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**The Need for Culturally Competent School Principals:  
K–12 School District Hiring Practices**

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**The Need for Culturally Competent School Principals:  
K–12 School District Hiring Practices**

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**Mónica Salas**

**Dissertation**

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## **Dedication**

In the memory of my brother, Marcos Moises Salas. During my time of pursuing each degree, you were my biggest cheerleader and the proudest big brother of your little sister. Completing this year without you has been bittersweet. You will forever remain my biggest supporter, “Love you and keep driving on. Don’t give up sis.”

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. Throughout the years, you have continued to support and believe in me when I struggled to believe in myself. Thank you for all the love and support you have given me and walking with me every step of the way. We did it!

To my nieces and nephews, Marky, Maddie, Dante, Charlie, Tyler, and Daisy, as you are starting out in this world in your own educational career know you can do anything you set your heart and mind to. To my students past, present, and future, always believe in yourself and keep your positive spirit and determination to always achieve more.

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## **Abstract**

### **The Need for Culturally Competent School Principals: K–12 School District Hiring Practices**

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Previous studies have investigated principal perceptions of cultural competence of already employed principals, principal standards, hiring decisions of school districts and principals. However, there is a gap in identifying what school districts are advertising and recruiting for culturally competent principals. The purpose of this study is to examine how school districts advertise, recruit and hire school principals for cultural proficiency through the lens of cultural competency conceptual framework (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

Research questions:

1. In a school district emphasizing cultural competence, what hiring practices are used for culturally competent school leaders?
  - a. What are the hiring procedures included in advertising, recruitment, screening, interview, and selection of principals of the school district?
  - b. What culturally competent knowledge, skills, and dispositions do school district representatives use when hiring principals?

This study uses a qualitative single case study approach on one public school district, Texas ISD. The school district identified in the study was selected due to the size and location of the school district within a large city. The school district also makes mention of cultural proficiency in their utilization of the cultural competency conceptual framework (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). This study utilizes a qualitative research approach of interviews and document analysis as data collection. Content and textual analysis (Davis, Gooden, & Micheaux, 2015)

was used to examine job descriptions and additional documents. Findings indicated Texas ISD was strategic and purposeful in their hiring practices from the recruitment to the selection of school principals. Cultural competencies were reflective in several different portions of the hiring practices however, was not reflective in all aspects of the hiring practices of the school district.

The study provides knowledge to the body of research of culturally competent leaders. Assessing the hiring practices of school districts for school principals assist in understanding how school districts identify the leadership capacity of principals in their cultural proficiency. The focus is on school principals because of their vital impact on campuses including in both teacher and student success. A call to action for school districts to examine their hiring practices and how they are hiring the best candidates for culturally diverse schools.

This research study supports the following areas of research: culturally competent leadership, leadership, human resource hiring practices, and K–12 public school districts.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

Advertising for and recruiting culturally competent leaders is crucial to school districts and their schools. This study sought to identify how school districts use advertising to recruit and hire culturally competent candidates as principals. School principals make decisions that impact every aspect of a campus, from the school systems and events to behavioral expectations and consequences for students. These decisions, which directly impact student success, become even more important as schools experience increased diversity in student populations.

The U. S. Census Bureau (2016) outlined the racial breakdown of the population in the United States as 61.3% White, 17.8% Hispanic, 13.3% Black or African American, 5.7% Asian, 1.3% American Indian and Alaska Native, and 2.6% representing two or more races. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016c), by 2025, less than half of the students in public schools will be White indicating the majority will be from other racial ethnicities. This anticipated student population composition is 46% White, 29% Hispanic, 15% Black, 6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 4% from two or more races, and 1% American Indian/Alaska Native. As the diversity of our school students continues to increase, it becomes more critical for principals to have a deeper, more sensitive understanding of cultural differences within the student populations they serve (Normore, 2006) because the need for culturally competent leadership escalates in tandem with increasing racial diversity.

The polar limits of the culturally proficient leadership continuum are characterized by opposing individual attitudes and behaviors. Cultural competency anchors the positive pole of the continuum and is demonstrated by respect for the traditions, beliefs, and customs of cultural groups (Bustamante, Nelson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). A culturally responsive leader is defined as one who demonstrates critical self-awareness, culturally responsive curricula and teacher

preparation, culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and engaging students and parents in community contexts (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016).

Culturally competent principals play an essential role in the academic success of all students regardless of background (Bustamante et al., 2009). This is especially important in schools that experience high rates of suspension or other behavioral issues for minority students. Given the role that culture plays in understanding students, culturally responsive leadership is a vital characteristic of principals (Bustamante et al., 2009; McCray & Beachum, 2014).

Chapter I describes the environmental characteristics that contribute to the problem being studied and establishes the boundaries that define the study. The chapter begins with a statement of the problem situated within extant literature. It then goes on to clarify the purpose of the study, list the research questions, and briefly discuss the methodology and assumptions that delineate the study. The chapter closes with a description of the significance of the study and concludes with a summary.

## **Background of the Study**

### **Cultural Diversity**

Cultural work in schools has been evident since the 1950s and continues today in the 21st-century (Lumby & Foskett, 2011). This cultural work is significant when examining the decisions of school districts, specifically how they go about hiring school principals. Scanlan and Lopez (2012) focused on culturally and linguistically diverse students in order to help school principals promote equity. School principals facilitate school improvement and student learning (Scanlan & Lopez, 2012). The use of reconstructing equity traps, assumptions made that “prevent educators from believing that their students of color can be successful learners” (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p.601), improved the possibility school principals develop



successful schools for students of color (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Valencia (1997) utilized the term “deficit thinking” to explain school failures for economically disadvantaged students of color. Deficit thinking encompasses the mindset of individuals that impact their behavior and attitudes toward minority students (Valencia, 1997). Eliminating deficit thinking by getting to know students, families, community, and their culture (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004) is a tool school principals can use. School leaders have the power to make a positive change for students in the organizational structures and processes of student’s perceptions and desires (Lumby & Foskett, 2011). Training and professional development for school leaders has been a priority for many national and state organizations (Lumby & Foskett, 2011). Lumby and Foskett (2011) chart the engagement on culture and educational leadership over time and share theoretical models on the concept of culture. Valenzuela (1999) conducted a three-year ethnographic study of high school immigrant Mexican and Mexican American students focusing on their academic achievement and school orientations. Valenzuela (1999) found schools subtract resources from students through assimilationist policies and practices. McKnight, as cited by Block (2008), established an Asset-based Community Development movement, focusing on the assets, resources, and talents of the community.

Cultural differences in schools may lead to cultural misunderstanding of students as they navigate through cultural differences between school and home cultures (Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011). Some students experience a cultural mismatch between home and school culture resulting in cultural conflict which can include students’ cultures not being recognized or valued in the classroom or campus setting (Horsford et al., 2011). Although there has been an increase of student racial diversity, teacher and principal diversity demonstrate a different story. Teachers’ racial make-up in 2012, according to the U. S. Department of Education (2016) was

82% White, 7% Black, 8% Hispanic, and 2% Asian. School principals' racial make-up was similar to that of school teachers in 2011–2012: 80% were White, 10% were Black 7% were Hispanic, and 3% were of other races. Furthermore, this racial trend for principals has been consistent since 2003 (U. S. Department of Education, 2016).

Student diversity is prominent in our schools with student differences in socioeconomic status, religion, physical and mental ability, language and ethnicity (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006). A change in student demographics in school districts leads to a change in student achievement approaches for school principals, particularly for those in schools made up of students from culturally, linguistic, and economically diverse backgrounds (Cooper, 2009; Hernandez & Kose, 2012; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). The achievement gap relates to the inequity of education for students from minority backgrounds, particularly as a result of standardized tests (Mcray & Beachum, 2014; Schlueter & Walker, 2008), that are themselves language dependent and culturally biased.

In years to come, people of color will outnumber Whites and by 2023, children of color under 18 will be the majority (Hernandez & Kose, 2012). Nelson and Guerra (2014) conducted a qualitative study of written scenario responses on culture clashes of 111 teachers and educational leaders in two school districts in Texas and Michigan. The study results demonstrated the majority of participants held deficit beliefs and used their deficit thinking to explain cultural clashes (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Cultural norms and values are reflected in schools in curricula, instructional methods, and behavioral management of the dominant culture (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). This socialization of the dominant culture for students who have a different set of cultural norms, is supported in schools through both academic teaching and cultural norms (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Students who veer away from White-normed, cultural expectations in

behavioral comportment are frequently assumed to be unruly and unintelligent by educators who lack cultural understanding (Nelson & Guerra, 2014).

Longoria and Manganaro (2012) conducted a study on chief administrative officer (CAO) approval of Texas residents with a Latinx oversample from south Texas border counties using a survey with random sampling. Findings indicated “that a respondent’s ethnic and being served by a coethnic do not matter, controlling for other variables.” Although Longoria and Manganaro (2012) did not argue the race and representation do not matter, the findings suggested there were other factors that are more important as predictors of CAO approval, such as economic status and trust in local government. The importance of cultural understanding and hiring culturally competent leaders can be seen in principal decisions on student behavioral outcomes. Leaders who are not culturally competent can impact their outlook on students and their achievements. Students of color are disproportionately suspended at higher rates than their White counterparts (Smith & Harper, 2015). Black students are suspended a rate of five times or higher than White counterparts in southern school districts (Smith & Harper, 2015). Texas suspended 31% of Black students who represent only 13% of the student population (Smith & Harper, 2015). These percentages were similar across 13 southern states; the disproportion of Black student enrollment percentages compared to Black student suspensions held (Smith & Harper, 2015). Although Black students are suspended at higher rates, research has not shown Black students misbehave at higher rates compared to White students (McCray, & Beachum, 2014). Given that teachers and principals are largely White this can reflect a cultural disconnect for students. Furthermore, student suspension is correlated to school dropout rates (McCray, & Beachum, 2014). With the demographics of our schools continuing to change and become more diverse, a cultural shift in our understanding must take place in schools, and it must be led by principals.

While some principals are not yet equipped with the tools necessary to successfully create environments of belonging for Black and Latino youth, all principals must be mindful of their students' cultural identities when making decisions in practice, including those that directly impact the curriculum and instruction of students (Horsford et al., 2011).

Discussion of cultural competence has occurred in a variety of fields including medical, social work, and education. The demographic change in students has increased the demand for racially and ethnically diverse school leaders (Fuller, Hollingworth, & An, 2016). In Texas, growth in student population increased almost 41% from 3.53 million in 1993 to 4.9 million in 2011 (Fuller et al., 2016). This growth in student population also increased school leader positions for assistant principals and principals from 37 to almost 65 percent (Fuller et al., 2016). Fuller et al. (2016) also examined the impact of personal and program characteristics on the placement of graduates in school leadership principal preparation programs in Texas on the likelihood of an individual obtaining employment as a school leader within a 5-year time frame using descriptive and multilevel logistic regression analysis. Assistant principal and principal positions were collapsed as one in the research analysis (Fuller et al., 2016). Findings demonstrated Black and Latina/o graduates had greater odds of obtaining an assistant principal position than their White peers but had lower odds in obtaining a principalship within five years of certification which could be contributed to the discrimination in hiring practices (Fuller et al., 2016). According to Winter & Morgenthal (2002), "The principalship remains a position dominated by White males, a circumstance some investigators attribute to historical bias against females and minorities (p. 337)."

## **Effective Principal Leadership**

The necessity for hiring effective principals in schools is evident in the impact these leaders have on both staff and students. An effective principal significantly impacts student achievement (Ash et al., 2013; Boyce & Bowers, 2016). As defined by the Center of Public Education (2012), an effective principal is one whose students make greater than average gains compared to similar students in other schools (McMahon, Peters, & Schumacher, 2014). There is a strong correlation between a principal and campus success for both teachers and students. For instance, individual principals impact the performance of approximately 500 students each year (New Leaders, 2013). Their influence accounts for roughly 25% of student achievement (Marzano, Walters, & McNulty, 2005), and because principals influence such large numbers of students, McMahon et al. (2014) concluded their impact on student achievement is more than four times that of a highly effective teacher. Principals determine the vision of the campus and what is viewed as important for the school's direction. Over the last 30 years according to Clifford and Ross (2012) as referenced by McMahon et al. (2014), researchers examined the role of principals in shaping school improvement and the foundation for student learning. Factors that influence school leadership decisions and effectiveness include: (a) school demographics, urbanicity, school size, grade level, percentage of students who receive special support, such as English language learners and special education, percentages of minority students and teachers, student-teacher ratios; and (b) meeting state and/or district goals (Urick & Bowers, 2014). With the percentage of minority students increasing and teachers influence on school decisions, it is important to have leaders who are culturally competent to make these decisions.

Principals create the campus culture and environment (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018) which can persuade teachers to stay at their current campus or cause drastic turnover. Campus

culture is categorized as respect, shared decision making, communication, and administrative support (Tadic, 2015; Willis & Varner, 2010). Teachers follow their leader's vision. Yet, disagreements about this vision or pedagogical differences can lead to turnover, which in turn will impact student success. Leadership behavior impacts not only student achievement, but also impacts 95% of teacher morale (Willis & Varner, 2010). Given that principals also make teacher hiring decisions, this impacts students either positively or negatively. Loeb and Reininger (2004) argue when hiring classroom teachers, high-needs districts do a poor job of recruiting. In all cases, principals determine who is hired, but there are different models for achieving this goal. Some principals are the sole hiring decision makers. Others share in the responsibility by forming a committee to interview and hire staff. A scarce few allow students to participate. While we know a lot of about teacher hiring, there is a paucity of information on how school districts hire principals.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Given the increase of minority students, the stagnant rate of minority principals, and the intensifying significance of culturally competent leadership, it is imperative to research how school districts go about hiring culturally competent school principals. Research by Ash, Hodge, and Connell (2013) and Boyce and Bowers (2016) has demonstrated the vital importance principals play in student success. Further, Bustamante et al. (2009) reported culturally responsive teaching contributed to improvements in student learning among diverse populations. Principals are instructional leaders and impact the instruction in classrooms based on their decisions in expected curriculum and instruction on their campus. The importance of having culturally competent instructional leaders is essential in our schools with the impact they have on the instructional decisions and their role as instructional leaders. These facts underscore the

importance of understanding the role of culture in school leadership. Yet, research into recruiting and hiring practices that focus on identifying and employing school leaders who are culturally competent and actively advocate for culturally responsive school environments is relatively scant.

Certainly, many studies of culturally competent leaders have been conducted in different forms. However, there is minimal extant research that examines culturally competent leadership as it specifically relates to hiring practices for principals. Davis, Gooden, and Micheaux (2015) provided an analysis of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and the Educational Leadership Constituent Council standards through the lens of Critical Race Theory which challenges dominant cultural ideologies (Yosso, 2005). Their findings identified a lack of dialogue concerning race, racism, and culture in both standards. This is crucial information because these standards guide the hiring practices of school districts.

Bustamante et al. (2009) conducted a mixed methods study on school culture audits which analyzed how well schools responded to diverse group needs. They found four primary themes: (a) policy as a paradox, (b) programs being instrumental to culturally competent practice, (b) the integral nature of school culture and climate, and (d) barriers to cultural competence. Perhaps even more important than these themes, the researchers uncovered implicit biases and a lack of understanding about cultural competence among the 151 school leaders from two Western states that participated. Participating positions varied from superintendents to school counselors and included various geographic locations and school types.

Welborn (2016) used a mixed method approach to examine elementary principal perceptions of cultural competency in their schools and their use of culturally competent practices through a survey and interviews conducted in school districts in Missouri. Several

themes emerged from the research student a) celebration of cultural diversity, b) communication, c) recognition of differences, d) establishment of high standards, e) understanding the differences, and f) improvement and growth (Welborn, 2016). Elementary principals perceived their schools to be culturally competent in areas of teaching and learning, conflict management, teachers, and curriculum (Welborn, 2016). Principals acknowledged a need for professional development in cultural competence (Welborn, 2016).

Gomez (2015) used a qualitative case study approach to examine principal perceptions of cultural competency and associated barriers among five principals in urban high, middle, and elementary schools in California. The cultural proficiency continuum, created by Terrell and Lindsey (2009), was used as the conceptual framework and data were gathered from interviews, school board meeting minutes, school accountability report cards, and notes with school descriptions (Gomez, 2015). Findings demonstrated varying perceptions regarding barriers and challenges of culturally competent leadership. They included daily realities of school management, one individual's own personal resistance, and staff expectations of teacher cultural competence (Gomez, 2015). Previous studies have investigated principal perceptions around the cultural competency of principals already employed, principal standards, and the hiring decisions of school districts and principals. However, there is a gap in extant literature surrounding how school districts advertise for, recruit, and hire culturally competent principals. Cruzeiro and Boone (2009) found superintendents in Texas sought experienced candidates who had completed a principal preparation program and held the appropriate certification. Superintendents also sought candidates with abilities who had worked effectively with ethnically and economically diverse student populations, were instructional leaders, and possessed human relations skills (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009). Roza et al. (2003), as cited by Cruzeiro and Boone (2009), found



there were differences between how superintendents and human resource administrators identified qualified applicants which directly impacts the applicant pool. Superintendents were interested in applicants' abilities to lead professional colleagues whereas human resource administrators considered the education and experience of candidates.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Viewed through the lens of a cultural competency framework (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009), this study examined how one school district advertised for, recruited, and hired culturally proficient school principals. The cultural competency framework outlined by Terrell and Lindsey (2009) provided a continuum of elements. The purpose was to identify the facets of culturally competent leadership valued by school district leaders in the different phases of the hiring process from the recruiting and screening to the selection of school principals.

### **Research Questions**

This study addressed the following research question and sub-questions:

1. In a school district emphasizing cultural competence, what hiring practices are used for culturally competent school leaders?
  - a. What are the hiring procedures included in advertising, recruitment, screening, interview, and selection of principals of the school district?
  - b. What culturally competent knowledge, skills, and dispositions do school district representatives use when hiring principals?

### **Brief Overview of the Methodology**

This study used a qualitative single case study approach for one public school district located in Texas. The districts' steady population, numbers of minority students, categorization type as defined by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and location contributed to their

identification and selection. There are a total of nine different clarifications for school districts by TEA; (a) major urban – 11 districts, (b) major suburban – 79 districts, (c) other central city – 41 districts, (d) other central city suburban – 161 districts; (e) independent town – 68 districts, (f) non-metropolitan: fast growing – 31 districts, (g) non-metropolitan: stable – 174 districts, (h) rural – 459 districts, and (i) charter school districts – 183 districts (TEA, 2017). In 2007, the TEA identified Texas ISD (pseudonym), as a *major urban* district district (TEA, 2011). The categorization type still applied to the school district based on the 2016–2017 school year report (TEA, 2018a). There were a total of eleven school districts in the State of Texas classified as major urban (TEA, 2017). The TEA glossary defines major urban based on county population, the enrollment based on the county, and the percentage of those enrolled as economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2017). “A district is classified as major urban if: (a) it is located in a county with a population of at least 950,000; (b) its enrollment is the largest in the county or at least 70% of the largest district enrollment in the county; and (c) at least 35% of enrolled students are economically disadvantaged. A student is reported as economically disadvantaged if he or she is eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program. (TEA, 2017).

Data that addressed the research questions was gathered utilizing a qualitative research approach including interviews and document analysis. A semi-structured interview format was used for interviews. Content and textual analysis (Davis et al., 2015) were used to examine job descriptions and additional documents through the conceptual framework of cultural competency. Documents for document analysis were retrieved from the district website and included job descriptions.

### **Limitations**

This study presented several inherent limitations that restrict transferability to similar school districts. The school district under study is located within a specific geographical area which may possess characteristics and practices that are relatively unique. The study was also constrained by time as the way in which a school district carries out procedures often varies according to the individuals who occupy those positions. Also, time changes the demographics of students, the racial make-up of cities, and the belief and dispositions of individuals. In education, one often hears the “pendulum swinging.” The phrase refers to how education changes. What is valued and important one moment in time may later change. These limitations are noted to assist the reader in determining the applicability of these findings to other situations.

### **Delimitations**

This research study only focused on one school district’s hiring practices for school principals. A review of assistant principal job descriptions might provide an extension of knowledge. The scope of the study examined job descriptions in one school district within the state of Texas. Although this research study only investigated culturally competent leadership that is not to say it is the only factor that supports or hinders school culture and student success. The research study was also given delimitations by the school district site which restricted contacts to be made with certain individuals and not others including the use of identified positions. Additionally, the research study intended to review interview questions posed during the interview process and the resources interview committees search for however, the school district site informed the researcher this would not be an attainable document.

### **Guiding Assumptions and Positionality**

It is assumed a school principal who is culturally competent can support students in their academic success (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). As student demographics will continue to shift, the importance of principals' cultural competence remains a vital component in student success. Advertising job descriptions, recruiting highly effective individuals, and hiring principals are essential tasks for school districts. It was also assumed the job descriptions, responses to interview questions, and documents analyzed incorporated language related to values associated with cultural diversity as discussed further in Chapter III.

It is important to note my positionality within the context of the research study. I self-identify as a Mexican American woman. I am also a current practitioner serving as a bilingual principal in a public-school district in Texas. The research study was significant not only to my role as a public-school principal but also my role as a scholar in academia. Cultural competency and proficiency are imperative to the work that principals do as we shape the campus in which our students enter. The decisions we make, have a drastic impact on the lives of others, our students. I believe our view and biases directly or indirectly impact our decisions.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study contributes knowledge to the body of research of culturally competent leaders. Assessing the hiring practices of school districts for school principals, assists in understanding how school districts identify the leadership capacity of principals who possess cultural competency. The focus was on school principals because of their vital impact on campuses including both teacher and student success. Advertising for and recruitment by school districts for culturally competent leaders is crucial to any school. This is a call to action for school

districts who must adapt their recruitment efforts to support the hiring and selecting of culturally competent school principals.

### **Summary**

Chapter I outlined the research study on the hiring practices of school districts of K–12 school principals, including the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, a brief overview of the methodology, assumptions, significance of the study, and concluded with a summary of the chapter. Chapter II provides a literature review of principal labor markets, school districts’ hiring practices, and principal and school district preferences, culturally competent leadership, and the national and Texas standards.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Race* – “Each of the major divisions of humankind, having distinct physical characteristics”

(Oxford Living Dictionary, 2019). Description of how one looks; texture- facial features, bone structure skin color, hair, eye color, white, brown, black

*Ethnicity* – “The fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition” (Oxford Living Dictionary, 2019). Cultural factors, nationality, regional culture ancestry, language. Based on social and cultural group.

*Color* – “Pigmentation of the skin, especially as an indication of someone's race” and “a group of people considered as being distinguished by skin pigmentation.” (Oxford Living Dictionary, 2019). Complexion or skin shade/tone- light skinned, dark skinned, lightness/darkness or other color characteristics.

*Diversity* – “the condition of having or being composed of differing elements; especially: the inclusion of different types of people (such as people of different races or cultures) in a group or organization” (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

*Culture* – “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group” (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

*Equity* – “justice according to natural law or right; specifically: freedom from bias or favoritism” (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

*Social Justice* – “Justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society” (Oxford Living Dictionary, 2019). All individuals and groups are entitled to fair and impartial treatment. Concept of fair and just.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

The success of a school is often dependent on that of the school principal (Rammer, 2007). Organizational change for student success is often determined by principal perceptions and behaviors (Urick & Bowers, 2014). Effective principals' critical practices strategically include a focus on direction, building on a powerful organization, giving life to data, a student-focused vision, and leading learning (Ash et al., 2013). Principals hire qualified professionals to work with students, influence discipline procedures, serve as the connection between school and community, promote the school's vision, and act as an instructional leader (Lynch, 2012). The general trajectory of a principal begins as a classroom teacher with an undergraduate degree or supplemental education. The individual pursues a master's degree and continues on to become an assistant principal and/or support instructionally at the district or campus level prior to seeking a principalship. On average, principals wait 5.1 years after graduating from their principal preparation program before pursuing a principalship (Bastian & Henry, 2015). Principals face increased diversity in student populations, including varying cultural differences (Normore, 2006).

This chapter provides an overview of two large areas of scholarly inquiry, hiring structures and cultural leadership, building on the argument as outlined by Bustamante et al. (2009) and other researchers that cultural competence, while understudied, is essential in a rapidly-changing world comprised of large increases of youth with specific needs. The role of the principal is encompassed by many facets. The literature review encompasses principal accountability as set forth by policies, national and state standards, school principal preparation programs, and labor markets and hiring practices, and concludes with the conceptual framework

of cultural competency to provide context of the expectations of the principal. The focus of the literature review was primarily school principal leadership. While examining the advertising and recruitment of school districts for culturally competent school principals, the study intended to identify the need for change in the hiring practices of school districts, if necessary.

### **National Principal Standards**

The role of the principal has evolved through the years in the United States (Lynch, 2012) in large part due to increased national accountability (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013). A look at what is expected of principals is necessary to identify where cultural competence falls as an expectation at the national level, if at all. Accountability standards-based reforms such as the Individuals with Disabilities Act, No Child Left behind and Every Student Succeeds Act, have raised the requirements of educator programs through the adoption of professional standards holding educators more accountable (Boscardin, McCarthy, & Delgado, 2009; Keeler, 2002). As a result, the role of the principal has become of great interest to policy makers and scholars (Davis, Leon, & Fultz, 2013). The field of education now regularly incorporates democratic community, social justice, and school improvement paradigms (McKerrow, Crawford, & Cornell, 2006).

Standards exemplify expectations of school leaders either adopted at the state, national level, or both. These standards include the vision of leadership that is currently reflected in the field, particularly focused on accountability-based reforms and high stakes tests, representing fundamental shifts in the desires of school principals (Anderson, 2001). While some have argued that creating standards represses the creative leadership possibilities that leaders may possess (Anderson, 2001), standards provide a policy framework for the kinds of knowledge and skills that professionals should possess (Boscardin et al., 2009). Although standards represent



expectations of what principals need to know, standards can be interpreted differently by the individual reading them (Anderson, 2001; Beach & Lindahl, 2000).

Certification standards are currently required for educational positions, including those in leadership positions of principals and superintendents. Thirteen states required academic preparation for superintendent certification in 1962 (Misner, & Wright, 1962). In 1994, the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), issued a set of grounded principles and best practices focused on knowledge base, performance standards, and professional dispositions, which were created to shape K– 12 administrator credential requirements (Davis et al., 2013; McKerrow et al., 2006). The qualitative shift here is with respect to dispositions, referring to, “those beliefs and values a quality administrator ought to possess” that are consistent with research on “good leaders” (McKerrow et al., 2006, p. 34). The goal of the ISLLC standards was to raise the quality of school leaders and expectations for those who hire and teach them at the district and college or university level by establishing a set criteria of standards (McKerrow et al., 2006).

The 1994 consortium licensure was formed by 24 states under the Council of Chief State School Officers funded by five states; Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, and Illinois along with the District of Columbia (Keeler, 2002; Lewis, 1997; McKerrow et al., 2006). Director of the consortium project, Neil Shipman, stated administrators would be evaluated on instructional leadership and not their management skills (Lewis, 1997). The dispositions describe what creators felt were values and beliefs of quality administrators (McKerrow et al., 2006).

Three trends led to the redefining of leadership: (a) redefining teaching and learning, (b) caring–centered concepts of school, and (c) people outside of the school playing stronger roles in

education (Beach & Lindahl, 2000; Lewis, 1997). In 1996, standards were organized into three domains and six conceptual categories: (a) knowledge—what administrators must know and understand, (b) disposition—making certain decisions, and (c) performance—what administrators must be able to do (Beach & Lindahl 2000; Davis et al., 2013; McKerrow et al., 2006; Voltz & Collins, 2010). The first states to mandate the new principal licensure assessment in July of 1997 developed by Educational Testing Service and the ISLLC were made official in 1998 (Lewis, 1997). Events leading to the improvement of preparation programs included the creation of the National Policy for Education Administration, University Council for Education Administration (UCEA) in conjunction with the National Commission of Excellence in Educational Administration published knowledge base for administrators, publication of a handbook for education administration research in American Education Research Association, and creating standards and dispositions for school administrators in ISLLC (McKerrow et al., 2006).

The ISLLC standards have had an influence on leadership preparation programs (Davis et al., 2013; Voltz, & Collins, 2010), the majority of whom (90%) are certified through graduate school programs incorporating such standards (Davis et al., 2013). Yet, 92% of superintendents believed administrator credential programs were ineffective at preparing them for the complex position (Davis et al., 2013). In 2000 more than 30 states had adopted or adapted versions of ISLLC standards (Beach & Lindahl, 2000; Keeler, 2002). McKerrow et al. (2006) state all educational administration organizations and approximately 40 states adopted or adapted the ISLLC standards for licensing, creating professional development, and developing or revising certification programs at the time of standard publication. The standards were revised in 2008 to align the evolving needs of 21st century schools (Davis et al., 2013).

Drawing from Critical Race Theory, Davis et al. (2015) conducted a study of ISLLC and Educational Leaders Constituent Council standards searching for key words such as race, ethnicity, color, culture, diversity, equity, and justice. The findings indicated culture, diversity, equity and social justice are more common compared to race, ethnicity and color as they do not appear in primary standards or functions (Davis et al., 2015). Davis et al. (2015) maintained that the terms culture, diversity, equity and social justice are less controversial and less specific, explaining their greater prevalence as standards.

The ISLLC standards were revised once again with a new name called Professional Standards of Educational Leaders 2015 (National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2015). These standards are said to be grounded in research and administrator experience (National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2015). These standards, similar to the ones before, offer a framework to the profession. The 2015 standards offer a clear emphasis on student learning and foundational principles to prepare 21st century learners (National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2015). They are divided into ten domains that function as an interdependent system: (a) mission, vision and core values; (b) ethics and professional norms; (c) equity and cultural responsiveness; (d) curriculum, instruction and assessment; (e) community of care and support for students; (f) professional capacity of school personnel; (g) professional community for teachers and staff; (h) meaningful engagement of families and communities; (i) operations and management; and (j) school improvement (National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2015). Incorporating, in effect, earlier concerns related to the absence of race, ethnicity, color, and culture (Davis et al., 2015), this updated version of the 2015 standards includes a discussion on cultural responsiveness as an expectation of school principals. The changes made from 1996 to 2015 can indicate the changes in our nation not only

related to race or ethnicity, but rather the change in the mindset and expectations of educating all students. In other words, we have adopted a stance for equity and cultural responsiveness for all students who are served in education. As shown in the revised standards, the changes of expectations for the role of the principal are evident. Every state has the option of adopting these national standards. Texas has developed their principal standards that are reflective of some of the dispositions.

### **Texas Principal Standards**

The context of this research focused on the State of Texas. Although the adoption of the National Policy Board for Education Administration standards is fairly recent, Texas had not yet revisited their principal standards since 2014. Texas Education Code (2014) denotes five board principal standards to be used for training, appraisal, and professional development: (a) instructional leadership, (b) human capital, (c) executive leadership, (d) school culture, and (e) strategic operations. Instructional leadership focuses on student achievement, classroom instruction, and strategies. The principal has the capacity to provide teachers with feedback and suggestions on instruction to impact student success. Instructional leadership relates to outlining the roles and responsibilities of the principal and emphasizes teacher; hiring, growing, and professional development support. Principals are expected to recruit and retain effective teachers in schools. Teachers are viewed as the most valuable asset. Executive leadership includes the success of the school as a whole, communication skills, feedback from stakeholders, reflection on their practice, and ethical behavior. Navigating the political terrain with stakeholders could be necessary in the executive leadership standard. In the school culture standard, concentration was placed on creating a school culture of high expectations, positive campus environment, focus on students' social emotional needs, and targeting family involvement. Highlighted in this

standard was developing a positive school culture. Strategic operation placed the focus on school vision, allocation of resources, and scheduling. Harnessed in this standard were established goals, having clear objectives, and a plan of action (TEC, 2014). The Texas standards provide a guideline of principal expectations; they are not specific in ensuring cultural diversity as an essential component of school principals' daily practices. The standards are to also support principal preparation programs across the state of Texas yet do not highlight the importance of being culturally competent.

### **Principal Preparation Programs**

Many principal preparation programs have adopted new approaches to meet the new challenges principals face in the field (Perez, Uline, Johnson, James–Ward, & Basom, 2011). Reforms to leadership programs began with the 1987 National Commission of Excellence in Education Administration papers and the 1989 National Board Policy for educational Administration report moving from traditional management–focused lecture to providing an authentic field–based experience (Perez et al., 2011). Educational leadership preparation programs have identified 12 research strands: “program design, curriculum, pedagogy, program evaluation, faculty, context, theory design, clinical experiences, students, student assessment, professional development, and mentoring, coaching, and induction” (O’Malley & Capper, 2015, p. 294). The definite linkage between principal preparation programs and student success has been extremely complex to identify (Donmoyer, Yennie–Donmoyer & Galloway, 2012). Critics argued principal preparation programs have failed to prepare future principals to be instructional leaders and influence student achievement (Donmoyer et al., 2012; Lynch, 2012). The research association creation of University Council of Educational Administration’s (UCEA) and published *Handbook on the Education of School Leaders* from UCEA and Division A of the

American Educational Research Association have begun to address the need for knowledge in principal preparation programs (Donmoyer et al., 2012).

Administrator preparation programs should encompass a focus on teaching and learning, commitment to educational values, change management, effectively working with groups, and familiarity with teaching techniques (Malone & Caddell, 2000). As noted above, individuals wait an average of 5.1 years before entering the role of principal (Bastian & Henry, 2015). In a longitudinal study conducted by DeAngelis and O'Connor (2012), 69.3% of their participants applied for administrator positions within the first two years of certification contrary to previous research. Early-career principals are influenced by their environment and experiences as assistant principals (Bastian & Henry, 2015). Bastian and Henry (2015) found that first-time principals assumed positions in the same school district in which they taught and/or were assistant principals. This suggests the professional development school districts provide can lead to improving principals' cultural competency. Miller and Martin (2015) used a cultural capital lens in the multi-case study conducted of educational leadership preparation programs for social justice leaders. Findings demonstrated principals' beliefs and assumptions affect diverse student populations (Miller & Martin, 2015).

### **School District Professional Development**

In a typical principal pathway, a principal completes their certification and enters their career as an assistant principal prior to assuming the role of principal. School districts throughout the nation determine the type of professional development a principal will receive, if any, determined by the values of school district. Conger and Benjamin (1999), as cited in Peterson (2002), stated that there are four structural and cultural objectives for professional development programs: (a) individual leadership effectiveness; (b) career transition into leadership positions;

(c) vision, values, and mission; and (d) skills and knowledge for long-term strategic objectives (Peterson, 2002).

State and national associations and organizations provide professional development opportunities for those who seek them (Peterson, 2002). School districts either execute their own ideas of professional development or partner with universities to provide these opportunities. School districts located in proximity to a university may choose to form a partnership with the university at little or no expense to the school district. Another option a school district may take is forming an Aspiring Principal program. The “grow your town” initiative is becoming a common trend within school districts. Valenzuela (2016) states

...efforts to transform education in a sustaining way are jeopardized when they lack a community on the ground that understands and supports this transformation. In the best of worlds, the community is much more than a supporting actor: It is a founding partner and respected co-equal that guides the overall initiative as the primary stakeholder of the reform . (p.11)

Valenzuela (2016) states (a) high-quality teachers correlate with student achievement, (b) Latino students “are systematically deprived of access to quality education” (p. 21), (c) hard-to-staff schools have more Latino and Latina teachers, (d) racial congruence has been researched that shows Latino teachers register higher test scores for students of color, and (e) knowledge of students’ cultures and language is helpful when building relationships between students and parents. This idea indicates the growing your own initiative begins with members of the community long before the principalship becomes involved, and could begin with teachers. The concept further explores how the community and university work together to redefine the role of the university programs and their teaching (Valenzuela, 2016). Often these programs are set up

to grow leaders within the respective school district. This program attracts teachers to develop their leadership skills, which in turn benefits the school district. Once an assistant principal is in the position the program may be geared toward transitioning to the role of the principal. The continued growth of principals once in position requires purposeful planning. Topics of professional development may vary depending on the target audience. These school districts have the opportunity to add culturally competent leadership training within the learning of all administrators, both those aspiring to and those already serving in those roles. Not only are the programs supporting in identifying and developing school leaders many have embedded mentorship and dialogue to their programs. These mentorship relationships can support in pushing the envelope of conversations centered around cultural proficiency. Establishing the vision of the program, including a desire to grow leaders in cultural competence, can contribute to the success of students.

### **University–Based Preparation Programs**

The change in student demographics leads to a need for change in university–based administrator training programs to prepare school leaders for equity, diversity, and social justice (Hernandez & Kose, 2012; Herrity & Glasman, 2010). In the United States alone over 500 university administrator training programs exist (Herrity & Glasman, 2010). These university–based programs train administrators who will venture out to a range of settings, including urban, rural, suburban, elementary, secondary, primary, public, private, etc. Herrity and Glasman (2010) examined recommendations from school principals for administrator preparation programs. Two–thirds of principals recommended areas of focus particularly related to diversity knowledge of: (a) bilingual education, (b) second language acquisition, (c) bilingual instructional methodology, (d) organizational models and scheduling for bilingual classrooms, (e) awareness



of cultural norms and diversity issues, and (f) knowledge of pragmatics related to diversity (Herrity & Glasman, 2010). It is essential for university programs to focus on diversity competencies that will enable leaders to establish equal opportunities of access for all students (Herrity & Glasman, 2010).

### **Labor Market**

The labor market of administrators seeks to identify the supply—individuals available to work, and demand—the positions available, for those seeking administrator positions. However, selecting, hiring and retaining strong leaders is difficult for many school districts. The demand for effective school leadership has increased as the demand for school accountability has also increased (Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011).

The role of the principalship has gone through several changes through the years: teacher, head teacher, teaching principal, school principal, supervising principal, and principal as a change agent (Malone & Caddell, 2000), to name a few. As administrators, the principal's demanding role has several hats to wear including manager, instructional leader, and motivator (Malone & Caddell, 2000). The new reform shifted from top-down leadership approaches of past instructional leadership to shared leadership with teachers (Urick & Bowers, 2014). Normore (2006) suggested the role "transcended the traditional notions of functional management, power, behavior style and instructional leadership" (Normore, 2006, p. 45). The search for principals and administrators is at an all-time high due to the high demands of the role, increased accountability, retirement of current principals, and increased enrollments in school districts (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012; Malone & Caddell, 2000; Normore, 2006; Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). Half of the elementary school principals surveyed planned to retire by 2000 (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). Between 1987–1988 and 1999–2000 there was a 7% growth in

public school principalship, with greater growth in certain regions (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). In Illinois, growth in demand for assistant principals increased by 10% from 71% (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). These findings show the demand for administrators seeking a leadership position is increasing.

While it appears the administrator market is oversaturated with greater numbers of individuals who are certified for these positions than there are positions to fill (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012; Whitaker & Vogel, 2005), the reality is that there are plenty of people who are certified to serve as administrators but choose not to pursue these positions. That said, openings typically receive multiple applications for one position and states certify more than enough administrator certifications to fill these vacancies, principal shortages persist (Myung et al., 2011). Principal shortages are particularly concerning only in certain types of schools: (a) schools that serve high minority populations including poor, non-White, or English language learners; and (b) middle and high schools compared to elementary schools (Myung et al., 2011). Although individuals have completed their principal programs, they do not apply for the principalships that are available (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). The major concern lies in finding quality candidates who possess the necessary skills rather than the quantity of candidates (Myung et al., 2011; Normore, 2006; Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). Some people also chose to receive their principal certification in the hopes of acquiring a district-level position but never really intended to serve as a principal. The degree is often viewed as an umbrella that can be used as a stepping stone to the next big role. Administrators must demonstrate an extensive array of skills, including both practical and conceptual (Malone & Caddell, 2000).

Adding to this are discriminatory practices against women and minority administrators in some positions such as high school principalships and superintendents (DeAngelis & O'Connor

2012). Women holding principal certifications are less likely to apply for positions than their male counterparts (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). Furthermore, men were typically favored in actual attainment of positions (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012). Some of the research surveys sample as a whole without narrowing down whether individuals have the minimum qualifications to pursue the role (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012). This leads to inadequate findings of information. Searching for individuals who are interested in pursuing the role and have the qualifications necessary to continue may give us a different insight.

Middle-aged individuals were more likely to pursue a role in administration than their younger or older counterparts (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012). Although teachers are primarily female, administrative positions are predominantly held by men (Normore, 2006). Females tend to enter their career in administration later in their career leading to older ages than what has been found for males (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012). Family responsibilities and commitments also affect females' decisions of advancement into administration (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012). Individual's take into account their age and experience to determine their readiness to apply for administrative positions (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012). Teachers with more years of experience and having job-specific preparation experiences, positively influenced decisions to apply for positions (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012).

Racial and gender disparity is an issue for teachers and continues to be an issue for administrators citing White females obtain administrative positions especially in elementary schools (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). There has been a pervasive lack of minority candidates for principal positions according to superintendents (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012; Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). There is no clear determination if the supply or demand has a contribution to this trend (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012).

Minority women and men make up nearly 18% of public-school leaders which does not reflect the racial composition of student populations (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). One study found there were few minorities actually enrolled in a principalship program leading to the idea of needing to recruit and train minority individuals (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005).

Recommendations for this recruitment include developing partnerships between school districts and universities, restructuring the role, and salaries and incentives (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005).

### **Hiring**

The recruitment and retention of quality individuals in the role of school principal are important tasks in the success of a school. Effective leadership has been redefined throughout the years initiating a needed change in the recruitment and selection process (Normore, 2006). Effective recruitment and selection processes are a challenge in seeking a quality fit in the now complex role of leadership by attracting, screening and identifying these candidates (Normore, 2006). Superintendents and school boards are seeking qualities that are possessed in the business industry such as honesty, competence, vision, and the ability to inspire others (Malone & Caddell, 2000). Businesses are able to provide benefits, stock options, and financial security where most schools are not able to compete favorably (Malone & Caddell, 2000).

The ability to recruit and hire transformative leaders begins by identifying transformative teachers in the classroom (Malone & Caddell, 2000). It becomes the role of the current administrator and university faculty to focus on the positive characteristics and explain broad perspectives of the principalship (Malone & Caddell, 2000). In 2001, more than 30% of school districts indicated they were not using a strategy to recruit candidates and only 10% reported collaborating with local universities as a way to address the shortage concern (Normore, 2006). No Child Left Behind passed in 2002 with a \$10 million initiative to support recruitment,

retention, and training of administrators but the monetary support was later removed (Normore, 2006). Schools districts can actively recruit teachers who have the potential to be effective leaders within their own schools (Myung et al., 2011).

The hiring process structure varies by school districts. Some processes may include a single person interview to a committee filled with teachers, human resources representative, and assistant superintendent or superintendent present. The interviews are usually focused on work history, education, training, etc. (Normore, 2006). Utilizing portfolios, or performance-based selection process can help committee members make a better decision about candidates (Normore, 2006), in addition, some school district also a principal candidate to facilitate a short lesson with a diverse group of students. Qualities of knowledge and skills on instructional practice are essential components (Normore, 2006).

These hiring structures of school districts are not always thorough, which in turn leads to making the wrong hiring decision on a candidate (Normore, 2006). Having an extensive hiring process can lead to placing and keeping qualified candidates within the school district (Normore, 2006). Selection procedures typically include an application, resume, and interview. Bills (2003) assesses the relationship between educational attainment, educational credentials, and socioeconomic success, job acquisition, using seven middle-range theories: (a) human capital, (b) screening, (c) signaling, (d) control, (e) cultural capital, (f) institutional, and (g) credentialism. Human capital theory posits the applicants' schooling as valuable to the employer (Bills, 2003). The more school in sheer years, or prestige in the school attended by the applicant, the more valuable the applicant is to the employer (Bills, 2003). Screening theory focuses on the reaction to the analysis of personal qualities of applicants such as education, job experience, race, and gender (Bills, 2003). Continuing to use schooling as an example, screening the school

the applicant attended may induce fluctuations in the amount paid to the applicant (Bills, 2003). Signaling theory compliments screening theory (Bills, 2003). The applicants signal based on the information placed on their applications that which employers use to screen. The term sorting can be used to include both screening and signaling (Bills, 2003). There are other frameworks that discuss hiring structures, however Bills (2013) provides a basic organization structure to gain understanding of the potential hiring practices of school districts.

### **Job Postings**

Richardson, Watts, Hollis, and McLeod (2016) conducted a study analyzing 300 job advertisements from seven states including Connecticut, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, and Ohio to explore whether the demands of the principalship were reflected in job advertisements. Results from the study indicate a disconnect between what researchers say the role of the principal is and what districts advertise, calling to question whether the needs are addressed in the interview process (Richardson et al., 2016). This research study in analyzing the interview process of school district will provide knowledge about this area in question.

Winter and Morgenthal (2002) explored assistant principal applicants' decisions to accept administrative positions prior to the initial interview in Kentucky using ANOVA. Participants were given a job description instrument which included a section about the district, job qualifications, school location, general school information, and school achievement (Winter & Morgenthal, 2002). Results revealed assistant principals rate jobs from schools with a higher achievement rating at the top of their list and those in-need-of-assistance as their lowest potential acceptance (Winter & Morgenthal, 2002). A recommendation from the research was to investigate the predisposition, attitudes, and perceptions of individuals' desire to assume the job (Winter & Morgenthal, 2002).

## **Applications**

There are multiple stages that lead to the role of a principal (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012). The initial stage is the certification stage in which the individual receives the licensure necessary to occupy the role (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012). Riehl and Byrd (1997), as cited in DeAngelis and O'Connor (2012), presented a three-stage career mobility model: (a) searching and applying, (b) receiving a job offer, and (c) accepting or declining the position. Part of the searching and applying component is the application stage. Occupational choice theory within economics frames the application stage, stating that individuals decide to pursue a position in educational administration if their expected satisfaction exceeds their current position (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012).

Pounder and Merrill (2001) investigated candidates' perceptions of high school principalships desirability using not occupational, but "job choice theory." Job choice theory explores decisions, applications and acceptances of principal positions, by the candidate through an evaluation, information, and process (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). Findings using descriptive statistics indicated applicants' highest desire to pursue a high school position was to achieve and influence education, with the second being the salary and benefits (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). Pounder & Merrill (2001) suggested further research was needed on how school personnel describe quality candidates, such as school boards and superintendents. Based on my own experiences as a practitioner, I add that human resource directors and assistant superintendents also play a vital role in the hiring decisions of principals.

## **Principal Preference**

Preferences, both positive and negative, impact decisions of future administrators. School districts must keep these in mind when making compensation decisions within their

respective sites. Factors that affect decisions to apply or not apply for administrator positions include high stress of the position, reforms, time spent with long hours with inadequate pay, the work environment, stress, and criticism from the external environment (Cooley & Shen, 2000; DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012; Malone & Caddell, 2000; Myung et al., 2011; Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). Eight factors were identified influencing decisions to apply: (a) workload and compensation, (b) macro-constraints, (c) impact on individual and family, (d) intrinsic rewards, (e) work environment, (f) school district characteristics including location, size and reputation, (g) community characteristics, and (h) safety and support (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012; Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). The time concern is due to additional time being spent to fulfill supplementary duties that equal or exceed the hours of a school day (Malone & Caddell, 2000). Time demands were the most negative aspect identified by both practicing principals (80.7%) and prospective principals (56.9%) as a contributing factor to pursue the role of an administrator (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). The changing and heavy toll of accountability has also put a heavy burden on administrators (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). Several states hold principals responsible for student achievement producing stress and a reason why many decide not to enter the role or causing those who are in the role to leave (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005).

Motivating factors also contribute to the desire to serve as an administrator such as: (a) working with teachers, (b) making a difference on a grander scale, (c) change of classroom routines, (d) salary, (e) extra service pay, (f) freedom to make decisions, (g) sense of achievement, (h) impact on implementation of school policy, and (i) opportunity to grow professionally (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012; Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). There are a number of ways administrators work with teachers including instructional coaching to increase student success. As the administrator, decisions of instructional focus, behavioral outcomes, systems



and structures, etc., are made through their vision. A typical day in the life of an administrator is never the same. There are a variety of tasks that need to be accomplished to ensure the success of a school.

Economic theory suggests the demands and responsibilities of an administrator lead individuals to question if the per diem basis is worthwhile (DeAngelis & O'Connor 2012; Malone & Caddell, 2000; Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). A high school principal may earn \$93,420 for a 227-day contract and a teacher at the top of the pay scale for a 187-day contract receives \$59,916, the difference in pay would be \$91 per day with an extra 40 days. An appealing incentive in the past was working longer contract days as longer contracts would equal greater pay (Malone & Caddell, 2000). The demands of the principalship has expectations of the job that need to be completed regardless of time and energy (Maone & Caddell, 2000; Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). Forty-hour work weeks in the field of education do not typically exist. Administrators are asked to do more without being compensated for their work (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). In the 1980s, veteran principals identified increased income as one of the two factors that attracted them to principalship (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). In the late 90s, superintendents identified a barrier for individuals was salary/compensation not being sufficient to their responsibilities (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005).

Administrators are paid differently depending on the grade level of students served. High school administrators tend to be paid the most compared to middle and elementary school administrators due to their extra duties and commitments. Principal preferences suggest it is the individual's decision to pursue a career as a school principal. Further research in preferences could include the factors that cause individuals to determine which schools to apply to, whether

candidates are applying for campuses with a high concentration of minority populations, or those that are high performing.

### **Screening or Selection Criteria**

In one study, the use of selection criteria was used as tool to differentiate candidates (Palmer, 2016). Over time selection criteria has evolved from using personal characteristics, such as race or gender, to focus more on quantifiable attributes that impact student achievement such as educational leadership experiences (Palmer, 2016). The term fit is used to describe a candidate's attributes in relation to the school district and was coined by Baltzell and Dentler (1983). It continues to be used by school districts in the principal selection process (Palmer, 2016).

### **Interviews**

After the screening process, candidates are selected for an interview. Interviews are the most common method of practice for principal selection (Palmer, 2016). According to research, interviews are used to gather and interpret relevant information from candidates and yet have minimal predictability of success (Palmer, 2016). Some school districts do not have a set of questions geared to cover what they view as important characteristics for a candidate to possess (Rammer, 2007).

### **Hiring Criteria**

Economic theory suggests employers will hire individuals based on their perception of candidates who will maximize productivity (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012). These decisions of productivity are derived from qualifications, including preparation and work experience, and may also include personal factors such as age, gender, or race/ethnicity (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012). Personal factors may also play a role depending on construction of the screening and

selection procedures within school districts and schools (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012).

Principal selection research suggests the hiring process is less structured (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012). Once hired, principals become the most visible individual in school reform (Winter & Morgenthal, 2002).

Principals play a critical role in the success of a school. Loeb, Kalogrides, and Hornig (2010) investigated the inequitable distribution of principal quality in Miami Dade County public schools (M-DCPS) from 2003–2009 using the common core of data survey combined with a survey for principals and assistant principals in May 2008. First-year principals are likely to be in low-income, low-performing, minority population schools (Loeb et al., 2010). Schools receiving an accountability grade of D or F have principals with 2.5 years of experience compared to schools receiving an A which have principals with 5.1 years of experience (Loeb et al., 2010).

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004), as cited by Rammer (2007), identified 21 responsibilities of effective school principals and correlated each responsibility to student achievement (see Table 1). Superintendents actively participate in the selection and hiring of school principals (Rammer, 2007). Rammer (2007) explored how public-school superintendents in Wisconsin use the literature of effective principals in their selection and how are these skills assessed. Superintendents indicated the 21 responsibilities were important to consider in hiring a school principal, 92%, with communication being 99.3% important by superintendents (Rammer, 2007).

Table 1  
*Responsibilities Alphabetically*

<b>21 Responsibilities</b>				
Affirmation	Change agent	Communication	Contingent rewards	Culture
Discipline	Flexibility	Focus	Ideals/beliefs	Input
Intellectual stimulation	Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment	Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment	Monitoring/evaluating	Optimizing
Order	Outreach	Relationships	Resources	Situational awareness
Visibility				

*Note.* Adapted from “Call to action for superintendents: Change the way you hire principals” by R. A. Rammer, 2007, *Journal of Educational Research*, 101(2), p. 67–76. Copyright 2007 by the Heldref Publications

Although all responsibilities were viewed as important, superintendents did not have a systematic way of assessing these responsibilities in candidates (Rammer, 2007). Rammer (2007) provided recommendations for addressing each of the responsibilities: (a) creation of interview questions; (b) questions when checking references; (c) creating a rubric for reviewing applications, cover letter, or resume; or (d) an inbox activity with a set of written questions. The conceptualized ideas and beliefs of what is important in a school principal may not correlate to the implementation of selection and hiring of candidates.

Schlueter and Walker (2008) analyzed Iowa school districts PK–12 principal hiring criteria and the characteristics of a second–order change agent using content analysis. Schlueter and Walker (2008) argued there are resources available to identify criteria or characteristics for school districts hiring principals including: (a) ISLLC standards, (b) McEwan’s 10 traits of highly effective principals, (c) Cotton’s 26 leadership behaviors that positively affect student achievement, and (d) Mid–continent Research for Education and Learning Balanced framework which identified 21 principal leadership responsibilities and practices correlated with student

achievement (Schlueter & Walker, 2008). As part of the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning framework were seven responsibilities of second-order change. Findings indicated 82% of the school district had at least one written criterion related to second-order change (Schlueter & Walker, 2008). Districts with more than 7,500 students had the highest percentage of 31% of criteria coded with second order change compared to districts with fewer than 250 students with 9% (Schlueter & Walker, 2008).

Palmer (2016) investigated the processes and practices national top-level school district administrators use when selecting school principals using a mixed methods approach. A total of 114 top-level district administrators who were either superintendents or human resource managers participated (Palmer, 2016). Research findings indicated top-level district administrators were inclined to select candidates who possess: (a) communication skills, (b) are student-centered, (c) demonstrate people skills, and (d) are knowledgeable in curriculum and instruction (Palmer, 2016). Findings further demonstrated interviews (98.3%), resumes (96.5%), and reference checks (93.9%) were important to the selection process (Palmer, 2016). Innovated procedures shared by participants included: (a) performance tasks– analyzing data, mock teacher evaluation, and delivering professional development; (b) interviews with stakeholders– students, parents, community members, and teachers; and (c) site visits–current sites while in faculty or community meetings or evaluations (Palmer, 2016). Recommendations from Palmer (2016) to improve the rigor of principal selection from the subjective interview process included assessments and objective performance tasks.

Turnover is detrimental in any field. School districts should collaborate with other stakeholders in selecting and recruiting administrators (Normore, 2006). Turnover for administrators can negatively lead to drastic changes causing stress in teachers and lack of

success for students (Boyce & Bowers, 2016). Principal turnover was reported higher in middle schools, high schools, and in high poverty, minority, and rural schools (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). The importance of school districts hiring practices relates to ensuring the principals hired are culturally competent. The cultural leadership section explains briefly current cultural models implemented in education.

## **Cultural Leadership**

### **Culturally Relevant Leadership**

The culturally relevant leadership framework can reduce intended and unintended consequences that occur in schools among students of color (McCray & Beachum, 2014). Culturally relevant leadership accepts and validates a student's home culture (Khalifa et al., 2016). Khalifa et al. (2016) synthesized culturally responsive literature behaviors into four primary strands: (a) critically self-reflects on leadership behaviors, (b) develops culturally responsive teachers, (c) promotes culturally responsive/inclusive school environments, and (d) engages students and parents in community contexts. Critical self-reflection allows the leader to reflect on their bias and their practices (Khalifa et al., 2016). The leader develops culturally responsive teachers by establishing a culturally responsive leadership team with a focus on analyzing curriculum (Khalifa et al., 2016). Creating a vision and culture for the school through culturally responsive teaching will ensure students' needs are being met (Khalifa et al., 2016). This includes the allocation of resources such as professional development, teacher mentorship and program funding. A welcoming and nurturing environment of diversity for all students, families and community will assist in promoting an inclusive environment. Advocacy over community issues and concerns is essential in engaging students, parents and indigenous communities (Khalifa et al., 2016). Leadership values culture and builds schooling around it by

fostering a culture that takes all cultures into account and students feel safe to be themselves (Fraise & Brooks, 2015).

### **Culturally Responsive Leadership**

Culturally responsive leadership positively influences academic achievement and student engagement (Bustamante et al., 2009). Leaders are not natural as they address and disrupt the educational injustices working within and among dimensions working to address and disrupt inequities in their locations ((DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). Culturally responsive leadership also focuses on the “relationship with the historical, social, and political context” (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018, p. 5).

### **Social Justice Leadership**

Social justice leadership assists schools’ social struggles to benefit all students (O’Malley & Capper, 2015). O’Malley and Capper (2015) conducted a cross–survey of faculty teaching in 53 different preparation programs. They found varying degrees of emphasis in social justice. The study focused on the LGBTIQ community and found integration of LGBTIQ was dependent on the level of the individual professor (O’Malley & Capper, 2015). Khalifa (2013) conducted a 2–year ethnographic study which demonstrated how school leaders can incorporate parents and students in school inclusion. The study suggested principals can develop strategies to teach parents and students to become self–advocates using social justice leadership strategies (Khalifa, 2013).

### **Transformative Leadership**

Cooper (2009) conducted a comparative case study in two North Carolina schools who had experienced demographic change. Transformative leadership includes self–reflection in addressing inequity, crosses sociocultural boundaries, and fosters inclusion by performing

cultural work and systematically analyzing schools through a leader's positional power (Cooper, 2009). Social justice targets the justice and fair treatment of all people by preventing and remedying existing inequity (Cooper, 2009). Informed by strands of critical theory, transformative leadership for social justice, requires leaders' self-awareness, clarity, passion, courage, commitment, and openness to risk taking (Cooper, 2009). Findings demonstrated a contradiction between the principals' equity intentions and their actual exclusionary beliefs and practices (Cooper, 2009). Educational leaders are in need of preparation to support the diverse populations of students they serve, as well as leaders who possess the knowledge and strategies to support culturally responsive curricula, instruction, student engagement, and school-family partnerships (Cooper, 2009). The ability to lead a culturally diverse population includes leaders rejecting biased ideologies and color-blind practices (Cooper, 2009).

### **Multicultural Leaders**

The need to understand culturally diverse populations in schools has not been a long-standing norm. Schools' student populations are racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse (Cooper, 2009). Cooper (2009) argued "U.S. public schools have long played an instrumental role in attempting to assimilate culturally and linguistically diverse students via educational structures, policies, and practices" (p. 698). These practices have contributed to deficit thinking and the marginalization of students of color (Cooper, 2009; Hernandez & Kose, 2012). Gardiner and Enomoto's (2006) study focused on six school principals and their role as multicultural leaders in urban schools. The study demonstrated all six principals participated in multicultural issues in their schools (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006). Standards and practices were generally focused on managerial or instructional leadership, however, principals had to be knowledgeable



about diversity and provide experiences that were culturally sensitive for students (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006).

### **Organizational Cultural Competence**

Organizational cultural competence examines how school policies, traditions, values, etc., reflect the diverse groups within the school community (Bustamante et al., 2009). Organizational culture is defined as the shared philosophies and interwoven patterns of the traditions and values of the community (Horsford et al., 2011). School culture is similar to that of organizational culture in which school policies, traditions, values diverse groups but differs by focusing on the school context (Horsford et al., 2011). The concept of propriospect refers to anthropological cultural term referring to the individual rather than a collective culture which requires school leaders to be aware of cultural vantage points, understand and respect differences (Fraise & Brooks, 2015).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Critical race theory (CRT) has its origins in critical legal studies (Davis, Gooden, & Micheaux, 2015) and draws from law, sociology, history, ethnic and women's studies (Yosso, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Historically CRT emerged post-1987 from the Critical Legal Studies movement by scholars who questioned the oppressive legal systems (Yosso, 2005). CRT scholars do not have an agreed upon list of tenets CRT employs (Davis, Gooden, & Micheaux, 2015). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) defined critical race methodology as “a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process...; b) challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color; (c) offers a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination; and (d) focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color. Furthermore, it views

these experiences as sources of strength and (e) uses the interdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, humanities, and the law to better understand the experiences of students of color." (p. 24). Davis, Gooden, and Micheaux (2015) employed three tenets in their research in analyzing leadership standards a) "...racism is ordinary instead of aberrational." (p. 341), b) "...civil rights advances for minoritized populations have happened only when their interest converged with those of elite Whites." (p. 341), and c) counter stories or counter narratives give voice to people of color to those who have been silenced. Solórzano identified five tenets from the CRT methodology (Yosso, 2005), a) race and racism intersectionality with other forms of subordination; b) challenge dominant ideology; c) commitment to social justice; d) centrality of experiential knowledge of people of color; and e) transdisciplinary perspective (Yosso, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical race theory has informed other forms including AsianCrit, FemCrit, LatCrit, TribalCrit, and WhiteCrit each extending the critical race discussion (Yosso, 2005). Valenzuela (2016) discussed dispositions of teachers working with youth from marginalized communities and the importance of critical consciousness.

### **Culturally Proficient Leadership Continuum Conceptual Framework**

This study relied heavily on the culturally proficient leadership continuum framework as elaborated by Bustamante and colleagues (2009). The culturally proficient continuum describes attitudes and behaviors of individuals (Bustamante et al., 2009). Cultural proficiency builds on six guiding principles to support effective cross-cultural communication along with a leadership continuum (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). The six guiding principles state:

culture is a predominant force in people's and school's lives; people are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture; people have group identities and individual identities;

diversity within cultures is vast and significant; each culture group has unique cultural needs; and the best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all. (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009, p. 24)

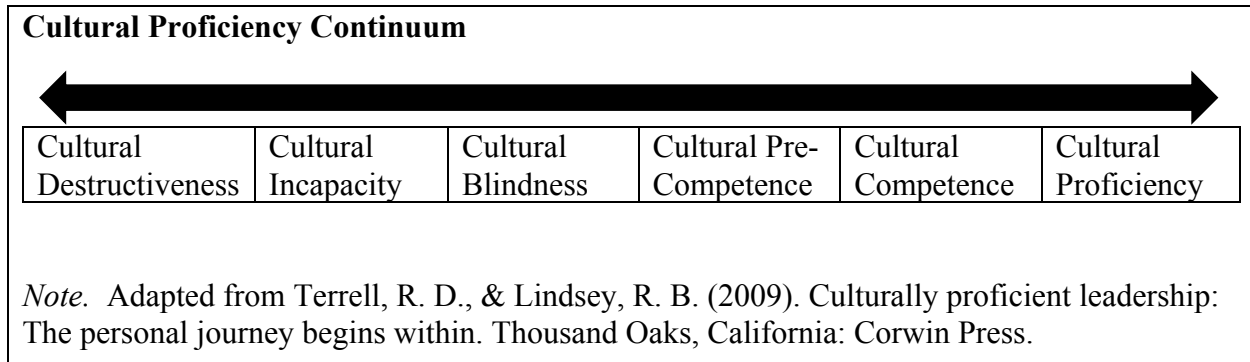


Figure 1. Cultural Proficiency Continuum.

The leadership continuum is broken up into six parts representing both negative- culturally destructive and positive-cultural proficient elements (Bustamante et al., 2009) (see Figure 1).

The following terms are on the culturally destructive behavior of the continuum: (a) cultural destructiveness—active elimination of differences, (b) cultural incapacity—belief that one culture is superior than another, and (c) cultural blindness—denial of differences between cultures (Bustamante et al., 2009). The first three points are viewed as focusing on your students and their culture as destructive (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). In cultural destructiveness, the leader seeks to eliminate the culture of others (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). Pertaining to cultural incapacity, the leader seeks to make the cultural differences of others seem wrong (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). When practicing cultural blindness, one does not notice or acknowledge the cultural differences of others (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). The remaining set of terms are found on the constructive end of the continuum. They include: (a) cultural pre-competence—awareness of limitations in response to different groups, (b) cultural competence—understanding and action in

responding to groups, and (c) cultural proficiency, interacting effectively and appropriately to a variety of cultures (Bustamante et al., 2009).

The positive three points focus on the leader's practice as a transformational leader (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). In cultural pre-competence the leader leads with a cultural awareness of what is unknown about the students being served at the campus (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). Cultural competence includes leading an inclusive school where school policies and practices are aligned to students' cultures (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). There are five essential elements to cultural competence targeting values, behaviors, policies and practice: (a) assessing cultural knowledge, (b) valuing diversity, (c) managing the dynamics of difference, (d) adapting to diversity, and (e) institutionalizing cultural knowledge (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). The final point on the continuum is cultural proficiency which is achieved when the leader advocates for cultural groups creating a socially just community (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). It is important to note, although cultural destructive behavior can negatively impact students once the individual is able to identify these behaviors one can make a positive modification to move toward a cultural proficient frame of mind within the continuum.

### **Cultural Competence**

This research study focused on the culturally competent leadership on the continuum. "Cultural competence should be a fundamental aspect of school principals' preparation and practice" (Hernandez & Kose, 2012, p. 513). Hernandez and Kose (2012) identified a gap in the literature on how principals differ in developmental orientations of understanding and seek to understand how school principals' interpret differences and experiential diversity using the intercultural development inventory of the Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), a research-based model, focusing on culture of race/ethnicity. There are six stages in

the DMIS continuum divided in two sections: (a) ethnocentric and (b) ethnorelative orientations (Hernandez & Kose, 2012). Beginning the ethnocentric section of the continuum we see: (a) denial—individuals deny or ignore cultural differences, (b) defense—us versus them superior to others, and (c) minimization—focus on the similarities (Hernandez & Kose, 2012). Continuing with the ethnorelative orientation we have: (d) acceptance—understanding of behavior and values, (e) adaption—ability to shift from one worldview to another in order to interact with others, and (f) integration—bicultural or multicultural skills of understanding (Hernandez & Kose, 2012). Recommendations included preparation programs meeting their leaders where they are on the development spectrum and supporting their learning (Hernandez & Kose, 2012). Cultural competence is vital school principals. The importance of evaluating the hiring practices of school districts for cultural competence is essential in the future success of students.

### **Summary**

In knowing how the hiring practices, such as screening and interview protocols, of school districts are used in their search for culturally competent principals, this study examined how school districts advertise for, recruit, and hire school principals through the conceptual framework of cultural competency. Chapter II provided an overview of the literature focusing on principal expectations, cultural frameworks, and the conceptual framework of cultural competency. Although research has demonstrated a shift in student demographics and need for school principals to be understanding and accepting of different cultures, there is little research that demonstrates how hiring committees actually hire culturally competent leaders. Further research is needed on job descriptions for school principals. An analysis of the job descriptions' correlation to the state standards is an important task to conduct. If there are differences, it is recommended in changing the state standards to meet the needs of requirements being asked of

principals. With the evolution of the role of the principal as well as changes in student demographics, it is important to incorporate knowledge of cultural diversity for future and current leaders. Cultural competence training is a topic that can be incorporated in the hiring process from the state standards to the interview questions. Understanding cultural differences plays a critical role in the success of all students. Being intentional in the interview questions related to cultural competence assists the committee in assessing the candidates' understanding of diversity. Potential responses for questions should be discussed as a committee to ensure committee members calibrated.

Principal standards should be reevaluated to address student cultural diversity. As part of yearly state required trainings, a training on cultural competence can be added as a requirement by all educators, particularly principals. Principal preparation programs can add cultural competence to their degree program coursework as part of a requirement for aspiring principals. Policy makers should also invest in the training that is necessary to grow effective culturally competent leaders. Next, Chapter III, provides the methodology of the study.

### **III. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES**

#### **Introduction**

This study used the conceptual framework of cultural competence to examine how one school district advertises for, recruits, and hires school principals. The hiring process is a crucial organizational function in all institutions, companies, and organizations, including education. School districts utilize multiple strategies to find the most qualified candidates including recruiting, screening, and hiring (Ellis, Skidmore, & Combs, 2017). Hiring practices include discussing job postings, applications, and screening for and identifying desirable candidate attributes. While these strategies vary by state and school district (Ellis, Skidmore, & Combs, 2017), it is common practice for all school districts to implement Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination of employment based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. This non-discriminatory statement is included on the majority of employment documents. Importantly, its inclusion leads to the belief that our educational institutions embrace cultural acceptance for all. While previous research has examined the cultural competency of principals already serving in the position, research is needed to investigate school districts' hiring practices as they specifically relate to searching for culturally competent candidates for the principalship. This chapter presents a review of the methodology guiding this study, research questions, participants involved in the study, as well as pertinent protocols, procedures, and analysis techniques that bound this inquiry.

One school district was selected as the site location for this study. The school district site was purposefully selected as a district which has emphasized cultural competence using the cultural proficiency continuum of Terrell and Lindsey (2009). The study site, Texas ISD (pseudonym), has a department titled Cultural Proficiency and Inclusiveness which connects

directly to the focus of this research study. The school district website disclosed the department was established in 2010-2011 with the goal of “...embed[ing] CP&I [cultural proficiency and inclusiveness] into the work of the school district, and to provide professional learning sessions on how to interact with students and their families in a manner that considers the diverse needs of all.” In addition to Texas ISD having a Cultural Proficiency and Inclusiveness department, the district also has a council established in 2013-2014 focused on race and equity with the goal of “grow[ing] the number of [\_\_\_\_] staff who approach work with students and their families using the equity lens as a mirror.” The council was created after principals attended a training focused on “Undoing Racism.” In 2018 the school district completed a Texas Equity Toolkit created by the TEA. Following the model provided by the Texas Equity Toolkit: Roadmap Reporting Template, documents on the school district website explain how Texas ISD will use teacher mentors and teacher leaders to establish professional learning related to coaching for diversity and cultural competence for those working within the unique needs of Title 1 campuses. Texas ISD has a strategic plan created for the 2015-2020 school years under which the district has committed to engage students in cultural proficiency and inclusion. The documents discussed in this section were found on the school district website. For the protection and confidentiality of the school district the research study is unable to provide the citations.

The district’s steady population, numbers of minority students, categorization type as defined by the TEA, and geographic location contributed to the identification and selection of this particular school district. Texas ISD is categorized as a *major urban* district based on the 2016–2017 school year report (TEA, 2018a). There are a total of eleven school districts in the state of Texas classified as major urban (TEA, 2017). The TEA glossary defines major urban based on a county population of at least 950,000, the enrollment based on the county being the



largest within the county or 70% of the district eligible enrollment population, and the percentage of those enrolled as economically disadvantaged of at least 35% (TEA, 2017). A student is classified as economically disadvantaged if he or she is eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program. (TEA, 2017). With the school district's focus and commitment on cultural proficiency and competency among all stakeholders from leadership and teachers to students, the geographic location and the diversity of the student population it seemed an ideal prospect for this study. These factors led to its identification in the research study to investigate the practices the school district used in the advertisement for, screening, and selection of principal candidates.

Data that address the research questions were gathered utilizing a qualitative research approach including interviews and document analysis. A semi-structured interview format was used for interviews. Content and textual analysis (Davis et al., 2015) were used to examine job descriptions and additional documents through the conceptual framework of cultural competency.

### **Research Questions**

This research study was guided by the following primary research question and sub-questions:

1. In a school district emphasizing cultural competence, what hiring practices are used for culturally competent school leaders?
  - a. What are the hiring procedures included in advertising, recruitment, screening, interview, and selection of principals of the school district?
  - b. What culturally competent knowledge, skills, and dispositions do school district representatives use when hiring principals?

## **Method and Design**

This study utilized qualitative methodology, specifically a single case study, to investigate the process one school district uses to recruit and hire culturally competent school principals. A case study offers the opportunity to investigate a single case or multiple cases in the process of an intensive examination bounded by time constraints and specific research techniques within a system (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011). Further, case studies can assist in constructing an in-depth understanding of or exploration into an issue or problem in a real-life context or setting (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative researchers, utilizing the case study methodology, collect detailed data involving various sources of information through observations, interviews, archival documents, reports, etc. (Creswell, 2012).

Case studies are divided into three categories bounded together with working parts: (a) intrinsic, which focuses on a single, particular case and contributes a better understanding of the case (Glesne, 2011); (b) instrumental, designed to provide insight into an issue, problem, or concern (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011); and (c) collective or multiple, which uses several cases to compare and contrast relevant factors (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011). Determining the type of study assists the researcher in deciding what to include or not include as part of the research boundaries (Glesne, 2011). This research inquiry used an intrinsic case study focused on one school district. Intrinsic single case study was selected because it facilitated developing in-depth insight into the process of recruiting and hiring culturally competent school principals. This is an important consideration because the consequences of hiring a principal who are not culturally competent leads to multiple issues of marginalization for students of color. Identifying the strategies used by the school districts can support other school districts in comparing and contrasting similarities or differences among them. This school district provided the in-depth

analysis needed to identify how school districts advertise for, recruit, and hire school principals. Data collection methods included interviews and document analysis. Documents analyzed were selected using strategic and purposive sampling (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014) and focused on school district job descriptions and documents related to the recruitment, advertising, and hiring of school principals

The primary limitation associated with this study was the use of only one study site. The small sample size and the finite geographic location context restrict the transferability of the findings to other school districts regardless of similarities related to enrollment, urban locations, or regional locations.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study was completed in the fall of 2016. Five individuals from one school district were initially contacted about participation. Two of these, the human resources director and assistant superintendent, agreed to participate. Subsequently, snowball sampling (Small, 2009) led to identifying two additional participants from two other school districts. Follow-up contact with these two individuals resulted in one additional school district superintendent agreeing to participate. A total of three interviews, one with each participant, were conducted. Based on self-identification, the sample consisted of an African American woman, one Anglo man, and one Hispanic man ranging in age from their early 40s to the late mid-60s.

Interviews took place during the fall semester of 2016. One was conducted in person while the other two were conducted via-phone for the convenience of the participants. Interviews followed a structured protocol using a majority of descriptive open-ended questions (Patton, 1990; Spradley, 1979). Developing rapport and eliciting information occurred prior to and throughout the interview (Spradley, 1979). The interview protocol was followed in

sequential order and questions were posed in the same manner for each interview (see Appendix A). Following this procedure allowed the researcher to increase comparability of interview responses which were the primary source of data (Patton, 1990). These recorded interviews were later transcribed to facilitate data analysis. Documents included in the analysis were selected using strategic and purposive sampling (Miles et al., 2014) focused on the school district application process, questions asked on the application, and job descriptions posted on respective websites. Participants were aware of the pilot study focused on hiring practices of school districts and their feedback was to be used to adapt the interview protocol for future research. The pilot study allowed the interview protocol to be tested and subsequently revised as necessary.

### **Participant Selection**

This study took place in one school district in the State of Texas. School district selection was made using the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2016a) data base for public school districts in Texas which listed a total of 1,232 districts (NCES, 2016a). Narrowing the search to *regular* school district type reduced the total to 1,026. A regular district is defined as a “locally governed agency responsible for providing free public elementary or secondary education; includes independent school districts and those that are a dependent segment of a local government such as a city or county” (NCES, 2016b). Other education agencies, charter schools, and regional and state school district types were excluded from consideration.

Further narrowing of the potential sites led to identifying school districts based on district *locale*. District locales were defined as (a) city: large, midsize, small; (b) rural: distant, fringe, remote; (c) suburb: large, midsize; and (d) small town: distant, fringe. Data were from the 2014–

2015 school year (NCES, 2016a). Snowball sampling (Small, 2009) led to the identification of one school district within one education service region considered to be a large city area (NCES, 2016a). Texas ISD categorization is shown in Table 2.

Table 2  
*District Classification*

<b>District</b>	<b>Locale</b>	<b>City Population Size</b>
Texas ISD	City: Large	≤250,000 (inside city)

*Note.* Adapted from “Common Core of Data: Search for Public School Districts” by the *National Center for Education Statistics*, 2016a.

The school district was selected based on district location in the state of Texas and their increase in student and city demographic data. Table 3 provides more information on the district’s characteristics. The current superintendent was employed by Texas ISD in 2014. The student and teacher ethnic distribution data were purposefully selected to ground the research study.

Table 3  
*District Student Ethnic Distribution 2014–2018*

	<b>State: Texas</b>				<b>District: Texas ISD</b>			
	<b>14–15</b>	<b>15–16</b>	<b>16-17</b>	<b>17-18</b>	<b>14–15</b>	<b>15–16</b>	<b>16-17</b>	<b>17-18</b>
African American	12.6%	12.6%	12.6%	12.6%	8.0%	7.8%	7.6%	7.3%
Hispanic	52.0%	52.2%	52.4%	52.4%	59.6%	58.8%	58.0%	56.7%
White	28.9%	28.5%	28.1%	27.8%	25.8%	26.6%	27.3%	28.5%
American Indian	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Asian	3.9%	4.0%	4.2%	4.4%	3.7%	3.8%	4.0%	4.2%
Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Two or More Races	2.0%	2.1%	2.2%	2.3%	2.7%	2.7%	2.9%	3.1%

*Note.* Adapted from “Texas academic performance reports” by the *Texas Education Agency*, 2018b. Copyright 2017-2018 Texas Education Agency.

In examining the student ethnic distribution, it is important to note the ethnic make-up of teachers within the district. Although teachers were not the focus of this study, the general trajectory for a school principal begins with their role as a classroom teacher. The ethnic make-up of school principals was not individually listed on the report. Comparing the variance between student and teacher populations highlights the need for administrators to be culturally competent to support student diversity. Specifically looking at minority populations, for the 2017-2018 school year, the district had 7.3% African American students and 56.7% Hispanic students (see Table 3). This compares to teacher populations of 5.7% and 32% respectively (see Table 4). There has not only been a decrease of African American student population, by 2-3 percentage points per year, but also a decrease in African American teachers. There has also been a steady increase in the Hispanic teacher population. In 2014-2015 Hispanic teachers represented 28.7% of the teacher population. This increased to 32% in 2017-2018. However, like that of the African American student population there has been a decrease in the Hispanic student population throughout the past four years.

Table 4  
*District Teacher Ethnic Distribution 2014–2018*

	<b>State: Texas</b>				<b>District: Texas ISD</b>			
	<b>14–15</b>	<b>15–16</b>	<b>16-17</b>	<b>17-18</b>	<b>14–15</b>	<b>15–16</b>	<b>16-17</b>	<b>17-18</b>
African American	9.9%	10.1%	10.2%	10.4%	6.4%	6.2%	5.7%	5.7%
Hispanic	25.6%	26.0%	26.6%	27.2%	28.7%	27.9%	29.5%	32.0%
White	61.4%	60.8%	59.8%	58.9%	62.4%	63.2%	61.3%	58.0%
American Indian	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%
Asian	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%	1.6%	2.0%	2.2%	2.0%	2.1%
Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Two or More Races	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	0.3%	0.4%	1.2%	1.8%

Note. Adapted from “Texas academic performance reports” by the *Texas Education Agency*, 2018b. Copyright 2017-2018 Texas Education Agency.

The study employed convenience sampling (Miles et al., 2014), sampling for range (Small, 2009), and purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2012) to identify participants who participate in the hiring process for school principals. Sampling for range and purposeful sampling ensures the participants are from a given category or group (Small, 2009). In the case of this study, these parameters led to seeking participants performing in roles of human resource directors, assistant superintendents, or superintendents (Miles et al., 2014). Sampling for range served as the boundary for this study. Within the school district, an interview was conducted with members who served in different capacities or at various points of the hiring process including recruiting, screening interviews, and hiring committees within the identified departments. Selection of interview participants included boundaries and recommendations outlined by the school district research department. Although some specific individuals who were identified for interviews based on job titles within the district in order to gain a better understanding of the school district's recruitment and hiring practices were not permissible, the school district's research department supported this research project by providing alternate recommendations. A total of eight interviews were held each lasting from 30 minutes to one hour. All eight interviews were conducted at the interviewee's convenience in both time and location preference either via phone or in person. Three interviews were held via phone while five of the interviews were conducted in person. Interview settings varied. Four participants preferred to conduct the meeting in their offices and one requested meeting in a coffee shop. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed.

### **Protocols**

This study employed the use of interviews, and document analysis of job descriptions and candidate interview questions. A pilot study was conducted in the fall 2016 which included the

interview protocol with individuals serving in the selected participant roles of this study. Recommendations were elicited, and appropriate revisions were made to the interview protocol. A focus group then reviewed the new protocol to provide recommendations. Participant interviews followed a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix A) using a majority of descriptive open-ended questions (Patton, 1990; Spradley, 1979). Interviews allowed the researcher to gain a better insight into how the school district advertises and recruits by hearing from representatives within the district.

As part of the study, a document analysis of job postings primarily from the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school year were analyzed. Job postings were retrieved from the school district website and were used as part of the document analysis. During interviews, interviewees mentioned the use of additional documents as part of their hiring practice relative to (a) leadership framework, (b) principal portrait, and (c) principal pathways. These documents were also retrieved via the school district website and analyzed. Job descriptions provided the researcher information on what was advertised for the principal positions for elementary, secondary, and generic principal positions. Elementary refers to K–2nd, 3rd–5th, or K–5th campus principals. Secondary includes 5th–8th grade, 6th–8th grade, or 9th–12th grade campuses. Generic encompasses K–12th grade campuses. Given the delimitation which restricted access to interview questions posed to principal candidates the research study was unable to provide insight into what was asked of participants during the elementary and secondary principal interviews to identify variances, if any. Participant interviews provided more information on what school districts expect from candidates for each question. “The researcher’s role [in qualitative research] is to gain a holistic overview...” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 9) of understanding how school districts recruit and hire culturally competent school principals.



## **Procedures**

Institutional Review Board approval was obtained through the University of Texas at Austin. The participating school district also required an external research approval within their own research department. After district approval was obtained, phone calls were made and emails were sent to each individual to request an interview meeting location and time. The research study was completed between the fall of 2018 and the spring of 2019. These members included the Talent Acquisition and Development Executive Director, Director for Leadership Development, Coordinator for Talent Acquisition, Administrative Supervisor for Race and Equity, Associate Superintendents of Elementary Schools, and the Associate Superintendent of High Schools.

The individuals with the following job titles were not recommended as part of the school district external research department as they do not take part in the hiring process: Human Resource Services Executive Director and Accountability and Assessment Executive Director. Accordingly, these individuals were not contacted. The individuals with the following job titles were not recommended as part of the school district external research department as they were new to their positions: Chief Officer of School Leadership and Associate Superintendent of Middle Schools. Again, these individuals were not contacted. The Executive Director's Office for elementary, middle schools, and high schools for the district was recommended as a secondary option after attempting to contact the Associate Superintendent. The Executive Director's office was later contacted after attempts to reach the Associate Superintendent were unsuccessful. The individuals with the following job titles were not recommended as part of the school district external research department due to their time availability: Chief Human Capital Officer and Superintendent. They were not contacted. Snowball sampling was also used to

recruit participants (Small, 2009). After interviewing the Assistant to the Superintendent, he assisted with direct contacts to the Assistant to the Superintendent of High Schools, Talent Acquisition and Development Executive Director, and Chief Human Capital Officer.

Meeting options allowed the interviews to be conducted via-phone or in person. A cell phone number for immediate contact was provided. Developing rapport and eliciting information occurred prior to and throughout the interview (Spradley, 1979). The interview protocol was followed in a semi-structured interview and were audio recorded. Questions were asked in a similar fashion and sequential order in each interview, however, some interviewees responded to questions within other posed questions and were omitted from the interview protocol. Following this process allowed the researcher to increase comparability of responses as interviews were the primary source of data (Patton, 1990). The recorded interviews were later transcribed to facilitate in data analysis. Follow-up requests via email and phone were made for interviews and documents, as necessary.

### **Analysis**

Single case studies can be “very valid and illuminating if they are chosen to be ‘critical,’ extreme or unique...” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 30). Within-case sampling was used to identify the multiple individuals and departments that take part in the hiring process in order to provide an overall picture of the hiring practices of the school district using multiple sources of information (Miles et al., 2014; Creswell, 2012). Unit of analysis of the school district sites was utilized in this study as means of identifying themes within the single case study (Creswell, 2012; Eisenhardt, 1989). Although multiple approaches could have been used for the analysis, an in-depth understanding of advertising and hiring practices was used to collectively analyze the school districts (Creswell, 2012). The within-case tactic of analysis was used to look for

similarities and difference between the interviewee responses and documents (Eisenhardt, 1989). Naturalistic generalizations developed from the research gave insight into what was occurring in the advertising and hiring process (Creswell, 2012).

Categorizing strategies, such as coding (Maxwell, 2013), were used as part of the interview data analysis. Deductive descriptive codes were used to summarize and sort the participants' responses that seemed meaningful (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2013). Once the initial organizational coding was applied, inductive coding was utilized for the cultural competency conceptual framework. Inductive coding, referred to as open coding, enables the researcher to read the data collected and develop categories (Maxwell, 2013).

A content analysis of word-for-word embedded meaning was also conducted (Miles et al., 2014). The process included the primary titles of the document analysis including job descriptions, and subsequently a review of the descriptions outlined under each title. The research study employed Davis et al.'s (2015) research on the ISSLC standards for cultural reference. Transcribed interviews and document analysis of initial category codes used the terms race, ethnicity, color, culture, diversity, equity, and social justice. Subcategory codes included terms under some initial category coding racial (race), ethnic (ethnicity), cultural (culture), diverse (diversity), reflect (diversity), equitable (equity), access (equity), and inclusiveness (equity). Interview questions were reviewed in the same format, word-for-word for each interview question and each interviewee. Further data analysis led to categorizing of the hiring procedures outlined by the school district that included recruitment, advertising, screening, interviewing, and selection. This was accomplished by continuing to use the word-for-word in deductive coding as outlined from Davis et al.'s (2015) research study.

## **Summary**

An overview of methods, participant data, protocols, procedures and analysis were reviewed in this chapter. A single case study was used for the research study to gain an in-depth understanding of the hiring practices of the school district. Findings of the analysis are provided in the next chapter drawing attention to what can be learned from the single case of one school district.

## IV: FINDINGS

The impact exerted on students by the hiring choice of a school principal is second only to that of a classroom teacher. The importance of the role played by a school principal in the overall success of students as well as campus educators compels us to focus on school district hiring practices for principals. This focus can shed light on how school districts approach the process of advertising, recruiting, and hiring principals. The purpose of this study was to use a cultural competency conceptual framework (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009) to examine how school districts apply cultural proficiency to advertise for, recruit, and hire school principals. The following research question and subordinate questions guided this study:

1. In a school district emphasizing cultural competency, what hiring practices are used for culturally competent school leaders?
  - a. What are the hiring procedures included in advertising, recruitment, screening, interview, and selection of principals of the school district?
  - b. What culturally competent knowledge, skills, and dispositions do school district representatives use when hiring principals?

Chapter III describes the methods and design of the research study. Chapter IV outlines the hiring process for the subject school district, including both the previous process and the present, updated procedures. This qualitative study used interviews and document analysis as data sources. Prior to presenting the findings of the study, a description of the seven interview participants has been provided to communicate the context of the research study and the school district. The district under study has been identified by the pseudonym Texas ISD. Pseudonyms were also applied to all participants in order to protect their identities. This chapter provides an overview of Texas ISD, participant profiles, analysis of the data, and a chapter summary.

## **Description of District and Participants**

Eight individuals from the district were chosen to participate in this study. They included one former school board member, one assistant to the superintendent, two associate superintendents, and three human resource representatives. Voluntary demographic information was collected for each participant. A brief description of the school district and each participant follow.

**Texas ISD.** Located in one of the fastest-growing areas of the country, the subject district is described as a large, urban, diverse public-school district. The “About us” page on the district website begins with the phrase “All Are Welcome!” The district serves more than 80,000 students with 129 “diverse school communities.” Further, the district employs over 5,000 classroom teachers more than 1,700 administrators and professional staff. The ethnic and racial diversity of students was reported as Hispanic 55.5%, White 29.6%, African-American 7.1%, and other 7.7%. Special program populations include 27.1% English Language Learners, 52.4% economically disadvantaged, and 12.1% receiving special education. The graduation rate for Texas ISD is 90.7%. Texas ISD prides themselves in providing a high-quality education and partnering with organizations within the city. Growth opportunities and pathways for teachers and administrators are advertised to entice individuals to consider applying to their school district.

Of the 130 schools within Texas ISD there are 84 elementary campuses serving students in Pre-K to fifth grade, 19 middle schools for students in sixth to eighth grades, 17 high schools made up of students in ninth through 12th grade, and ten specialized schools. Each campus, elementary, middle, high, or specialized schools, has either a head principal or a director who serves in the capacity of head principal. Larger campuses also include assistant principals.

**Participants.** A total of eight participants were included in the research study. In order to gain an understanding of the school district demographic data were collected from each participant. The participants were all involved in the hiring practices of the school district. A brief sketch of each participant is included below. Following these narrative descriptions, a summary of participant demographics is found in Table 1.

**Mark Garcia.** Mr. Garcia is a former school board member for Texas ISD. He has served both as a voting school board member with the authority to hire principals within the district (most recently in 2014), and as a member of the interview committee in the capacity of a parent/community member (as recently as 2018). Mr. Garcia self-identifies as a 52-year-old Latino. He describes himself as a native of the city, attending both elementary and secondary schools in the district during his childhood. Both he and his wife, who is a school teacher, are invested in the community. Their children have attended Texas ISD schools. Mr. Garcia has a total of 25 years of public policy experience serving in various capacities within both the city and Texas ISD.

**Oralia Roberts.** Dr. Oralia Roberts has served as the Talent Acquisition Coordinator for Administrators in Texas ISD for the past year and a half. She is also a native of the city and attended elementary and secondary schools in Texas ISD throughout her childhood. Her career experience in the district includes having served as a teacher prior to assuming her present position. She earned an English degree from Texas State University along with her teaching certification with a minor in mass communications, as well as a master's degree, principal certification, and a doctorate. Oralia Roberts serves in the capacity of recruiting and screening candidates and facilitates multiple committees throughout the hiring process in Texas ISD.

***Patricia Saldivar.*** Dr. Patricia Saldivar has served as Director of Leadership Development within Texas ISD for the past three years. Over the course of her 31-year tenure in the district, she has held a variety of positions including bilingual teacher (ten years), bilingual specialist (one year), assistant principal (two years), principal (15 years), and human resource coordinator (one year). Her role as human resource coordinator supported in identifying a need for reorganization within the district to best hire school leaders. Patricia Saldivar serves in the capacity of recruiting and screening candidates and facilitates multiple committees throughout the hiring process in Texas ISD. She earned her doctorate in 2010.

***Jose Dante.*** Jose Dante has served as Associate Superintendent of Elementary Schools for the past seven years and is responsible for 44 elementary schools. Mr. Dante self-identifies as a 55-year-old Black male. During his 21-year career with the district he has served as teacher, assistant principal, and principal. Mr. Dante is involved in screening candidates and participates in multiple screening and interview committees throughout the hiring process in Texas ISD.

***Dalia Tyler.*** Dalia Tyler has served in the capacity of Executive Director of Talent Acquisition and Development for the past year and a half. Dr. Tyler is 50-year-old White female. Her employment history with the district began 19 years ago. During this time she has been employed as a bilingual teacher, associate principal, principal, and clinical professor. Following the completion of her doctoral studies she returned to the district as a campus principal. Dr. Tyler participates in establishing policies and procedures within the district including the screening of candidates and interview processes.

***Adam Isabella.*** Dr. Adam Isabella has served as Associate Superintendent of High Schools for the past three years. His position as associate superintendent for high schools includes all high schools within Texas ISD. He self-identifies as a 49-year-old White male. His



experience during his 26 years in education includes working as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal. Dr. Isabella career with Texas ISD began ten years ago as a campus principal. Adam Isabella is involved in screening candidates and participating in multiple screening and interview committees throughout the hiring process in Texas ISD.

**Phillip Madison.** Dr. Philip Madison has served as Assistant to the Superintendent for the past year and half. He self-identifies as a 38-year-old White male. Over the course of his educational career he has worked in the capacity of teacher, assistant principal, administrator supervisor, and principal. He is a native of the city and attended elementary and secondary schools in Texas ISD during his childhood. He earned his undergraduate degree in 2005, a master’s degree with principal certification in 2013, and completed his doctoral degree in 2018. Philip Madison is involved in screening candidates and takes part in multiple screening and interview committees throughout the hiring process in Texas ISD.

**Charlotte Eloy.** Ms. Eloy has spent 22 years as an educator and is currently in the process of obtaining her doctoral degree. She has served in Texas ISD in multiple positions with her most recent roles being in the central office over the past ten-12 years. She has been a classroom teacher, campus administrator, an instructional and literacy coach, and for the past nine years she has served as Administrative Supervisor for Race and Equity.

Table 5  
*Study Participants’ Demographic Information*

Pseudonym	Title	Self-Identified Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Current Texas ISD Position Tenure	Educational Career Path
Mark Garcia	Former School Board Member	Latino	52	Male	NA	NA
Oralia Roberts	Talent Acquisition Coordinator for Administrators			Female	1-½ years	Teacher, Region 13, talent acquisition coordinator for administrators

Table 5 (continued)

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Self-Identified Ethnicity</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Current Texas ISD Position Tenure</b>	<b>Educational Career Path</b>
Patricia Saldivar	Director of Leadership Development			Female	3 years	Bilingual teacher, bilingual specialist, assistant principal, principal, human resource coordinator, director of leadership development
Jose Dante	Associate Superintendent of Elementary Schools	Black	55	Male	7 years	Teacher, assistant principal, principal, associate superintendent
Dalia Tyler	Executive Director of Talent Acquisition and Development	White	50	Female	1-½ years	Bilingual teacher, associate principal, principal, clinical professor, campus principal, executive director
Adam Isabella	Associate Superintendent of High Schools	White	49	Male	3 years	Teacher, assistant principal, principal, associate superintendent
Phillip Madison	Assistant to the Superintendent	White	38	Male	1-½ years	Teacher, assistant principal, administrator supervisor, principal, assistant to the superintendent
Charlotte Eloy	Administrative Supervisor for Race and Equity	Black	46	Female	9 years	Teacher, campus administrator, central office- instructional coach, literacy coach, and administrative supervisor for race and equity

The research study was conducted during a transitional year of hiring procedures for Texas ISD. During this time, Texas ISD was navigating using the previous outlined procedures and the updated procedures for the new principal positions. Prior to the transition, in school year 2016, the school district averaged losing between 35-40 principals. Restructuring the hiring

practices of the school district came upon the arrival of the Chief Human Capital Officer who assessed the structures in place in 2016. The assessment identified that although there was a process in place it did not include a systematic strategy or comprehensive way of identifying the long-term yield and supports needed for principals. Figure 1 outlines the school district hiring process timeline of changes. The existing procedures embraced the idea of wanting good leaders however, the process did not include a way of identifying exactly what the district was looking for in their school leaders. A profile was created initially aligning leadership standards with the leadership framework the district created. Subsequently, the profile has also been aligned with the principal appraisal system. Restructuring led to the creation of several positions and a new division focused on functioning strategically not only throughout the hiring process but to also retain strong leaders by effectively supporting new principals and facilitating the leadership development of administrators. The school district has made an “...effort to be very transparent, inclusive...” as Mark Garcia, former school board member, states. This represents a monumental change from the time he served as interim superintendent almost five years ago. Principal positions for the 2018-2019 school year followed the previous hiring procedures while principal positions for the 2019-2020 school year followed the updated procedures. Differences in the previous outlined procedures included the use of an assessment center which evaluated multiple behavioral tasks.

<b>Date, Year, or Academic Year</b>	<b>Precipitating Event (if any)</b>	<b>Hiring Process</b>
<b>2014</b>	Interim Superintendent (later became Superintendent)	Transparent and inclusive of faculty, staff, parents, and community
<b>2015-2016</b>	Loss of 40 school principals a year	2016-2017 creation of Principal Training Program
<b>2016-2017</b>	Arrival of Chief Human Capital Officer (June)	Strategic and systematic hiring plan
<b>2017-2018</b>	Loss of 17 school principals a year  Reorganization/restructure and creation of new positions	Focus on hiring strong leaders  3-year partnership: Bush Institute – focus on recruit, train, and retain (Dec.)
<b>2018-2019</b>	No data	Assessment Center Pilot for Assistant Principal positions
<b>2019-2020</b>	No data	Assessment Center Principal Positions Requirement

Figure 2. School District Hiring Process Timeline of Changes.

**Description of Texas ISD, Administrators, Students, and Community**

“I say that it's diverse in that we have quite a bit of mix of groups, but definitely there's a much and larger group than others.” Oralia Roberts.

Interviewees were asked to describe the school district, school administrators, and students and the community the school district serves. In these questions different interviewees used the initial and subcategory coding within their responses. Terms of diversity and diverse were used to describe students’ ethnicities, cultural differences such as different languages, and socioeconomic statuses. Concerns associated with changes were shared when describing the student population as they impacted losing students or losing diversity. Philip Madison, Assistant to the Superintendent shared,

It's a large urban [district] when you compare it to districts in the state...pretty diverse although that we're losing that diversity. We're losing students. We're losing some of our

low-income families mainly due to affordability, some due to charters, but we're still a pretty diverse district.

The Associate Superintendent of Elementary Schools, Jose Dante also shared a similar statement, “We are about 52% free and reduced lunch and that number is decreasing over time from a high of around 60%. Gentrification and affordability are impacting that number.” The vision of the school district is, as shared by Oralia Roberts, Talent Acquisition Coordinator for Administrators, “...our district is one that is working to a close achievement gaps and ensure equity access for all our students.” Students’ ethnicities specifically shared were African American and Hispanic students. Dalia Tyler, Executive Director of Talent Acquisition and Development, stated “primarily our core business is providing really strong equity minded champions for students as leaders of our schools. That's our primary focus.”

In describing students and the community, terms associated with diversity were used in regard to languages, or “students of color” such as Hispanic and African American populations, and the segregation that exists within the city that impacts the school district and their campuses with high populations of predominantly White or other communities that are predominantly students of color were specifically mentioned.

School administrator diversity was referenced by ethnicity, gender, years of experience, and type of experienced based on level and programming. Diversity in terms of external versus internal applicants was not pertinent within the school district views. Philip Madison, Assistant to the Superintendent shared,

So, a lot of the new administrators coming in are really strong. But then we have a lot of veteran administrators as well. And it's a pretty diverse group of administrators as well, as far as ethnicity and gender. A lot of them stay for a while.

## **Recruitment**

The recruitment process varies by internal versus external candidates. The identification of candidates at times begins well before the position is advertised. For some of the interviewees the process begins within their university programs; others have the advantage of being internal candidates. University program partnerships are essential in identifying prospective candidates and extend to multiple universities. Agreements with two primary universities were outlined to illustrate the degree to which partnerships can vary with regard to what the school district offers to employees. For University A, partnership opportunities extend to more than one visit per year visits and focus on different categories including (a) research, (b) teacher preparation and curriculum, and (c) leadership. Discussions are held to identify the challenges the school district is currently facing and include ways to strengthen the partnership. With University B, the school district offers opportunities for the school district to cover book expenses or a portion of the student's tuition. These partnerships also allow the school district to identify potential candidates for their schools and school district before the candidates complete their programs.

Emphasis is placed on “growing our own” by creating opportunities for prospective leaders. The recruitment process begins years ahead of a principal position with identifying and attracting strong teachers and leaders. Recruitment begins at the campus level for internal candidates early on by identifying teachers, counselors, or instructional coaches to apply for the assistant principal pathway. Although recruitment was discussed in terms of the pathways outlined by the district, Dr. Isabella shared a focus on identifying teachers on Title 1 campuses to take part in a district initiative to attract more teachers who possess national board certifications. Prior to the initiative nationally board certified teachers were primarily on non-Title 1 campuses. Once they become assistant principals, recruitment continues as assistant principals are

approached to apply for the principal pathway. There is also a pathway for current assistant principals who are interested in becoming principals. Internal experienced assistant principal candidates have the opportunity to apply for these pathways and be selected for the year-long program. These internal candidates are exposed to growth opportunities in which they can lead, are coached, and receive professional development in leadership through a specific pathway that provides the “next set of skills and insight.”. Individuals who are selected for these pathways typically acquire a position within the school district. Once a position as principal is obtained, there is another pathway that supports their growth as first year principals or first year in the school district. Dalia Tyler said,

We take it upon ourselves both through the nomination process and the recommendation process to work very closely with our school's office off the school leadership and our superintendent to create a diverse pool of folks who are in those programs, who are equity focused, strongly committed to social justice. But likewise, reflect the diversity of our students that we would like to see. We want our teachers to see and their leaders as well. And so that's done with quite a bit of intentionality and strategy, so that we can continue to do that type of outreach in pool development.

Internal candidates could also be approached by district level administrators as they deem someone as “ready.” In these cases, the district level administrator would approach a potential candidate and inquire if they have considered interviewing or encourage them to interview for the position. In addition to approaching internal candidates, the school district also researches other similar campuses when they have a need for a principal. For example, if there is one that fits a specific focus a personalized school district letter would be sent out.

## **Screening**

The process of searching for a campus principal typically begins with the resignation of the current principal or opening a new campus within a school district. When there is a vacancy a letter is sent out to the community informing them of the vacancy. A job posting is also advertised via the online application system the district uses as well as social media outlets such as LinkedIn. In addition, contacts at conferences or professional organizations or word-of-mouth are also used. The job posting online could either be for a “principal pool” which means applying to this “pool” includes all schools or it could be for a specific school which means a candidate applies for one school and is considered only for that school. Applicants complete the online application along with submitting their resume, certification, references, and complete a survey designed to identifying their match within the school district. The initial screening begins with meeting the predetermined set of qualifications. Qualifications include principal certification, administrative experience, and no criminal history. All candidates who apply are placed on a spreadsheet that includes their name, email address, the date they applied, principal experience, number of years as an assistant principal, the number of years of teaching, and any other leadership experience that they have had. Based on meeting the qualification criteria, an online invitation is sent for an online virtual interview.

The screening process continues with the virtual interview for each candidate. Candidates have about one week to complete the virtual interview. The interview includes a set of questions that are consistent for all, which require the candidate to respond and record their response. In the virtual interview once a question pops up on the screen the candidate is given about 30 seconds to think of a response, and three minutes to respond. There is no opportunity to redo the response. The system then moves on to the next question using the same process for the



remainder in the interview. In the previous process, the virtual interview responses were reviewed and “scored” in order to make a recommendation to the associate superintendent of potential candidates to consider for an interview. The scoring was an informal process in which the human resources department gauged the candidate’s ability to perform as a principal within the school district. Once the virtual interviews were scored and potential candidates were identified, the associate superintendent’s office who oversees the school would form a vertical team committee. Dalia Tyler stated,

In past years, a few years back, we had a system where summatively we would say we've finished the hiring season, here's the diversity that we hired. Here's our overall back, here's the description of the pool of individuals we hired in general certification, elementary high. And then sort of the ethnic background of those folks or how they're identified. That changed to being more of a front end and a tracking system for strategy and trying to really use that as a lens for developing pools, putting that, putting strong candidates in front of our principals early on.

Oralia Roberts added,

I will say if diversity ... I will say that's something we might have more of a conversation with about when we're screening applicants. Like okay, this is a school that has a high population of African Americans. Do we have a diverse group of people that we are considering interviewing?

The committee included the vertical team principals of the school opening, a human resource representative, and the associate superintendent. A vertical team is defined as those schools that are shared within an area as outlined by the district as sharing students on their route through the school system such as elementary, middle, and high school. For example if “School

A” was in need of a new principal, the committee would be formed from those schools that “School A” is part of. Confidentiality statements are signed for individuals taking part in the committee. The spreadsheet previously created with candidate information was used by the human resource representative in the event there were questions about individual candidates, such as why they were not listed as potential candidates. Various reasons that could preclude the individual being considered by human resource as a viable candidate may be due to specific qualifications such as certifications, years of principal experience, or the candidate could have a criminal history.

The updated process includes each step of the procedures described above with assessment center as an added component. The steps now involve: (a) the individual applies to a job posting; (b) upon applying, the candidate’s name is added to a spreadsheet; (c) the candidate is sent a virtual interview; and (d) once that interview is received and scored, the candidate receives an invitation for the assessment center. The assessment center is described as a “rigorous” process in which candidates participate in completing different tasks within an allotted amount of time. There are four activities: (a) analysis data in which the candidates create/write a plan to submit, (b) coaching teachers with feedback involving a 5-7minute role play with two assessors/and the candidate acting as facilitator, (c) providing written feedback to teachers, and (d) a written scenario in which the candidate responds to situation. In order for the candidate to be considered for an interview he or she must pass each task outlined in the assessment center. Once the assessment center tasks are scored using a rubric, the candidate is added to a list of approved principal candidates. The interview committee is only able to interview or screen those candidates on the approved list for a principal position. These activities are scored by a team of principals. The team of principals scoring the activities has

been through a calibration to ensure fidelity of the instrument. All activities in the process include the components of the leadership framework and principal portrait that was created by the school district. Jose Dante, Associate Superintendent of Elementary Schools, said, “But in a nutshell, in the end when we write our questions, when we vet people through the final process with the superintendent, we want to find candidates that have most of these in place,” in referencing the leadership framework.

While the job is posted on the online application system and human resource is screening applicants based on qualifications and virtual interviews, the associate superintendent associated with the school goes to the school to create a principal profile in two settings with (a) faculty and staff, and (b) parents and community. This principal profile is in addition to the job description in the job posting. The profile contains a list of characteristics or qualities they are seeking in their next principal grounded in the school district’s vision of leadership and leadership framework. This profile is used to select or develop questions that will support the interview committee as they select candidates that fit the profile created. As, Adam Isabella, Associate Superintendent of High Schools shared “it goes back to the school, and who the population of the students, their needs. The families, and their needs. Then, matching a person that can lead that group.” The community and staff help develop the interview questions.

The task of the vertical team committee is to screen and identify six candidates and one alternate for the first round of interviews. The materials needed for the vertical team screening committee are the human resources potential candidates list, virtual interview videos, references, and the candidate’s application as well as the principal profile that was created with faculty, staff, parents, and community. The virtual interview videos are viewed by the vertical team as needed. In this process, the team may look at each question or identify a specific question they

would like to review for each candidate. Once the six candidates and alternate are identified using the principal profile the human resource department calls the candidates to invite them to the interview. An email will later be sent with the leadership framework, profile of the school, and sample entry plans. The entry plans are outlined steps for the first 90 days as principal. Interviews are scheduled more or less one week out of the vertical team screening committee.

### **Interview**

The interview committee consists of one human resources representative, associate superintendent, two or three parents and community members, and two or three teachers associated with the school in need of a principal. Prior to the interview, the committee is called together to review the procedures of the interview and the principal profile. The information shared in this meeting is the format in which the interviews will be conducted and how questions will be asked. The 40 to 45-minute interview is conducted in a formal setting in which all candidates receive the same questions in a question and answer format with no opportunities for follow-up questions from the committee. The interview questions are geared toward different “themes” such as instructional leader, working with community and parents, management of the campus by identifying and addressing a problem while including campus needs within the interview questions. Philip Madison, Assistant to the Superintendent, noted, “I think if it's a campus with a really diverse population, there's probably going to be a question about their experience with working with a diverse group of students and families.” It is recommended for a potential candidate to research the school district and be able to speak to the initiatives of the district in addition to the vision of Texas ISD. This vision incorporates components of focusing on equity for all students.

Once the candidate interview is complete, the committee debriefs for ten minutes in which strengths and areas to consider are discussed for each candidate. Within the same setting, once all interviews are complete, each candidate is reviewed again including notes taken, committee conversations, and the outcome of the interview itself. The interview committee identifies the three finalists who will proceed to next round and interview with the superintendent. The process by which the three finalists are selected involves each committee member writing their top three candidates on a sticky note. The sticky notes are collected and tallied. At times, the tally clearly identifies three candidates; at other times it requires the interview committee to further discuss the candidates and vote again. The three finalists are listed in no particular order. However, there are instances in which the interview committee feels strongly about one or two candidates and this information is communicated to the superintendent. Also, in some instances there could be only two candidates the committee would like to move forward as opposed to three. These individuals are then sent to interview with the superintendent. The interview committee is informed of the timeline in which the recommendation will be made to the school board and the voting date. All information is confidential. Oralía Roberts said,

I do know that it's evident when somebody has been interviewed when they have a social justice lens or when they say words like equity or access. Those are things that really get the committee's attention and it's appreciated, but the way that we use it from that department, I don't know. That's probably something that we need to connect about, talk about.

The interviews with the three finalists are scheduled within one week from the first round of interviews with the committee. The superintendent committee includes the superintendent,

associate superintendent, and the chief of school leadership. The superintendent receives a list of the strengths to consider for each candidate and an overview of the interview process thus far. The superintendent interview is also conducted in a question and answer session similar to the first round of interviews. Once the candidates are interviewed a recommendation for one candidate is made to the school board by the superintendent.

The school board receives a packet a minimum of two weeks or as much as a month before a vote is expected. The packet includes information pertinent to the hiring process such as a summary of the candidates' demographic data, ethnicity, gender, internal/external status, number of applicants, years of principal or leadership experience, length of educational experience, and resume. In addition, names of the members of the screening and interview committees are included along with demographic school data, characteristics of the school, and the principal profile created. The superintendent at times will contact school board members for the district where the principal position is needed to "provide feedback or thoughts" according to Mark Garcia, former school board member. There is a formal process for school board members to submit questions or request additional information prior to the voting however, they also have the option of a phone call or a direct conversation in a meeting with the superintendent. The school board then votes on the candidate and either approves or denies the proposed principal candidate. The school board votes on principal positions not on "individual recommendations, they come to the board as slate of hires," per Mark Garcia, former school board member. The recommended candidate names are not made public until the board has voted on the hiring of the position. Former school board member, Mark Garcia, shared the "the leadership and management style...[are] contingent upon the leadership style and the role that the superintendent has with trustees." It is not required to involve the school board trustees in the

hiring process until a vote is needed. There are circumstances in which the projected timeline for a recommendation to the board is not met. For example, if a principal leaves or retires proximate to the board's last spring session, summer schedules may not permit adherence to the timeline. In those instances, an interim principal is placed at the campus until the hiring process can be completed. Interim principals can choose to apply for the position and go through the interview process, if interested. Oralia Roberts noted,

I feel like in most of the interviews, it's not that the people at the table want things totally changed. They want to somebody who can keep the... and continue some of the things that are going well, but then also incorporate new things if needed to push the campus to the next level. They're looking for somebody who's supportive of the school and community and who's visible, approachable, has a vision, inclusive, understands and supports and every kid despite their needs.

### **Selection**

The school district is looking for leaders whose own qualities align with their leadership framework and principal portrait documents. Both documents were obtained from the school district website. Additionally, they are looking for an innovative individual who is going to take the campus to the next level. The school district places emphasis on principal experience, internal candidates, and previous campuses served seeking to identify their readiness and suitability to become a principal. The district focuses on selecting candidates using the leadership framework as a guide which includes, "...instructional leadership, who believes in social-emotional learning, equity, developing others, somebody who has a vision, builds strong relationships, whole child, who is a strategic thinker and planner, and collaborative, brings in

families, communities, partners...relationships,” according to Oralia Roberts, Talent Acquisition Coordinator for Administrators.

The leadership framework is also used to define effective administrators. Philip Madison shared,

...we need folks that are really equity-focused... the cultural proficiency level is higher because ... that's what's going to end up getting people in trouble or getting them fired is when they don't know how to work with folks that maybe don't look like them or aren't from the same background as them and really being able to work with a diverse community with less focus on the managerial aspects of the position.

General principal experience as well as program experience, knowledge and understanding of the school are assessed during the interview process. At times, the campus request is to find a principal similar to their predecessor who will continue building on the strengths of the campus and at other times the profile identifies gaps which were not addressed adequately by the previous principal and the focus is to find a change agent. Dalia Tyler mentioned,

And what we try to do is really at all those early steps of the process pay critical and careful attention to candidate, experienced candidate and skills and alignment to our leadership framework as well as, to the extent possible. So, the candidate’s diversity or certainly the commitment to social justice and with our students.

In selecting candidates, the committee is searching for candidates who are equity focused.

Listening to candidate responses provides the opportunity to evaluate the use of terms such as equity, social justice, culturally proficient, etc., while also making reference to working with diverse populations. The committee is sensitive to how the individual works with people who have different socio-economic or cultural backgrounds. The question for the committee



becomes, how will the candidate build relationships with the community and staff. The Assistant to the Superintendent provided an example. When he stepped in to a principal position as a White male on a diverse campus he had to understand his own biases and views. Equity focused individuals avoid phrases such as “those people,” “those students,” or “those children.” These types of phrases indicate a negative view or bias toward different cultural groups. An example provided in one intervention mentioned a potential candidate’s interview being cut short due to these negative statements. Although the terms or phrases may not be used in the interview, Adam Isabella, Associate Superintendent of High Schools, stated,

They may have a sparkling resume, but when they start interacting and they let their guard down a little bit, you start to hear what they say and how they say it, and what is said. You start to get a sense of what their beliefs truly are.

### **Differences by Campus**

The leadership qualities required by both elementary and secondary campuses remain the same. The principal profile created with faculty, staff, parents, and community drives the needs variance by campus regardless of level. Elementary commonly includes early childhood – 5th grade while secondary includes 6th – 12th grades. The difference in searching for elementary versus secondary principals was based on district initiatives. In elementary, principals need to understand and speak to literacy with the goal of students reading at grade level by 3rd grade according to Oralia Roberts, Talent Acquisition Coordinator for Administrators. In secondary grade levels, the focus is on operational pieces such as programing and supporting students to be college and career ready by the time they graduate. Another consideration is bilingual versus monolingual campuses. In Texas, the term bilingual primarily indicates English and Spanish. At times, bilingual preferred is listed on the job posting however, it is not necessarily a requirement

for the position. Title 1 schools have been defined as campuses with a significant percentage of the student population identified as economically disadvantaged. When the job posting includes the term Title 1 it typically indicates the committee is looking for someone who has Title 1 experience. Among the participants in this study there was a difference of opinion regarding the need to have Title 1 experience versus someone who is simply a “good leader” who has the ability to work with any campus regardless of Title 1 experience. School data from the candidate’s previous campus is referenced as part of the information gathering process. Regardless, hiring procedures are followed exactly regardless of Title versus non-Title campus. Dalia Tyler noted,

On the front end, we're really trying to target not just the diversity in our pipeline programs of background for candidates but also the diversity in terms of levels, experiences, et cetera. We're excited with the residency program that we're going to be implementing that we feel we can also have folks have some dual experiences in different types of settings. Both in Title 1, non-Title 1 or secondary and elementary.

## **Retention**

Information was obtained from the district website regarding the new principal institute as it involved principal preparation, and novice or new principals. The creation of this program was part of a four to five-year strategic plan to develop “pipelines for principals and assistant principals.” In addition to this archival information, participants were also asked to discuss various programs. In analyzing the information obtained from the school district website initial or subcategory coding terms were not found within the documents. The criteria included holding a current administrative position within the district, at least two or more years of service as a campus administrator, and not having been a member of the program previously. The process to

apply for this program begins with an online application, resume, and application essay which are screened by a committee. In addition to the documents submitted, applicants also take part in a virtual recorded interview. Finally, applicants need approval from their principal and associate superintendent as part of the selection process.

Once hired as a school principal, there is a pathway program for novice principals to supports them through one-on-one coaching with a retired principal who worked within the school district. This structure also involves monthly meetings during the first year of principalship. The principals receive two to four hours of support each month during the school year. In addition to the novice principal pathway program there is a new principal institute for both novice and veteran principals. This two-day induction program focuses on teaching the school district leadership initiatives to their new leaders. In order to continue in the district and have a successful experience the school principal must be reflective of the community they serve.

As district leaders, both district administrators and school principals are required to attend diversity training. To this end, a partnership has been formed with a fellow organization to provide the two-day initial training and follow-up support for school principals and district leadership. The leadership framework encompasses the vision of the district in terms of serving all students. In leadership meetings, including the superintendent cabinet and principal meetings, conversations surrounding and “addressing the equity issues” within the school district are discussed. Phillip Madison noted,

At the end of the day, the parents and the students, they're the ‘customers.’ We're there to serve them. And so, if you can't do that, then you're not in the right space. And so, I think if you're going to work with a community that is diverse or even if they're not really, I

mean, what is diverse, right? A lot of times we say diverse and it really just means like it's all students of color. Well, it's not really a diverse campus, but if I step in as a white male and I'm principal of the campus and most of the students don't look like me and we haven't had the same background, like I'm going to have to have some sort of one, understanding of myself and my own biases and kind of my background and my view on things. And then I'm going to have to spend a lot of time trying to figure out and learn more about the background and the experiences of my students and my families so that I can actually meet the needs.

<b>Hiring Process</b>	<b>Committee Responsibilities</b>
<p><b>Recruitment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships: Universities, Professional Conferences, Relationships</li> <li>• Internal Pathways</li> </ul> <p><b>Selection:</b> Principal Profile Created using Leadership Framework and Principal Portrait</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents/Community Meeting</li> <li>• Faculty and Staff Meeting</li> </ul> <p><b>Advertising:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Posting Position: School District Website</li> <li>• Media: LinkedIn</li> <li>• Word of Mouth</li> </ul> <p><b>Screen:</b></p> <p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application: Pool OR Specific Position</li> <li>• Resume</li> <li>• References</li> </ul> <p>Step 2: Virtual Online Interview</p> <p>Step 3: Assessment Center Activities (new 2019-2020 positions)</p> <p>Step 4: Vertical team committee reviews information from steps 1-3</p>	<p>Screen- Step 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vertical Team Principals</li> <li>• Associate Superintendent</li> <li>• Human Resource Representative</li> </ul>

Figure 3. Hiring Process and Committee Responsibilities.

Figure 3 (continued)

<p><b>Interview:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal 45minutes Interview Committee: 6 candidates + 1 alternate</li> <li>• 6-8 Interview Questions</li> <li>• Identify 3 finalist candidates to move forward with round 2 of interview</li> </ul> <p><b>Finalist Interview:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal Interview: 3 finalist candidates</li> <li>• Interview Questions</li> <li>• Identify 1 recommendation</li> </ul> <p><b>School Board:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalist recommendation submitted</li> </ul> <p>Board Packet</p>	<p><b>Interview-Interview Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty/Staff (3)</li> <li>• Parents/Community (3)</li> <li>• Associate Superintendent</li> <li>• Individual from Associate Superintendent department</li> <li>• Human Resource Representative (not part of the hiring decision)</li> </ul> <p><b>Finalist-Interview Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Superintendent</li> <li>• Associate Superintendent</li> </ul> <p>Chief officer of school leadership</p>
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## Document Analysis

### Leadership Framework

The leadership framework document was obtained via the school district website. It is composed of “three domains, six core competencies and ten standards” referencing the use of Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015) and National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015). Domain one titled instructional core includes two competencies, instructional leadership and talent development competencies. Standards outlined in the instructional leadership competency include (a) curriculum, instruction and assessment, and (b) school improvement. Domain one competency two, talent development, references two standards (a) professional capacity of school personnel, and (b) professional community for teachers and staff. Domain three, systems and operations, outlines two competencies, strategic thinker which identifies one standard, operation and management. The second competency, executive leadership, includes one standard, ethics and professional norms. Initial and

subcategory coding terms were not used in either domains one and three including within the four competencies and six standards in each domain. However, the phrase "...each student's academic success and well-being..." was referenced in both standards. With all six standards making reference to "each student" the argument could be made the phrase includes the view of equity, including access and inclusiveness for all. Domain two, competency four, culture building, standards (a) mission, vision, and core values; and (b) meaningful engagement of families and communities followed the same structure of standards as those in domains one and three.

Domain two, relationships and communication, identifies two competencies (a) child-centered leadership and (b) culture building. The descriptor of the competency three, child-centered leadership, initial coding identified the term diversity in stating "diversity among students, staff, and community through a physically, emotionally and psychologically safe environment utilizing social emotional learning." The descriptor of standard (a) community of care and support of students, makes reference of subcategory coding of "inclusive" within the school community including the phrase "each student". Domain two, competency four, culture building, uses the phrase "...high expectations for all stakeholders within a frame of equity" within the descriptor. Domain two, competency four, culture building, (b) equity and cultural responsiveness which includes mention of "...equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices..." within the standard.

In total, two of three domains, four of six core competencies and eight of the ten standards made no mention of initial and subcategory coding terms. Of the two competencies, the initial coding term diversity was used in one of the competencies and the term equity was used in the other competency within the descriptor. Subcategory coding terms were found in two

of the ten standards which used the terms inclusive, cultural, or culturally within their standards descriptor.

### **Principal Portrait**

The principal portrait was obtained via the school district website. The principal portrait references the use of professional standards for educational leaders, Marzano's 21 balanced leadership responsibilities, and the principal evaluation system created by the school district as documents supporting the creation of the principal portrait. The characteristics identified are under six categories which are the six competencies in the leadership framework: (a) instructional leader, (b) talent developer, (c) child-centered leader, (d) culture builder, (e) strategic thinker, and (f) executive leader. There is one brief sentence describing a definition of the category. The word diversity was found under child-centered leader in which the principal leader would value "the benefits of diversity among students, staff, and community through a physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe environment utilizing social emotional learning." The term culture was identified in culture builder however, the term used as a support develop a school culture and not necessarily a student's home culture. The subcategory terms were not found in principal portrait document however, terms such as "all students," "whole child," "every student," and "all children," were used throughout the document leading to the discussion of equity being access and inclusiveness for all.

### **Job Descriptions**

The school district website was utilized as a primary source for obtaining the job descriptions. The ability to retrieve archived postings was not an option in the district website. A total of nine job postings were analyzed: three elementary, two middle school, and four high

school for the 2018-2019 school year. Each category in elementary to high school had a principal pool for applications in addition to individual campuses posted.

Areas of analysis included categories of minimum qualifications, skill requirements, job purpose and responsibility, essential functions, other duties as assigned, physical effort and work environment, and personal work relationships. All nine of the job postings followed the same structure of the main categories. The minimum qualifications in each job posting were 100% identical. Each position required (a) Master's degree in education, administrative and mid-management certification as required by the State of Texas; (b) three years of successful classroom teaching experience; and (c) three years of administrative experience. Initial and subcategory coding of terms was applied to the minimum qualifications and no terms were found in this section of the job posting. Skill requirements were also identical in each of the nine job postings. These skill requirements included: (a) curriculum, instruction, site based improvement, and professional development expertise; (b) knowledge about planning, staff development, and personnel management; (c) ability to lead, inspire, motivate, and involve others to create quality learning and work environments for students and staff; (d) demonstrate both leadership and management skills, work well with staff and the community, and communicate effectively both orally and in writing; (e) ability to problem solve, handle a variety of administrative duties within tight timeframes, and participate in the community of continual learning; (f) knowledge and skill in the use of personal computers; and (g) able to read, write, and speak/communicate in English in order to receive and to provide work related information in a timely manner to other employees, supervisors, principals, school personnel, volunteers and where appropriate, visitors and students. Initial and subcategory coding of terms was applied, and no terms were found in the skill requirements section of the job posting.



The job purpose and responsibilities section included the same information in all job postings however, in three of the high school job postings there was a variance in one sentence. The job purpose and responsibility included (a) chief administrative officer of an individual school; (b) responsible for hiring, supervising, and evaluating teachers and staff developing and implementing educational programs in the school, overseeing extracurricular activities and assuring that Board policies are fully carried out, as well as directing all support services of the school; and (c) responsible for the administration of the school programs and services, as well as supervision of teachers, counselors, and other administrative staff at the school. The additional sentence listed on the three high school specific school job posting included item (d) responsible for ensuring implementation of the Board's results policies while working within the boundaries of the executive limitations. Although the primary wording was similar in all of the job descriptions, the same three specific high school job postings included punctuation differences in the placement of commas and semicolons. Initial and subcategory coding of terms was applied, and no terms were found in the job purpose and responsibility section of the job posting.

The essential functions sections included twenty-two responsibilities. There were 100% similarities in all elementary job postings including the specific schools and the principal pool, the one middle school principal pool and the one high school principal pool. There was variance in the specific middle school job posting and the three specific high school job postings. There were 26 essential functions in the specific middle school posting and 22 essential functions in the three specific high school job postings that shared the exact functions listed. Although there was variance in the elementary job posting, middle school principal pool. and the high school principal pool posting verses specific school middle school essential functions, all six of the job postings included the last three bullets that referenced (a) cultivates an inclusive, caring and

supportive school community that promotes the academic success and wellbeing of each student; (b) establishes a shared vision and culture of high expectations for all stakeholders within a frame of equity; and (c) believes all children will achieve by valuing the benefits of diversity among students, staff, and community through a physically, emotionally and psychologically safe environment utilizing social emotional learning. The exact wording was found in the leadership framework of the school district which has been discussed. The initial coding terms of “equity” and “diversity” were found in the last three statements. In addition to the initial coding, the subcategory coding term of “inclusive” was also found in the last three statements. There was mention of “each student” and “all children” which could be included the subcategory coding term off equity with inclusiveness for all. The three specific high school job postings made no mention of the last three bullets that were included in the other six job postings. No initial or subcategory coding terms were found in these job postings.

One sentence encompassed the other duties as assigned section with 100% of the job descriptions having the same information “perform other related duties as assigned; however, all employees are expected to comply with lawful directives in rare situations driven by need where a team effort is required.” Initial and subcategory coding of terms was applied, and no terms were found in the other duties as assigned section of the job posting.

The physical effort and work environment section included the same information in 100% of job postings. However, in three of the high school specific school job postings there was a variance of one sentence with added information not found in the other job postings. The physical effort and work environment information included (a) physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job, (b) services are generally provided in an office and school setting, (c) some

travel is required, (d) may involve possible exposure to blood or body fluids, and (e) regular attendance is required for this position. The additional information of the one sentence on the three high school specific school job posting was, position requires sitting and standing and will require travel to other district offices. Initial and subcategory coding of terms was applied, and no terms were found in the physical effort and work environment section of the job posting.

The personal work relationships section included the same information in 100% of job postings however, there was variance in the Associate Superintendent title dependent on the level of the position. Similarly, in three of the high school specific school job postings there was a variance of two sentences with added information not found in the other job postings. The personal work relationships information included (a) reports directly to the Associate Superintendent for [\_\_\_\_\_] Schools, (b) receives general supervision from the Associate Superintendent, and (c) performance is reviewed on the basis of documented student achievements, maintenance of Board policies, meeting of established deadlines, operating within established budget, and public comment. The additional two sentences on the three high school specific school job posting were: (a) regular contact with school administrators and other [district] staff, and (b) position has supervisory responsibility for all employees on the campus. Initial and subcategory coding of terms was applied, and no terms were found in the personal work relationships section of the job posting.

There was variance in the descriptive information prior to the categories with four of the nine job posting descriptions following the same format. Each of these positions were for the 2019-2020 fiscal year which included the elementary, middle, and high school principal pools in addition to one specific high school job posting. The descriptive information provided referenced the updated process for screening including the Principal Assessment Center. The

subcategory term “equitable” was used in the purpose of the Principal Assessment Center. No other initial or subcategory coding terms were found in the descriptive information of these job postings.

Three of nine job postings provided descriptive information for two elementary specific positions and one middle school specific job posting included the hiring process for the position. These positions were listed for the 2018-2019 fiscal year for one specific elementary school principal job posting, one specific elementary job posting was for the 2019-2020 fiscal year and specific middle school did not have a fiscal year noted. The information focused on the hiring process the school district takes including the consideration for the specific position applying for; the screening process and selection of six candidates to be interviewed by an interview committee of parents, teachers, and administrations; and the recommendation of three candidates to interview with the superintendent and final recommendation submission to the school board. No initial or subcategory coding terms were found in the descriptive information of these job postings. Four of the nine job postings had vision, mission, and core benefits information provided. These positions were listed for the 2018-2019 fiscal year for the two specific high school principal job postings, one specific elementary job posting was for the 2018-2019 school year while the other was for the 2019-2020 fiscal school year. The mission did not have initial or subcategory coding terms however, the phrase “...all Texas children have access...” was mentioned. Initial or subcategory coding terms were not found in the vision and core beliefs of the job postings. The core belief section did make mention of the leadership framework which in reviewing the leadership framework document separately it was reflective of initial and subcategory coding terms, however, these terms were not mentioned specifically in the core beliefs section.

Applicants are informed of the hiring process including applying for a principal position where they will be screened for eligibility, an invitation to complete a virtual online interview where they will again be screened before finally advancing to the principal assessment center where they will be screened one last time to determine eligibility as a qualified principal candidate. The principal assessment center is only open during certain times and candidates must apply for the principal position within a certain timeframe in order to be considered for the principal assessment center. If candidates apply outside the timeline, they would be considered for future assessment centers.

In the process of interviewing and selecting a candidate, ethnicity was used in the context of the student ethnicity and demographics, experiences in working with the community and student population rather than that of the applicant. The research study did include moments of noticing the individual's race or ethnicity in the interview however, the significant factor the committee was looking for was the candidate's stance on equity and social justice. The terms White and Anglo were used interchangeably by interviewees. Culture was mentioned throughout however, culture was used in the context of school culture rather than the student or community culture. Reference to school culture was not included in the findings chart. The recruitment procedures will impact subsequent hiring practices. The district has been strategic in establishing recruitment plans to support their goal of creating and increasing the diversity of their applicant pool. This recruitment process begins much earlier when recruiting at the teacher level. While screening applicants, race and ethnicity are used as part of ensuring candidates representing a broad diversity of backgrounds are being considered for positions. Texas ISD starts early to ensure they bring a diverse group of individuals forward for interviews. In discussing diversity, Adam Isabella noted he not only touched on racial and ethnic diversity he

also mentioned the impact of the superintendent’s challenge regarding district level administration to,

Ensure that we're not lopsided one way or another, that we do have a number of great educators from all different groups, male, female, and ethnic groups, racial groups. I think that's a great place to work. When you have that kind of diversity. I think diversity of thought, as well as diversity of experience, really does make good decision making.

The interview questions are used to gauge what the campus and district are looking for in a leader. If the campus is diverse, there will be questions related to experience working with diverse communities. In addition to the interview questions being geared toward the campus needs based on the principal profile, the district is committed to selecting individuals who are equity-driven for all of their campuses regardless of campus specifics.

	Mark Garcia	Oralia Roberts	Patricia Saldivar	Jose Dante	Dalia Tyler	Adam Isabella	Philip Madison
Recruitment	Culture-1	Color-1 Ethnicity-1	Race- 1		Ethnicity-4 Diversity-13 Equity-2 Social Justice- 1		Social Justice-1 Cultural Proficiency-1
Screen	Race-1 Ethnicity-1	Diversity-1 Ethncity-1	Race- 2 Equity- 2 Ethnicity 2	Diversity-2 Ethnicity-2 Race- 1	Diversity-4 Diverse-1	Ethnicity-1	Diversity-1 Diverse-1
Interview	Ethnicity-3 Diversity-5 Culture-1	Diversity-1 Culture-2		Diverse-1 Diversity-1	Diversity-3 Diverse-1	Diversity-1	Diversity-1
Select	Ethnicity-8 Equity-2 Culture- 4 Diversity-3 Inclusion-1	Equity-1 Diversity-2 Access-1 Social Justice-1	Ethnicity-1 Race- 2 Color- 1 Equity- 6 Culturally Responsive-1 Equitable- 2 Culture- 2	Ethnicity-1 Equity-1 Cultural proficiency-1 Cultural relevancy- 1 Diversity- 1	Ethnicity- 1 Cultural Proficiency-1 Inclusive-1 Diversity-1 Social Justice-1	Ethnicity-1 Racial-1 Ethnic-2 Diverse-1 Diversity-3 Culturally competent-1	Equity-1 Diverse-2 Culture-1 Cultural proficient-2
Place			Ethnicity- 1		Diversity-6		

Figure 4. Participant Coding Frequencies.

## **Summary**

Chapter four included findings to the research study including addressing the research questions. An analysis of the data collected provided an in-depth process of how Texas ISD approaches the hiring of school principals. Data from interviews and documents were analyzed to identify the procedures taken and how they fit within the cultural competency framework. The data revealed the cultural competency framework and understanding are part of the district's institutional vision which was evident throughout the study as interviewees described the school district as well as in multiple stages of the hiring process from recruitment, screening, interviewing and selecting.

## V: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the different stages of the hiring process while grounding the discussion using the cultural competency conceptual framework (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). The chapter concludes with recommendations for school districts and future research. One interviewee, Adam Isabella, Associate Superintendent of High Schools shared, “The skillsets that are needed will change over time, with the different populations of students, or changes in the neighborhood, or conditions, or the need of the students themselves,” which is a characteristic of using a single case study. The idea of needed skillsets will change over time reflecting changes in the racial or ethnic make-up of the students as well as changes in educational ideologies.

The purpose of this study was to examine how one school district advertises for, recruits, and hires school principals for cultural proficiency through the lens of a cultural competency conceptual framework (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). The research was grounded in this cultural competency conceptual framework. The following research question and sub-questions were addressed:

1. In a school district emphasizing cultural competence, what hiring practices are used for culturally competent school leaders?
  - a. What are the hiring procedures included in advertising, recruitment, screening, interview, and selection of principals of the school district?
  - b. What culturally competent knowledge, skills, and dispositions do school district representatives use when hiring principals?

These research questions provided insight to better understand the hiring process one school district, Texas ISD, uses to ensure effective school leaders who meet the needs of the students and community are selected and hired.



Terrel and Lindsey’s Cultural Proficiency Continuum (2009) was used as the conceptual framework for this research study. The continuum (see Figure 5) served as a guide to identify the components of the hiring process. This guide was used to not only identify elements present in the process, but to also develop recommendations from the findings for future research.

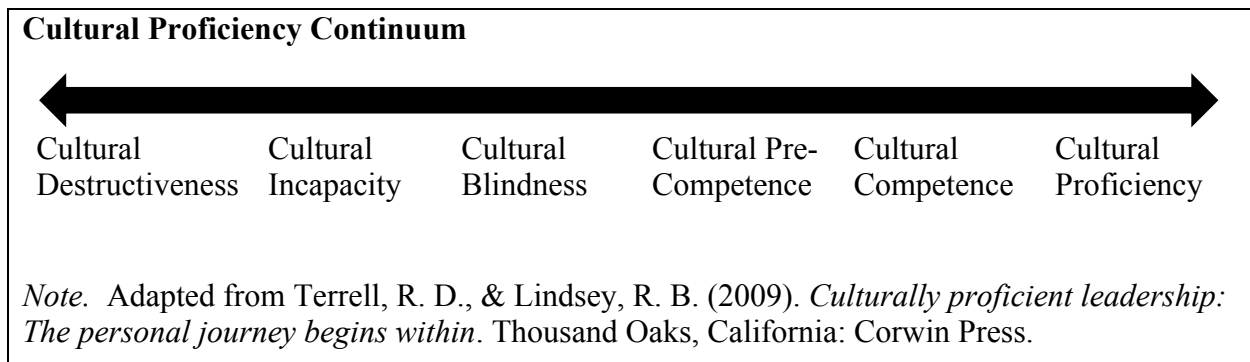


Figure 5. Cultural Proficiency Continuum

### Transition

The changes the district has experienced in becoming open to the conversation of race and equity has impacted their hiring process through a multitude of factors within the last five years. The superintendent was employed by Texas ISD in 2014, during a time when the Texas Civil Rights Project led to the district completing an Equity Self-Assessment. The community was having conversations around the academic achievement gap between minority and majority students, yearly teacher turnover which was around 800, variances between the demographic profile of teachers compared to students served by the district, school suspension rates, etc. All of this led to the school board and superintendent becoming involved in these conversations. The district’s openness regarding cultural proficiency is evidenced by the manner in which the school district has adapted and applies their hiring practices.

Jose Dante, Associate Superintendent of Elementary Schools, shared, “schools go through different iterations over the course of time.” The “fit” the campus is looking for in the

profile created and in the moment of the interview process may be different over time. An example shared was if the campus in need a principal is a turnaround school the interview committee would be looking for a turnaround principal who has been successful in getting schools out of their low status. A turnaround school is defined as one that is at the bottom and academically struggling.

## **Recruitment**

Recruitment for Texas ISD is about being strategic and purposeful through the decisions they make in advertising for and recruiting candidates. The conversation of diversity and differing cultural groups began in the pathways created by the school district and partnerships with neighboring universities. Malone and Caddell (2000) discussed the ability to recruit and hire transformative leaders begins by identifying transformative teachers. Texas ISD implements this belief as part of their vision. The district, while keeping in mind EOC regulations, intentionally includes the race and ethnicity of their students as part of their thought processes as they recruit individuals to their district as teachers and later administrators. They demonstrate cultural competence throughout the recruitment practices of their hiring process. The cultural competence identification within each section of the hiring process is outlined in Figure 2. The district actively searches for candidates who represent their student racial make-up. In addition to the racial and make-up they look for equity-focused individuals who will not only accept but will also promote the diversity of students and community. University partnerships, as shared by one interviewee, join with the district to increase the focus on equity and social justice in preparing their leaders. This type of university program aligns with Hernandez and Kose (2012), and Herrity and Glasman's (2010) stance on preparation programs preparing school leaders who are focused on equity, diversity, and social justice. The urban context and location of the school

district facilitates the ability to select candidates from these selected and prestigious university programs.

**Documents**

The job description postings, leadership framework, and principal profile however, had limited evidence of cultural competence. Nonetheless, although limited, the statements focused on equity and the diversity of the student and community populations in their respective schools. The terms race, ethnicity, or color were not found in the documents. Regardless, the importance of being equity-focused was an overarching theme in the documents and in the interviews which these documents guide.

<p><b>Recruitment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships: Universities, Professional Conferences, Relationships</li> <li>Internal Pathways</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cultural Competence</b></p>
<p><b>Selection:</b> Principal Profile Created using Leadership Framework and Principal Portrait</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents/Community Meeting</li> <li>Faculty and Staff Meeting</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cultural Competence</b></p>
<p><b>Advertising:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job Posting Position: School District Website</li> <li>Media: LinkedIn</li> <li>Word of Mouth</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cultural Blindness</b></p>
<p><b>Screen:</b></p> <p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application: Pool OR Specific Position</li> <li>Resume</li> <li>References</li> </ul> <p>Step 2: Virtual Online Interview</p> <p>Step 3: Assessment Center Activities (new 2019-2020 positions)</p> <p>Step 4: Vertical team committee reviews information from steps 1-3</p>	<p><b>Step 1: Cultural Blindness</b></p> <p><b>Step 2-4: Cultural Competence</b></p>
<p><b>Interview:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal 45minutes Interview Committee: 6 candidates + 1 alternate</li> <li>6-8 Interview Questions</li> <li>Identify 3 finalist candidates to move forward with round 2 of interview</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cultural Competence</b></p>

Figure 6. Hiring Process Cultural Competence.

Figure 6 (continued)

<p><b>Finalist Interview:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal Interview: 3 finalist candidates</li> <li>• Interview Questions</li> <li>• Identify 1 recommendation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Information Not Gathered</b></p>
<p><b>School Board:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalist recommendation submitted</li> <li>• Board Packet</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cultural Competence</b></p>

### Screening

The initial stages of the screening process in searching for principals included principal certification, administrative experience, and no criminal history. None of these reflect components of cultural competence but rather focus on the cultural blindness of the cultural proficiency continuum. In screening candidates, cultural competency was reflective in the school district’s process based on the interview process during which candidates have an opportunity to demonstrate a clear mindset in valuing diversity. Patricia Saldivar, Director of Leadership Development, shared there is an attempt to “match between leaders and students.” Dalia Tyler, Executive Director of Talent Acquisition and Development also stated,

And we are persistently looking at reflecting the diversity of our students and continue to actively pursue folks for positions that can reflect the diversity of our students. But let me say both with that and with sort of EOC regulations, et cetera. We are not only aspire to, but really want to require that we have folks who have that sense of cultural proficiency and inclusiveness and equity mindedness, which is not only defined obviously by a particular background of an individual ethnically.

The materials used by the school district to create their job descriptions follow the Professional Standards of Educational Leaders 2015 (National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2015). The same process is evidenced by research for other school districts. The standards

themselves list one domain that focuses on equity and cultural responsiveness. This supports the school district's stance on ensuring the equity focused individual.

### **Interview**

The principal profile drives the screening of the vertical team, interview committee, and questions that are asked during the interview committee. The principal profile uses a cultural competence lens through which Texas ISD purposefully seeks candidates who are equity-focused to support the success of all their students. The interview committee is different than the superintendent interview committee. Lack of collected research focused on the superintendent interview does not lend itself to generalizations about cultural competency within the continuum. The principal profile created uses the leadership framework and principal portrait in which reference is made to being equity-focused.

### **Selection**

The findings in the study confirmed Longoria and Manganaro's (2012) research. Their study was conducted on chief administrative officer (CAO) approval of Texas residents which suggested there are other factors that are more critical as predictors of CAO approval than race and representation. This research study confirmed influences of the candidate's mindset and beliefs about cultural equity impact candidate selection. Cultural competencies were reflective in the selection of candidates. The candidate's race or ethnicity was a focus in the screening process however, the statements about being equity-focused were what drove the interview committees' decisions in selecting candidates. These statements could be made about the screening process of the virtual online interviews, the assessment center, or the interview committees. These opportunities provide Texas ISD with multiple experiences in which they can get to know the candidate and their views in differing contexts. Sampson's (2019) research

involving a qualitative multiple case study of three school districts in the western US evaluated how Latinx school board members address educational equity in the context of English Language Learners (ELLs). Findings suggested the Latinx school board members used the following to inform their decisions: family, identity, and encounters with inequities (Sampson, 2019). The research study confirmed how the school district used the principal profile created with faculty, staff, parents, and community to make an informed decision while screening, interviewing, and selecting a principal candidate.

### **Additional Layers**

The district level leaders who participate in the interview committees have previously participated in cultural proficiency training including the vertical team principals, associate superintendents, and superintendent. The interviewees mentioned attending these trainings increased their focus on cultural proficiency. Through this learning opportunity, the district leadership has created an advantage for Texas ISD and their focus on equity-driven educators. The trainings have, whether intentional to or not, framed the lens of the individuals taking part in the hiring process. These leaders have the benefit of being able to identify the skill set needed for culturally competent leaders by listening to and evaluating the responses provided by candidates.

The conversations surrounding equity and diversity were grounded in cultural competency by institutionalizing cultural knowledge within the school district. The superintendent was mentioned in multiple interviews. Participants specifically discussed his receptivity to ideas and questions, and the fact that his vision ensures the leadership traits and characteristics are considered in the hiring and screening processes. Adam Isabella, Associate Superintendent of High Schools, shared,

He [The Superintendent] also challenges us to ... he monitors carefully, and so do we, the ethnic makeup of the core team, the principal core. Ensure that we're not lopsided one way or another, that we do have a number of great educators from all different groups, male, female, and ethnic groups, racial groups. I think that's a great place to work. When you have that kind of diversity. I think diversity of thought, as well as diversity of experience, really does make good decision making.

Diversity of experience and diversity of gender are not necessarily reflective of cultural competency to address different cultural groups or practices. Although diversity can take many forms cultural competency focuses on the acceptance and respect for differences in cultures. As the principal sets the tone for the campus, the superintendent sets the tone and the vision for the district. The Texas ISD superintendent has made it a clear focus for the school district to be culturally proficient which has impacted the hiring decisions of the school district.

Some interviewees mentioned parent, community, board, or district politics that sometimes try to influence portions of the hiring process. Political implications may include a member of the committee already having a set list of candidates they would like to see interviewed. The individuals from the list may be added to the interview list for a committee interview. These individuals may have applied directly to the applicant pool and not directly to the individual school or these individuals could be identified as individuals who may be "ready" for the principal position. Applying to an individual school may show the committee the individual has a genuine interest in the school itself while applying to the generic pool has the advantage of being added to the assessment center process.

As mentioned previously, not only may committee members have specific candidates in mind, parents or committee members serving on the interview committee may have their own

political agendas. A parent or committee member may have their own private agenda based on an identified need for the campus. For example, if the person has a student who is gifted and talented the focus they desire from a principal may be one who can support that specific program on the campus. If an interview committee participant believes the previous principal did not address something specific on the campus, the committee member would be searching for that in the interview. There was mention of community, board, or district politics in addition to particular individual's politics. Mark Garcia, former school board member shared, "School board members may have a strong opinion of the the candidate recommendations and may be vocal of their strong opinions." The phrase "strong opinions" was not further explained however, the strong opinions could sway the superintendent's recommendations when feedback is received from the school board. While there was mention of these differing politics, details of what these politics comprised were not shared.

### **Texas ISD Hiring Practices**

Overall, Texas ISD operates at the cultural competency stage in the majority of their hiring process phases. The school district itself is reflecting on their practices and how to improve their current procedures. One aspect worth of note is the online interviews. The online interviews are different for many candidates and may not include the human interaction which has been the norm. The school district is addressing this need by creating a protocol support document for candidates. The district is also considering a learning walk with the associate superintendent at a different campus than the one being applied for, for the three final principal candidates. This would provide an opportunity to observe and further discuss the instructional views of the principal candidate, adding an additional layer to the interview process. The hope for this process is to obtain another data point on the candidates. This interview would take



place after the interview committee but prior to the interview with the superintendent. The committee is also considering adding “look fors” in the interview procedure to support individuals who are taking part in the interview committee. The stance of how the individuals feel about this addition was not evaluated. After each hiring season the human resource department evaluates the effectiveness of their hiring process for the year. They collect demographic data about who was hired for certain positions including the race and ethnicity of each individual. Texas ISD follows the same process of evaluating their hiring practices for school principals by sharing demographic candidate information with the school board.

When looking at candidates, the school district considers at the previous school’s data for the principal candidate applying for the position. The interviewees did not make mention about how this information and data analysis does or does not affect the candidate’s opportunity for the principal position. One participant mentioned the candidate may have principal experience in a non-Title 1 campus and could possibly not be considered for a Title 1 campus. The informational data of the individual could “pigeonhole people” which was shared as a concern in looking for specific experiences.

Texas ISD’s commitment to growing their own is underscored by their efforts to establish pathways for community members who want to become teaching assistants. This idea of finding applicants within the community supports the research on growing your own. Dalia Tyler explained,

All the diversity we're looking for, [is already] within the room. We don't have to go to the Valley, we do, we still do, right. It's not about going everywhere, although that's important. But it's about building and growing folks who are right here, many of whom had credentials but just weren't sure that it was for them, needed that extra piece. And

then those people will be some of our strongest teachers. And then there'll be some of our strongest leaders and then they grew up or lived in these communities.

Texas ISD also has a pathway established for high school students who are interested in becoming teachers. These pathways have been utilized by a small number of Texas ISD principals who began their educational career as teaching assistants, progressing through the pathway to become teachers, later assistant principals, and now principals. Although there was no a direct identification of principals who came from the community, the reality that some principals have come from the community was confirmed in one interview. Given this focus on growing their own, a deeper look into the pathways and the individuals who have successfully walked these pathways is needed to more fully understand the effectiveness of growing people from the community.

The job description postings did follow similar findings from the leadership framework in that they included the same exact wording in both documents which led to the identification of initial and subcategory coding terms. Questions as to why three specific high school job postings did not make mention of the last three bullet points which encompassed the same information from the leadership framework remain. This point could not be answered as the document analysis occurred after the interviews. Further investigation is needed into how these job descriptions were created and what resources were used to support their creation.

Given that this research took place while this process was new and all individuals were newly on board with ensuring the fidelity of the hiring practices, it would be interesting to see, a few years after initial implementation, if the sentiments are still there. When a new program starts, individuals are often willing to implement the initiative or program to its full intended expectation. However, as transitions come, some of the pieces are not followed through with as

much fidelity. Part of the Bush institute was a three-year grant for the school district; this research study was completed during year two of the partnership. It would also be interesting to evaluate the sustainability of the program and the new learned knowledge as time passes. All school district personnel were excited and invested in the new assessment center initiative which was in its first year of implementation during the research study.

### **Recommendations for School Districts**

There was much mention during the interviews of “equity,” “diversity,” etc., however, there was a lack of identification of these terms within the documents published. The job description postings were organized in a similar format that included categories of minimum qualifications, skill requirements, job purpose and responsibility, essential functions, other duties as assigned, physical effort and work environment, and personal work relationships. One recommendation for the job description postings is to review and organize each posting along with the leadership framework and principal portrait using the identified competencies.

Throughout the interviews, the documents referenced as part of the hiring process included the leadership framework and the principal portrait. This process would ensure the alignment of what the school district states they value with their selection of prospective and current principals. The job posting is typically the first document the candidate views when applying to the school district if they are external.

Findings indicated the Cultural Proficiency and Inclusiveness department does not take part in the hiring process. Although not part of the recruiting and hiring stages, individuals in the Cultural Proficiency and Inclusiveness department support principals upon their arrival in the school district. The cultural department did not take part in interview questions proposed or the leadership framework created by the district. With the created department that supports cultural

proficiency, collaborating with the department would further support the the identification of cultural competent leaders.

District individuals viewed a principal’s cultural proficiency as part of the skills necessary to have a successful year. They viewed potential failure as a principal’s lack of understanding of the community. One participant shared,

We have a few instances were we have chosen principals who are not ready to understand or didn't understand the history of the campus, and they come in and they change things and their life becomes miserable because the leaders haven't prepped them for being very careful and very thoughtful about how they approach changes that they feel like need to be made. Yes, you should be able to make those changes as a principal, but yes, you also need to understand that you're not the authority until you've built relationships.

Part of the final recommendation to district personnel who participate in hiring school principals, requires them to be able to critically reflect on their backgrounds, their beliefs, and understand the historical impacts on the school that they are selecting leaders for and understand how that not having that knowledge can set up a principal for failure.

Texas ISD is committed to identifying leaders who are equity focused. The screening and interview committees are listening to what candidates share in multiple stages in the hiring process. An important factor to keep in mind is how the candidate responds for the sole purpose of obtaining the principal position. If an applicant researched the school district they would know the diversity within the school district and be able to use terms such as equity and social justice to “perform” for the interview committee. It is essential for the questions posed and responses obtained for the screening and interview committee to dig deeper into what the applicant truly believes. Some individuals who take part in the hiring process believe if the

question posed is a “good question” the committee should be able to gather valuable information from the candidates. This could look like listening for the candidate to provide a concrete example or have evidence to support their response.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This research study was conducted in one school district. The study does not allow for generalizing as it was conducted as one single case study. Further research is needed on other large urban school districts and their approaches to the hiring practices. Although not urban, the diversity of students and community would also impact rural, medium, or small school districts. Research within the area in which the large school district where a school district would or could not be considered urban, however, could share the same diversity would also be another avenue of research study. The majority of the district level personnel who took part in the hiring process were interviewed including at least one member for each department. An expansion of the number of participants such as additional individuals who have taken part in principal screening or interview committees as a school board member; or the superintendent could enhance the research study further.

As evidenced by the student population decrease according to Texas academic performance reports (TEA, 2018b), Texas ISD is aware of the loss of Hispanic and African American students and has attributed the decrease to gentrification. More research is needed on the impact gentrification has exerted on the hiring practices of the school district, if at all. The initial proposed research intended to identify interview questions and responses during the committee interview process by principal candidates. However, due to delimitations these documents were not available. Further research is needed to analyze the questions interview committees ask, and the responses they are looking for in principal candidates deemed to be

culturally competent. The information could provide another layer in identifying cultural competence within this practice that directly impacts the hiring of school principals. Education changes through the years inevitably impact our changing foci; what was once relevant may not be years later. This single case study is reflective of the time in which it was conducted. Revisiting the hiring practices of the school district may be relevant in sequential years.

## APPENDIX A

### Interview Protocol: Human Resource/Associate Superintendent/School Board Member

Name:                      Position:

1. Tell me about yourself. What is your background and experience in education?
2. Describe your school district.
3. Describe your school administrators.
4. Describe the students and the community this school district serves.
5. Tell me about the recruitment process for administrators (challenges, competition, etc.)
6. Can you walk me through the process of how you separate out the high quality candidates? **(screen)**
7. What candidates/characteristics are best for your district? **(select)**
8. Describe how the school district (or you) defines effective school administrators **(select)**
9. What are some of the differences when searching for elementary versus secondary candidates?
10. Describe any differences when searching for Title 1 campus, bilingual campuses, and non–Title 1 campuses? How does this affect the hiring decisions?
11. Could you take me through what the interview process looks like? **(interview)**
12. In the interview process, what types of things do you assess (probe for relationships with community, etc.) **(interview)**
13. How does the diversity in the school district and community influence what you are searching for or the questions you ask when hiring administrators? **(place)**
14. How do you know if a principal is a good fit for a school? **(place)**
  - a. What factors determine that?
  - b. Can you give me an example?
15. *If they don't mention culture or the idea of a match of candidate to demographics, or anything like that, you could ask toward the end of the interview:*

A lot of people have been talking about the idea that leaders should be connected to the communities they serve. Can you tell me how that factors in, if at all, to the hiring process? How do you know if a principal is a good fit?
16. How does the school district use the cultural competency conceptual framework in the hiring practices?
  - a. Screen
  - b. Interview
  - c. Select
  - d. Place
  - e. Retain
17. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you would like to discuss?

Collect at end of Interview: Demographic Data

- Race/Age/Years of leading/Years in current position

Would you be willing to be contacted for future follow–up interview?

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