through implementation of HB5. Factors that shaped implementation revolved around the culture, people, and resources available to each high school in the district. Central office leadership planned for individualities found at each facility and allowed for the individualities of course availability, student demand, and culturally appropriate planning for the students enrolled in the school. Central office leaders allowed for each high school to tailor their implementation to the needs of their campus so no two plans are the same in the district.

Summary

The purpose of the visionary leadership team was multifaceted. They had the responsibility to interpret the policy messages received from the state about the new graduation expectations to establish procedures for implementation. District policy must be approved by the Board of Trustees prior to implementation. This study examined the process they underwent to prepare for implementation and looked at how the leaders adjusted for the individualities of each high school. Structural elements guided the interpretation process for the central office leadership team. These elements were These factors were:

1. team creation,
2. analysis of HB5 essential elements,
3. professional networking across campuses,
4. data collection,
5. data analysis,

6. organization of courses,

7. preparation for communication with stakeholders,

8. preparation for board approval,

9. obtaining board approval, and

10. dissemination of data/training all stakeholders.

Each element was essential in the planning process. Had any step been missed or not prepared adequately, implementation would have been increasingly complicated.

Factors of implementation that were intrinsically connected to the process, although intangible were trust, integrity, and adaptability. Each were presented in multiple aspects of this chapter. Trust showed itself with the initial delegation to Dr. Celeste as she undertook this enormous responsibility. It appeared again as she reached out to the community for assistance and Dr. Camarin joined the team ready and willing to do what it took to get the work complete for the team and community. Trust was apparent as Dr. Colette took the reigns of preparing for implementation by guiding teams, set-up to adjust curriculum to meet the needs of the new expectations of math and science integration along with the new demands of certification exams. Integrity was interwoven as the high expectations of the community assume results will be of the highest quality graduation standards for our internal and external stakeholders who always expect the best from The District. Adaptability was especially important as the cultural context of each campus is unique and each needed the opportunity to adopt course sequences necessary for their students.

Themes that presented themselves were empowerment and cultural awareness. Dr. Celeste's demand for high quality leaders to be empowered to do what must be done started the visionary leadership to plan for implementation. This was intentionally included by Dr. Celeste and became a theme through the process of planning and preparation. Each administrator and counselor have the power to do what it takes to support students through the process of choosing an endorsement and completing it. Students are also empowered to change their minds. They can choose a new endorsement pathway in the middle of their high school career within the structure of this graduation plan. This allowance is the result of cultural awareness. It is an integral aspect of planning for the nature of high school students. The leadership team investigated the schools and the resources present within the schools. The history of what courses were taken and what teachers were prepared to teach. They listened to the requests of parents through surveys. This was all to prepare for cultural awareness. These two themes continue throughout the comparative case study presented in the following chapter with new awareness added to the realities of empowerment and cultural awareness from the perspective of administrators, counselors, and teachers at each of the most economically disadvantaged high schools in The District.

Initial sensemaking shows that the complexities of implementing a new graduation standard in the state required tremendous planning and preparation from The District. Expectations from stakeholders for excellence in every aspect of district activity put pressure on the visionary leadership team to perform to exceptionally high standards. This responsibility for interpreting and planning for implementation was taken seriously by the leaders who grew professionally through the process of preparing the district for

the new graduation standards. The networks required for the process of interpretation

integrated professionals at every level of The District requiring trust, integrity and

adaptability which resulted in increased cultural awareness and empowerment.

Chapter V

Comparative Case Study

This chapter is a comparison of how HB5 was implemented at West and East High Schools. Understanding the implementation process across the two most economically disadvantaged schools in this fast-growing, suburban district will provide insight into the process of implementation for The District which may help others around the state improve HB5 implementation. Assessing how both schools implemented HB5 within the framework, established by the visionary leaders, will provide a valuable opportunity to learn more about the new graduation pathways in The District.

Examining the individualities of context found in each school, along with the roles of participants, will help understand policy implementation from the people who work directly with students. Since policy was examined in detail in chapters two and four, we will start with the context then explore the people. Each context and the people who work there will be described together. There were 12 participants in this comparative case study with 6 employed at each high school; two of each administrators, teachers, and counselors. West High School will be presented first. Principal Miller and Assistant Principal Monroe, both Caucasian females, represent the administrative team. Mrs. Newman and Mrs. Nicely, also both Caucasian females, are the teacher representatives. Mrs. Rogers and Mrs. Thomas, both African-American females, are the counseling interviewees. East High School Principal Marshall and Associate Principal Donaldson, both Caucasian males, are the administrative representatives. Mrs. Eastermann, an African-American female, and Mrs. Clevenger, a Caucasian female, are the teacher focus group members. Finally, the counselors attending the interview, Mr. Randall and Mrs.

Church, are both Caucasians. Data will be presented according to the high school, followed by role in the school. The principal, at each school, selected the participants to invite to speak about their experiences implementing HB5. The principals had to agree to participate over the summer by pre-reading the initial three chapters in the study, along with the focus group questions. East High School's Principal Marshall reluctantly agreed.

Sensemaking principles will be used to analyze the data, as they were in the previous chapter. Identity construction, retrospective, enactive of sensible elements, social, ongoing, focus on extracted cues, and driven by plausibility are the areas of interest for sensemaking (Weik, 1995). Analysis of the seven aspects of sensemaking will be first followed by themes.

West High School

West High School, built early in the 21st century, is located north of a major thoroughfare which bisects The District. Its first graduating class was before 2010 as it rolled out new zoning to prevent distressing the community over high changes in the middle of their high school career. This means, in the initial school year, there was only a freshman class in attendance at the high school.

Even though the school is less than 15 years old, there was a recent bond issue to update the technology around the district. As a result, the school has interactive smartboards in every room as well as WIFI connections. There are multiple computer labs in the school and two cafeterias. The school is designed with one wing as athletics and the opposite wing for 9th graders, which also houses the performing arts stage, 9th grade cafeteria, and two stories of classrooms. Administrators use golf carts to get from

one wing to the other expeditiously, whereas students have seven minutes to walk to classes.

Security is a high priority. It is essential for administrators and office staff to do tardy sweeps of the hallways at the close of passing time, during first and seventh periods, as well as during all lunches. Truancy is a problem; administrators perpetually fight to prevent students from being late to class. The school has video surveillance cameras all around the building, including secure entries that require ID cards and security badges to enter without going through the office. People are able to leave without going through these measures.

West High School has a variety of students from mostly impoverished backgrounds. Total enrollment is over 3000, with a student to teacher ratio of 16:1. There are over 200 teachers employed at West and around 800 students in each grade level. Ethnicities are listed on the state accountability website (data rounded to protect the identity of the district and school): African-American 20%, Hispanic 51%, Caucasian 20%, American Indian 1%, Asian 4 %, Pacific Islander 1%, and Multi-Ethnic 3%. Nearly 60% of the students enrolled are economically disadvantaged, 10% are language learners, special education students are around 9%, and the mobility rate is around 15%. When looking at the state averages, these numbers closely resemble the state data.

Performance data, according to the school report card, shows students are performing better than state averages. Looking at one specific standard, "Approaching Standard on All End of Course Exams," 80% of students at West High School are meeting this standard when the state average is 75%. None of the tracked ethnic groups

listed dips below the state average on any of these tests as tracked in the "Approaching Standard" category.

Table 5.1 – West High School Data on End of Course Exams: Approaches Grade Level

	State	West	African-American	Hispanic	Caucasian	Amer. Indian	Asian	Econ. Disadv.
All subjects	75%	80%	75%	75%	81%	80%	90%	80%
Reading	72%	68%	65%	65%	70%	85%	80%	65%
Math	79%	85%	85%	85%	85%	-	90%	85%
Science	79%	90%	85%	85%	95%	-	100%	85%
Social Studies	77%	96%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%

Even though West High School is successfully teaching the core subjects, they still have a higher than 40% student population at risk of dropping out. The actual dropout rate was over 1% in 2017. Percentages of ethnic groups that dropped out were: 7% American Indian (statewide 2.7%), 1% African-American (statewide 1.1%), 1% Hispanic (statewide 2.4%), and 1% Caucasian (statewide 1.1%). Asian, Pacific Islander, and Multi-Ethnic students did not drop out.

The staff is also diverse at West High School. 15% of the staff is African-American (statewide 10.2%), 4% Asian (statewide 1.5%), 1% Multi-Ethnic (statewide 1.1%), 1% American Indian (statewide 0.4%), 14% Hispanic (Statewide 26.6%), and 65% Caucasian (Statewide 59.8%). There aren't any Pacific Islander staff members. Most members of the staff have their bachelor's degree (70%) and 30% have a master's degree or higher. The average number of years teachers have been in the field is around 10 years with the state average being 10.9. Teachers earn around $56,000 a year based on this level of experience.

West High School staffing roles provide insight into student management. There are 8 administrators on site. There are ten members of the counseling team which are divided alphabetically amongst all 4 grade levels. One of them is designated the lead counselor with a drop-out prevention facilitator as well. The testing facilitator is grouped with the counselors and a grant-funded member of the team is included as well as the school psychologist. The grant-funded employee is employed to support high school students as they apply to colleges and universities, request financial aid, and submit scholarship applications. Two district police officers are assigned to the campus as well as two school nurses and one clinical aide. The departments are: registrar, student support, English, Electives, Fine Arts, Languages Other Than English, Mathematics, Physical Education, Science, Social Studies, and Special Education.

West Administrators. Principal Miller and Assistant Principal Monroe were the representatives of the administrative team. Principal Miller is a tall, fit Caucasian woman in her mid-40s. She has an optimistic, outgoing nature. We met initially in her office then had the focus group in an administrative conference room. Principal Miller always has a smile in her eyes and uses her sense of humor to cope with difficult situations. She has been in education for 21 years, working in both junior and high schools. She started out as a teacher and worked up through the system into administration. This is her 8th year in administration. Assistant Principal Monroe is assigned to work with special populations. She is a petite Caucasian woman in her mid-40s with a bright voice and has experience at all levels of education. She has been in education for 19 years. This is her 9th year in administration. As part of her role, Assistant Principal Monroe is the administrative representative on special education committees and connects with parents and students.

Both administrators are focused on meeting the academic needs of students and supporting them through graduation.

Beliefs. Both administrators are dedicated to education in the community. Principal Miller is passionate about supporting both the teachers and students in her school. She grows future leaders through a mentorship program. This program empowers members of her team to continue their education and take on leadership roles. She has a two-year cycle for mentoring potential leaders where they communicate their aspirations, creating opportunities within her campus to help them grow towards their goals. She believes in connecting with students personally, as well. She inspires kids by participating in after-school groups as a mentor who is actively leading her students. Principal Monroe believes in being present throughout the day and at after-school activities. She blends in with the kids and always has an ear to the student community, so students have access to an administrator they can trust. She is also passionate about providing a voice for student rights at special education and 504 meetings. She ensures they have the information required to make realistic, informed decisions about what they want to do after high school. She believes in being a voice of reason if a special needs student aspires to something that may be temporarily out of reach. There will be an example of that in the next section.

Leadership. The two administrators have had roles in HB5 implementation since the roll-out from central office in 2014. Each presents varying perspectives on the process. Principal Miller was located at West prior to HB5 implementation. Assistant Principal Monroe was at a junior high school across town during roll-out and was

recently promoted to work at West. This difference in point-of-view is beneficial to this research, as it shows more facets of initial implementation.

Principal Miller. When asked about implementation roles, Principal Miller responded with confidence. Part of her confidence was rooted in formerly having Dr. Camarin on staff before she transitioned from lead counselor at West into the visionary leadership team. Camarin's connection to the West Campus was a huge source of support for her during the interpretation phase of planning. During implementation, the roles were reversed, and the principal referenced a resounding confidence because of their connection to Camarin in times of confusion or need. Principal Miller said of this connection to the visionary interpreter, "A lot of times, I find myself telling them (other principals) certain things. At this point in time, now that we have been through it several years, everyone's on the same page." Aside from connecting with Dr. Camarin, she said a great deal of her information about implementation came from group training sessions over the summer prior to the 2013-2014 school year. Additional opportunities were presented during the school year and embedded in the counselor training. Principal Miller took pride in attending that training session with her counselors.

Principal Miller and her administrative team made sure teachers received extra administrative support during early implementation. Initially, they focused on elective teachers to ensure they were well-trained on the nuances of the endorsement plans and emphasized pulling aside the career and technical education instructors for extra building level training. She talked about how the administrative team coached the teachers during initial implementation providing building level cues for implementing HB5. The

administrative goal was to help CTE teachers through identity construction as their roles adjusted within the high school community.

Principal Miller said that the original stock presentation from the central office did not work and that the initial information session presented to the community has been modified. Families in the community did not attend the first information session, so the administrative team retrospectively analyzed what did not work to create an improved presentation. Principal Miller said of the updated information session, "You need to pick an endorsement, but do not be overly concerned now, coming into your freshman year. We will take care of your child and make sure they are going through the right pathway." Attendance has not changed much, but they post the PowerPoint online, and stream the presentation for digital attendees. With this change in means of attendance, they have closer to 200 parents, or students, they do not know for sure who accesses the information in person or online. Plausibility of more attendees helps them have hope for future improvements.

There were obstacles to implementation besides communication with the community. When the 4x4 plan and HB5 were being offered simultaneously, Principal Miller was aware of the complicated balancing act the counselors endured.

> When a student lost credits and was no longer in a specific cohort and was
> classified as a sophomore but credit-wise was a freshman, understanding
> where they fit in the graduation process required guidance from the central
> office. There were four years of this type of negotiations. It was a
> "Hallelujah" moment when that juggling ended. Getting parents to not
> overly stress about their child's endorsement has also been a challenge.

College-bound parents are the most engaged in their student's education

and convincing them at the universities do not evaluate endorsements and

focus on the level of AP, SAT/ACT scores, community

engagement/volunteer work, and class rank over all other statistics.

Principal Miller understands communication is a primary obstacle at West and has

worked to bridge the information gap by diversifying access to school information.

Principal Miller noted students often understand they want to go into a specific field, like

the medical field, but do not know what area. She said, "By the time a student finishes the

medical pathway, they realize it is not just doctors and nurses. There are so many caveats

to that field." The obstacle of students not knowing specifically what they want to do in

life after high school can be overcome. Each of these three obstacles were repeatedly

discussed: juggling the two graduation plans when they overlap, parents believing

endorsements are equivalent to majors in college, and students not knowing what path

they want to take, so they struggle with finding an endorsement in high school.

Assistant Principal Monroe. Assistant Principal Monroe was differently prepared

for HB5 implementation without direct social connection to the visionary leaders. She

referenced the need to do fact-checking with the counseling team to verify cues received

in training prior to entering into a meeting with parents. Assistant Principal Monroe also

does her best to stay up-to-date on the training available from The District. She said the

counselors are building level experts on HB5 and they are ongoing supports to the

administrative team throughout the year.

The role of Assistant Principal Monroe communicating with parents of special

education students is more personalized. She uses her time in special education meetings

with the parents and students to maintain communication pathways. She talked about the complications when students struggle to pass courses required for graduation. She said it may not be possible for a student to keep an endorsement like STEM if they cannot pass Algebra I. When this happens, or looks like it may happen, she has an early conversation with them about how it is alright to change endorsements, and on the occasion where a student may need to graduate without an endorsement, the conversation is carefully crafted by starting with a statement like this, "Okay, your kid may need to move from the 26 credit graduation plan to the 22 credit one." This is also usually followed up with a conversation about the importance of being ready for university and starting at a junior college may be the best path for these students. The goal of HB5 is preparation for life after high school and this administrator helps keep the student and family aware of the possibilities for the kid when they finish high school, even when they are in special education classes. Assistant Principal Monroe added, "Most of our parents are supportive. They are realistic, knowing the expectations and their kids. Since they know what to do, most of the time it is not an issue." She later went on to discuss the realities of having this conversation as early as possible with the student and their family. She said when a student hears information like this in their junior or senior year for the first time, it can be a shock and an opportunity was missed at an earlier meeting. The importance of clear communication with both parents and students about graduation requirements is emphasized here as essential in supporting students through their high school career.

Assistant Principal Monroe talked about the confusion of parents as they tried to understand that endorsements are not like college majors. She said it is a conversation repeated yearly with parents of college bound students. Endorsement flexibility was not

understood by parents, either. They were concerned that once an endorsement was selected they had to stick to that pathway. Assistant Principal Monroe works to inform one set of parents at a time as she encounters them at sporting events, and parent meetings. She patiently lets them know how HB5 works and that each child has tremendous flexibility within the new graduation plan.

Reflection. Both Principal Miller and Assistant Principal Monroe believe implementation of HB5 has been incredibly successful. Principal Miller stated it may not look like the same success found at other campuses, but if the goal is college and career readiness for life after high school then they are more successfully preparing students than policies prior to HB5 did. She attributes their success to collaboration, social sensemaking, and while West is not perfect, students have the resources to make informed decisions. Principal Miller showed enthusiasm when she referenced students talking about their programs.

> The excitement is palpable when they are nearing completion of an endorsement. They can talk to you more about things and you can see the excitement when they are nearing the end. When they get through the weed-out courses, they get to the stuff they are really interested in and we get to see the excitement.

Principal Miller expressed tremendous pride in the accomplishments of her students and staff. Assistant Principal Monroe added to this line of thinking, "The endorsement gives them a little taste of what they want from life. If they don't like it, they know before making the decision and going to college. They can get a little taste of what could be and

continue if they enjoy it." This concept of sampling is welcomed by staff members who support student success in high school, and potentially in life after, as well.

When asked what is necessary for continued success with HB5, there was a moment of contemplation. Principal Miller mentioned it is important for students to feel engaged with content whether they participate in a specific endorsement or not. She talked about exposure to concepts through clubs reinforcing what is taught in the classroom as being an essential recruiting area for teachers. She said, "We have the largest FCCLA organization in the district. They have exposed the kids to a ton of home-making type careers and avenues. It's not just 'Home Ec.' anymore. They have done a really good job of exposing our students at the national level to those types of things. We're seeing success here." Assistant Principal Monroe added that success depends on teachers who do recruiting for club membership. "We need strong, student-centered, passionate teachers to continue recruiting for their subject areas, so programs continue growing over time. Teachers have to build and sell their courses, so kids get excited to participate." Principal Miller added, "Kids talk real quick and we notice programs where teachers are not as 'gung-ho' and guess what happens? No one signed up for the class." If it is the teacher's only certification then they could lose part of their contract the following year. Miller added that their fastest growing endorsement area is health sciences. In order to continue growing this department, they are going to need help from the district to continue getting highly qualified teachers to work who have the prerequisite field experience. Continued success is on the horizon, but it is going to take the entire team to keep successfully implementing endorsements in the fast-growing areas in which students are most interested.

West Teachers. This research will study the sensemaking process of two teachers who went through HB5 implementation. The CTE Department Chair, Mrs. Newman, and Health Sciences Teacher, Mrs. Nicely, were the two teachers in the West High School Focus Group. The interview took place between two rooms, a health classroom where Mrs. Newman works and then we traveled to the health sciences classroom where Mrs. Nicely instructs students potentially interested in medical careers.

Mrs. Newman is a tall, outspoken Caucasian woman who is passionate about her role at West High School as CTE Department Chair. She has worked in education for over 20 years and has worked in two separate facilities in The District. She is incredibly knowledgeable about her field and takes her responsibility to prepare students for life after high school seriously. Being the voice of the department, she represents herself and the administrators with reciprocal communication obligations to the teachers on her team. Mrs. Newman has been in this role through the initial and current implementation of HB5. She has worked to ensure her team is transparently aware of their role implementing the new graduation plan as explained by the central office staff.

Mrs. Nicely is a petite, fit, Caucasian woman who was hired to teach an introductory health science course, which holds certification opportunities when pursued through the capstone course. Her first year in the district, she was working on her certification while learning the curriculum under the direction of a mentor. Her first year was also the first year of HB5 implementation. Mrs. Nicely worked on identity construction during the early years of HB5 implementation and recognized cues regarding the fundamental connection between the instruction a medical professional receives and that of the educator. She has an additional role within the building as a

member of the Campus Improvement Team. This is a position focusing on what is happening in the building and any needs that may need to be addressed. This committee has members from the community, from each department, and often has student voice as well. Participation on the campus improvement team is a privilege. Participants are invited to attend. She takes her role on this committee seriously and sees her representation on the team as important as when she speaks to the state of The District with the community as a district representative. Mrs. Nicely said of the responsibility, "I try to be involved not only here on campus but on things that take me out of the campus where I am still representing The District as a whole." She is a proud educator in The District.

Beliefs. Both teachers believe they are making a difference in the lives of their students. The Department Chair sees herself as a voice for the CTE department across The District, not just with the families around West. Community members seek her out, asking questions about the endorsements and how they work. Mrs. Newman talks about the disposable nature of material possessions amongst modern families and how she aspires to help students recognize the alternatives to throwing away a dress when they rip a hem. Mrs. Nicely believes it is important to inform kids about the realities of working in the medical field by providing hands-on opportunities. She believes the greatest challenge for kids in this generation is their unprofessional use of language and electronic addictions. She said it is equally important to work with kids outside the classroom to really get to know them through club sponsorship. She believes in the value of quality time spent with an adult leader in the community.

Leadership. Both teachers are leaders in their department and both have the ear of their administrators. Mrs. Newman is the leader as the department chair and Mrs. Nicely is a leader as a campus improvement team member.

Mrs. Newman. Mrs. Newman's professional focus is on preparing all kids for life after high school. She is dedicated to the new graduation policies set forth by HB5. She said, "that made us NOT the evil step-child, and the forgotten one. It brought us into 'Oh…' other people go, 'Oh, you do have value.'" She said that the new pathways have improved perceptions about the career and technical education department at West and across the district. She is proud to be the voice of her team under this new legislation.

Mrs. Newman said the teacher role in communicating with staff was mostly on the shoulders of the CTE Department Chair. She said informing the community is a high priority. One of her new responsibilities is ensuring teachers become knowledgeable not only about their course but also the subsequent options in the series along with other courses in the department. This is the foundation of job security for teachers of CTE courses where the teaching contract depends on preregistration. Students readily collect social cues from the teachers with whom they enjoy spending time and energy.

Mrs. Newman works with clubs, Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Future Business Leaders of America, and Future Farmers of America. These four clubs at West High School have the largest membership in the district and have provided multiple scholarship opportunities for students. Mrs. Newman said of a particular student,

> A young lady that went to nationals in fashion construction has $24,000
> worth of scholarships to FIDM, which is the Fashion Institute of Design

and Merchandising. And she did this as a junior and she is getting ready to come back as a senior. She has had principles of human services, then she took a fashion design class, she's had fashion merchandising, so she's working her way through. We don't technically… that's not a designated pathway. There's not a fashion pathway, she's taken every class that pertains to fashion. I have no inkling that she won't do well. And, she's an AP student. She's managed to balance AP classes with regular classes that are helping her.

Mrs. Newman talked about a student success story and how she worked within the multidisciplinary endorsement to create her own fashion-focused coursework that was aimed for college preparedness. Within her role as club sponsor, she has witnessed this junior participate in the national competition last year for a scholarship and win. There was tremendous pride in the student's industrious nature and follow-through. She said the new graduation plan provides students the structure and flexibility to pursue their interests while meeting other long-term goals. The role of clubs is to provide support to students who are cautious to endeavor away from the AP course work and stay away from courses that would lower their GPA. When students participate in the clubs, they either get reinforcement of concepts taught in their classes, or they are provided a means of attaining access to instruction that would otherwise be unobtainable based on personal or family goals for their future. Mrs. Newman emphasized the importance of clubs on high school campuses to bridge the emotional and intellectual needs of students.

She also addressed obstacles she sees in implementing HB5. Her focus is not on the kids but on the engagement of parents.

The district put out PowerPoints, and the counselors had parent night

where they came in… when they started implementation. And then it has

carried through every year; they have the parent night and they explain the

endorsement procedure…. I haven't attended one in a while… I'm sure

that, you know, it hasn't really changed much… but they did a good job

rolling that out… but the problem is that the parents don't show up, they

cannot be educated about it. We've got to do something … and this is a

dry subject…. So, a lot of parents are worried about going from job A to

job B and they are relying on the kid … it's kind of like free range

children. 'Hey, I fed you, I clothed you, you've gotta take care of this.' It's

not to the parent's fault because you know the struggle is real. You've got

to continue on. But we've got to make it more kid-friendly, so the students

understand why the pathways are important.

Her complex response to the question about obstacles shows many elements of

frustration. Superficially, there is a lack of engagement in the school by the parents.

Second, she admitted to not engaging in the learning opportunity and referenced a lack of

faith in the system to adapt to the needs of the parents and presenting a dry informational

PowerPoint repeatedly. Then she labeled the students "free-range" while addressing the

need to speak directly to the children who are ultimately the decision makers about their

future.

Mrs. Nicely. Mrs. Nicely's focus is on preparing students for their career options

in the medical field. One of the courses she teaches is a sampler course where students

get to have hands-on experience learning the basics of specific fields of medicine,

including, but not limited to: x-ray technician, dental hygienist, phlebotomist, nurse, doctor, emergency medical technician, and veterinary assistant. She thought aloud about the marketing necessary to hook potential students in her program,

> We do have a night in the spring when incoming freshmen can come and learn about all the electives but there is just not enough parent involvement. We need to make that easier for the students… or market it more. Let the parents know how important it (the information night) is. We put it on the website, and I don't know if they (junior high families) need to have … I don't know, because I haven't actually looked at the junior high websites to see, do they put it on the junior high websites? Do they send notices home?

She talked about how important the evening opportunities are for meeting potential students that she is willing to give up her own family time for events like this. Unfortunately, Mrs. Nicely alluded to the poor attendance at these family nights and does not know to whom the attendance concerns should be addressed. This demonstrates a desire amongst the teachers to inform their students and community about the benefits of enrolling in their classes, along with a disconnect with the realities of obtaining attendance to essential informational opportunities.

Mrs. Nicely tries to make the realities of working in the industry understandable for her students. She says her students struggle with professional filters when interacting with each other, often lacking the professional decorum to articulate what they are thinking.

Cell phones. Language. I tell them all the time that cell phones cause

distractions and distractions kill patients. We show some real-life

examples of that. Like Dennis Quaid's twins almost died from a heparin

overdose. That's real-life drama unfolding on 60 Minutes. They can

watch… the language …. "If you talk like this with your friends…" When

you're coding a patient and you're losing them and the family is watching

you and you're cussing you are going to lose your job. You have got to

have it (cussing and cell phones) not be your safety net and not be your

every day. You have to be professional.

These are typical issues for teachers in high schools around the country and Mrs. Nicely's

instruction helps them focus on the expectations of professional decorum in the industry

they are exploring.

Reflection. Attitudes towards success of implementation specifically say the

programs are successful. Mrs. Newman cites the evidence of club participation and

multiple endorsement pathways hiring new teachers to meet student demand for the

programs. Nicely agreed that the programs have been successful, as her endorsement

hired a new teacher this year. Mrs. Nicely also tracks her students' acceptance to the

programs at The District's central CTE campus. She said,

I am very fortunate that at least my students last year had 100%

acceptance to the CTE campus for the ones that wanted to attend. I keep

track of that… not all teachers keep track… I like to brag on my kids

when we get together. So, I keep track of who applied and what they

applied for. Plus, when they come back as seniors, I can remember… now

that I have had 3 graduating classes…. It's already starting to be too much

to remember.

Mrs. Nicely values success data about her students and the programs in the district,

allowing her to design a way to track their success without the assistance of The District.

This pride in guiding students and successful instruction is her evidence of successful

implementation of HB5.

Attitudes towards requirements for future implementation focus on adding

certifications or giving credit to The District for all the certifications offered and

completed. Mrs. Newman said they have offered multiple certifications for years and the

state has not given them credit for the work students have completed. This lack of credit

concerns the CTE Department Chair because it undervalues student achievement. Mrs.

Newman said,

They are wanting… what goes into your accountability rating are, how

many kids have gotten their Emergency Medical Technician

certifications? How many kids have passed the Microsoft Operating

System certification for business? The Microsoft office certifications are

what those are. We are looking at those things. Those skills will make

them employable or more enticing to an employer. From my class they go,

if they choose to go over to the CTE Campus it's not a prerequisite to go

over there. But, I have already given them basic safety and sanitation.

They go to the CTE Campus and they have to pass the test for ServeSafe,

which is the industry standard for safety and sanitation in fast food and

restaurants. Employers have told me if they can already have that

certification, that is one less thing I have to pay for. We are seeing that

pull in. I think the endorsements have helped streamline where we need

the certifications. That's going to help our kids be more successful.

While answering the question, she also voiced concerns about the district getting credit

where credit is due from the state. There is tremendous success as far as students

receiving certifications, but when The District does not get credit, it concerns everyone

involved. Mrs. Nicely nodded in agreement to Mrs. Newman's statements and added how

it is important to honor the hard work of the students. She reinforced that students need to

know what they are doing has a deeper meaning and lifelong purpose.

West Counselors. The counseling focus group took place in the counseling

conference room, which is a multi-purpose room intended for meetings and breaks. The

two members of the counseling team who attended the focus group were Mrs. Rogers and

Mrs. Thomas. It is important to note early that I had the least access to the West High

School counselors out of all the campus members interviewed. Not because of anything

specific, as they were both amenable to meeting; however, they were also the busiest of

all the team members who participated. Therefore, they stuck to business when answering

the questions and focused on school. Both Mrs. Rogers and Mrs. Thomas kept their

personal lives private, carefully showing the high value they have for keeping their

family connections to themselves. There was some data provided about their personal

views which will be interwoven into the interview responses.

Mrs. Rogers is a tall, African-American lead counselor who has been with West

High School throughout the HB5 implementation process. She is her late 30s or early

40s, vividly aware of the innerworkings of her department and has access to the complex

workings of the individuals in the department and their various responsibilities. Rogers has been in education for 17 years and worked with all three school levels, elementary, junior high, and high school. In particular, she has worked in the counseling role at the elementary and high school levels. It is her 8th year in The District.

Mrs. Thomas is a fit, petite African-American counselor working for West High School the same amount of time as Mrs. Rogers. They are friends outside work. Mrs. Thomas is more reserved when speaking, carefully contemplating her words before doing so. She was a late addition to the focus group as the person previously assigned to the interview called in sick. Mrs. Rogers communicated early that she has a heart for meeting the social and emotional needs of her students and will do what it takes to help her students successfully complete high school as prepared as possible for life afterwards.

Beliefs. Both counselors believe they have too many students on their caseloads and are concerned about their effectiveness. They also believe they have a responsibility to guide their students but also have a responsibility to support their social-emotional needs and not only in emergency situations. Mrs. Thomas talked specifically about the caseloads saying,

> If we had more counselors, then you could have a smaller caseload and it
> would be more manageable. As opposed to sitting at 515 kids, and we
> have all grade levels. We had to go to all grade levels because there used
> to be 2 freshmen counselors then everyone else had the 10th -12th. So
> everyone has 9-12th alpha split now.

Reorganization of the counseling team significantly affected the flow of work and focus of the individuals. This was detrimental to morale and the counselors are struggling to

keep the morale up as they do their best to meet the expectations of The District and the students they are responsible to guide. This change in the role of their position was deeply concerning to both counselors who are holding out, believing that there will be changes to the organization of the team next year.

    Counselor Leaders. As these counselors reflect on their experiences implementing HB5, this research will examine their role in implementation. Interviews demonstrated a level of engagement from the counselors far beyond the imagination. Each counselor takes an alphabetically assigned cross-section of the student body and are responsible for guiding their pathway to completion of graduation requirements. Upon the opening of a new high school in the district two years earlier, the West High School team lost one full-time employee in the counseling department which raised their caseloads over 500 per counselor.

    Mrs. Rogers. Mrs. Rogers talked about how the counseling team empowers teachers to guide students to register for the next courses in their endorsement. Instructors are trained on the required courses for the Foundation High School Plan (FHSP) and then become resources to students for additional information about their endorsements. Empowering the teaching staff to train students during preregistration on how to read the course catalogue has eased some of the pressure on the counseling staff. Teachers are able to facilitate initial course selection. West students and teachers turn to their counselors when they need additional guidance. With 500 or more students on each caseload, students are allotted 10 minutes preregistration meetings before spring break. Cross-training the educational staff makes it plausible to meet the needs of students and

some of the pressure during preregistration. Otherwise, the communication with staff is minimal from the counseling department.

Preparation for preregistration also involves completion of interest surveys in a program called Naviance. Mrs. Rogers described the program in a statement,

The district has implemented the Naviance programs. We're trying to capture the 9th graders because, of course, the hope is to have them very used to the program and benefit from it so that by the time they are seniors, it will become second nature to them, so right now… that's actually where I was when you came…. All 9th graders are taking a personality test. That's hopefully going to help them not only pick their classes for the rest of high school, but just to start thinking about a career – what type of career they would succeed in based on the personality.

Naviance collects data over time and it is implemented the first time in 8th grade and then continued throughout high school. This collection of data assists students first in choosing an endorsement by giving a personality test and then showing areas of strength and weakness based on their responses. In the end, it will help them gather what is necessary to apply for college and scholarships. This data is essential but not all are implemented with fidelity by the teams at the junior high schools, so it becomes one more thing the counselors must do when preparing for preregistration each spring. The window for preregistration is from late January to the first week in March. In this meeting, counselors ensure each student is registered for the correct courses to complete a pathway for graduation. The 10 minutes allotment per student does not take into consideration any behavioral concerns that require intervention or social-emotional counseling that must

take place, let alone the emergencies that arise and interrupt meetings. Mrs. Rogers is sensible of the counseling environment and has ongoing concerns about the plausibility of continuing next year with the same caseload structure in place.

An obstacle implementing HB5 discussed by the counseling team was the fickle nature of high school students who frequently change their endorsement pathways which undermines the completion rates. Mrs. Rogers addressed students changing their endorsements by saying, "If a student pretty much has completed their high school credits then they do qualify, or they meet their requirements for the multidisciplinary endorsement, so we have that to fall back on if all else fails. But, it's ultimately the counselor's responsibility to make sure the student has the required courses for the endorsement." The multidisciplinary endorsement is The District back-up plan if a student changes their endorsement too many times to compete an entire pathway. Luckily, this is one of the plans that can prepare a student for postsecondary studies or a career.

Mrs. Thomas. Mrs. Thomas has been building relationships with students at risk of dropping out and she said of one particular student, "You know you just help one and then get them across the stage and help them go on - you know, without a baby and go on to bigger and better things." She is concerned that these individuals will slip through the cracks considering her caseload. HB5 responsibilities for the counseling team has hindered their opportunity to implement social-emotional support by filling the time of counselors doing the tasks required to monitor course completion and enrollment in preselected pathways. This sense of foreboding was exacerbated with the reduction in counseling staff the previous school year at West and the team feels the loss.

Mrs. Thomas talked about the special education population that often requires special interventions in order to give students the opportunity to graduate with an endorsement. She said, "I worry about special education because they already have some kind of ailment where they may not be able to reach a certain potential so we're trying to get them employable." If the responsibility of The District is to prepare all students for life after high school then equitable opportunity for special education students must be provided to prepare uniquely abled students, even those with genetic differences, for some sort of career. Another concern is the fickle nature of high school students. Students talk and always look towards the best, sometimes easiest, most interesting options around them and if one of their friends has made a connection with a teacher or content area in another endorsement, then they are tempted to change their endorsement to the one they deem better. This need to change endorsements has complicated the responsibilities of counselors who want to do what is best for students and help them finish their pathway.

The counselor's role in communicating with parents follows the same basic template as was established by the visionary leadership team at the beginning of implementation. The administrators addressed the lack of alignment to community needs from the presentation by simplifying, or streamlining, the content. However, they are still not gaining access to a large number of parents. Participation has grown from 50 to around 200 participants out of around 3,000 students, but this is not considered acceptable to the counseling team. Thomas said,

> We don't have much parent involvement, so it's really hard for us to
> portray graduation information to our parents because we do hold the
> meetings, but they don't come. We have a little difficulty relaying the

information to the parents just because they don't show up. As counselors,

we are pretty well versed with HB5 but, it's just getting that information

trickled down to the parents and students.

The counseling team wants to improve participation but has no idea how to improve

relationships with parents when parents do not attend information sessions. Mrs. Thomas

made excuses for their non-involvement with their student's schooling saying, "On this

side of The District, our kids' parents don't work for a big firm. They don't work for the

Texans. They don't have these… whatever you are going to get, you are going to get on

your own blood, sweat, and tears." This is the counseling team's excuse for not

continuously reaching out to engage parents in the educational community.

Another obstacle to completion of endorsements is prerequisites. Prerequisites are

gateway courses into multiple pathways. Not completing these gateway courses also

affects student count in the upper level courses and staffing. Mrs. Thomas said, "Those

prerequisites actually hurt their programs because if the student doesn't technically have

that principles class, they are not supposed to go into any of the upper level courses

which could really affect their numbers." They are addressing this particular dilemma by

adjusting the registration process for students and focusing on the prerequisites instead of

the traditional PE, health, speech, or teen leadership courses other high schools in the

district focus on for freshmen. The counseling team has a plan for prerequisites but the

areas affecting special education students and indecisiveness of high schoolers is beyond

the counseling team's ability to prepare for the future.

Reflection. When counselors were asked about whether or not HB5 was

successfully implemented, their response was a resounding no. Their justification for this

response was the changing focus from social-emotional well-being to completion of courses. This change is referenced when Mrs. Thomas said,

> Students may fall a couple of times, but how are they going to recover? That's the counseling piece that I am fearful of. These kids… when something hits them it's not a big blow in my eyes. 'Oh, that's not too bad…' but it devastates them. That's like… this right here (indicating their hearts)… I just think that the basic things of food, water, shelter – you know on this side of The District is priority over endorsements. I don't know… I feel like we are missing the mark… It's a great idea… for these kids to save money and prevent wasting time in college but our kids are asking themselves, 'Can I even go to college?' I know we are The District but there are a lot of people in this school that need to just get a certification, so they can support their family.

This references the emphasis on college preparedness over career preparedness. She is unclear as to whether this is a building, district, or perhaps parent directive, but the drive to prepare students for university performance over obtaining a career is present in her statement. She hyper-focuses on Maslow's Hierarchy of needs referenced earlier by Mrs. Nicely. When a student has their basic needs met, then they are able to rise to the occasion of learning. The counselors emphasized repeatedly that there is a high population of students who will not attend university or college from their student population and that greater opportunity to become certified for careers available in the community is required to meet their needs. This is the counselor's justification for saying that HB5 was not successfully implemented at West High School.

Counselors believe there is a requirement for The District to implement specific programs for HB5 to be successfully implemented at West High School. The first is the program to meet the needs of the special-needs population – this would look like a mini-CTE certification school. This is where students could learn career specific skills that would be aligned to community needs and job opportunities. Necessary certifications would be provided in-house and when the student graduates they would begin earning money at their new job placement. In addition, the counselors discussed opportunities offered in the community that are not offered in The District like International Baccalaureate courses and partnerships with community or technical colleges that could potentially help students obtain an associate degree or job certification prior to finishing high school. These partnerships are not available within The District, which minimizes student opportunities for success or wasting time and money, in addition to being emphasized during implementation of the new HB5 graduation pathways. In a community with around 60% of the students living in economically disadvantaged households, saving money and time should be of the highest priorities when they need to get into the workforce to help their families overcome life conditions related to poverty.

East High School

East High School is located north of the large roadway that divides The District. It was built over 30 years ago, in the mid-1980's. The first year it opened, it only served 8th and 9th graders then rolled in each subsequent grade level yearly as those initial students progressed towards graduation. Significant rezoning took place to accommodate the once new high school, which was welcomed as students were being bussed across town to get

their secondary education. The District ensured none of the students enrolled in one of its high schools had to change their school of affiliation midway through high school.

Due to the age of the building, the district passed a bond issue to update the wiring to accommodate modern technology and renovate the interior of the school. This was completed a year ago and East High School is now a beautifully functional school on the inside. What was once a technological dungeon with dark spots for technology, is now a lovely facility which is inviting to those walking through its threshold.

Besides the obvious superficial improvements to the design of the school, the technology was also updated. The entire school was repainted, and carpeted or tiled. Lighting was improved as well. Classroom technology was updated to include interactive smartboards and WIFI connections. The multiple computer labs and the library underwent a major transformation of technology. They updated every aspect of the school including the office and the furniture. The library conference room where I met with the teachers had an enormous drop-down screen for presentations and a conference table for group meetings. Additionally, safety of the building has been updated with digital locks requiring an identification badge to enter. Those without badges must pass through the office and present state identification to enter the school. Safety is a high priority for The District, and it is evident in the upgrades to East High School. Students are required to wear student identification badges at all times when present on campus. This benefits students and staff. The badges are used in the library and cafeteria to access student accounts and to check out books.

East High School has a diverse population with nearly 3,000 students. Nearly 60% of the students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. There is a 17:1

student teacher ratio with just over 160 teachers on campus. There are approximately 700 students in each grade level and 50% are classified as at risk of dropping out. Ethnicity is tracked as 18% African-American, 1% American Indian, 7% Asian, 58% Hispanic, and 16% Caucasian. Approximately 9% are language learners and special education students are about 10% of the population. Interesting to note, nearly 50% are enrolled in career and technical education programs, and the mobility rate is 14%.

Performance data was rounded based on the school report card to protect the identity of the school district, school, staff members, and students. Two areas are not outperforming state averages on End-of-Course exams. Overall, 80% of all students are passing all exams. When looking at the data on the school report card labeled "Approaches Grade Level," there are areas of concern for economically disadvantaged and Hispanic students in the area of reading comprehension. Both categories of students are performing around 7% below state averages.

Table 5.2 – East High School Data on End of Course Exams: Approaches Grade Level							
	State	East	African-American	Hispanic	Caucasian	Amer. Indian	Asian	Econ. Disadv.
All subjects	75%	80	80	80	85	80	90	80
Reading	72%	70	65	65	75	85	80	65
Math	79%	85	85	85	85	-	90	85
Science	79%	90	85	85	95	-	95	85
Social Studies	77%	95	95	95	95	-	95	95

Data gathered from TEA School Report Card 2017

East High School has around 50% of the population at risk of dropping out; however, the official dropout rate for 2017 was just under 2%. Percentages of ethnic groups that did not graduate were 7% American Indian (statewide 2.7%), 2% African-

American (statewide 3%), 2% Hispanic (statewide 2.4%), and 1% Caucasian (statewide 1%).

The East High School staff is diverse. 15% of the entire staff is African-American (statewide 10.2%), 3% Asian (statewide 1.5%), 1% American Indian (statewide 0.4%), 16% Hispanic (statewide 26.6%), and 70% Caucasian (statewide 59.8%). There aren't any members of the staff who have identified as multi-ethnic or Pacific Islander. Just under 70% of the staff have their bachelor's degree with around 30% of the staff having a master's degree or higher. Teachers average around 13 years' experience in the teaching field and earn an average of $58,000 per year in salary.

East High School has allocated their staff according to disbursement of funds by the district. There are 8 administrators allotted by the district; principal, associate principal, four grade level assistant principals, an athletic director, and a building level or special populations assistant principal. They have seven counselors at East. Six members of the team are divided alphabetically across the four grade levels and one is designated specifically to prevent dropouts. There is an additional grant-funded guidance counselor who focuses on helping students through the university and scholarship application process. There are two registrars on the roster as well to help students enroll in school and maintain their paperwork and the building PEIMS coding. There are two police officers and four security personnel on campus and a special program, ROTC. ROTC is a leadership program offered on the East High School campus and nowhere else in The District. There are two full-time staff members dedicated to the team. The rest of the staff members are assigned to the following departments: Career and Technical

Education, English, Fine Arts, Languages Other Than English, Math, Athletics/Health, Science, Social Studies, Special Education, and Special Programs.

East Administrators. The two administrators interviewed from East High School are Principal Marshall and Associate Principal Donaldson. Each are new to their positions in The District but arrive with diverse experiences in administration.

Principal Marshall is a mature, tall, Caucasian man who is not an open book when it comes to volunteering information. He has a reserved demeanor that is incredibly protective of his staff and students. He is focused on his primary objective, graduating students. Principal Marshall has been in education for 28 years and has split his career between the junior and high school levels. His career has been divided between three districts with as high as 90% low socio-economic status on one campus. He has been in his current role within the district for the past three years, although he has been in the district for a total of six years. He described his role in his current placement as a top down policy implementor. He also stated he has been given tremendous latitude interpreting district policy directives in order to adapt them for the unique needs of his campus.

Associate Principal Donaldson is younger than Principal Marshall. He, too, is a Caucasian man of average height and build with lofty academic goals of completing his doctorate in professional leadership. He is currently enrolled in a program and looking at potential research topics. Associate Principal Donaldson has been in education for a shorter period of time than Principal Marshall; 12 years. His time in the district has been primarily in high school but across multiple positions. Before working as an associate principal, he worked his way up from a teacher position, to an instructional coach,

followed by assistant principal and now into his current role as associate principal of East High School. He worked for The District through the transition to HB5. He is focused at this point in time on the building and operations side of running the school as opposed to curriculum and instruction. Associate Principal Donaldson said he has required an adjustment period to change leadership perspectives. Previously, he was a grade level assistant principal who was focused on behavior and student management.

 Beliefs. East administrators believe the old 4x4 plan is the way to go when coaching students about the importance of preparing them for college, which is their primary goal. The resulting endorsements that are supported by this belief are STEM and multidisciplinary studies. They believe HB5 has missed the essential components of coaching students towards admissions requirements. The areas they emphasize when discussing this are the missing year in languages other than English and the missing requirement for physics, which sabotage students applying for university admissions.

 Leadership. Both administrators reflect on their perceptions of HB5 implementation based on their previous positions around the district and also talk about the specific characteristics of implementation as leaders of East High School. Their roles in implementation varied.

 Principal Marshall. Principal Marshall was principal when HB5 rolled out on the other side of The District in a more affluent environment where the parents were directly involved in their student's education. Principal Marshall agreed to the need for our counseling team as experts on this policy and went on to say there is still a reliance on the 4x4 model the universities prefer. Our students who are aimed for postsecondary education are informed that our graduation pathways do not align with university

expectations for admission. There is a university requirement to attend the highest levels of maths and sciences possible to get into facilities around the country and the changes to requirements for Languages other than English also hinder student acceptance. Students are informed on our campus on the role of endorsements in getting them graduated and then coached to ensure they have the information necessary to get into the college or university of their choice. Our role is to empower our staff to inform students about the realities of our graduation pathways and endorsements as a means for graduating, not getting into university. Principal Marshall says, "The District keeps the bar high regarding expectations for student performance and that helps us meet the demands from universities as we prepare students for success. HB5 is a means for graduation and that is what we focus on. The training we have received over the past six years has taught us that."

He discussed that the conversations and connections being made with kids are of highest importance. He also said if college and career readiness is the goal of HB5 that these conversations must be prioritized.

The administrative role communicating HB5 expectations and requirements with parents has changed since Principal Marshall has taken his new role. He has tried new things to meet the needs of parents and decided to have a second information night for Spanish speaking families. He said this of the event,

Our communication to our parents was initially streamlined from

The District through our central office and counselors through information

nights for parents who were concerned. I think that was probably the

struggle for this campus because we are still talking endorsements here

with our parents. I think what we found out last year, which has been a big

change for us… is there is a language barrier. Immigration status of our

parents is also a concern and prevents some of them from attending

information sessions. I would say that when we did a talk last time with an

information session in English and another information session in Spanish,

we had a lot of parents who had never gotten the endorsement talk until it

was presented by a Spanish speaking counselor. Then, they started

understanding not only the differences between PAP and AP and that level

of rigor, but they also started to better understand the endorsement idea of

where my kid would need to be or what they would need to take that year.

I think we received a lot of positive praise and feedback. I am not sure

how it was rolled out when the cohort first came through, but we are

continually crafting better ways to explain it to parents to help them

understand these pathways or these levels of endorsements.

Principal Marshall showed a deep pride in what was accomplished in the translated

parent night and said he is going to do his best to offer more opportunities like this in the

future. The better the administrative team gets to know their kids, the more they learn the

importance of understanding desires of the diverse group of learners present at East, and

the better they can customize their program. He went on to say, "Not all of our kids are

pursuing college, but we do need to prep them for career readiness." This reality took him

a bit to absorb, and in his second year at the high school, he is readily transitioning the

staff to better meet the needs of the community.

Finally, the lack of employable certifications is frustrating for the administrative team. They want more options available for their students with means for job placement upon graduation. Principal Marshall surmises that what is offered now is basically what was offered when HB5 was implemented six years ago and it is time to diversify. Obstacles aside, implementation is well underway in The District.

Associate Principal Donaldson. Associate Principal Donaldson, on the other hand, was working as an instructional coach across the district at a high school during the roll-out of HB5. He said when HB5 rolled out, he had a general idea about the requirements of HB5. His role as an instructional coach, and later, assistant principal, provided insight into the new graduation pathways and endorsements available. Even now, he relies on the expertise of the counseling team when issues arise regarding the HB5 plans.

The administrative role of communicating with staff is focused on student completion of courses and the expectation of graduating students. During the transition from the old 4x4 plan to the new endorsement graduation plan, Associate Principal Donaldson said they focused on identifying the cohort that was primarily affected by the new policies to ensure they were supported appropriately as they pursued graduation. He said the buzz words around campus were "college and career readiness." The teams focused on answering questions like, "Where can we place this kid who wants [this] pathway?" In the end, the goal was to prepare kids for life, so the administrative teams challenged staff to focus on what the district already offers and then look to aiming students to the resources that most closely fit their goals for college or career. Associate Principal Donaldson said one of the areas of empowerment for his staff is to spend more

time talking to kids, whether the adult is a counselor, teacher, paraeducator, or administrator. Conversations are being had with young people about what they want from life.

Obstacles to implementation emphasized by these two administrators not already mentioned are mobility, staffing, and certifications available. In this particular community, there are apartment complexes offering a free month of rent and waive last month prepayment along with the down-payment. This pattern is repeated across complexes in the region setting families up for a pattern of relocation every three months. Students and their families do what is required to survive in this community with high educational expectations drawing families into the community who desire the best education possible for their students. The course areas Associate Principal Donaldson mention being in the greatest demand are drafting/design and health sciences. The dilemma is that the people working in these careers earn much more than the average $58,000 average salary available working 13 years in The District. Plus, they will not earn this much at the beginning of their education careers. Enticing them away from their more lucrative position is difficult, and then when they get into the position, these new teachers also have multiple teaching preps and are overwhelmed by the demands of the profession. These new recruits often do not stay in the positions very long. Staffing is a problem without a foreseeable end.

Reflection. Attitudes towards success of implementation are positive from both Principal Marshall and Associate Principal Donaldson. HB5 gives guidance to the student who is not on the college bound path, which was not in existence with the old 4x4 pathway. Principal Marshall said, "I have seen the success here is some of our kids who

are more prepared to enter the workforce… We have been able to get them Microsoft certifications, welding certifications and I don't know that we couldn't do that before, but I think that there has just been more of an emphasis on it since HB5. That is a benefit of HB5." They both positively reflected on success since they joined the staff. Both said the team has improved over time and that neither of them is satisfied to keep things exactly the way they are. Associate Principal Donaldson said, "I think it is just not being afraid of trying different things and I think our principal is really good at getting feedback from our staff continuously of what we should adapt and what we should change. By no means was last year perfect, and so we are making tweaks." This willingness to admit there are needs and the focus on college and career readiness along with the ability to adapt for the community are the data they referenced when responding to the successful implementation of HB5. They both said in the end that HB5 was successfully implemented at East High School.

Requirements for future implementation to be increasingly successful is greater participation from the community. Associate Principal Donaldson addressed making parents feel more welcome and receptive to entering the school environment no matter their educational background or history in the community. He said specifically, "We hope to make the stigma of getting into an educational setting less daunting. This is a big challenge for us. We are always trying to craft and make parents and community members feel more welcome to come through our doors to be a part of the educational cycle with their kids." Principal Marshall said specifically he would prefer to have more staff; administrators, teachers, counselors, and support staff. Also, that relationships need to be built and the only way to do this effectively is to reduce the student to teacher ratio.

This is when he talked about the importance of a grant paid employee who works with the counseling staff to ensure college bound students receive the support necessary to apply to university and obtain funding for their schooling. He said this employee just arrived one day and announced what his role is in the school and that he has made a tremendous difference for their counseling staff. He said he would do anything to keep this role in his school if for any reason he lost the staff member. Associate Principal Donaldson added that it could be a dynamic teacher using half of their day to support the needs of college bound students and they went on a tangent describing the importance of the staff member. This team of administrators are on a pathway of accepting change, embracing the needs of the students in their care, and looking always for ways to improve.

East Teachers. The interviews with the teachers took place in the library meeting room. I never got the opportunity to see their classrooms. The meeting took place over a large, round table with room designed to seat a half-dozen people. In addition, it was the location for the department chair meeting at the start of the school day, so there was a time crunch to get the meeting over promptly with the principal stepping in at the end to set up for the meeting. The two participants were: Mrs. Eastermann and Mrs. Clevenger, both department chairs, one for the CTE department, and the other, history.

Mrs. Eastermann is a tall, young African-American woman. She is the CTE department chair. Eastermann was businesslike and focused on getting through the interview. In fact, she was cautious in the beginning when sharing. She has been in education for 10 years and her entire career has been at East High School. She spent the first eight years teaching digital graphics and then two years ago, was promoted to Chair.

She enjoys her work with the kids. She takes her responsibilities seriously in the CTE department and is networking to gain resources to help her students and staff.

Mrs. Clevenger is an incredibly fit, young, Caucasian woman. She is energetic, focused on student success, and a member of the female coaching staff as well as the department chair. She is entering her 8th year in teaching and her 7th year at East High School. She has a passion for teaching AP History to freshmen and repeatedly mentioned how much she loves her job. The AP Human Geography course she teaches has been her pride and joy. She is glad to help get freshmen ready for the academic responsibilities of preparing them to take future AP courses during high school.

Beliefs. Each teacher has very different perspectives about their role in the district. When asked about her role in implementing HB5, Mrs. Clevenger said, "I'm not teaching an elective – really, I know that they exist, and I know that kids need to choose their classes based on them. Beyond that, I think it is my own self-awareness of what is required and what has been going on more than a 'sit-you-down and tell you what is needed' kind of role." This shows a disconnect between her role as a teacher of AP courses and her role in the college preparedness endorsements available for graduation.

Teacher Leadership. The teachers have similar leadership roles in HB5 implementation. As a department chair, Mrs. Eastermann has received extra training regarding implementation of the new graduation plan and supporting the teachers in the CTE department. Department Chairs from around the district regularly assemble to discuss what is working and what needs to be improved within the CTE system. These meetings occur once every six weeks. Their training focuses on ways to push the certifications and gives them required information to represent students who may not be

best served by attending college. She uses this valuable information as Chair to guide the decision-making process regarding the workings of the department. Mrs. Clevenger was not aware her role of preparing students for participation in AP courses is integral to the college preparedness aspect of HB5. Her role is specifically to teach the survival skills required to learn the required information and strategies necessary to acquire knowledge and test well. These skills are essential to prove in this gateway course to future AP classes available at East High School.

Each of these teacher leaders use their role in the school to influence staff and students. As department chairs, they learn information from administrators as well as central office leaders that need to be disseminated to their coworkers. The training sessions take place at least once every six weeks for both department chairs. The resulting conversations take place in formal and organically informal settings. When the leaders return from their formal meetings, they hold formal meetings with their department members. The informal meetings are often hallway meetings occurring naturally through conversations that casually happen during the course of the school day. Topics vary in these meetings, but they cover details about the new graduation policy implementation that would not be covered otherwise. They often cover areas of weakness that need to be addressed like the cost of certifications or giving voice to students that would otherwise remain unheard.

Mrs. Eastermann. Mrs. Eastermann talked about the importance of bridging the information gap with parents. Her team does their best to communicate in a variety of ways. Eastermann said,

We do have a challenge because a lot of our parents are working maybe

two jobs or working the second or third shift. The great thing we offer, we

send out an email to families every week. That is something they can have

sent to their email to know what is happening on campus. We try to do

reminders, instead of relying on students to tell their parents the

information. They get the class information via text. Canvas is a big help.

That is something that parents can access online. Canvas and home access

help parents keep up to date.

This disconnect in communicating with parents is frustrating to the teachers. Even though the information is going out, the teachers say the information is not received by families. Personal conversations work the best because the parents just do not show up. They did mention that one of the last HB5 information sessions were more successful than in the past and the administration had translated the session into Spanish. This gave the teachers hope for future home communications and upcoming parent engagement.

There are obstacles to implementation that were referenced beyond the miscommunication received by non-elective departments and inconsistent parent involvement. Mrs. Eastermann was deeply concerned about hardware wearing out a year or two in advance of replacement by The District. She said,

"Cycling out technology every three years instead of every 5-6 is essential

because we have 180 kids using the Chromebooks or the laptops in a day

and 5 days a week. It's just wear and tear on the technology. Technology

slows down and the kids get frustrated. This wear and tear was actually

planned for by The District prior to implementation of HB5 and now that

the enrollment in these highly demanding CTE courses has risen, the

policies for maintaining the hardware in the department need to catch up

to demand. …The great thing about The District is they're on top of the

software programs that are in industry and that whether it is in welding or

it is in video production they're very good as far as kids getting that

experience. It's the hardware that just needs to be updated. That would be

a dream."

Software is supplied generously in The District at a high expense and the hardware is not

keeping up. Hardware that does not last through long enough for required coursework is

deeply concerning. Students need to stay motivated to complete their studies and

continue on the pathway they have chosen. If they become disheartened because of

lagging systems or dysfunctional connections between overused hardware and cutting-

edge software both become useless. Aside from this need, the team and the ones

previously mentioned as weaknesses, HB5 is being implemented as well as possible.

Mrs. Clevenger. Mrs. Clevenger discussed the importance of connecting with

parents in ways that help students. She said, "When talking about our school and the

programs we offer, we make sure parents understand we are trying to do this along a

certain path and to get kids to have this end-goal vision of what they want to do." These

tend to be personal conversations because when she has group information sessions,

parents don't show up. She has 180 students and when there are meetings for her students

after school, she celebrates when 10 family members show up.

Mrs. Clevenger emphasized they need data regarding how many students

complete their endorsements and what endorsements they received. The informal data of

getting a student engaged in a pathway towards a capstone course is evidence of success but they would still like to see the completion data of how many students started on these pathways and the comparative number of students who finished.

Reflection. When asked about their attitudes towards whether HB5 has been successfully implemented, the response was mixed. Mrs. Eastermann said,

> We don't necessarily see that data. If they are completing the endorsement
>
> that they are starting with when they came in as a freshman, we have a
>
> tendency to see the same kids… especially if they like the introductory
>
> classes, the principles classes in CTE. Once we can get a kid into CTE
>
> class, a lot of times they will stay in the CTE pathway whether it is in
>
> medical, business, engineering, Home-Ec or Ag. If they like the teachers,
>
> they stay.

The data the teachers have is informal to evaluate whether HB5 has been successful or not.

They both agreed future implementation requires a careful look at who is assigned to teach the gateway courses. These individuals are the marketing specialists for the rest of the courses in the program. Mrs. Eastermann said,

> The teacher that teaches the introduction classes, if they can engage and
>
> capture the kids' attention then they want to move on to the next level
>
> which allows us to offer more classes. We do have more classes in the
>
> course selection catalogue for next year so that is a good thing. When the
>
> kids express that interest then we see that there is some work that needs to

be done on our end and more classes need to be offered which align with student interests.

At this point in implementation, the health sciences courses and engineering courses have captured the attention of kids and the departments are growing. Administrators need to look at the other gateway courses to ensure that they are staffed by dynamic individuals who are prepared to sell the rest of the courses available in that pathway. Mrs. Eastermann also discussed the importance of bringing in representatives from the industry to mentor and prepare educational opportunities for students aimed at their profession.

> We try to bring in guest speakers from an industry or are possibly within a college that has a specialty. The welding school comes out to talk to our program. They just offered one of our students an opportunity. He created a project and got a scholarship for it. It is an unconventional guest speaker. We are not bringing in the university from downtown for a welding class. We bring in a certification program.

With opportunities like this, students get excited to participate in programs they can tangibly see will positively affect their future. Emphasis on these during future implementation of HB5 will positively affect connections made with students as they pursue graduation.

East Counselors. This section will introduce the counselors who participated in the focus group at East High School. The pseudonyms of the two participants are Mr. Randall, the department chair, and Mrs. Church, the longest standing counselor on the team. The interview took place in the counseling conference room. Mrs. Church is a

Caucasian woman near retirement. She is conservatively dressed in business casual attire. Interactions between the team were incredibly respectful and mindful of her experience in the field. The Lead Counselor is Mr. Randall, a Caucasian man who is in the middle of his second career. He was dressed business casual with dress shirt and slacks as well as dress shoes. He has experience in "corporate" in between his experience as a teacher and that of a counselor. He is outspoken, confident, well organized and highly values his time, keeping to the schedule as best he can.

Mrs. Church has been in the profession for over 39 years. She has experience working with kids from kindergarten to 12th grade. She began her counseling career in a K-6 school, though she was K-8 certified when she moved to Texas. In Texas, Mrs. Church began as a secondary teacher then worked for the last 13 years at East High School. She began working primarily with seniors to working with all grade levels. Their caseloads are divided alphabetically, and each team member works with 9th -12th graders. Special education and English learners are integrated into their caseloads as well. Counseling responsibilities have changed significantly over the past 13 years at East High School.

Mr. Randall has been in education for around 20 years and has been a counselor for the last 10 years. His experience is diverse having worked at an alternative, high-risk campus where most of the students are at risk of dropping out. He has been employed at East High School for the past 3 years and has experience earlier in his career as a secondary science teacher. He attributes his success in counseling to his work with kids "who really needed to have an adult involved in their lives" at the alternative campus. Mr. Randall has only worked for The District.

Beliefs. This counseling team believes HB5 represents a pendulum swing regarding graduation pathways. They said in a unified way they have been through this in the past and are taking it as standard expectations of the profession. They believe they are there to guide students towards graduation and this has always been the primary responsibility of high school counselors.

Counselor Leadership. This research will examine the counselor's role in implementation of HB5. Counselors at East High School are the backbone of HB5 implementation. Every person involved in the study at the school made it clear the counselors are the experts in the new graduation requirements.

Mrs. Church. The counselors are the translators of HB5 for staff members, students and their families. The counseling team explains how the courses from the 4x4 structure work within the new HB5 structures. Specifically, Mrs. Church said about HB5 implementation, "We have been doing HB5 unofficially without the structure that goes with it… well, forever because that is what a counselor does."

She said it concisely when she talked about what the kids tell her, "We (students) may not all be going to college. Or if we are going to college… wouldn't it be nice if we knew kind of about what we wanted to do before we hit college?" This is a moment of discourse that could have taken place between Mrs. Church and a student to get them started in the process of choosing a graduation pathway or endorsement. Right away, she unintentionally emphasized the importance of building relationships with students to help guide them towards successful completion of endorsements.

One of the roles of counselors when implementing HB5 with staff members is voicing staff recommendations for new courses to be offered at East. There was one

instance where a teacher in the engineering pathway wanted to teach an architecture course and if that happened, there would not be a capstone course for students already enrolled in his pathway. They had to decide as a team whether or not to propose the new course to administrators or keep him in a position where he would help students complete the penultimate course in the sequence. Mrs. Church said it was not a difficult decision for them but was rough for the teacher who changed jobs the following year. They are balancing the responsibilities of scheduling with the needs of students and staff. The ultimate decision is up to administration, but they have a voice in the feasibility of the process

Communication with parents is focused to an information session offered in January prior to preregistration. Mrs. Church said, "We try to be as efficient as possible by having a course selection night in early January. We try to get all this information out."

She talked about the lives of the parents in the communities and asked questions integral to the interactions between the counseling staff and community members,

Parents are just trying to earn a living and put food on the table but we're encouraging them to think about what your career will be? What are you going to study in college? What do you want to be when you grow up? We start that a lot earlier. Start looking at jobs. What are you going to do with your life? Do you like that job? What do your family members do? What do you want to do when you grow up? Really! We start that much earlier than we did 10 years ago. We start when the kids are 13 years old and in 8th grade.

Families in this community have tremendous trust in the expertise the staff at East High

School have in preparing their students for life after high school.

     Mr. Randall. Mr. Randall has strong opinions about the new graduation

requirements. He talked about the marketing from central office as HB5 was rolled out,

> We had most of these courses in place to begin with, but they just weren't
>
> packaged in groups. The district decided to meet state standards to figure
>
> out the sequences, and so forth. We've had some changes where classes
>
> are a little bit longer, two semesters instead of one, and things like that
>
> trying to meet those programs, and so forth. Those courses in the selection
>
> process has pretty much been consistent.

This is just a new set of labels for what they have always been doing as secondary

counselors, helping students graduate.

     Mr. Randall talked about his training from the university and how their training

prepares them for a balance of guidance from the perspectives of social-emotional

wellbeing and successful completion of graduation requirements. He said specifically,

> We all go into the business and were trained with the degrees to be
>
> supportive on the social-emotional but the way that counselors are
>
> implemented within the district in the numbers we have, if we followed
>
> the standard model there would be about 250 students per counselor.
>
> Instead, we have over 500 or roughly 500 per counselor. So, it literally
>
> becomes the majority of the focus on the academic side of it all.

This means high schools in The District have twice the caseloads recommended by

university experts who train them, and this enormous caseload has required that

counselors choose between the graduation status and the social-emotional wellbeing of their students. Emergent instances occur, stopping everything from progressing during the course of the school year; however, the priority has been established by The District to get kids through school physically with their social-emotional wellbeing a side concern even if it is a natural consequence and not implemented by design.

Like the team at West High School, Randall talked about limited time to meet with their students. He said it comes down to 10-minute meetings with each of their students to verify preregistration. In order to ease the chaos of these time-sensitive meetings with students, they are meeting with their teachers and verifying progress in courses. They are able to identify courses that would be in the best interest of the student for the following year based on the conversations with the teachers then make recommendations as well. For example, if a student has failed English I first semester and wants to register for AP English II for the following year to prepare for college, the counselor can make informed decisions with the student based on their goals for their coursework and plans after high school. Without these meetings with their teachers, they would go into the meeting with the student blind of the realities of the classroom and perhaps guide them towards the wrong path. This is a new plan based on what happened last year in hopes of expediting the meetings with kids.

Mr. Randall said, "Our staff love kids here and this is an amazing staff. Our kids need kind support." This is essential no matter the school but especially important with 50% of the students at risk of dropping out. The counselors did not voice they are the HB5 experts on campus, but they did talk about answering questions from all levels of

stakeholders. Teachers and administrators feel as free to lean on the expertise of the counseling team as do the students.

Mr. Randall said there was one successful parent engagement session with parents where they provided the first Spanish translated session in the history of their school during the last school year. They were impressed with their new Spanish speaking counselor and how well she connected with the community. They were surprised they did not think to do this earlier. There is a reliance in the process the administration sets up for mass communication with the families in the community. Unless, there is some sort of emergency in the works, the counseling team does not have the time to reach out to families individually.

Mr. Randall talked about the way the parents entrust their kids to the educational system saying they drop off their kids at our doors and step back waiting for the system to work. Their role in communicating with parents is one of representing the needs of the community through advocation for the needs the students express to them. This is a chance for the counselors to be the voice for the community as long as connection is somehow made with the families.

Reflection. Mrs. Church and Mr. Randall reflected on the success of HB5 implementation. They said there are more hands-on classes for students to explore what they want from life before wasting money on things they won't like after high school. Hands-on experience is also good to reinforce their learnings in core classes. Mrs. Church said about the role of CTE for the average students enrolled, "We have a huge number of kids that are in that middle area that can be properly serviced with CTE courses and given an opportunity to be successful in their lives. It may be a stepping stone to other aspects

or even being very successful financially with some of the skills that they will be able to obtain through a certification." This addresses the needs of the middle two quartiles of students who need hands-on learning opportunities though certification processes that may lead either to college or careers after high school. The counselors talked about advanced students who are college bound in the context of implementing college prep courses like those expected on the other side of the district. Mr. Randall said the following about the high achievers and those who aspire to careers in a STEM field,

> They can take AP classes which is probably more in line for a student who is competing to get into a nice university. If they want to be in the top 10% of your class, students will take more advanced placement classes. That's meeting HB5 requirements in the sense that you are dealing with STEM, or so forth… But, STEM, for a high achiever, is going to be more AP classes. AP comp SCI, AP BIOLOGY, AP Chem., AP Calc; whereas, you take a student who may not perform as well academically you are going to find the principles of engineering, engineering design, more of the auto-CAD type programs. What's nice about HB5, is those kids are getting exposed to a post HS education or career path that may have been overlooked with the old recommended HS plan. Not all those kids may be successful in chemistry and physics, yet, they can still have a STEM endorsement.

Evidence was found for the upper three quartiles when the counselors were asked about the success of HB5. When the counselors were responding about those who struggle most in high school, they said they struggle to get 25-30% of their students to graduate under

the Foundation High School Plan without endorsement and that happened in the previous system with the Minimum High School Plan as well. This is what Mr. Randall said about those who struggle to graduate,

> We struggle at this high school to get enough of our students to graduate on the full graduation plan, whether that be the foundation with an endorsement, or if we roll back a few years the recommended plan … or if we roll back to some on the minimum requirement plan. Getting the kids to stay in the full graduation path is a challenge in itself. We have about 25-30% of our students that do not meet that criteria at the end of the year under HB5.

Based on these mixed messages about the successful implementation of HB5, it is unclear as to whether the counselors believe HB5 was entirely successful. Their messages report that it was a benefit to the students who would have likely graduated under the previous system giving them hands-on differentiated opportunities to graduate but if HB5 was designed to meet the needs of the most struggling students in high school then HB5 was no more successful than the previous legislation.

The counselors' views on what is needed for improved future implementation were more complex than anticipated. Mrs. Church dove right in and said, "We need help getting our kids eagerness for learning like they were in the earlier years." She suggests we do research to light their fire for learning again when she said, "I think that there is something somebody in Texas needs to look at and see what we can do to keep high school kids wanting to go to school and to keep them wanting to learn and to keep them feeling successful. We need a program to feed the eagerness." She is referencing a level

of apathy towards schooling that is present amongst students who struggle to find success in school. Mrs. Church suggests helping this last group of kids will require we conquer the apathy that is present and help kids find their place. Mr. Randall added, "One thing that we try to encourage all of the counselors here is to make sure that the kids are connected here. One of our leaders at the central office talks about love and belonging." Students who belong to a group on campus are more likely to be successful. How do we engage those whose interests lie outside the campus walls? The counselors at East High School suggest ensuring future success relies on engaging the struggling students at a deeper level in the school culture in order to conquer the elements of their lives that may prevent completion of the new graduation endorsements of HB5.

Comparative Sensemaking

Examination of the seven elements of Sensemaking will provide the foundation for comparative analysis of the data. Identifying similarities and differences between the Sensemaking elements at the two facilities will provide a greater understanding of implementation of HB5.

Identity Construction. Examination of identity roles within each school show similarities and distinctions between the two campuses. First and foremost, both teams have fixed their attention on figuring out the excuses they should give their community members instead of getting to know the identities of their community members to improve communication. This demonstrates a level of colorblindness and excuse-making as they seek what is plausible instead of what is accurate.

Both schools are run by Caucasian educational leaders with varying perspectives on the teams they represent. Both teams shared generously about their perceptions of

HB5 implementation giving insights into the realities of implementation, success and needs of the program. Preparation for HB5 implementation has been well-supported and both teams helped building level identity construction take place as each team member focused on what they need to do to support the new graduation expectations.

Superficially looking at identity construction; administrators, teachers, and students alike rely on the counseling team to be the most knowledgeable about the new graduation policies which frees them to focus on their primary roles. They trust the identity construction of the counseling team is well defined by each member, so they can focus on their roles in the school instead of increasing their expertise on HB5 requirements.

The ethnic identity of the teams was Caucasian and African-American; however, the two most dominant student populations in the school are Hispanic/Latino and Caucasian. The first-person voice of the Hispanic identity was entirely missing from this study. West High School discussed the importance of having a Spanish speaking counselor as an asset on the team when it came to parent communication.

Counselors at each facility were unique. They were different ethnically and in perspectives about graduation requirements. West counselors did not believe HB5 was successful because it did not equitably support all students social-emotional needs nor their educational needs. They cited the group of students graduating without endorsements who had to take remedial courses as evidence of the failure. East High School counselors also referenced the large number of students graduating without endorsements but did not attribute it to inequity, but instead, on students' apathy towards education.

Retrospective. Stakeholders have used hindsight to look back at implementation of HB5 to evaluate what was effective. This process of digging deep to shape and improve the working of the school is a part of using results to affect improvements. This process is recursive in nature.

Administrators in this research understand their campuses are challenged with mobility, language learning, special education, and at-risk students who are economically disadvantaged. In order to affect improvements to the systems, both administrative teams examined what worked throughout the year. Retrospective sensemaking shaped failures as opportunities to improve processes and facilitate success.

Some of the successes found at both schools involved improving the communication process with parents. West High School focused on diversifying ways community members can access information sessions adding a virtual means of attending. East High School has implemented culturally sensitive information sessions in Spanish where families obtained HB5 data for the first time in their native language from adults. Both improved parent participation. Both administrations want more.

The recursive nature of retrospective sensemaking requires that changes are made to programs; some of which expand, and others shrink. Each of these changes affect courses offered to students the following year and student requirements must be the heart of all the modifications made on campus. The administrative teams on both campuses strive to constantly improve. The administrative team at East High School particularly emphasized they are always surveying participants about their experiences at events, so the following year can be better.

Teachers at both campuses also follow this reflection process to understand what worked and didn't. The teachers at each high school do this without being told to do so. They dig deep to develop and shape their understanding of what happened during the course of the year to improve results for future years. HB5 requires recursive evaluation by the teachers as they shape their programs. At East, this is seen in the CTE department as they request new technology to meet the high demands of the coursework and programming. At West, this requires hiring more teachers in the health sciences and engineering pathways. In addition, some teachers look at their personal data collected throughout the year and evaluate what worked and what didn't. Mrs. Nicely watched who was accepted to what programs at the central CTE facility in order to brag and help future students prepare for the application process. This shapes departments and personal practice as the HB5 continues to be implemented.

Counselors at both high schools felt the full effect of HB5 implementation last year as it was the only graduation policy still in effect. They are using retrospective, or reflection, to adjust procedures and improve processes. West has made a huge change to the freshmen enrollment process, which will affect whether or not a student has taken the prerequisite course for an endorsement they are potentially interested in pursuing. It is an experiment, and the results will take years to collect, but they are prepared to take the good with the bad in this area, if it helps students pursue endorsements more successfully. East counselors are working to improve efficacy in the short meetings they have with students. They are doing preparation work before their meetings to ensure they have the data required to make informed decisions and guide student progress as students register at the beginning of the spring term. Each counselor will repeat the process 500 times,

which will ensure they have cycled through the data, resulting in streamlining more processes next year without compromising the depth of their data digging to shape and improve student successful completion of the new graduation requirements.

Enactive of Sensible Elements. Sensible elements that were enactive in this research include the following list for both schools:

1. 50% at-risk
2. 60% economically disadvantaged
3. ethnic diversity amongst the students that includes ethnicities not on the registration documents
4. predominantly Caucasian staff
5. grant-funded guidance specialist
6. course availability
7. certification options
8. prerequisite requirements
9. counselor caseloads

It is interesting to note that all stakeholders held tremendous hope that the sensible elements could be overcome. Counselors were willing to work through the situation as if they knew their leadership would help them in the future but there was also a sense of almost quiet discomfort as they prepared for the preregistration phase of the spring term.

Availability of resources is something important in the conversations with teams from both campuses. From staffing to technology and time there is an awareness of the

limits to each. Administrators work hard to provide their students with the highest quality staff members and do not follow through with the hardware to run the software essential to the endorsement pathway. Without sensible hardware, the staff member becomes frustrated and less committed to educational excellence. This creates a loop of need for sensible elements especially if a teacher is lost in the want for new technology. The East CTE teacher emphasized the need to maintain high quality hardware to interact with the software that was purchased to industry standards

And then there is time, one of the most valuable of the sensible elements There is never enough especially when talking to the counselors. Time is needed to plan, communicate with families, and support students, but when they have 5 courses to prepare for, 180 students to socially and emotionally support because the counselors have 500, then time is a commodity that must be allocated like other resources.

Behavior influencing was also a sensible aspect of the interviews. Counselors wanted to influence behaviors preventing success. Administrators wanted to influence counselor, teacher and student behaviors to improve outcomes. Teachers wanted to influence student behaviors to give them a better chance at careers in the industry they represent. The HB5 graduation policy balances course requirements with the beliefs and behaviors required to be successful in life after high school. It is a complicated matter to influence behaviors. Mrs. Church at East high school talked about wanting to inspire the eagerness to learn amongst high school students, as some of them have lost the will to perform in class. Mrs. Thomas at West discussed just wanting the young ladies to prioritize graduating, "crossing the stage," over relationships with young men and having babies. Administrators at both campuses talked about needed behaviors from

professionals and students. Teachers talked about their need to self-advocate for the courses they teach and advertise their courses to support job security. Growing programs are positive reinforcers of high-quality connections with students requiring influencing behaviors as a sensible element, which is key to successful implementation of HB5.

Social. The nature of policy implementation is social. As people receive cues from those issuing them, or in this case, interpreting policy, they have responsibilities to act on the cues they receive.

Tapping into a deeper culturally-aware relationship with the families and students connected to the community needs to be of the highest priority in an economy when working with historically marginalized populations (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015). Social equity means students are provided equitable educational opportunities within the context of policy enactment (English et al., 2016). If 25-30% of a school graduating without an endorsement that has 50% of its student population at risk of dropping out and 60% economically disadvantaged, then there is a social, relational problem with implementation of state-mandated graduation requirements.

The administrators in this study were the informational liaisons, the communication filters between the different individuals involved in the implementation of HB5. Administrators used this role to constantly collect data and to make micro-adjustments when interacting with those involved with HB5, so how did they miss their community members who needed access to graduation information required for their students to successfully complete endorsements? The goal for social interactions involving HB5 is to foster transparence in communication between groups, the ultimate goal of which, is trust. Both campus administrators communicated these interactions and

both teams said they could improve their communications, especially with the community. At the same time, the administrators at East suggested there is an element of trust growing as parents drop their kids off at the door. This represents good faith that their most prized family members will receive the education necessary to survive out in the world after high school. These fabrications by the staff at both high schools are justification for less effort to communicate with families and represent social injustice.

Ongoing. The ongoing nature of making cyclical adjustments creates a ripple effect when each minute change is made. Perpetual evaluation of processes involved in HB5 implementation occurs to improve student graduation rates. These cyclical evaluations are being employed by administrators, counselors and teachers. Initiating lasting change that positively affects student completion of endorsements requires an ongoing convergence of ideas. As stakeholders notice areas of need, like equitable access to graduation pathways, it takes the entire team to plan for all the little details involved in implementation. Both high schools address changes in policy focusing on equitable access to graduation pathways through the use of idea convergence in an effort to obtain the resources and staff to successfully implement the new building level policies. West adjusted the way information goes out and diversified opportunities while East offered a Spanish-translated information session. Ongoing collaborative evaluation of procedures affected communication between home and school.

Focus On Extracted Cues. Administrators, teachers, and counselors are affected by cues in their environment regarding successful policy implementation of HB5. The current cues that are concerning to administrators in both high schools are the high numbers of students graduating without endorsements. The primary cue from counselors

outside of prerequisites is the enormous caseloads. CTE teachers, especially, are focused on marketing their endorsements so they keep enrollment high and ensure job security. Students will use extracted cues provided by their teachers to make decisions about enrollment for the following year. In the end, all stakeholders use cues from the staff at each high school to make decisions. Therefore, it is important to understand the culture of the community including the linguistic needs and actual ethnic profile, not just the one allowed on the registration documents, so the information disseminated is readily understood by the intended audience. Socio-economic and at-risk statuses are excuses for social injustice and educator apathy. It is the responsibility of the school and district to ensure building stakeholders know their communities and do everything possible to engage their families equitably.

Driven by Plausibility. The recrafting of implementation of HB5 must be done perpetually, based on student performance, cues from the community, and staff feedback. There are multiple avenues that can be used to verify plausibility, including data from the previous school year regarding completion of endorsements, and enrollment in the next course in a sequence. Deviation from a pattern of enrollment must be understood with data being collected when the change occurs. In addition, the plausibility of funding a change in the system must be considered.

Funding must be considered when determining plausibility. The other side of funding and plausibility is whether or not an expense is plausibly worthwhile. Evaluation of whether the cost is worth the end result must be determined. This could be seen as West stakeholders decided to change the freshmen enrollment options to focus on prerequisites. The plausibility of funding was weighed regarding the value of potential outcomes. The

search for plausible certifications is also important when considering flexible, equitable graduation endorsement implementation for all populations.

The schools and district are exploring the plausibility of offering new certifications currently and, whether or not, the flexibility of implementation meets the needs of all populations. These attempts to plan for the future take time. Planning for ongoing change in order to maintain growth for all programs requires a dedication to cyclically monitor and adjust as errors are made, so they are not made again. At this point in time, the teams at both schools are looking for more ways to plausibly validate student effort with the addition of equitable options for all students enrolled.

Research Questions

The first research question asked how the key stakeholders made sense of HB5 (2013). From the perspective of the high school stakeholders who contributed to this research, the central office interpreters gathered the information necessary to facilitate implementation across the district then trained each high school team across the district, providing them to with resources aligned to state and district expectations. They did the "dirty work" to ensure the people at each high school had what was necessary to implement HB5. Central office leaders created guiding documents to align implementation with legislative mandates and then empowered the leadership teams at each facility to do what is necessary to meet the graduation needs of their students. West High School leaders felt most connected to the central office leadership team who interpreted the initial graduation policy and East High School entrusted in the expertise of the central office leaders. Most stakeholders reflected that they were successfully prepared by the work of the central office team for implementation. The exceptions were

West counselors and the East AP History Department Chair. The West counselors felt their caseloads were prohibitive to meeting the needs of students and the teacher at East was not connected to her role in students pursuing college readiness instruction within a college preparedness endorsement. STEM or multidisciplinary studies.

The second question asked what factors shaped the sensemaking process for stakeholders through implementation of HB5. The culture of each school, demand on resources, plus the people involved are the key factors that shaped the sensemaking process. The at-risk, low socio-economic student populations at both high schools required that the stakeholders in this study plan for flexibility in implementation in order for them to graduate with an endorsement. Unfortunately, as suggested by the AIR report the counseling team at East made it clear that 25-30% of their population are still not prepared for life after high school by obtaining an endorsement which undermines their income earning potential in life (English, et al., 2016). West high school was less specific about quantifying the number of unsuccessfully prepared students while they indicated the need for more ways to provide endorsements to struggling learners. This alignment with the AIR report is an indication of failure for HB5 in that it was designed to meet the needs of the students who graduated under the previous Minimum High School Plan provided in the previous graduation legislation and it has not so far.

Summary

The purpose of this HB5 policy implementation is to prepare students for life after high school, specifically providing college and career readiness. Stakeholders mentioned some level of successful implementation with evidence about growing programs in the CTE department and specific teacher data regarding acceptance to the central CTE

training facility. The additional data regarding differentiation for STEM students with two options for preparation for postsecondary integration into engineering programs, one through CTE certifications and the other through AP course work, demonstrates greater inclusion of students. Based on the purpose of HB5 being preparation for college and career readiness, there is evidence of success in both high school facilities.

The absence of policy addressing the excuses being made by staff members across the two campuses and at central office for a lack of engagement from families from these two campuses is concerning. This is dysconscious racism, a form of colorblind excuse often taught while participating in higher education, which justifies inaction on the part of the administrative team when circumstances are difficult or culturally challenging (King, 2004). Every effort must be made to meet the needs of the families and students while treating them with culturally appropriate kindness and respect. Cultivation of stakeholder engagement, especially in person, is necessary to understand the needs of the community and continue to improve communication.

Common factors between the two high schools are a desire to understand the cultural demands from the community, a recognized need to communication with all stakeholders, continued development of endorsement infrastructure, adaptation to improve successful completion of endorsements, and equitable division of responsibilities amongst staff members. Community engagement levels are similar across both schools even though they employed different means of connecting with parents. The two schools need to communicate to understand what works and does not to make further improvements.

Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusions

This study was designed to understand how two high schools in a single district implemented HB5 (2013) with the most at-risk and economically disadvantaged populations in The District. Central office visionaries interpreted the new graduation policy based on cues received from the state. Interpretation was necessary for the high schools in The District to create infrastructure necessary to implement graduation expectations.

The first question guiding this research addressed how key stakeholders made sense of HB5 (2013). A leader of the team was selected and empowered by the superintendent to interpret cues received by the State of Texas about new graduation expectations. A professional network was accessed to assess the new graduation policy. Essential to implementation once data was collected, this team was responsible for garnering permission from executive leadership to begin the comprehensive reform of graduation requirements. Implementation required extensive instruction at each facility to ensure stakeholders had necessary information to perform their duties. Upon completion of HB5 training, empowered team members guided the first cohort of 8th graders who had to declare their endorsement pathway prior to entry into their freshman (2014-2015) year of high school.

The second question addressed the factors that shaped the sensemaking process for stakeholders in each of the high schools through implementation of HB5. The common factors between the two high schools are extracting understanding cultural cues

from the community, continued development of endorsement infrastructure, adaptation and growth of endorsement options, and division of responsibilities amongst staff members. These findings were determined through the process of coding data collected from interviews. These findings are significant because they are the areas that are potentially generalizable. Data was evaluated for commonalities between the two high schools across the seven sensemaking categories as described in the literature review.

In this chapter, findings will be summarized, implications discussed, and recommendations made for future research.

Sensemaking Findings

This study took place in a fast-growing suburban district responsible to educate economically disadvantaged students. 60% of their populations are at risk of dropping out and stakeholders repeatedly said their families work very hard to supply the basic needs of students. West High School is run by a primarily female administrative staff; whereas, East is predominantly male. Employees in both schools have an average of over 10 years of experience, are predominantly Caucasian, which does not mirror the population of students. West and East High School teams have limited dropout rates to just over 1% by adjusting graduation plans to exclude endorsements when students did not successfully complete endorsement pathways. East High School openly communicated they have about 25-30% of their students graduating without endorsements. Although West did not report their numbers of students graduating without endorsements, it is likely they have a similar number of students graduating without endorsements.

Sensemaking informed this research about the role of identity construction while interpreting HB5 for The District. Identity construction within HB5 involved the sum of

the individual's perceptions and actions over time as well as the affects on their roles and responsibilities (Weber & Glynn, 2006). HB5 implementation newly required students to make choices to construct their future identities and their role in the community after high school. Besides students, HB5 most affected the counselors, whose roles were redefined. The focus of their profession was always graduation and social-emotional wellbeing; however, the new graduation plans limit social-emotional coaching time to emergency interventions. There was a tremendous level of trust in counselors' professional knowledge about HB5 from the adults around the community.

Retrospective sensemaking of HB5 focuses on making meaning of lived experiences (Weick, 1995). Individuals at East and West reflected on implementation along with changes that took place. Everything was designed so students and staff would have what was necessary to fulfill endorsements and receive certifications. This involved gathering, organizing and disseminating data approved by The District Board of Trustees to implement the new graduation requirements. Digging deep at the visionary level showed the complexities of culture and context where the policy was implemented.

Identification of success and failures in procedures was purposeful to improve student completion of endorsements. Stakeholders were universally concerned about communicating with families, so each high school team set goals to improve parent communication. Diversifying the means of communication helped administrators improve parent involvement at both schools. East High School took an especially culturally sensitive approach in their quest to improve parent participation. Projected improvements based on this reflective look at the past has involved translating

information sessions, live streaming after school meetings, and offering times for meetings.

Retrospective sensemaking shapes practice and policy by adjusting procedures. An example of this occurred at West High School as the counselors changed the preregistration expectations for freshmen to focus on taking prerequisites for endorsement pathways in their first year of high school. This policy adjustment was focused on streamlining student access to endorsement courses. West was in the middle of implementing this change in the Spring after this research was conducted.

Enactment of sensible elements in the beginning researched physical and staff resource availability (Weick, 1995). The resources tracked included teacher skills and certifications along with current, past, and potential course offerings. Data tabulation identified certifications readily available within The District, and, also, those desired and accessible within the feasibility of budgetary allowances. Knowledge of the sensible elements in high school informed research about the cultural realities in each high school. Spanish was the second most common language in the homes of students which must be a part of planning events. Family members who speak another language must be included during information sessions. Another sensible element on both campuses was grant-funded college guidance specialists and counselors with immense caseloads. Guidance counselors were concerned about their caseloads. Influencing behaviors requires time, a commodity that was in high demand for the counseling team. Counselors on both campuses balanced helping students engage in required coursework and support for their social emotional growth, so they can cross the stage. Influencing behavior is a tool the

adults used to successfully implement HB5. Awareness of these sensible elements while implementing the new graduation policy helped staff meet the needs of students.

Social interactions, the interdependence of people, inspired sensemaking of complex webs of conversations that affected HB5 implementation (Weick, 1995). Dr. Celeste's belief in empowerment and delegation were important aspects of trust building and enabling leaders to do what was necessary to support the new graduation requirements at each campus. Dr. Celeste transparently established ongoing conversations and advocation for the needs of students and staff. Visionary leaders heard the needs of administrators and planned for flexibility in implementation. Relationships were planned, and time allotted to longitudinally mentor students as well as teachers. The social connections across campuses with central office helped adults stay focused on helping students towards graduation by anticipating student needs and improving processes in place.

Ongoing sensemaking is essential to the cyclical process of analysis. There isn't a beginning or an end to sensemaking, it is a cyclical process which inspires a convergence of ideas (Weick, 1995). The more stakeholders strive to make sense of implementation, the more likely they will perpetually improve processes. Counselors implemented the new freshman preregistration with a prerequisite focus at West High School. Each campus independently adjusted their master schedule, staffing and course offerings as a result of their ongoing sensemaking. As cyclical adjustments were made, there were ripple effects including plans for students who needed to graduate without endorsements. When ideas converged, the goal was for changes to lead students towards equitable access to preparation for life after high school. East High school took risks offering two

information nights with one translated into Spanish. The risk paid off and attendance was higher than predicted at the information session. Lasting improvements to positively affect student completion of endorsements is the goal of ongoing sensemaking across the District. If something works, stakeholders will try it again.

Sensemaking focused on extracted cues seeks to perceive these instantaneous moments where decisions were made to understand processes that led to them (Weick, 1995). Visionary leaders extracted information from the law itself then from the community and campus environments. Subsequent conversations provided observational data. As situations and resources were considered, data included teacher backgrounds and their history of teaching, along with verified career histories outside of education. Discernment of processes took place followed by an investigation of implementation plausibility. Essential cues to understand include the percentage of students graduating with and without endorsements, caseloads of counselors, and accountability data required by the state. These cues provided data about successful implementation of HB5 which was relayed by members of focus groups. Cultural cues from the community must be addressed with intentions of equitably engaging all families no matter their cultural or economic backgrounds. Community support provides insight into the needs of the community and most importantly aspirations for the future. Students extracted cues from their environments to plan enrollment each year. Teachers provide cues to encourage enrollment and solidify job security. The complexity of implementing HB5 required that stakeholders at all levels of the learning community have the information required to make decisions regarding the wellbeing of their students. Some evidence of processes to

make those decisions are the cues about completion, engagement, and changes in course offerings.

Sensemaking is also driven by plausibility, not necessarily accuracy (Weick, 1995). If an idea does not work, then it is not plausible. Visionary leaders did everything within their power to create a flexible implementation plan that could be molded by high school administrators. Driven by plausibility, leadership at each campus looked at the value of the change versus the cost of inaction. Plausibility was carefully considered at West and they still endeavored to adjust the freshman expectation to complete endorsement prerequisites. West administrators pursued avenues for the most equitable implementation of HB5 on their campus. East administration also focused on culturally appropriate communication as a means of accessing familial support for their Spanish speaking families. This is a less costly intervention and required no adjustment to the staffing of the high school. Both high schools sought plausible interventions with West requiring longitudinal monitoring to collect cues about affecting student completion of endorsements after changing freshmen enrollment procedures.

Themes

There are three thematic areas present in multiple aspects of this study: cultural needs of the community, dysconscious racism, and equitable provision of endorsements.

Finding Cultural Needs of the Community. Stakeholders at both campuses seem unaware of the cultural needs of their families. They are just starting to tune into the linguistic needs but seem to be at a loss as to the other needs like advanced notice, communication disconnect, and aspirations for future generations. The linguistic barrier is partially to blame, but when families register for school, they must fill in a home

language survey. This informs the district about the linguistic needs of households and whether they need translated information from the school. Both high schools are just starting to use linguistic information. There is a need for the home language survey to be a cue for immediate change in policy and procedures when communicating. However, this is not the only cue being missed. All stakeholders made excuses for a lack of communication and participation from families which is a cue unto itself. When families disengage, it does not necessarily mean they do not want to participate. Cues must be carefully received to prevent misinterpretation. Possible misinterpretations are non-attendance at informational evening events, non-communication with staff unless there is an emergency, and non-access to digital tools online to obtain alternative forms of information. Making excuses for families working hard and avoiding engagement in educational information nights is a misconnect with the culture of the community. Continuous reflection on the social identity of self, as well as the community, is essential when evaluating these cues (Medina, Morrone, & Anderson, 2005). This will help the stakeholder identify their preconceived notions while assessing the cues of others. Understanding culturally different cues from families in the community is essential to support student success. Individuals who serve low socio-economic populations may fail to recognize their preconceived notions to meet the needs of this struggling group of students (Delpit, 1995). It is time to really understand why there is a disconnect with families so parents feel welcome at their student's school.

It is time to create a collaborative team with stakeholders from each involved population to access perceptions for the purpose of problem-solving (Gallagher, Loveland Cook, Tebb, & Berg-Weger, 2003). This is a social work approach, which

openly considers the perspectives of others to improve practice and connect with populations at risk. It is essential the voices of each of these stakeholders is respected and remain individual within the group, so their unique contribution can be incorporated within the context of the community.

    Dysconscious Racism. The second theme, dysconscious racism, is commonly called colorblindness (King, 2004). This involves staff members unintentionally attempting to treat all students equally instead of equitably. It is a complicated matter starting with the way data is tracked and ending with the type of excuse-making found in the first theme. When you look at data from the state, they collect demographic data for subpopulations intentionally. They include in data collection statistics for: African-American, Hispanic, Caucasian, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, Two or More Races, Economically Disadvantaged, English Learners, and Special Education. These are the only categories tracked.

    Knowing linguistic origins may help with preventing dysconscious racism. There is a home language survey in the State of Texas which was previously mentioned but is not always helpful. It does not provide enough information, as a Spanish-speaker may be Hispanic or Latino. They could be from either hemisphere. For example, what if your family has newly relocated from South Africa or India? The home language survey could state English but there is not an option for either of their ethnicities in registration documents. This cultural miscue must be resolved in order to begin engaging families in the educational community from their first day in the district. Unfortunately, local education agencies and districts will have to bridge this gap as national and state governments have not provided means of tracking this more accurate data. It is plausible

and the value of gathering this information would greatly benefit the educational community as long as stakeholders used it.

Dysconscious racism is fostered by the lack of information. Families not heard, not respected, from day one, may be part of the informational disconnect both campuses are experiencing (Gallagher et al., 2003). Intentional action must be taken to connect with historically marginalized populations along with finding the members of groups who have not been included at all.

Equitable Provision of Endorsements. When East High School counselors announced 25-30% of their students graduate without completing an endorsement, it became clear that the third theme, equitable provision of endorsements, was not taking place. Both leadership teams spoke to the need for more endorsements and West said they need a mini-CTE opportunity for their special needs populations to obtain endorsements and certifications in-house. There was a concern from the visionary leadership team that the state does not honor endorsements, which earn minimal wages, but the district is dedicated to offering these certifications and finding more for students with limited options for career readiness.

Recommendations

1. Create a committee at each school that gives voice to each of the stakeholders in the graduation process.

2. Reduce Counselor Caseloads for counselors at these two high schools by hiring at least one more counselor for each school.

3. Constantly recruit high quality professionals into the teaching profession from the fields of health sciences/medicine and engineering/architecture.

4. Find partnerships with local community colleges to help offer more certifications, and thus, endorsements.

5. Develop central office policy to help the high schools bridge communication gaps with multi-ethnic populations who speak languages other than English.

6. Create, or require, a comprehensive district-based support network for teachers who are newly certifying as educators and receiving alternative certification that address first, second, and third year appropriate needs.

7. Develop a technology policy to change out hardware every 2-3 years. The software is cutting-edge, but it is not keeping up with the demands of the growing CTE programs.

8. Empower CTE and endorsement voices at the state level to affect policy creation with the legislative bodies to address costs of certification, alignment of accountability, and need for more certifications for special needs alongside struggling learners.

Implications for Future Research

There are several implications for future research across the state. Understanding the need for policy implementation studies in a variety of settings would significantly benefit scholars and district leaders as they plan to further adapt and adjust their programs to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Collaboration with the regional facilities to investigate area resources and employment needs have the potential to powerfully assist local education agencies and school districts as they implement HB5. There is a need to look at technical infrastructure

as well as the regional demands for certifications. More certifications need to be identified for use in graduation endorsements as summative tests.

There is a great need in the already understaffed education industry. Professionals who are interested in changing professions and are willing to gain education certifications are in high demand across this district, and according to the billboards, this researcher has passed when driving across the state. It would be extremely useful if there was research about ways to successfully recruit and train these new professionals who are changing professions. It would also be interesting to see if there is an average career life of individuals who have served in this type of capacity in districts.

It would be interesting to also see research about alternative means of certifying former professionals who are entering the field of education. There are regional training centers, traditional universities, and districts who have created their own programs. Studies on changes in the enrollment in these certification programs since the onset of HB5 would shed light on supply and demand in the field.

A comparative case study examining how districts have engaged stakeholders is necessary to help provide ideas for districts still struggling to connect with their diverse communities. The experiences of these two high schools show a need in this community to grow relationships with the community who entrusts the district with the future of their families.

In a state full of diverse populations, it would be beneficial for a researcher to create a new way to track ethnicity for school districts that does not limit ethnic identification to African-American, Asian, American Indian, Native American, Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, Multi-ethnic, and Caucasian. At some point, there should be a

blank where individuals can write their preferred label. There are so many more ethnicities in this district and one of the problems the community has in meeting the cultural needs of the families, is a disconnect with the actual ethnicities present in the community. A study polling the actual ethnicities in a district like The District would be a powerful tool to stop ethnic colorblindness to provide equitable education for all.

Finally, it would be interesting to see how social justice, race, ethnicity, gender and endorsement choice in high-poverty schools affect endorsement completion and graduation rates under HB5. It would be beneficial to see a quantitative study taking these elements into consideration using state PEIMS data to better understand how the new graduation policy is serving subpopulations.

Limitations

Several limitations exist in this study. There were not any students included, only the rare anecdotes provided by staff members. The district, and time, limited my access to staff members. They told me only two members of each team could be present in my focus groups though I requested 5. They did this to protect their staff members and still participate which is understandable. Only two schools were included in this study and they were both economically disadvantaged. It would have been interesting to compare and contrast East High School with one of the affluent schools in the district to show the great potential for college preparedness within the district but chose not to do this as it would further limit the generalizability of the research. There is already a concern about generalizability as this is an affluent school district with tremendous resources for implementing HB5. In fact, they turn down Title I funds as they have the resources available to supplement within the general operating fund. In addition, generalizability

may be limited when looking at schools that are not suburban or fast-growing because the tax bases have different challenges. The final limitation was time. A longitudinal study started with interpretation through completion of the first 8th grade cohort would have been increasingly informative, but this researcher was barely contemplating doctoral studies at that time.

Closing Remarks

It was an honor and privilege to do research inside The District. The visionary leaders, administrators, teachers and counselors shared their insights, entrusting me with their identities and hopes for greater opportunities to help students in the future. The ultimate goal of this legislation was to improve student preparation for life after high school through college and career readiness education. Stakeholders shared their successes along with their struggles. In the end, the successes of both campuses were apparent but so was the need for greater engagement to complete endorsements amongst the students who represent the greatest needs in the population. A memorable moment occurred when Mrs. Newman from West High School referenced her department is no longer considered the "Evil Stepchild" and participants in her program have received greater acceptance by their peers.

Thank you to all participants for your kindness and generosity. The principals and visionaries, who opened their doors to research and shared their impressions of HB5 interpretation and implementation, were the foundation of this study. Teachers and counselors continuously astounded me, forcing me to further address my biases as I learned about the complex roles and responsibilities resulting from the new graduation legislation.

Thank you to The District for opening your doors to this study. Not only was this a fantastic learning opportunity, but it was a distinct privilege to work with The District.

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APPENDIX A

American Institute for Resesarch – GRADUATION TOOLKIT SIDE-BY-SIDE

Subject Area	Students Entering Grade 9 in 2012–13 or 2013–14 Graduation Program			Students Entering Grade 9 in 2014–15 Graduation Program		
	Minimum	Recommended	Distinguished	Foundation	Foundation with an Endorsement	Distinguished Level of Achievement
English Language Arts	4	4	4	4	4	4
Mathematics	3	4	4	3	4 [b]	4 [c]
Science	2	4	4	3	4	4
Social Studies	2.5	4	4	3	3	3
Academic Elective	1	—	—	—	—	—
Economics	0.5	—	—	—	—	—
Languages Other Than English	—	2	3	2	2	2
Fine Arts	1	1	1	1	1	1
Physical Education	1	1	1	1	1	1
Health Education	—	—	—	—	—	—
Technology Applications	—	—	—	—	—	—
Speech	0.5	0.5	0.5	—	—	—
Electives	6.5	5.5	4.5	5	7 [a]	7 [a]
Total	**22**	**26**	**26**	**22**	**26**	**26**

Source: Title 19 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Chapter 74, Subchapter G §§ 74.71-74.74, 2012, and 19 TAC, Chapter 74, Subchapter B, §§ 74.11-74.14, 2014.
[a] Completion of at least one endorsement.
[b] Must include Algebra II if the student chooses to complete the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) endorsement.
[c] Algebra II is required.

Appendix B

Recruiting Document

Researcher's Recruitment Script

Hello, my name is Donna Lynn Clark and I am a junior high school ESL teacher in the district, and a student at the University of Houston Main Campus studying to get my doctoral degree in educational leadership. In my studies, I am trying to learn more about college/career readiness at the high school level. I want to understand what aspects of implementation of new policies have been important in implementing HB5.

I am looking for volunteers to take part in a group interview to help me answer questions I have concerning preparing students for their future college/career through endorsement pathways. I plan to have three interviews one each for counselors, teachers, and administrators and am looking for 7-10 staff members to participate in each. The interview will take roughly 45-60 minutes and will take place during a planning period or other convenient time during the day. There will also be light refreshments served.

The group interview will take place in English at _____ on _____, 2017. I really appreciate your time in hearing this morning/afternoon and am grateful for your consideration. Please see me if you are interested in taking part in this study.

Thank you,

Donna Lynn Clark

Appendix C

Study Protocol

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Donna Lynn Clark
Student at the University of Houston
College of Education
Department of Educational Leadership
University of Houston
Houston, TX 77004
(903) 221-6490
dlclark@uh.edu

FULL PROTOCOL TITLE: Implementation of College and Career Readiness in Texas: A Case Study of How Stakeholders Make Sense of House Bill 5

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1.0 Objectives

Research indicates that college/career readiness is a primary goal of Texas House Bill 5 (HB5, 2013). Understanding the factors of implementation of HB5 from the perspectives of policy interpreters in the central office in combination with those involved in implementation on high school campuses will inform educational leadership and contribute to the body of knowledge regarding college/career readiness. It is understood that not all students are equally prepared for life after college and in this high achieving South Texas school district stakeholders can share what factors affected their sense making processes.

2.0 Background

Under HB5 (2013) school districts require freshmen to enroll in a tracked endorsement declared prior to enrollment in high school. There are five endorsement areas: Business and Industry, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, Public Service, Arts and Humanities, and Multidisciplinary Studies. Each of these categories has multiple sequences of courses to fulfill endorsement requirements intended to prepare students for college/career readiness. Texas law requires that all courses students select are aligned to their graduation and endorsement pathways from the first day of high school (Graduation requirements, §19 TAC chapter 74, subchapter B).

These endorsement structures changed educational opportunities on each campus. Initial declaration of endorsements established tracked cohorts within the master schedule (Dauber, 1996). The master schedule became increasingly complex as the five required endorsements were introduced especially considering the sequential nature of coursework. Students are required to complete all courses sequentially as required by state assessment requirements. The master schedule's complexity increased with each year following initial implementation.

Texas Higher Education and College Board established a requirement for high schools to prepare 60% of their students to meet career readiness standards (Hahn et al., 2015). According to the American Institutes for Research Evaluation report on HB5 (2015), only two subpopulations in the first graduating group of students in Texas under HB5 (2013) have a chance of meeting college/career readiness standards, Asian and White (see Table 1). The rest of the subpopulations are performing significantly below the standard of 60% passing state assessments with the populations of greatest concern being students participating in Special Education, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged, also African American students who are meeting state assessment standards 35% of the time or less.

Now that the first class that had to declare their endorsement pathway prior to entry into high school is graduating, it is time to understand the factors that stakeholders faced through implementation. This will help fill knowledge gaps involving HB5 implementation especially considering the context of a high performing school district which still has two campuses with greater than 50% economically disadvantaged populations.

Table 1.1 – Statewide Student Performance Data on Students Reaching Level II

Graduating Class of 2017-2018 Scores on State Assessments in 8th Grade

Subpopulation	Reading	Math	Algebra I in 8th Grade	Algebra I in 9th Grade
African American	35.3	32.9	67.8	13.4
American Indian	45	33.7	76.9	15.2
Asian	75.6	68.3	94.2	47.9
Hispanic	37.4	27.9	71.5	16.1
Multiracial	59.1	39.7	85.8	26.2
Pacific Islander	42.7	31.9	86.4	19.4
White	64	45.8	87.1	28.1
Economically Disadvantaged	34	25.2	68.8	13.8
English Language Learners	5.6	11.8	39.0	4.0
Special Education	10.6	10.6	50.2	1.8

Note: American Institute for Research House Bill 5 Evaluation Report (2015, p. 40)

3.0 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The District was selected due to its history of exceeding state academic expectations. It is essential to understand how at-risk students perform within the new graduation endorsement expectations in a district that meets high achievement goals. This high achieving district will have structures in place for the general population that affect student success across multiple demographics.

Potential school-level participants must meet the following criteria:

1) Be over the age of 18
2) Be involved with instructing or guiding students along endorsement pathways
3) Work in one of the two target high schools
4) Work directly with students or staff supporting selection, enrollment, or fulfillment of endorsements necessary to graduate.

Central office participants must meet the following criteria:

1) Adults, over the age of 18
2) Leaders who were selected to interpret HB5 (2013) and design district level policy for implementation when it was released.
3) Leaders in the counseling department who design, implement, or train high school staff members regarding compliance with HB5.

Appendix C (cont.)

4) Leaders within the Career and Technical Education leadership team who have planned endorsement structures

Screening will take place based on staff directories, approval from central office to do the research, and confirmation of relevant member rosters from campus and district administration. Participation requests will be sent to eligible participants. Of those consenting stakeholders, a random lottery will take place based on stratified roles and endorsement/instruction assignments. Adults unable to consent, infants, children, teenagers, prisoners, students of any sort, economically or educationally disadvantaged persons are not participants in this study. This is not a study of pregnant women and will not be a criterion for stakeholder selection.

4.0 Vulnerable Populations

N/A

5.0 Number of Subjects

STUDY-WIDE:

The total number of subjects to be accrued across all three sites will be 60. There will not be any recruited individuals who attend University of Houston. This number of subjects is essential to understand sense making of HB5 (2013) as it was implemented over the past five years. All of the participants are located in a single Texas district.

LOCAL:

Campus level recruitment is straightforward. Each of the administrators at the selected campuses will be recruited, 7 administrators per site. All counselors will be recruited, totaling 7 counselors from each campus. All college and career readiness teachers from the campus will be recruited and 2 teachers from each endorsement pathway will be selected via lottery. To complete research the minimum number from each group must be 5 totaling 15 participants per campus.

District level members will be limited to 12 to minimize disruption to central office routines and focus on those members who have the greatest wealth of knowledge to provide the focus group. Those charged with initial interpretation of HB5 will be invited to participate in the first focus group. This will include three members. The second focus group will be a stratified group limited to district level counseling staff members. Those four members who have been employed by the district the longest and agree to participate will be recruited. All district level career and technical education staff members will be recruited and those five serving the district the longest will be invited. The numbers are specific due to the roles of the members and the growth of the departments. The career and technical education department has grown since implementation of HB5 more than the counseling team. These numbers were selected to prevent undue demands on the teams when they attend a 45-60-minute focus group.

6.0 Recruitment Methods

STUDY WIDE:

This is a multicenter study and subjects will be recruited by the researcher in Katy Independent School District from the central office, Morton Ranch High School, and Mayde Creek High School. One week prior to the focus groups, potential subjects will be recruited via email. All will receive the same email explaining the research, the purpose, and that their ideas are valuable to the study. Identification of subjects is through the directory for each of the high schools for administrators and counselors. All will be recruited. Teachers will be recruited based on their professional role, which endorsements they support through their teaching position. 10 will be selected based on the number of years they have been with the district and the endorsement they support. Only two members from each endorsement pathway will be selected to provide balance to the focus group and voices for each area (see attached email script).

District level members will be recruited as well based on years of service, and roles in HB5 implementation. Those charged with initial interpretation of HB5 will be invited to participate in the first focus group. This will include three members: Dr. Freda Creech - The Associate Superintendent of School Leadership and Improvement, Dr. Sarah Martin - Leader of Career and Technical Education, and Christy Maeker - Leader of Counseling. The second focus group will be a stratified group limited to district level counseling staff members. Those four members who have been employed by the district the longest and agree to participate will be recruited. All district level career and technical education staff members will be recruited and those five serving the district the longest will be invited to participate. The numbers are specific due to the roles of the members and the growth of the departments. The career and technical education department has grown since implementation of HB5 more than the counseling team.

7.0 Multi-Site Research Communication

Each site will be staggered a week apart from the other site. This will ensure adequate communication. Each site will be provided a current version of protocols along with the question and answer version of the protocol prior to the meeting day. Required approvals will be verbal until members sign forms on the day of the focus group. Consent must be provided to participate. If modifications are necessarily approved, they will be communicated prior to the meeting. The researcher will safeguard data through use of a password protected computer and locked file cabinet. The researcher is the only investigator and study protocols will be followed at all times or IRB will be notified in accordance with local policy. Communication will take place via a calendar invite and if there are problems then there will be a follow-up email and a fresh invite. Interim results will be published through an executive summary prior to defense of thesis. This will share factors of implementation as disclosed by stakeholders along with themes identified along with suggested areas of interest and further study. If closure of the study is required, then I will report it to IRB, the university department chair and research chair, and the research department in the district.

8.0 Study Timelines

The study will take place during one week over the summer with the focus groups from central office. Focus group one will be first and the other will be in order of convenience and timed to meet the team needs.

Campus focus groups will take place 5-7 weeks after the start of the school year as approved by the district and involve 3 one hour sessions per campus in a single week

per campus. The researcher will need three weeks to plan and implement the focus groups.

1. Week one - September 17-21, 2018 - recruiting and scheduling at both high schools

2. Week 2 - September 24-28, 2018 - will involve three 45-60-minute focus group interviews at Morton Ranch High School and initial follow-up questions along with transcription

3. Week 3 - October 1-5, 2018 - will involve three 45-60-minute focus group interviews at Mayde Creek High School and initial follow-up questions along with transcription.

The total demand on each campus will be three hours in person and time recruiting and scheduling via email which will amount to less than 30 minutes per person if they read all attachments and thoughtfully think through the questions. If there are follow-up questions, the researcher will take into consideration time demands of the individual and ask questions via email unless a call or in-person conversation is requested by the stakeholder. No more than one additional hour will be allocated to follow-up questions per person. Emails or phone calls are anticipated to suffice.

Data collection will be complete by the end of the first week in October and initial data analysis will be completed by the end of October. The researcher anticipates defending the thesis in the middle of November.

9.0   Study Endpoints

Study will end on site in the middle of October at Katy Independent School District. The secondary endpoint is defense of the thesis which will take place in the month of November.

10.0   Procedures Involved

This investigation will use a comparative case study design to understand implementation of one statewide college and career readiness policy across two high schools in a suburban Texas public school district (Creswell, Hanson, Clark-Plano, 2007). A case study is description and analysis of a singularity bound within a specific location and time (Yin, 2017). A comparative case study adds complexity through the comparison of two instances where the phenomenon occurs concurrently.

Focus groups will be used to interview the administrators who witnessed the evolution of implementation over the past 5 years. Focus groups will include between 3 and 12 individuals from one of three stratified groups: teachers, counselors, or administrators. The focus groups will be conducted in a convenient neutral location on campus either before, after or during a preparatory period during their normal school day. Each group will be interviewed separately to give them increased freedom to speak freely. To best facilitate conversations, the focus groups will be recorded then transcribed. This will ease data collection and free the researcher to more deeply engage with participants. Questions will be provided in advance to help facilitate conversation during the focus group. Focus groups, as opposed to individual interviews, were chosen so the individuals can build on each other as they answer questions. This will provide

additional insight into how programs have developed simultaneously across two separate yet similar contexts in a single district.

The comparative case study process for sensemaking of this HB5 (2013) policy implementation research will be followed:

1. Recruit stakeholders via an email invitation and telephone call.

2. Follow protocols for focus groups. The essential steps are:
   - Gather consent at start of focus group
   - Introductions
   - Answer questions collectively
   - Remind that there will be clarifying questions asked by telephone, email, or in person

3. Collect data requested from the district about **student endorsements completed according to student subpopulation** as of the end of 2017-2018 school year. Additional data in the form of documents supplied by focus group members will be analyzed and coded in the data collection process.

4. Follow data analysis plan: interview, transcribe, code, analyze for theme.

5. Follow triangulation plan to maintain the highest integrity possible for data collected by verifying data with focus group number one at the central office.

11.0   Setting

The research will take place at Katy Independent School District in the two most economically disadvantaged high schools, Morton Ranch and Mayde Creek upon approval from the district research department. Each of these schools has more than 50% Economically disadvantaged students. The principal investigator will be simultaneously applying to the district for approval to conduct research. I have discussed my research with the superintendent, the Leader of the Assessment Accountability and Research, and the Associate Superintendent of School Leadership and Improvement though no official approval letters have been obtained yet. The researcher has been informed that their consent is contingent upon university approval along with district approval.

12.0   Risks to Subjects

There are no foreseeable risks related to the procedures conducted as part of this study.

13.0   Potential Benefits to Subjects

There are not any direct benefits from participation to the stakeholder, no pay/incentives. Participation may affect the programs they have invested their careers, this voice in the programs may help leaders understand HB5 implementation.

14.0   Provisions to Monitor Data to Ensure the Safety of Subjects

N/A

Appendix C (cont.)

FULL PROTOCOL TITLE: Implementation of College and Career Readiness in Texas:
A Case Study of How Stakeholders Make Sense of House Bill 5

15.0 Withdrawal of Subjects

Participation in this project may be terminated by the principal investigator if the stakeholder decides to stop or cancel participation.

16.0 Costs/Payments to Subjects

N/A

17.0 Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be maintained through a password protected computer. The only person with access to the password is the researcher and will remain locked at all times the researcher is not accessing the computer. The audio recordings are for transcription accuracy purposes so the researcher can focus on connecting with the focus groups during interviews instead of taking notes. Artifacts and a copy of the audio data files will be stored in a locked file cabinet until transcription is complete whereupon the audio recordings and files will be destroyed. Each subject's name will be paired with a code number, which will appear on all written study materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned code number will be kept separate from these materials.

The district and campuses will never be identified, only labeled: The District, West High School and East High School. Nobody outside the research team will have access to the identifiers. The key to the study code will be maintained for three years then destroyed. The purpose for maintaining is to reference for future publication purposes which will maintain pseudonyms for all involved.

18.0 Provisions to Protect the Privacy Interests of Subjects

Provisions to protect subjects will include a description of how I am protecting their identities using pseudonyms and focus groups. I will reinforce that they are there to give voice to their perceptions of HB5 implementation in a safe peer environment in which they can add to or reinforce the stories and perceptions of others, or not. I will make it clear that we are there to learn about implementation of HB5 and factors affecting it. That they are the experts and I am the learner. The purpose is to improve the system for all stakeholders. The goal is to learn through collaborative answering of open-ended questions provided in advance of the meeting so they know what is coming and can think about their answers prior to the session.

19.0 Informed Consent Process

All focus groups will take place in Katy Independent School District, first at the central office, then at Morton Ranch High School, and finally at Mayde Creek High School. Standard Operating Procedures will be followed to obtain consent according to University of Houston policy HRP-090. Authorization from the district will be obtained in writing prior to conducting research at the beginning of each focus group where consent forms will be signed in-person. This written communication will be provided to the IRB offices in advance of collecting any data. Recruitment will involve inviting stakeholders to participate in the focus group. The researcher will obtain consent at the beginning of each focus group after initial verbal consent is provided via email or by telephone to scheduling the meeting. Consent forms will be explained and collected

during the first 5 minutes of each focus group. The long-form will be completed in writing prior to initiating the focus group. Once an indication of interest is received, each focus group will be scheduled within a week. To prevent feelings of coercion, a consent document without signature lines will be sent out electronically informing participants about the study and ways to gather further information.

20.0 Process to Document Consent in Writing

Consent to participate will be collected in writing using a Consent Form, attached. The Template Consent Document HRP-502a was used to create the consent document. In addition, the researcher will follow all standard operating procedures detailed in the University of Houston document HRP-091 will be followed to obtain consent of participants who are all over the age of 18 and employees of the school district.

21.0 Data Management

Data is qualitative in nature. Statistical analysis will not take place. Data will be secured in a password protected computer and locked file cabinet. Data will be stored for three years for ongoing publication opportunities aside from the initial thesis. A copy of the data will be stored at the university for three years following completion of research by the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies in Farish Hall on the main campus. The only person with access to this data outside the university is the researcher, principal investigator, who is solely responsible for the receipt and transmission of the data from all sites involved in this study. Data will be submitted electronically through a secure, password protected server of which only the principal investigator has access.

Confidentiality will be maintained through coding. The key to the codes used for stakeholders participating in the study will be kept separate from the data itself. All audio recordings will be destroyed upon transcription to promote confidentiality and trust with participants.

Quality will be maintained through verification of information gathered through the members of focus group one. This is a form of triangulation of data: interview, artifact, and data provided by the district regarding endorsement completion of the first cohort of freshmen selecting endorsements prior to entering high school.

22.0 Sharing of Results with Subjects

An executive summary of results will be shared with the subjects along with the district. This will share findings and suggestions for future research and implementation based on what stakeholders share during the focus group. Each member of the study will receive this summary if they are still employed by the district.

23.0 Resources

The primary investigator is a doctoral student at the University of Houston and a teacher at Katy Independent School District for one of the feeder junior high schools to Morton Ranch High School. As a specialist in instruction for at-risk students in the content area of English as a Second Language (ESL), I am particularly interested in the success of at-risk students in our high schools. This researcher a practicing member of

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Texas Association of School Administrators, Texas Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents, University Council of Education Administration, and is currently the compliance staff member for the English as a Second Language department at Katy Junior High School. I have studied qualitative research as a doctoral and master's student and will have researched this topic for over a year. I am committed to creating and growing high quality educational opportunities for all students and want to know more about how this district has made strides where other districts have not.

The number and members of stakeholders has been thoughtfully deliberated with my research chair and has been decided over time. This is a small percentage of the total full-time teaching and administrative staff compared to the number of full time employees at each campus and across the district; yet, they are instrumental staff members who will provide essential voice for the HB5 implementation processes on their campuses. This research will take place over the course of 5 weeks and protocols for focus groups will be shared up-front to give participants what they need to know during the recruitment phase of data collection.

Scheduling and planning details for the research are straightforward. The first two weeks will take place at the central office during the summer. One week for planning at the district level, one week for focus groups. The actual focus groups will take place in 45-60-minute group interview sessions – three per location. Anticipated planning will be around 20 hours for contacting individuals, sending information electronically, arranging meeting rooms, and answering questions that arise. The other 3 weeks will take place on high school campuses. The first week will be for planning and arranging technical details for the focus groups along with recruiting. The second week will be at Morton Ranch and the third at Mayde Creek.

Hours invested by the researcher far outnumber those of district particpants. Actual interview time will be limited to 3 hours at each campus but planning will take closer to 20 hours per campus to ensure that the focus run smoothly. Potential follow-up questions are likely. I will do my best to ask questions via email or over the phone to minimize disruption to the normal routine of participants. Follow-up will be on a case by case basis and extremely specific in nature. Anticipated time will be less than 3 hours of follow-up question time per campus. Total face-to-face time is 12 hours across 3 locations. My personal time involved in the research will be much more extensive: transcription, planning, and the multiple phases of coding prior to analysis will take well over 80 hours outside of work hours. I will complete all interviews while on pre-arranged absences so disruption to my professional position is minimized as well. The one aspect of data collection that will take some time and planning on the part of the district is filling the spreadsheet with data regarding student endorsement pathways based on student demographic for each high school. This will involve either gathering PEIMS data or programming a computer for autofill of the Excel document. This will likely be completed by a member of the accountability department and provided to me over the summer. It should not take more than 3 hours to complete using existing data from each high school in the study.

24.0 Additional Approvals

District approval will be obtained prior to commencing the research. District approval is being sought simultaneously to the university IRB. Upon receipt of district approval, it will be expeditiously submitted to the university.

Appendix D

High School Protocol

Teacher, Administrator, Counselor Focus Group Interview Protocol

Focus Group Interview Protocol Project: Implementation of College and Career Readiness in Texas: A Case Study of How Stakeholders Make Sense of House Bill 5

Time of Interview: During a time convenient to all participants
Date of Interview: 45-60-minute Focus Group
Location of Interview: High School
Number of Interviewees: 7-10 members per focus group

Introduction Questions

1. How long have you been in education?
   - What grades have you worked with?
   - How would you describe your experience as a (counselor, administrator, teacher) in this school/district?
   - What populations have you worked most with: ethnic groups, language learners, special education students, economically disadvantaged?
2. How long have you been in this role in your school?
   - Have you worked in this role in another school?
   - Is this the only district you have worked for?
   - How has your role changed over the past 5 years?
3. How has the district helped prepare you for your role implementing graduation endorsements?
   - What special training have you received to help guide or instruct students?
   - Describe your training experiences. Did you feel prepared?

Guiding Questions

1. Describe your school's implementation of HB5
   - Strengths/weaknesses in endorsement programs
   - Students (demographics/behaviors) within graduation endorsements
   - Parent involvement in endorsements
   - School District training/preparation for you in your position to help students be successful
   - School resources to help students be successful
   - Successes – student stories
   - Events/issues that stand out and capture your school's complexity and context
2. What are your most important responsibilities in regards to students completing their endorsements?
   - Responsibilities
   - Tasks
   - Time allotment devoted to student successful completion of endorsements
   - Strengths/weaknesses in your role of helping students
   - Changes over time
3. What have been the most challenging obstacles implementing endorsement pathways?
   - What did you do?
   - What were your initial reactions?

- What concerned you?
- Were you excited? Nervous? Why?
- How did you communicate with your community?
    - How did your community pull together to work through challenges/obstacles?
    - Positives/negatives
    - What were your community's reactions? The same as yours?
    - What has changed due to these challenges?
4. Based on your past experiences, what elements should be in place in your school to continue improving?
    - Are they in place?
    - What else is needed?
    - Do these needs change over time?
    - What are the most important needs?
    - Can you be successful without these new elements?
    - Predict the outcome for continued success?
        - Why did you make this prediction?
        - What evidence do you look at/consider?
5. Has your graduation endorsement program been successful?
    - Why?
    - How do you know?
6. Do you plan on making any changes in your graduation program for next year (this year)? (explain)
7. How would you define your graduation endorsement programs in your school?
8. What role does your graduation/endorsement programs play in your school's future?
    - Plan for next steps?
    - Lessons Learned
    - Role of leadership/principal
    - Role of other staff?

Wrap-up Questions

1. Did I forget to ask a question that I should have asked?
2. Do you have anything else to add?

Appendix E

Central Office Protocol

Interpreting School Leaders, Counselors, and CTE Leader
Focus Group Interview Protocol

Focus Group Interview Protocol Project: Implementation of College and Career Readiness in Texas: A Case Study of How Stakeholders Make Sense of House Bill 5

Time of Interview: During a time convenient to all participants
Date of Interview: 45-60-minute Focus Group Between approval and first week of August
Location of Interview: Central Office
Number of Interviewees: 3-5 members per focus group

Introduction Questions

1. How long have you been in education?
   - What grade levels have you worked with directly?
   - How would you describe your experience as a leader in this school/district?
   - What populations have you worked most with: ethnic groups, language learners, special education students, economically disadvantaged?
2. How long have you been in this role in your district?
   - Have you worked in this role in another school or district?
   - Is this the only district you have worked for?
   - How has your role changed over the past 5 years?
3. How have you helped prepare the schools in the district to implement graduation endorsement programs?
   - What special training have you planned or implemented to help guide building personnel to implement HB5?
   - Describe professional development you have planned. Did you feel building members were prepared to implement endorsement programs?

Guiding Questions

1. Describe how you have prepared our high schools to implement HB5 required endorsement mandates
   - Strengths/weaknesses in endorsement programs initially
   - Strengths/weaknesses over time and now
   - Community involvement in endorsement opportunities
   - Business partnerships in endorsement opportunities
   - District resources made available to help students complete endorsements
   - Successes –stories/anecdotes
   - Events/issues that stand out and capture how you prepared for complexity and context
2. What are your most important responsibilities in regards to schools implementing (or guiding implementation of) endorsement programs?
   - Responsibilities
   - Tasks
   - Time allotment
   - Strengths/weaknesses ¡

- Changes over time

3. What have been the most challenging obstacles implementing endorsement pathways?
    - What did you do?
    - What were your initial reactions?
    - What concerned you?
    - Were you excited? Nervous? Why?
    - How did you communicate with your peers?
        - How did the district pull together to work through challenges/obstacles?
        - Positives/negatives
        - What were reactions? The same as yours?
        - What has changed due to these challenges?

4. Based on your past experiences, what elements should be in place in the district to continue improving?
    - Are they in place?
    - What else is needed?
    - Do these needs change over time?
    - What are the most important needs?
    - Can you be successful without these new elements?
    - Predict the outcome for continued success?
        - Why did you make this prediction?
        - What evidence do you look at/consider?

5. Has your graduation endorsement program been successful?
    - Why?
    - How do you know?

6. Do you plan on making any changes in your graduation program for next year (this year)? (explain)

7. How would you define similarities and differences in preparing each of the high schools for implementing graduation endorsements?

8. What role does your graduation/endorsement programs play in the future?
    - Plan for next steps?
    - Lessons Learned

Wrap-up Questions

1. Did I forget to ask a question that I should have asked?
2. Do you have anything else to add?

Appendix F

Consent to Participate

UNIVERSITY of

HOUSTON

A CARNEGIE-DESIGNATED TIER ONE
PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

Permission to Take Part in a Focus Group Interview

PROJECT TITLE: Implementation of College and Career Readiness in Texas: A Case Study of How Stakeholders Make Sense of House Bill 5.

You are being asked to participate in a research project led by Donna Lynn Clark, Educational Leadership Doctoral Candidate at the University of Houston.

NON-PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

You can leave the research at any time it will not be held against you. Your participation is strictly voluntary.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purposes of this study are to 1) understand how stakeholders make sense of Texas House Bill 5, and 2) understand factors that shape sense making for stakeholders at each of the high school sites, and 3) compare two cases of implementation within a single district.

PROCEDURES

A total of 60 participants, 12 at central office, 24 at each campus across two locations (Morton Ranch High School and Mayde Creek High School in Katy Independent School district) will be asked to participate in this project. You will be approximately one of 24 asked to participate at this location. You will be invited to participate in a single focus group interview which will take approximately one hour. The questions will be about high school endorsement implementation and the factors of implementation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to maintain the privacy of your personal information in this project. Each subject's name will be paired with a code number by the principal investigator. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned code number will be kept separate from all study materials and available only to the principal investigator. Confidentiality will be maintained within legal limits.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks related to this study. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, do not feel obligated to answer the question. Your participation is strictly voluntary.

Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

BENEFITS

There are not any direct benefits from participation. Your participation may help leaders understand college/career readiness implementation on your campus which can benefit the school, students, teachers, and community.

ALTERNATIVES

Your participation in this project is voluntary and the only alternative to this project is non-participation.

INCENTIVES

You will not receive any compensation for participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES

Participation in this research is completely voluntary.

PUBLICATION STATEMENT

The results of this study may be published in educational journals along with educational purposes or professional presentations. Subjects will not be identified.

AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF AUDIO TAPES

If you consent to participate, please indicate below whether you agree to be audio recorded during the study. Recordings will be transcribed for research purposes only. If you agree to be audio recorded, indicate agreement by checking the box below:

- ☐ I agree to be audio recorded during the research study.
- ☐ I do not agree to be audio recorded during the research study.

You can still participate in the research if you do not agree to the audiotaping.

CIRCUMSTANCES FOR DISMISSAL FROM THE PROJECT

Participation in this project may be terminated by the principal investigator if you decide to stop or cancel participation.

Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

SUBJECT RIGHTS

1. Procedures were explained and I have been given the chance to ask questions.
2. Any risks have been explained.
3. Benefits have been explained.
4. I understand that I may contact Donna Lynn Clark with any questions at 903-221-6490.
5. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop participation in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any question.
6. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING MY RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (713-743-9204).
7. All information gathered related to this study and that can be identified with me will remain confidential as far as possible within legal limits. The results may be published in scientific, professional, or educational journals or publications without identifying my name.

Signature of Participant

Your signature indicates your consent to take part in this research.

Signature of subject	Date
Printed name of subject	

Appendix G

University of Houston IRB Approval

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
DIVISION OF RESEARCH
Institutional Review Boards

APPROVAL OF SUBMISSION

April 24, 2018

Donna Clark

dlclark2@uh.edu

Dear Donna Clark:

On April 10, 2018, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Implementation of College and Career Readiness in Texas: A Case Study of How Stakeholders Make Sense of House Bill 5
Investigator:	Donna Clark
IRB ID:	STUDY00000875
Funding/ Proposed Funding:	Name: Unfunded
Award ID:	
Award Title:	
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• HRP-502a Donna Lynn Clark 4, Category: Consent Form; • Mayde Creek Protocol, Category: Study tools (ex: surveys, interview/focus group questions, data collection forms, etc.); • Recruitment Script, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Recruitment Script, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Morton.Ranch.Protocol, Category: Study tools (ex: surveys, interview/focus group questions, data collection forms, etc.); • Consent Document, Category: Consent Form; • Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol; • Central.Office.Protocol1, Category: Study tools (ex: surveys, interview/focus group questions, data collection forms, etc.);

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UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
DIVISION OF RESEARCH
Institutional Review Boards

Review Category:	Expedited
Committee Name:	Not Applicable
IRB Coordinator:	Danielle Griffin

The IRB approved the study from April 24, 2018 to April 23, 2019, inclusive.

To ensure continuous approval for studies with a review category of "Committee Review" in the above table, you must submit a continuing review with required explanations by the deadline for the March 2019 meeting. These deadlines may be found on the compliance website (http://www.uh.edu/research/compliance/). You can submit a continuing review by navigating to the active study and clicking "Create Modification/CR."

For expedited and exempt studies, a continuing review should be submitted no later than 30 days prior to study closure.

If continuing review approval is not granted on or before April 23, 2019, approval of this study expires and all research (including but not limited to recruitment, consent, study procedures, and analysis of identifiable data) must stop. If the study expires and you believe the welfare of the subjects to be at risk if research procedures are discontinued, please contact the IRB office immediately.

Unless a waiver has been granted by the IRB, use the stamped consent form approved by the IRB to document consent. The approved version may be downloaded from the documents tab.Attached are stamped approved consent documents. Use copies of these documents to document consent.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system.

Sincerely,

Research Integrity and Oversight (RIO) Office
University of Houston, Division of Research
713 743 9204
cphs@central.uh.edu
http://www.uh.edu/research/compliance/irb-cphs/

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Appendix H

District Diversity Data