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Pauline M. Sampson, *Editor*

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Restrictions on Texas Educators' Use of Text Messaging with Students

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Abstract

The researchers reviewed 300 Texas public school district policies DH (Local) and 2014-2015 Employee Handbooks to determine districts' policies and regulations surrounding text messaging restrictions for educators' use with students. This review found wide variation in regulations, from no text messaging restrictions to full restrictions.

Keywords: text messaging restrictions, educator inappropriate relationships, educator sexual misconduct, social media policy

Problem & Purpose

Over the past seven school years, the number of Texas Education Agency (TEA) investigations opened into educator inappropriate relationships/sexual misconduct (IRSM) with students has increased by nearly 53% from 123 in 2008-2009 to 188 in 2014-2015 (Chang, 2015). Adding to this alarming increase in the number of IRSM cases is the emerging trend for the majority of educator sex abuse cases to include electronic communication, either by the internet or cell phone (Maxwell, 2007).

Tremendously difficult policy and practice issues arise when responding to educators' misuse of social media. As communication technology develops faster than school districts' ability to respond, it is important to examine the current policy responses and challenges faced by Texas school districts. Investigators of IRSM cases recommend that districts create and implement social media policies designed to prevent inappropriate educator conduct (Phillips, 2015). Previous research has considered the overall state of Texas school district local policies in regards to educator use of social media (Robert & Thompson, 2015) and school district regulations as defined in employee handbooks (Robert, Krimbill, & Thompson, 2015). This research will examine social media policy responses in Texas school districts specifically in regard to restrictions to text messaging.

Perspectives/Theoretical Framework

Current policy context

Social media is merely a technologically-advanced means of communicating between persons, or from persons to large groups. Allegedly improper communication between educators and students and between educators and a larger audience has existed as long as schools themselves, and this type of communication has been the subject of school district policy responses and actions. Further, states and professional associations continually modify professional codes of ethics for educators to address emerging concerns. Indeed, the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics was amended in 2010 to include a "social media" standard (Standard 3.9), which prohibits "inappropriate communication with a student or minor, including, but not limited to, electronic communication..." (19 Tex. Admin. Code § 247.2 [3][I]), and sets out six non-limiting criteria for the Texas Education Agency to use when, in educator discipline cases, evaluating the inappropriateness of educators' electronic communication with students:

- a. the nature, purpose, timing, and amount of the communication;
- b. the subject matter of the communication;
- c. whether the communication was made openly or the educator attempted to conceal the communication;
- d. whether the communication could be reasonably interpreted as soliciting sexual contact or a romantic relationship;
- e. whether the communication was sexually explicit; and
- f. whether the communication involved discussion(s) of the physical or sexual attractiveness or the sexual history, activities, preferences, or fantasies of either the educator or the student (19 Tex. Admin. Code § 247.2 (3) (I)).

Thus, it is clear that the "social media" provision of the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics was written to place great emphasis on sexually-oriented communications between educators and students.

Simultaneously, Texas school districts enact and update their policies in order to stake out employee conduct that they may regulate. With regard to electronic communication with students, nearly all school districts have enacted Policy DH (Local) which, in general, addresses employee use of electronic media, both with and without students. Policy DH (Legal) also incorporates by reference the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics, and Policy DH (Exhibit) contains the entire Code of Ethics. Since the passage of Standard 3.9 of the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics, nearly all Texas school districts have revised their social media policies (Robert & Thompson, 2015).

Best Interests of the Student Ethical Framework

Ultimately, both codes of ethics and local policies, particularly as they relate to students, are (or at least should be) first designed with students' best interests in mind. Thus, the interpretive framework used to analyze and interpret the data is the "Best Interests of the Student" model espoused by Stefkovich (2006, 2013) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2010). Pictured in Stefkovich (2006, p. 15), this model of ethical decision-making for educational leaders comprises five interrelated, and sometimes clashing,

facets of ethics that combine both to form an “ethic of the profession” and inform decision-making:

1. Professional codes of ethics.
2. Personal codes of ethics.
3. Standards of the profession.
4. Individual professional codes (of ethics).
5. Ethic of the community.

Stefkovich (2006) notes what constitutes the best interests of students has been and continues to be both amorphous and contentious. Ultimately, Stefkovich constructs an “eclectic” triad of concepts through which students’ best interests can be viewed:

1. Student rights.
2. Student responsibilities.
3. Respect by, for, and among students.

Methods & Procedures

Population and Sample

Robert & Thompson (2015) employed the Texas Education Agency “Texas School Directory” (<http://mansfield.tea.state.tx.us/tea.askted.web/forms/home.aspx>) as the sampling frame for their study on school district employee electronic media policies. Of the 1032 “regular instruction” districts, the researchers randomly selected 300 school districts to examine their respective Board Policy DH (Local). This selection of districts ensures that any estimates are within a 5% margin of error at a 95% confidence level (Shaffer, Mendenhall, & Ott, 2011). Robert & Thompson (2015) located 288 out of 300 policies DH (Local), resulting in a 96% return rate. In the current study, the researchers went to the websites of the same 300 school districts and obtained 144 2014-2015 employee handbooks from the 300 school districts searched.

Method of Analysis

A document analysis method was used in this study. Bowen’s (2009) definition of document analysis was used, specifically, thematic analysis in which the emerging analytic categories and themes are developed. The authors were informed of their choice of emerging categories and themes in two ways. First, the authors were guided by Bon et al. (2013) and their recommendations for components of school district social media policies. Second, the authors also reviewed a sample of employee handbooks to gain a sense of the analytic themes and categories in the policies themselves.

The authors constructed the following analytical categories and/or themes to guide their analysis:

1. Electronic media definition;
2. Employee is responsible for public use of electronic media;
3. Guidelines to observe with personal use of electronic media;
4. Who may use electronic media to communicate with students;
5. Exceptions to prohibited communications;

6. Additional definitions of “communicate” and “certified or licensed employee;”
7. Guidelines to observe when communicating with students through electronic media including:
 - a. Restrictions on text messaging
 - b. Requirement to be within scope of responsibilities
 - c. Requirement to use a professional media page rather than a personal page to communicate with students
 - d. Prohibited hours of direct contact.

Findings

Of the 300 districts, 144 (or 48%) provided a link to their 2014-2015 Employee Handbook on each school district website. 54 districts (or 18%) of the 300 districts sampled provided links to employee handbooks from previous years. The remaining 102 (or 34%) districts did not provide an employee handbook for public access on their website.

The Model Employee Handbook (MEH)

Over 80% of the sampled districts utilize the model policy language for their employee handbook as provided by the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) for references to Personal Use of Electronic Media and Use of Electronic Media with Students, with only small modifications (discussed later). These handbooks were posted for use in the 2014-2015 school year utilizing the model policy published by TASB in May of 2014. Of the 116 districts using the model handbook, small additions and modifications were made (to be discussed). An additional 11 districts (7.64%) utilized the MEH with more significant modification, and 17 districts (11.80%) did not use the MEH sections for either Personal Use of Electronic Media or Use of Electronic Media with Students.

Personal Use of Electronic Media

The MEH’s definition of electronic media “includes all forms of social media” in addition to “all forms of telecommunications...and web-based applications” (TASB HR Services, 2014, p. 1). Thus, references to electronic media include social media. The Personal Use of Electronic Media section reminds employees that their use of electronic media for personal use is subject to professional standards and violation of such could affect their employment.

Use of Electronic Media with Students

In the MEH, only a “certified or licensed employee” may communicate electronically with students (TASB, 2014, p. 1), with the superintendent or principal able to designate additional persons who may communicate electronically with students. All communication is required to be “within the scope of the employee’s professional responsibilities” (p. 2). Exceptions to prohibited communication include social and

family relationships and are further clarified with examples such as, “niece or nephew”, “child of an adult friend”, or “member or participant in the same...religious organization” (p. 1).

The final section in the MEH regarding electronic media use contains several pertinent details regarding how employees can communicate with students over social media. Text messaging is reserved only for “a teacher, trainer, or other employee who has extracurricular duty” provided the employee is communicating about the activity with a supervised student. (TASB, 2014, p. 2). All electronic communication must fall within the scope of the employees’ professional responsibility and must be through a platform specifically designated as a professional page. The employee may not use a personal Facebook page to communicate with students. Direct communication is prohibited within a span of hours, with districts able to set these hours.

Employees do not have a right to privacy with parent and student communications and they are again reminded they are subject to relevant legal provisions such as FERPA and copyright law. In addition, there is a specific reminder prohibiting “soliciting or engaging in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student” (p. 2). Employees must furnish all information regarding contact upon request from administration and must discontinue contact if requested by the parent or student in writing. Finally, an employee can request exceptions to any regulations in writing to his/her supervisor (TASB, 2014).

Small Modifications to the Model

Acting with the encouragement of the MEH, 63% of the 2014-2015 handbooks limited electronic communication with students to specific hours, with the most common times starting at 10:00 PM and ending at 7:00 AM. Teachers may post on a blog or public site at any time of the night or day. 37% of districts do not restrict times of contact and instead deleted the entire bullet from the model handbook.

While 84% (or 121) of the 144 responding districts follow TASB’s model regarding restricting text messaging, 16% (or 23) of districts do not specifically restrict the practice. In most cases (as with designating times of contact), districts remove the entire bullet that discusses text messaging.

Departure from the TASB Model Employee Handbook

11 districts (8%) of the 144 who published 2014-2015 employee handbooks also utilized the MEH; however, these districts made more significant changes than adding or deleting one line. An additional 17 districts did not use the MEH format in reference to the use of electronic media. 11 districts completely omit the mention of electronic media. Several of the smaller districts in this case had handbooks similar to a faculty campus handbook rather than a district employee handbook, despite their title of “Employee Handbook”. Aldine ISD, a district with over 67,000 students, is the largest district to not mention electronic media in their 2014-2015 Employee Handbook. Four of the districts melded the Acceptable Use Policy with Personal Use of Electronic Media.

While the model prohibits text messaging between employees and students with the sole exception of an extracurricular sponsor, five districts broadened the scope of whom can text message with students. All districts broadening from the model in this

way still limit to communicating “within the scope of professional responsibilities” (San Angelo ISD and Katy ISD) and utilize vague terms such as using texting only as a “last resort” (Tahoka ISD) or on a “limited basis” (Canyon ISD). The expanded options for texting seemingly align to a district philosophy acknowledging an evolving world (see, e.g., Conroe ISD, 2014, p. 27).

Discussion

As the second part of a study reviewing districts’ multiple policy responses to employee use of social media (Robert and Thompson, 2015), this discussion will include consideration of both the DH (Local) policy and the Employee Handbook. Together, these comprise a more complete (though not fully inclusive) picture of a district’s full policy response.

Best Interests of the Student Ethical Framework

The “Bests Interests” Ethical Framework (Stefkovich, 2006, 2013) was introduced in the theoretical/interpretive framework section of this paper. The authors believe that the intent of Policy DH (Local) and the 2 related sections of the employee handbook is to serve students’ best interests, particularly as those interests are operationalized by student rights and student respect (specifically, respect by educators for students). Because an increasing amount of educator sexual misconduct with students is accompanied by inappropriate use of electronic media (Chang, 2015), it seems that local school districts’ policy responses are designed out of respect for the rights of students to not be subjected to educator sexual misconduct, which violates students’ rights under the 14th Amendment and Title IX. Accordingly, these responses are certainly informed by each component of the ethic of the profession as conceptualized by Stefkovich (2006, 2013), including but not limited to the ethic of the community.

Second, the provision of DH (Local) and the handbook that limits electronic communication with students to certified and licensed employees only for “matters within employees’ scope of professional responsibilities” sends a clear message to the community that school boards are concerned for students’ best interests. Further, this provision places certified or licensed employees on notice that they may be subject to personal liability if their electronic communication with students steps out from under the “scope of duties” umbrella of protection (Tex. Educ. Code § 22.0511).

Third, the provision in the “Personal Use” of media provision in DH (Local) that requires educators to comply with all applicable state, federal, and local legal provisions and incorporates the “adverse effect” termination of employment standard reflects a policy decision that places students and their best interests above educators in the hierarchy of importance in school districts. As noted in the Texas Educators’ Code of Ethics Preamble (19 Tex. Admin. Code § 247.1 [b]) the code places the educator in a position of “public trust,” i.e., entrusted with the two most precious resources of the people of Texas: their children and their tax dollars. Thus, the clear expectation is that educators will conduct themselves in a manner “worthy to instruct or supervise the youth of this state” (19 Tex. Admin. Code § 247.1 [e][21]).

Questions Remaining After Study of DH (Local)

Robert and Thompson's (2015) previous analysis of DH (Local) policies in Texas asked the following questions regarding employee handbooks: 1) Do the district regulations address family and social relationships? 2) Do the regulations address employee to student text messaging guidelines? The TASB MEH addresses both relationships and text messaging guidelines. While the model addresses text messaging guidelines, it is important to note that 23 districts of the 144 reviewed (16%) do not discuss text messaging. As the vast majority of districts utilize the model policy that specifically requires districts to provide circumstances in which text messaging is allowed, this omission represents a possible gap between policy and the linking regulations as listed in the handbook.

Recommendations for Further Research

Employee handbooks are one piece of a complex set of policy responses to employees' conduct regarding social media. This work, coupled with Robert and Thompson's (2015) previous study of DH (Local) policy, frames a more detailed, yet not complete picture of the full range of policy responses. Additional research is needed to describe and analyze remaining policies and regulations governing employees' use of social media that fall outside of DH (Local) policy and employee handbooks.

Policy

Three districts were significant outliers in both the review of DH (Local) and in the employee handbook review: Aldine, Conroe, and San Angelo. In addition, Katy ISD utilizes the TASB model policy but has a completely unique handbook that notably does not provide text messaging restrictions. Several districts were outliers in not just their text messaging restrictions, but also in their blending of acceptable use policy with the social media policy. The authors recommend additional guidance for districts to help distinguish between employee use of social media and the traditional acceptable use policy.

Practice

Human resource directors can glean several important recommendations from this study. First, a director should review the existing policies, regulations, handbooks, and guidelines that exist within her school district. Is the model handbook in use or is it unique? If unique, it is critical to consider any differences from the model and confirm that the decisions are purposeful and carefully considered before deviating from recommended elements. The DH (Local) policy specifically recommends that additional regulations address both family and social relationships and specific text messaging guidelines. If the model handbook is not in use, does the handbook include these two topics?

Third, it is concerning that less than one-half (i.e., 48%, or 144) of 300 randomly selected Texas school districts published their 2014-2015 Employee Handbooks on their district websites. Unless employee expectations for electronic media are published in student handbooks or other media that are readily available to parents and students, neither students nor parents are aware of these expectations. With preliminary evidence that inappropriate use of social media is accompanying a greater number of educator sexual misconduct cases in Texas (Chang, 2015), the authors believe it is important that these handbooks be published in a prominent location on the school district websites.

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Examining the Multifaceted Impact of Dual Language Program Implementation on Educational Leaders in a Public School Setting:

A Descriptive Case Study

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Introduction

This case study focuses on the initial ideation, program development and implementation of a novel Mandarin Chinese/English Dual Language Immersion Program. The target institution under study is a large, urban school district located in Texas. The researchers will use a case study methodology to examine the genesis of the idea, the personnel involved, the perceptions of progress and pitfalls as the first class of students enters the program. This represents a unique opportunity to observe the development of a program to serve special populations from inception.

Mandarin Chinese Immersion Program

Program Design

The target school district under examination is located in the 4th largest metropolitan area in the United States. This urban school district is in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex and serves well over 50,000 students of diverse populations.

Demographic racial and ethnic information regarding students in the target district (rounded) is as follows:

- American Indian / Alaskan 1.00%
- Asian 8.00%
- Black / African American 17.00%
- Hawaiian / Pacific Islander 0.0%
- Hispanic / Latino 50.00%
- White 22.00%
- Two or more 2.00%

Demographic racial and ethnic information about students attending the target campus (rounded) is as follows:

- American Indian / Alaskan 0.00%
- Asian 7.5%

- Black / African American 18.30%
- Hawaiian / Pacific Islander 0.0%
- Hispanic / Latino 59.60%
- White 11.8
- Two or more 2.80%

Target school of study:

- K-5 Elementary Campus
- Approximately 600 students enrolled
- English/Mandarin Dual Language Program
- Kindergarten enrollment (12 first year students)
- 1st Grade enrollment (20-22 first year students)

This Mandarin Chinese/English Dual Language program has roots within a district-wide global business, language and leadership magnet program. This program provides students with additional curricular program options that will expand their understanding of business, marketing, and/or finance within a global context. The school district envisions that these offerings will help students to be more competitive when applying to colleges.

The school district lists the following on it's website as innovative aspects of this exciting magnet program:

- When competing in a global marketplace, students who are competent in Mandarin Chinese will have the potential to reach more than 1 billion additional consumers
- Rigorous dual language immersion program designed to develop linguistic and academic proficiency in English and Mandarin Chinese
- Management skills fostered through service learning and leadership development projects.

(Garland Independent School District, 2015)

Conceptual Framework

This article uses the work of Steven Krashen as a conceptual lens to view the dual language program implementation under examination. Krashen's notion of second language acquisition centers around the concept that natural communicative experiences are how language is learned and acquired and is both a conscious and subconscious process (Krashen, 1981). His theory contends that both are necessary for one to achieve bilingual fluency and literacy.

Review of Literature

Introduction and History

Research regarding the process of acquiring a second language is longstanding and has roots dating back for centuries. The educator's perspective of second language acquisition, albeit not new, has more recently began to evolve as an effective means of educating students. Initial implementation of bilingual programs date back to the early 1960's. According to Baker (2006) the first bilingual education program emerged in Miami, Florida in 1962. A year later, the first Dual Language program emerged in an effort to address the educational needs of Cuban refugees who were attempting to avoid the Cuban revolution. Practitioners today continue to research and seek the most effective means of educating students whose native language is not English. Moreover, educators have more recently began to seek effective means by which to educate students whose primary language is English, but wish to acquire a second language.

Theories of Second Language Acquisition

Bilingual education in the United States has not been without controversy, and likewise, the theories behind second language acquisition have also been of debate. However, there are 2 theories that are more widely known among educators who seek to study the most effective means of bilingual program implementation.

Dr. Stephen Krashen is a professor at the University of Southern California. Krashen's theory of Second Language is comprised of 5 hypotheses, with the basis of his theory being Acquisition-learning hypothesis – Language is acquired through natural communicative experiences. Krashen's theory expresses the notion that the process of acquiring language is a subconscious process, while the purposeful act of learning language is a conscious process (Krashen, 1981). Krashen further contends, both are necessary for one to achieve bilingual fluency and literacy.

Dr. Jim Cummins, is another leading theorist in the research of second language acquisition. Dr. Cummins is a professor at the University of Toronto. In an effort to provide a distinction between social language fluency and academic language fluency, Dr. Cummins originated the following terms: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency Skills (CALPS). Cummins further contends that it takes, on average, 5-7 years for one to acquire grade level appropriate fluency (Cummins, 1981).

Bilingual Education in Texas

There are various program types that fall under the auspices of Bilingual Education. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has approved four program models for implementation within the state: Transitional Bilingual/Early Exit, Transitional bilingual/late exit, Dual language immersion/two-way, and Dual language immersion/one-way. The bilingual program under this study is a unique hybrid of the

One-Way Dual Language Model. This program is comprised of Non-Native English Speakers only, with the goal of becoming bilingual and biliterate in English and Chinese.

Dual Language Program Model

Dr. Virginia Collier and Dr. Wayne Thomas have executed extensive research in the area of Dual Language implementation. While there are a variety of program models available, the basic Dual Language Program Model offers 50% of instruction in English and the other 50% of instruction in another target language. Of the bilingual education program models available, Thomas and Collier (2011) have found the Dual Language program model to be the most effective. “The most effective English learner programs we’ve seen, dual language programs are capable of closing the large gap (1.2 national standard deviations) at the rate of about 0.2 national standard deviations per year. This means that the strongest programs for English learners will require about six years to fully close the gap. Three-year programs only close half of the gap at best” (ESL Globe, 2011).

Chinese Dual Language

The most popular Dual Language Programs involve the languages of English and Spanish. On this rise, however are program models offering other languages of instruction including Chinese, Haitian Creole, and French (Wilson, 2011). According to (Bae, 2007), there are approximately three hundred and ninety-eight two-way immersion programs in thirty distinct states and the District of Columbia. Further, it is estimated that “ninety-four percent of the dual immersion programs are Spanish/English, with the remaining six percent either Chinese/English, Navajo/English, Japanese/English, and Korean/English programs” (Bae, 2007). To that end, it is clear to see that while Chinese Dual Language Programs are somewhat scarce, they are on the rise as parents seek to provide a quality education for their children that include the acquisition of a second language.

Administrative Considerations

Implementation of a Two-Way Dual Language Program has unique implications for the school administrator. (Howard et al, 2007) presents the following seven strands for consideration when embarking upon planning and implementation.

- Assessment and Accountability
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Staff Quality and Professional Development
- Program Structure
- Family and Community
- Support and Resources

While the strands certainly provide a framework for thought and consideration, context is equally important. What proves to be effective practice in one district or community may need to present differently in another district or community (Christian, Montone, Lindholm, & Carranza, 1997). Each program will assume a culture of its own and will need to be customized to meet the unique needs of the community of which it serves.

Assessment and Accountability

All schools are faced with meeting high standards that include mastery of state and district goals (Lindholm-Leary & Molina, 2000; Montecel & Cortez, 2002). “Dual language programs require the use of multiple measures in both languages to assess students’ progress toward meeting bilingual and bi-literacy goals along with the curricular and content-related goals” (Howard et al, 2007). This could include the need to create assessments in multiple languages, while seeking to maintain statistical integrity.

Curriculum

By design, Dual Language Programs embed language instruction into the curriculum. Finding a balance between rigorous content rooted with rich language experiences is key. “Language objectives should be incorporated into the curriculum planning” (Lyster, 1998). A high quality curriculum, which addresses both target languages through instruction and assessment, while maintaining alignment to state and district standards must be at the core of any quality dual language program.

Instruction

Effective instruction typically equates to increased academic achievement as demonstrated through standardized test scores (Howard et al, 2007). Since language development is integral in the dual language program, models of instruction that involve frequent interaction are essential. “Research suggests that a reciprocal interaction model of teaching is more beneficial to students than the traditional teacher centered transmission model of teaching” (Cummins, 2000; Doherty et al., 2003; Tikunoff, 1983).

Staff Quality and Professional Development

Educators are all too familiar with the challenges of hiring quality bilingual teachers, yet, “Effective dual language education programs require additional teaching and staff characteristics” (Cloud et al., 2000; Day & Shapson, 1996; Met & Lorenz, 1997; Montecel & Cortez, 2002). “Teachers in language education programs need appropriate teaching certificates or credentials, good content knowledge and classroom management skills, and training with respect to the language education model and appropriate instructional strategies” (Cloud et al., 2000; Lindholm-Leary & Molina, 2000; Met & Lorenz, 1997).

One cannot simply assume that all bilingual teachers have the same knowledge base required to teach second language learners. “Bilingual teachers need professional

development delivered in Spanish to help them know how to deliver instruction in ways that will help students develop higher levels of language proficiency” (Guerrero & Sloan, 2001). “To effectively administer and teach in a dual language program, administrators and teachers also need professional development related to the definition of the dual language education model and to the theories and philosophies underlying the model” (Howard et al, 2007).

Program Structure

With the various program models available, it is imperative for districts and campus leaders to select a program model which can be implemented with full integrity. Consistency in implementation is key. Without effective leadership, dual language programs will not thrive. Howard et al, 2007 suggests the following 3 major tasks must be evident of any dual language program leader: advocate and liaison, supervisor, and facilitator.

Family and Community

As with any educational program, parent involvement within a dual language program typically leads to increased overall learning for students. Effective program models incorporate home and school activities. A parent liaison is essential in bridging home and school efforts. Further, increased parent involvement typically leads to an increase in overall program support and advocates (Howard, et al, 2007).

Support and Resources

Implementation of a dual language program requires much consideration and advance planning. “Funding, materials, teacher training, program model, planning and parent involvement and ultimately student achievement” are all important factors for consideration (Howard et al, 2007). Successful programs require hard work and dedication but the outcome of bilingual and bi-literate students is rewarding.

First Organizational Meeting

“9 kinder 18 first graders showed up”

The initial district administrative meeting regarding the program was held in early spring of the 2013-14 school year. An Associate Superintendent, an Executive Director for Special Programs, 2 elementary school principals, one middle school principal, one high school principal, a district technology representative and a district coordinator of languages other than English (LOTE) were in attendance at the meeting. Two of the members of this first planning committee have ceased working for the school district. Topics of discussion during the meeting included drafting a budget, curriculum choices, and program design.

Methodology

The researchers settled on a descriptive case study methodological approach for this study. A case study design should be considered when:

- (a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions
- (b) the researchers cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study
- (c) the researchers want to cover contextual conditions relevant to the phenomenon under study.

“A descriptive case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred” (Yin, 2003).

Narrative analysis was implemented to closely evaluate the data gathered.

“Narrative methods may provide special insights into the complexity of community intervention implementation over and above more familiar research methods” as it seeks to embody the depth of all elements presented during the “story telling” process of the interviews (Riley, T. & Hawe, 2005). The categories; descriptive, consecutive, consequential, evaluative, and transformative, were adapted from Young (1984) and employed in this study.

A narrative approach looks closely at the sentences constructed by the storyteller and the information and meaning they portray. Are the sentences descriptive? That is, a sentence or paragraph that sets the scene, but has no temporal role in the story. Are they consecutive? Is there a logic to where the sentence fits into the story? Are they consequential to the story? That is, they have causal implications. If the sentences are evaluative, do they show something of the attitude of the CDO? These sentences give meaning to the story. If they are transformative, they express a change in how the storyteller evaluates something, such as an epiphany (Riley, T. & Hawe, 2005, p. 230).

The researchers scheduled a focus group meeting(s) with the staff involved with the first campus to receive the dual language program. The initial campus began with kinder and first grade classes. The other elementary campus was not selected for focus group participation because no dual language program was initiated there because of lack of enrollment.

The First Focus Group Meeting was held in July 2015 at the elementary campus of study. In attendance were:

- 4 participants (mini focus group)
- 1 Campus Administrator
- 1 Central Office Magnet Coordinator
- 2 Dual Language Teachers

The following questions were constructed to assist in guiding the discussions during the initial focus group meeting:

Guiding Questions:

- 1. What were your perceptions about the support that was provided during the planning stages of the dual language program?**
- 2. Describe your perceptions about the efficacy of leadership in planning and implementation of the dual language program.**
- 3. How do you perceive the ongoing support provided to and for the dual language program by all levels of administration?**
- 4. What do you perceive as the greatest limitation in program planning and implementation?**
- 5. What do you perceive as the most helpful factors in program planning and implementation?**

The Second Group Meeting was held in November 2015 at the elementary campus of study. In attendance were:

- 3 participants (mini focus group)
- 1 Campus Administrator
- 2 Dual Language Teachers

The following questions were constructed to assist in guiding the discussions during the follow-up focus group meeting:

- 1. Describe your perceptions about the ongoing support that has been provided during the implementation phase of the program thus far? Have your perceptions changed? How so?**
- 2. Describe your perceptions regarding the efficacy of leadership that has been provided to you during the implementation phase?**
- 3. What has been your greatest limitation in program implementation?**
- 4. What has been your greatest resource or support during program implantation?**
- 5. What has been the greatest unanticipated challenge you have encountered?**
- 6. Knowing what you know now, what would you do differently during the planning stages?**
- 7. What would be your greatest piece of advice for others looking to implement a dual language program?**
- 8. In your own words, describe your perception of the overall success of program implementation thus far.**
- 9. What has been your greatest personal reward during the implementation phase of the dual language program?**
- 10. Moving forward, what is your greatest anticipated challenge?**

Findings

The following charts depict the focus group participant responses into the narrative analysis categories.

Descriptive	Consecutive	Consequential	Evaluative	Transformative
Chaos might be possible when school starts	Difficulty in planning due to uncertainty of what to expect in the future	Budget approval	Making progress	Would liked to have started one year later
Initial Planning not as smooth as they would have liked	Need of additional instructional materials for future curriculum planning	New top administrators hired and engaging	Lack of definition of roles	Desire to have participated in more planning sessions/meetings
frustrated	better grasp on future planning after beginning program implementation	District resignations led to lack of role clarity	Needed earlier planning	Would like to have known history of vision to provide clarity of program design and goals
“who Knows” waiting for start of school		Participation in additional professional develop will lead to increased program design clarity.	This current meeting has been very informative	
Competition for student recruitment			Need for increased stakeholders' communication	

Descriptive	Consecutive	Consequential	Evaluative	Transformative
Lack of instructional Time	No appropriate developmental and implementation timeline	Overwhelming Workload	Curriculum should have been translated and in place before starting the program	Surprise Chinese language specialist on district staff.
level of student achievement in spite of roadblocks	Curriculum should have been translated and in place before starting the program	Lack of Resources	Lack of Resources	
Student excitement and engagement			Low Parental Participation	

Initial Findings

The first focus group meeting yielded interesting findings. The participants described a need for increased role clarity for all program stakeholders. They also cited the need for a point person, one who would have access to all program, district state and best practice information to bring it all together for the program at the local level.

That led to discussions about increased communications for all participants, parents, students, teachers, and administrators.

Formative Findings

The focus group participants were even more open and expansive at the follow-up meeting. Several quotes are revelatory about the growth of self-knowledge and a deeper understanding of the task at hand. One teacher opined; “When the program started, it took 16 hours to translate a single chapter of text”. They had cut that time to less than half by the time this event occurred.

“Not enough instructional time”

“Wish we had known about the Chinese language specialist on staff”

“We have to do our own student recruitment for the program”

Conclusions

Findings were informative and offered unique insight into the processes of Dual Language Program implementation. Both initial and mid-year review indicated a need for increased communication. Discoveries regarding resources and processes were not revealed until focus group meetings were held. Thus, it was further noted that a centralized program focus at the district level would prove beneficial for all involved parties. The lack of readily available resources in Mandarin resulted in a large focus on curriculum development. All parties involved concluded the focus on curriculum development did not leave a desirable amount of time for instructional focus. Worth noting, however, is the reported student progress indicating overall program success. Further research is warranted regarding an in-depth look at student performance data.

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STAAR EOC as a predictor of College Readiness-What Administrators Should Know

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Abstract

The Texas Education Agency states the new system of STAAR EOC testing focuses on increasing college readiness of graduating high school students and ensures that Texas students are competitive with national and international competitors (TEA, 2013a). The researcher used qualitative narrative inquiry to add an expert English II teacher perspective regarding the English II STAAR EOC as a predictor of college readiness. Findings included a teacher opinion that accountability was necessary but also included assertions that testing was too heavily influenced by outside sources. Because of these criticisms, as well as the multiple non-academic factors required for success at the collegiate level, the expert teachers in this study did not feel the English II STAAR EOC was an accurate predictor of college readiness.

Key Words: STAAR EOC, English II teachers, college readiness

Introduction

The Texas Education Agency (TEA), in collaboration with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and Texas educators, states that they developed STAAR EOCs in response to requirements set forth by the 80th and 81st Texas legislatures to be in compliance with NCLB (TEA, 2014b). TEA states that the new system of STAAR EOC testing focuses on increasing college readiness of graduating high school students and ensures Texas students are academically competitive both nationally and internationally (TEA, 2013a). TEA also notes that a goal of the STAAR EOC exams is to be in the top ten states for graduating college ready students (TEA, 2015b). With this goal in mind, does success on this exam truly indicate college readiness?

According to Roderick, Nagaoka, and Coca (2009), test scores alone cannot predict college readiness. Roderick et al. (2009) assert one must look at the student as a whole, including their non-academic skills and abilities. Roderick, et al. (2009) argue: Gaining access to and succeeding in college requires students to have high levels of content knowledge, core academic skills, and non-cognitive skills—skills that colleges traditionally assess by looking at students' high school coursework, their

performance on achievement exams, and their relative class rank and grade point average (GPA). (p. 190)

Roderick et al. (2009) contend, though standardized test scores are a part of the picture, they do not alone determine college readiness. In addition, there is no standard amongst colleges for determining readiness. The goal of this study was to determine if expert English II teachers perceive the English II STAAR EOC exam as an accurate predictor of college readiness.

Statement of the Problem

The NCLB Act of 2001 is based on the belief that setting high educational standards and establishing measurable goals via state standardized testing can improve student performance and outcomes in education (TEA, 2014b). Does mastery of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) indicate a readiness to succeed at the collegiate level? Are there other factors such as those suggested by Roderick et al. (2009) that the STAAR EOC test was not designed to measure? Is it possible to tell students in their second year of high school, after meeting standard on this STAAR EOC exam, that they are college ready? Is there a more appropriate goal and message that TEA could send to students, parents, and teachers about performance on the STAAR EOC exams, such as, “your student has the ‘academic potential,’ but must also possess additional skills and characteristics to be successful at the collegiate level”?

There are multiple factors outside of test scores that could impact a student’s college readiness, including maturity, individual and family history and expectations, cognitive ability, motivation, and financial status. Madaus and Russell (2010) note, they [tests] do not address the deeper underlying problems that are barriers to student learning, such as student health, nutrition and living conditions, class size, and teachers’ education...mandating high-stakes testing allows policy-makers to sidestep difficult ideological, economic, and political issues. (p. 103)

None of these factors are tested or taken into consideration on the English II STAAR EOC exam score report, yet a student is determined to be college ready based solely on the quintile and number reported on the English II STAAR EOC exam during their second year of high school (TEA, 2014b). Teachers are typically able to gain a detailed picture of a student’s circumstances via months of classroom interactions, tutorials, parent phone calls, conversations, and meetings. With this additional information, do expert English II teachers think the English II STAAR EOC is truly an accurate gauge of a student’s college readiness?

Research Design

The researcher in this qualitative study used a narrative inquiry design approach to uncover and understand expert Texas high school English II teachers’ knowledge, experiences, and opinions regarding the accurateness of the English II STAAR EOC exam as a predictor of college-readiness. Interviews were conducted with teachers in their school classroom settings in alignment with narrative inquiry to gain detailed

teacher observations related to the English II STAAR EOC per Creswell (2007). The interview questions on the research protocol were open-ended and non-directional in nature per Bogdan and Biklen (2007). This method of qualitative study is called for when the voice of their experiences can add to the understanding of the situation. “Experience is a key term in these diverse inquiries,” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2). In addition, the focus in these types of inquiries is “very much on trying to understand what we called their [research participants] personal practical knowledge” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 3). “Qualitative researchers are concerned with what are called participant perspectives,” according to Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 7). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note, “experience happens narratively...therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively” (p. 19). Creswell (2007) also recommends using such a strategy when a topic needs to be explored more, but exact variables cannot necessarily be identified.

This research targeted high school English II teachers in multiple schools and districts and utilized purposive sampling in eight North Texas suburban public schools. Teachers were selected using multiple overlying methods and included only exemplary teachers. These parameters were in place to ensure that the teachers’ opinions were based in rich experience per Bogdan & Biklen (2007, p. 104), and that the teachers knew and understood the skills assessed at the English II STAAR EOC level, the skills deemed necessary for college readiness.

Significance of the Study

As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) express, “We need to have the work connect with larger questions of social significance” (p. 121). This findings of this study are significant because English II STAAR EOC testing affects every high school student in the state of Texas and will be in place until the state develops and implements a new testing system and/or new graduation requirements. Texas public high school students must meet standard on the five required exams, including the English II STAAR EOCs (TEA, 2014b) to graduate. Minimal research has been conducted to ensure the exam accurately measures what the TEA states it intends to measure.

Requiring a met standard score on the five exams could also impact the drop-out rates and graduation rates of Texas public high school students, as well as the performance label of high schools, as performance on standardized exams is directly correlated to the school’s performance label (TEA, 2014a). The TEA reports an 87.7% graduation rate and a 12.3% dropout rate for the Texas high school graduating class of 2012 (TEA, 2012b). With new and more stringent graduation requirements in place, this 12.3% dropout rate could potentially increase dramatically.

Elected officials and the TEA alike tout the high caliber and quality of these newly created STAAR EOC mandated tests. “The rigor of items has been increased by assessing skills at a greater depth and level of cognitive complexity. In this way the tests will be better able to measure a greater range of student achievement and establish stronger links to postsecondary readiness” (STAAR Q&A, 2012). Though TEA does claim that the English II STAAR EOC exam requires students to think at higher levels

than the TAKS previously required, does that mean the English II STAAR EOC is a better or accurate indicator of college-readiness?

Push back against STAAR testing is widespread. There are currently two consortiums of school districts with combined lawsuits against the state of Texas regarding state standardized testing (Hundley, Dallas Morning News, 2013, Knect, 2007). Former Texas Commissioner of Education Robert Scott called the state testing system a "perversion of its original intent" and stated he was looking forward to "reeling it back in" (Smith, The Texas Tribune, January 2012). Information discovered in this study could offer additional guidance to the districts and individuals who are still questioning the motives, cost benefits, intentions, and message of TEA regarding the new STAAR EOC exams.

Collection of Data

Nine participant interviews were conducted in total. Recordings were transcribed for analysis. Second meetings served as a member check and contributed to the validation of the research and reporting per Clandinin and Connelly (2000). This member check served to "verify that the teachers' meaning is accurately portrayed in the research" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A member check is also essential because "Qualitative researchers are concerned with making sure that they capture perspectives accurately" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 8).

Treatment of Data

Transcripts were read and analyzed by the researcher for overall understanding. The researcher identified significant themes and statements made throughout the interviews, and these themes and statements were labeled and organized into common categories per Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 173). Quotes were embedded in findings to support the overarching themes and details per Bogdan and Biklen (2007). In addition, findings were connected and related to current literature regarding standardized testing, college readiness, teacher perceptions, and the STAAR EOC exams per Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 169).

Findings

The first research question asked teachers to describe what made a master teacher. Findings included teachers who were passionate about their profession and about doing what is best for students. Teachers discussed the necessity to know the individual needs and learning styles of students and differentiating lessons to meet those individual student needs. Also discussed was the importance of maintaining a positive rapport with students in order to gain their trust and create an effective learning environment. Lastly, teachers shared the desire to continually improve and grow in their learning, whether through professional development, collaboration with colleagues, or learning from their students. Teachers, schools, and districts are rated by TEA on student performance, met standard

rates on STAAR EOC, student test scores, and a myriad of other numeric standards, but passion for the job, love of students, and exemplifying life-long learning is never in the ratings reported by TEA. There is disconnect between what teachers value as important or vital in their profession, and what TEA feels is significant enough to report to the public.

Teachers were then asked to share why they felt Texas created the STAAR EOC exams. Teachers expressed a belief that accountability is necessary in education for both teachers and students. The English II STAAR EOC is valuable in establishing and monitoring an accountability standard, and accountability ensures students are meeting a minimum standard across the state. While teachers think the current system of accountability is well intended, teachers are frustrated that their students' high school graduation is determined by a test that does not take into account the whole student. Teachers also feel a lack of control with the system. Multiple participants cited examples of students who they felt were harmed by the testing process itself. Until there is a shared value system between master educators and state entities, and until teachers feel their values are represented in the tests, teachers will be critical of state mandated standardized testing.

Teachers also expressed the English II STAAR EOC was most useful for new-to-the-profession teachers, or teachers who were not masters in their craft however, since teachers know their individual students the best, they should be given the autonomy to alter lessons and curriculum to best meet the needs of those students. Standardized testing does not currently allow for this autonomy in the classroom. Teachers even stated the English II STAAR EOC is not cognitively demanding, describing the test as formulaic and leading to a mediocre learning experience. The values between master teachers and the cognitive skills demanded on current state standardized exams, or the STAAR EOC, do not align.

When asked if the English II STAAR EOC exam was an accurate predictor of college readiness, teachers elaborated on their concerns with the content of the test, expressing the content was not appropriate for college readiness. For this reason, teachers did not focus on the English II STAAR EOC when teaching their students; instead, they concentrated on the district's curriculum to guide their lessons. Teachers felt students do need to improve their writing skills, but teachers should aim much higher than the writing level required on the English II STAAR EOC when teaching their students writing. As mentioned earlier, there is a discrepancy between what master teachers think is essential knowledge for success at the collegiate level and what TEA assesses on state standardized testing such as the English II STAAR EOC. Until the values between these two entities align, master teachers will be critical of state standardized testing.

Overall, the teachers did not think meeting standard on the English II STAAR EOC indicated their students were ready for college or career. In addition to the concerns with the content of the test, teachers cited multiple non-academic skills that were necessary for college readiness that were not assessed on the exam. Teachers shared stories of students who met standard on the English II STAAR EOC who would not be successful at the college level because they lacked one or more of these essential non-

academic skills. Teachers expressed these non-academic skills were even more important to college success than the academic content assessed on the English II STAAR EOC exams. These non-academic skills included intrinsic student motivation, social skills, time management, maturity, and a focus on goals and the future. Teachers also shared concerns that students were reduced to a number and that their high school graduation and college readiness was determined by one number from one day.

Conclusion and Implications of the Study

Considering most master English II teachers do not think the English II STAAR EOC is an accurate predictor of college readiness, educators and school leaders need to be very cognizant of the message they are communicating to students and parents regarding the results of the STAAR EOC exams. Perhaps the message should be “These scores are a good measurement of present academic expectations, but the student will need to continue to make progress on academic factors for the coming 2 years.”

Next, the frustrations teachers express when discussing the lack of teacher voice in the English II STAAR EOC creation and implementation need to be echoed by administrators and school leaders. Educators should fight for more localized control and voice in their students’ academic career and outcomes. Educational leaders and administrators should be expressing this frustration to the policy makers, as the professional teacher voice is invaluable to the educational process. Teachers agreed that a standard of accountability is necessary, but being tied to a student’s high school graduation is excessive. Educators at the local level and in the classrooms know their students best. They know their names, their faces, their circumstances, and their needs. They can best determine if students are worthy of a high school diploma.

Educational leaders and administrators should also acknowledge that the skills assessed on the English II STAAR EOC are basic skills, and to truly prepare students for the collegiate level, teachers need to go above and beyond these basic skills. Administrators need to know and understand the significance and relevance of creativity to student success, encouraging teachers to assess students using creative means, not just standardized assessments. Teachers need to incorporate more detailed writing skills that require synthesis of multiple sources, again, taking students above and beyond the basic skills assessed on the English II STAAR EOC. Lastly, educational leaders need to advocate for students who do not meet standard on traditional standardized exams such as the English II STAAR EOC. Students who are ESL or special education, or students who have unique life circumstances may still deserve to earn their high school diploma even though they do not meet standard on the English II STAAR EOC.

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School Bond Passage: Relationship to Demographics and Student Achievement

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Abstract

This study describes the results of Texas school bond elections for one year. The factors of student and district demographics are compared with the bond election results. A correlational analysis shows a correlation with bond amounts, social economic status of the school district as well as ethnicity of the student composition. There is no relationship between bond passage and student achievement in mathematics or reading. Qualitative data further describes reasons for success and failure of school bond elections.

Introduction and Review of Literature

There is minimal research on school bond elections beyond single case studies of school bond elections. Bond elections are the major way that school districts are able to obtain the funds for renovation or building of campuses it is important to understand the factors that impact the results of this revenue generation. Additionally, it is the citizens in the communities of the school districts that ultimately make the decisions that directly impact the decisions related to facilities in their school districts, it is important to understand how their vote impacts the school districts. This paper adds to the school bond elections research with the analysis of 133 school bond elections in Texas for the 2014 school year.

In Texas between 1997 to 2009 the bond passage rate was at 77%; however a more recent dataset in 2010 showed that the passage rate was 66% (Bowers & Lee, 2013). Additionally, the first attempt for a district to pass a bond has the highest chance for success (Bowers & Lee, 2013). Further, Asian and Hispanic populations tend to vote positive for bonds (Bowers & Lee, 2013). However, other researchers found no relationship between ethnicity and bond passage (Gong, et al. 2014; Theobald & Meier, 2002; Zimmer, et al., 2011). Younger voters and high socio-economic status voters are more likely to vote positively on bonds (Bowers & Lee, 2013). However, Theobald and Meier (2002) found that the larger level of low income students, there was a higher passage rate. Other research showed that rural districts had a lower chance of passing

bonds than suburban or urban districts (Bowers, et al, 2010; Zimmer, et al., 2011). However, the larger the amount of the bond, the less likely it is to pass (Bowers, Metzger, & Militello, 2010). This differed from another study conducted in Oklahoma that showed a relationship with increased student enrollment and a higher bond passage (Gong, et al., 2014). Another study showed that school district size as determined by student enrollment was not a predictor of bond passage (Bowers, et al., 2010). However, Theobald and Meier (2002) determined that the larger a school district the less likely for bond passage. Interestingly, school districts with long term debt was a positive significant predictor of future bond passage (Bowers, et. Al, 2010; Zimmer, et al., 2011). Zimmer, et al (2011) also determined that bonds for maintaining existing facilities had a higher chance of passing then bonds for new construction. This is different from Theobald and Meier (2002) findings that bonds that had larger increases on maintenance expenditure actually had less likelihood of bond passage. Additionally, the longer time period between bond issues tends to get larger support for bond passage.

Student achievement studies comparing the academic achievement results with bond passage is limited. One study conducted in Norway showed that student satisfaction with their school building was positive and significantly connected to student achievement (Hopland & Nyhus, 2016). However, an earlier study that the connection to student achievement and school buildings connection varied by countries. Hopland (2013) found a negative relationship between student achievement and poor building conditions in Australia, Netherlands, and Japan, while there was no relationship in Belgium, Great Britain, Italy, New Zealand, and the United States. Another study showed that there was no relationship between differences in student achievement with inadequate facilities (Gronberg, et al., 2011). Further, in the United States, Momprimeir (2013) established that the “White House stated that students in poor school buildings are more likely to struggle academically” (p. 510). This same study found that there are over 98,000 schools in the U.S. schools that educate 511 million students (Momprimeir, p. 513).

School bond election research is important since many school districts are only able to renovate and/or build new campuses through capital expenditures that are typically funded through bonds. The bond passage rate showed a decline from 75% in 1960 to 35% in 1986 (Wirt and Kirst 1997, 116). There has been some reports that this decline may be due to a desire for not increased property taxes as well as lower economy (Revelli, 2016). Additionally, school bond elections must gain the support of the community in order to pass; therefore, there is a need for different understandings such as demographics and voter tendencies that are not needed in school board decisions. (Newman, 2013).

The literature on school bond elections is first examined through the components of bond passage as far as the demographics of the community and school district as well as the demographics of voters and how they vote. Additionally, the requirements of bond passage are described for Texas.

Bond passage requires a simple majority. The determination of seeking a bond is not without risks. The superintendent as well as the current school board may see a bond election as a way to voice their concerns with the management of the district. The citizens of a community may not perceive the same needs for the facilities of the school. Other decisions made earlier on class size, grade configuration, and school zone boundaries may impact the citizens' perception of the school district and thus their willingness to vote favorably for a bond. Administration such as the superintendent and school board members that show a primary need for class size through overcrowded classrooms may gain more creditability for their establishment of a need for the bond. Decisions on grade configuration as well as zone boundary changes that were not well received by the citizens may negatively impact their support for future bonds. Further, the maintenance of current facilities may impact the citizens' decisions on a bond. Many school districts may not maintain their facilities at their desired levels because it was easier to defer those costs rather than instructional personnel during tight budgets (Lufkin, Hightower II, Landsbergen, & Desai, 2012). However, if the citizens see poor maintenance on the facilities, they may question the administrators' ability to manage repairs and thus not trust them and therefore not vote for bonds. Further, schools that do not have as much financial resources because they serve higher levels of lower income students and less local revenue may not be able to meet all their facility needs without going to a bond election. The state assistance on money for facilities is limited especially for districts that are not building because of growth in student enrollment. (Clark, 2001; Hood, 2014; Malone, Trost, & Fire, 2014). The citizens' property tax rate may also affect their willingness to pass bond elections. If taxes are already high in a community, the citizens may not desire for more taxes to support the school district's renovations or building. However, higher taxes could also indicate that a community is willing to have higher taxes for specific and desired services such as higher quality school buildings. The current level of bonds in a school district might also impact the citizens' willingness to further add to the bond debt and tax rates. Additionally, the academic performance if high may be perceived as the administrators are doing well, and thus a more willingness by the citizens of the community to vote positively for the bond and increased expenditure on facilities. In Texas, the state had publically accessible data on academic performance of school districts and campuses. The overall districts' achievement in overall test performance in reading and mathematics was used as variables in this study. Further, if a bond proposes a new campus building in a smaller district, it may be more obvious of a need than in a larger school district with less visible need for the building. This also may be seen more personally as an impact beneficially to their own children while also raising their property values.

The wording of bonds as well as the placement of bonds on a ballot have also been studied. Bowers, et al. (2013) found that bonds that proposed renovations of debt refinancing had a higher passage rate than bonds that had increases in programs such as athletics. Additionally, the placement of the bond proposal lower on the ballot had a higher chance of passage (Bowers, et al., 2013).

The voter turnout has also been studied for the impact on bond passage. A study in Oklahoma showed that there was not a significant relationship between voter turnout and the bond outcome (Gong, 2014).

Some factors have been identified that may lead to a more likely failure of a bond election (First Southwest Company, 2007). These factors are 1) a loss of faith in elected board members and/or school administrators, 2) difficulty recruiting and retaining personnel in the school district, 3) difficulty in attracting new businesses to the community, 4) a decline in community economic growth, and 5) an overall negative self-image of the community (First Southwest Company, 2007, p.1).

The purpose for this research examined the current data on school bond elections in Texas for the 2014-2015 school year, the student and district finance data for those districts, and the demographics of the school districts. Additionally, this research examined the perceptions of administrators and community members for strategies to succeed on passing and potential reasons for failures. Community members may have misperceived understanding of property tax rate and spending per pupil and school finance to improve facilities. Gong and Rogers (2014) determined that school district administrators would do best to target their efforts to supportive voters and not the general voting population.

Educational importance of study. This research is important since it offers insight into reasons for bond passage and failure. This is important since bonds pass at a higher rate on the first attempt so administrators must use best strategies on their first attempts. The conflict between school facilities and the citizen's willingness to pay for the school facilities is a major reason for this study and the understanding of bond elections.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The study of school bond elections require degree of capital expenditures, passage rate, and citizens direct decisions on school board policy. The voting demographic is an important concept with the passage of bond elections. Additionally, the key concepts for bond elections is described. Some of these key concepts are costs, resources, performance of school, and self-interest of groups of voters (Theobald & Meier, 2002).

Methods and Procedures

This research was explanatory descriptive research to determine the basic demographics of communities with bond elections. One of the first variables used in this study was the size of the district. This data were obtained from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) web site for the year 2014. The bond election data were obtained from the Texas Bond Review Board which has collected bond election results since 1997. Their bond election results include the district, region of the district, amount of the bond, reason for the bond, and passage results. The student achievement data for the year prior to the bond election was obtained from the TEA website. The demographics of the school district was obtained from the U.S. Census and Proximity One, a website that collected data from the

American Community Survey. The analysis of the data was correlation. A bond result that failed was coded as 0 and a bond result that passed was coded as 1. The follow-up research was a qualitative design to examine the potential reasons for bond election passage or failure as perceived by superintendents. The research questions that guided this study were: 1) What key strategies and relationships exist between school districts that have and have not passed bond elections? 2) What community demographics were present in schools that have and have not passed bond elections?

Results and Conclusions

There were 133 bond elections in Texas school districts in 2014 with 111 (83%) passed and 22 failed (17%). The first examination of the data was conducted with a look at the bond elections by school district size. The school districts in Texas are divided as designations 1A – 6A. (1A schools have 104 students or less, 2A schools have 105-219 students, 3A schools have a 220-464 students, 4A schools have 465-1059, 5A schools have 1060-2099 students, and 6A schools have over 2,100 students). The bond elections were: 1A 4%; 2A 3%; 3A 5%; 4A 9%; 5A 7%; 6A 24%.

School Demographic findings

The data were examined for school size and number of bonds that carried and defeated. The majority of the bonds were in 6A school districts.

Table 1

School Type (Number of Students)	No of Schools		Carried		Defeated	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1A (less than 105)	1	0.8%	1	0.8%	0	0.0%
2A(105-219)	8	6.6%	6	4.9%	2	1.6%
3A (220-464)	12	9.8%	11	9.0%	1	0.8%
4A (465-1,059)	23	18.9%	19	15.6%	4	3.3%
5A (1,060-2,099)	18	14.8%	15	12.3%	3	2.5%
6A(2,100 or more)	60	49.2%	50	41.0%	10	8.2%
Total	122	100.0	102	83.6%	20	16.4%

Table 1 reports the school size/type, Total number of participating schools, and numbers and their percentage that put forward the bonds for vote. There were a total of 122 schools to put up the bonds for vote. Analysis of the schools according to their size/type

there was only one participating (0.8%) 1A school. Similarly eight (6.6%) 2A, 12 (9.8%) 3A, 23(18.9%) 4A, 18 (14.8%) 5A, and 60 (49.2%) 6A schools also put up the ballots. Analysis revealed that almost a half of the schools were 6A and a very small number of small schools had only a few bond elections, one 1A and only 8 2A schools had bond elections.

There were a variety of purposes for the bonds. Table two shows the different bond purposes.

Table 2
Purpose of the Bond

Purpose	No of Schools		Carried		Defeated	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Building	79	64.75	62	50.82	17	13.93
Building/Athletic	1	0.82	1	0.82	0	0.00
Building/Auditorium	2	1.64	2	1.64	0	0.00
Building/Buses	17	13.93	14	11.48	3	2.46
Building/Gym	3	2.46	3	2.46	0	0.00
Building/Security	12	9.84	12	9.84	0	0.00
Building/Technology	6	4.92	6	4.92	0	0.00
Campus Improvement	1	0.82	1	0.82	0	0.00
Renovations	1	0.82	1	0.82	0	0.00
Total	122	100	102	83.61	20	16.39

Table 2 reports the purpose of the bonds. Out of the total 122 proposals, 79 of them (64.8%) were purely for school building. Similarly, one or 0.8% was for building and athletic, two or 1.6% were for building and auditorium, 17 or 13.9% were for building and school buses, three or 2.5% were for building and gym, 12 or 9.8% were for building and security, and six or 4.9% were for building and technology. Only two bonds did not include building as their purpose was one each or 0.8% for campus improvement and campus renovation respectively.

Table 3 is the summary of the correlational analysis of several factors.

Correlational Findings

Table 3
Correlational Chart

Correlations	CPT	SPT	EDSPT	RA	MA
Total Bond Amount	.662**	.895**	.756**	0.145	0.174
Carried Bond Amount	.618**	.892**	.727**	0.134	0.174
Defeated Bond Amount	.982**	.952**	.919**	0.288	0.183

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). CPT=City population Total, SPT= Student population Total, EDSPT= Economic Disadvantaged Students Population Total, RA= Reading Achievement, MA= Mathematics Achievement

Table 3 reports the correlations between proposed bond amount and school's demographic and achievement variables. Total Bond Amount (Both Carried and Defeated) and the total population of the city or cities (if it was a consolidated school district) had positive correlation with $r = .662^{**}$, which was significant in 0.01 confident level. Similarly, Student population Total and Economic Disadvantaged Students Population Total also significantly correlated to the Total Bond Amount (Both Carried and Defeated) with $r = .895^{**}$ and $r = .756^{**}$ ($N = 122$). Likewise, City population Total, Student population Total, and Economic Disadvantaged Students Population Total were significantly correlated in 0.01 confident level to Only Carried Amount in the bond election with the values $r = .618^{**}$, $r = .892^{**}$, and $r = .727^{**}$ ($n = 102$) respectively. Furthermore, City population Total, Student population Total, and Economic Disadvantaged Students Population were significantly correlated in 0.01 confident level to Only Defeated Amount in the bond election with the values, $r = .982^{**}$, $r = .952^{**}$, and $r = .919^{**}$ ($n = 20$) respectively. City population Total, Student population Total, and Economic Disadvantaged Students Population had almost perfect positive correlation to the proposed bond amount which was not carried. None of the achievement variables Reading Achievement, Mathematics Achievement showed significant correlations to the bond amount proposed, carried, or defeated.

An analysis of this data showed that there was a strong positive correlation with bond passage and more white students, lower SES for district, and the higher the bond amount. There was no correlation with bond passage and city/town demographics. There was also no correlation with bond passage and district reading or math achievement data.

There are many factors and strategies may affect the outcome of a bond election. Teachers can be advocates for a bond and communicate with the parents the importance of the bond. Citizens and parents often trust their own teachers at a higher level than

even the district administration (Hamilton & Cohen, 1974)). The school district is not able to change their size or demographics; however, the administrators may use the knowledge of how this effects their chance of school bond passage, may use that knowledge to inform their strategies on how to plan their bond passage. Therefore, qualitative data from two superintendents shows some methods of successful bond elections as well as failed elections.

Successful strategies for bond passage

One superintendent shared strategies that were important in two different school districts for the successful passing of bond elections. Findings show that successful strategies to pass a bond election are:

1. Conduct a needs assessment with the administrative team
2. Inform the board of your district needs and get their support
3. Hire a financial advisor, architectural firm, and determine a delivery method for construction
4. With input from the Board, form a Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) made up a diverse group of stakeholders
5. Schedule information sessions with professional services to inform the LRPC. Allow for dialogue.
6. Have the LRPC make a formal recommendation to the school board
7. The school board should unanimously adopt the LRPC recommendation
8. Members of the LRPC can form a Political Action Committee (PAC) to support the bond issue
9. The district responsibility is to provide the community with factual information regarding the bond
10. Provide monthly updates to the school board and host public forums to discuss issues
11. Get out the vote. Utilize voting locations on your campuses and a district events

Besides the list of steps for a successful bond passage, one superintendent share that a major portion of their success was the involvement of many of the stakeholders at all steps of the process. He shared,

Our bond initiative was successful because of the work we did on the front end with our long range planning committee. We involved a diverse group of stakeholders, and provided them with relevant information from professional demographers, architects, financial advisors, and construction managers. It was a team effort to move our district forward. Our administrative team was strategic in its approach with the long range planning committee. We wanted to show these community leaders how a systemic facilities plan could impact student learning for generations to come.

Further this superintendent shared that he had been a part of two successful bond elections in two different districts. Both districts were growing and the community valued education. He stated,

Waxahachie is a fast growing district. Our community is proud of the school system and wanted to continue to make WISD and educational destination. Our goal, as an administrative team, was to facilitate factual information so that citizens could make informed decisions.

Another point was made by this superintendent as he shared that communication is a key. This communication starts with also be clear about the financial status of a district while sharing how the district had utilized good financial policies and practices. He pointed out,

Good communication is essential in passing a school bond. District administrators must convey information to the school board, teachers, parents, students, and the community. We must show that we have been good stewards of the taxpayers' monies in the past, and will continue to do so moving forward.

Reasons for failed passage of a bond

Another former superintendent shared why bond elections failed in two bond attempts. He shared the following reasons for failure.

1. Never run an election when having to make an unpopular decision. A school campus had to be closed in one section of the district. The people from that area were upset and voted 100% against a bond. Later a board member was not re-elected and the closed school placed one of their followers on the board.
2. Make certain you know where your different publics vote. He shared that he had closed some voting sites to save money, but these sites were major voting places for one ethnic group. This adversely affected the bond passage.
3. Just because it is quiet, do not assume that there is not opposition.
4. Rally your voters to vote because many do not vote if they think it will pass.

Conclusions

The findings of this study generally had mixed results when compared with the findings of other studies. There is a high percentage passing rate of bond elections in Texas. This bond passage rate is higher than previous research showed nationally and in Texas. The findings of this research showed another difference in the findings in that the larger the bond, the more likely the bond passage. Previous research showed that smaller bond amounts had a more likely chance of passing. Additionally, this research differed from other research in that ethnicity and social economic status of district did have a correlation to bond passage whereas previous research showed no relationship with

ethnicity and bond passage. Further, the findings of this research matched previous research in that the bond passage rate was not correlated with the demographics of a community, nor was there a correlation with academic achievement and bond passage rate.

Superintendents and school board members need to understand the components of bond election passage in order to decide and plan for a bond election. Additional studies on school board and teacher perceptions of bond elections would contribute to a large knowledge base for bond election planning.

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The Impact of Instructional Program Delivery on Texas Principal Certification Test Results

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Introduction

Understanding the relationship between the success of students in a university principal program and the relationship between the type of instructional delivery model and the student scores on state mandated TExES principal exam was the main focus of this research. The purpose for this study was twofold. First, identifying the preferred instructional delivery models, as defined through the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and requesting confirmation from each university as to which program delivery model was instituted was needed. The second purpose was to identify any statistically significant difference between program delivery (face-to-face [F2F], blended, online) as compared with student scaled scores on the TExES (068) Principal Test, an examination required for Texas Principal Certification.

Therefore, the following research questions were posed:

- (a) What is the program design (F2F, blended, or online) for each TEA approved principal preparation program in Texas? and
- (b) Is there a statistically significant difference in TExES Principal (068) Test average scaled score and the three domain scores among Texas principal preparation programs that are characterized as F2F, blended, or online?

In order to retrieve the answers to these research questions, it was first determined that the TExES Principal (068) Test average scaled institutional scores from the Texas Education Agency were needed from all principal preparation programs in the state. Next, a departmental administrator was pursued after reviewing a list of 60 TEA identified principal preparation programs within the State of Texas, both public and private. The departmental administrator, or representative, was asked to complete a monkey survey where the responded would need to identify what type of instructional delivery their principal preparation program instituted: F2F, blended, or online. Each survey respondent had knowledge of the TExES Principal (068) Test, because they either taught courses in their educational leadership program or they had educational leadership experience.

The instructional delivery options were the main focus of this study are defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB; 2014) as follows:

- F2F delivery is known as traditional instruction, and it is defined as a course, which has mandatory face-to-face sessions totalling more than 85% of the instructional time;
- The hybrid/blended delivery is defined as a course in which a majority (more than 50 percent but less than 85 percent), of the planned instruction occurs when the students and instructor(s) are not in the same place;
- Online delivery is defined as a course, which may have mandatory face-to-face sessions totalling no more than 15 percent of the instructional time. Examples of face-to-face sessions include orientation, laboratory, exam review, or an in-person test. (THECB, 2014)

These definitions were used in surveying the participants of this study about each university's instructional delivery data.

Methodology

A mixed methods research design was used for this study and a survey was emailed to program personnel at identified universities and they were asked to comment on the instructional delivery of their principal program. After emailing program personnel identified through each universities webpage, a follow-up phone call was done, especially after return communication was not received. In some cases, the information was gathered through the phone conversation and not through the email survey.

The TExES Principal (068) Test results that were administered between the period 09/01/2013 to 08/31/2014 from the Texas Education Agency was collected. This data represents:

1. General aggregate test and domain average scaled scores, and
2. General aggregate demographic data that includes gender, ethnicity, certification routes, best language of communication, first language learned as a child, test repeater status, and number of test attempts.

A follow-up TEA test data report (AY 2013 - 2014 test administration period) was received by researchers in 08/2015 that addressed institutional principal test pass rates: attempted; passed; and percentage.

Literature Review

Persistent question on whether or not instructional delivery links to student success is constantly being pondered. Specifically, many universities have placed total programs fully online and student success seems to continue. In Texas, different universities use different types of instructional delivery and a mixture of instructional deliveries to promote their principal preparation programs. What has been identified across Texas and across the United States is the question of what instructional delivery is best and where is student success more prominent. Furthermore, a question of what students prefer as far as instructional delivery is concerned, does not seem to be apparent in the literature, especially

when the principal program coursework and the performance of students on state certification exams is the focus.

There have been studies that have focused on the delivery models and whether or not student success is a parent. Through Driscoll, Jicha, Hunt, Tichavsky, and Thompson's (2012) study, they found that there was no statistical significance between online courses versus face-to-face courses. What they did find however is that those instructors and students who prefer one instructional model over another feel very strongly about their preference and will not consider alternatives deliveries of instruction. In research done by Atchley, Wingenbach, and Akers (2013), it was noted that there are inconsistencies throughout the literature when viewing data focused on student academic performance and instructional delivery models that focus on online learning and traditional learning in the classroom. In some research, online instructional delivery was seen as superior, but others found that traditional F2F courses were superior (Faux & Black-Hughes, 2000; Paden, 2006; Shoefeld-Tacher, McConnel, & Graham, 2001 as cited in Atchley, Wingenbach, & Akers, 2013).

Other research shows no statistical significance between student performance and the instructional delivery of courses (Atchley, Wingenbach, & Akers, 2013; Gerlich & Sollosy's 2011). What was found, was that students who were apt to do well because of intrinsic motivators would do well no matter the instructional delivery model. Further, there was no statistical significance between students who focused on truly understanding the course material three critical thinking when taking a course online versus taking a course face-to-face.

For online courses, the relationship that a student had with an instructor and the perception that a student had about the instructor seem to correlate with student academic performance according to Chitkushev, Vodenska, and Zlateva (2014). Students who belief that they did well on an online course correlated with their opinion that online course was well organized and that the instructor was prepared and well-informed (Chitkushev, Vodenska, & Zlateva , 2014; Driscoll, Jicha, Hunt, Tichavsky, & Thompson, 2012). Furthermore, in a study done by Driscoll, Jicha, Hunt, Tichavsky, and Thompson (2012), it was found that those students who were academically stronger tended to enroll and traditional courses, such as face-to-face courses. They also found that some students believe that online courses were easier than traditional, or face-to-face courses, which could be a reason for the uptick in online enrollment.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was twofold: first to identify the principal program delivery models (i.e., F-2-F, blended, or online) within the State of Texas at Texas Education Agency recognized public and private institutions surveyed during the last half of 2014; and second, to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in TExES Principal (068) Test average scaled score and the three domains of (School-Community Leadership, Instructional Leadership and Administrative Leadership) among Texas principal preparation programs that are characterized as F2F, blended, and online.

Sixty institutional programs of principal preparation were identified by the Texas Education Agency for the testing period 09/01/2013 to 08/31/2014. Through the data, 13 face-to-face, 12 blended, and 22 online programs of principal preparation were identified. In addition, 11 programs into the three format deliveries as identified by TEA and two programs did not provide data that was usable for this study. The techniques that are used to identify trends for this study are presented below.

The statistical technique used in this study involved first determining the mean of the institutional scaled test score and scaled scores of the three domains with each delivery mode (Table 1). Further, ANOVA scores for the average scale score and each domain score were determined across delivery mode (Table 2). Pearson r correlations were determined and a correlation matrix was developed denoting the correlation between average scaled scores and each domain score (Table 3). Cronbach's Alpha statistic of reliability was determined (Table 4). With this statistical technique, the score analysis on the TExES data indicated NO Significant Difference occurred on the average or three domain scaled scores between test takers who took the test via F2F, blended, or online delivery.

Table 1

Means for Average Score & Scale Scores (Delivery: 1=F2F; Online=2; 3=Blended)

Delivery	Average Scaled Score	School Leadership	Instructional Leadership	Admin. Leadership	
1 Mean	246.5838	76.2131	75.6162	74.9885	
N	13	13	13	13	
Std. Deviation	8.94213	4.65703	5.14748	4.55515	
2 Mean	243.8255	75.4914	73.2209	74.1282	
N	22	22	22	22	
Std. Deviation	6.68558	4.16069	2.93363	3.93432	
3 Mean	242.5075	73.9200	73.2975	73.0067	
N	12	12	12	12	
Std. Deviation	5.87581	2.28373	3.48676	3.40014	
Total Mean	244.2519	75.2898	73.9030	74.0798	
Total N	47	47	47	47	
Total Std. Deviation	7.20682	3.94433		3.85951	3.97225

Table 2

ANOVA ACROSS MODES OF DELIVERY

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Average Scaled Score	Between Groups	111.210	2	55.605	1.074	.350
	Within Groups	2277.953	44	51.772		
	Total	2389.163	46			
School Leadership	Between Groups	34.492	2	17.246	1.114	.337
	Within Groups	681.163	44	15.481		
	Total	715.655	46			

Instructional Leadership	Between Groups	52.789	2	26.394	1.836	.171
	Within Groups	632.420	44	14.373		
	Total	685.209	46			
Administrative Leadership	Between Groups	24.605	2	12.302	.772	.468
	Within Groups	701.220	44	15.937		
	Total	725.825	46			

Table 3

Pearson Correlations

		Average Scaled Score	School Leadership	Instructional Leadership	Adm Leadership
Average Scaled Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.941**	.932**	.951**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	47	47	47	47
School Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.941**	1	.798**	.911**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	47	47	47	47
Instructional Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.932**	.798**	1	.857**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	47	47	47	47
Administrative Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.951**	.911**	.857**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	47	47	47	47

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.945	4

As can be seen with these results and with the literature review present, universities must take into account the desires of their students when it comes to the instructional content delivery method. For some universities, placing programs online is a survival move that helps them stay competitive. As was noted in The Babson Survey Research Group in partnership with the College Board data, 2,500 colleges and universities in the United States were surveyed and sixty-five percent identified that online learning is a critical element of their strategic; additionally, for-profit institutions also were more likely to implement online instructional delivery (Allen & Seaman, 2011).

The State of Texas ranks second in the nation in number of institutions of higher education offering online degree programs. In 2011, enrollment in public four-year colleges and universities for the Fall Semester totaled 12,037,997 students (SREB, 2013). The Southern Regional Education Board addressed the percentage of instruction through e-learning at Texas public four-year colleges and universities reported that 23.3% of students received some instruction through e-learning (2013). Instruction was considered e-learning if more than 50 percent of course content is delivered electronically.

Conclusion

In summary, the data for this study revealed that there is no significant differences among test takers' average or domain scaled scores and the instructional delivery of their principal program. Specifically, there is no statistical difference between student success on a state principal exam and the way courses are delivered through a principal program. For this study, there were 60 programs, both public and private, identified through the TEA report of recognized Texas principal preparation programs at the time of this research. Of the 60 programs, 47 programs were identified as exclusively either F2F, blended, or online; 13 programs were identified as exclusively face-to-face; 12 programs were identified as exclusively blended; and 22 programs identified as exclusively online. Some universities did deliver their programs and multiple formats, but they were not counted for this study, because it was reported that students were allowed to take courses in whatever format they chose, including different formats within one semester.

In conclusion, as identified through the data of this research, no delivery of instruction was superior to another when looking at principal preparation delivery and no one delivery of instruction did not lead to statistically significantly higher scale scores on the TExES principal test for the period AY 2013 – 2014. Because of this finding, more research is needed to understand why universities are choosing to deliver their principal preparation programs online and what identified adequacies and inadequacies are inherent in all forms of program design being considered. Additionally, student input and their reason for choosing one program over another and one instructional delivery model over another as it relates to their success with the TExES principal test should also be investigated.

Overall, more research is needed on what makes a principal preparation program attractive to students and what is offered through principal preparation programs that helps students succeed. Identifying and focusing on these specific variables may point to more concrete data that can help illuminate and predict what factors help students succeed when taking state principal exams. Furthermore, what specifically makes a principal program

work for some students who do exceedingly well on state exams should be examined closer.

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