

**TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE DECISION-  
MAKING AT A PREDOMINANTLY MEXICAN AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL  
IN ACADEMIC JEOPARDY**

A Record of Study

by

ELIAS ALONZO

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

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Chair of Committee,	Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan
Committee Members,	Patricia Larke
	Karen S. Smith
	Randel Brown
Head of Department,	Mario Torres

December 2017

Major Subject: Educational Administration

Copyright 2017 Elias Alonzo

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this this mixed methods study, utilizing survey and interview data, was to present teacher perceptions regarding the decision-making process and outcomes of school administrators for a South Texas school that is in accountability jeopardy. The study took into consideration whether administrative practices were genuine regarding student success, especially when fifty-two percent of the population consists of English Language Learners. The researcher proposed to document teacher perceptions about administrative practices and the relationship to accountability mandates, high-stakes state assessments, and the true mission of the school. The theoretical framework for this study regarding decision-making by school administration utilizes the lenses of mindfulness and sense-making. A sequential explanatory design allowed for the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by a collection and analysis of qualitative data.

The findings gathered through teacher mindfulness surveys and interviews indicated that all ninety-one participants strongly felt that although school administrators were mindful of the school mission that administrative practices focused greatly on accountability compliance. The majority of participants did indicate that school administrators were good stewards of the organization, but a solid majority indicated that goals were not genuine to the school mission. At a high school with a population that comprised fifty-two percent English Language Learners was in academic jeopardy as defined by federal and state accountability mandates and high-stakes testing practice directed at securing only compliance numbers, marginalizes genuine instruction.

Recommendations for practice include the development of organizational mission statements that take into account accountability and compliance mandates and that reinforce proactive procedures for planned and unplanned events. Administrators must be collegial in sharing best practices with other organizations. Recommendations for further study include expanding this study to include other organizations with similar demographics and compliance challenges and the examination of administrative decision-making practices on specific instructional disciplines. School administrators must be mindful of these situations and use sense-making practices to make the right decision. School administrators must also insure that mission statements, goals, and objectives are more in line with the true direction of the organization.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, Elias and Maria whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears. My family Monica, Carlos, Mindy, Sophia, Cordie, and Olivia who sacrificed for many years as I undertook this journey. I also dedicate this dissertation to my many friends who have supported me throughout the process. I will always appreciate all they have done, especially J.J. Perez for helping me develop my technology skills and always being a brother and bandmate. Last, but not least, to our Lord. He has always guided me and put me where best I can serve.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thomas Paine said, “The real man smiles in trouble, gathers strength from distress, and grows brave by reflection.” Regarding troubles, I have learned to face them and to seek resolution. As for distress, they have been life’s lessons. In reflection, the events in my life have brought me to this point; they have not been ones that I undertook alone. I have many people to thank. First, Monica who has been a constant source of support for me by keeping the kids, pets, and family together through this journey. She has proofread and edited many papers, been a great sounding board, and has been brutally honest when I needed to come back down to earth. The many sacrifices she has borne have sustained me and allowed me to continue my journey. Thank you, Monica, for being the best wife and friend to me during those trying years. My efforts could not have sustained such results without your blessing and support.

I want to recognize and thank my mother and father, Maria Victoria and Elias for their support. My parents, through their hard work and belief in the American dream provided the foundation for me to reach many of my goals. My mother, the kindest soul I know, taught me compassion and respect. As the smartest man, I know, my father might not understand what graduate work is, but he knows the value of hard work, service and duty. He instilled those things in me and I am eternally grateful. I would like to thank the Villarreal and Zapata families, especially Grandma Julie who always valued a good education.

Dr. Webb-Hasan, my chair, has been a mentor extraordinaire. The faith she had in me and my abilities to continue have been incredible. As a fellow Chicagoan, she taught me to embrace and foster the lessons I learned from my roots. I appreciate all she has done to challenge me and foster those passions regarding being a voice for all children. It is her sage advice that permitted me to come this far. I truly appreciate the time, effort, and resources you poured out to me when I was contending with my eighty-hour workweeks away from school.

I want to thank Dr. Larke, Dr. Smith, and Dr. Brown, who as committee members, not only guided me through the process, but also taught me the value of my coursework. Dr. Larke, your knowledge and direction regarding educational psychology provided amazing insight and connected with those lessons about multiculturalism that are so important. Dr. Smith advised me as a practitioner, mentor, and friend. She is someone who knows the challenges we encounter as administrators at a campus level. Her leadership qualities, I continue to hold in the highest esteem. Dr. Brown helped by stepping in for a colleague that had to move on. He provided a voice, much like he does as an advocate for special needs children. He guided me in continuing the journey.

Although many other professors and colleagues have indeed helped me along the way, I feel obligated to single out a few: Dr. Stanley Green who I consider not only a mentor, but also a friend who helped begin the journey. His stimulating conversation and work ethic acted as a great source of inspiration to me; Dr. Fred Ivy who taught me to always do what is right for the right reason; Dr. Barbara Hong who not only has been a dear friend but an inspiration as to all we can achieve.

The support staff at Texas A & M made this process so special. They provided advice on what deadlines were important, which departments to go to find information, processing my university paperwork, and correcting it when it contained errors. Joyce Nelson, Brandi Barnett, and Marie Shelfer. I thank you all.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge my kids who provided me with the will and determination to want to better myself so that I might provide a better life for them. Thank you, Carlos, Mindy, Sophia, Cordie and Olivia for being such great kids while I was away from home either “physically or mentally” so many nights over the last few years. I hope this work will in turn inspire you.

## CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

This study supervised by a dissertation committee consisting of Dr. Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan, Dr. Patricia Larke, Dr. Karen Smith, and Dr. Randel Brown was critical to its completion. Research conducted under the support of the Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development. This study was not funded by any external source or entity. This study was completed via resources provided by the researcher himself.



## NOMENCLATURE

B/CS	Bryan/College Station
EAHRD	Educational Administration and Human Resource Development
SL	School Leadership
E	Education
TEA	Texas Education Agency

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES .....	viii
NOMENCLATURE .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xii
LIST OF TABLES .....	xiii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION .....	1
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM .....	3
PURPOSE OF STUDY .....	7
DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS .....	8
DEFINITION OF TERMS .....	16
ASSUMPTIONS .....	20
LIMITATIONS OF STUDY .....	20
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	21
SUMMARY AND ORGANIZATION OF STUDY .....	21
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	24
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....	24
SCHOOL STRUCTURES .....	27
MINDFULNESS .....	36
SENSE-MAKING .....	46
SCHOOLS AS HIGH RELIABILITY ORGANIZATION .....	54
CHAPTER SUMMARY: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....	60
CHAPTER III METHODS .....	62
RESEARCH METHODS .....	62
RESEARCH PARADIGM .....	63
STUDY POPULATION .....	67
INSTRUMENTATION .....	68

	Page
DATA ANALYSIS .....	70
LIMITATIONS AND VALIDITY OF INTERVIEWS .....	74
CHAPTER SUMMARY: STUDY METHODS .....	76
 CHAPTER IV RESULTS .....	 77
MINDFULNESS SURVEY .....	81
Preoccupation with Failure .....	82
Master Teacher Interview Responses.....	83
Reluctance to Simplify Interpretations .....	85
Master Teacher Interview Responses.....	87
Sensitivity to Operations .....	90
Master Teacher Interview Responses.....	91
Commitment to Resilience .....	93
Master Teacher Interview Responses.....	95
Deference to Expertise.....	97
Master Teacher Interview Responses.....	99
Chapter Summary: Survey and Interview Outcomes .....	100
 CHAPTER V SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	 102
SUMMARY OF STUDY .....	103
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .....	104
PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES.....	106
METHODOLOGY .....	107
FINDINGS .....	108
CONCLUSIONS .....	111
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE .....	113
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....	115
CONCLUSION.....	118
 REFERENCES .....	 121
 APPENDIX A TEACHER MINDFULNESS QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY.....	 142
APPENDIX B TEACHER SENSE-MAKING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	147
APPENDIX C SAMPLE INTERVIEW CODING.....	150
APPENDIX D VITAE.....	156

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 3.1: Independent and Dependent Variables .....	71

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 4.1 Master Teacher Participants .....	80
Table 4.2 Mindfulness Survey: Preoccupation with Failure .....	81
Table 4.3 Mindfulness Survey: Reluctance to Simplify Interpretations .....	84
Table 4.4 Mindfulness Survey: Sensitivity to Operations .....	89
Table 4.5 Mindfulness Survey: Commitment to Resilience .....	92
Table 4.6 Mindfulness Survey: Deference to Expertise .....	96

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In today's global environment and "flattening world", education is integral to the success of every society (Friedman, 2007). The problem regarding education is that with academic accountability and changes in demographics, it is difficult to follow a specific path that can replicate success for everyone. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's national projections, Hispanics represent the third fastest growing population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Hispanics are predicted to grow by 115% between 2014 and 2060 (2014). Almost fifty-four percent of that projected growth is identified as being of school age and under the age of eighteen. These demographic projections are factors to be considered in striving for best practices in education. Education is not an exact science that thrives in a clinical environment.

For this study, the term Hispanic is too broad to be utilized in addressing the challenges of this organization. Although in most research studies, the term Hispanic or Latino is used to identify students any of the numerous countries whose language is derived from the Latin or Spanish language, this study's stakeholders can be identified as Mexican American (Gonzalez, 2010). Although the terms Hispanic or Latino are acceptable, neither is accurate to this school's challenges (2007). For Cubans, they may be offered refugee status, Puerto Ricans have U.S. citizenship rights, however all others under this label have a variety of challenges. Every generation of students brings with it a variety of needs and factors that influence the fidelity of authentic schooling. For

children of color challenged by language issues, a low socio-economic status, and an unstable environment, state assessments and federal program mandates are not always a priority. Yet that is how policy-makers have dictated that school success and student achievement is measured (Linn, 2010). At a time when a “large proportion of underserved minority students” are not being prepared for post-secondary success, research indicates that students often leave high school having to enroll in remedial coursework (Moore, et al., 2007). Research further indicated that a large proportion of students enrolled in remedial classes are students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, students who speak a language other than English, and are students of color, so much like in high school; they fail or drop out (Moore, et al., 2007).

Those issues, along with the numerous educational accountability mandates, political initiatives, and misguided theoretical beliefs, influence school administration and the way they direct teaching and learning in America’s classrooms. Regarding accountability, today’s schools are charged in making sure that all students are successful in the core area subjects of English, Math, Social Studies, and Science. Under the edicts of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which is a reauthorization of the Elementary Secondary Education Act of 1965, policymakers sought to close educational gaps between various demographic groups and insure that all students were academically successful (Thornton, Hill, and Usinger, 2006). Under these mandates, educational systems developed and defined ways to meet critical accountability goals, so that by 2014, students would be at 100% regarding academic success. It is these

accountability mandates that have allowed a culture, where school administrators, develop practices to reach targets in a contrived and almost suspect manner (2006).

The system, by focusing attention on certain parameters, allows some administrators to lessen their fidelity to the overall educational program and key in on those items they will be graded on. That is to say that, as long as students are successful with state assessment results, the rest is not as accountable an item. Thornton, Hill, and Usinger (2006) in referencing Faircloth put forth that accountability mandates are both an administrative and ethical dilemma which require balancing practices for the good of the student as well as for the good of the school. Regarding children of color, accountability and state mandated assessments must be examined as to whether there is fidelity to what they truly measure. Richard Valencia (2008) stated, “if students of color do not receive equal opportunity to learn, then their poor performance on high-stakes tests reflects inferior schooling, not the inability to learn”.

### **Statement of the Problem**

At a South Texas, secondary school where fifty-two percent of the population is identified as Mexican American, English Language Learners (ELLs), campus administration is tasked with maintaining its primary purpose of educating all students, while addressing accountability factors.

### **Administrative Practices**

By examining administrative practices as viewed by teachers, one might determine if they are genuine to school outcomes. The campus has defined those outcomes via its



mission statement that states, “The mission of this South Texas High School is to produce students that can compete at the global level in the college classroom, the workforce, or the military”. For a campus that identified as being in *required improvement* due to the fact it has not met state assessment measures and is at a point where sanctions may be implemented, the administration is under more duress. Can school administration tasked in providing corrective action be true to the school’s primary mission? If the administration is focused on meeting federal and state assessment accountability measures, are they truly preparing students who will compete at the global level as the mission statement infers?

### **Accountability**

When it comes to accountability, as measured by high-stakes testing, the reality for many administrators is that they operate under very static parameters in a very dynamic environment. That is to say, that practices and genuine academic outcomes for students challenged by language, socio economics, environmental issues, etcetera, limited by accountability measures with respects to genuine educational outcomes. With the target date of 2014, where achievement gaps for all students should have been closed, school administrators continued to focus on accountability as defined through high-stakes state assessments while dealing with daily dilemmas. The problem is what does campus administration do to maintain its primary purpose of educating all students, while addressing accountability factors? Perhaps that is the rationale for some administrators to exploit loopholes in the system or play the numbers game with certain populations.

Thornton, Hill, and Usinger (2006) in their examination of the implementation of NCLB found that school administrators would often follow the letter of the law and not the spirit. In other words, administrators, perhaps intentionally, could define students in certain ways so that students were left out of the testing mandate. A special needs student or an English language learner who could be delayed from testing or exempt is often held out; that is, the student is not tested and perhaps this is not in the best interest of the student, but one that helps the campus when results come in.

### **Accountability Changes**

For the 2014-15 school year, as Texas moved from using the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness Modified (STAAR M) for special needs students to other options, the STAAR A (accommodated) exam was introduced. The STAAR A exam was an online exam that was available as a possible alternate if agreed upon by a special education ARD (admission, review, and dismissal) committee. Once again, as the state was going to exclude students tested with this instrument in accountability ratings, some administrators may have channeled students towards this exam, in the best interests of the school, not necessarily the child. The truth is some of these issues could be related to a lack of understanding or misinterpretation of the law; regardless, it is a serious issue.

Another area that attached to accountability is school completion and/or graduation rate. Although past research indicated that more students in this century were completing high school, genuine data indicates that data has been skewed and that not

only does research and administrative documentation differ in their estimates of the prevalence of the high school graduation, but also their explanations of why students do not complete high school (Pharris-Ciurej, Hirschman, and Willhoft, 2012). A true indicator, despite a practice that solely focuses on mandated testing and/or accountability, is whether students continue their education and find success in life. Blankstein and Noguera (2004) put forth that schools across this country cannot choose to fail and that measures must be taken to ensure success. For school administrators, that mindset begins by asking, "What will it take for everyone involved to resolve that failure is not an acceptable option for public education?"

### **Administrative Decision-making**

For school administrators, genuine decision-making, regarding both being mindful and accountability as related to the true mission of the school, is a monstrous predicament. Thornton, Hill, and Usinger (2006) in their examination regarding Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), found that administrators readily admitted that they would focus efforts on specific cohorts that had a chance of passing the test, and outliers on the bottom of the scale were neglected. Regarding mindfulness, sense-making, and administrative decision-making, administration must see schools a *high reliability organizations* that demand leaders operate in a just manner and that the big picture is always in focus. According to research for social justice, data has stressed the essential role school leaders' play in ensuring the academic success of all children, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, age, language, religion, or socioeconomic status (Bustamante, Nelson, and Omwuegbuzie, 2009). The problem for

school administrators is being true to the genuine mission of the school in the face of accountability and high stakes testing.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher beliefs and truths regarding administrative practices at a High School campus in academic jeopardy. The perceptions by teachers after successive years of failing to meet high-stakes testing and accountability mandates, required by No Child Left Behind (2001) may have affected how the organization functions and the true mission of the school. This study will contribute to the limited body of data on the perceptions of administrative mindfulness and sense-making regarding decision making for a school in academic jeopardy. Research provided may also contribute data regarding best practices for a secondary school campus functioning as a high reliability organization (HRO). A high reliability organization, as defined by Weick and Sutcliffe, as one in which a mindful infrastructure has been developed, allows for timely corrective action and resiliency in the face of critical situations (2015).

The invariable inquiry of the kind instilled by mindfulness and represented by sense-making in a genuine manner, for school administrators, may provide a connection to sound organizational health. School leadership might also benefit from an understanding of how they are perceived by stakeholders and members of the organization. Hamilton, Vasquez - Heilig, and Pazey (2013), in their examination of school reform and the turn-around practices for low-performing schools, stated that oftentimes, drastic measures like reconstitution are not the answer; rather, it is mindful,

consistent practices that do the job. This assumption is based on the belief that a healthier organization is a more mindful organization.

### **Definition of Concepts**

Sense-making and mindful leadership for a campus in accountability jeopardy require certain epistemological examinations to understand the nature of a high reliability organization. Critical to examining and understanding how certain beliefs and truths influence and/or impact stakeholders is the definition of certain key concepts. In order to address the research questions for this study, concepts, vocabulary, and terms used must be defined. The following section provides an explanation of general concepts that school administrators should be aware of followed by specific definitions related to this study.

### **Accountability**

Although core area subjects have been identified to measure academic success for all students, the state of Texas has primarily focused on the areas of reading and math along with graduation rate as key indicators of success (TAIS, 2015). Nichols and Berliner (2008) point out that regarding accountability and the high stakes tests that are utilized to drive that engine, the rewards are attached to success, while the punishment is attached to failure; for school administrators, these elements are aides used to encourage efficiency. Educators acknowledge that because of state mandated testing and accountability, there is an overall increase in emphasizing tested subjects. Practices have shifted in using fewer, student-directed pedagogies, and more time is spent on test-taking strategies. School administration will also confirm that several factors, apart from

test-based accountability, influenced their organizational methods; including those related to class schedules and class size. Nichols and Berliner (2008), in examining this situation, cite Donald T. Campbell and his theory regarding society conforming to these types of situations. According to Campbell, “The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures, and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor”. Regarding school administrators and accountability as defined by testing, practices come into play, which focus on just passing the test and not necessarily on authentic learning. Oftentimes, school administrators’ focus on only tested curriculum for a given grade level and disregard other materials that should be taught. The problem with this practice is that curriculum spirals vertically; if certain items are neglected, or not taught at all, student loses in foundation concepts and skills emerge.

In Texas, regarding compliance with federal accountability, the state negotiated and developed a standardized testing system that would address not only state policy requirements, but also federal accountability to meet all students’ educational needs (Kimmelman, 2006). Shelly’s (2012) research regarding NCLB, federalism, and state accountability practices indicates that flexibility allowed states to address Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for all students, but in the end, that flexibility would hit a wall. Under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) President Obama pushed forth an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, that lessened some of the compliance documentation under NCLB, but still called for academic success for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Adequate

yearly progress is a system by which schools can show that students are not merely making gains, but mastering core area standards. The Texas Education Agency (2012) regarding accountability, state that districts, campuses, and the state itself are accountable for an additional indicator. The additional indicators, depending on minimum size requirement or the number of students tested include graduation rate and attendance. The indicator for graduation rate is the *graduates'* college/career component of the longitudinal secondary school completion rate. A longitudinal completion rate is the percentage of students from a class of beginning ninth graders who complete their high school education by their anticipated graduation date. The completion class has four components: percent graduating (either on time or early); percent continuing in public high schools after the expected graduation year; percent receiving General Educational Development (GED) certificates; and percent dropping out. The graduation rate component for AYP has been monitored, and as college and career readiness become more critical, scrutiny regarding this area will grow (Bustamante, Nelson, and Omwuegbuzie, 2016).

Regarding attendance rate, this indicator is utilized by all public school districts with the requirement that attendance and contact hours are submitted at a student's specific detail level for the academic school year. The coding and submission process for student data is completed via a secure web-based system known as the Public Education Information Monitoring System (PEIMS). The Attendance Rate is based on attendance of all students in Grades 1–12 for the entire school year, and is the same rate reported for the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). School districts

follow the official attendance accounting rules and regulations for all public-school districts in Texas as outlined in the *Student Attendance Accounting Handbook* (TEA, 2015).

For Reading/ELA and Mathematics, all students and each student group that meets minimum size requirements (fifty students), districts and campuses must meet the performance target or performance improvement/safe harbor and the participation target. The performance target is based on test results for students enrolled for the full academic year as of the last Friday in October. The participation target is based on participation in the assessment program of all students enrolled on the day of testing.

In today's schools, much has been examined regarding the correlation between student outcomes as it relates to race, gender, and socio-economic status. Included in these studies regarding accountability are evaluations concerning educational opportunities for all students, especially when mandates utilize tools that are generic. Critical to those examinations is leadership's role in addressing the various issues.

### **Administrative Mindfulness**

Langer's (1975) preeminent work regarding mindful behavior was a precursor in examining elements and issues regarding dependency, helplessness, and control within organizations as it related to social interaction. Studies of complex social behaviors revealed that perceived purposeful behaviors might be mindless responses to stimuli based solely on prior exposure to information or premature cognitive commitment (Chanowitz and Langer, 1981; Langer, 1992; Langer, Blank, & Chanowitz, 1978). Regarding school administrators, it is critical to examine their practices as they relate to



the goal of authentic instruction versus actions that are reactive responses to environmental stimuli. In other words, school administrators need to be mindful and maintain focus on genuine goals while at the same time have the capacity to deal with spontaneous items in an effective manner. Administrators need to be conscious that their actions are not reactive efforts that lose sight of or are not mindful of student best interests. Goodman, Ramanujam, Carroll, Edmondson, Hofmann, and Sutcliffe (2011), in their examination of management and the high probability for organizational errors, argued that administrative mindfulness merits research as an important organizational-level phenomenon.

Mindfulness is the antithesis of an automatic response behavior. According to Langer (1989), mindfulness is a state of awareness during which the observer is actively engaged in processing information. Multiple perspectives are considered, context is evaluated, and varieties of responses are possible. Bodner (2000) expanded the definition of individual mindfulness to include four categories: engagement, novelty seeking, flexibility and novelty producing. Information is re-assessed and meaning is reconstructed because of contextual variations. This ability to identify discrepancies based on environmental factors allows the individual to re-assess previously created constructs and maintain an open and flexible approach to information processing. Gebauer (2012), in examining mindful organizations, put forth that an emphasis on reliability design, the recognition of latent failures, deviances, and the recognition of possible challenges that often develop into larger unwanted events must be accounted

for. Gebauer found that organizations must operate in a proactive manner rather than being reactive and caught up with crisis management.

### **Mindfulness and School Structures**

Hoy (2003), in his examination of mindfulness and school structures saw where schools by nature could become ineffective bureaucracies. Because a school structure has its hierarchy of authority, division of labor, impersonality, objective standards, technical competence, rules, and regulations, it is prone to fall under a classical identification as a bureaucracy. Kearney, Kelsey, and Herrington (2013) point out that “mindful behavior” should be based on questioning bureaucratic practices, while developing mental habits that reflect the learning and growth that come from sound reasoning.

According to Hoy (2003), the key is for a school structure, which has mindful leadership, to enable rather than hinder best practices. For an organization like a school, school administrators can cultivate a mindful environment as a collective property by encouraging flexibility, openness to new information, trust, risk taking and thoughtful adaptability (Kearney, Kelsey, and Herrington, 2013). Mindfulness for school administrators serves as a means for leadership to make sense of their environment on a timely basis, in a way that they do not lose sight of the authentic goal. As Gebauer (2012) argues, practitioners begin to recognize that the reality for the organization is that it is socially constructed and that it is important to cultivate collective sense-making capabilities.

### **Administrative Sense-making**

Before attaching sense-making and the connection it has with school leadership

and sound administration, it is important to understand what sense-making is. Blatt, et al. (2006) in examining the work of Weick and Sutcliffe and related theorists, postulate, that sense-making occurs when individuals turn a flow of organizational experiences into words and salient categories that they can comprehend and then use these as a springboard for action. The issue(s) for school administrators and/or leadership stems from the fact that they must manage for the organization not only the primary goal of educating students, but also adhere to certain mandates dictated by current policy. It is important that school administrators understand their critical role regarding education and policy implementation; these mandates are not a simple technical job performed locally by individuals who have been provided with appropriate training (Werts et. al., 2013). For school administrators, the process of transferring, translating, and sense-making all have important political consequences (Werts et. al., 2013).

Ancona (2012) argues that strong leadership must include sense-making as a component of strong leadership and as part of “structuring the unknown”. O’Leary and Chia (2007), in their examination of educational administration, point out that the sense-making perspective, is grounded in a process that involves identity construction, definition of environment, social elements, dynamic events, varying cues, and practices that attempt to eliminate and/or minimize reactive actions.

How organizations achieve reliable outcomes repeatedly—how they avoid unwanted and unanticipated variance in performance—is an important but unevenly answered question in organization theory. Blatt, et al (2006), argued the fact that

leadership and organizations must focus on prevention and that the identification and anticipation of events that deter an organization from attaining reliability are a challenge. Critical to an organization's success is its resiliency and ability to maintain positive adjustment under challenging conditions, for leadership mindfulness and sense-making play a critical role.

Regarding educational administration, the primary focus and one of the main expectations per the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS), is the directive that leadership improve the organizations overall success, while meeting student need as quantified by accountability measures (TAIS, 2015).

### **Schools as High Reliability Organizations**

Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (1999) regarding high reliability organizations (HROs) stated that they are harbingers of adaptive organizational forms for an increasingly complex environment. Based on this premise, various characteristics of HROs including an overriding commitment to failure free operations, is the need to be mindful and to identify possible areas of concern. Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) examined the construct of mindfulness as a concept that applies to High Reliability Organizations (HRO) and stated that processes needed to be identified or defined. They identified five processes promoted by mindful organizations: preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise. Subsequently, Hoy (2003) applied this organizational framework to education. He identified two dimensions that characterize school mindfulness: faculty mindfulness and principal or administrative mindfulness. The behaviors of both dimensions are further

filtered and conceptualized via the five processes developed by Weick and Sutcliffe (2001). Hoy's work also draws connections between the constructs of mindfulness and teacher efficacy. Both are characterized by resilience in the face of failure and a flexible approach to problem solving.

For school administrators, the recognition that their organization is a high reliability organization is critical. As Goodman, Ramanujam, Carroll, Edmondson, Hofmann, and Sutcliffe (2011) propose, the recognition that leadership, although striving for error-prevention as a distinctive feature of a high reliability organizations, must continuously manage to avoid major adverse outcomes while constantly carrying out high-risk work activities. Administration must recognize that organizations regularly encounter errors in their operations. Leadership manages to limit the consequences of errors by enacting the collective processes of mindful organizing (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). In other words, the absence of errors is neither necessary nor sufficient for reliability, which can be undermined for reasons unconnected to errors such as unforeseeable events (Blatt, Christianson, Sutcliffe, and Rosenthal, 2006; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007).

### **Definition of Terms**

The following supplementary definitions are provided as a resource insuring understanding and consistency of the specified terms throughout the study. The definitions are consistent with the literature reviewed and are expressed as such. They are not exclusively the words of the researcher.

**Accountability Rating:** This refers to the campus rating assigned by the Texas Education Agency's state accountability system. Campuses are evaluated on performance on the **State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)**. Possible ratings are *Met Standard or Improvement Required* (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

**Accountability System:** A system of evaluation "grounded on the belief that all students can learn," with an "emphasis on increasing performance for all students regardless of the demographic (Kimmelman, 2006).

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):** Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was established under the accountability provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), requiring all public-school campuses, school districts, and the state to be evaluated for adequate yearly progress. Districts, campuses, and the state are required to meet AYP criteria on three measures including Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, and either Graduation Rate for high schools and districts, or Attendance Rate for elementary and middle or junior high schools (Texas Education Agency, 2008c).

**Campus Administrators:** For this study, this includes high school principal(s) and assistant principal(s) providing supervision and leadership for grades 9th-12th.

**High-stakes Accountability:** A term used to describe a system of rewards and sanctions that directly tied to student performance on state mandated assessments as related to federal programs and compliance (Kimmelman, 2006).

**High Reliability Organization (HRO):** A term used to describe an organization that requires immediate and constant attention to ongoing situations or phenomena.

High Reliability Organizations must use proactive, timely procedures to insure situations do not escalate to crisis situations (Blatt, Christianson, Sutcliffe, and Rosenthal, 2006; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007).

**Instructional Practices:** Teaching strategies, teaching techniques and teaching tools that guide interaction and learning in the classroom (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 2005; Downey, Steffy, Poston, and English, 2009).

**Met AYP:** This designates a district or campus that meets AYP standards on all indicators for which it is evaluated (Texas Education Agency, 2008c).

**Missed AYP:** This designates a district or campus that does not meet AYP standards on one or more indicator components. The Missed AYP label may also be assigned to a district or campus in the rare situation where the accuracy and/or integrity of performance results have been compromised (Texas Education Agency, 2008c).

**Mindfulness:** The extent to which teachers and administrators in a school carefully and regularly look for problems, prevent problems from becoming crises, are reluctant to oversimplify events, focus on teaching and learning, are resilient to problems, and defer to expertise (Hoy, 2001).

**Met Standard Rating:** Met standard is the highest possible rating of the Texas Education Agency's accountability system. To achieve this rating, at least 90% of the tested students must pass each subject area and the district or campus must meet the standards for the Exemplary rating on the completion and dropout indicators (Texas Education Agency, 2012).

**Mexican American Students:** Students who sometimes fall under the umbrella of Hispanic or Latino accountability descriptors, however are distinct from other Spanish speaking peers in that they usually are defined as being at greater academic risk due to socio-economics, high mobility, environment, and lack of foundation educational experiences. These students may be immigrants, U.S. born, or children of parents who may be U.S. citizens, Mexican Citizens, or an amalgam of both. “The presence of large numbers of Mexican immigrants with low levels of education upon arrival in the United States may also contribute to the particular educational challenges faced by Mexican-origin youth.” (Ream, 2003).

**Organizational Climate:** Describes a harmony present when the institutional, administrative, and teacher levels work in concert and the school meets functional needs as it successfully copes with disruptive external forces and directs its energies toward its mission (Hoy, 2001). Dimensions of organizational climate include achievement press, collegial leadership, institutional vulnerability, and professional teacher behavior.

**Sense-making:** An organization’s practice to conform to some underlying, historically shaped structure of expectation; along with some form of implicit understanding about what constitutes an acceptable and justifiable system of values, beliefs, and practices. (O’Leary and Chia, 2007).

**State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR):** The *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness* (STAAR) test was implemented in Spring 2012 and replaced the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). By law, all eligible Texas public school students are currently assessed in mathematics, English



Language Arts, science, and social studies (Texas Education Agency, 2012). For High School, the assessments are in Algebra 1, English 1, English II, Biology, and U.S. History.

**South Texas High School:** A school located in Region I of the Texas Educational Service Center (ESC) with an enrollment of approximately 1,970 students who are predominately Hispanic.

### **Assumptions**

It is assumed that the participants/teachers answering the survey understood the purpose of the study, understood the survey instrument, and were proficient and objective in self-reporting. It was assumed that participants/ teachers who were interviewed understood the purpose of the study, understood the methodology, and were proficient and objective in their responses. Data analysis and disaggregation accurately reflects the beliefs of the teachers. The methodology of the study is logical and appropriate for this research project.

### **Limitations of Study**

The study was limited to one South Texas high school within the Region I Educational Service Center in Texas. The results of this study were limited by the accuracy of the participants. Findings are generalized only to the one South Texas High School within the Region I Educational Service Center in Texas due to its unique demographic regarding English Language Learners and accountability status. This study was limited to the information acquired from the survey instrument, literature review, and interview responses provided.

## **Research Questions**

This mixed methods study was guided by the following research questions:

*Research Question 1:* What are teachers' perceptions regarding administrative decision-making in connection with the achievement of the school's primary mission?

*Research Question 2:* What are the perceptions of teachers on school administrators regarding the impact of a high-stakes accountability system on administrative decision-making?

*Research Question 3:* What are teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of administrators' decision-making based on the administrators' mindfulness?

*Research Question 4:* What dimensions of school mindfulness (teacher mindfulness and principal mindfulness) are the best predictors of the collective efficacy of administrators?

*Research Question 5:* What dimensions of sense-making are the best predictors of the administrative efficacy of school outcomes and best practices?

## **Summary and Organization of the Study**

School administrators are often limited in their impact to the true mission of the school due to the inflexible nature of accountability measures and the required school improvement processes. By examining mindfulness and sense-making in correlation to administrative decision-making, administrators may benefit from the opportunity to design and implement practices that are in line with an effective high reliability organization. As the timeline to meet requirements under NCLB (2002) and President Obama's "*Race to the Top*" (2010) has materialized, the rise in the number of schools in

need of improvement dictates mindfulness and proactive practices for these campuses (Hamilton, Vasquez Heilig, and Pazey, 2014).

Notably, for many of these faltering schools, leadership must contend not only with meeting required targets, but with increased diversity regarding the student body (Hamilton, Vasquez Heilig, and Pazey, 2014). Although it may be true that theorists, policymakers and practitioners acknowledge that, schools as institutions become more complex and diverse, they must be sensitive to administration as being proactive and decisive regarding value issues and how they influence core activities (Lazaridou, 2007). As a key factor in identifying and defining mindful practices, sense-making practices that vie for high reliability, and accountability issues, organizational research requires the examination of the dynamics related to administrative roles. The focus of this study was to demonstrate the connection of these variables to best practices as they relate to administrative practices and contending with a school in accountability jeopardy.

Elbert Hubbard an American writer, publisher, artist, and philosopher once said, “It does not take much strength to do things, but it requires a great deal of strength to decide what to do.” For school administrators deciding whether to do what is best for all students or simply doing things that comply with accountability mandates requires strength of character. This study clearly showed how an organization could maintain practices that keep the organization together, yet falter when tasked regarding the true mission of the school. Quantitative data showed that teacher’s perceptions regarding administrative decision-making acknowledged practices that brought the organization together. Qualitative data, however, showed that teachers found administration failed in

authentic practices as defined by the schools mission. Langston Hughes, poet, once asked, “What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? ... Or does it explode?” Are school administrators in their race to comply with compliance measures hindering a dream of a sound education? Will false, mindless practices lead to bushels of dry raisins? Or will the whole absurdity explode? We can no longer ignore futility of faulty practices that are borne of compliance.

Chapter I presented a statement of the problem, a significance of the study, research questions, a conceptual framework, assumptions and limitations, definitions, and an organization of the study. Chapter II provides a review of literature on school structures, mindfulness, sense-making, and schools as high reliability organizations. In Chapter III, an explanation of the primary focus of the research, methodology, and mixed methods is provided. Chapter IV provides an analysis of data that emerged from the data. Chapter V presents a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for practice and further research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The researcher using various library and online resources conducted a careful and methodical review of literature applicable to the topic of this study. The review focuses on four constructs; school structures, mindfulness, sense-making, and schools as high reliability organizations. At the heart of this examination is accountability as it relates to the campus mission and influences on school administration. Poliner-Shapiro and Stefkovich (2010) put forth that accountability is both a positive and negative measure for school success. For some stakeholders, accountability may provide some proof as to how schools are doing and for others; it is detrimental to genuine instruction and pedagogy. The literature review begins with school structures, as the dynamic regarding an organization's primary function relative to accountability, student success, and how it dictates leaderships' daily decision-making. Special notice was taken regarding the independent variables of mindfulness and sense-making as it related to that process.

#### **Conceptual Framework**

Theory, which guides our thinking regarding established epistemologies and ontologies in educational administration and organizational management, has barely broken the surface regarding mindfulness, sense-making, and their influence on administrative decision-making in schools. Scientific rationality and accountability-related leadership to achieve organizational ends have dominated in many ways conventional examinations regarding educational administration. In recent years, with

greater weight being given to accountability, a shift has occurred, with greater consideration being given to best practices for all stakeholders. Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2004) extended the research of school leadership and decision-making by examining specific factors related to mindfulness and sense-making that enable schools to function as effective organizations. To that end, they sought to operationalize school mindfulness by creating the School Mindfulness Scale (M-Scale) based on the theoretical premises of Langer (1992), Weick (1996), and Sutcliffe (2001). It is these key factors and/or five properties measured by the Mindfulness Scale (M-Scale) that leadership can use to determine the extent of preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise. Additional research has identified school mindfulness as a critical component in effective school organizations (Hoy, 2003). It has been linked to trust, enabling school structures, and collective efficacy as one of the major factors contributing to the creation of successful schools (Gage, 2003; Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006).

Karl Weick (2011) in examining mindfulness, sense-making, and school structures, made two assertions regarding the dynamics with which leadership; the first was that reliability is a moving target and therefore transient, and the second assertion was that reliability is a dynamic non-event and therefore continuously re-accomplished. For people, especially school administrators, the question arises, how does one organize to continuously produce non-events (nearly failure-free performance) when the nature of a non-event keeps changing? Levine and Levine (2014) regarding accountability and best practices put forth that leadership needs to ask whether to assess or to intervene, if

we are good managers, we must ask “how costly is this method of annual high-stakes achievement testing and how successful is it in producing measurable outcomes?”

For schools, that are in accountability jeopardy and who service a demographic that requires greater support, “mindfulness” should be part of the equation. According to Weick and Sutcliffe (2011), mindfulness is “a rich awareness of discriminatory detail” and that is important to a school in jeopardy. Pedro A. Noguera (2012) in his examination of leadership and marginalized students noted that one demographic that is directly influenced by a principal’s leadership is students identified as being at risk. There is a direct correlation for students struggling with basic academic success much less, career and/or college readiness (Suárez-Orozco, C. and Suárez-Orozco, M., 2009). Regarding the urgency that often affects schools in crisis and certain demographics, Noguera said,

“Were the situation in urban schools truly a "crisis" one might expect to see urgent responses from leaders at the local, state and federal levels. After all, the education and welfare of millions of children are at stake, and if a crisis were genuinely perceived would not drastic measures be taken to alleviate the suffering, not unlike the actions taken following an earthquake or hurricane? However, even during a period in which educational issues receive more media coverage and more attention from policy makers than ever before, there is a stunning lack of urgency associated with official responses to the issues confronting urban public schools.”

Administration has much to contend with and should be examined for their beliefs and practices. Hoyle (2007) states that leadership has a major challenge in that most stakeholders are prone to be content with the status quo. Even though administrators, teachers, parents, and students know that there is a need to improve, they are reticent to make changes that take them out of their norm.

Regarding mindfulness, it is a critical element, especially for administration regarding sense-making, and working within a High Reliability Organizations. This study examined the relationship regarding the balance between school administration's defined goals and actual outcomes.

### **School Structures**

According to Ellerbrock and Kiefer (2013), school structures are aspects and components of the school environment that organize students and teachers and guide the daily operation of the school. These structures include scheduling, grouping of students, staffing, procedures, roles, responsibilities, the allocation of resources, the culture, mandated assessments, and the organizational dynamics. These also include unstructured aspects of the school environment such as non-academic times of the school day times when stakeholders navigate on their own and experience minimal supervision. These unstructured aspects of the school day, that include activities before school, lunch, classroom interchanges, and end of school, may play a key role in the promotion of responsive secondary school environments (2013). In today's climate that attempts to close gaps for all students, school structure plays a pivotal part in achieving that goal. McGuigan and Hoy (2006) examined the factors and elements that dealt with



school structures and the marginalization of some students. Based on their research, McGuigan and Hoy found that school structures could be ineffective unless there is a collective efficacy to get things done. Hoy's (2003) examination of school structures also found that effective schools enable individuals and do not hinder outcomes. He put forth that although schools must have their hierarchy of structures, administrators can establish for stakeholders, procedures and assign roles that are genuine (2003). For stakeholders, this gives them a greater sense of ownership and a lesser feeling that they are being manipulated or controlled.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

At a High School campus, especially one in academic jeopardy that has been defined by the fifty-two percent English Language Learners, the roles and responsibilities of all individuals is of extreme importance and impacts how effective leadership is. A critical focus for leadership is the expectation for what professionals should do and what they actually do. It is important to understand that effectiveness of specific roles and responsibilities falls under certain ranges and the dynamics within those ranges must be genuine. According to Cronin, Weingart and Todorova (2011), oftentimes, research examines the demographics of an organization, but not the dynamics of that demographic. Staff demographics need to be examined for their dynamics, otherwise a mostly "chain-like unidirectional cause – effect relationship" is brought into play without consideration of cross-level dynamics (2011). Effective leadership should not be a one-dimensional practice that dictates the actions of others with disregard for their interests. Hoy (2003) examined school structures and what he

stated was that schools, as organizations, often function as bureaucracies. Hoy also said that although bureaucracies often function as organizations, that require procedure and hierarchical structures to prevent chaos, it is important for stakeholders to understand that such bureaucracies often stifle effectiveness (2003). For that reason, administrative leadership should be identified as individuals within a process of influencing group activities in order that common goals can be accomplished. Administration that utilizes a bi-directional communication system that is dynamic, proactive, and prepared to address events/phenomenon in a timely manner is powerful (Öznacar and Osma, 2016). School administration that develops investment in common goals and fosters a mindful organization can teach stakeholders to adapt themselves to the targets of the organization as if they were their own targets (2016). This is also, where sense-making comes into play as mindful individuals connect personal interests with those of the organization.

Sergiovanni (2003) said of roles and responsibilities, that leadership must understand that individuals within an organization have their own personal assignments, but that in truth, effectiveness is more successful when all stakeholders come together as a collective entity. Sergiovanni referred to this as organizational competence and stated that as important as the individual is to an organization, that one person cannot do it alone. Portin, Alejano, Knapp, and Marzolf (2006) point out that the primary role of leaders should not fall on the shoulders of one person and that that perspective is too narrow. Administrative leadership roles must include those individuals who have a common stake in the outcomes of the organization. According to current research, organizations that recognize that limiting attention to these positions alone is too narrow

and, in a sense, may contribute to the “leadership problem” in schools (Portin, Alejano, Knapp, and Marzolf, 2006). Administrative leadership roles must include those individuals who have a direct impact on outcomes: assistant principals, master teachers, counselors, teachers, teacher aides, etc.

Critical to the collective commitments that stakeholders make is the fact that the same commitments outline the roles for both the individual and the organization (Sergiovanni, 2005). Stakeholders have roles that include rights and responsibilities and those elements are what factor in to expectations and a means to measure things as they move forward (2005). Sergiovanni (2005) further points out that aside from expectations roles are linked to other roles based on responsibilities within the organization.

Regarding school structures, roles and responsibilities, a culture must exist within an organization that represents active engagement and a sense of empowerment. In order to overcome what is just a bureaucracy; stakeholders must have a framework within the school’s culture that supports positive outcomes. Sergiovanni (2005) stated on this issue:

“Teachers and students alike seek frameworks and norm systems that help them sort out how they fit into a school's culture. Cultural frameworks are sources of sense-making and meaning that all of us need.”

Hoy (2003), explained that a school structure must be in place to provide formal structure and procedure for stakeholders, but that it should not be so rigid as to not allow participants to function. As Hoy noted, systems should be in place so that guidelines

reflect “best practices” rather than rigid rules, thus allowing flexibility and a provision for dealing with surprises and crises (Hoy, 2003). The classical leadership role and managerial administrative mentality of the school administrator has changed over the years. Administration’s basic role and goal in today’s schools is one of instructional leadership with the realization of sound education (Öznacar and Osma, 2016). In the end, a successful organization or school comes together to insure the same common goals are met.

### **Mission, Goals, and Objectives**

The mission, goals, and objectives of an organization are those elements that serve as the compass that directs an organization and its stakeholders towards seeing their vision realized. Regarding schools, it is important for leadership to work collectively at defining those elements and mapping out how they will reach that destination. One of the key factors or elements that helps move an organization forward is communicating and fostering a widely shared investment and commitment to the organization’s purpose (i.e., mission, goals, and objectives) (Gurley, Peters, Collins, and Fift, 2016). For leadership and stakeholders to have a shared *raison d’être*, efficiency, along with genuine motivation, can breed success. Gurley, Peters, Collins, and Fift (2016) point out that this type of effective leadership eliminates a lot of unnecessary conflict and directs stakeholders to best practices in a genuine manner.

School improvement and a connection to business management has driven the development of a school’s mission, goals, and objectives to become measurable and connected to student success (Gurley, Peters, Collins, and Fift, 2016). Some data

points out that oftentimes there exists confusion and even ignorance about a school's mission, goals, and objectives (2016). Most stakeholders understand that they are there to teach and for children to learn, but having a common vision and lacking a methodology of how that success will be achieved is a major challenge. Nickerson (1998) in examining confirmation bias, found that individuals sometimes fall into two factions; they either evaluate information objectively and draw conclusions based on that evidence or as usually happens, individuals selectively gather information, side with the majority, but discount the evidence. Gurley, Peters, Collins, and Fifolt (2016) described how an organization, in order to promote effective leadership practices, has to start by examining the status of the organization and targets that must be met. Organizational members must become aware that the current mindset within the organization and “unfreeze” or refute the practice(s) of always doing things because that is how they were done in the past (2016). It is vital that stakeholders genuinely define mission expectations, goals, and objectives.

Regarding mindfulness, sense-making, and effective administrative leadership within an organization, it is important to examine and understand the common mission, goals, and objectives that drive organization. Furman and Starratt (2002) found that if schools are to develop their organizational capacity, stakeholders need to be encouraged to exercise leadership. For an organization or school that has additional challenges, that administrative leadership is important. Current challenges for most schools regarding accountability is closing the gaps for those students who have been identified as being at risk for academic failure. According to Fitzgerald et al (2013), the possibility of

educational failure for Hispanic students exists and often becomes part of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Due to at-risk factors, Hispanic students might be prone to failure due to low-test scores, living at or below the poverty line, emotional or physical abuse, limited English proficiency, or reading below grade level (2013).

### **Monitoring and Measuring Effectiveness**

Alvesson and Spicer, (2012) in examining the role of leadership put forth that administrative leadership can be studied for the variables that affect its functionalist identity and it can be examined in a descriptive and an interpretive manner to garner meaning for how managers take action. In a school organizational setting, administration is the educational leadership that in the end should be viewed as an authority figure. Once an organization has collectively defined and outlined its processes and procedures, it is the role of administration to monitor and measure.

McGuigan and Hoy (2006) in examining the impact of school administrators and leadership, found that although in general there was an “academic optimism” with regards with possible students’ success, actual student performance was affected when collectively; teachers saw school organizations, structures, rules, and procedures as enabling. In a sense, an organization that allows for individuals to be empowered, provides for more individuals to collectively measure, monitor, and adjust efforts. Howard (2016) found that as educators address the demographic divide, teachers must face the reality that they will continue to encounter students who’s cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social class backgrounds differ from their own. However, where many U.S. schools continue to become learning spaces where an increasingly

homogeneous teaching population (mostly White, female, and middle class) encounters an increasingly heterogeneous student population (primarily students of color and from low-income backgrounds), the same cannot be said for some South Texas schools (Howard, 2016). In South Texas, Hispanic teachers teaching a Hispanic population, staff many schools. School administrators must realize and re-conceptualize how they might empower teachers, especially Hispanic teachers, teaching Hispanic students to be successful with generic standards.

### **Corrective Action**

As part of maintaining school structures positive efforts, corrective action must be part of the process. Administrators must insure that stakeholders know that there is a way to right the ship, so to speak, when things go askew. In relation to school structures, mindfulness, and sense-making, there must exist a confidence for stakeholders that there are procedures in place to bring things in order. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), point out that in American society, parents send students to school very unaware of what relationships exist between teachers and school administration. Aside from the primary objective of educating children, how do educators deal with events? Sergiovanni (2005), in examining the relationship between school administrators and teachers, indicated that there exist numerous interactions, tasks, and organizational characteristics that influence the campus culture. Sergiovanni eloquently said, “The heartbeats of leadership and schools are strengthened when word and deed are one.” For that matter, it is important to establish those connections and processes that manage variables between leader behavior and subordinate contentment, self-confidence, drive, and job performance. According to

McGuigan and Hoy (2006), administrative leadership must be decisive in their actions and

“should do everything possible to foster teachers’ collective efficacy by providing mastery experiences and vicarious experiences, using verbal persuasion, and fostering positive affective states. Teacher assignments should be mindfully related to teacher’s skills and developmental needs, so confidence is built rather than destroyed. Celebration of classroom successes can be powerful examples to all teachers, and can foster collective faculty confidence and encourage open teaching.”

In keeping with providing support within dynamic school structures, administration by being decisive and have procedures/systems in place insure corrective actions may be more timely and effective.

### **Section Summary**

School structures are constructs that provide an organization an ability to establish roles, responsibilities, organizational goals, objectives, monitoring mechanisms, and corrective action processes. In examining school structures and individuals within those structures, it is vital to examine their interactions or dynamics. According to Cronin, Weingart, and Todorova (2011), in studying group dynamics, they acquiesced that groups pose a challenge to study. If one focused primarily on certain factors or aspects within a group, then individual factors/elements are constrained by the group dynamics themselves or the contextual (the environment) ones (2011). For that reason, this study examined the two variables of mindfulness and sense-making as they



correlate with administrative decision-making and the group dynamic. In that way, perhaps greater insight regarding multi-dimensional dynamics can surface.

### **Mindfulness**

Regarding mindfulness as a construct, outside of the eastern tenets that defined it as a meditative awareness or mindset, in the educational realm, and pertaining to administrative leadership, it is a construct that may influence administrative practices (Hyland, 2015). Haigh, Moore, Kashdan, and Fresco (2011), in examining Langer's work on mindfulness, refer to it as a secularized adaptation of Eastern Buddhist tradition that as a construct is commonly defined as moment-to-moment awareness without judgment. For school administrators, being able to provide attention to the present moment in a non-judgmental manner and provide direction is difficult and can have an enormous impact. Schoeberlein and Sheth (2009) in addressing education and practices, state: "Mindfulness promotes resilience and enhances social and emotional competence. Mindfulness combined with empathy, kindness and compassion supports constructive action and caring behaviour." Shankar-Brown (2015) found that for educators, understanding the impact of urbanization on public schooling is a vital piece of ensuring that socially ostracized, adolescent learners are properly supported in the classroom, otherwise the structural reform that has marginalized poor minority groups will continue. Regarding mindfulness and school administrators, the factor of social interaction regarding collective efficacy must be examined in regards to behaviors that are perceived as purposeful and perhaps mindful as opposed to mindless ones (Hyland, 2015). Are administrative leadership and staff reacting to stimuli or events in an

automatic manner with no awareness or have they been prepared to be mindful of what would constitute best practices? For that reason, individual as well as organizational mindfulness should be considered.

In examining High Reliability Organizations, Weick and Sutcliffe (2015) researched mindfulness and its correlation to how individuals acted. The five processes related to a mindful organization that included a preoccupation with failure, a reluctance to simplify, a sensitivity to operations, a commitment to resilience, and a deference to expertise are ones to be considered for both the individual and the organization. Langer's work in examining mindfulness and applications as a construct in western society became a means to initiate examinations of organizations, including schools (Haigh, Moore, Kashdan and Fresco, 2011). Subsequently, that research allowed for examinations and the application of that framework in the educational realm. Hoy (2003) examined two dimensions related to school mindfulness and those referred to faculty mindfulness and administrator mindfulness. In examining mindfulness as a variable that influences flexibility and specific actions, it is important to consider the various stakeholders involved and their roles/responsibilities within the organization. Walach, Buchheld, Klienkecht, and Schmidt (2006) in examining the methods for measuring mindfulness found that although the final goal might be to exam the organization as a whole, it is the individual and their dynamic that influences the environment and others within it. School administrators need to recognize that the organization must be aware of individual mindfulness and foster those practices that engage the individual in practices that empower.

## **Individual Mindfulness**

Individual mindfulness as a construct on its own may be too broad a topic to examine on its own; however, when tied to education and administrative leadership, mindfulness takes on a more specific understanding. In relation to education and the efficacy of positive student academic success, mindfulness can be a solid resource. According to Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt, and Lang (2013), current research supports that mindfulness improves job satisfaction and a sense of well-being. For educators, a sense that they are making an impact is powerful. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) point out that when stakeholders have a vested interest in increasing outcomes for the tangible as well as the intangible factors, then impact outcomes become more real.

Hoy (2003) points out that regarding mindfulness and individuals, the taking in of data for individuals is often done without too much cognition regarding mindfulness or mindlessness. In fact, Hoy states that for most individuals, mindsets form as they take in data without much reflection (2003). Hoy states that, “We seize on standard classifications, use routine rules, and procedures, and then become seduced by our habits.” This is such a telling statement, especially for educators, who may be seduced by the organization’s routine(s) the longer they remain in the field. Educators may be more prone to continue doing things the same way, whether wrong or right, because it is what they know. Mindfulness is distinct from earlier established constructs like openness to experience, neuroticism, emotional intelligence, or absorption and in fact can be fostered as a trait that bolsters the individual’s sense of well-being (Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt, and Lang, 2013). The thing is for individuals to be cognizant or

“mindful” of practices to promote fidelity to purposefulness. Administrators and teachers have a greater sense of mindfulness when they share a common vision and goal of improving all they work on together.

### **Organizational Mindfulness**

When individuals realize that their mindfulness reflects their commitment not solely to outcomes, but to the processes that become best practices, then organizational mindfulness has a greater opportunity for success. Organizational mindfulness is a construct that must function within the boundaries not only of the organization, but also of the policies and expectations put upon it by policymakers and society. Consider an organization that must not only contend with student success but also with safety, parents/community expectations, student schedules, crisis management, student busing, budget, staffing, data management, etc. The development of a mindful organization, one that fosters resiliency, requires a commitment to collective efficacy. Weick and Sutcliffe (2015) state that one of the major challenges regarding collective efficacy is the stakeholders must be cognizant of the fact that oftentimes expectations are high, while mindfulness is lacking. According to Sergiovanni (2005), the collective commitments and/or promises by all stakeholders provide an organizational guide, which defines roles and procedures promoting success. According to Yamamoto, Gardiner, and Tenuto (2013), leading a school organization has become a matter of sustainability, and individuals have to be cognizant of themselves and their role with the organization. In the end, a lack of mindfulness may limit collaborative work, stifle social interaction, diminish emotional intelligence, and affect the growth of capacity.

Laitch (2013) points out that one of the problems with organizations and the mindset with respects to high-stakes testing and accountability, is instituting practices that have no data supporting genuine success. Organizations due to reform policy have been tasked to ensure that all students are successful and this is measured through standardized testing. The federal government, through various mandates (i.e. “Elementary-Secondary Education Act”, “America 2000”, “No Child Left Behind”, “Race to the Top”, “Every Student Succeeds Act”, etc.), has instituted mechanisms to measure student success, but in the end, might limit organizations as to best practices.

### **Preoccupation with Failure**

It is difficult for an individual or an organization to exist and operate with a sense or preoccupation with a possibility of failure. Kearney, Kelsey, and, Herrington (2013) in examining mindful organizations, found that leadership, in striving to change an organization, benefits from working on areas of identified need collectively, continuously, and thoughtfully. Hoy (2003) puts forth that although a preoccupation with failure might be a defeating prospect, it actually serves as a means to continually “scan” or be observant as to problems that might arise. In a sense, an organization that looks at problems or possible problems puts itself in a better position to prepare. Weick (2012) in his examination of organizations found that organizations are an “impermanent” construct that exists within a dynamic that demands adaptation. In order to move forward, stakeholders need to accept that a possibility of failure exists, but that developing systems that adapt and proactively engage individuals to make adjustments within their role(s) may provide appropriate corrective measures. Critical to best

practices regarding organizational mindfulness, is individuals looking at actions which question past beliefs and developing mental habits (Kearney, Kelsey, and Herrington, 2013). Best practices may be achieved if stakeholders reflect the learning and growth that come from sound reasoning (Gilovich, 1991). Mindful schools may have a preoccupation with failure and perhaps in a pessimistic mindset, are in fear for the worst to happen, but a failure to prepare mindfully, would be the true catastrophe (Kearney, Kelsey, and Herrington, 2013). A preoccupation with failure does include a continual scanning for anomalies, an avoidance of static routines, a review of rules, and an examination of procedures (2013). Weick (2012) refers to this sense of being, by connecting it to eastern tenets regarding mindfulness. In Weick's words, impermanent organizations "possess the quality of experience that everything is shifting, going to pieces, slowly dissolving, rising and falling, and that moment-to-moment experience is all there is'." (2012).

### **Reluctance to Simplify**

One of the major challenges for organizations is the resistance to examine situations and events and work at simplifying processes and/or procedures (Hoy, 2012). While it is true that school administrators might be challenged by managing many events and addressing numerous daily challenges, the practice of taking time to simply can prove useful. Leadership is often reluctant to accept simplifications and study the subtleties of situations, even though a mindful leader could benefit from such a practice (Hoy, 2003). Yamamoto, Gardiner, and Tenuto (2013) in examining distributive

leader's practices, put forth the notion that authentic leaders, who are willing to be more open to examining possibilities can enhance their relationships within the organization.

Colville, Pye, and Brown (2016) regarding simplification of organizational challenges found that it is critical to eliminate the noise. In a sense, it is important to get to the important aspect in order to pose solutions. This may be a difficult proposition as, according to Weick and Westley (1996), "the relationship between organization and learning is oxymoronic: to learn is to disorganize and increase variety. To organize is to forget and reduce variety." Truthfully, simplification requires an organization to examine challenges and reduce the minutia in order to establish the procedures and processes that need to be addressed in a timely manner.

Meier, Wrinkle, and Polinard (2000) advocate for organizations to address challenges without the escalation of bureaucratic tendencies; too often organizations adopt bureaucracies as a means to cope with problems. Tanner (2013) in examining challenges in today's schools found that dealing with issues related to school failure require all stakeholders to identify problems and work together to find solutions. Laitsch (2013) in addressing the questions that arise regarding school reform and accountability points out that it should be more than just addressing immediate problems; organizations need to address underlying issues. School administrators need to address not only the items that may be the cause, but how these problems are addressed by the organization.

### **Sensitivity to Operations**

Regarding a sensitivity to operations, an organization must be cognizant of the "big picture" and seeing all the events and factors that might influence daily operations

(Hoy, 2003). Stakeholders and especially leadership must be open to the possibility of detecting problems, making continuous adjustments, and preventing situations from escalating or getting out of hand. Klocko and Wells (2015) found that school administrators and leadership often are prone to chronic stress due to the cascading number of issues they must deal with. For leadership, that chronic stress can manifest itself into a state of being where it is difficult to be resilient (2015). Critical to overcoming stress issues and fostering resiliency is unity and a collective efficacy towards achieving goals. Lazaridou's (2007) study on school leadership and coping with stress found that insuring stakeholders come together to view and understand common challenges helps. When individuals and/or stakeholders come together and are sensitive to all factors that influence their goals and objectives, then those values influence their sensitivity to information and the action alternatives they deem acceptable (2007).

Cherry and Spiegel (2006) regarding leadership and the daily struggle to cope with a possible negative situation found that oftentimes a prominent institutional dysfunction arises labeled "the victim mythology". Leadership is often tasked with making decisions where individuals involved almost always see themselves as being wronged in a grievous way (2005). McNeil (2000) in examining school reform and accountability found that educators who sometimes struggled with a system that often seemed to set them up to fail needed to not give in to impersonal bureaucracy.

Communication and collegiality are the means to first identify possible problems and secondly a means to address them. Tanner (2013) in studying President Obama's "Race to the Top" found that schools and education policymakers often do not assist in solving



issues, but rather add to the perception that failing schools are the fault of the educator. It is for that reason that school administration and teachers must in a sense, “circle the wagons”. School administrators and teachers must accept that overcrowded classrooms, outmoded facilities, a lack of adequate curricular, changing demographics, and numerous at-risk factors exist. Accountability and mandated assessments will not get schools to reverse the challenges previously listed. School leadership and teachers need to come together and focus specifically on their challenges and commit to solve issues.

### **Commitment to Resilience**

Organizations through mindful leadership must develop a capacity to detect and recover from negative events (Hoy, 2003). Colville, Pye, and Brown (2016) in examining mindful organizations and sense-making found that a factor critical to resiliency is the need to simplify and identify the crucial elements necessary for success. Alvesson and Spicer (2012) found that leadership requires attention to what is relevant, a sense of skepticism, and to how to achieve outcomes. School administrators must be reminded that resiliency depends on a mindset that understands “purity is not a possibility” (2012). A resilient school organization requires that a pragmatic engagement exists for stakeholders that examines viable solutions.

Regarding mindfulness and resiliency, Weick (2012) in speaking to an organization’s sense-making abilities pointed out that the importance of an organization’s ability to move from components that are vague to ones which are crystal clear is critical. Cole, Pye, and Brown (2016) found that reducing equivocality through balancing thinking and acting allows for a proactive means to preparing to bounce back.

For a school that might be dealing with the challenge of not meeting accountability standards, a mindset that is open to corrective action and moving forward is more prone to succeed than one that dwells on the past. It is also important not to continue following the same practices that have not been productive. School leadership needs to foster a practice of accepting and/or utilizing resources from different sources.

### **Deference to Expertise**

Critical to a mindful organization's success, is its ability to nurture and foster the practice of utilizing resources that provide genuine corrective action. Hoy (2003) in examining mindful organizations points out the importance of securing resources and individuals that can provide specific elements that provide recourse. Rigby (2015) in examining school leadership and human resources with respects to sense-making, found that school administration, through a purposeful and reflective process, can help teachers to improve, but the system cannot be adversarial. Individuals within an organization would benefit from reflective, positive practices rather than divisive ones. Leadership that can foster and nurture trust will move in the right direction.

If an organization can foster and nurture a culture where stakeholders are trusting and collegial, then sense-making has an opportunity to diminish friction and unnecessary practices. Colville, Pye, and Brown (2016) explain that process is movement, and by embracing sense-making and processes that allow for understanding, stakeholders find an added significance in being part of the dynamic. The challenge for administration will depend on the ability to convey to stakeholders that they can grow and move, by depending on and working with others. For stakeholders, much of that dynamic will

depend on the ability to build trust in the system and in each other. Imber (1997) in his examination of school reform and organizational theory posed the fact that organizations that find themselves with overwhelming challenges, along with those of accountability, find it harder to build trust. One can clearly understand that a school that is challenged by changing demographics, students at-risk, a lack of funding, overpopulation, understaffing, etc. would find it hard to deal with additional complexities. Again, leadership would benefit from practices that build trust and that have no problem in deferring to whatever helpful resource exists.

### **Section Summary**

Hoy (2003) said of mindfulness, “Mindfulness is a paradox of sorts: it sees problems as opportunities and views successes as problematic; it is both optimistic and skeptical.” In a sense, school administrators must contend with that mindset when contemplating “best practices”. For organizations to move in a positive direction, it is important to examine elements that affect the organization as well as those that affect the individual. Regarding the utilization of mindfulness to foster best practices, the five processes that include a preoccupation with failure, a reluctance to simplify, a sensitivity to operations, a commitment to resilience, and a deference to expertise are factors of which administrative leadership must be attentive.

### **Sense-making**

O’Meara, Louder, and Campbell (2014) in describing what sense-making is, stated that theoretically, sense-making provides insight as to how individuals assimilate environmental data in order to process and interpret events and phenomenon. The

concept of sense-making offers a useful way to analyze how educators and leadership struggle with issues of reason, as it considers how local stakeholders negotiate meaning from a multiplicity of often conflicting data/messages they encounter in their local environment. Weick (1995) outlined seven dimensions or areas of sense-making consisting of: 1) elements grounded in identity construction; 2) retrospective elements; 3) elements enactive of sensible environments; 4) social elements; 5) ongoing elements; 6) elements focused on and by extracted cues; and 7) elements driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. The construct of sense-making has been used in organizational studies and the field of education before, but as a variable that influences administrative decision-making in an environment dealing with accountability issues, there is room for greater study. Regarding each of the seven areas or dimensions that Weick defines, they are all relative to the individual's interactions regarding events and phenomenon within an environment.

Weick (2009) further defines sense-making as a description of the ways that individuals/actors contend or make sense of the unknown within an environment or organizational setting. Colville, Pye, and Brown (2016) in advancing an understanding of sense-making, articulate that sense-making is a viable means for interpreting contemporary conditions and the dynamic complexity of actions. Given that the dynamics of events within an organization may be complex, then a goal might be to employ sense-making to simplify.

The question at the heart of this study is, "To what extent is prior knowledge, mindfulness, or experience of an organization in academic jeopardy, effective for sense-

making practices to assist in administrative decision-making?” A logical secondary question is, “How might an organization overcome challenges or prepare the organization so that procedures support a high reliability organization?” The challenge for school organizations is that the complexity, rapidity, and lack of knowledge or procedure for ongoing events is difficult to manage and utilizing failed practices to correct can lead to additional failures. Weick (1995) points out that for “actors” or stakeholders challenged by a situation or events must have an understanding that it is not pragmatic to continue with an assumption that current happenings cannot necessarily be taken care of with past practices. Guiette and Vandembemt (2016) propose that sense-making is not a by-product of deliberate and intentional actions. Sense-making for individuals in an organization should be a result of processes and practices that embed locally driven initiatives that emerge based on the situation or event (2016). An educator struggling with student attendance issues for example, should not rely on past practices, but should be able to put into action processes and procedures that have been developed based on mindful and sense-making mindsets.

### **Sense-making and Organizational Theory**

Traditional organizational theory typically defines organizations as predictable, goal-attaining entities that are driven by intended rational behaviors and which tend to generalize situations. Weick (1995) said of organizations, that they were/are social constructs the stakeholders create and recreate to fit the meaning of their environment. In order to placate stakeholders, organizations often struggle to preserve the illusion of permanence and try to keep any issues that might arise compartmentalized (Weick,

2009). Rigby (2015) in examining instructional leadership, sense-making, and organizational theory found that organizations and schools exist “within the context of their environment” and reflection of beliefs, norms, and routines need to be considered.

In examining organizational theory, whether scientific, bureaucratic, modern, post-modern, contingency, socialization, and/or even sense-making theory, school administrative leadership must be an active component in the implementation. School administration contends with constant and ubiquitous demands regarding not only educating children, but also the environment itself. Oftentimes the decisions to be made are not only difficult, but also risky mostly due to an uncertainty as to the outcome. A school administrator for example can assign both fiscal and human resources to provide intervention classes for struggling students, but there is no certainty as to possible success. Students may be struggling not only because they lack an understanding of the curriculum, but because of external factors (i.e. socio-economics, a dysfunctional family, child care, bullying, etc.). For that reason, school administrative leadership, utilizing organizational skills, must implement procedures and processes that are flexible and inclusive of environmental factors. Morrison (2010), in examining organizational theory as it applies to schools referenced a belief that organizations are like living organisms that adapt to their environment. Morrison further found that organizations are emergent systems that are oftentimes unpredictable and non-linear: “Organisms and systems propel themselves through ‘self-organized criticality’” (2010). A senior high school in today’s urban America can be easily defined as being unpredictable or having unpredictable events occur.

## **The Co-existence of competing Epistemes**

One of the primary mindsets that has developed over the last half century has been one where school organizations and educational institutions have been measured by business models. Klocko and Wells (2015) found that established administrative leadership models based on supported business literature were being applied to school administrative leadership more and more. The problem with this way of thinking is that students and student success are not a static product that can be pushed out like a reproducible widget. The goal may be for all students to get a good education and be college and/or career ready for both society and school leadership; however, the justified “true belief” as to how to achieve this might differ. Cronin, Weingart and Todorova (2011), regarding current educational administrative leadership, point out that simultaneous epistemes exist, and that genuine assessment of areas of convergence as well as areas of differentiation should be considered.

While there might exist a certain belief as to student success, how it might be achieved, and how it might be measured, there also exists various beliefs as to the role administrative leadership should play. Co-existing epistemes as to what comprises an effective school administrator and leadership style(s) support both a transformational style of leadership, while, on the other hand, an authoritarian, managerial style is also accepted (Lazaridou, 2007). Morrison (2010) found that regarding organizations, struggling with best practices and change must provide mechanisms to manage stagnant areas and members of the organization. There always exists a probability that a lack of attention to that element can lead to self-organization and inefficiency (Morrison, 2010).

In fact, when individuals within an organization foster self-organization or a divergence from the current organizational episteme, then not only inefficiency will arise, but time-wasting, mob rule, distrust, and a misalignment of organizational goals will surface.

Weick (2009) in addressing organizational sense-making and effectiveness found that leadership must be cognizant of effectiveness at all times, even at a time of uncertainty. Sense-making at a time of uncertainty must be activated, organized, strengthened, and institutionalized to a greater extent (2009). Colville, Pye, and Brown (2016) cautioned that regarding sense-making and organizational practices, temporary solutions might only delay best practices. In organizing, an organization must diminish the amount of temporary solutions and be cognizant of the variety of practices that fit within sense-making processes (Morrison, 2010).

Co-existing epistemes regarding an organization especially when leadership contends with both external and internal demands can be taxing and challenging to best practices. Leadership may have a primary goal of educating students in a safe and nurturing environment, but when external factors, regarding accountability drive practices to produce no matter the cost, then leadership is at peril of giving in to mixed measures. For an organization, it is critical for leadership to present and provide a cohesive plan that all stakeholders can utilize. Stakeholders must have a primary role in the development and the implementation of that plan without any ambiguity. Colville, Pye, and Brown (2016) found that in implementation there could be no “in between” regarding how stakeholders put the plan into practice. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) in examining the institution of sense-making for an organization found that at a



time when challenges in the perception of current epistemes are needed, then sense-making enables an organization to provide direction.

### **Organizing Sense-making**

In making sense-making an operational component in the daily working practices of an organization, it is important to respond to the need for application of the theory. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) state that an organization needs to answer; how is there a need for sense-making? And what does sense-making mean for stakeholders regarding current events and organizational practices? In organizing sense-making, school administrative leadership should understand that as the instructional leader for an organization, it is not about what they know about genuine outcomes, but rather having the ability to put the best resources in place to garner success (Rigby, 2015).

Regarding the organizing and the utilization of sense-making, Coutu (2003), in a dialogue with Karl Weick, found that sense-making for a mindful organization makes sense especially in an environment requiring “High Reliability”. Weick (2009) in putting sense-making in play for an organization said the primary thing is for leadership to be “attentive”; to sort out and prioritize what must be done. Guette and Vandenbempt (2016) regarding the dynamic complexity of sense-making and an organizations’ investment in best practices, stated that stakeholders will have an expanded understanding along with a broader repertoire of interpretation of procedure(s) and a larger inventory of reasonable actions if they are attentive. High reliability requires an organization to have more than static practices in place. Such organizations must have systems in place to not only monitor, but also adjust.

## **Social and Systemic Sense-making Practices**

As sense-making is a social construct used to make sense of the environments and the events that exist for specific stakeholders, it is vital to examine how practices will be implemented to make systemic changes. Kezar (2013) in examining sense-making as a means for transformational change acknowledged what Weick formalized in his recognition that organizations are not static and that there is no single reality. For school administrative leadership, it is important that sense-making provides stakeholders with processes that address the dynamics of the organization and guide individuals to better choices and actions. Weick (2009) in addressing leaderships' challenge for bringing individuals within an organization together said; "part of the craft of '*searching*' for fleeting social order involves the careful choice of one's assumptions. Since the assumptions constrain what one will see ('believing is seeing'), it is important to be explicit and deliberate about such choices". Carraway and Young (2015) regarding sense-making and school leadership found that administrators need to understand the complexities of implementation. Aside from fostering a mindful community, school administrators must also show stakeholders that sense-making is a means for taking daily events, no matter the size, and give them substance and form within the organizations goals.

### **Section Summary**

Weick (1995) defined sense-making "as a process that is: 1. grounded in identity construction, 2. retrospective, 3. enactive of sensible environments, 4. social, 5. ongoing, 6. focused on and by extracted cues, and 7. driven by plausibility rather than accuracy."

School leadership in acknowledging that sense-making is a variable that may help in decision-making for the organization should accept that there may be a co-existence of competing epistemes, that organizing how sense-making works is a process, and that both social and systemic factors will be influenced. Colville, Pye, and Brown (2016) regarding sense-making and leadership found that converting theory into practice is a challenge at a time when “continuous life” is streaming twenty-four seven in multiple voices, forms and social media. For school administrators, that is why it is important not to hold on to the past and to practices that may no longer apply, but to define practices and procedures that can be activated when future vents in a dynamic environment come into play. A mindful organization that employs sense-making practices to make decisions may be more resilient and apt to handle critical and urgent events.

### **Schools as High Reliability Organizations**

Hales and Chakravorty (2016) in examining High Reliability Organizations (HRO) defined as organizations that typically operate in hazardous environments where the consequences of process failures are extremely high, found that events and processes, must to be defined. While most individuals would consider organizations related to safety, healthcare, utilities, and military institutions as HROs, the average individual may not consider a school as an HRO; however, the daily dynamics tied with the objectives of a school should make one reconsider. Schools operate daily in a dynamic that involves many events in constant motion, and while these events are not hazardous, the consequences of failure are immense. Added to the dynamic environment at a secondary school is the fact that administration must often work with a

staff that still reflects an outdated paradigm at a time when schools move from a homogeneous cultural to an environment characterized by a multiethnic, multilingual, and economically diverse student body (Young, Madsen, and Young, 2010).

Regarding the dynamics of an organization and operating as a High Reliability Organization, schools currently operate in an environment that is part of a flattening world, and bullying, social media, and even violent events are possible. Dwyer, Osher, and Hoffman (2000) in providing direction for the creation of responsive schools found that despite the likelihood that no grievous event might happen, administrative leadership must be ever at the ready. In fact, most of today's districts and schools have crisis management teams in place to handle any situation that must arise. There also has to exist procedure that monitor the environment and engage the community as a means to support any possibilities. Today's school administrator, whose primary mission revolves around educating students in a safe environment, must contend with illegal drugs, truancy, bullying, gang violence, social media, and other at risk situations at a time when being held accountable to educate all students.

Bellamy, Crawford, Marshall, and Coulter (2005) in examining fail-safe schools, found that the burden to address high stakes assessment places added pressure on administration and the organization itself. Schools and school improvement especially at a high capacity, dynamic environment requires organizational structures to come together and enable staff members, parents, students, etc., to participate in activities that foster participation, advance skillfulness, better communication, and enhance relationships (Lambert, 2006). Systems for prevention and intervention to ensure

achievement for all students are a necessity and a non-negotiable item. Blankstein and Noguera (2008) found that high-performing schools require the adoption of a comprehensive system for prevention and intervention along with the practice of accelerating learning opportunities for students who are behind academically. Administrative leadership cannot afford to implement practices that isolate students and slow them down. School administrators should empower and engage stakeholders so that the mission of the school and student success are a priority.

### **Administrative Decision-Making**

Educational leadership is not an exact science, and when examining all the variables school administrators must contend with, decision-making can be a difficult task. Examining mindfulness and sense-making as variables that effect administrative decision-making may add to current research and provide insight. Regarding school administration and the dynamics of the organization, a central process requires great attention. Day, Gu, and Sammons (2016) found that articulated, organizationally shared educational values that are context sensitive provide administration with strategies that can progressively help them move an organization in a positive direction.

Sutcliffe and McNamara (2001) in examining the connection between sense-making and administrative decision-making found that leadership is taxed to adhere to set rules in making decisions; however, the sheer dynamics of the organization often strain that practice. Chassin and Loeb (2013) regarding High Reliability Organizations put forth that although much of the research regarding HROs and administrative decision-making has revolved around health-care and safety, which methods and

procedures might easily apply in other areas. Tenam-Zemach and Flynn (2011) in researching current federal mandates and how oftentimes society itself is unsure about what an educated student is, provides for school administrative leadership that decision-making in such a dynamic environment must be grounded in what is best for students.

Noguera (2009), in examining school reform and accountability mandates, found that asking administrative leadership to implement “the change we need” as asked by the federal government in President Obama’s ‘Race to the Top’ is well intended, but schools are still not being provided the correct resources and support to make good decisions for all students. School administrators, in taking on the challenges of the average school day and managing the challenges of accountability, often make decisions based on past practices and resources at hand. For that reason, it is critical to develop an organization that genuinely empowers individuals to do what is right and to make the right decisions.

### **School Reform**

School reform is a broad area to examine, but with the reauthorization of the Elementary-Secondary Education Act of 1965, No Child Left Behind, and Race to The Top, it has taken on a different, more urgent meaning. Jennings, Brayboy, and Cozart (2007) in examining school reform and a transition in the accountability system, found that although defined as school-level management, the accountability system was more centralized at the federal and state level; school districts were actually content when abdicating control. For local schools, following federal and state policy, school administration adopted practices that focused on compliance and less on the interests of the child. One item to consider regarding this matter is that not all districts or schools

are the same and applying mandates to the middle of the bell curve leaves the outliers with probability of maybe developing successful plans.

With changing demographics and the mandate to close academic gaps for all students, school administrators are now tasked with not only meeting generic targets, but with meeting the same targets for all students. Madsen and Mabokela (2014) in examining school leadership and demographic changes found that in order for school administrators to be successful, they must be culturally attuned to the needs of the students they served. Levine and Levine (2012) in breaking down the effects of federal mandates for the past half century found that the business models that are used to implement practices merely create bigger business, more bureaucracy, and less instruction

Blankstein and Noguera (2008) regarding school reform and accountability found that accountability and student success is garnered by good instruction and experiences with those individuals who have direct impact on student learning. School administration oftentimes in trying to meet compliance, focus on those “measurables” and narrow the curriculum. School administrators need to make conscious efforts to address all challenges then avoid attributing student performance to factors they cannot control and pointing their fingers at others (2008). Disdain for and even discord regarding the difficult questions about whose knowledge is of most worth undermines the purposes of education (Tenam-Zemach and Flynn, 2011). Tenam-Zemach and Flynn put forth: “Society may establish values, but when the society is as pluralistic and divided as America currently is, is it possible to determine, in a national sense, what an

educated person looks like? Is it possible to nationally dictate the content and skills that all students need to know and be able to do to be “successful,” especially when success can be individually constructed?”

Levine and Levine (2012) regarding school reform pointed out that for most policymakers, the bottom-line is the main thing and the well-being or education of children is secondary. Again, this frankly points back to the fact that school administrators often are dealing with co-existing epistemes. Noguera (2012) in examining the major challenges that schools face and current trends regarding reform, found that for school administrators, that oftentimes students who face the hardest challenges are not receiving the support they need and continue to be marginalized. Shankar-Brown (2015) in examining the urbanization of American schools addressed an item identified as “residential segregation”. Basically minority children, enrolled in schools with much higher levels of poverty, as indicated by eligibility for free and reduced-price school lunches, struggle with an array of complicated problems including high-dropout rates, poor attendance, low test scores, higher rates of unqualified or lateral entry teachers, teacher shortages, lower teacher salaries, and district pressure to raise test scores (2015).

### **Section Summary**

The proposition that schools might be seen or operate as High Reliability Organizations may for some seem extreme, but in the face of safety, daily operational challenges, and school reform, stakeholders might benefit from the development of such an organization. Administrative and leadership decision-making is such a critical



practice that it demands process and procedure for a dynamic environment. Regarding secondary schools, specifically high schools, the accountability becomes even more daunting as students are at the end of the academic stage. For school administrators, if there exists a void or a gap in their organizational operations, then the challenge becomes even greater. Noguera (2004) found that, “As educators grapple with various strategies for raising student achievement, it is becoming increasingly clear that we face our biggest challenge in improving high schools. Steeped in tradition and dependent on practices that have long outlived their usefulness, high schools are in dire need of reform.”

#### **Chapter Summary: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

Regarding this examination of mindfulness, sense-making, administrative decision-making, and high reliability organizations, it is critical for school administrators to evaluate their organization with a mindset that their organization is dynamic and that they must contend with many events on a regular basis. Research and theory development to assist with best practices must be timely and genuine. Hoy and Miskel (2013) emphatically point how reality can be distorted when, “haphazard observations followed by the conclusion that the facts speak for themselves do not qualify as scientific research”. This review of literature is a careful and methodical review of applicable research data. With accountability as another factor to consider regarding school success, all variables need to be examined and considered in moving forward. Research data can provide for not only researchers, but also practitioners with other perspectives and theory from which to utilize. Hoy and Miskel (2013) regarding theory

acknowledge that theory provides a frame of reference for the practitioner; the practitioner then can analyze events and practices. Finally, the research and theory can guide school administrators in critical decision-making.

Attaining high reliability regarding education in today's schools will require organizations to undergo significant change and mindful, purposeful decisions. For school administration, the challenge would be in genuinely engaging stakeholders, acquiring mindful practices, utilizing sense-making in decision-making, and accepting that the process is always dynamic. The following chapter will briefly describe the research problem, data sample, collection procedures, instrumentation, and data analysis procedures for this mixed methods examination.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS**

In this chapter, the research design, the population, instrumentation, and data analysis procedures for this study are presented. The research design for this study is descriptive. The purpose of this study is to describe, examine, and interpret how mindfulness and sense-making influence decision-making for school administrators at a school in academic jeopardy (academic jeopardy is defined as the school being in required improvement based on mandated testing). With consideration, being given to the fact that schools, with their daily activity, being a high reliability organization (HRO), administrations' decision-making is critical to the organization's success. Smith and Riley (2012) point out that when strong school administrative leadership is in place, staff is supported, empowered, and in a position where school success is possible. However, regarding decision-making, school administration finds itself in times of crisis in dealing with events, emotions, and consequences that in the end deter from the primary focus of the organization (2012).

#### **Research Methods**

This section outlines the research methods of this study. Regarding specific research paradigms, it is useful and very necessary to provide a descriptive or interpretive expression of relevant perspectives as they apply to the social environment of an organization as well as the ontological limitations that might apply. For the researcher, it is vital to define the methods used to collect quantitative and qualitative

data, to define the study population, to articulate interview techniques, to collect and provide data analysis, and to consider any validity concerns. The methods provided are focused on addressing the five guiding questions; Question 1: What are teachers' perceptions regarding administrative decision-making in connection with the achievement of the schools primary mission? Question 2: What are the perceptions of teachers on school administrators regarding the impact of a high-stakes accountability system on administrative decision-making? Question 3: What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of administrators' decision-making based on the administrators' experience? Question 4: What dimensions of school mindfulness (teacher mindfulness and principal mindfulness) are the best predictors of the collective efficacy of administrators? Question 5: What dimensions of sense-making are the best predictors of the administrative efficacy of school outcomes and best practices?

### **Research Paradigm**

The understanding that the examination of a specific paradigm often influenced by its relativity to the researcher's ontology might be considered as unavoidable as it is vital to a better understanding of a social environment or phenomenon especially by stakeholders affected. The development of a standard or archetype related to a specific system of beliefs, organizational knowledge, and methodology is central to the definition of the type of study and the paradigm's definition (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), it is important to solidify, interpret, and organize a field of research, specifically if qualitative and/or mixed methods are utilized. Furthermore, it is even more essential in the face of political, paradigmatic differences,

and inherent contradictions among styles and types of research (Dash, 2005). It is also critical to consider barriers regarding disciplinary, national, racial, cultural, and gender differences. The approach to the study and/or the research done should be specific to a scientific methodology and the paradigm examined. Critical for a researcher to identify is the definition of a paradigm. The researcher must also define whether a study is descriptive, interpretive, positive, post-positive, or critical. Being that a paradigm is a shared understanding among scientists or scholars, working in a discipline regarding important problems, structures values, and assumptions determining that discipline, the research should reflect the knowledge and beliefs of affected stakeholders. Dash (2005), in his examination of paradigms as related to education said that the examination of social phenomena is educational in itself. With consideration to that, line of thinking and given that administrative decision-making contends with various processes that rely on experience and beliefs, a post-positive inquiry may be the best research method to employ. Cohen, Morrison, and Manion (2011), stated regarding research that the researcher must be cognizant of whether he/she is studying the cause of an effect, the effect of a cause, or both. Regarding this examination of mindfulness, sense-making, and administrative decision-making, the assessment would consider both.

As a researcher, who understands that personal relativity is a factor that influences this type of study and recognizes that a post-positive framework should take into consideration any possible bias, interpretation of collected data should be more genuine. As most individuals, might view a study as being esoteric and coming from someone who might be narrow-minded when examining the situation, then it behooves

the researcher to take into consideration that perspective. In education, it might be safe to assume that one would perceive certain practices cannot be measured in a positivist way. The examination of an organization and its processes cannot simply stop at an empirical study. In order for knowledge to move forward, it would benefit all stakeholders if a post-positive, interpretive examination of data surrounding events and phenomenon were used. Too many stakeholders react to situations in so many different ways, which cannot produce a static environment. In education, the epistemology and methodologies used to drive results are subject to influences and practices by too many individuals with distinct standards. Utilizing a post-positive perspective, a framework is established that allows for an examination that accounts for both the researcher and the stakeholders' predispositions. With the researcher's goal, especially when applied to an educational setting, of understanding mindfulness, sense-making, and administrative decision-making, developing a solid research framework that defines best practices is significant. The researcher must understand that solid insight regarding those best practices must be established through impartiality in the collection data that is both valid and reliable (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

As the examination of the different elements within a study is developed, the researcher must accept that certain constructs that arise because of the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of the stakeholders become evident, that those constructs are what drives sense-making and decision-making for those individuals (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2015). An interpretive perception might consider actions and processes of stakeholders as being informed actions rather than genuine or true actions. Regarding sense-making

and decision-making, research should examine the ontology or the understanding of the administrator's beliefs (2015). Aside from that assessment, research should also examine how the mindfulness, sense-making, and decision-making impact the organization; how genuine are these constructs in impacting others and the environment. Maitlis and Christianson (2014) in their research regarding sense-making, note that it is important to understand an individual's processes in making sense and coping with events that influence an organization, no matter the magnitude.

“When organizational members encounter moments of ambiguity or uncertainty, they seek to clarify what is going on by extracting and interpreting cues from their environment, using these as the basis for a plausible account that provides order and “makes sense” of what has occurred, and through which they continue to enact the environment”

In education, it is important to understand organizational missions, goals, and objectives. The goal of this study is to provide some understanding of the mindfulness, the sense-making process, and the decision-making process of administration as it applies to those elements. A study that might provide a better understanding of the how participant's subjectivity, interpretation, and/or communication related to their experiences may prove beneficial to best practices. With that in mind, a better understanding of the process(s) may expand definitions and practices that in turn might provide better outcomes.

Regarding this study, a sequential explanatory design was used to collect data and interpret results for this mixed-methods approach in examining the impact of

mindfulness and sense-making on administrative decision-making (Creswell, Plano, Gutmann, and Hanson, 2003). The researcher in consideration of the variables and the environment found that neither a quantitative nor a qualitative study would be sufficient to capture the beliefs and perceptions, and details of a campus in academic jeopardy. When used in combination, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and provide a more complete picture of the problem (Creswell, 2013). Data collection (including qualitative and quantitative sources) from active stakeholders at the school in question will be utilized.

### **Study Population**

The study asked one hundred and twenty-seven high school teachers to participate; of that number, ninety-one actually took part in the quantitative part. The researcher also recruited nine high school master teachers from that sample to be interviewed from a campus in required improvement as defined by the Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2014). Criteria for selecting study participants regarding the quantitative part included being on staff within the required improvement accountability timeframe (2012-2017). The nine master teachers represent ten percent of the ninety-one teachers surveyed. The teachers, which participated directly, affect college and/or career readiness as defined by the state of Texas for this South Texas high school campus in required improvement status (TEA, 2012). Regarding this study, the interview sample can be deemed adequate in consideration of response saturation, as additional participants may not provide greater insight than those assigned to this campus (Mason,



2010). The interviews held in the spring of 2017 and restricted to those master teachers who taught within a five-year period prior to and up to the required improvement status.

### **Instrumentation**

Regarding quantitative data, a mindfulness (M) scale survey instrument was used which was developed by the researcher based on the work of Hoy and Langer and expanded to include those items that would reflect areas of concern at a campus in academic jeopardy (Hoy et al., 2006). The mindfulness scale score is based on the five mindfulness factors and is comprised of fifty items (ten per area), ten points per area were possible through a Likert-type scale instrument. It was designed to measure the extent to which faculty at this campus connect administrative decision-making to Preoccupation with Failure, (b) Reluctance to Simplify Interpretations (c) Sensitivity to Operations (d) Commitment to Resilience and (d) a Deference to Expertise. Sample Items include, “Those with the most experience make important decisions at this campus.” and “Staff is aware of procedures to address situations with their supervisors.” The response choices for this modified M-Scale were based on a five-point Likert scale beginning with range of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

Regarding qualitative data collection and the interview process that was used to acquire insight regarding mindfulness and sense-making as it applies to administrative decision-making, methodology requires using an open-ended and a semi-structured process (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012). Regarding the interviews as they relate to school administration, participants (instructional master teachers) responded to scripted questions that added information regarding survey data and how it relates to

administrative decision-making. In trying to obtain a more genuine and concrete understanding of administrative practices, subjects were sometimes urged to examine and respond employing the application of mindfulness and sense-making. In doing so, the researcher hoped to garner better insight regarding administration's schema or constructs that exist within the process. This is especially important when examining situations that require attention that is more urgent and vary from regular situations. Being that a school might be considered a high reliability environment; a better understanding of those processes would be beneficial.

Prior to the interview of master teachers, the researcher reviewed the subject's background and campus data relevant to the interviewee. Interviewees signed an informed consent form prior to the interview in keeping with Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol. Interviewees were assigned a pseudonym, as their identities were kept confidential in accordance with IRB. As this study was restricted to one campus, actual identification could prove problematic. The interviews were digitally recorded in person and were conducted in the school library during a private session. Following the interview process and protocol, participants were asked to respond to questions with any anecdotal information they could apply. This was critical to the review of the interview information gathered because it shed insight regarding perceptions of structures associated to an organization's operations. This was important when examining mindfulness, sense-making, and the administrative decision-making process.

An essential element to insure additional validity of the interviews was the documenting or journaling of the interviews by the researcher. This documentation

allowed for the collection of additional insights from the interviews. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) in their examination of qualitative research and the interview process state, “At the heart of qualitative research is the desire to expose the human part of the story”. The documentation allows the researcher to adhere to the process and garner extraneous elements that are not captured by the digital recorder. The documentation may also serve to provide an opportunity for additional knowledge or elements not developed by the researcher or ones that were overlooked (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012).

Regarding the interviews, the primary researcher to provide greater fidelity to the process and familiarity to the dynamics of the organization completed transcription. Transcripts of the interviews were available to the interviewees upon request. Along with the interview material, the researcher also collected data relevant to the participant’s roles and duties related to organization’s specific challenge of academic success.

### **Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data for the two independent variables, the areas of mindfulness and sense-making were examined regarding their relation to the one dependent variable of administrative decision-making. Mindfulness was examined using a quantitative instrument and sense-making data were collected employing a qualitative interview approach.

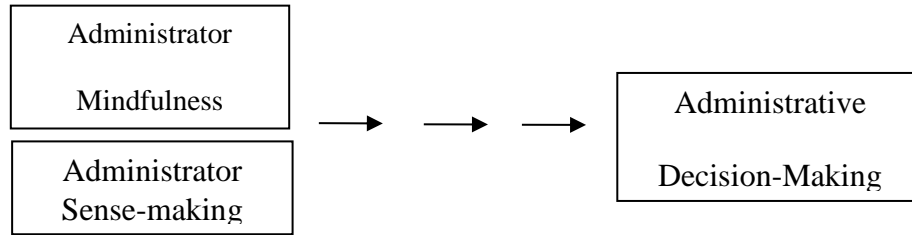


Figure 3.1. This simple diagram identifies the independent variables and the dependent variable that are part of a school administrator’s decision-making process.

A methodology like *sequential explanatory design* is one for developing greater insight after participants have been queried about one variable (mindfulness) which was gathered through a systemic process and analyzed. Sequential explanatory design studies, regarding a specific item, provide a more genuine understanding of the variables when data collection, analysis, interpretation, and theory development comes from and is derived on site (Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick, 2006). According to Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie (2003), when utilizing a mixed methods design like a sequential explanatory design, a continual and dynamic dialogue takes place regarding data, analysis and theory; elements do not function in isolation.

The goal of the quantitative phase of the research was to identify teacher perceptions of school administrators’ decision-making process as they relate to mindfulness. Regarding quantitative data collected from teachers at this one campus in academic jeopardy, the data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics as derived by the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSSR, 20.0). The one quantitative independent variable for the study focuses on teacher perceptions of administrative decision-making through the lens of mindfulness. A Statistical Package

for Social Science (SPSSR) procedure reliability was used to determine internal consistency of the five internal scales.

Five scales measured teacher perceptions of administrative decision-making through the lens of mindfulness: (a) Preoccupation with Failure, (b) Reluctance to Simplify Interpretations (c) Sensitivity to Operations (d) Commitment to Resilience and (d) a Deference to Expertise. The teacher perceptions of administrative decision-making through the lens of mindfulness described by cumulatively summing the frequency for individual items within each scale for each respondent. The frequency results were then used to calculate percentages or confidences for each scale item. Allen and Seaman (2007) supported the use of additional data to support Likert scalar data. While Likert scale variables usually represent an underlying continuous measure, analysis of individual items should use supplementary clarification (2007).

Regarding the analysis of the interview data, it was reviewed and sorted as a means to examine and code the data collected (Locke, 2001; Charmaz, 2014). As noted by Aldiabat and Le Navenec (2011), qualitative researchers must contend with and find a methodology that provides opportunity to best describe and/or interpret data that may shed light on a particular event or phenomenon by certain stakeholders. By utilizing a sequential explanatory design, interview data may provide more genuine data regarding the relationship between the stakeholders and the processes because it may add to the quantitative data, rather than a thick description that might focus too much on the individual (2011).

Coding of the interviews was comprised of a three-part process. The first part, involved coding the responses. Coding protocols as noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) have a hierarchy of code types, which include open, axial, and selective items. Open coding directly tied to the identification of concepts that serve as the fundamental component(s) in the analysis process (Ruppel and Mey, 2015). Regarding sense-making and taking into account Weick's preeminent work, the seven tenets he defined serve as those fundamental components. A line-by-line coding of the interview transcripts will allow for the better identification of the elements that fall under those seven tenets and eliminated the possibility of quick conjecture.

Regarding the process of bringing data into a more cohesive and categorical picture, axial categorization will be employed which allows for the filtering and assembling of data that might have been lost/missed during open coding (Ruppel and Mey, 2015). This was managed by inserting direct interview quotes into a table alongside relevant doctrine noted in sense-making literature. Using Weick and Sutcliffe's fundamental work regarding sense-making, the selection, elimination, and identification of axial categories will consist of criteria where interest, plausibility and criteria saturation will be considered (2015). Believability and reasonability in response to the guiding research questions were taken into consideration in connection to existing literature, theory, and previous findings. In eliminating or discarding axial categories, the researcher before discarding possible axial categories, will set them aside for further review and possible selective coding.

In addressing the final stage of coding, selective coding will allow core categories to produce substantive theoretical information (Locke, 2001). Sequential explanatory design methods, like many other approaches in qualitative research, can (and must) be modified depending on the subject under examination (Ruppel and Mey, 2015). As a researcher, this information can produce greater insight regarding qualitative interview data and how it relates to the examination of sense-making in its application to administrative decision-making. In analyzing the data, scrutinizing abstract items against existing literature may provide greater substance to the connection stakeholders and the organization's outcome have.

According to Locke (2001), a researcher, in order to develop authenticity, needs to show readers a genuine presence in the data collection and understanding of the interviewee's point of view. A critical component to achieve the solid data theory coupling that might connect a theoretical element to be viewed as 'grounded,' requires a link to the researchers' theoretical framework (2001). Analysis of the coded interviews, the journaling, and the literature, allows the researcher to move within the data constructs be they abstract or concrete. It is vital for the researcher to connect the data to the literature to provide greater substance and tangible examples.

### **Limitations and Validity of Interviews**

Regarding this examination, several factors or issues may limit the validity of the interviews (Ruppel and Mey, 2015). A primary limitation may stem from the fact that memory deficiencies limit the scope of responses from those individuals with greater time spent within the organization and under different leadership. The researcher must

also keep abreast of the investment the interviewee might have regarding a specific item. For some interviewees, whether hampered by faulty memory or interest in a topic/item, the process may be more involuntary than explicit and thus limiting the scope of the data once again. Furthermore, the process may be subconscious rather than explicit, making it hard to conceptualize the process because it is difficult for respondents to articulate their past thought processes. In the end, it is the researcher's responsibility, to synthesize the data into a viable narrative that provides perspective. As noted by Ruppel and Mey (2015) regarding the narrative;

“The delineation of the characteristics of the setting, its temporal embeddedness, and the actors, who are confronted with challenges that they overcome: this generates a significant development that progresses the narrative towards a conclusion that underlines the value of the narrative itself.”

In researching, how the perception by faculty on how mindfulness and sense-making influence and impact administrative decision-making, Weick would be prone to say that it is difficult to examine individuals actively considering a certain process (Weick, 2012). Genuine results using sequential explanatory design accept that knowledge comes through action and interaction along with the experiences of “the engaged inquirer” (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The fact that the interviewee may still have ongoing interaction regarding the organization's process may influence responses. It is the interviewee's familiarity with the phenomenon, along with the researcher's analysis, that can determine how much of an impact the two independent variables have on the outcome(s).



A last limitation that might influence and limit the data collected comes from the perception of the interviewees themselves, regarding the phenomenon. Interviewees may consider and be reticent to respond if they consider how they may be perceived regarding their actions, inactions, or role in the organization's processes. If they recognize that their competency may have been a deficiency to administration or the organization, then they may be hesitant to be genuine in their responses.

### **Chapter Summary: Study Methods**

As noted by Cohen, Mason, and Morrison (2011), decision-making factors are critical to identify the purpose or rationale for the research. As indicated in this chapter the researcher used a mixed methods approach to understand the “what” and “why” related to mindfulness, sense-making, and administrative decision-making at a campus in academic jeopardy. A research paradigm that strives at a genuine examination of data, dictates that a researcher uses a post-positivist, interpretive process. The study population must also reflect a sample of stakeholders that have an honest data source from which to pull sincere information. Data analysis along with the consideration of limitations, must consider variables and factors that might influence outcomes. In the following chapter, we will examine the findings of this mixed methods examination.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

This chapter presents the results of this study. The purpose of this study was to examine the connection, if teachers at a school perceive any, between mindfulness and sense-making regarding administrative decision-making as it in academic jeopardy. One hundred and twenty-seven teachers who make up the faculty at a South Texas Secondary School in State/Federal accountability jeopardy were asked to participate in the study. Regarding this study, a sequential explanatory design was used to collect data and interpret results for this mixed-methods approach in examining the impact of mindfulness and sense-making on administrative decision-making (Creswell et al., 2003).

Participants were asked to complete a fifty-item Likert scale survey instrument regarding the identified five processes promoted by mindful organizations, which include preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2015). Along with the survey data collected, some participants were interviewed through the lens of sense-making to garner additional insight regarding administrative decision-making. The additional participants were garnered from the complete sample, but as master teachers provide additional insight in this sequential explanatory design study.

Regarding potential benefits for the participants, study data may add literature for best practices that may benefit the organization and similar organizations. There

were/are no potential or anticipated risks for participants. All and every measure to insure confidentiality was adhered to as prescribed by Institutional Review Board (IRB) processes. The knowledge gained from this study may be useful to campuses across the United States who may face similar challenges, and will expand the literature on the subject of secondary school administrative decision-making with respects to mindfulness and sense-making for all students in the face of mandated accountability.

Quantitative data gathered using a Likert scale mindfulness survey is listed in the tables below followed by a qualitative data collected through interviews of master teachers. The mindfulness survey data indicates not only the number of responses, but also the frequency of responses indicating the strength or confidence regarding certain perceptions. As Likert scales parameters are invalidated regarding descriptive statistics for mean and standard deviation due to their non-parametric process, response frequencies will be utilized to analyze the data (Allen and Seaman, 2007). Huebner (2015) in examining data indicated that even when trying to measure observable and measurable data, that data is always victim to variations relative to context. When measuring the boiling point of a metal for example, outcomes will vary based on the environmental conditions, purity of the metal, equipment used to measure temperature, etcetera. For that reason, Huebner (2015) proposes additional data sources to support data collected.

As noted, for this mixed methods study, data was collected and analyzed using a sequential explanatory design to garner greater insight. Frequency tables were used listing the mindfulness statements teachers reviewed along with their responses. Of the

one hundred and twenty seven teachers asked to participate, ninety-one responded (71.65%). The mindfulness survey developed by the researcher based the research of Hoy and Langer (2006), provides insight regarding teachers' perceptions of administrative decision-making as it applies to the organization. Teachers were reminded of the campus mission statement, "The mission of this South Texas High School is to produce students that can compete at the global level in the college classroom, the workforce, or the military" and whether administration supported that statement through their decision-making.

Regarding the qualitative data, master teachers were asked to participate in an interview to add additional insight regarding administrative decision-making. Of the possible twelve master teachers that have been active during the campus' accountability jeopardy status nine (10%) participated in the interview process. In keeping with the sequential explanatory design and due to the fact that Likert scale instruments lack a means of converting diffuse thoughts in a discrete manner, an interview of some participants was utilized to assist with descriptive information (Huebner, 2015). The interviews were directed using a researcher developed instrument guided by Weick's preeminent work and the seven sense-making tenets. Responses were transcribed, coded and analyzed. The researcher also used journal notes to better interpret responses. Quantitative survey data for this study is presented first followed by qualitative data gathered from master teacher interviews. It is the researcher's hopes that this provides greater insight to teacher perceptions of administrative decision-making as it applies to the organization. Booher-Jennings (2005) found that data exists on the results of the

impact of high-stakes testing and accountability systems, but there is still a gap in data regarding the mechanisms that account for administration, a district, and a teacher’s willingness to change. The tables below presenting teacher perceptions regarding administration and organizational practices may help to close that gap.

Table 4.1

*Master Teacher Interview participants*

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Years of Experience</i>	<i>Years as Master Teacher</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>
Juana Lorca	8	1 ½	F	Mexican-American
Samuel Twain	8	2	M	European American
Esmeralda Solis	27	11	F	Mexican American
Benito “Tiger” Roosevelt	38	5	M	Mexican American
Juana Ines De La Cruz	30	5	F	Mexican American
Cesar Villa	25	6	M	Mexican American
Carol Perkins	29	3	F	Mexican American
Vanessa Nordin	11	3	F	Mexican American
Ronaldo Blanco	8	3	M	Mexican American

As noted in Table 4.1, eight of the nine teachers interviewed are Hispanic (Mexican-American). Teachers range in years of experience from eight to thirty-eight years’ experience. Regarding master teacher experience, only one teacher had experience over ten years with most ranging between three to five years. Regarding gender, slightly more than half of the teachers are female (55.55%). Regarding the sample of master teachers interviewed, the majority are homegrown products and more

than likely went through the very same system they now work in; their familiarity with the demographic is strong. As noted by Finlay (2011) researchers nowadays need to bridge the gaps in research from the humanistic to the existential utilizing novel methods. Individuals build certain interpretation of their environment based on events, issues, interactions, and items related to their specific phenomena.

Table 4.2

*Teacher survey responses regarding teacher perceived confidence regarding the organization's **Preoccupation with Failure** n=91*

#	Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Staff talks more about work-related mistakes than work related successes.	22	24.17%	41	45.05%	5	5.494%	23	25.27%	0	0%
2	Staff take even the smallest of mistakes seriously.	0	0%	21	23.07%	14	15.38%	42	46.15%	14	15.38%
3	Staff sees close calls (e.g., a two student fight on campus) as mistakes.	3	3.296%	26	28.57%	45	49.45%	13	14.28%	4	4.39%
4	Staff gets praised if they report general problems, errors, or inconsistencies (e.g., no paper towels in the restrooms).	6	6.59%	41	45.05%	26	28.57%	15	16.48%	3	3.296%
5	Staff reports work-related mistakes that could have serious consequences, even if nobody else notices the mistake.	0	0%	20	21.97%	14	15.38%	42	46.15%	15	16.48%
6	Staff feels comfortable reporting general mistakes they have made to superiors.	1	1.098%	12	13.18%	20	21.97%	48	52.74%	10	10.98%
7	Staff talks about general mistakes that have been made.	0	0%	13	14.28%	12	13.18%	60	65.93%	6	6.59%
8	Staff often sees certain challenges as too hard to overcome.	6	6.59%	53	58.24%	14	15.38%	16	17.58%	2	2.197%
9	Staff is quick to give up when others do not provide support.	13	14.28%	45	49.45%	10	10.98%	19	20.87%	4	4.39%

Table 4.2 Continued

10	Staff believes that no matter how hard they work, that some things do not change.	9	9.89%	24	26.37%	18	19.78%	32	35.16%	8	8.79%
----	---	---	-------	----	--------	----	--------	----	--------	---	-------

Note. Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. A mean cumulative score was calculated by averaging item responses: M=16.2.

Regarding a *preoccupation with failure*, teachers showed consistency in their responses with the majority of the items. Regarding **statement number 1**, where teachers were asked, “Staff talks more about work-related mistakes than work related successes.” Survey results indicate that teacher do believe that success are discussed as much as mistakes with scale item 1 (24.17%) and item 2(45.05%). For **statement number 2**, “Staff take even the smallest of mistakes seriously.”, although teachers indicated in scale item 2(23/07%) a slight negative response, overall a confident sign for scale items 4(46.15%) and item 5(15.38%) were stronger. Regarding **statement number 3**, “Staff sees close calls (e.g., a two student fight on campus) as mistakes.” teachers showed some hesitation as to a perception of possible mistakes; scale item 2(28.57% and item 3(49.45%) indicated disagreement and indecision with the statement. Regarding **statement number 4**, “Staff gets praised if they report general problems, errors, or inconsistencies (e.g., no paper towels in the restrooms).” teachers indicated in scale item 2(45.05%) that staff did not get praised and item 3(28.57%) indicated indecision. For scale **statement number 5**, “Staff reports work-related mistakes that could have serious consequences, even if nobody else notices the mistake.” although some teacher indicated disagreement in scale item 2(21.97%), scale items 4(46.15%) and 5(16.48%) indicated that mistakes were reported.

Regarding **statement number 6**, “Staff feels comfortable reporting general mistakes they have made to superiors.” teachers showed a strong confidence in reporting mistakes with scale item 4(52.74%). For **statement number 7**, “Staff talks about general mistakes that have been made.” teachers strongly indicated with scale item 4 (65.93%) the affirmative. Regarding **statement number 8**, “Staff often sees certain challenges as too hard to overcome.” teachers indicated in scale item 2 (58.24%) disagreement. **Statement number 9**, “Staff is quick to give up when others do not provide support.” teachers via scale item 2(49.45%) indicated disagreement with the statement. Regarding **statement number 10**, “Staff believes that no matter how hard they work, that some things do not change.” Teachers showed mixed responses with scale item 2 (26.37%) indicating disagreement, scale item 3(19.78%) uncertainty, and scale item 4(35.16%) agreement with the statement.

### **Master Teacher Interview Responses**

Regarding a *preoccupation with failure*, teachers perhaps due to the stress and pressure of the impact of high-stakes testing, accountability systems, and what administration requires, noted that things have changes over the years. The sense-making tenet of *retrospective elements* asks individuals to consider items relevant to their past practices and their environment. Regarding a *preoccupation with failure* teachers did provided some insight as to the worry and stress about not being successful. **Vanessa Nordin** said, “Things aren’t what they were before. Over the years, we are asked to more with a focus on the test and not real classroom instruction. Moreover, as teachers, we feel if we don’t go along with everyone, we are going to fail. But fail at what? Real teaching



or testing?” Regarding a preoccupation with failure, **Esmeralda Solis** noted that, “some of us feel frustrated or give up trying because things don’t change in the way we prepare students. No matter what we do they (administrators) don’t let us just teach and kids fail. Testing strategies aren’t going to help if they can’t read and write.”

Regarding many of the mindfulness statements teachers showed agreement, except with respects to statement number two; being praised for pointing out problems. Regarding this item, **Ronaldo Blanco** said “we are able to approach administration regarding problems, but only one or two administrators acknowledge that we are trying to fix things. They are more worried about us just failing with the test.” Brunborg, Pallesen, Diseth and Larsen (2010) found in their research that a *preoccupation with failure* may exist as an action control for individuals, but internal factors and stress may influence self-regulation in a negative way rather than push for action. Individuals rather than being stirred into action focus on the worries about performing sub-optimally and accept their fate. Statements from master teachers also contradict survey results as although the organization is focused on outcomes; many recognize the shortfalls related to high-stakes testing.

Table 4.3

*Teacher survey responses regarding teacher perceived confidence regarding the organization’s*  
**Reluctance to Simplify Interpretations n=91**

#	Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Staff believes that simple solutions are good for complex problems.	6	6.593%	8	8.79%	18	19.78%	51	56.04%	8	8.79%

Table 4.3 Continued

2	It is rare at this campus that anyone's view is dismissed.	10 10.98%	24 26.37%	20 21.97%	33 36.26%	4 4.39%
3	Staff is encouraged to question the way things are usually done.	12 13.18%	25 27.47%	24 26.37%	27 29.67%	3 3.296%
4	Staff shows a great deal of mutual respect for each other.	2 2.197%	16 17.58%	15 16.48%	41 45.05%	17 18.68%
5	Staff feels comfortable expressing their own opinions about school operations.	4 4.39%	21 23.07%	12 13.18%	38 41.75%	16 17.58%
6	This school values staff that is able to get along well with different types of people.	1 1.098%	9 9.89%	13 14.28%	40 43.95%	28 30.76%
7	Staff is encouraged to question decisions made by others.	3 3.296%	24 26.37%	20 21.97%	35 38.46%	9 9.89%
8	Staff believes that collaborative planning assists in meeting goals and objectives.	1 1.089%	7 7.69%	10 10.98%	39 42.85%	34 37.36%
9	Staff has established procedures for addressing most situations.	0 0%	14 15.38%	7 7.69%	52 57.14%	18 19.78%
10	Staff meets regularly to insure timely communication.	1 1.089%	15 16.48%	8 8.79%	48 52.74%	19 20.87%

Note. Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. A mean cumulative score was calculated by averaging item responses: M=16.2.

Regarding a *reluctance to simplify interpretations*, teachers showed consistency in some of their responses with agreement on a majority of the items, but for statements

two, three, four, and seven, teachers showed slight variation in responding. Regarding **statement number 1**, “Staff believes that simple solutions are good for complex problems.” Survey results indicate that teacher do believe that simple solutions are valid responses to complexes items with scale item 4(51.56%). For **statement number 2**, “It is rare at this campus that anyone's view is dismissed.” teachers indicated that not all teachers were not easily dismissed for their views. Scale item 2(26.37%) indicated disagreement, scale item 3(21.97%) indicated uncertainty, and item number 4(36.36%) showed confidence in the statement. Regarding **statement number 3**, “Staff is encouraged to question the way things are usually done.” teachers in scale item 2(27.47%) indicated disagreement with the statement, in scale item 3(26.37%) teachers were undecided, and in scale item 4(29.67%) teacher indicated agreement with the statement. Regarding **statement number 4**, “Staff shows a great deal of mutual respect for each other.” teachers indicated in scale item 4(45.05%) that they did get a sense of mutual respect, scale item 3(16.48%) indicated indecision, and scale item 2(17.58%) indicated teachers did not believe there was mutual respect. For scale **statement number 5**, “Staff feels comfortable expressing their own opinions about school operations.” although some teacher indicated disagreement in scale item 2(23.07%), overall scale item 4(41.75%) indicated confidence in the statement. Regarding **statement number 6**, “This school values staff that is able to get along well with different types of people.” teachers overwhelmingly indicated strong confidence in the statement with scale item 4(43.95%) and scale item 5(30.76%). For **statement number 7**, “Staff is encouraged to question decisions made by others.” teachers indicated some lack of confidence in the statement

with scale item 2 (26.37%) showing disagreement, scale item 3(21.97%) showing indecision, and item 4(38.46%) indicating agreement with the statement. Regarding **statement number 8**, “Staff believes that collaborative planning assists in meeting goals and objectives.” teachers indicated overwhelmingly strong confidence in the statement with scale item 4(42.85%) and scale item 5(37.36%) indicating agreement with the statement. **Statement number 9**, “Staff has established procedures for addressing most situations.” teachers via scale item 4(57.14%) and scale item 5(19.78%) indicated confidence in the statement. Regarding **statement number 10**, “Staff meets regularly to insure timely communication.” Teachers showed confidence in the statement with scale item 4(52.74%) and scale item 5(20.87%) indicating agreement with the statement.

### **Master Teacher Interview Responses**

Regarding a *reluctance to simplify interpretations*, as noted regarding the mindfulness survey, most teachers concurred with the majority of the statements, but for statements two, three, four, and seven, teachers showed slight variation in responding. **Statement 2** dealt with teacher’s views and whether they were taken into account or easily dismissed. **Esmeralda Solis** a twenty-seven year veteran educator pointed out in the sense-making tenet about *sensible environments* that, “administration and leadership listen when it’s about testing, but when it’s about scheduling, teacher assignment, resources, etcetera, that they don’t care.” Second year master teacher **Juana Lorca** said, “When we have our weekly planning sessions and it gets close to testing time...that’s all we focus on.” **Cesar Villa** commenting about his department said, “We only worry about our subject area. The other subjects aren’t really monitored.”

Regarding **statement number 3**, regarding teachers questioning how things are done, **Vanessa Nordin** a strong advocate for her students said, “Many decisions are made by administration and through the leadership team, but when we question or ask as to why something was decided, we don’t always get a clear answer. This is especially true regarding teacher assignments. It doesn’t seem like it makes sense.” This response can be tied to the sense-making tenet of *extracted cues* where elements limit best practices within the organization.

**Statement 4** queries staff regarding the existence of mutual respect, **Juana Inés de la Cruz** a veteran teacher pointed out, “we are a department that works like a well-oiled machine and we respect each other’s position, but I know that’s not true of every department.” **Juana Lorca** on her second year as master teacher pointed out that they are acknowledged as teachers, but that because of testing they lose some respect; “other departments think that we hold the school back from doing more, but our content area demands more. We have more challenges because our kids don’t have the foundation.”

Regarding **statement 7** where teachers were queried about questioning decision-making, teachers showed mixed results in the survey. Under the sense-making tenet of **plausibility rather than accuracy**, **Ms. Vanessa Nordin** said, “we are able to approach administrators...well not all administrators. The thing is not all listen to you and only one or two actually appreciate constructive criticism.” **Esmeralda Solis** said, “Sometimes we don’t have a choice, especially if it’s coming from downtown. Decisions are made, but some administrators don’t see the whole picture. They only see what’s on their agenda or what they want to see.” Blatt, Christianson, Sutcliffe, and Rosenthal (2006) found that

leadership and how organizations achieve reliable outcomes repeatedly is by how they avoid unwanted and unanticipated variance in performance. It is by some organizations being able to be open to plausible outcomes and not just focus on fixed practices. That is to say attaining reliability requires organizations to anticipate, identify events, and be flexible to possible solutions.

Table 4.4

*Teacher survey responses regarding teacher perceived confidence regarding the organization's*  
**Sensitivity to Operations** n=91

#	Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Staff is encouraged to share general information with each other.	0	0%	11	12.08%	8	8.79%	41	45.05%	31	34.06%
2	Staff listens carefully to one another when talking about school operations.	0	0%	20	21.97%	6	6.59%	46	50.54%	19	20.87%
3	Staff concentrates on what is happening "moment to moment".	8	8.79%	8	8.79%	8	8.79%	50	54.94%	17	18.68%
4	Staff is concerned with their own tasks, not with the school as a whole.	19	20.87%	41	45.05%	2	2.197%	21	23.07%	8	8.79%
5	Staff recognizes the challenges of having many people making school related decisions at any one moment.	5	5.49%	9	9.89%	21	23.07%	39	42.85%	17	18.68%
6	Staff is familiar with tasks beyond their immediate jobs.	3	3.296%	13	14.28%	13	14.28%	50	54.94%	12	13.18%
7	Staff frequently talks with one another about what is going on at the school/campus.	5	5.49%	9	9.89%	11	12.08%	48	52.74%	19	20.87%

Table 4.4 Continued

8	When there are many tasks going on at school, staff tries to help each other out.	3	3.29%	11	12.08%	13	14.28%	43	47.25%	21	23.07%
9	When one department is challenged, other departments try to help.	1	1.09%	17	18.68%	9	9.89%	39	42.85%	25	27.47%
10	Staff keeps current with all school events.	2	2.197%	19	20.87%	10	10.98%	39	42.85%	21	23.07%

Note. Scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. A mean cumulative score was calculated by averaging item responses: M=16.2.

Regarding a *Sensitivity to Operations*, table 4.4 above indicates that teachers showed consistency in the majority of the statement responses with the exception being statement 6, where teachers showed slight variation in responding. Regarding **statement number 1**, “Staff is encouraged to share general information with each other.” survey results indicate that teachers do believe that staff is encouraged to share general information with scale items 4(45.05%) and scale item 5(34.06%) indicating agreement. For **statement number 2**, “Staff listens carefully to one another when talking about school operations.” teachers in scale item 2(21.97%) indicated disagreement with the statement, however teachers indicated that staff did listen to others regarding operations with scale item 4(50.54%) and scale item 5(34.06%) indicating agreement with the statement. Regarding **statement number 3**, “Staff concentrates on what is happening "moment to moment".” scale items 4(54.94%) and scale item 5(18.68%) indicated teachers were in agreement with the statement. Regarding **statement number 4**, “Staff is concerned with their own tasks, not with the school as a whole.” teachers indicated in scale item 4(23.07%) that there was some agreement with the statement, however scale item 1(20.87%) and

scale item 2(45.05%) showed disagreement. For scale **statement number 5**, “Staff recognizes the challenges of having many people making school related decisions at any one moment.” although some teacher indicated uncertainty in scale item 3(23.07%), overall scale item 4(42.85%) indicated confidence in the statement. Regarding **statement number 6**, “Staff is familiar with tasks beyond their immediate jobs.” teachers did show some disagreement regarding the statement via scale item 2(14.28%) and uncertainty in scale item 3(14.28%), but indicated strong confidence in the statement with scale item 4(54.94%). For **statement number 7**, “Staff frequently talks with one another about what is going on at the school/campus.” teachers indicated strong confidence in the statement with scale item 4(52.74%) and scale item 5(20.87%). Regarding **statement number 8**, “When there are many tasks going on at school, staff tries to help each other out..” teachers indicated overwhelmingly strong confidence in the statement with scale item 4(47.25%) and scale item 5(23.07%) indicating agreement with the statement. **Statement number 9**, “When one department is challenged, other departments try to help.” teachers via scale item 4(42.85%) and scale item 5(27.47.78%) indicated confidence in the statement. Regarding **statement number 10**, “Staff keeps current with all school events.” Teachers showed confidence in the statement with scale item 4(42.85%) and scale item 5(23.07%) indicating agreement with the statement.

### **Master Teacher Interview Responses**

Regarding a *Sensitivity to Operations*, as noted regarding the mindfulness survey, most teachers concurred with the majority of the statements, but for statement six, teachers showed slight variation in responding. A *Sensitivity to Operations* in mindfulness focuses



on an organizations ability to work with all stakeholders. Regarding sense-making the tenet of *social elements* can also refer to communication and communal aspect of an organization. **Juana Lorca** as a fairly, new master teacher, in providing insight to administration and colleagues said, “Everyone is approachable and we do function almost like a family. Sure there are often misunderstandings and even fights within a family, but in the end we come together.” Seasoned veteran teacher **Benito “Tigre” Juarez** said, “In addressing the challenges of accountability, we have had many battles and it can be very hard to deal with, but we always manage to come together.” Fellow veteran teacher **Esmeralda Solis** said, “We are all in the same boat and we all know that a large ship is hard to turn quickly or alone. It has to be a group effort. Administrators just have to work with us to keep us together.” **Statement 6** dealt with whether teachers were cognizant of each other’s tasks. According to **Vanessa Nordin**, “that’s the problem; many departments often focus on just their part of the job. A lot of teachers and departments have their own agendas. A dedicated master teacher, Samuel Twain pointed out, “the problem is often the cliques. Many departments are divided by cliques and a lot of times that brings drama rather than solutions.”

Table 4.5

*Teacher survey responses regarding teacher perceived confidence regarding the organization’s*  
**Commitment to Resilience** n=91

#	Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Staff is committed to solving any problem that arises.	5	5.49%	19	20.87%	7	7.692%	39	42.85%	21	23.07%

Table 4.5 Continued

2	When a mistake is made, staff is encouraged to limit any negative consequences.	1 1.098%	9 9.890%	23 25.27%	41 45.05%	17 18.68%
3	Staff is encouraged to solve problems in new ways.	0 0%	13 14.28%	18 19.78%	41 45.05%	19 20.87%
4	Staff is occasionally retrained.	3 3.296%	23 25.27%	11 12.08%	47 51.64%	7 7.692%
5	Staff is given tasks from which they can learn more about school operations.	3 3.296%	15 16.48%	15 16.48%	46 50.54%	12 13.18%
6	Staff is well-trained for the kind of work they do.	3 3.296%	13 14.28%	9 9.890%	43 47.25%	23 25.27%
7	When a mistake is made on campus, staff can "bounce back" from it.	2 2.197%	10 10.98%	15 16.48%	39 42.85%	25 27.47%
8	Staff does not give up on solving a problem.	0 0%	11 12.08%	16 17.58%	44 48.35%	20 21.97%
9	Staff uses their abilities and knowledge in new ways to improve how the school runs.	0 0%	12 13.18%	7 7.692%	51 56.04%	21 23.07%
10	Staff is willing to change in order to solve problems.	1 1.098%	13 14.28%	8 8.79%	48 52.74%	21 23.07%

Note. Scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. A mean cumulative score was calculated by averaging item responses: M=16.2.

Regarding a *Commitment to Resilience*, table 4.5 above indicates that teachers showed consistency in the majority of the statement responses with the exception being statements 2 and 4, where teachers showed slight variation in responding. Regarding **statement number 1**, “Staff is committed to solving any problem that arises.” survey results indicate that teachers believe staff is committed to problem solving when needed

with scale items 4(42.85%) and scale item 5(23.07%) indicating agreement. For **statement number 2**, “When a mistake is made, staff is encouraged to limit any negative consequences.” teachers in scale item 3(25.27%) indicated uncertainty with the statement, however teachers indicated that staff did support the statement with scale item 4(45.05%) and scale item 5(17.18%) indicating agreement with the statement. Regarding **statement number 3**, “Staff is encouraged to solve problems in new ways.” scale items 4(45.05%) and scale item 5(20.87%) indicated teachers were in agreement with the statement. Regarding **statement number 4**, “Staff is occasionally retrained.” teachers indicated in scale item 2(25.27%) disagreement with the statement, but scale item 4(51.64%) indicated confidence in the statement. For scale **statement number 5**, “Staff is given tasks from which they can learn more about school operations.” although some teacher indicated some disagreement in scale item 2(16.48%) and uncertainty in scale item 3(16.48%), overall scale item 4(50.54%) indicated confidence in the statement. Regarding **statement number 6**, “Staff is well-trained for the kind of work they do.” teachers indicated strong confidence in the statement with scale item 4(47.25%) and scale item 5(25.27%). For **statement number 7**, “When a mistake is made on campus, staff can "bounce back" from it.” teachers indicated strong confidence in the statement with scale item 4(42.85%) and scale item 5(27.47%). Regarding **statement number 8**, “Staff does not give up on solving a problem.” teachers indicated overwhelmingly strong confidence in the statement with scale item 4(48.35%) and scale item 5(21.97%) indicating agreement with the statement. **Statement number 9**, “Staff uses their abilities and knowledge in new ways to improve how the school runs.” teachers via scale item 4(56.04%) and scale item 5(23.07%)

indicated strong confidence in the statement. Regarding **statement number 10**, “Staff is willing to change in order to solve problems.” Teachers again showed strong confidence in the statement with scale item 4(52.74%) and scale item 5(23.07%) indicating agreement with the statement.

### **Master Teacher Interview Responses**

Regarding a *Commitment to Resilience*, teachers showed consistency in the majority of the statement responses with the exception being statements 2 and 4. **Commitment to resilience** for Weick was one of the tenants that focused on the assertions that disruptions in routine processes require individuals to make sense of what is occurring now and to consider what should be done next (2005). Individuals need to be able to make sense of their environment and have processes to cope and prevent events not prepared for. In the majority of the statements, teachers believed that a commitment to resiliency existed. **Juana Inés de la Cruz** a veteran educator said, “Whether planning, training, or just taking care of daily items, we feel that administration has prepared us.” Fellow veteran teacher **Cesar Villa** offered, “We know that because of accountability, we need to be able to change and to learn from any mistakes or situations.”

Statement 2 refers to limiting negative consequences when mistakes are made; regarding this statement a very vocal **Vanessa Nordin** said, “The problem is some people make mistakes and they are rewarded or get no consequences”. Statement 4, which refers to the retention of staff in relation to resiliency, had some teacher disagreeing with teachers occasionally being retained. A frustrated Samuel Twain said, “Sometimes things don’t change or get better because not only do we retain good teachers, but we keep the bad.

That doesn't help us especially with accountability." A resilient organization must have a procedure or process to better measure staffing and turnover. An organization that allows other stakeholders to provide input regarding this process are more likely to be more transparent and effective.

Table 4.6

*Teacher survey responses regarding teacher perceived confidence regarding the organization's Deference to Expertise n=91*

#	Statement	1		2		3		4		5	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Staff is comfortable asking others with more experience for help.	4	4.39%	4	4.39%	10	10.98%	48	52.74%	25	27.47%
2	Those with the most experience make important decisions at this campus.	7	7.69%	21	23.07%	15	16.48%	31	34.06%	17	18.68%
3	When staff here cannot solve a problem, they seek someone with more experience to solve it.	3	3.296%	10	10.98%	19	20.87%	46	50.54%	13	14.28%
4	Whoever discovers a mistake/issue on campus is initially responsible for correcting it.	2	2.197%	39	42.85%	26	28.57%	18	19.78%	6	6.593%
5	At this campus, it is generally easy to obtain expert help when something comes up that staff does not know how to handle.	1	1.098%	17	18.68%	21	23.07%	46	50.54%	6	6.593%
6	At this campus, experience is more important than hierarchical position.	17	18.68%	33	36.26%	19	20.87%	15	16.48%	7	7.69%

Table 4.6 Continued

7	Staff is well aware of everyone's roles and responsibilities.	0 0%	17 18.68%	11 12.08%	44 48.35%	19 20.87%
8	Staff is aware of procedures to address situations with their supervisors.	2 2.197%	15 16.48%	6 6.593%	49 53.84%	19 20.87%
9	Staff is generally accepting of decisions made by leadership.	1 1.098%	12 13.18%	11 12.08%	48 52.74%	19 20.87%
10	Staff has no reluctance in turning to leadership for support.	6 6.593%	11 12.08%	12 13.18%	41 45.05%	21 23.07%

---

Note. Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. A mean cumulative score was calculated by averaging item responses: M=16.2.

With a *Deference to Expertise*, table 4.6 above indicates that teachers showed consistency in the majority of the statement responses with the exception being statements 2, 4, 5, and 6 where teachers showed slight variation in responding. Regarding **statement number 1**, “Staff is comfortable asking others with more experience for help.” survey results indicate that teacher do believe that staff turn to others for help with scale items 4(52.74%) and scale item 5(27.47%) indicating agreement. For **statement number 2**, “Those with the most experience make important decisions at this campus.” teachers in scale item 2(23.07%) indicated disagreement with the statement, however teachers indicated that staff did believe experience did merit decision-making with scale item 4(34.06%) and scale item 5(18.68%) indicating agreement with the statement. Regarding **statement number 3**, “When staff here cannot solve a problem, they seek someone with

more experience to solve it.” in scale item 3(20.87%) teachers showed some indecision, but scale items 4(50.54%) and scale item 5(14.28%) indicated teachers were in agreement with the statement. Regarding **statement number 4**, “Whoever discovers a mistake/issue on campus is initially responsible for correcting it.” teachers indicated in scale item 2(42.85%) solid disagreement with the state, showed uncertainty with scale item 3(28.57%), and only some agreement with the statement with scale item 4(19.78%). For scale **statement number 5**, “At this campus, it is generally easy to obtain expert help when something comes up that staff does not know how to handle.” although some teacher indicated uncertainty in scale item 3(23.07%), overall scale item 4(50.54%) indicated confidence in the statement. Regarding **statement number 6**, “At this campus, experience is more important than hierarchical position.” teachers did show some disagreement regarding the statement via scale item 1(18.68%), scale item 2(36.26%) and uncertainty in scale item 3(20.87%). For **statement number 7**, “Staff is well aware of everyone’s roles and responsibilities.” teachers indicated strong confidence in the statement with scale item 4(49.35%) and scale item 5(20.87%). Regarding **statement number 8**, “Staff is aware of procedures to address situations with their supervisors.” teachers indicated overwhelmingly strong confidence in the statement with scale item 4(53.84%) and scale item 5(20.87%) indicating agreement with the statement. **Statement number 9**, “Staff is generally accepting of decisions made by leadership.” teachers via scale item 4(52.74%) and scale item 5(20.87%) indicated confidence in the statement. Regarding **statement number 10**, “Staff has no reluctance in turning to leadership for

support.” Teachers showed confidence in the statement with scale item 4(45.05%) and scale item 5(23.07%) indicating agreement with the statement.

### **Master Teacher Interview Responses**

With a *Deference to Expertise*, where teachers were asked about turning to administration or leadership for direction, teachers indicated consistency in the majority of the statement responses with the exception being statements 2, 4, 5, and 6 where teachers showed slight variation in responding. **Statement 2** regarding seeking assistance from the more experienced, some teachers where not too sure about agreeing with the statement. **Ronaldo Blanco** commenting on the sense-making social element said, “Administrators are available and we can turn to them for help, but not all are as well informed or have a reasonable answer.” Regarding **Statement 4**, which refers to individuals handling issues they come across. Teachers showed some disagreement as to who responded. **Carol Perkins** said under the sense-making tenet of **Ongoing Elements**, “We come a across problems or mistake, but some teacher are hesitant to point them out to certain administrators or supervisor for fear of drawing negative attention.” As a teacher new to the leadership role, **Ms. Juana Lorca** under the same tenet said, “Some of us do try to fix problems or mistakes, but we don’t always tell others. While that might solve the problem for that teacher, what if others have the same issue?”

**Statement 5** deals with getting expert help for issues. Teachers, regarding this statement, showed some uncertainty as noted above. In the sense-making tenet of *elements focused on extracted cures*, **Carol Perkins** said, “Not everyone sees the big picture and when we need help from administration or other staff, we don’t always get a quick or



appropriate response.” **Ronaldo Blanco** said, “When we don’t get help or direction from supervisors or administration, we often have to “wing it” or make do until we get an answer.” **Statement 6**, like the previous statement deals with expert help, but in this case, teachers were asked to consider experience versus hierarchical status. **Samuel Twain** a master teacher always offering possible solutions, said under the sense-making tenet of *identity construction*, “What gets in our way is that sometimes administration doesn’t value experience and they go with who is making the most noise”

### **Chapter Summary: Survey and Interview Questions**

Regarding this study, a sequential explanatory design was used to collect data and interpret results for this mixed-methods approach in examining the impact of mindfulness and sense-making on administrative decision-making (Creswell et al., 2003). Participants were asked to complete a fifty-item Likert scale survey instrument regarding the identified five processes promoted by mindful organizations, which include preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2015). Along with the survey data collected, some participants (master teachers) were interviewed through the lens of sense-making to garner additional insight regarding administrative decision-making. Weick (1995) defined sense-making “as a process that is: 1. grounded in identity construction, 2. retrospective, 3. enactive of sensible environments, 4. social, 5. ongoing, 6. focused on and by extracted cues, and 7. driven by plausibility rather than accuracy.” Data collection and analysis provided teacher

perceptions regarding mindfulness and sense-making as variables that may influence decision-making for the organization.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the study, including a review of the problem, purpose and objectives, methodology, and findings. Conclusions and implications produced from the findings and recommendations for future practice and research are presented. In examining administrative decision-making at a secondary school in academic jeopardy through the lenses of mindfulness and sense-making, this researcher concluded that data revealed a lapse in administration staying true to the mission of the school. Wong, Wing, and Martin (2011) found that regarding mandated testing and accountability, that compliance is hard to achieve when dealing with too many variables including changes in policy. Administrators have to juggle and balance genuine campus goals with dynamic accountability mandates in the face of day-to-day organizational events. For a secondary high school that usually operates as a High Reliability Organization, contending with accountability factors, staying true to the mission is a challenge.

Hollingsworth (2008) in her research on accountability and mandated testing found that many teachers felt the loss of academic freedom as they are forced to abandon genuine instructional practices in exchange for a test-preparation curriculum designed to raise test scores limits teacher best practices. School administrators taxed with accountability compliance items often find that giving in to test preparation scenarios lessen the burden of leadership even when it is not in the best interests of the child.

Perhaps the whole macrocosm of mandated testing and accountability has made administrators and educators as a whole more prone to mediocrity in accepting success in minimal skills tests sufficient. Schroth (2016) found that perhaps the real crisis in education centers on a decline of teaching as a profession and once again, that might be traced to the mandated testing and accountability reality. One should also consider the fact that many of today's administrators and teachers have only known an environment where this type of testing is in place. Larke, Webb-Hasan, Jimarez, and Li (2014) noted that practices that limit and marginalize students, even if intended to support, facilitate a "permanence of racism". For a campus that is comprised of fifty-two percent English Language Learners (ELLs) a lack of genuine curriculum and instruction compounds the challenges. Leahey (2012) identified today's educational challenges as a "Catch 22", where an irrational nature of bureaucratic policies is put in place taking away from genuine instructional practices. Leahey actually connects his discourse with the actual text of Joseph Heller's novel and connects current accountability practices as a "business of illusion". In a sense, educators and school administrators specifically, abandon their principles and uncritically accept irrational orders in order to meet the burden of the current bureaucracy. Many educational scholars who point out that high stakes testing produces collateral effects continue to cite that these elements include the marginalizing of curriculum, children, or both (Valenzuela, 2002; Maxcy, 2006).

For school administrators, in leading the fight to be true to the genuine mission of education, managing effective organizational practices while closing gaps for always changing demographics is hard. Levine and Levine (2013) point out that state

assessment are not a means for gauging instruction since most tests are administered at the end of the year and that is too late for corrective action. Here is where the dilemma exists for administrators as they usually put into practice, test preparation strategies and move away from classroom instruction that can monitor students as they learn.

Teaching students testing strategies and keeping fingers crossed hoping that students will pass end of year exams is not smart. Eurich (2017) in her examination of self-awareness regarding organizations, points out that oftentimes we do not acknowledge the reality of our environment or existence and easily give in to taking the easiest way out. Eurich actuates some leaders as being delusional in that they lose sight of their true mission because tunnel vision has them only focused on one thing. In education and for school administrators that would not be the moral or ethical thing to do. School administrators must exam all issues, along with the numerous educational accountability mandates, political initiatives, and misguided theoretical beliefs in doing what is right for all students. Standardized tests and mandated accountability policies have not shown genuine results regarding the improvement of student academic success. (Levine and Levine, 2013).

## **Summary of the Study**

### **Statement of the Problem**

At a South Texas secondary school where fifty-two percent of the population is identified as English Language Learners (ELLs), campus administration is tasked with maintaining its primary purpose of educating all students, while staying true to the campus mission and addressing accountability factors. By examining administrative

practices as viewed by teachers, one might determine if they are genuine to school outcomes. The campus has defined those outcomes via its mission statement, which states, “The mission of this South Texas High School is to produce students that can compete at the global level in the college classroom, the workforce, or the military”. For a campus, that under Texas Education Agency standards, has been identified as being in *required improvement* due to the fact it has not met state assessment measures and is at a point where sanctions may be implemented, administration is under more duress. Can school administration that is tasked into providing corrective action, be true to the school’s primary mission? If administration is focused on meeting state assessment accountability measures, are they truly preparing students who will compete at the global level as the mission statement infers? Bunch (2013) in his examination of English Language Learners noted that schools must account for changes in demographics as well as academic standards.

Aside from contending with demographic challenges at the campus, administration must also address the voluminous daily problems and situations that occur at a large and dynamic organization. In a sense, schools, aside from addressing the primary mission of educating children, are operating as a High Reliability Organization (HRO). Dwyer, Osher, and Hoffman (2000) in examining schools and the dynamics of responding to issues in a proactive and timely manner found that administration must have effective systems in place to manage effectively. The fact that mandated testing and accountability affect educational practices in the school setting, for campus administrators, this adds additional responsibilities to the job. Booher-Jennings

(2005) in her examination of the “triage” that administrators must undertake when testing and accountability systems have altered day-to-day life in school districts and classrooms asks, “How has this happened, when so many interventions predating these policies have not?” Wong, Wing, and Martin (2016) found that a key challenge has been the lack of data regarding the multiple policy devices that states had under No Child Left behind (NCLB) in establishing proficiency cutoffs, to providing exemption rules that effectively lowered standards for most schools in various states. For a school with the unique challenge in addressing a unique demographic, administration was more apt to meet compliance rather than best practices.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to examine teacher beliefs and perceptions regarding administrative practices at a High School campus in academic jeopardy. The perceptions by teachers after successive years of failing to meet high-stakes testing and accountability mandates required by No Child Left Behind (USDOE, 2002), may have affected how the organization functions in relation to the true mission of the school. This study aimed to contribute to the limited body of data on the perceptions of administrative mindfulness and sense-making regarding decision making for schools in academic jeopardy.

Research provided may also contribute data regarding best practices for a secondary school campus functioning as a High Reliability Organization (HRO). A high reliability organization as defined by Weick and Sutcliffe is one in which a mindful

infrastructure has been developed that allows for timely corrective action and resiliency in the face of critical situations (2015).

Five research questions guided this study:

**Question 1:** What are teachers' perceptions regarding administrative decision-making in connection with the achievement of the schools primary mission?

**Question 2:** What are the perceptions of teachers on school administrators regarding the impact of a high-stakes accountability system on administrative decision-making?

**Question 3:** What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of administrators' decision-making based on the administrators' experience?

**Question 4:** What dimensions of school mindfulness (teacher mindfulness and principal mindfulness) are the best predictors of the collective efficacy of administrators?

**Question 5:** What dimensions of sense-making are the best predictors of the administrative efficacy of school outcomes and best practices?

## **Methodology**

Regarding this study, a sequential explanatory design was used to collect data and interpret results for this mixed-methods approach in examining the impact of mindfulness and sense-making on administrative decision-making (Creswell et al., 2003). The researcher in consideration of the variables and the environment found that neither a quantitative nor a qualitative study would be sufficient to capture the perceptions and details of a campus in academic jeopardy. When used in combination,



quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and provide a more complete picture of the problem (Creswell, 2013). Data collection (including qualitative and quantitative sources) from active stakeholders at the school in question were utilized.

## **Findings**

The findings are discussed in connection with each of the research questions. After teachers were surveyed regarding administrative decision-making through the lens of mindfulness, master teachers were interviewed to expand on the mindfulness data through the construct of sense-making. Both of these variables were examined to determine whether administrative decision-making supported the true mission of the school.

Regarding **Question 1: What are teachers' perceptions regarding administrative decision-making in connection with the achievement of the schools primary mission?** Both mindfulness survey data and sense-making interview data did indicate that administration through their stewardship of the organization sought to meet the goal of the mission statement, but acknowledged that mandated testing and accountability got in the way. Veteran teacher **Benito "Tigre" Juarez** said, "We know that some administrators push to make sure our students are successful, but not all of them do. Some are too caught up in the testing thing and don't get to know our kids." Showing frustration **Ms. Vanessa Nordin** said, "It's all about testing, even when we sit in ARDs, some administrators are more about what makes the school look good, rather than what is best for the student. That's not right."

Regarding **Question 2: What are the perceptions of teachers on school administrators regarding the impact of a high-stakes accountability system on administrative decision-making?** Regarding this question mindfulness survey data indicated that overall administration and the organization worked collectively to comply with testing and accountability. Sense-making interview data also supported this perception. A slightly exasperated **Juana Lorca** said, “Administration makes it clear that STAAR/EOC (end of course) exams are the priority. From the beginning of the year until testing time, we are all about reviewing the data and getting students ready.” Also a slightly frustrated teacher, **Ms. Esmeralda Solis** said “That’s all we know, is the test. Which is unfair, because those of us who teach a tested course are held more accountable than others.” Just as irritated, **Ms. Juana Inés de la Cruz** said, “Whenever we meet or have our collaborative professional learning community sessions, the focus is testing. How many instructional days do we have left? How many students are attending tutorials? Have you called home to recruit kids for Super Saturday tutorials? That’s all we hear.”

For **Question 3: What are the teachers’ perceptions regarding the effectiveness of administrators’ decision-making based on the administrators’ experience?** Regarding this question, data did indicate that administrative experience offered better outcomes. **Vanessa Nordin** enthusiastically said, “We have a strong team of administrators who always work with us. All we have to do is ask and we get a quick response.” Veteran master teacher **Esmeralda Solis** said, “Some administrators have been here a lot of years, but that doesn’t mean they know how to do things. Some

have never handled or worked with certain programs. Usually we all end up turning to just one or two administrators.” **Carol Perkins** agreed with her colleagues and said, “We know which administrators know what they are doing. We know which ones we can count on and which get away with doing less.”

Regarding **Question 4: What dimensions of school mindfulness (teacher mindfulness and principal mindfulness) are the best predictors of the collective efficacy of administrators?** Study data indicated that all mindfulness tenets were important to teachers in administration bringing the organization together. **Benito “Tigre” Juarez** a teacher with strong ties to the campus said, “Administrators, not just the current ones, but those that have been here before, have always worked with all of us to get us headed in the right direction. That’s why the campus feels like family.” **Samuel Twain** although often frustrated with some practices said, “I know that sometimes we focus too much on testing, but all of us are mostly together on getting things done.” **Esmeralda Solis** reflecting on the various campuses she has served said, “I think that the school is special because administration does manage to bring everyone together. The problem is that sometimes we come together and we stray from the mission of the campus and are focused on STAAR.” **Vanessa Nordin** always vocal in advocating for her students said, “Administrators at this campus are held accountable for test results. Some are all about that, but there are one or two that actually see through the BS and actually care about student success.”

Regarding **Question 5: What dimensions of sense-making are the best predictors of the administrative efficacy of school outcomes and best practices?**

Weick (1995) outlined seven dimensions or areas of sense-making consisting of: 1) elements grounded in identity construction; 2) retrospective elements; 3) elements enactive of sensible environments; 4) social elements; 5) ongoing elements; 6) elements focused on and by extracted cues; and 7) elements driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. For this question, again teachers came together in awareness and consensus regarding their perceptions of administration. **Ronaldo Blanco** who always looks to expand his role said, “Our school is very aware of what and who we are. We know our students, our community, and the challenges we face. The thing is that our administrators have allowed us to be part of the solution.” **Samuel Twain** adamantly said, “Hey, we are very lucky to have people that believe in us and have given us an opportunity to grow. The fact that we have a leadership committee where administrators and teachers come together is great!” **Juana Inés de la Cruz** who has been through these struggles before agreed, “We have been through this struggle before. In 2005, we were also at the point of maybe being taken over by the state, but it didn’t happen. Administration guided us and we came together to do what had to be done. That is always our challenge; Because of who we are, where our school is, and the students we teach.”

### **Conclusions**

Linn (2010) in his examination of test-based educational accountability found that if stakeholders want true results, then it is important to measure the truth of the situation. In looking at administrative decision-making through the lenses of mindfulness and sense-making requires more than this study ascertained. It is important

to take whatever findings resulted and to be able to apply them elsewhere. In this examination, descriptions and interpretations of participants from a school in state and federal accountability jeopardy were studied in relation to mindfulness, sense-making, and administrative decision-making. This study focused on one school which has a unique demographic and thus generalizing the conclusions to other populations is not recommended without further provisions. Based on the findings, the following conclusions are considered:

1. Reflection by administration and other stakeholders regarding genuine practices that support the mission of the school should be examined.
2. Mission statement should be reviewed and perhaps revised to reflect the accountability and mandated testing that is part of the organization's practiced goals.
3. Confidence was gained in administrative decision-making as a result of engagement in mindful and sense-making practices.
4. Study participants demonstrated heightened levels of self-awareness regarding the school's mission and actual practices.
5. Practices that place compliance over genuine student goals should be re-examined in relation to student demographics and students that might be marginalized.

Based on this mixed methods study regarding teachers' perceptions of administrative decision-making, data showed that collectively the organization is working together towards agreed upon goals, however those goals do not support the

true mission of the school. Teachers recognized that the true mission of the school was the production of students who would be successful in regarding college and career readiness, but also recognized that current practices were more about compliance goals. Leahey (2012) regarding mandated testing and accountability put forth that educators would have to find alternative ways of coming together with administration that not only exposes the failings of standards-based reform but also offers meaningful alternatives.

The fact that administrators at a school in academic jeopardy have to not only overcome the accountability challenges, but also meet the goals outlined in the mission of the school is a daunting task. Added to that challenge, is the fact that administration must also overcome that massive task with an at-risk, language challenged, often-marginalized population, and the task becomes impossible. Cusick (2014) in his examination regarding the logic of United States educational system found that federally mandated mechanisms are bureaucratically inconvenient. For school administrators, compliance allows some priorities to be unattended.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Upon review of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations for practice are presented.

1. School administration in developing a mission statement with stakeholders, must acknowledge that mandated testing and accountability exist. The organization would benefit not only from a mindful awareness of all the dynamics associated with mandated testing and accountability compliance, but would make greater sense and be more focused in keeping true to that

statement. Ravitch (2014) points out that there exists no evidence based research that supports the success of state mandated testing and accountability policies. School administrators must acknowledge the fact that gaps still exist, especially for many children of color and socio-economically disadvantaged students.

2. School administrators should put into practice mindful and sense-making practices that are pro-active and address planned and unplanned events. The organization's health benefits and is more resilient in having these procedures in place. Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2009) in examining school administrators found that practices vary too much from school to school in the way each administrator leads the organization. Just like many High Reliability Organizations, school administrators and schools must constantly and consistently review practices. A recommendation for administrators to keep end of the day logs to review during administrative meetings may promote best practices.
3. In keeping with the development of mindful and sense-making practices, school administrators must come to a consensus in that best practices must be shared with other administrators and other organizations. Administrators and schools need to set aside the competitive nature often associated between secondary schools due to extra-curricular activities and work collaboratively to better schools. This should also be true of other organizational stakeholders. Schools should not replace traditional collaboration and

collegiality with market-style competition, incentives and punishments based on both data-driven quantitative results and qualitative assessment within the organization (Behrent, 2016).

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Upon review of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations for future research are presented.

1. As this study was specific to a school with a homogeneous demographic being led by individuals that are almost true to that demographic a study where other organizations sharing a similar existence with similar challenges should provide greater insight. Eck (2011) in scrutinizing High Reliability Organization in education posed the possibility of studies that compared organizations not only in different regions of the country, but comparisons with other countries with similar plights. For example, perhaps examining a school in Asia that has a homogeneous population, with sub-groups that have not achieved academic success can be studied.
2. Regarding mindfulness and sense-making in relation to administrative decision-making, an examination of individual subject areas might provide different results. Would a teacher who is teaching a subject area with various standards or different success rates hold the same beliefs as one with solid standards and success rates? For example, would an algebra teacher who has been successful despite testing students with language challenges hold the



same beliefs as an English Language Arts teacher whose subject matter is more reliant on language?

Tucker (2014) in his examination of the country's accountability system found that "Reducing everything they (educators) have tried to do for their students to scores on low-level tests of two subjects makes a mockery of their work." In a sense, lumping the scores from this very narrow slice of student accomplishment, to define a school's overall accomplishments or failures is lacking. Accountability mandates and state assigned assessments do not provide an accurate picture of administration, because too many variables may influence outcomes.

Regarding items for further research, it would be beneficial to exam how school administrators have been changed by the accountability and mandated testing reality. Today's school administrators are not being groomed to be instructional leaders; they are being directed to just get good test results. Where in the past administrator competencies and school improvement edicts were directed at ethical instructional outcomes, now it is often results at whatever costs. That has bred some school administrators who do not genuinely care about how students are doing academically, it is just about getting them to pass the test. The current educational paradigm is one which is directed at still emulating business models where organizations seek to accomplish more by expending less. Harris, Jones, and Adams (2016) found that although some of these practices have some merit, that it is important to consider context and cultural factors. For a school that has a population identified as being at risk for certain elements, administration needs to be very self-aware. Fisch (2014) in his examination of leadership in quality

organizations found that meaning-making or sense-making is critical in contemporary organizations because of the dynamics. The development of meaningful alternatives to management by measurement offers for stakeholders' genuine practices and not ones that result from misunderstandings generated by static measurements. School administrators who only focus on the numbers without evaluating context and cultural challenges may never hit the mark. These school administrators in a sense operate with blinders on and never see the full picture. Practices driven solely because of these misguided understandings deviate from true progress.

As proof of some of these practices, one can compare past administrative practices regarding scheduling, intervention, and summer school. Some schools have even abandoned traditional instructional programs for ones directed at test preparation. Many schools now tailor their master schedule to provide students access to test preparation course and to delay testing. Students who have not passed a state exam are given an intervention course rather than an elective or vocational course. Little or no data exists on whether intervention classes provide genuine instruction rather than the classes that are taken away. Staff is assigned based on their success with student testing results and not authentic instruction. Intervention programs, as some are defined today are not geared to help students recover credits and advance in their studies, but rather to prepare for the next testing round. Regarding summer school, some administrators have abandoned traditional credit recovery programs for their campus and now schedule test prep academies. While it is true that state mandated assessments are a means of measuring student ability, regarding basic education, it may not be a genuine measure

and reflect equity for all students. DeMoss (2002) found that regarding school administrators, leadership styles vary greatly depending on the vision for the school, stakeholders, and the way administration viewed high-stakes testing. School administrators must not only address testing compliance, but the overall instructional program. Singh and Al-Fadhi (2011) defined a school administrator's role as one of increased responsibility in this era of accountability and state assessments. Today's school administrators must be knowledgeable regarding assessment, data disaggregation, instructional decision-making, facilities, personnel, and finance management.

### **Conclusion**

On some positions,

Cowardice asks the question - is it safe?

Expediency asks the question - is it politic?

Vanity asks the question - is it popular?

But conscience asks the question - is it right?

And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular; but one must take it because it is right.

#### **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

This quote from a sermon Dr. King made on Passion Sunday, March 31, 1968 spoke about the fact that like Rip Van Winkle who slept through the American Revolution, that many of us are capable of sleeping through a revolution (Carson and Holloran, 2000). In a sense, for school administrators, accountability mandates and high stakes testing can be viewed as a revolution. Educational policy and instruction have shifted in practices geared towards student success to ones that are about the school standing. In a sense, directing practices without being mindful of each and every student

is wrong. At a high school with a population that is comprised of fifty-two percent English Language Learners and in academic jeopardy as defined by accountability mandates and high-stakes testing, practices that are solely directed at securing only compliance numbers, marginalizes genuine instruction. Noguera (2006) in his examination of Latino students and their educational struggles pointed out that,

“Unlike their parents, immigrant Latino youth often find themselves caught between two worlds, neither fully American, nor fully part of their parents’ country. Many also arrive without having experienced formal education in their countries of origin nor literacy in their native Spanish language. Consequently, there is growing evidence that immigrant youth are susceptible to a variety of hardships and pressures that many adults, including their parents, do not fully understand. These challenges and hardships encountered by Latino immigrant youth living in a society where hostility toward their presence is growing must be of concern to educators, service providers, and policy-makers. Through constructing culturally relevant educational policies, programs, and pedagogy, we can assist Latino immigrant youth to avoid the pitfalls that often beset this vulnerable population.”

School administrators must be mindful of these situations and use sense-making practices to make the right decision. School administrators must also insure that mission statements, goals, and objectives are more in line with the true direction of the organization. Shankar-Brown (2015) pointed out in his examination of today’s educational system and changing demographics that students are faced with the challenge of the “culture of power”; this involves values and practices enacted in

institutions such as schooling where the dominant culture dictates how all students are measured. Noguera (2006) pointed out that the “pervasiveness of racialized inequalities” that persist especially within the educational world dictate that Latino students will be even more challenged regarding resources, cultural deficits, and the mere fact that instruction does not adjust to meet Latino student needs. If school administrators and schools continue, on a course that is driven by accountability mandates and testing, then a self-fulfilling mechanism dictates things will remain the status quo.

Elbert Hubbard an American writer, publisher, artist, and philosopher once said, “It does not take much strength to do things, but it requires a great deal of strength to decide what to do.” For school administrators deciding whether to do what is best for all students or simply doing things that comply with accountability mandates requires strength of character. This study clearly showed how an organization could maintain practices that keep the organization together, yet falter when tasked regarding the true mission of the school. Quantitative data showed that teacher’s perceptions regarding administrative decision-making acknowledged practices that brought the organization together. Qualitative data however showed that teachers found administration failed in authentic practices as defined by the schools mission. Langston Hughes, poet, once asked, “What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? ... Or does it explode?” Are school administrators in their race to comply with compliance measure hindering a dream of a sound education? Will false, mindless practices lead to bushels of dry raisins? Or will the whole absurdity explode? We can no longer ignore futility of faulty practices that are borne of compliance.

## REFERENCES

- Aldiabat, K. & Le Navenec, C. L. (2011). Clarification of the blurred boundaries between grounded theory and ethnography: Differences and similarities. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, July 2011, 2(3), 1-13.
- Alvesson, M. & Spicer, A. (2012). Critical leadership studies: The case for critical performativity. *Human Relations*, March, 65: 367-390.
- Allen, I. E., & Seaman, C. A. (2007). Likert scales and data analyses. *Quality progress*, 40(7), 64.
- Ancona, D. (2012). Sensemaking: Framing and acting in the unknown. *The Handbook for Teaching Leadership*, SAGE Publications, Los Angeles, CA.
- Behrent, M. (2016). More than a score: Neoliberalism. *Testing & Teacher Evaluations. Workplace*, 26, 50-62.
- Bellamy, G. T., Crawford, L., Marshall, L. H., & Coulter, G. A. (2005). The Fail-Safe Schools Challenge: Leadership possibilities from high reliability organizations. *Educational Administration Quarterly* V-41, No. 3, 383-412.
- Blankstein, A. & Noguera, P. (2008). Reclaiming the promise of public education: The will is the way for schools where failure is not an option. *School Administrator*, v61 n5, 31-34.
- Blatt, R., Christianson, M. K., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Rosenthal, M. M. (2006). A sensemaking lens on reliability. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 27,

897–917.

Bodner, T. (2000). On the assessment of individual differences in mindful information processing. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61 (09), 5051B (UMI no. 9988530).

Booher-Jennings, J. (2005). Below the bubble: “Educational triage” and the Texas accountability system. *American Educational Research Journal Summer 2005*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 231–268.

Booher-Jennings, J., & Beveridge, A. A. (2008). Who counts for accountability? High-stakes test exemptions in a large urban school district. In A. R. Sadovnik, J. A. O'Day, G. W. Bohrnstedt, & K. M. Borman (Eds.), *No child left behind and the reduction of the achievement gap: Sociological perspectives on federal educational policy* (pp. 77-96). New York, NY: Routledge.

Brendan D. Maxcy (2006). Leaving children behind: How "Texas-style" accountability fails Latino youth. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, vol. 42, 2, 256-284.

Brunborg, G. S., Pallesen, S., Diseth, A., & Larsen, S. (2010). Preoccupation with failure affects number of study hours — not academic achievement. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, Volume 54, Issue 2, 125-132.

Bunch, G. C. (2013). Pedagogical language knowledge: Preparing mainstream teachers for English learners in the new standards era. *Review of Research in Education*, 37, 298–341.

Bustamante, R. M., Nelson, J. A., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2009). Assessing school-wide

- cultural competence: Implications for school leadership preparation. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 45(5), 793-827.
- Carraway, J. H. & Young, T. (2015). Implementation of a districtwide policy to improve principals' instructional leadership. *Educational Policy*, Vol 29, Issue 1, 230 – 256.
- Carson, C. & Holloran, P. (2000). *A Knock at Midnight: Inspiration from the Great Sermons of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Warner Books., New York, NY.
- Chanowitz, B., & Langer, E. J. (1981). Premature cognitive commitment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 41(6), 1051–1063. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.41.6.1051.
- Charmaz K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London, England: SAGE.
- Chassin, M. R. & Loeb, J. M. (2013). High-reliability health care: Getting there from here. *The Milbank Quarterly*, Vol. 91, No. 3, 459–490.
- Cherry, D. & Spiegel, J. (2006) *Leadership, myth, & metaphor: Finding common ground to guide effective school change*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press).
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. New York, NY.
- Colville, I., Pye, A., & Brown, A. D. (2016) Sensemaking processes and Weickarious learning. *Management Learning*, Volume 47, issue 1. 3-13.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA:



Sage.

Coutu, D. L. (2003). Sense and reliability. A conversation with celebrated psychologist

Karl E. Weick. *Harvard Business Review*. Apr;81(4):84-90, 84-90.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE Publications, Inc, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Creswell, J.W., Plano, V.L., Gutmann, M.L., & Hanson, W.E. (2003). Advanced mixed methods research designs. *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Cronin, M. A., Weingart, L. R., & Todorova, G. (2011). Dynamics in groups: Are we there yet? *The Academy of Management Annals*, 5:1, 571-612, DOI:

10.1080/19416520.2011.590297

Cusick, P. A. (2014). The logic of the U.S. educational system and teaching. *Theory into practice*, Taylor & Francis Ltd 53:176–182, ISSN: 0040-5841 print/1543-0421 online DOI: 10.1080/00405841.2014.916568.

Dash, K. K. (2005). Online research methods resource: Module - selection of the research paradigm and methodology. University web site,

[http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/researchmethods/Modules/Selection\\_of\\_methodology/index.php](http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/researchmethods/Modules/Selection_of_methodology/index.php).

Day, C., Gu, Q., & Sammons, P. (2016) The impact of leadership on student outcomes: how successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52 (2), 221-258. ISSN 1552-3519.

- Deming, D. J., Cohodes, S., Jennings, J., & Jencks, C. (2016). School accountability, postsecondary attainment, and earnings. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, December 2016, 98(5): 848–862 2016 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
doi:10.1162/REST\_a\_00598.
- DeMoss, K. (2002). Leadership styles and high-stakes testing: Principals make a difference. *Education and Urban Society*, 35(1), 110-131.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- Dobrick, A. (2014). "Poverty and pretense: Good intentions and misguided educational reform from No Child Left Behind through Race to the Top" in the Obama administration and educational reform. Published online: 01 Dec 2014; 27-44.  
Permanent link to this document: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1479-358X20130000010002>
- Downey, C. J., Steffy, B. E., Poston, W. K., & English, F. W. (2009). *50 ways to close the achievement gap (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Dwyer, K. P., Osher, D., & Hoffman, C. (2000). Creating responsive schools: Contextualizing early warning, timely response. *Exceptional Children*; Spring 2000; 66, 3; 347-365.
- Eck, J. H. (2011). High reliability organizations in education. *Noteworthy Perspectives*. Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning, Denver, Colorado.
- Ellerbrock, C. R., & Kiefer, S. M. (2013). The interplay between adolescent needs and

secondary school structures: Fostering developmentally responsive middle and high school environments across the transition. *High School Journal*, 96(3), 170-187.

Eurich, T. (2017). *Insight: Why we're not as self-aware as we think, and how seeing ourselves clearly helps us succeed at work and in life*. Crown Business.

Finlay, L. (2011). *Phenomenology for Therapists*. Oxford, England: Wiley-Blackwell, ISBN 978-0-470-66646-3.

Fisch, B. (2014). Narrative leadership in a quality organization: a meaningful alternative to management by measurement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education; Theory and Practice Volume 17, Issue 2*, 154-173.

Fitzgerald, K., Gordon, T. V., Canty, A. L., Stitt, R. E., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Frels, R. K. (2012). Ethnic differences in completion rates as a function of school size in Texas high schools. *Journal of At-Risk Issues*, 17(2), 1-10.

Friedman, T. L. (2007). *The world is flat 3.0: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. Picador; 3 edition.

Furman, G. C., & Starratt, R. J. (2002). Leadership for democratic community in schools. In J. Murphy (Ed), *The educational leadership challenge: Redefining leadership for the 21st century. One hundred-first yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Chicago, 105-133.

Gage, C. Q. (2003). The meaning and measure of school mindfulness: an exploratory analysis (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from [www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com).

Gebauer, A. (2012). Mindful organizing as a paradigm to develop managers. *Journal of*

*Management Education*, 37(2), 203–228.

Gilovich, T. (1991). *How we know what isn't so: The fallibility of human reason in everyday life*. NY: The Free Press.

Golden-Biddle, K. & Locke, K. (2007). *Composing qualitative research: Crafting theoretical points from qualitative data*. Sage Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, California.

González, M. L. (2010) The critical role of all educators in the school success of Latino children. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 9:4, 479-494, DOI: 10.1080/15700763.2010.493635.

Goodman P. S., Ramanujam R., Carroll J., Edmondson A. C., Hofmann D., & Sutcliffe K. (2011). Organizational errors: Directions for future research. *Research in Organizational Behavior*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1016/j.riob.2011.09.003

Guette, A. & Vandembemt, K. (2016). Exploring team mental model dynamics during strategic change implementation in professional service organizations. *A sensemaking perspective* 728-744.

Gurley, K., D., Peters, G. B., Collins, L., & Fifolt, M. (2016). Mission, vision, values, and goals: An exploration of key organizational statements and daily practice in schools. *Journal of Educational Change*, Volume 16, Issue 2, 217–242.

Haigh, E. A. P., Moore, M. T., Kashdan, T. B., & Fresco, D. M. (2011).

Examination of the factor structure and concurrent validity of the Langer mindfulness/mindlessness scale. *Assessment March 2011 18*: 11-26.

Hales, D. N. & Chakravorty, S. S. (2016). Creating high reliability organizations using mindfulness. *Journal of Business Research*, 1-24.

Hamilton, M. P., Vazquez - Heilig, J. & Pazez, B. L. (2013). A nostrum of school reform? Turning around reconstituted urban Texas high schools. *Urban Education March 2014 49*: 182 - 215, first published on March 5, 2013.

Harris, A., Jones, M., & Adams, D. (2016) Qualified to lead? A comparative, contextual and cultural view of educational policy borrowing. *Educational Research*, 58:2, 166-178, DOI: 10.1080/00131881.2016.1165412.

Hollingworth, L. (2008). Five ways to prepare for standardized tests without sacrificing best practice. *The Reading Teacher 61 (4)*, 339-342.

Hornig, E. L., Klasik, D., & Loeb, S. (2009). Principal time-use and school effectiveness. Calder Working Paper No. 34 December 2009.

Hoy, W. K. (2003). An analysis of enabling and mindful school structures: Some theoretical, research and practical considerations. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 41(1), 87-108.

Hoy, W. K. (2012). School characteristics that make a difference for the achievement of all students: A 40-year academic odyssey. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 50, 76-97.

- Hoy, W. K. & Miskel, C. G. (2013). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice, 9th edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Hoy, W. K., Gage, Q. & Tarter, C. J. (2006). School mindfulness and faculty trust: Necessary conditions for each other. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42, 236-255.
- Hoyle, J. R. (2007). *Leadership and futuring: Making visions happen*. Corwin; 2nd edition (June 28, 2006).
- Howard, G. (2016). *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know (Multicultural Education)*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Teachers College Press; 3 New edition, New York, NY.
- Huebner, B. (2015). What is a philosophical effect? Models of data in experimental Philosophy. *Philosophical Studies, Springer Science & Business Media*, 172, 3273–3292.
- Hülshager, U. T., Alberts, H. J. E. M., Feinholdt, A., and Lang, J. W. B. (2013). Benefits of mindfulness at work: The role of mindfulness in emotion regulation, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology Vol. 98, No. 2*, 310–325.
- Hyland, T. (2015). On the contemporary applications of mindfulness: Some implications for Education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, Vol. 49, No. 2*, 170-186.
- Imber, M. (1997). "Educational Reforms Can Reproduce Societal Inequities." In *Research Method in the Postmodern*. James J. Scheurich, ed. Falmer Press, 8-28.
- Ivankova, N.V., Creswell, J.W., & Stick. S.L. (2006). Using mixed-methods sequential

- explanatory design: Theory to practice. *Field Methods* 18(1), 3-20.
- Jacob, S.A. & Furgerson, S.P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 2012 Volume 17, T&L Art. 6, 1-10.
- Jennings, M. E., Noblit, G. W., Brayboy, B., & Cozart, S. (2007). Accountability and abdication: School reform and urban school districts in the era of accountability. *Educational Foundations*, 21(3-4), 27-38.
- Kearney, W. S., Kelsey, C., & Herrington, D. (2013). Mindful leaders in highly effective Schools: A mixed-method application of Hoy's M-scale. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. Sage Publications, ISSN: 1741-1432.
- Kezar A. (2013). Understanding sensemaking/sensegiving in transformational change processes from the bottom up. *High Education*, 65, 761–780.
- Kimmelman, P. L. (2006). Implementing NCLB: Creating a knowledge framework to support school improvement. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Klocko, B. A. & Wells, C. M. (2015). Workload pressures of principals: A focus on renewal, support, and mindfulness. *National Association of Secondary School Principal (NAASSP) Bulletin* 2015, Vol. 99(4), 332 –355.
- Kocaba, I. & Karaköse, T. (2009). Ethics in school administration. *African Journal of Business Management* Vol.3 (4), 126-130.
- Laitch, D. (2013). Smaked by the invisible hand: The wrong debate at the wrong time

- with the wrong people. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 45:1, 16-27.
- Lambert, L. (2006). Lasting leadership: A study of high leadership capacity schools, *The Educational Forum*, 70:3, 238-254.
- Langer, E. J. (1975). The illusion of control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 32, 311-328.
- Langer, E. J. (1989). *Mindfulness*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Langer, E. J. (1992). Matters of mind: mindfulness/mindlessness in perspective. *Consciousness and Cognition 1*: 289–305.
- Langer, E. J., Blank, A., & Chanowitz, B. (1978). The mindlessness of ostensibly thoughtful action: The role of “placebic” information in interpersonal interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 36(6), 635–642.
- Larke, P. J., Webb-Hasan, G., Jimarez, T., & Li, Y. (2014). Analysis of Texas achievement data for elementary African American and Latino females. *Journal of Case Studies in Education*, v6. 1-16.
- Lazaridou, A. (2007) Values in principals’ thinking when solving problems, *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice*, 10:4, 339-356.
- Leahey, C. (2012). Catch-22 and the paradox of teaching in the age of accountability. 4(5). Retrieved from



<http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/criticaled/article/view/182436>.

- Levine, M. & Levine, A. (2014). Holding accountability accountable: A cost–benefit analysis of achievement test scores. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *Vol. 83, No. 1*, 17–26.
- Linn, R. L. (2010). A new era of test-based educational accountability measurement, 8: 145–149, Taylor & Francis Group, LLC ISSN: 1536-6367 print / 1536-6359 online DOI: 10.1080/15366367.2010.508692
- Locke, K. (2001). *Grounded theory in management research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Madsen, J. & Mabokela, R. (2014). Leadership challenges in addressing changing demographics in schools. *NASSP Bulletin Volume: 98 issue: 1*, 75-96.
- Maitlis, S. & Christianson, M. (2014). Sensemaking in organizations. *The Academy of Management Annals Vol. 8, Iss. 1, No. 1*, 57–125,  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19416520.2014.873177>.
- Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *11(3)*, 1-19.
- Maxcy, B. D. (2006). Leaving children behind: How Texas-style accountability fails Latino youth. *Educational administration quarterly*, *vol. 42, no. 2*, pp. 256-284.
- McGuigan, L. & Hoy, W. K. (2006). Principal leadership: Creating a culture of

- academic optimism to improve achievement for all students. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 5, 203-229.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Public Law No. 107–110, § 115 Stat. 1425 (2002).
- McNeil, L. M. (2000). *Contradictions of school reform: Educational costs of standardized testing*. Routledge, New York, NY.
- Meier K. J., Wrinkle R. D., Polinard J. L. (1999). Representative bureaucracy and distributional equity: Addressing the hard question. *The Journal of Politics*, 61(4), 1025–1039.
- Morrison, K. (2010). Complexity theory, school leadership and management: Questions for theory and practice. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 38(3), 374 – 393.
- Nichols, S. L. & Berliner, D. C. (2008). Why has high-stakes testing so easily slipped into contemporary American life? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89 (May 2008), Phi Delta Kappan International, Inc.
- Nickerson, R. S. (1998). Confirmation bias: A ubiquitous phenomenon in many guises. *Review of General Psychology*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 175-220.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, (2002) 20 U.S.C. § 9101 C.F.R. (2002). Federal Register/Vol. 67, No. 231.
- Noguera, P. A. (2009). The achievement gap: Public education in crisis. *New Labor Forum (Murphy Institute)*, 18(2), 60-69.
- Noguera, P. A. (2012). Stretching the school safety net. *Nation*, 294(1), 23-25.

- Noguera, P. A. (2012). Chicago strike lessons. *Nation*, 295(15), 4-6.
- Noguera, P. A. (2012). Saving black and Latino boys. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 93(5), 8-12.
- Obama, B. (2011). Remarks on the No Child Left Behind Act. Washington D.C., DCPD  
Number: DCPD201100674.
- O'Leary, M. & Chia, R. (2007). Epistemes and structures of sensemaking in  
organizational life. *Journal of Management Inquiry December 2007 16*, 392-406.
- O'Meara, K. A., Louder, A., & Campbell, C. M. (2014). To heaven or hell:  
Sensemaking about why faculty leave. *The Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 85,*  
*No. 5*, 603-662.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Teddlie, C. (2003). A framework for analyzing data in mixed  
Methods research. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed  
methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 351-383). Thousand Oaks, CA:  
SAGE.
- Öznacar, B. & Osma, E. (2016). Determination of instructional leadership  
administrators. *International Journal of Environmental and Science Education*  
*11 (5)*, 957-972.
- Pharris-Ciurej, N., Hirschman, C., & Willhoft, J. (2012) The ninth-grade shock and  
the high school dropout crisis. *Social Science Research, Volume 41, Issue 3,*  
*May 2012*, 709-730.
- Poliner-Shapiro, J. & Stefkovich, J. A. (2010). *Ethical leadership and decision making  
in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas*, Third  
Edition, Routledge Press.

- Portin, B. S., Alejano, C. R., Knapp, M. S., & Marzolf, E. (2006). Redefining roles, responsibilities, and authority of school leaders. Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy. Retrieved from <http://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/Roles-Oct16.pdf>.
- Ravitch, D. (2014). Hoaxes in educational policy. *The Teacher Educator*, 49:153–165, 2014 Taylor & Francis Group, LLC ISSN: 0887-8730 print/1938-8101 online DOI: 10.1080/08878730.2014.916959.
- Ream, R.K. (2003). Counterfeit social capital and Mexican-American underachievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Fall 2003, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 237–262
- Rigby, J. G. (2015) "Principals' sensemaking and enactment of teacher evaluation", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 53 Issue: 3, 374-392, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-04-2014-0051>.
- Ruppel, P. S., & Mey, G. (2015). Grounded theory methodology: Narrativity revisited. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, June 2015, Volume 49, Issue 2, 174–186.
- Salinas, L., & Kimball, R. H. (2007). The equal treatment of unequals: Barriers facing Latino and the poor in Texas public schools. *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy*, 14(2), 215-254.
- Scanlan, M. & López, F. (2012). ¡Vamos! How school leaders promote equity and excellence for bilingual students. *Educational Administration Quarterly* 48(4), 583 -625.

- Schoeberlein, D. R. (2009). *Mindful teaching and teaching mindfulness: A guide for anyone who teaches anything*. Wisdom Publications, Somerville MA.
- Schroth, R.A. (2016). Teacher, heal thyself fixing the nation's education crisis requires elementary thinking. *America Magazine*, America Press Inc.
- Shankar-Brown, R. (2015). Urbanization and persistent educational inequalities: The need for collective action towards equity and social justice. *National Youth-At-Risk Journal*, 1(1). Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/nyar/vol1/iss1/4>.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2005). The virtues of leadership. *The Educational Forum*, 69:2, 112-123 To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00131720508984675>.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2007). *Rethinking leadership: A collection of articles*. Trinity University, Corwin; 2nd edition (June 14, 2006).
- Shelly, B. (2012). Flexible response: Executive federalism and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. *Educational Policy January 2012* 26: 117-135, first published on November 28, 2011.
- Singh, M. and Al-Fadhli, H. (2011). Does school leadership matter in the NCLB era? *Journal of Black Studies* 42(5), 751 –767, DOI: 10.1177/0021934710372895.
- Smith, L., & Riley, D. (2012). School leadership in times of crisis. *School Leadership and Management: Formerly School Organisation*, 32(1), 57-71.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., & Suárez-Orozco, M. (2009). Educating Latino immigrant students in the twenty-first century: Principles for the Obama administration. *Harvard Educational Review; Summer 2009*; 79, 2; Research Library Core. 327-401.

- Sutcliffe, K. M. & McNamara, G. (2001). Controlling decision-making practice in organizations. *Organization Science, Informs Vol. 12, No. 4*, July-August 2001, 484-501.
- Tanner, D. (2013). Race to the top and leave the children behind. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, Vol. 45, No. 1*, 4–15, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2012.754946>.
- Tenam-Zemach, M. & Flynn, J. (2011). America's race to the top, our fall from grace. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue, v.13, no.1-2*, 113-124.
- Texas Accountability Intervention System. (2015). TAIS resources. <http://www.taisresources.net/>.
- Texas Education Agency (2012). Explanation of the 2012 Accountability Summary Report. [https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2012/summary\\_explanation.pdf](https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2012/summary_explanation.pdf).
- Texas Education Agency (2014). Accountability Manual. Texas Education Agency. <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2014/manual/index.html>.
- Texas Education Agency (2015). *2015-16 Student Attendance Accounting Handbook*.
- Thornton, B., Hill, G., & Usinger, J. (2006). An examination of a fissure within the implementation of the NCLB. *Education; Fall 2006; 127, 1*; Research Library Core. 115.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W. K. (2000). A multidisciplinary analysis of the nature, meaning, and measurement of trust. *Review of Educational Research, 70*, 547-

593.

Tucker, M. S. (2014). Fixing our national accountability system. The National

Center on Education and the Economy. Washington D.C..

U.S. Census Bureau (2014). *The Hispanic Population: 2014*. Washington, DC: U.S.

Department of Commerce.

U.S. Department of Education (2002). No child left behind. U.S. Department of

Education. Washington D. C..

U.S. Department of Education. (2009). Race to the top: Executive summary.

Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>.

Valencia, R. (2008). *Chicano students and the courts: The Mexican American legal*

*struggle for educational equality*. (Critical America.) New York: New York

University Press. xix - 483.

Valenzuela, A. (2002). "High-stakes testing and U.S. - Mexican youth in Texas: The

case for multiple compensatory criteria in assessment. *Harvard Journal of*

*Hispanic Policy, Vol. 14, 97-116.*

Walach, H., Buchheld, N., Buttenmuller, V., Kleinknecht, N., Schmidt, S. (2006).

Measuring Mindfulness--The Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI). *Personality*

*and Individual Differences, 40, 1543-1555.*

- Weick, K. E. (1996). Fighting fires in educational administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 32 (4), 565-578.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). Sense-making in organizations: Foundations for organizational science. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Weick, K. E. (2009). Las organizaciones educativas como sistemas flojamente acoplados. *Gestion y Estrategia*, Num. 36, Julio/Diciembre. 93-110.
- Weick, K. E. (2011). Organizing for transient reliability: The production of dynamic non-events. *Journal of Contingencies & Crisis Management* Mar2011, Vol. 19 Issue 1, 21-27.
- Weick, K.E. (2012). Organized sensemaking: A commentary on processes of interpretive work. *Human Relations* January, 2012 65: 141-153.
- Weick, K. E., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2001). *Managing the unexpected: Assuring high performance in an age of complexity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Weick, K. E. & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2007). *Managing the unexpected: Resilient Performance in an Age of Uncertainty*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Weick, K. E., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2015). *Managing the Unexpected: Sustained Performance in a Complex World*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (1999). Organizing for high reliability:



- Processes of collective mindfulness. In B. M. Staw, & R. Sutton (Eds.), *Research In organizational behavior* (Vol. 21, pp. 81–123). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Weick, K. E. & Westley, F. (1996) ‘Organizational learning: Affirming an oxymoron’, in Stewart R. Clegg, Cynthia Hardy and Walter R. Nord (eds) *Handbook of Organization Studies*. London: Sage.
- Werts, A. B., Sala, M. D., Lindle, J., Horace, J. M., Brewer, C., & Knoepfel, R. (2013). Education Stakeholders' Translation and Sense-Making of Accountability Policies. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, Vol. 12, Iss. 4*, 2013.
- Wong, V. C., Wing, C., & Martin, D. (2016). Do schools respond to pressure? Evidence from NCLB implementation details. *Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE) Spring 2016 Conference*.
- Yamamoto, J. K., Gardiner, M. E., & Tenuto, P. L. (2013). Emotion in leadership: Secondary school administrators’ perceptions of critical incidents. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership March 2014 42: 165-183*, first published on September 24, 2013.
- Young, B. L., Madsen, J., & Young, M. A. (2010). Implementing diversity plans: Principals’ perception of their ability to address diversity in their schools. *NASSP Bulletin 94 (2)*, 135-157.
- Zemelman, S., Daniels, H., & Hyde, A. (2005). *Best practice: New standards for*

*teaching and learning in America's school (3rd Edition)*. Portsmouth, NH:

Heinemann.

## APPENDIX A

### MINDFULNESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please respond by considering how well each statement applies to your administration.

Please use the following scale:

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Undecided 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

<b>Sensitivity to Operations</b>		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Staff is encouraged to share general information with each other.					
2.	Staff listens carefully to one another when talking about school operations.					
3.	Staff concentrates on what is happening "moment to moment."					
4.	Staff is concerned with their own tasks, not with the school as a whole.					
5.	Staff recognizes the challenges of having many people making school related decisions at any one moment.					
6.	Staff is familiar with tasks beyond their immediate jobs.					
7.	Staff frequently talks with one another about what is going on at the school/campus.					
8.	When there are many tasks going on at school, staff tries to help each other out.					
9.	When one department is challenged, other departments try to help.					
10.	Staff keeps current with all school events.					

## MINDFULNESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please respond by considering how well each statement applies to your administration.

Please use the following scale:

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Undecided 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

Deference to Expertise		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Staff is comfortable asking others with more experience for help.					
2.	Those with the most experience make important decisions at this campus.					
3.	When staff here cannot solve a problem, they seek someone with more experience to solve it.					
4.	Whoever discovers a mistake/issue on campus is initially responsible for correcting it.					
5.	At this campus, it is generally easy to obtain expert help when something comes up that staff does not know how to handle.					
6.	At this campus, experience is more important than hierarchical position.					
7.	Staff is well aware of everyone's roles and responsibilities.					
8.	Staff is aware of procedures to address situations with their supervisors.					
9.	Staff is generally accepting of decisions made by leadership.					
10.	Staff has no reluctance in turning to leadership for support.					

## MINDFULNESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please respond by considering how well each statement applies to your administration.

Please use the following scale:

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Undecided 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

Commitment to Resilience		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Staff is committed to solving any problem that arises.					
2.	When a mistake is made, staff is encouraged to limit any negative consequences.					
3.	Staff is encouraged to solve problems in new ways.					
4.	Staff is occasionally retrained.					
5.	Staff is given tasks from which they can learn more about school operations.					
6.	Staff is well-trained for the kind of work they do.					
7.	When a mistake is made on campus, staff can "bounce back" from it.					
8.	Staff does not give up on solving a problem.					
9.	Staff uses their abilities and knowledge in new ways to improve how the school runs.					
10.	Staff is willing to change in order to solve problems.					

## MINDFULNESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please respond by considering how well each statement applies to your campus administration.

Please use the following scale:

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Undecided 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

<b>Preoccupation with Failure</b>		<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Staff talks more about work-related mistakes than work related successes.</b>					
<b>2.</b>	<b>Staff take even the smallest of mistakes seriously</b>					
<b>3.</b>	<b>Staff sees close calls (e.g., a two student fight on campus) as mistakes.</b>					
<b>4.</b>	<b>Staff gets praised if they report general problems, errors, or inconsistencies (e.g., no paper towels in the restrooms)</b>					
<b>5.</b>	<b>Staff reports work-related mistakes that could have serious consequences, even if nobody else notices the mistake.</b>					
<b>6.</b>	<b>Staff feels comfortable reporting general mistakes they have made to superiors.</b>					
<b>7.</b>	<b>Staff talks about general mistakes that have been made.</b>					
<b>8.</b>	<b>Staff often sees certain challenges as too hard to overcome.</b>					
<b>9.</b>	<b>Staff is quick to give up when others do not provide support.</b>					
<b>10.</b>	<b>Staff believes that no matter how hard they work, that some things do not change.</b>					

## MINDFULNESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please respond by considering how well each statement applies to your administration.  
Please use the following scale:

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Undecided 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

Reluctance to Simplify Interpretations		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Staff believes that simple solutions are good for complex problems.					
2.	It is rare at this campus that anyone's view is dismissed.					
3.	Staff is encouraged to question the way things are usually done.					
4.	Staff shows a great deal of mutual respect for each other.					
5.	Staff feels comfortable expressing their own opinions about school operations.					
6.	This school values staff that is able to get along well with different types of people.					
7.	Staff is encouraged to question decisions made by others.					
8.	Staff believes that collaborative planning assists in meeting goals and objectives.					
9.	Staff has established procedures for addressing most situations.					
10.	Staff meets regularly to insure timely communication.					

## APPENDIX B

### MASTER TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: SENSE-MAKING

#### 1. Elements grounded in identity construction

- + How did you get to be the Master Teacher here? (Why at this time, why not try something else?)
- + What does it mean to be a teacher at your school?
- + Tell me about your school;
  - + What defines your department?
  - + What defines your average student?

#### 2. Retrospective elements

- + Have things/practices changed in the past few years?
- + Have practices changed drastically with different administrators?
- + How have things changed in the classroom?
- + How worried are you about little mistakes that you make? How about little mistakes your teachers make? What do you do about those mistakes? How do you feel about self-reporting? How about the teachers?

#### 3. Elements enactive of sensible environments

- + What would you say are difficulties of defining your job?....Or...Why do you think it is easy to define?
- + Do you feel/believe you are able to influence change?
- + How do your new teachers get support when they join the team?
- + When assistance is provided or a course of action is recommended, how open are you to follow through?
- + When confronted with situations or problems, how easy is it for you to defer to assistance from supervisors and/or central office staff?



- + Ever make a big mistake? What did you do?

#### **4. Social elements**

- + Is it easy to approach school administrators?
- + What are your feelings about leadership?
- + Is communication/interaction within the department open?
- + How is communication/relationship with parents?
- + How do you deal with upset parents? Upset teachers or staff?
- + Tell me about turnover in your staff..... How does that affect the department?

#### **5. Ongoing elements**

- + During the school year, do things keep on track?
- + Tell me about staff development at your school. How does it work? Who controls it? Etc?
- + Are there many drastic changes?
- + As a school and department; what is a critical element to always consider?
- + Tell me about pressures educators in general are feeling due to accountability.
- + How do you “Choose your battles”?

#### **6. Elements focused on and by extracted cues**

- + DO you believe your campus uses information correctly? And in a timely manner?
- + What are elements that limit or might limit best practices?
- + Do you believe everyone knows and sees the big picture about what must be done?

- + What kinds of tough issues have you dealt with recently? How do you make the “hard decisions?”
- + Ever get in a situation where you have to “wing it?” Tell me about it.....

## 7. Elements driven by plausibility rather than accuracy

- + As a campus, do you believe that you are headed in the right direction?
- + What is the school’s ultimate goal? Do you feel that that is the main focus?
- + When assistance is provided or a course of action is recommended, how open are you to follow through?
- + Is there anything else about your work that you would like to share about being a master teacher or being part of the leadership team?
- + How can you tell when trouble is coming? What do you do to stop it from happening?
  - + Ever just let “it” happen? Talk to me about that.....
  - + Ever not let “it” happen when you should have?
  - + How about when you did let “it” happen and should not have? How did that work out for you?

## APPENDIX C

### MASTER TEACHER INTERVIEW RESPONSES (SAMPLE)

Overarching Theme	Sub-Themes/Patterns	Sample of Coded Text
<b>Identity Construction</b>	Becoming a Master Teacher	“Administration gave me a chance. I had problems as a new teacher a few years ago. I was even on a growth plan. But like I said, administration helped me and believed in me and I was able to turn it around.”
		“I still have a way to go. I know that we have a lot to deal with, but I will continue to do my best.”
		“I work with another lead teacher, but now that he is moving on, I think I can handle all of it.”
	Being a teacher at your school	“Being a teacher at this school is special. It is hard sometimes and yes we have our problems, but we all work together.”
		“Everyone doubts us. We are the oldest school, but we are also in a place where our students have it hard.”
		“The hardest thing for us is that we are a subject that has the most work to do. Some of our teachers are really under a lot of pressure, but they don’t give up.”
	Definition of department	“other departments think that we hold the school back from doing more, but our content area demands more. We have more challenges because our kids don’t have the foundation.”
		“The department like I said has a lot to do. Our department has a lot of old...veteran teachers, but many of us are new. We are also learning.”
		“Many of us are still learning how to address the EOC (End of Course). But we learn to use data and meet weekly to discuss and plan.”
	Definition of average student	“The average student has a lot to overcome. Most don’t know English.”
		“Students at our school are very poor and many cross the bridge on a daily basis.”
		“Many of our students don’t see why or want to learn the language.”
<b>Retrospective Elements</b>	Changes in practices (past few years)	“We are more focused and we come together to plan strategies.”
		“Although some core areas have less testing, we are still accountable for two major exams.”
		“We are more involved in what we need to do.”
	Changed with different administrators	“I have had changes in administration and there have been changes. I would say for the better, but then the testing has also changed.”

		<p>“Some administrators just demanded results, but know we have administrators who work with us and allow us to work together.”</p> <p>“The thing is some of them come and go, but we still stay here and are still expected to get results.”</p>
	Changes in the classroom	<p>“Administration makes it clear that STAAR/EOC (end of course) exams are the priority. From the beginning of the year until testing time, we are all about reviewing the data and getting students ready.”</p> <p>“The classroom is still the same, except for students with more and more problems. We have some that are homeless, have medical problems, psychological problems, and some that don’t see a reason for school.”</p> <p>“The one thing I see is that students don’t want to do as much. And cellphones, they...we can’t live without them. But that is everybody and everywhere.”</p>
	Mistakes made by teacher	<p>“We are human and of course we make mistakes, but usually they are ones which can be corrected. We always help each other out and we ask questions.”</p> <p>“Sometimes things happen because it is too much. Too much data...paperwork, and even students.”</p> <p>“Mistakes are usually made because we don’t have all the information.</p>
<b>Sensible Environments</b>	Difficulties of defining job	<p>“We need help in better defining the roles of the master teachers/leadership team; otherwise you have those saying they are not EOC so less is required.”</p>
		<p>“You have to be very specific in holding all teachers, not just some for accountability. Otherwise it’s unfair.”</p>
		<p>“In our department the issue is that there are two of us and it’s not always balanced.”</p>
	Ability to influence change	<p>“When we have our weekly planning sessions and it gets close to testing time...that’s all we focus on.”</p>
		<p>“I feel we are doing more and working together to change things.”</p>
		<p>“There is only so many things you can change. With the district, state, and federal programs asking us to do so many things.”</p>
	Support for new teachers	<p>“New teachers always have help, whether from the department, administration, or central office.”</p>
		<p>“They need to be made aware of documentation and what is expected from them with TTESS (Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System). That way there are no excuses.”</p>
		<p>“New teachers do need the support because we are having trouble finding fully certified and experienced teachers.”</p>
	Provided assistance	<p>“We get help when we need it”</p>
		<p>“Sometimes it’s a money thing.”</p>
		<p>“All we have to do is ask and we do get answers. Sometimes we can’t do certain things because of budget.”</p>

	Assistance from supervisors (campus and central office)	"Like I said before, help is always there."
		"We need to have things in writing. Especially the accountability stuff. Tell teachers... what are your percentages regarding passing or a certain population."
		"Central office sometimes doesn't see the whole picture. And they are supposed to be support, but most of the time they are asking for things."
	Mistakes made	"I don't have too much to say here. Mistake usually happen with scheduling and staffing."
		"And yes, we all make mistakes, but we are a campus that recognizes and provides corrective action."
		"I guess mistakes related to the school or the classroom happen because we are not paying attention to what we should be doing."
<b>Social Elements</b>	Ability to approach school administrators	"Yes it is very easy. Since Mr. Principal created the leadership team. It's very easy to approach him or any other admin."
		"It's also very easy through the group chat. We get information right away."
		"The response is quick and they help resolve any issue."
	Teacher feelings about leadership	"The testing area needs a lot of help especially when they are training on STAAR. Which is why I think we had a lot of errors."
		"The training is like twenty minutes and the presenter doesn't take it seriously."
		"We know that not everyone does their stuff. Not every administrator works as hard as some."
	Communication/interaction within the department	"Everyone is approachable and we do function almost like a family. Sure there are often misunderstandings and even fights within a family, but in the end we come together."
		"There are issues with the new teachers following the hierarchy."
		"New teachers don't respect the chain of command."
	Communication/relationship with parents	"Parents are very supportive. They will be there for us."
		"I always have a good turnout for tutorials and super Saturday because I call parents and they send the students."
		"Many of our parents don't know a lot about the school."
	Addressing upset stakeholders	"Usually we deal with people who escalate things. Teachers that let situations get out of hand, students that also don't see the whole picture, and community member who get the wrong information."
		"The good thing is that some administrators are quick to intercede and help resolve situations."
		"We are directed to answer or respond to issues quickly."
	Turnover in your staff	"We have had some turnover, but we also have had some teachers from other campuses pushed on us. I know it sounds bad, but we usually get the scrap and have to make it work."

		<p>“It’s also hard to find new teachers that are fully certified. Teacher pool out there is not good quality.”</p> <p>“We don’t have a lot of turnover in our department. Mostly it’s a good thing, but sometimes it’s not. Some teachers that need to move on don’t.”</p>
<b>Ongoing elements</b>	Things keep on track	<p>“Overall yes, but there are things that overlap. Like TELPAS (Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System), we have to stop and take care of that. I know for the practice not everyone completed that.”</p>
		<p>“We have a lot to do with having to teach students writing and preparing them for the test.”</p>
		<p>“It just requires a lot of work and we need more resources.”</p>
	Staff development at your school	<p>“We need more and better training for testing items. Not just a twenty-minute presentation. Teacher don’t learn and the presenter doesn’t even care.”</p>
		<p>“Most staff development is ok, but we need new stuff, not the same trainings from the region.”</p>
		<p>“Hopefully we can provide more suggestions. We also need training from other areas.”</p>
	Drastic changes	<p>“Because of accountability and what we had to do, I had to get stricter with teachers. For lesson plans, I put everything on the one drive, because I constantly had to be calling teachers and reminding them about lesson plans. Now all of it is there and administration can also see it.”</p>
		<p>“The biggest adjustment usually happens with changes in testing. Either the number of tests or the standards changing.”</p>
		<p>“We also had changes with students being able to graduate without passing all the tests. They had to pass three out of five.”</p>
	Critical element to always consider	<p>“There is no school like us. I know because in studying for my masters. Our population of LEP students are not ready. Many of the seniors can’t even get a forty percent on an reading and writing exit exam.”</p>
		<p>“We need to consider holding everyone accountable not just the EOC teachers.”</p>
		<p>Administration needs to help define the roles and responsibilities for everyone not just the EOC teachers. Everyone should be held accountable.”</p>
	Pressures educators in general are feeling (regarding accountability)	<p>“Our evaluation is connected to how we do.”</p>
<p>“The only thing that isn’t fair is that not everyone teaches a tested subject and those teachers usually have little or no pressure.”</p>		
<p>“I also believe that we have no voice. They decide what will be tested and we have nothing to do with that decision.”</p>		
Choosing your battles	<p>“Some of us do try to fix problems or mistakes, but we don’t always tell others. While that might solve the problem for that teacher, what if others have the same issue?”</p>	
	<p>“If you plan ahead things go better.”</p>	

		“The bad part is that somethings you can’t fight. The test is the test and we get orders of how to do things.”
<b>Extracted Cues</b>	Campus uses information correctly/timely	“For EOC (End of Course) and all that stuff. Yes.”
		“What we need to do is just like we do it for EOC, we should also do it for other things. Like we should do the student at a glance for TELPAS (Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System).”
		“We need to start all of that at the beginning of the year.”
	Limitations on best practices	“Again, we can only do so many things. We are told that testing is the priority and that we need to do certain things.”
		“Sometimes we are also limited by the level of the students. By the time they get to the high school level, they are missing so many skills. Most of our LEP students can’t read, speak, or write simple things.”
		“We also have some teachers or people that refuse to change. That makes things harder.”
	Everyone knows and sees the big picture	“For the AP and Dual-Credit course students we are about the mission, for all the regular students, it’s about passing the test.”
		“It becomes, if you don’t pass the STAAR, you don’t graduate.”
		“I do understand that mentality because if you don’t pass the STAAR you don’t graduate. And if you don’t graduate, how are you going to go to college?”
	Dealing with “tough issues”	“Usually with the department I address it, but half the time I have to call in administration to intercede.”
		“Some issue we know are going to take time to fix.”
		“The thing with tough issues is that we need everyone involved.”
Situation where you have to “wing it”	“For me I can’t afford to wing it. As the master teacher, I can’t afford to make mistakes.”	
	“I know that for everyone things every now and then don’t go right. So if I “wing it”, I already have somethings I can fall back on.”	
	“Technology sometimes is what makes us “wing it”. Sometimes it just doesn’t work.”	
<b>Plausibility rather than accuracy</b>	Campus headed in the right direction	“We are! Thanks to our administration and their belief and support; we are.”
		“Some parts are more ahead then others, but we are moving forward.”
		“We need to revisit our mission statement.”
	School’s ultimate goal? Do you feel that is the focus?	“Testing is the focus. We need to look at that.”
		“We need to look at the mission statement and our testing situation. We need to bring those things together if we want to be true.”
		“The goal is also for us not to go backwards and be in a required improvement status.”
	Is assistance is provided	“Yes we get help.”
“All we have to do is ask.”		

		“The only things that need more attention are budget and staffing.”
Items to share about being a master teacher		“It’s not an easy job and requires a lot of work.”
		“Experience helps in handling so many different duties.”
Can you tell when trouble is coming?		“Be ready to have to deal with adults. Colleagues may be friends, but business is business.”
		“Yes, most of the time we are prepared.”
		“It’s important to be proactive.”
		“It help that administration keeps us informed and focused.”



## APPENDIX D

### VITAE

#### Education:

- Texas A & M International University
  - Master of Science in Educational Administration
  - Superintendent Certification Coursework
- Laredo State University
  - Bachelors of Science in Secondary Education

#### Awards:

- “Raices” Hispanic Heritage Award - Awarded for Hispanic Educational Leadership. 2010
- National Scholars Honor Society - Awarded lifetime membership for academic scholarship. 2009
- Teaching American History Grant (author & program director) -Awarded by the U. S. Department of Education to increase teacher capacity under NCLB. 2006-2009
- Educator of the Week: Laredo Morning Times -Awarded by local newspaper to recognized educators. 2006
- Chancellor’s List: Texas A & M International University - 2004 - 2006
- Who’s Who Among American Teachers - 2003 -2004
- Congressional Award for Excellence in Education – 2003 Awarded by Dr. Henry Cuellar to educators who provide educational leadership in the 28<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congressional District.
- Regional Recipient of Excellence in Teaching Award, HEB – 2003
- CATE Shining Star Recipient – 2003
- Amigo Program Collaborative Partner, University of Texas Recognition for fostering partnership between secondary and post-secondary partners in the areas of business and finance. 2002
- Tech Prep Grant Recipient, Laredo Community College (VICA) 1999-1998
- Teacher of the Year, The Academy at United South High School - 1997

#### Administrative Experience

- Assistant Principal: Martin High School - Laredo ISD, Laredo, TX  
Administrator in charge of Special Education, Bilingual Education, ELA, Social Studies, Discipline, Budget, CEIC, Campus Improvement Plan, Athletics, Fine Arts, ROTC, Parental Involvement, Library, Nurses, and Section 504. January 2012 – Present
- Director for Non-Traditional High School - Laredo ISD, Laredo, TX  
Administrator accountable for overseeing and implementing program for the

recovery of at-risk overage students who dropped out of high school (drug history). July 2011 – December 2011.

- Interim Director for Dr. Dennis D. Cantu Health Science Magnet - Laredo ISD, Laredo, TX  
Administrator accountable for overseeing and implementing magnet program dedicated towards coursework and certifications in the Health Science Field. The program situated in a school within a school setting at the Martin High School campus. 2010 – 2011.
- Director for Career and Technical Education - Laredo ISD, Laredo, TX  
Administrator accountable for overseeing and implementing CTE program at 10 secondary campus. Duties require development and management of Department of Education Perkins IV Grant, state program compliance, providing and coordinating professional development, collection and reporting of data, budget, and developing annual reports. 2008 – May 2012
- Program Director: Teaching American History Grant - Laredo ISD, Laredo, TX  
Administrator in charge of implementing Department of Education grant, providing and coordinating professional development, compliance, collection and reporting of data, budget, and developing annual reports. 2006 – 2012
- Social Studies Academic Dean - Laredo ISD, Laredo, TX  
Provide administrative support in the discipline of social studies for all twenty-nine-district campuses. Support includes development of action plan, data disaggregation, timelines, staff development, curriculum support, assessment development, and program monitoring. 2007
- Assistant Principal: Martin High School - Laredo ISD, Laredo, TX  
Administrator in supervising 9<sup>th</sup> grade class, Social Studies, Technology, CTE, PE, ROTC, and Section 504. As administrator in charge of Freshman class, I supervised grade level programs, including attendance and discipline. 2006 – 2007
- Social Studies Academic Dean: - Laredo ISD, Laredo, TX  
Provide administrative support in the discipline of social studies for all twenty-nine-district campuses. Support includes development of action plan, data disaggregation, timelines, staff development, curriculum support, assessment development, and program monitoring. 2005 – 2006
- Curriculum & Instruction Technology Coordinator/Specialist - Laredo ISD, Laredo, TX  
Provide administrative and technical support to the department of Curriculum and Instruction in regards to the integration of technology. Support included the recommendation, review, monitoring, and evaluation of instructional technology applications in conjunction with curricular goals. Duties also entailed the development and maintenance of district's curriculum/content area web-sites. 2005
- Social Studies Instructional Specialist - Laredo ISD, Laredo, TX

Provide administrative support in the discipline of social studies for twenty elementary district campuses. Support includes development of action plan, data disaggregation, timelines, staff development, curriculum support, assessment development, and program monitoring. 2003 - 2004

**Teaching Experience:**

- Texas A & M International, Laredo, TX  
Teaching Assistant – Assisted Dr. Barbara Hong-Foster with respects to research and design class, which required assisting graduate students with preparation of professional paper and/or thesis. 2005-2006
- The Academy at United South High School, Laredo, TX  
Instructor – Multimedia, Graphic Design, and Animation Developed syllabus and overall course structure, and administered all grades. 1997-2003
- S.T.E.P. Academy at Los Obispos, UISD Laredo, TX  
Instructor – Social Studies: Developed syllabus and overall course structure, including weekly Novanet lab practicum, and administered all grades. 1996-1997
- United South High School, Laredo, TX  
Yearbook Sponsor - Taught and sponsored class, which taught desktop publishing skills and journalism skills in the production of a yearbook annual for the campus. 1990 - 2002
- United South High School, Laredo, TX  
UIL Journalism Coach - Taught and sponsored journalism team, including news writing, feature writing, editorial writing, and headline writing. 1990 – 2002
- United South High School, Laredo, TX  
Boys & Girls Varsity Soccer Coach - 1999 – 2003

**Conferences:**

- Texas A & M International, Laredo, TX  
Lamar Bruni Vergara & Guillermo Benavides Academic Conference. 2010  
Presentation on Administrative Practices Regarding Authentic Instruction and Accountability Issues
- Texas A & M International, Laredo, TX  
Lamar Bruni Vergara Academic Conference. 2009  
Presentation on Meeting the Needs of Non-traditional Students.
- Texas A&M University System Sixth Annual Student Research Symposium, Commerce TX  
Presentation on methodologies to identify student need regarding at-risk students. 2008
- Texas A & M International, Laredo, TX  
Graduate Research Education Conference. 2005  
Presentation on utilizing Performance Data and New Bloom’s Taxonomy

**Professional Activities:**

- Texas A & M Honor Society (2014)
- Kappa Delta Pi Society (2009 – 2011)
- South Texas Tech Prep (Executive Board Member) (2008 – 2012)
- Laredo Manufacturing Institute (Board Member) (2008 – present)
- Laredo Community College Industrial Trades Advisory Council (2007 – 2012)
- South Texas Tech Prep (Executive Board Member) (2008 – 2012)
- Laredo Manufacturing Institute (Board Member) (2008 – present)
- Laredo Community College Industrial Trades Advisory Council (2007 – 2012)
- Jr. Diabetes Foundation(2004)
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Laredo (1996)
- Veterans' History Project (2006)
- School District Community Initiatives
- Laredo History Council: Republic of the Rio Grande